



GEORG KOLBE — Elisa Tamaschke, Julia Wallner (eds.)

THE ARTIST AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

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Georg Kolbe — The Artist and National Socialism.

Breaks and Continuities in Life,
Work, and Reception

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Breaks and Continuities in Life,
Work, and Reception

Translated by Gérard A. Goodrow

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Preface

“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.”

Walter Benjamin, *“Theses on the Philosophy of History,”*
7th thesis, 1940¹

In his ambiguity during the National Socialist regime and the historicization that followed his death in 1947, Georg Kolbe emerges more and more clearly as a key figure in a newly developing art historiography of modernism. This is increasingly working from the previous margins of a male-centered Eurocentric narrative, emphasizing research on the social conditions for artistic creation as well as the relationships to overarching social and political forces that need to be reappraised, described, and contextualized.

This publication, edited by my predecessor Julia Wallner and the researcher Elisa Tamaschke, is thus a central contribution to a new integrative understanding of—and critical demand for—art historiography in relation to ideologies and power relations, and it assigns Georg Kolbe an important position in this context. The work of artists, the context of creation, and their own attitudes and responsibilities are increasingly at the center of innovative museum work and exhibition practice. Many of the studies carried out here in the methodological tradition of the social history of art thus reposition Kolbe within the construct of art histories, which has become mutable. They place the plural and often non-linear narratives of the everyday on an equal footing with familiar art-historical narratives in order to broaden our access to art historiographies. This publication positions Kolbe as a critical example to trace and understand how artists have navigated, appropriated, and come to terms with various institutionalized systems and forms of power. Transcending national boundaries, this volume invites further research and reflection on the relationship between difficult pasts and their influence today, as an often self-centered and overly consolidated German memory landscape needs to be updated and reactivated anew for the increasingly challenging present.

In this way, not only are new insights developed and classified, but far-reaching questions can be developed that offer many possibilities for research. As a contemporary research and learning institution, the Georg Kolbe Museum will use this space opened up by the past to ask which forms of contemporary confrontation are important and central. What kind of society do we live in today, what stories and truths need to be told in order to grasp and assess its complexity, and how do we do this? Making and exhibiting art means understanding the world as changeable. Museums need to find a form of active memory that is able to take into account both the light and the dark sides in equal measure, and to connect the time and the circumstances of the works to be preserved,

researched, and presented with the urgent questions of our present, in order to be effective as a place of knowledge formation and enchantment at the same time.

For a museum must situate and communicate the artists not only in the contexts of their lives, but also in our own time. This publication is therefore also a basis and a starting point for asking more broadly how we can go beyond the boundaries of the archive and move towards other models of knowledge. What role do we assign to the archive and its reprocessing as a tool for imagining new futures, for building multi-layered collective knowledge through and with artists and thinkers, new art histories, curatorial practices, and documentation and display strategies? How can an awareness of the past, updated through an engagement with art and its contexts, which does not excuse but also does not absolutely demonize lead to a new sense of responsibility in our present?

This publication is also to be understood as a handing over, as it were, in which a chorus of outstanding scholarly voices opens a new chapter for the institution with their work. As the Georg Kolbe Foundation and Museum, it is now necessary to make productive use of this often distressing basis, not only to research what was and to show what is, but also to imagine and shape what can be. The publication is therefore intended to serve as a compass, not only for the still incomplete indexing, classification, and visualization of new sources, or the deconstruction of the mechanisms of the process of coming to terms with the past in Germany that have been in effect for decades, but above all in the search for an institutional approach that is capable of critically grasping this process in all its complexity, which ranges from the artistic and cultural claim of universality to the abysses of colonialism. It also feeds on what the publicist Max Czollek recently called “inconsolability” in the face of what has happened and how it could have happened at all. With its emphasis on feeling, it forms an antipole to the sovereign claim of a self-centered German understanding of history. In its deliberately chosen sentimentality, the term also reaches deeply into the reappraisal of Georg Kolbe’s life and work that this publication brings about.

I conclude with great thanks to the former director of the Georg Kolbe Museum, Julia Wallner, and the art historian Elisa Tamaschke, who supervised this publication with outstanding commitment. I would also like to thank all those involved for their exceptional work and the impulses they have given. This publication would not have been possible without the support of the Hermann Reemtsma Foundation, the Ferdinand Möller Foundation, the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation, and the Friends of the Museum.

Kathleen Reinhardt

Director, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Introduction

After the death of Maria von Tiesenhausen, Georg Kolbe's granddaughter, a significant and hitherto largely unknown part of his written estate was transferred from Canada to the artist's former residence and studio in Berlin in March 2020, seventy years after the opening of the Georg Kolbe Museum. The surprising quality of its contents, its thematic diversity, and its overwhelming quantity make it an art-historical sensation. The materials that we, as the director and research associate of the museum at that time, examined in the apartment of the deceased granddaughter far exceeded our expectations: hundreds of letters and documents, notes, plans, records, diary-like calendars, photographs, magazines and journals, books, and numerous works of art (figs. 1 and 2). With this rich addition, the Kolbe Estate is now one of the most comprehensive documentations of the biography of a twentieth-century artist.

During his lifetime, Georg Kolbe (1877–1947) was considered one of the most successful German artists of his generation. With participation in numerous international exhibitions, works prominently represented in influential collections as well as in public spaces, an extensive network of artist friendships, and memberships in artists' associations, he was considered an important voice in connection with cultural policy. In the 1910s and 1920s, he decisively and programmatically modernized figurative sculpture. It is important to note that, during his creative period, the artist lived through four different systems of government, which were marked by harsh political disputes, as well as two world wars. His recognition and success grew steadily during the German Empire and the Weimar Republic. Even under the National Socialist regime, he was able to largely maintain his established position, although a younger generation of sculptors had come to the fore. Today, Kolbe's defensive interpretations of his existence as an artist must provoke contradictions: in his fundamental understanding, he considered his artistic work to be free and independent, invulnerable to social influences or political demands on art. Kolbe's formal language developed continuously, without strong breaks, and revolved around the depiction of the human figure. It must always be seen in the context of cultural-political and contemporary historical developments.

The arrival of new material from Canada—but not only that—is challenging us to question previous interpretations of Kolbe's life and work. We now have the opportunity to add some dynamism to what we thought was certain and firmly established.

This publication brings together the research papers that were presented in September 2022 at the Georg Kolbe Museum's conference "Georg Kolbe and National Socialism.



1 Various boxes in Maria von Tiesenhausen's apartment in Vancouver, Canada, 2019



2 Some of the boxes after their arrival from Canada, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, March 2020

Continuities and Breaks in Life, Work, and Reception” and were subsequently expanded upon. For us, as specialists who have been dealing with the life and work of the artist for many years, it was a matter of subjecting the research on Kolbe’s position during National Socialism to a necessary revision. To this end, we made available the newly accessible sources, drawing, of course, on the material already available in the museum and excellently catalogued in recent years, as well as on the basis of existing publications. As

a research institution, the critical and differentiated examination of questions of artistic production, its creation, and its (changing) reception is one of our core themes; the dedication of a monographic museum makes this indispensable. At the same time, this historically evolved task represents an opportunity to keep alive in the present and in the future an engagement with the challenging (art) history of the twentieth century.

Georg Kolbe's Estate and Its History

The estate of Georg Kolbe is characterized by an unexpected, literally eventful history. In his last will and testament, the artist had stipulated that the studio house he had built in the late 1920s, the works of art contained in it, and his written estate should go either to a foundation yet to be established, or to the state and be made accessible to the public. By the time of his death on November 20, 1947, this self-confident gesture had created the necessary conditions for securing his estate—and his posthumous reputation. In 1949, old friends and companions established the Georg Kolbe Foundation, and in 1950 the studio building was opened as a museum.² The first director was Margrit Schwartzkopff, Kolbe's former photographer and office assistant, as well as the executor of his will, who was allowed by the will to live in selected rooms at Sensburger Allee 25. The interpretation of the will led to long disputes over the artistic and material estate between Margrit Schwartzkopff, who represented the foundation, and the family. She served as director until her death in 1969, during which time she ran the institution as a kind of memorial to the late artist, leaving the furnishings of the rooms largely as Kolbe had left them. Schwartzkopff was succeeded as director of the museum by Maria von Tiesenhausen, Georg Kolbe's granddaughter, who was born in 1929. She emigrated to Canada in the 1950s but continued to travel regularly during her directorship between Berlin and her adopted country of Canada, where her husband, Hans Dietrich ("Dietz") von Tiesenhausen, a Second World War naval officer, lived. It is impossible to date exactly when she began taking estate documents from the museum's archives to Canada, but she did so on a large scale and without disclosing which or how many documents were involved. Since there was no inventory of the written estate, it was subsequently impossible to collate what was missing with what existed in the museum's holdings. In 1987, almost a decade after the end of her directorship, von Tiesenhausen published a selection of letters to and from Kolbe.³ For the most part, the selected excerpts came from the estate, which she also supplemented through selected acquisitions. As a close relative, she also had access to other materials remaining in the family; she continued to maintain some of her grandfather's contacts for research purposes, and conducted research in the public archives accessible to her. She also successfully and extensively researched the works of Kolbe that remained in the GDR and the Soviet Union. By 2006, she had successively returned the originals of the letters she had published, along with other documents, to the museum and its director Ursel Berger, who had been working there since 1978, as well as to her research assistants Josephine Gabler and Carolin Jahn—a total of approximately 800 individual documents. The written



3 A glimpse into the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen

estate, which has been reunited and is preserved in the museum, thus comprises some 3,500 documents, most of which come from the estate, but which the museum had also selectively supplemented through purchases and donations in previous decades.⁴

It could be assumed that Maria von Tiesenhausen kept more material with her. However, the quantity and quality could hardly be determined from Berlin, despite the improvement in the relationship between the museum and von Tiesenhausen, which had been prob-

lematic for decades. Julia Wallner traveled to Canada several times during her directorship and also received the granddaughter at the museum in Berlin.⁵ She was eventually able to convince von Tiesenhausen that the museum was unquestionably the best place to preserve and process the estate. In 2018, after long and sometimes difficult discussions, part of the estate, including a sculpture by Aristide Maillol and a painting by Max Beckmann, as well as works by Georg Kolbe, were transferred to the museum. It was only after von Tiesenhausen's death in 2019 that a comprehensive viewing of the objects and documents was possible, thanks to the Canadian executors of her estate, who had already acted as intermediaries during her lifetime, and to their relationship



4 One of over 100 drawings from the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen

5 Letter from Max Pechstein to Georg Kolbe, 1920



6 Georg Kolbe's appointment diaries from the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen



of trust, which was underpinned by previous visits and conversations. Finally, in March 2020, approximately 3,000 additional private and business letters, as well as works of art, photographs of works and photo albums, pocket calendars, appointment and telephone calendars, address books, notes, newspaper clippings on exhibitions, fellow artists, and cultural-political topics from Kolbe's estate, as well as from the holdings of the granddaughter and her parents, were returned to the museum (figs. 3–6).⁶

The Museum as a Place of Reappraisal

Four museum directors, in a not always conflict-free relationship, have worked with their respective teams and networks to ensure that this heritage is preserved and maintained.

Now, for the first time, it is reunited for future generations in its original location and is accessible in its entirety for research, which was a major concern of ours. Its significance for art history extends far beyond the sculptor himself; the estate leads to four continents, and thus into the far-reaching and challenging networks of relationships in the history of art and culture in the twentieth century, of which it is an invaluable witness.⁷

Margrit Schwartzkopff and Maria von Tiesenhausen were too personally involved to be able or willing to deal with the artist in a scholarly and critical manner. In fact, the very history of the museum's founding is itself the story of a continuity in the field of art and cultural policy after 1945 that needs to be critically evaluated. Two of the founders were members of the NSDAP; and after 1950, works from the 1930s and 1940s were also installed in public spaces without criticism or reflection.⁸ Schwartzkopff made it her declared goal to be a "torchbearer" on the path to elevating "the work of Georg Kolbe beyond its ties to a specific time [...] until the knowledge of the significance of this unique work has truly become common knowledge."⁹ Statements of this kind indirectly refer to critical voices that were raised against Kolbe and his role in the cultural-political system of National Socialism, as well as against his artistic conception of man, which was at least formally connectable to National Socialist ideology.¹⁰ Margrit Schwartzkopff and, after her, Maria von Tiesenhausen were able to stylize Kolbe as an artist who, even between 1933 and 1945, was primarily concerned with artistic-formal issues and could therefore not be interpreted politically.¹¹

Art-historical research on the life and work of Georg Kolbe did not begin until 1978 with Ursel Berger. In the decades of her directorship (until 2012), she developed fundamental research—her published findings still form the basis of any discussion of the sculptor today.¹² In addition to extensive biographical and art-historical contextual research, during her time as director of the museum she began compiling a catalogue raisonné of Kolbe's works: an extensive and costly undertaking—especially in the case of sculptures with numerous casts—that has since been continued at the museum by the art historian Thomas Pavel.¹³

Since the 1980s, research has turned to Kolbe's work during National Socialism, a topic that eventually became urgent at that time. In addition to Ursel Berger, Magdalena Bushart, Josephine Gabler, Arie Hartog, and Penelope Curtis have published on this topic in the context of exhibition publications or university theses, thus making important contributions.¹⁴ With the exhibition at the Georg Kolbe Museum and the publication of the major research volume on the work of the art dealer Alfred Flechtheim in 2017, an important chapter on the artist's environment during National Socialism was opened up and further explored in the specific context of sculpture.¹⁵

Revision and Multiple Perspectives

New sources require new research and an update of previous research results; at the same time, they offer the historical opportunity to open up a field of research, also in terms of personnel. With the receipt of the bequest from Canada, it quickly became

clear that numerous documents from the period between 1933 and 1945 had not been previously known and would now allow for more in-depth research. This remains an institutional obligation; after all, questions have remained unanswered and must be asked anew. The reappraisal of National Socialist history can never be complete because it is an ethical and social necessity to remember it.

In recent years, the critical study of artists' biographies during National Socialism and the postwar period has undergone a great development. Exhibitions on Emil Nolde and the continuity of artists' careers after 1945, such as the exhibition on the "Gottbegnadeten-Liste," the list of "divinely gifted" artists, have set new standards and sharpened the view of the art world and its political entanglements in the twentieth century.¹⁶ These projects were often accompanied by the revision of existing archives and allowed external researchers to access and work with the material. An open way of dealing with the material was also fundamental to our approach. After an initial phase of intensive indexing, which included a year of reviewing, sorting, and securing by Elisa Tamaschke, the new archival material was to be made available as quickly as possible and without any restrictions. In order, as the Georg Kolbe Museum, not to claim sole interpretative authority over the documents and the resulting art-historical questions, and in order to build on the expertise in the field of art during National Socialism, in the fall of 2021 we invited a group of renowned art historians to familiarize themselves with the new material and to develop their own research priorities on the basis of existing research. Their insightful results were finally presented at a conference at the museum in September 2022, and can be read in expanded form in this volume.¹⁷

With this project, we were particularly concerned with extending and rejuvenating the circle of scholars working on Georg Kolbe. After all, scholarship only remains justified and vital in its openness if it experiences a constant broadening of horizons through ever new perspectives.

The essays in this volume change our view of Kolbe. He served the NS power elite to a much greater extent than has been recognized in the literature. Many of the essays in this volume show the ambivalence of Kolbe's actions, which is characteristic of every human existence; at the same time, they show for the first time in detail how this ambivalence increasingly developed into opportunism. Thus Georg Kolbe signed the "Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden" (Call of the Cultural Workers), he accepted public commissions and honors, he portrayed Francisco Franco, and he expressed the wish to make a portrait of Adolf Hitler,¹⁸ which was never realized. He was on the "Gottbegnadeten-Liste" and was invited to evening events of the political elite.¹⁹ However, he was not a member of the NSDAP, and at the beginning of National Socialist rule he was apparently widely perceived as a representative of the Weimar Republic; some of his sculptures in public spaces were removed. Unlike Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, who, as representatives of a younger generation of sculptors, clearly benefited from the NS state, Kolbe built on an existing career. He continued to cultivate his friendships with artists defamed as "degenerate," and to appreciate and represent their works on juries; furthermore, contrary to various official pronouncements, he expressed his criticism of the system in private letters. Such an

exemplary list shows how important it is to perceive the shades of gray in order to grasp the complexity of historical facts and human life, instead of creating a black-and-white picture. In this context, it is also important to turn the argumentative “but,” which is often placed between pro and contra and always smacks of a desire to relativize, into an “and.”

This publication does not offer a fixed framework for interpretation, but rather seeks to open up space for a multi-perspective approach. The authors’ analyses provide in-depth and new insights into a subject that is challenging due to its multifaceted nature. Aya Soika places Kolbe for the first time in the cultural-political situation between 1933 and 1945, both in detail and critically. Paula Schwerdtfeger and Ambra Frank examine his participation in exhibitions during this period as well as his strong public presence in Frankfurt am Main to the present day. Christian Fuhrmeister focuses on a particular gala dinner in 1939 and its cultural-political significance in the NS state. Jan Giebel’s overview of Kolbe’s relationship with his art dealers provides new insights into his self-image as a businessman and artist. The in-depth studies by Wolfgang Schöddert, Gesa Vietzen, and Anja Tiedemann of Kolbe’s business relationships with the galleries of Ferdinand Möller, Alfred Flechtheim, and Karl Buchholz provide new and sometimes electrifying insights not only into the topic of Kolbe but also and especially into the galleries that were so crucial to modernism in Germany. Bernhard Maaz, Olaf Peters, and Arie Hartog explore artistic-formal questions of tradition and the ideational content of Kolbe’s formal language. The texts by Christina Irrgang and Magdalena Bushart consider the resonances during Kolbe’s lifetime: on the one hand, the reflection of sculpture in the medium of photography and its medial usability; on the other hand, the written tributes that the artist received on the occasion of milestone birthdays and awards. In their studies, Maike Steinkamp and Dorothea Schöne examine the history of Kolbe’s reception after 1945 in the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and the United States. With these contributions, research on Georg Kolbe, on the life of an artist under National Socialism, is on entirely new ground.

Prospects

At the same time, further research is necessary. Kolbe’s relationships to his collectors and to his Jewish friends, his international travels, his life between 1943 and 1945 in Hierlsenhagen in Silesia, his relationship to the Allies, the political dimension of his sculptures, which Kolbe certainly intended, the history of ideas of the bodies he designed, his reading experiences, his scope of knowledge of everyday political events, his awareness of and striving for power and success, his reception in the GDR, the institutional history of the Georg Kolbe Museum—all these are research perspectives that need to be deepened and continued. The digital publication of the catalogue raisonné in the coming year will also facilitate a thorough analysis of the development of the form, while at the same time making the history of reception even more tangible through cast editions and exhibition participation. The publication of the conference papers is a beginning of something that we look forward to continuing.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the authors who unhesitatingly agreed to participate in this research project, and without whose enthusiasm this book would not exist. We thank the executors of the estate, Willard and Penny Dunn, for their warm welcome in Canada and for the many years of trustful collaboration. At the Georg Kolbe Museum, we thank Kathleen Reinhardt, the director since 2022, for her unstinting support of this publication. Carolin Jahn (Art Collection and Archive, Georg Kolbe Museum) and Thomas Pavel (Georg Kolbe catalogue raisonné) deserve our heartfelt thanks for sharing their expertise on the museum collection and its documentation. We would also like to thank the staff members of the Georg Kolbe Museum—Eva Antunes, Ingo Gorny, Gisela Hälbig, Elisabeth Heymer, and Katherina Perlongo—for their support in organizing the conference.

Gérard A. Goodrow undertook the English translations, Sarah Quigley was responsible for the English copyediting, and Şebnem Yavuz did the copyediting of the German texts, as the publication is also appearing in German under the title *Georg Kolbe im Nationalsozialismus. Kontinuitäten und Brüche in Leben, Werk und Rezeption*. We are very grateful to all of them for the precise results. The extremely reliable cooperation with each of them was a great pleasure.

The immediate enthusiasm of Hans-Robert Cram and Merle Ziegler of Gebr. Mann Verlag for our publication project and their willingness to integrate this volume into their publishing program has delighted us.

The fact that we were able to work on the Canadian part of the estate as soon as it arrived in Berlin was only possible thanks to the generous support of the Hermann Reemtsma Foundation and the Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation. Sebastian Giesen (Hermann Reemtsma Foundation) and Martin Hoernes (Ernst von Siemens Art Foundation) have supported us with great dedication over many years and have shared our enthusiasm for the material from the beginning. We are very grateful to the Ferdinand Möller Foundation, the Hermann Reemtsma Foundation, and the Friends of the Georg Kolbe Museum for their generous support of the publication of the conference papers. For the restoration of a significant part of Maria von Tiesenhausen's estate, we would like to thank the Coordination Office for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage (KEK) at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz. The Senate Department for Culture and Community as the main sponsor of the Georg Kolbe Museum deserves our constant gratitude. We are extremely fortunate to be able to count on such enthusiastic supporters. Without them, our work would not be possible.

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Remagen (formerly Director, Georg Kolbe
Museum, Berlin)

Notes

- 1 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in: idem, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York 2007), pp. 253–264, here p. 256.
- 2 The foundation is governed by a board of trustees, which in its founding year of 1949 included the following members: Adolf Jannasch, Kurt von Keudell, Hugo Körtzinger, Konrad Lemmer, Hermann Lempere, Max Leube, Erich Ott, Richard Scheibe, Alfred Wolters, Désirée Zimmermann-Klinger, and Margrit Schwartzkopff.
- 3 Maria Baroness von Tiesenhausen (ed.), *Georg Kolbe. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Tübingen 1987). In her preface, von Tiesenhausen writes that Kolbe's private correspondence, which was entrusted to her by Margrit Schwartzkopff and her father Kurt von Keudell, was in her possession—the transfer of these documents may very well have concerned the private family letters, but this attempt at an explanation cannot, of course, explain why the extensive correspondence with galleries, collectors, clients, artist friends, political decision-makers, museums, and other cultural institutions and municipal administrations was also in her possession.
- 4 In the course of a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in 2008–10, these documents were catalogued, digitized, and linked to the Kalliope portal. The documents were then transferred in their entirety to the museum's own database, Kolbe Online, where they are accessible together with images and transcriptions. Kolbe's artistic estate in the possession of the Georg Kolbe Museum is also fully accessible via Kolbe Online.
- 5 Julia Wallner was director of the museum from 2013 to 2022.
- 6 It remains an intractable challenge to determine what is no longer part of the estate—whether through wartime loss, a failure to preserve certain documents on the part of Kolbe himself, or the removal of such by Margrit Schwartzkopff or Maria von Tiesenhausen. Indeed, there are conspicuous gaps, the future filling and analysis of which promises further insights.
- 7 The part of the estate that came from Canada in 2020 is referred to as the "Maria von Tiesenhausen Estate" (MvT Estate). De facto it is the partial estate of Georg Kolbe; however, this designation is justified because it was in the possession of Maria von Tiesenhausen, and the museum received it from her estate. It also distinguishes it from the holdings that previously existed in the museum. From Canada, the museum has also received small holdings from the estates of Kurt von Keudell (Kolbe's son-in-law), Margrit Schwartzkopff, and Maria von Tiesenhausen. These holdings are valuable sources for tracing the history of Georg Kolbe's reception in the second half of the twentieth century.
- 8 Kurt von Keudell and Hermann Lempere were both members of the NSDAP. For more on the institutional history of the museum, see also the transcript of the lecture by Elisa Tamaschke, given at the conference "Kunst und Kultur nach dem Nationalsozialismus" (Art and Culture after National Socialism), organized by the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam and the Humboldt University, Berlin, held at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities on March 13, 2023 (4:10:30–4:28:30 hrs.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aYFB-7vr71A&t=30103s> [last accessed July 11, 2023].
- 9 As formulated by Schwartzkopff in a letter to Hermann Reemtsma, January 6, 1948, MvT Estate, GKM, Berlin [translated].
- 10 See the essay by Magdalena Bushart in this volume, pp. 312–330. During his lifetime, Kolbe was challenged on several occasions by critical questions about his relationship to the power elite: see the essays by Aya Soika and Maike Steinkamp in this volume, pp. 82–114 and pp. 334–349.
- 11 See, for example, the copy of a typescript dated January 1948 in the MvT Estate, on which Margrit Schwartzkopff has handwritten: "Zu der Campagne i. Amerika gegen Georg Kolbe" (On the campaign against Kolbe in America). In the following remarks, Kolbe is defended against the accusation that he had aligned himself with the National Socialists.
- 12 Ursel Berger's publications up to 2014 are listed in: Julia Wallner and Marc Wellmann (eds.), *Skulpturenstreit – Texte zur Skulptur und Bildhauerei der Moderne, Festschrift für Ursel Berger* (Berlin 2014), pp. 171–175.
- 13 On the basis of a catalogue raisonné published as a dissertation in the United States in the 1960s—Kurt Eugene von Meier, *Georg Kolbe [1877–1947]*, 2 vols., PhD diss., Princeton University (Ann Arbor 1966)—which was essentially based on the holdings of the Georg Kolbe Museum, Hella Reelfs, supported by the Thyssen Foundation, worked on completing the catalogue raisonné in the 1970s, but was unable to publish it despite her successful research. Her findings were continuously refined and expanded by Ursel Berger during her tenure at the Georg Kolbe Museum in the course of her research on Kolbe.

- 14 See, for example, in addition to Ursel Berger's remarks in: *Georg Kolbe. Leben und Werk, mit dem Katalog der Kolbe-Plastiken im Georg-Kolbe-Museum Berlin* (Berlin 1990): Ursel Berger, "'Einseitig künstlerisch.' Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit," 2018, published as a PDF on the website of the Georg Kolbe Museum, currently accessible there in the archive; see: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190508074534/https://www.georg-kolbe-museum.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Einseitig-künstlerisch-mit-Bildern-Titel-1.pdf> [last accessed July 11, 2023]; Ursel Berger, "'Ein verdienter Altmeister.' Die Rolle des Bildhauers Georg Kolbe während der Nazizeit," in: Maria Rüger (ed.), *Kunst und Kunstkritik der dreißiger Jahre. 29 Standpunkte zu künstlerischen und ästhetischen Prozessen und Kontroversen* [Fundus-Bücher, vol. 124] (Dresden 1990), pp. 130–140; Ursel Berger, "'Herauf nun, herauf, du großer Mittag.' Georg Kolbes Statue für die Nietzsche-Gedächtnishalle und die gescheiterten Vorläuferprojekte," in: Hans Wilderotter and Michael Dormmann (eds.), *Wege nach Weimar. Auf der Suche nach der Einheit von Kunst und Politik* (Berlin 1999), pp. 177–194; *Sculpture and Power. Figurative Plastik in Deutschland der 30er und 40er Jahre*, ed. Magdalena Bushart et al., exh. cat. Akademie der Künste, Berlin and Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (Berlin 1983); Josephine Gabler, *Skulptur in Deutschland in den Ausstellungen zwischen 1933 und 1945*, PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1996, unpublished, accessible in the archive of the GKM; Josephine Gabler, "Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit," in: *Georg Kolbe 1877–1947*, exh. cat. Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin and Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen (Munich 1997), pp. 87–94; Josephine Gabler, "Anpassung im Dissens. Die Bildhauer im Dritten Reich," in: Penelope Curtis (ed.), *Taking Positions. Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich*, exh. cat. Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin, Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen and Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (Bremen and Leeds 2001), pp. 42–59; Josephine Gabler, "Vom Menschen zum Monument? Die Plastik in Deutschland zwischen 1933 und 1945," in: Andrea M. Kluxen (ed.), *Aesthetic Problems of Sculpture in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Nuremberg 2001), pp. 229–239; Arie Hartog, *Georg Kolbe. Receptie in Duitsland tussen 1920 en 1950*, PhD diss., Catholic University Nijmegen, 1989, unpublished, accessible in the archive of the GKM; *Taking Positions. Figurative Sculpture and the Third Reich*, exh. cat. Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin, Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen and Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (Bremen and Leeds 2001); Werner Stockfisch, *Ordnung gegen Chaos. Zum Menschenbild Georg Kolbes*, PhD diss., Humboldt University, Berlin, 1984, unpublished, accessible in the archive of the GKM.
- 15 Ottfried Dascher (ed.), *Sprung in den Raum. Skulpturen bei Alfred Flechtheim* [Quellenstudien zur Kunst, vol. 11] (Wädenswil 2017).
- 16 Emil Nolde – eine deutsche Legende. *Der Künstler im Nationalsozialismus*, Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin 2019 (accompanied by a comprehensive catalog); *Die Liste der "Gottbegnadeten." Künstler des Nationalsozialismus in der Bundesrepublik*, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin 2021 (accompanied by a catalog). Interactively, the complex research on art during the NS era has also repeatedly received important impulses from the results of individual research; see, for example: *Grauzonen. Nürnberger Künstler:innen im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Andrea Dippel, exh. cat. Kunstvilla, Nuremberg (Wien 2022); *vermacht. verfallen. verdrängt. Kunst und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Christian Fuhrmeister, Monika Hauser-Mair, and Felix Steffan, exh. cat. Städtische Galerie Rosenheim (Petersberg 2017). See also the anthology: Meike Hoffmann and Dieter Scholz (eds.), *Unbewältigt? Ästhetische Moderne und Nationalsozialismus: Kunst, Kunsthandel, Ausstellungspraxis* (Berlin 2020).
- 17 For reactions to the conference, see: Ronald Berg, "Kolbe, der Opportunist," in: *taz*, September 6, 2022; Julius Redzinski, "Form versus Kontext?" in: *Kunstchronik* 76, no. 1, 2023, pp. 5–12.
- 18 Aya Soika elaborates on this issue in her essay in this volume, pp. 82–114.
- 19 For more on the evening events, see the essay by Christian Fuhrmeister in this volume, pp. 152–161.

Precursors

Bernhard Maaz

Martial Sculpture of the Imperial Era: Georg Kolbe's Predecessors and Environment

A sculptor is dependent on potent clients and willing buyers if he does not want to overfill his studio with sketches, models, and realized works in a short period of time. For this reason, he—or, theoretically, she, the sculptress, who, however, will not be considered in the following—strives to satisfy the prevailing tastes and needs of the time. This influences the formal language and determines the attitude—and probably occasionally leads artists to compromise with regard to the formal language demanded or promoted by the clients and buyers. Thus, when there is talk of artistic forms in the following, they are to a large extent to be understood as an expression of social expectations, that is to say, of a political, philosophical, or ideological-historical context.¹

The official expectation of the German Emperor Wilhelm II, who had ascended the throne in 1888, was clear: he demanded that sculpture should represent, instruct, and illustrate.² Various “neo” styles existed in parallel and were associated with specific tasks. For example, neo-Baroque was used for state representation, neo-Gothic for state-conformist church buildings, and neo-Romanesque for patriotic national themes and motifs in the service of legitimacy. Under Wilhelm II, Germany left behind late Classicism with its realistic connotations in sculpture. Adolf von Hildebrand’s neo-Classicism became the language of the humanistic tradition and thus remained a relatively ideologically remote art of an elite, even when fountains and monuments were created under the sign of these sculptural views—at any rate, far from the Wilhelminian demonstration of power. Hildebrand and his school, however, shaped the image of sculpture only for small sections of the artist community and art experts. The most modern tendencies turned to Auguste Rodin, who was initially celebrated and collected more vehemently in Germany than in France. In addition, in the early twentieth century, the Secessions from Berlin to Munich cultivated a classically connoted style that interwove the serene and occasionally melancholically harmonious or elegiac human figure with an Impressionistically animated surface texture, thus bringing a sense of both calm and liveliness into subtle harmony, as exemplified by Georg Kolbe’s *Tänzerin* (Dancer, fig. 1), created in 1911/12. This may help to describe the major lines of development in sculpture immediately before and after 1900: the neo-Baroque representational tradition of Reinhold Begas, the neo-Classical idealistic tradition of Adolf von Hildebrand, the genial, anarchic tradition of Auguste Rodin, and the Secessionist harmonizing tradition of Georg Kolbe.

This essay is concerned with another line of tradition, namely that of martial, hard sculpture in the Wilhelminian period—that is to say, with Georg Kolbe’s predecessors and environment, as well as with that which continued into the twentieth century.

Aggressiveness and belligerence, severity, notions of dominance and authoritarianism, the will to fight, angularity and motifs of strength, war allegories and colonial claims, the colossal figure and gigantomania, self-promotion, the desire to win, and the certainty of victory culminate in a fundamental will to defend and a *dégoûtant* lust for defense: a disturbing glorification of conflict took hold in the late nineteenth century. The stylistic development of the decade and a half to two decades before the First World War—that is to say, the art of the generation that followed Adolf von Hildebrand—was described in



1 Georg Kolbe, *Tänzerin* (Dancer), 1911/12, bronze, h. 154 cm, historic photograph

1920 by the Berlin-based editor and art critic Willi Wolfradt as the “monumental style,”³ although this is only partially accurate, since this style, with its “pre-Expressionist hardening of form,”⁴ can be traced from the colossal format and architectural sculpture to the medal format. In the following, this phenomenon of the trend directed against realism, naturalism, and neo-Baroque, its often hard and angular forms of expression, and its scope of application will be examined. The period and region under consideration is the late Wilhelminian Period in Germany, in which there was an intense interest in Impressionism and Symbolism, and in which Expressionism, with the founding of the artists’ group *Die Brücke* in 1905, was also an innovative movement, but in which the “monumental style” played an important publicly present role as a “defensive style.”

The focus here is on Georg Kolbe. This is justified not only by the context of this essay, but also by the fact that his work reflects stylistic transformations connected with this development, and that the understanding of Kolbe’s late creations must be seen against the background of precisely these precursors, which go back several decades. It is well known that Kolbe derived decisive impulses from the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche;⁵ and the same can be assumed for many other sculptors and their clients and buyers. Kolbe was also enthusiastic about Ludwig Derleth from the circle around the poet Stefan

George, whom he portrayed in a bust with a hard physiognomy and a strong emphasis on a masculine strength of will,⁶ as well as about the late Romantic-mystical artists Arnold Böcklin and Max Klinger, who were celebrated as outstanding masters of their time: will, success, greatness, and strength were the guiding principles behind which the veneration of any outstanding power was concealed. The life models and ideals of the time centered on intellectual greatness, glory and heroism, power and strength, entitlement and assertiveness. Many of these models of thought reemerged and became even more radical after the Weimar Republic (and continued to guide conservative circles in the 1920s). Tracing the sculptural forms of expression that captured these values in images and thus kept them present and alive is the goal of this essay. The concept of “power” will run through it as a *basso continuo*.

Struggle for Power on the Part of the State

Within Germany, the former Prussian state had acquired a position of supremacy since the founding of the German Empire, which was also to be expressed in the erection of monuments. The National Kaiser Wilhelm Monument, which honored Wilhelm I, was erected opposite the Berlin City Palace. Reinhold Begas’s design (fig. 2) from the early 1890s was the one that “attracted the most public attention”⁷—and with its equestrian statue, allegories, larger-than-life lions, and the twelve “Heroes of the Franco-Prussian War,”⁸ it was a highly complex symbol of the imperial claim to power, the result of a multi-step process in which Wilhelm II took an interested part.⁹ In this genesis, as in many later projects, the architects were actively involved: on the one hand, Bruno Schmitz and on the other, the court architect Ernst von Ihne, but above all—the emperor himself.¹⁰ In 1897, the nearly one-meter-wide model was cast in bronze for Kaiser Wilhelm I. The original—a large-scale urban planning project that anticipated later colossal dimensions—was inaugurated in the same year, and the artist was decorated with medals.¹¹ As if the project were an anticipation of National Socialism, Adolf Rosenberg noted in 1897: it “seems that the Kaiser Wilhelm Monument will serve as the first element in a structural transformation of the heart of Alt-Berlin.”¹² Monument, cityscape, and urban redevelopment had thus already entered into a not-so-blissful alliance before 1900, though not yet as ill-fated as would later be the case. The sculpture—in conjunction with the architecture—served to formulate a national claim to power that was interwoven with urban redevelopment aspirations (fig. 3). This national monument became an expression of the fundamental antagonisms of the late nineteenth century, such as those between power and spirit, between nation and Europe. The orientalist and cultural philosopher Paul de Lagarde, born with the surname Bötticher, who had died shortly before, had developed the idea of a national church in Germany, the idea of a Germania that would encompass the German-speaking countries—similar ideas are known, for example, from Ludwig I of Bavaria—and that would be governed under Prussian hegemony.¹³ The author became a reference figure for the National Socialists.



2 Reinhold Begas, model of the national monument to Emperor Wilhelm I, 1894/97, bronze, h. 37.9 cm, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe



3 Reinhold Begas, national monument to Emperor Wilhelm I, 1895–97, stone, bronze, historical photograph



4 The Siegesallee in Berlin, ca. 1900, colored historical photograph



5 Reinhold Begas, *Merkur entführt Psyche* (Mercury and Psyche), 1870/74, marble, h. 205 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Another parallel may seem cynical, referring to the Berlin sculpture of the Begas School on the one hand and to the Boer Wars on the other. In 1904, Victor Laverrenz published *Die Denkmäler Berlins und der Volkswitz. Humoristisch-satirische Betrachtungen* (The Monuments of Berlin and Popular Wit. Humorous-Satirical Reflections), in which he wrote: “The Siegesallee [fig. 4] is, to use a modern catchphrase, a ‘concentration camp of Märkische sovereigns.’ Like those English camps of the same designation in South Africa during the Boer War, it is surrounded by barbed wire fences and is well guarded; here by Berlin policemen.”¹⁴ (We will return to the fatal term “concentration camp” later.) Sarcas- tically, the author goes on to fabricate that there had been a visit by the Italian king, who, in view of the Berlin sculptures, had stated that “one notices that Germany has become an industrial state,”¹⁵ i.e., that a serial production of sculpture had emerged.

All this took place around 1900, when people were already looking back at earlier times:

“And yet it had been so different in the past, when Begas still found time for elated Mercuries [fig. 5], trembling Psyches, and gallant Centaurs. As Cronos de- voured his sons, so then the Berlin master also consumed the band of his pupils, who had already become mature artists through him, again as his creations for himself, by using them to cope with the masses of monument commissions.”¹⁶

In this way, the master had gained a sense of power over the minds of the next genera- tion. And Wilhelminian centralism gave him a power of aesthetic influence that manifested itself in hieratic subjects such as Otto Lessing’s Roland fountain in Berlin, which, though it goes beyond Begas’s playful suppleness, insistently articulates the notion of national identification.

Promethean Heroes

Since the end of the eighteenth century, Prometheus, capable of resistance and suffering, had become, as is well known, the symbol and epitome of rebellious artistry, but then also, in a broader sense, of resistance to tutelage, restriction, authority, power, and superiority. The Prometheus of German intellectual history is a countervailing force. He embodies the power that resists and withdraws from experiences of powerlessness. Worthy of brief mention here is Georg Kolbe’s *Prometheus* of 1901, a figure hardened by suffering, also known under the title *Gefesselter* (Bound Man), which, documented by a photograph, likewise belongs in this context.¹⁷

Promethean heroes are the subcutaneous forerunners of a heroism that remains un- compromising and is no longer legitimized by myth. Three examples may be cited, includ- ing Eduard Müller’s *Prometheus, beklagt von den Okeaniden* (Prometheus Bound and the Oceanids, fig. 6) from 1868–79, one of the largest sculptures in the Nationalgalerie in Berlin.¹⁸ This work, as well as its prominent position in the museum, is part of the tradi- tion of furnishing cultural and educational institutions, in which the suffering and rebellious



6 Eduard Müller, *Prometheus, beklagt von den Okeaniden* (Prometheus Bound and the Oceanids), 1868–79, marble, h. 302 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz



7 Hermann Prell, *Prometheus*, 1899 (cast probably 1900), bronze, h. 60 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

habitus of the mythological hero became a cipher for the hard-won artistic existence, for the struggle against authority, and for the necessary willingness to suffer: Prometheus, who had rebelled against Zeus and brought fire to humanity, was understood as the rebel who would ultimately be vindicated, in other words, as a forbearing hero. The sculptor had even originally planned a counterpart depicting Prometheus's liberation, which would have further emphasized the hero's victory.

Müller's colossal sculptural group was also reproduced in small-scale copies that could be purchased in plaster and bronze. Hermann Prell's statuette *Prometheus* (fig. 7) from 1899/1900 is also directly related to an architectural sculpture: the staircase of the Altes Museum contained statues and murals executed by Prell, including a large-scale version of Prometheus.¹⁹ The motif recalls Renaissance motifs of David triumphing over Goliath and the Michelangelesque language of forms, i.e., references that were easily recognizable, even familiar, to the educated bourgeoisie. This made Prell's statuette of Prometheus socially acceptable and acceptable to the majority. We will not address the many different ways in which the subject was taken up by sculptors, but that there was a clear tendency to monumentalize the ancient hero is illustrated by Joseph von Kopf in his *Lebenserinnerungen* (Memoirs), in which he refers to a note from 1862: "Yesterday, I began to model my larger-than-life Prometheus in clay. He is already hanging on his rock."²⁰ Unfortunately, the clay model

then fell down, so one could be forgiven for thinking, with a certain amount of sarcasm, that the hero had been transformed into an Icarus. This was not the plan, however, but rather an irony of fate. The number of sculptures dealing with the figure of the suffering creator is large. On the façade of the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK, formerly HdK) is Emil Hundrieser's Prometheus group²¹—an appellative sign of creative nonconformity. A little later is Reinhold Begas's *Der gefesselte Prometheus* (Prometheus Bound, fig. 8), a figure originally conceived as a sculpture in the round, which depicts the athletic hero in chains, martially bound to the wall, harassed by the eagle, which gorges itself daily on his liver and, like a vulture, stares at the hero, who is unwilling to die. Begas focuses the gaze on the deed of the indomitable hero, who, though depicted as bound, defiantly rebels. Comparable attitudes will be discussed in the context of Max Klinger's *Beethoven*. Who was this Prometheus for the people of 1900? Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain) may provide an answer: Prometheus “was guilty of hubris—and his torture on the Scythian cliffs was, from our point of view, a holy martyrdom.”²² Martyrdom or hubris—this raised the question of triumphant power in the supposed impotence of martyrdom versus that of hubris, a theme that has always been central to the figure of the artist.



8 Reinhold Begas, *Der gefesselte Prometheus* (Prometheus Bound), 1900, marble, h. 380 cm, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Art Collection

It is noteworthy that Begas exhibited a version of his *Prometheus* at the *Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (German Art Exhibition) in Dresden in 1899, next to *Raub der Sabinerinnen* (Rape of the Sabines), a scene of violence, and the sculptural group *Kain und Abel* (Cain and Abel), the first biblical scene of violence par excellence:²³ heroes, struggle, rivalry, murder, and manslaughter everywhere. Whether Begas's group of *Prometheus, von zwei Männern gefesselt* (Prometheus, Bound by Two Men), which verifiably existed already in 1898,²⁴ was conceived as a counter-image to Eduard Müller's work in the Nationalgalerie must remain an open question: this forbearing fighter and heroic spirit remained for decades a key figure in the negotiation of force and power in sculpture. Begas's *Prometheus*, however, his last autonomous and large-scale sculpture, remained in the estate and then, through an unknown owner, found its way to the Berlin Academy of Arts via Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler's favorite architect, in 1941, thus proving its effortless adaptability to the National Socialist aesthetic.

Antique Heroism

In his *Deutsche Geschichte* (German History), first published in 1958, Golo Mann describes the time of Kaiser Wilhelm II, a politically inexperienced, and at times downright simple, regent, as follows: “One had to offer the people something inspiring, [...] fight against someone, have a victory over something.”²⁵ Politics was and became a system of competition, society became a battlefield, and thus representations of struggle, strength, and victory became a central topos in sculpture—often presented in public. The omnipresence of wrestling—that is to say, of a culture of competition and the question of victory and inferiority—had long been in the making. Initially, however, it was not the expression of sheer power that prevailed, but rather the expression of superiority of thought, of superior thinking.

Ernst Herter's *Ruhender Alexander* (Resting Alexander, fig. 9) from 1875 depicts the military commander who demanded of himself that he remain alert and vigilant at all times.²⁶ In case he falls asleep while reading or thinking, he holds a bullet in his left hand, which—should sleep overtake him—would fall out of his hand into the shield and wake him up immediately: intellectual vigilance thus concealed the vigilance of the commander, who strove to secure his superiority through iron discipline, who sought to unite thought and strength in his conduct of life, and who could thus be elevated to a kind of ethical role model. In the statue *La jeunesse d'Aristote* (The Youth of Aristotle),²⁷ which was created almost at the same time, the French sculptor Charles Jean Marie Degeorge used the motif of a young man with a ball in his hand, meant to keep him awake, entirely in the context of a philosopher. This marble statue had been acquired for the national museums in Paris in 1875; it is not known whether Herter knew of this work.

In 1886, Herter completed his *Sterbender Achilles* (Dying Achilles, fig. 10). According to mythology, Achilles had been wounded by Paris by means of an arrow in the only vulnerable spot on his body, the (Achilles) heel. Herter created his life-size figure of the sufferer with reference to the ancient *Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museum in Rome. Still entirely in the tradition of classicism, Herter's dying man appears serene. Significantly, the statue was part of the holdings of the Nationalgalerie, was lost in the twentieth century, and is now in Poland.²⁸ A second version was commissioned by Empress Elisabeth of Austria and placed in the Achilleion on the island of Corfu, which clearly reveals its proximity to political power. It is also known that Wilhelm II visited the artist, who was loyal to the emperor and was a German citizen, in his studio.²⁹ As far as the subject is concerned, a possible model can also be identified here, namely Jean-Baptiste Giraud's *Achille mourant* (Dying Achilles, fig. 11) from 1789: there, too, one encounters an athletic or downright steeled hero pulling the arrow out of his heel with his left hand. In the same year, 1789, the sculptor became a full member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris—“on the basis of a marble statuette of the dying Achilles now in the Mus[eum]. in Aix.”³⁰ Created during the time of the French Revolution, this figure embodies the radical human will to fight, but at the same time also the superiority of the gods over mankind—and thus the danger of the fighter.

9 Ernst Herter, *Ruhender Alexander* (Resting Alexander), 1875 (cast 1878), bronze, h. 75 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz



10 Ernst Herter, *Sterbender Achilles* (Dying Achilles), 1886, Tyrolean marble, h. 160 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (lost in the war, today Elbląg/Poland), historical photograph



11 Jean-Baptiste Giraud, *Dying Achilles*, 1789, marble statuette, h. 55 cm, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence





12 Hermann Hahn, *Schlangenwürger* (Serpent Slayer), 1890/91, bronze, life-size, Müller'sches Volksbad, Munich

13 John Leighton, *Athlete Wrestling with a Python*, 1877, bronze, h. 1746 cm, Tate, London



14 Auguste Henri Modeste Pontier, *Ixion, King of Lapithes*, 1877, plaster, h. 11.3 cm, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, acquired in 1877 as a gift from the artist

Hercules

The themes of struggle for survival and self-assertion are leitmotifs in late nineteenth-century sculpture; think of the figure of Siegfried, which was taken up by Rudolf Maison, Heinrich Wedemeyer,³¹ Peter Breuer, Ludwig Habich, Hermann Hahn, and Franz Metzner, as well as of the Valkyrie or—legitimized by antiquity—of the numerous Amazons. Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer stood in the background as philosophical godfathers; Richard Wagner with his pathos no less. Reflections on the role of struggle and of men led to numerous militant figures, to formulas of strength and superiority. The Nibelungen were, as the Swiss sculptor Carl Burckhardt put it in 1904, “the truly Germanic, which, despite and in contrast to the Odyssey, confronts us as a second, equally significant power.”³² For him, as for his contemporaries in general, the focus was on fate and the question of life and death, and danger was an obligatory part of the myth: “In the Nibelungen, however, the heroes are giants cast down from the heavens, dragging even a

god like Siegfried down with them to their doom.”³³ Heroism and downfall—this was to be an uncanny topos of the first half of the twentieth century.

The figure of Hercules, the strong and defensible son of Zeus, was often used as a symbol of power, especially in the Baroque era. He was the epitome of invincibility. The motif of the serpent slayer, which is also interwoven with his myth, took on a life of its own in Hermann Hahn’s *Schlangenwürger* (Serpent Slayer, fig. 12)³⁴ from 1890/91, a free adaptation of the theme of Hercules fighting the Lernaean Hydra. The bronze based on the existing model was initiated and financed by a foundry owner, undoubtedly as an advertising gesture for his company. The motif embodies in a timeless way man’s struggle with nature, with evil, with fate. It is, however, not about Hercules, but about man himself, about a man struggling. And this had at least one essential precursor, for John Leighton’s *Athlete Wrestling with a Python* (fig. 13) from 1877 combined the motif of a standing man entangled by a snake, depicted the struggle against the forces of nature, and combined a hard face with a steeled body.³⁵ It is difficult to imagine that Hahn was unaware of this work, which offers a non-mythological man-animal battle group of the utmost intensity. It is interesting to note that a recent essay on the tradition of municipal baths does not discuss this atypical element of the Müller’sches Volksbad in Munich and its athletic dimension,³⁶ but this can be explained by the existence of another study.³⁷

It is noteworthy that, in the same year, namely 1877, a battle motif depicting a man wrestling was also created in France, namely Auguste Henri Modeste Pontier’s *Ixion, roi des Lapithes* (Ixion, King of the Lapiths, fig. 14), the plaster model of which is in the museum of Aix-en-Provence and whose creator became not only a curator at the museum but also the director of the drawing school there. *Ixion* is one of the few verifiable works by the artist;³⁸ it depicts the hero bound to the wheel as punishment for refusing to pay the promised bride price. Thus, it is not about a winner or even a potential winner, but rather a clear loser. The snakes are not actually necessary here, even in terms of the motif. But on another level, the sculptor is referring to a motif with snakes, namely the famous Laocoön group. And this applies to him as well as to the other Herculean subjects discussed here.

Titanic Battles

Wilhelminian Germany produced numerous heroes and male figures with strained bodies, some of which were more widely disseminated. Among them were Franz von Stuck’s *Amazonen* of 1897 and his *Athlet* of 1892 (fig. 15), works that replaced neo-Baroque traditions with strong stylization. Adolf von Hildebrand had long since moved away from the painterly turbulence of the neo-Baroque to greater formal rigor in both theory and practice. With his Symbolist tendencies, Franz von Stuck, the “artist prince” with imperial charisma, was inclined to exaltation. His *Athlet* is a world-bearing Atlas, a powerful Hercules, and—credibly, especially in view of the numerous photographs of Stuck—a stylized self-portrait or at least a self-image of the draftsman, successful painter, villa owner, and professor who saw himself as a titan. It has long been commented that this athlete is stylized “into an indirect

allegory of his own person,”³⁹ but also that he is meant to represent the embodiment of all masculine strength. The counter-image remained the Amazon, the motif of the female warrior. Thus, such a world of motifs is subject not only to the dimension of the titanic battle, but also to that of the battle of the sexes, which will be touched upon later.

Wilhelm Lehmbruck's *Steinwlzer mit Hose* (Man with Trousers Rolling a Stone, fig. 16) from around 1904/05, known not only under this descriptive title but also under the allegorical *Die Arbeit* (Work), could be understood as a titan of everyday life, in terms of the motif in the tradition of the Belgian artist Constantin Meunier.⁴⁰ A man braces himself against an overweight stone and is doomed to failure by human standards. However, it is not about work processes as in Gustave Courbet's *Stone Breakers*, but rather about the embodiment of strength, which can already be seen from the fact that preparatory sketches were given titles such as *Tatkraft* (Vigor) or *Siegfried*.⁴¹ The title *Steinroller* (Stone Roller) was also used, and references to Sisyphus were made.⁴² Thus, for the artist, the anatomical mastery of the muscular hero is initially in the foreground, flanked by the Symbolistic polyvalence of the motif, which can be embedded in the most diverse interpretive contexts. Is this Titan an artistic five-finger exercise in preparation for the treatment of ancient or Wagnerian myths? A probable answer can be found in the contemporaneous debates about a “monument to labor,” which was intended to combine the abstract concept of work with representations of trades and professions, and which, in turn, must certainly be seen in the context of the discussions of the “social question” at the time, i.e., ultimately as a public recognition of the proletariat and the peasantry, which was intended to serve to secure social peace and thus had a calming character.

The numerous titanic figures of the years around and after 1900 can be traced back to other important roots, namely to the thought and influence of Friedrich Nietzsche and his skepticism. “It is the age of the masses: they lie on their belly before everything that is massive. And so also in *politicis*. A statesman who rears up for them a new Tower of Babel, some monstrosity of empire and power, they call ‘great.’”⁴³ Monuments to labor: Were these not also something like Babylonian—and thus ideally and intentionally all-encompassing—constructs, expressions of a purported communality with simultaneous hubris? And is the statesman who promises something not to be found in Wilhelm II, just as later in Hitler's initially dazzling politics of promises? Nietzsche's thinking revolved around the power or powerlessness of the form of government, that is to say, around power and force, as well as around the role of heroes within society. In 1882, he wrote to Heinrich von Stein: “About ‘the hero’: [...] it is the most acceptable form of existence.”⁴⁴

It is precisely this glorification of the hero, of fighters and Titans, that proves to be expansive, to determine society, to be omnipresent. Martial thinking was able to creep into even the most poetic corners, as shown by the fountain created by Josef Heu in 1903 for the Stadtpark in Vienna (fig. 17), located on the Wienfluss promenade: two muscular, overstated men, their joints martially bent, hunched over, lift an enormous stone—similar to Lehmbruck's sculpture—and thus, according to legend, cause the spring below to bubble. The man—as a synonym for “humanity”—subjugates nature and makes life possible in the first place. It should be noted that this fountain was created in Rome as the first work of



15 Franz von Stuck, *Athlet* (Athlete), 1892, bronze, h. 66 cm, Kunsthalle Bremen



16 Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Steinwlzer mit Hose* (*Die Arbeit*) (Man with Trousers Rolling a Stone [Work]), ca. 1904/05, hard plaster cast with lacquer coating, h. 18.5 cm, Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg

17 Josef Heu, fountain on the Wienfluss promenade (*Die Befreiung der Quelle* [Freeing of the Source]), 1903, Leitha limestone, larger than life, Vienna



Josef Heu, who thus broke away from his role as a student of Caspar von Zumbusch. It is also titled *Titanen wlzen einen Fels, der die Quelle geschlossen hat, fort* (Titans Roll Away a Boulder That Has Closed the Fountain):⁴⁵ power and charitable service intertwine synonymously, as it were. This formal language and way of thinking were to earn Josef Heu further important commissions, such as the architectural sculpture for the Haus der Kaufmannschaft (House of Merchants) on Schwarzenbergplatz in Vienna in 1903, in which the “power of trade on land” is symbolized by Atlas and Mercury and the “power of trade at sea” by Triton and Nereids.⁴⁶

Modern Heroes—Wrestlers

The body language is revealing: broad shoulders, stiffly outstretched arms, hands ready to grab or grasp, springy standing posture, well-formed or even “steeled” musculature, a



18 Reinhold Begas, *Ringer (Athlet)* (Wrestler [Athlete]), 1888, bronze, h. 65.5 cm, LETTER Stiftung, Cologne



19 Adolf von Hildebrand, *Stehender junger Mann* (Standing Young Man), 1881–84, marble, h. 183 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

powerful neck, and—*horribile dictu*—a sexual organ reduced to inconspicuousness, the inferiority of which is obviously meant to signal that this is not about eros and eroticism, but rather about strength, presence, physicality, corporeality; Reinhold Begas's warrior, titled *Ringer* (Wrestler) or *Athlet* (fig. 18), from 1888 thus towers above a pedestal with reliefs. He has “assumed the pose of the concentrated wrestler, about to stride into battle, who will soon measure himself against his opponent, as the relief scene on the front of the pedestal depicts,”⁴⁷ while the sides are decorated with victor's wreaths, thus presupposing superiority per se. Contemporaries already noted that Begas did not repeat the concrete forms of an individual human being.⁴⁸ And indeed, it is probably above all else a matter of body language. However, if one compares the expression with the other style-defining *Stehender Mann* (Standing Man), that of Adolf von Hildebrand (fig. 19) from 1881–84, it is unmistakable that the latter is oriented toward grounded worldliness and serene inwardness, whereas the hero created by Begas is oriented toward confrontation and a test of strength. Begas, the emperor's favorite sculptor, struck the tone of the powerful of his time. Hildebrand, on the other hand, prepared the attitude of modern sculpture; about his *Stehender Mann* he wrote in a letter to his friend, the art theorist Conrad Fiedler that



20 Reinhold Begas, *Ringer* (Wrestlers), ca. 1900, plaster, h. 47 cm, private collection



21 Matthias Gasteiger, *Ringergruppe* (Herakle und Antäos) (Wrestlers [Hercules and Antaeus]), 1893/1901, stone, larger than life; former gymnastics playground on Schyrenplatz, Munich, today, Sachsenstrasse 2, Munich

this figure (mind you, he does not write “this man”) “wants nothing at all, does nothing, and has, I believe, the charm of mere existence.”⁴⁹ In this way, he restored the language of sculpture and focused attention entirely on the expressive content of body language.

The wrestlers, which were widely used as a motif, ran through the work of Reinhold Begas via August Hudler to Wilhelm Haverkamp.⁵⁰ They legitimized the depiction of the male nude—but pure sports, such as the game of bowls,⁵¹ would have done the same: they thus carried a different impulse, perhaps even unconsciously. Wrestling, on the other hand, is obviously competitive; since antiquity, it has had a warlike, military “training” quality. And the fact that we are dealing with a combative zeitgeist becomes undeniable at the latest when one hears that Begas acted as a referee at wrestling matches and donated wrestling statuettes as trophies.⁵²

In Hugo Lederer’s lost *Ringkämpfer Peruse* (The Wrestler Peruse) from 1899, the inequality of the fighters with the simultaneous absence of the second figure is further emphasized by the expressions of disapproval, contempt, and disdain.⁵³ The cult of heroes typical of the period, which can be associated with Ludwig van Beethoven, Wagner, and Nietzsche in equal measure, continued with Reinhold Begas’s group of two *Ringer*

(Wrestlers) in action (fig. 20), a subject executed in plaster, bronze, and marble: the work in marble was auctioned from the artist's estate and has been lost since 1940.⁵⁴ Everything testifies to "fighting forms"—to anticipate the title of Franz Marc's painting—to turbulence and a mutual struggle, to shimmering light on entangled limbs.

While Begas's group dates from around 1900, the Munich-based Matthias Gasteiger completed his *Ringergruppe* (Group of Wrestlers, fig. 21) in the following year, 1901. Since it is also known as *Herakles und Antäos* (Heracles and Antaeus),⁵⁵ ancient mythology still peeks out here from the garb of the naked test of strength. Gasteiger not only created this work of rival figures, but also, for example, the monumental sculptural group *Herkules mit Hydra* (Hercules with Hydra), which, in crass exaggeration, depicts the athletic body in almost berserk violence, but is dated around 1921. Nevertheless, his "tendency to exaggerate the form of monumental figures [...] has been recognizable since 1900."⁵⁶ The fact that the group of wrestlers was installed at the Munich gymnastics playground reveals the concept behind it: the municipal school sports grounds were thus emblematically elevated to a place of preparation for combative wrestling, for any test of strength.

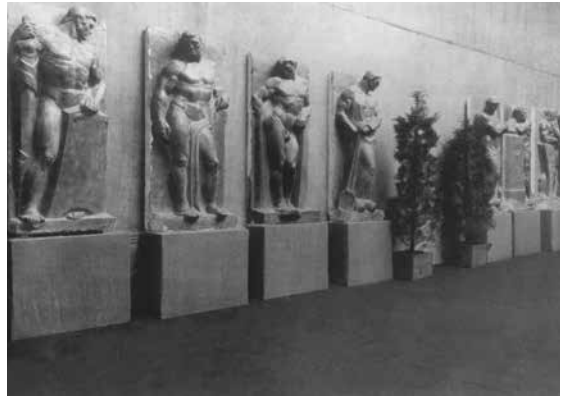
State Fighters

Emil Schaudt designed the architectural parts, Hugo Lederer the figurative elements for the Hamburg Bismarck Monument of 1906 (fig. 22): the Iron Chancellor as Roland, as a guardian, equipped with the gigantic sword, carved in granite—Germany could not show itself more capable of defense. Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Empire, social reformer, dismissed by Wilhelm II and therefore all the more appreciated by many, lived on his estates near Hamburg and was stylized as the antipode and victim of the ruler, maneuvered politically for several more years. Golo Mann sketches his last years: "In his last days, Bismarck became a demagogue, almost a democrat. It was necessary, he said again and again, to strengthen the constitution."⁵⁷ That Bismarck monuments soon became legion and served a national self-definition is obvious. As hard, hieratic works, they presented a human image of patriotic unity, honoring the lone warrior as the bearer of glory. And the echoes of the "Iron Chancellor" were to reverberate well into the twentieth century.

In Hugo Lederer, on the other hand, lived, as the art historian Alfred Kuhn noted in 1921, "the love of the gigantic form. He can hardly tame these monstrous bodies [...]. They writhe with their powerful thighs, their muscles are tensed to bursting, their breasts swell. The horses grind their teeth, they can hardly be held. Everything is gigantic, all the passions seem gathered here and forced into shape. But it is hollow."⁵⁸ Kuhn's lucid analysis is astonishing because it is valid both backwards and forwards, i.e., also in the continuation of pathos formulas in the 1930s. Already in the year of the monument's unveiling, the perceptive essayist Alfred Kerr had commented on it with ambivalent enthusiasm and reservation, because it was undeniably "immense, mythical, and unforgettable."⁵⁹ And the forcefulness already began with the fact that the reliefs, at almost two meters high, served the slightly colossally exaggerated scale even in the model (fig. 23), lined up in the *Große*



22 Emil Schaudt (architecture), Hugo Lederer (sculpture), Bismarck monument, 1906, Hamburg, historical photograph



23 Hugo Lederer, pedestal reliefs for the Bismarck monument in Hamburg, 1906, plaster, h. ca. 190 cm, exhibition view from the *Große Berliner Kunstausstellung*, 1907, historical photograph

Berliner Kunstausstellung (Great Berlin Art Exhibition) of 1907 like industrious warriors:⁶⁰ martial, defensive, fearsome in their exaggerated athleticism. Even small trees cannot be reconciled here.

Hugo Lederer and Franz Metzner were active around 1900 in the “period of the style seekers,”⁶¹ as this time of pre-Expressionist hardening of form, of martial masculinity, of “constrained humans”⁶² was once called, in a time of “megalomaniacal stylizers”⁶³ and cyclopean figurations that stood in sharp contrast to the late neo-Baroque and no longer served the cult of the emperor, but rather a new image of Germany or democracy, as the example of the veneration of Bismarck shows.

But the difference, or even the discrepancy, between claim and reality could no longer be concealed. Germany was in a crisis, and sculpture showed it. Metzner possessed “only the longing for power, not power itself,” as Kuhn noted in 1921.⁶⁴ Again, one senses the reproach of hollowness, and to this day the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* (Monument to the Battle of the Nations, fig. 24) remains problematic in this ambivalence of patriotic pathos and national emptiness, of a monument to the dead and a place of consecration, of the darkening and hardening of form, of crypt and temple. Kuhn’s 1921 comment seems visionary: “There is no doubt that there is a primordial humanity in these images; these giants are brooding on self-indulgent dreams.”⁶⁵ It was precisely this self-indulgence, so astutely perceived, that led into the second third of the century. And there is much to be said about the colossal projects of the first third of the century, which is echoed here as a quotation: Metzner was a sculptor “whom the megalomania of Wilhelminian Germany drove into



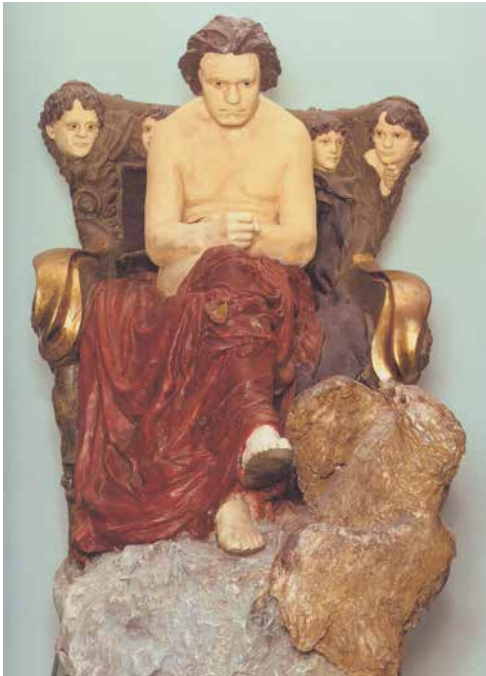
24 Franz Metzner, monument to the Battle of the Nations, Leipzig, statue *Willingness to Sacrifice*, ca. 1906, granite, larger than life, historical photograph

the cyclopean.”⁶⁶ Here, as with later artists, it goes without saying that the sculptors were not driven into a formal language by an epoch, but rather—as a historian, one must take into account the reciprocal nature of the impulses—that they, for their part, participated in the aesthetic shaping of the respective ideas and ideologies.

Ideal Heroes—Spiritual Fighters

It would be a further criminal oversimplification to think that the willingness to fight around 1900 was concentrated only on motifs such as athletes and statesmen. Rather, it is obvious that the themes of power, the martial, and the claim to dominance can also be found in the field of those subjects with which thinkers, literary figures, and artists were to be memorialized: the discourse of power conquered the mind. Monument and claim were intertwined, not infrequently under the sign of hypertrophic genius and absolutized creative power.

Spirit and fighting—are they not causally contradictory? Max Klinger’s colored plaster model (fig. 25) for his *Beethoven* in Leipzig, his search for a polyolithically valid version, demonstrated as early as 1885 how he intended to combine the Beethoven veneration of his time with a modern aesthetic and a gigantic pathos.⁶⁷ The composer thus became the projection surface of rebellious creativity, the solitary Olympian of earthly descent, the fighter for his music, lonely in the isolation of physical deafness and surrounded, as it were, by the inner voices of angelic faces. A few years earlier, the twenty-eight-year-old



25 Max Klinger, model for the Beethoven monument in Leipzig, 1885/86, plaster, painted, h. 131 cm, Beethoven House, Bonn



26 Max Klinger, Beethoven monument in the artist's studio (today in the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig), 1902, historical photograph

Klinger had met Johannes Brahms, just such a giant of music, and on his own initiative had created with *Beethoven* an “example of the quasi-religious veneration of a genius,”⁶⁸ a pathos formula of the tragic and lonely genius, a quasi-Promethean glorification of an artist-god, which naturally demanded a separate, almost sacral presentation from the very beginning. The fact that Ludwig van Beethoven here and in the subsequent polyolithic execution (fig. 26)⁶⁹ became a symbol of the individualization that has increasingly determined society since the Enlightenment makes him a Promethean-heroic lone fighter. Adolph Menzel slandered this work: “The most beautiful part of it is only seen by the sun, namely the back.”⁷⁰ Or, one might ask even more ironically, do only the gods see it? Only Zeus! They or he, after all, seem to have sent the eagle that perches next to the genius, peering and ogling, if that is what an eagle is capable of doing: as if it had the mission of creating a constant state of suffering and thus emphasizing Beethoven’s fighting spirit.

At this point, one could easily add Klinger’s somber bust of Nietzsche, created in 1904, which is in the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar and which, with its sinister gaze, aptly captures the genial loneliness, the suffering isolation, the distant and misanthropic thinking that prevailed around the more or less “mentally deranged” philosopher.⁷¹ The bust is not a portrait, but rather a symbol, an allegory of the absolute. And the veneration of the thinker was probably just as absolute. Here, however, hero worship slipped into a fatal direction, into that of the domineering man. And Hermann Hahn’s monument to Franz Liszt



27 Hermann Hahn, Franz Liszt monument, 1902, Lasa marble, h. 250 cm, Park an der Ilm, Weimar



28 Ö. Fülöp Beck, plaque commemorating the hundreth birthday of Franz Liszt, 1911, bronze, h. 6.3 cm, Klassik Stiftung Weimar

from 1902 (fig. 27), also a work of the intellectual world of Weimar in the late nineteenth century, hardly has a different effect: the symbol of a martial spiritual fighter who, as a lonely person looking far away, thinks he draws his inspiration from the infinite nature of the cosmos, and seems to be listening to an inner voice. Cosima Wagner told the writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain laconically and overplaying the abysses: “The monument is beautiful, very simple, without symbolism.”⁷² This assumption must seem wrong to us. In fact, the statue has a kind of hidden symbolism: the gaze is not directed at the beholder, but rather at the intangible, quasi-divine sources of creativity in the composer’s infinite range of vision. At this point, a few biographical details about Hermann Hahn: He developed his art from the late realism of Wilhelm von Rümman through the neo-Classicism of Adolf von Hildebrand to a modernist who, like Ernst Barlach, Georg Kolbe, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, and Franz Metzner, was admitted to the Prussian Academy of Arts in 1919. In 1937, he was dismissed from his posts because of his age, and his chair went to Ludwig Thorak.⁷³ The fact that Hahn had been an advisor to the Bavarian State Advisory Office for War Graves since 1916 and that he carried out numerous such commissions from 1919 onwards should neither be ignored nor overrated, but nevertheless shows the continuities in biographical detail.

Franz Liszt remains an exemplary case: the plaque by Ö. Fülöp Beck, created on the occasion of Liszt's hundredth birthday (1911, fig. 28), seems more like an homage to Stefan George—hard in outline, imperious in expression: as if images of spiritual fighters, heroes of thought or invention, were needed. And Ernst Freese's portrait bust of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (fig. 29) from 1908 seems no different: an exaggeration of the Weimar poet's physicality and presence, a martial pathos formula that presents Goethe not as a lyrical poet and ethereal aesthete, but rather as a defiant and Olympian heroic character. This marble head was commissioned by the Senckenberg Naturalist Society and stands in the stairwell of its main building in Frankfurt am Main: Goethe is stylized here in an almost disturbing way as an obsessive spiritual fighter.



29 Ernst Freese, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, 1908, marble, life-size, staircase, main building, Senckenberg Society, Frankfurt am Main

The Will to Fight

A thinker, a poet, an artist, or a composer does not want to actually fight; that is left to athletes, sportsmen, or even warriors. The multitude of archers, discus throwers, and ballplayers who populated the salons of the late nineteenth century⁷⁴ can be disregarded here by concentrating on the body language of the sports depictions and bypassing the traditional sporting attributes. What does Max Klinger's *Athlet* (fig. 30) from 1898 say with his compact body, the apparently relaxed yet dismissive posture of hands and arms folded behind the head, and the almost Impressionistic shimmering surface texture? Klinger called the statuette a study and had it cast in five bronze copies, one of which, for example, ended up in the possession of the wealthy Jewish Viennese family Wittgenstein.⁷⁵ all of this elevates the alleged study to a work to be considered final.

The model for the male nude was a professional athlete who went by the pseudonym Rasso and whose steeled body had provoked the greatest hymns of enthusiasm. Klinger modeled him “far beyond life size.”⁷⁶ Why? Was the “body hero” so impressive, engaging, compelling? There were other male models of this kind, such as Eugen Sandow and Lionel Strongfort—a pseudonym for the athlete?—some of whom were extremely well paid for their services.⁷⁷ Here, weightlifting and the cult of the body come together.



30 Max Klinger, *Athlet* (Athlete), 1898, bronze, h. 69 cm, Lindenau-Museum Altenburg

Athletes were *en vogue*. Were they politically connoted, was their popularity due to the naturism and reform movements of those years? They deserve a highly differentiated view and careful consideration, as Sascha Schneider demonstrates with his *Siegerknabe* (Boy Victor, fig. 31) from 1911. Schneider was a professor in Weimar, a monumental and mural painter who, like Max Klinger, Ernst Moritz Geyger, and others, oscillated between color and form, painting and sculpture, who could be described as conservative to reactionary in spirit, and who wrote texts such as “Kriegsgestalten und Todesgestalten” (Figures of War and Figures of Death), published in Leipzig in 1915.⁷⁸ This reflects a tendency. The *Siegerknabe*, created before the First World War, has the attitude of departure already known from Begas, but thanks to the title and the award of the golden headband, it evokes the battle already won: superiority is the concept here. From the concentrated posture comes tension and self-confidence, presence and pride, the certainty of victory. The *Gürtelbinder* (Boy Buckling His Belt, fig. 32) from 1913 is hardly any different, with similarly broad shoulders and a comparably athletic body as he fiddles with his accessory, his figure literally spread out on the surface, blocking the way and the view, and is virtually a counter-image to the figures that Julia Wallner once so aptly described as “sensitive men,” questioning them under the aspects of weakness, war, and asceticism.⁷⁹ Schneider’s *Gürtelbinder* is not a sensitive man, but rather a teenager arming himself, and it is precisely these models that will be further explored here.



31 Sascha Schneider, *Siegerknabe* (Boy Victor), 1911, copper, hollow galvano, patinated, gilded headband, 185.5 × 57 × 51 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Skulpturensammlung from 1800/Albertinum



32 Sascha Schneider, *Gürtelbinder* (Boy Buckling His Belt), 1913, hollow galvano, 85.3 × 37.5 × 20 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Skulpturensammlung from 1800/Albertinum

Berserker

It seems that many images of men have been characterized by militancy and athleticism. But there are also emotional outbursts that had never been seen before in such expressiveness. Ernst Barlach's *Berserker* (fig. 33)⁸⁰ from 1910 is a frenzied, uninhibited, distressed man. In the age of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, rage and despair, frenzy and destruction—uncontrolled, mind you—had become an impossibility as representations. A man had to prove his strength and composure. With Barlach's motif, however, the dynamics of body language gain an unprecedented vitality. As closed as the form appears, the language of the body is energetically eruptive and yet seems to be confined and held together by the cloak-like garment. The lunge and gesture of the figure wrestle with the cloak: emotion and reason are in competition.

These radical transgressions of classical statuary can be traced further. Ludwig Habich created a bronze *Berserker* in 1921, which was acquired by the artists' colony in Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt. Only a year later, Georg Kolbe followed up with his smaller-than-life figure *Zorn (Flamme)* (Wrath [Flame], fig. 34), a now vertically erect rather than horizontally extended symbol of passionate release and dangerous, even destructive emotional



33 Ernst Barlach, *Berserker*, 1910, bronze, h. 55 cm, Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg



34 Georg Kolbe, *Zorn (Flamme)* (*Wrath [Flame]*), 1922, oak, h. 166 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

outbursts.⁸¹ However, these images of men remained rather the exception; the gender role remained fixed: they had to fight, defend, win, wrestle—for country, power, role, or even just for a woman.

Battle of the Sexes

Many of the sculpturally exceptional motifs owe much to the cross-genre work of painters and graphic artists who also incorporated the third dimension. This is also true of Max Klinger and his *Drama* (fig. 35) from 1904. The model was begun in 1899 and shows the influence of Auguste Rodin.⁸² Initially, there were only two figures: the lying female nude clinging to the rock before she falls, and the athletic male nude with his back turned to her, embodying an extreme counterforce and clinging to a root formation on the back, but without reference or even relationship to the accompanying figure. Later, the girl in the lower left was added, another isolated, desperate figure. One can see this motif in the tradition of the numerous depictions of the Deluge. At the same time, it stands in the context of other motifs already mentioned, for which “the strength athlete Rasso sat as a model,”⁸³ that is to say, which are completely anchored in Klinger’s body-enthusiastic time. With regard to the oppressive isolation and at the same time the supposed sense of community, references to the contemporaneous dramas of Henrik Ibsen and August



35 Max Klinger, *Das Drama* (The Drama), 1899–1904, Lasa marble, 212 × 230 × 112 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Skulpturensammlung from 1800/Albertinum

Strindberg are suggested, even in the terminology, for Klinger called the lying figure “the sinking woman”⁸⁴ and thus conjured up female versus male roles. As if that were not enough polyvalence. Strangely enough, Klinger sometimes even imposed a political interpretation on the work, which is over two meters high, by relating it to the war in South Africa—with the interpretation that a heroic Boer was defending his wife and child. Klinger considered the inscription “Belli boerorum imago” for this, because he saw in it an image of the Boer War, which was fought between the British and the German-Dutch immigrants in South Africa from 1899 to 1902. At that time, the British imprisoned the women and children of the Boers in specially created “concentration camps”—the term probably appears there for the first time in world history—so that the man’s gesture of strength and defense acquires a factual relevance. At the same time, this composition remains a metaphor of heroism for the family, a struggle of the man for the family rather than of the sexes between themselves—but it thus remained part of the gender role assignments typical of the time.

There is no doubt, however, that a “battle of the sexes”⁸⁵ underlies Klinger’s *Mann und Weib* (*Genie und Leidenschaft*) (Man and Woman [Genius and Passion], fig. 36),⁸⁶ for it is hardly a foreplay, an amorous game. The plaster model of 1903, which has been preserved only in the historical photograph, is based on the opposing lines of force resulting from the wrestling arms, the legs placed against each other, and the intersecting visual axes: turbulent directions of thrust and pressure.



36 Max Klinger, *Mann und Weib* (*Genie und Leidenschaft*) (Man and Woman [Genius and Passion]), 1903, plaster, h. 245 cm, formerly Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig, historical photograph of the plaster model



37 Hugo Lederer, *Kauerndes Mädchen* (Crouching Girl), 1897, plaster, h. 49.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



38 a Georg Kolbe, *Sitzendes Mädchen* (Seated Girl), 1904, limestone, h. 45.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



38 b Georg Kolbe, *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman), 1906/09, marble, h. 49 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



38 c Georg Kolbe, *Sklavin* (Slave), 1916, bronze, h. 71.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Georg Kolbe, who owed much to Max Klinger, especially in his younger years,⁸⁷ created *Liebeskampf* (Amorous Battle) in 1911: a similarly intertwined group of two figures.⁸⁸ In 1918, the work was also called *Kämpfende Amazonen* (Battling Amazons),⁸⁹ which would transfer it from the battle of the sexes to homoeroticism, meaning that the masculine world of battle, which has already been observed many times in the course of these investigations, would also be transferred to that of the female warriors, the Amazons. Does this perhaps indicate feminist tendencies? Or does it rather belong to the imagery of the Amazons that has been so often thematized, which would then extend battle, war, and conflict to the gender that has been described as soft and feminine for so long?

It would be a topic in itself to consider the constrained female figures of Georg Kolbe,⁹⁰ Hugo Lederer,⁹¹ and others, which, at least in Kolbe's case, are also due to the influence of Max Klinger, and then in the years leading up to 1920 increasingly unfold, rise up, expand, and liberate themselves, even where the figure depicted is ostensibly a slave (figs. 37 and 38a–c).⁹²

Struggle of Fate

Two works of Symbolist density stand in large German cemeteries—and yet were not intended for them. The fact that they are installed there is nevertheless significant for the theme of the “constrained human”:⁹³ the broken figuration and mortality are intertwined, as Sibylle Einholz has lucidly demonstrated, and have become a topos of funerary sculpture. This can therefore be disregarded here. However, two programmatic works should be considered, namely the Christ relief (fig. 39) from 1909–11 by Ludwig Manzel, a sculptor who had worked under Begas on the Siegesallee and who, in 1889, had created the large sculpture *Der Friede, durch Waffen geschützt* (Peace, Protected by Arms),⁹⁴ which won many medals. Begun in 1909, the broad relief with Christ vaulted by the round arch and the faithful, the infirm, children, and adults approaching him was originally conceived for a church, as we know from comparable motifs, but in the 1920s—because it was not needed at the intended site—it was installed as a kind of programmatic sculpture in the Stahnsdorf South-Western Cemetery. Theologically, it is an appeal to all to turn to the faith; in the new context, however, it seems like a social-utopian formula for integration: in death, all are equal. The pathos formula of the many bent over and oppressed was sacrally obsolete and now created a community in death. Whether the *Monument aux Morts* in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris or even its original plaster in the Dresden Skulpturensammlung served as a model for the installation of this work, which was already anachronistic in the 1920s,⁹⁵ must remain open, but that work, too, is to be understood as a relief of the bent-over, fallen, tortured, and maltreated.

In 1905, Hugo Lederer created the dark, sinister figure *Das Schicksal* (Fate, fig. 40),⁹⁶ a symbol of every conceivable humiliation of man by an impending fate, a cipher between Norn and Sphinx, an image of humiliating horror. The towering, bare-breasted Valkyrie-like figure drags a woman and a man by the hair behind her, their facial expressions somewhere between surrender and pain, and their gestures expressing weariness and hopelessness. While the



39 Ludwig Manzel, Christ monument, 1909–11 (installed 1923), marble, larger than life, Stahnsdorf South-Western Cemetery, Berlin



40 Hugo Lederer, *Das Schicksal* (Fate) (Ohlsdorf Cemetery), 1905, stone, h. 200 cm, Hamburg, historical photograph

female figure has surrendered, the man still resists by bracing himself against the ground. This work, too, was not conceived for the cemetery but rather for a private pavilion belonging to Eduard Lippert's family, and was only later installed here. The Lippert family had made its fortune in the colonial trade of South African gold mines—and was active in charity. What does this fatalistic group of figures mean in this context? Is it the expression of an apocalyptic mood à la Nietzsche, of a Wagnerian will to fight, of a nihilistic fanaticism? And how appropriate or fatal is its placement in a cemetery at a time when the Christian hope of resurrection is collapsing? This group now stands in the Ohlsdorf Cemetery in Hamburg, and it takes up something that is also known from other places of peace in death, namely from military cemeteries such as the one in

Gotha. There we find a guardian leaning on his sword, his nakedness covered by a stone cloth; he looks over the stone grave crosses, and the inscription on the pedestal provides the reference: “In Memory of Germany’s Heroes. The City of Gotha. 1914–1918”—a man bent over, but more a sinister genius of retribution by the sword than an allegory of inevitable fate.

Fight for Survival

Nature has often placed sickness before death; and in sickness, man struggles with mortality. Fritz Klimsch cast this unequal struggle, this attempt at self-assertion, in a most remarkable formula with the *Denkmal für Rudolf Virchow* (Monument to Rudolf Virchow, fig. 41) from 1906–10 on Karlsplatz in Berlin. The monument to the physician Virchow stands near his former place of work, the Charité, and reverses tradition: the honored man is no longer raised on a pedestal as a heroic figure but is present only as a portrait relief on the front. On the high pedestal with Doric forms, however, is the symbolic scene, the battle. The male figure, also described by Klimsch as a Titan, is wrestling with the Sphinx, which at the same time is reminiscent of Hercules's fight with the Nemean Lion. The reference to the Sphinx recalls the mysteries of nature traditionally embodied by the Sphinx. Here, man—Virchow—conquers the mysteries of nature, namely the elements of nature that are not visible to the eye, such as the world of bacteria. At this point, one could make some remarks about Klimsch's patrons, such as the art historian and museum director general Wilhelm von Bode, and about the hostility to modernism of these formative old elites, but instead one must refer to previous studies.⁹⁷



41 Fritz Klimsch, Rudolf Virchow monument, 1906–10, stone, larger than life, Karlsplatz, Berlin, historical photograph

Territorial Conflicts

When Hugo Lederer was commissioned around 1899 to create the allegories *Der Krieg* (War) and *Der Frieden* (Peace) (fig. 42) for the Oberlausitzer Ruhmeshalle (Hall of Fame or Honor) in Görlitz (now Zgorzelec, Poland)—a kind of scaled-down Reichstag architecture—a frighteningly close connection was established between glory and war, glory and peace—and thus glory and victory. The female Siegfried with sword (as if allegories had to be female) towers over the pyramidal composition, while the heroes and heroines cower on the ground, writhing, suffering, and exhausted from battle. The message, however, boils down to the fact that war and victory go together. Alfred Kuhn's superb description speaks volumes: "Enormous, writhing athletic bodies, forced movements, stage thunder, a personification of war with an inevitable sword, a cloak swirling around her



42 Hugo Lederer, *Der Krieg* (War) for the Oberlausitzer Ruhmeshalle, Görlitz (now Zgorzelec, Poland), ca. 1899, stone, larger than life, historical photograph



43 Hermann Hosaeus, *Nach dem Kampfe* (After the Battle), 1899, bronze, h. 48 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

head, seemingly frozen in mid-swing"⁹⁸—this conglomerate of motifs shows all the characteristics of the articulation of power and a Michelangelesque pathos, which in architecture and sculpture is intended to dwarf people before the colossal titanic creation of the turn of the century.

Those who thought around 1900 that, after three decades of peace, war was no longer conceivable on German territory may have thought for their own relief that it could be outsourced and thus exported in space or postponed in time. Such hopeful speculations are still dangerous today, because they are based on delusions. Hermann Hosaeus shifts the hymns of victory into the space of abstraction by showing in *Nach dem Kampfe* (After the Battle, fig. 43)⁹⁹ from 1899 a healthy, uninjured rider, powerful with his intact weapons, leading his thirsty horse to the watering trough, as if only this horse had suffered: the surviving horseman is the victorious warrior, the conqueror of his opponents, and thus the survivor, against whom the dead, absent from the image—the victims, euphemistically called “fallen”—are to be held. Hosaeus, who approached Hugo Lederer’s formal language around 1910, taught at the Technische Hochschule (Technical College) in Berlin during the Weimar Republic and was appointed professor of sculpture there in 1933. Certainly, one cannot and must not attempt to explain works of art on the basis of biographical details, especially when they lie in the future of the work; however, under certain circumstances, they and their formal language gain an astonishing plausibility in retrospect. In the case of Hosaeus, who had already openly endorsed National Socialist positions before 1933, this is further underscored by the fact that he participated in monument competitions for Richard Wagner or for fraternity monuments, i.e., for decidedly value-conservative reference figures.

The war shifted to earlier times is scenically reenacted in Oskar Erich Hösel's *Hunne zu Pferde* (Hun on Horseback, fig. 44) from 1897.¹⁰⁰ The Hun wars took place centuries earlier. But the supposed historical distance is deceptive: according to general education in Germany at the turn of the century, the Huns were a Mongolian people who, as a traditional enemy of the Chinese, had induced them to build the Great Wall of China. They besieged Europe from the east: "To the terror spread by the great number and rapidity of the victories of the H[uns], was added the horror instilled by the piercing cries, coarse gestures, and repulsive ugliness of the Huns."¹⁰¹ Among the available knowledge of the habits of life were that they lived by cattle breeding, hunting, and robbery, dressed in skins, ate raw meat, and did not shave—in short, they embodied not only something exotic, but also something hostile to Europe in every way, something uncivilized. Nearly four decades later, the Brockhaus encyclopedia put it even more succinctly: "The name H[uns]. is often used as a synonym for barbarians."¹⁰² This has a long tradition. Kaiser Wilhelm II, on the occasion of the Boxer Rebellion in China, expressed that the German troops should spread terror as the Huns once did. This was in reference to the xenophobic fighting in China, in the wake of which the German envoy to China was assassinated in 1900, resulting in war against the colony under German leadership. At that time, Oskar Erich Hösel's *Hunne zu Pferde* had been completed and cast in bronze for only three years: an image of danger per se, of uncivilized savagery and murderous destructiveness—and an occasion for debate about the values of society at that time and their relevance today.

The conservative Felix Dahn had dealt with the figure of the Hun in his poem "Der Hunnenzug" (The March of the Huns), in which the danger posed by the Huns leads to the unification of the Goths and the Germanic tribes. Börries von Münchhausen's "Hunnenzug" and Friedrich Wilhelm Weber's "Die Hunnen" (The Huns) continued the theme of the dangers looming from the east: murder and rape, kidnapping and plunder, looting and arson. Hösel's large bronze was thus at the center of the preoccupation of the time with an image of the enemy that could be derived from history but was inherently topical. It is therefore not surprising that this motif could also be acquired as a porcelain version, which is still produced today in Meissen, where Hösel taught. Finally, it should be noted that the motif shows the horse recoiling and its rider bending over as a skull and a broken shield lie on the ground: the warrior thus contemplates the victim of the past



44 Oskar Erich Hösel, *Hunne zu Pferde* (Hun on Horseback, 1895 (cast 1897), bronze, h. 178 cm, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

and dismounts in astonishment, but not in reverence. The young rider is amazed, but the horse shies away, as if it associates the objects with gruesome memories. Hösel was honored for this work at the 1896 *Internationale Kunstausstellung* (International Art Exhibition) in Berlin; the social consensus could not be more clearly expressed. The fact that the bronze was installed next to the Nationalgalerie also placed it in the context of Wilhelm von Kaulbach's lost wall paintings in the Neues Museum, which also dealt with the same subject.¹⁰³ Given this zeitgeist, it is not surprising that Kaiser Wilhelm's speech was fierce:

"Should you encounter the enemy, he will be defeated! No quarter will be given! Prisoners will not be taken! Whoever falls into your hands is forfeited. Just as a thousand years ago the Huns under their King Attila made a name for themselves, one that even today makes them seem mighty in history and legend, may the name German be affirmed by you in such a way in China that no Chinese will ever again dare to look cross-eyed at a German."¹⁰⁴

What a beacon, what an anticipation of later diction, what circular reasoning. But the groups of horses and riders that National Socialism brought forth and that was installed in the vicinity of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin seem harmless by comparison.¹⁰⁵

Façades of Power

Feminine and narrative, architectural sculpture in the German-speaking world after the mid-nineteenth century sought to indicate the functions of a building by means of beautiful allegories. Consider, for example, Hans Gasser's 1859 series of allegories of commerce, industry, and railroads for the Österreichische Creditanstalt, a series of sleek allegories with traditional attributes such as the cogwheel (figs. 45a, b).¹⁰⁶ Wherever political power was to be legitimized, male figures were traditionally used, as in the case of the Hamburg City Hall, the façade of which, designed around 1893 in the neo-Renaissance style, has a pictorial program (fig. 46) that refers to "patriotic history"¹⁰⁷ and, with statues of emperors and clerics, sets local history in relation to overall German or national history, as is also known from other city halls.¹⁰⁸ But that was not all in the age of Wilhelm II. "In reality," according to Golo Mann, "the German Empire was an immensely strong, concentrated nation-state, driven forward by the engine of a powerful industry,"¹⁰⁹ within which Prussia held a dominant position but was flanked by other highly industrialized states—one thinks, for example, of Saxony. The accompanying economic prosperity was manifested, for example, in the increasing general affluence as well as in the decoration and pictorial programs of public buildings, from town halls to courts and from trading companies to financial institutions.

In 1895, Kaiser Wilhelm II proudly declared that the German Empire had become "a world empire"¹¹⁰ that had caught up with England and France. This claim to be a world trading power and world political power was consequently also articulated in buildings.



45 a, b Hans (Hanns) Gasser, allegories of industry and commerce (designs for the figural building decoration of the *Österreichische Creditanstalt für Handel und Gewerbe*), 1859, plaster, h. 46.5 cm, Wien Museum, Vienna

They manifested the potency of an “industry second only to that of America, an army of incomparable power,”¹¹¹ as Golo Mann defined it—in treacherous military diction. This, in turn, led to highly revealing sculpture programs on the buildings of institutions such as the Reichsbank in Hamburg, next door to the city hall on Rathausmarkt, the main façade of which was decorated around 1914/18 with martial sculpture on the north gable and on the portal on the east side with sculptures already pointing ahead to the decorative 1920s (figs. 47a, b). Angular and hard warriors and heroes have been carved in stone and squeezed between the horizontal entablatures as if they had to support the façade. However, even with the help of the *Dehio Handbook*, it is not possible to identify the artist. Today, such sculptural programs—in this case, personifications of professions—are generally treated as insignificant. But this is a subject in itself.

The “pre-Expressionist hardening of form” manifested in such buildings led, on the one hand, to Art Deco, which operated with decorative and often small-scale forms and tended to marginalize architectural decoration—further research on this would be useful—and, on the other hand, to late Expressionist forms.

The hard figurations applied to the façades from the period before the First World War were found everywhere, including at universities such as the main building of the Ludwig



46 Sculptural decoration on the main façade of the Hamburg City Hall by various sculptors of the late nineteenth century, 1893

Maximilian University on Amalienstrasse in Munich, completed in 1909 (fig. 48). The figures of philosophers and thinkers in togas are reminiscent of antiquity on the one hand and of Romanesque saints on the other, entirely in the spirit of national tradition, whose attachment to the wall documents their supporting character; moreover, with their comparatively small heads, they seem like heroes of a coming future. Clear contours, hard tuff, and concise reminiscences of antiquity and the Middle Ages—this syncretism articulates an all-encompassing postulate of power and heritage, i.e., the claim to be the legitimate heir of all the historical merits of European intellectual history. Humanism and hegemony appear in harmony.

The building of the publishing house of the newspaper *Münchener Merkur*—one of the leading among its kind in the city—was sculpturally designed only a little later,

probably around 1910/12 (fig. 49): a building with mercantile interests and an intrinsic educational mandate of the newspaper publishers. Above the large windows are cartouches and emblems; on the last full floor, human figures are squeezed between them. On the left, a young male nude reading a scroll—perhaps a proofreader? On the right, an athletic nude with a box, which may be interpreted as a reference to the typesetting box. In the center, an older, bearded man in a cap, coat, and leggings stands beside a press with a spindle: an adaptation of the figure of Johannes Gutenberg, the father of movable type printing. Allegories thus flank the historical reference figure and the professional profile; the present and the past are intertwined—the power of history is carried into the present.

The sculptures presented thus far testify to the aesthetics of constraint, the lack of space, the oppressed figure. The façades after the turn of the century bear witness to this image of man in many ways, oscillating between the irrepressible power of athletic musclemen on the one hand and the feeling of “man-without-space” and the lack of room for development or play on the other. In the following, we will focus on a sculptor whose work has only recently been the subject of more extensive scholarly research: Georg Grasegger. The commissions he received are eloquent reflections of the times. *Schmied an der Esse* (Blacksmith at the Forge, figs. 50a, b), a façade decoration for the Barmer Bank-Verein in Iserlohn, was created in 1906/07 and is part of a complex iconography of creation of value at a recognized site of the coal and steel industry.¹¹² The existing title of the work would probably be more correctly modified to a title such as



47 a, b Sculptural decoration on the main façade of the Hamburg Reichsbank building on Rathausmarkt, ca. 1914/18, north gable with sculptural decoration (left), portal on the east side with sculptures (right)



48 German Bestelmeyer (architecture), Georg Albertshofer (sculptures), sculptures on the façade of the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, 1906/09, limestone and tuff, Amalienstrasse, Munich, historical photograph



49 Allegorical architectural sculpture on the façade of the publishing house of the *Münchner Merkur*, probably ca. 1910/12, limestone, Paul-Heyse-Strasse 4, Munich

Der Abstich (Tapping), since the laborer—an iron puddler (Constantin Meunier had also sculpturally depicted this working-class world)—is working with a poker at the fire hole. The counterpart, of course, also shows Mercury squeezed into a flat as a relief: thus the god of money as a counter-image to a man of labor—but not to a more complicated iconography, as it would have been the case, for example, with Hephaestus, the god of fire and blacksmiths.



50 a, b Georg Grassegger, *Schmied an der Esse* (Blacksmith at the Forge) (left), *Hermes* (right), façade decoration for the Barmer Bank-Verein in Iserlohn, 1906/07, material and dimensions unknown, Unnaer Strasse 3, Iserlohn



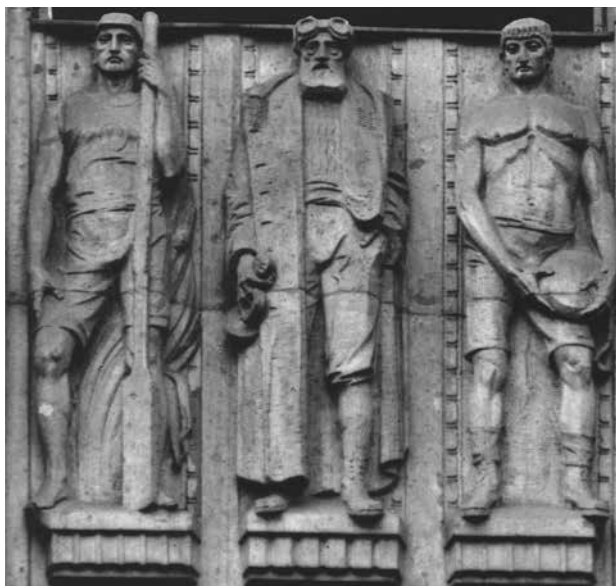
51 Georg Grassegger, *Fleiß* (Diligence) (left), *Handel* (Commerce) (right), façade decoration on the building of the Rheinisch-Westfälische Disconto-Gesellschaft in Recklinghausen, 1907, stone, dimensions unknown, Kaiserwall 21, Recklinghausen



52 Georg Grassegger, tympanum above the main portal of the building of the Rheinisch-Westfälische Disconto-Gesellschaft in Düsseldorf, 1909, material and dimensions unknown, Breite Strasse 10/12, Düsseldorf

Grassegger's pair of figures *Fleiß* (Diligence) and *Handel* (Commerce) (fig. 51), a façade decoration on the building of the Rheinisch-Westfälische Disconto-Gesellschaft in Recklinghausen from 1907, is based on a similar fusion of ancient and modern motifs: on the left, Diligence with a beehive, and on the right, Commerce with a winged cap and the caduceus, i.e., with the ancient attributes of Mercury, who, as mentioned, is also the god of money. The architecture has features of Art Nouveau, while the figures interweave the stylistic features of Near Eastern Assyrian sculpture, oscillating between frontality and profile. Nothing is accidental, even the bee in the center—a well-known heraldic animal that refers to diligence—has found its place and serves not only as an ornament. And yet, if one looks at the hard contours, the decidedly empty mimic, the gestural pair of figures crystallized to the point of icing, it becomes clear that this is, as it were, an expressively supercooled demonstration of power. Diligence and commerce are the foundations of prosperity—worldwide and in Recklinghausen.

53 Georg Grasegger, *Ruderer, Automobilist, Fußballspieler* (Rower, Motorist, Soccer Player), façade decoration for the building of the Barmer Bank-Verein Hinsberg, Fischer & Comp. in Barmen (fragmentarily preserved sculptural cycle), 1909, red sandstone, dimensions unknown, Fischertal 1, Wuppertal-Barmen



It is fascinating and insightful to examine the world of motifs of Rhenish financial institutions prior to the First World War, but this requires preliminary research such as that on Grasegger. His photographically documented tympanum from the main portal of the Rheinisch-Westfälische Disconto-Gesellschaft in Düsseldorf from 1909 (fig. 52) was described on the historical photograph as “Mental and physical work under the protection of the bank.”¹¹³ The financial institution thus becomes the potentate and protector, the enabler of thought and action, of science and business. Once again, we find syncretic pictorial motifs that incorporate ancient elements of education and modern everyday experience. On the left are the master builder, a woman with an owl (Minerva as an allegory of wisdom and education), thinking, pondering men, a male figure with winged shoes (Mercury as the god of commerce and money), and a man with a model ship referring to the Rhine as an artery for transporting ore and coal, and even steel products. In the middle is a woman unveiling herself—a free adaptation of archaic figures—referring to the unveiling of truth itself, i.e., to financial and banking institutions. This is probably the same motif that Grasegger used elsewhere, namely a free adaptation of Fortuna as the goddess of fortune, who—more or less benevolently—unveils herself or refuses to do so: for a bank, an exemption from responsibility, as it were, since this figure conceals and reveals fortune and misfortune as a veiled future. On the right, it then approaches the base and production. The bent figure on the side symbolizes agriculture with grain according to the ancient goddess Ceres. Towards the center of the field follow men with hammer and cogwheel, i.e., the members of industry and mechanical engineering.

What was completely new was that leisure and hobbies became worthy of depiction as activities of the non-professional world. But here, too, there are powerful bodies, splayed postures, frontal torsos, and hard faces. *Ruderer, Automobilist, Fußballspieler* (Rower, Motorist, Soccer Player) (fig. 53) was created in 1909 as a façade decoration for the

building of the Barmer Bank-Verein Hinsberg, Fischer & Comp. in Barmen (now part of Wuppertal).¹¹⁴ Leisure-oriented society becomes worthy of depiction, albeit hard-bodied, to cloak it in a verbal metaphor. However, the subject is not just any sport—not badminton, for example—but rather a male world associated with power, strength, and struggle. With his façade decoration, Grasegger oscillated between outdated hierarchies of social standing—one of the groups of three dealt with motifs such as “courtier, emperor, and warrior,” another with “craftsman, burgher, and farmer”—and modern social differentiations. The other motifs, typical of the period, were based on polarizations and, in some cases, simplifications: industry and commerce, mining and agriculture, peace and war, poverty and wealth. With these motifs, Grasegger and his patrons refer to history and the present in equal measure, dissolving traditional thematic groups, but using the hard contour as an expression of a hard form of existence, thereby evoking the ideal human hardness.

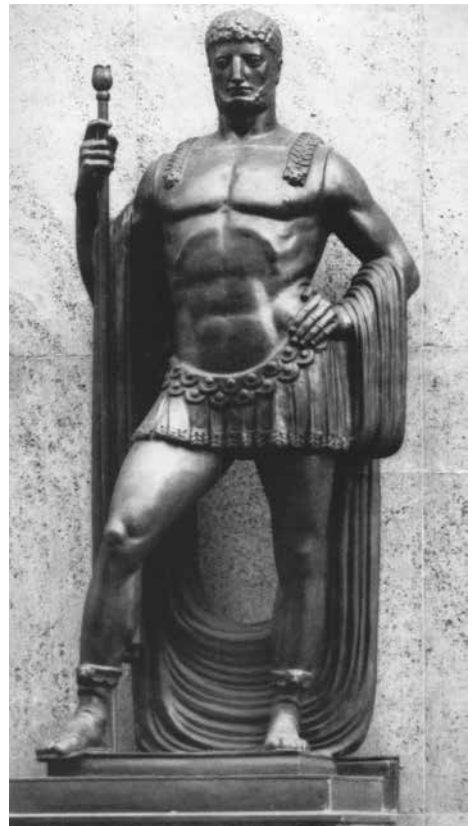
Powerful Virtues

In the face of over-articulated power strategies, one is reminded of the views of Ernst Moritz Geyger, whose *Fleiß* (Diligence) and *Arbeit* (Work) (figs. 54a, b) from 1904 convey precisely this oppressive awareness of power. The two statues presented here in historical photographs exist today as isolated, partially fragmented museum pieces,¹¹⁵ but were presumably conceived for an architectural setting. They are not mentioned in the authoritative monograph on the artist.¹¹⁶ The body language with its strikingly angled gestures, the physique with broad shoulders and the manneristically exaggerated muscles, the defiant gazes—everything is aimed at an explicit expression of power and strength. It is, as it were, “the constrained human in the open air.” This brings to mind one of the biggest projects pursued by Geyger—who, incidentally, was patronized by Wilhelm von Bode—namely his so-called *Jugendtempel des Stadion* (*Gedächtnis- und Ehrenhalle für persönlichen Mut*) (Youth Temple of the Stadium [Memorial and Hall of Honor for Personal Courage]) as a “socio-political and artistic-architectural project” near Heerstrasse in Berlin. He planned statues for this as well, including *Fleiß* (Diligence), *Tapferkeit* (Bravery), *Liebe* (Love), and *Freiheit* (Freedom), which he called the “cardinal virtues of the people.”¹¹⁷ It is known how intensively Geyger studied Friedrich Nietzsche, that he also created illustrations for his parable “Der Riese” (The Giant) in 1895—the dream of the colossal is also evident here!—and that Geyger had a “broad knowledge of Nietzsche’s works.”¹¹⁸

The same spirit of unbridled strength is also found in Georg Grasegger’s *Tatkraft* (Vigor, fig. 55), also titled *Stärke* (Strength), which was installed in 1910/12 as a façade decoration on the building of the Barmer Bank-Verein in Cologne. The harshly contoured figure combines the traditions of the Roman warrior with those of old German guardian figures. As a counterpart, Grasegger—no doubt in close consultation with the client—executed a female figure entitled *Klugheit* (Prudence): masculinity (vigor and strength) is juxtaposed



54 a, b Ernst Moritz Geyger, *Fleiß* (Diligence) (left), *Die Arbeit* (Work) (right, fragmentarily preserved), 1904, marble, both h. 182 cm, historical photographs, Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz



55 Georg Grasegger, *Tatkraft* (Stärke) (Vigor [Strength]), façade decoration on the building of the Barmer Bank-Verein in Cologne, 1910/12, bronze, dimensions unknown, Unter Sachsenhausen 21–27, Cologne



56 Franz von Stuck, *Feinde ringsum* (Surrounded by Enemies), 1916, plaster, bronzed, 67 cm. high, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin

with the feminine role (prudence); the financial institution addresses both sexes, promotes action and contemplation, and identifies itself as armed, which is intended to bind the clientele to it. They are warriors who must serve the common good.

Swordsmen

With his statues, Ernst Moritz Geyger struck a note that was not to be forgotten for decades and which found a gestural, mimic, and athletic-habitual successor in Arno Breker's *Bereitschaft* (Readiness, p. 287, fig. 8) from 1939.¹¹⁹ But Breker also had other predecessors, such as Franz von Stuck with the statuette *Feinde ringsum* (Surrounded by Enemies, fig. 56) from 1916. Breker's gesture, however, is based on a defensiveness that is consciously designed to frighten, while Stuck's warrior is engaged in active combat: Breker wants to and

should frighten and threaten, while Stuck's figure finds himself in a powerful, active struggle. The latter embodies the so-called man of action, the former the latency of action. This is plausible to the extent that Stuck's work was created in the middle of the First World War, while Breker's *Bereitschaft* was created in 1939, i.e., at the historical moment before the outbreak of war, or at least at the same time.

Swordsmen, Roland figures, and statues of Bismarck were part of a repertoire of threat scenarios and not just defense scenarios. "The aspirations and realities of the educated middle classes in the industrialized nation of Germany were bound to diverge more and more, creating a dangerous breeding ground for fear, resentment, and arrogance."¹²⁰ How strongly this view was influenced and legitimized by the exploitation of Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas is not to be examined here, but it is no coincidence that the contemporary architecture of Peter Behrens with its colossal proportions was called "Zarathustra style"¹²¹ by Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann in 1941. And as early as 1903, in the magazine *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, there had already been mention of the goal of a "temple art."¹²² The various built and sculpturally embellished examples can be cited, such as the monument to the physicist and industrialist Ernst Abbe in Jena, erected by Henry van de Velde, one of the many temples that arose in opposition to the neo-Baroque figure monuments.¹²³ As an extreme comparison, the vision of the eccentric artist and missionary reformer Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, executed in drawing form in 1896, should also be mentioned.¹²⁴ He envisioned a colossal sphinx as the sculptural crowning of a building



57 Georg Kolbe, *Torso eines Somali* (ehemals: *Torso eines Somali-Negers*) (*Torso of a Somali* [originally: *Torso of a Somali Negro*]), 1912 (cast 1978), bronze, h. 156 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, historical photograph



58 Rudolf Maison, *Eselreiter* (*Ohne Sattel und Zaum*) (*Donkey Rider* [Without Saddle and Bridle]), 1892, bronze, h. 53 cm, Berlinische Galerie, Museum of Modern Art, Berlin

described as the “Tempel der Humanitas,”¹²⁵ which, despite its reclining figure, was to be so colossal that it was to be several stories high and probably 100 meters long.¹²⁶ This concept of colossal projects was to culminate, among other things, in Hermann Hahn’s *Siegfried Dolmen*:¹²⁷ in the sketch, the viewer appears as small as an ant. Honor to the point of absolute awe, humility to the point of total humiliation is the program.

“Racial Conflict”

Kolbe’s focus on aesthetic categories, as he revealed in *Torso eines Somali* (*Torso of a Somali*, fig. 57)—formerly titled *Torso eines Somali-Negers* (*Torso of a Somali Negro*)—from 1912, which was preceded by a full nude,¹²⁸ suggests how little politicized and stereotyped the Berlin sculptor began, especially when juxtaposed with comparable subjects by other sculptors.

Rudolf Maison’s *Eselreiter* (*Donkey Rider*, fig. 58) from 1892, also known as *Ohne Sattel und Zaum* (*Without Saddle and Bridle*), reveals the pejorative perspective of Gründerzeit



59 Ernst Moritz Geyger, *Pavian* (Pavian mit Menschen-Maske, ursprünglich: Pavian und Neger-Maske) (Baboon [Baboon with Human Mask, originally: Baboon with Negro Mask]), 1903, bronze, dimensions unknown, private collection, historical photograph



60 Georg Grasegger, *Stammverwandt* (Related by Descent), 1906, bronze, dimensions and whereabouts unknown, historical photograph

sculptors who mocked the lifestyles of supposedly uncultured civilizations: this youthful, carefree rider experiences pain with a facial expression somewhere between scream and mirth. The *Eselreiter* exists in versions with and without a loincloth; it was successful in both Europe and the United States and exists in numerous copies.¹²⁹

Ernst Moritz Geyger, who has already been mentioned here several times, caused even more trouble with his *Pavian* (Baboon, fig. 59), a bronze statuette from 1903, which was also known as *Pavian mit Menschen-Maske* (Baboon with Human Mask) and even originally as *Pavian und Neger-Maske* (Baboon and Negro Mask), which thus intertwined Darwinian teachings with colonial value judgments in a way that is hardly tolerable today.¹³⁰ Georg Grasegger, who has been mentioned here several times as a voice of conservatism, also devoted himself to Darwinism with his almost perfidious work *Stammverwandt* (Related by Descent, fig. 60) from 1906, a martial man holding an ape under his arm as a reference to the theory of descent.¹³¹ In comparison, Kolbe's view of the athletic, beautifully formed, and gesturally elegant swing of his model proves to be free of all condescension, a magnificent solution that found and adapted human beauty in a concrete artist's model while remaining completely free of ideological barriers.

61 Ludwig Manzel, *Die Arbeit* (Work), colossal statue in the atrium of the Wertheim department store in Berlin, 1897, bronze, dimensions unknown, historical photograph



Labor Struggle

With the statue *Die Arbeit* (Work, fig. 61), executed in colossal dimensions in 1897, the Berlin-based sculptor and later academy president Ludwig Manzel, who has already been mentioned here in connection with the Stahnsdorf cemetery relief, placed an allegory of productive industriousness in the atrium of the Wertheim department store.¹³² This statue seems to be documented only by historical photographs; in comparison, a preserved statuette shows better that we are dealing here with a stocky female worker with machine and workpiece, an allegory of value-creating diligence, the female basis of prosperity, a proper female worker. A few decades earlier, this would have been a Mercury, the ancient god of commerce, or at best an Athena. Now, however, the praise of the industrious labor force moved to the temple of consumption and took the form of a contemporary woman who appears—what would Karl Marx have said?—well-fed and serene and even a little proud. Who was the target audience? It might have been the wealthy townspeople who went shopping there in the opulent department store. No one would have guessed that, in 1933, Manzel would have been in a hurry to execute a portrait of Joseph Goebbels.¹³³

The supreme virtue was *Der Fleiß* (Diligence, fig. 62), as Georg Grasegger's relief from 1903 for Haus Dekker in Solingen can attest. It is one of the reliefs placed above the doors and windows of this building, which apparently belonged to one of the most financially powerful industrialists in the city,¹³⁴ where a street is named after the family. The gestures of defense culminated in motifs such as the *Wächter* (Guardian, fig. 63), also to be dated



62 Georg Grasegger, *Der Fleiß* (Diligence), façade decoration for Haus Dekker in Solingen, 1903, stone, dimensions and whereabouts unknown, formerly Haus Dekker, Solingen



63 Georg Grasegger, *Der Wächter* (Guardian), façade decoration for Haus Dekker in Solingen, 1903, stone, dimensions and whereabouts unknown, formerly Haus Dekker, Solingen



64 Georg Grasegger, *Die Arbeit* (Work), façade decoration for Haus Dekker in Solingen, 1903, stone, dimensions and whereabouts unknown, formerly Haus Dekker, Solingen



65 Rupert von Miller, *Holz tragender Mann* (Man Carrying Wood), between 1902 and 1925, limestone, dimensions unknown, Reichenbach Bridge, bridgehead east side, northern ramp, Munich

1903, an extreme defensive austerity and defiantly powerful restraint, Germanic-patriotic-Teutsch, combining lance with shield and mail armor. These pictorial elements recall the Solingen coal and steel industry, while the portcullis in the background evokes medieval castles and their omnipresent defensiveness. One could call this “distinctly apotropaic,”¹³⁵ but it is imbued with a degree of militancy that would later be called “Cold War”: this image of Germany is armed from head to toe. This, in turn, is not relativized when one considers other reliefs from the same building, such as *Die Arbeit* (Work, fig. 64) from 1903, since here as well one gets the impression that the hammer is both a means of production and a weapon.

As soon as one begins to collect material, one is struck by the abundance of constrained figures, of figures carrying loads, of figures bent over. Façades, squares, parks, and bridges are “populated” with bent figures. Rupert von Miller probably conceived the sculptures on the Reichenbach Bridge in Munich during the years of its construction, i.e., around 1903. The realization can only be dated by the fact that the installation took place in 1925.¹³⁶ Could it be that the figures, such as the *Holz tragender Mann* (Man Carrying Wood, fig. 65), were actually only realized in the 1920s? The constrained, load-bearing

figure is in the tradition of Adolf von Hildebrand in its relief-like disposition, but also in the tradition of Wilhelminian Germany in its pressed and squeezed-in state, as well as in its athletic body and bent limbs, its surrender and simultaneous resistance. Heroism and endurance are brought into a remarkable balance. The oppressed and maltreated man becomes worthy of representation; his submissiveness becomes visible. Gathering wood by the Isar means using the scattered goods that the river brings to the city, but it also means that the person depicted is not one of the winners and thus represents a marginalized group. In contrast to Ernst Moritz Geyger in the imperial capital of Berlin or Grasegger in the Rhenish West, the depiction here seems quite strained: work is drudgery, and the subject is thus anchored in the present.

Struggles of Faith

At first glance, one might think that Wilhelminian Germany was a land without faith, a land of the militant and martial, the secular and pagan. But once again, such a perception or reading falls short, as a glance at a few examples will show. The old motifs lived on, but they were gradually secularized. The fact that the Cologne mayor and judiciary council Georg Fuchs had the approximately two-meter-high relief *Der heilige Georg* (St. George, fig. 66)—from a formal point of view, his patron saint—by Georg Grasegger mounted on his villa in 1907/09 could be interpreted as blasphemy: a saint on the façade of a private home? But, of course, this motif referred back to the courts of the nineteenth century and the pictorial tradition of the saint,¹³⁷ who stood for chivalry, strength, and Christianity in equal measure.¹³⁸ The flatness of the relief, the framing by the upturned edge, the composition that fills the picture with overlapping edges—all this refers less to Adolf von Hildebrand's theory than to the ivory carvings of the early and high Middle Ages, to a neo-Romanesque pictorial language that had its parallels in architecture around 1900. Here, it was no longer a matter of Christian faith, but of historical acts of legitimation.

It was no different with the use of the iconography of St. George, for example, on the monument to those fallen in war sculpted by a certain A. Lallinger in Sandizell west of Ingolstadt, where probably in 1918 the—then still—reigning Carl Theodor Graf von und zu Sandizell donated to the church an epitaph to the war dead (fig. 67), which retrospectively integrated the wars up to Napoleon into the local commemoration and which is crowned by the scene of George fighting the dragon. The saint fights chivalrously, and the dragon dies miserably. The message is the value of death “for the fatherland,” as stated in the inscription. The beliefs of the Catholic veneration of saints had been definitively adapted, legends had become formulas.

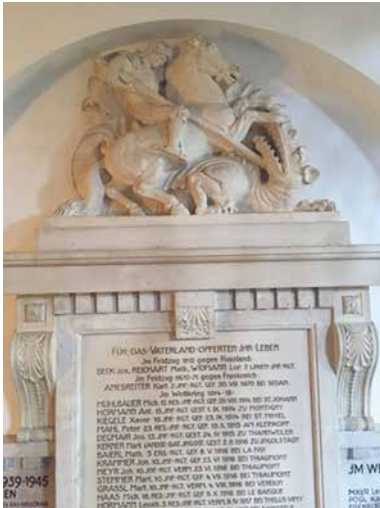
We are accustomed to interpreting the history of art as a chain of innovations. This perspective does not apply when one looks at retarding currents, which to the retrospective historian turn out to be trends that set the direction for later developments.

The *Nonne* (Nun, fig. 68)¹³⁹ from 1902 by August Schreitmüller, a Dresden-based sculptor who created twelve sculptures for the façade of the city hall there,¹⁴⁰ has not survived,



66 Georg Grasegger, *Der heilige Georg* (St. George), decoration for the villa of the mayor and judiciary council Georg Fuchs in Cologne, 1907/09, terracotta/majolica, h. ca. 200 cm, Parkstrasse 31, Cologne

but nevertheless it testifies to the austere, pre-Expressionist formal language that was often seen in examples of architectural sculpture. It also has echoes of George Minne's Symbolism. The polychrome lime wood bust testifies to a will to modernity, in which tradition—carved and painted wood—is combined with expressive gesture and contour. Is it here a matter of powers of faith or only of Symbolistic inwardness, well known from George Minne and Fernand Khnopff? It seems—in addition to all the examples of secular sculpture seen—as if the ecclesiastical world was retreating into a tentative inwardness. Years later, a pseudo-classical two-figure group, *Das Erwachen* (The Awakening),¹⁴¹ was created with ideally formed bodies and a somewhat empty exchange of glances. For the context under discussion, the statement made about it in 1923 is alarming: “Even the most ardent advocate of the ideas of racial improvement would find this perfect couple worthy of becoming progenitors of a new, healthier, more perfect race.”¹⁴² The inwardness of the *Nonne* there had already given way so radically to a standardized conservative image of man that the implicit bridge-building to the National Socialist standard of form propagated ten years later is not surprising in view of the photograph of *Das Erwachen*. What had once appeared as an angular, hard form now developed into a coldly conservative design that could be reclaimed in terms of racial ideology and that, according to contemporaries, was the expression of a “genuinely German view”¹⁴³—thus consequently closing the circle to national, racial ideological, and proto-National Socialist aspects, which led to the grave sculpture for a fallen man with a steel helmet, a genre also referred to as “Siegfried figures.”¹⁴⁴



67 Adolf Lallinger, war memorial with St. George, donated by Carl Theodor Graf zu Sandizell and Wanda Gräfin Sandizell Lamberg, probably 1918, stone, dimensions unknown, St. Peter's Church, Sandizell (Schrobenhausen)



68 August Schreitmüller, *Büste einer Nonne* (bust of a nun), 1902, limewood, painted, h. 51 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Skulpturensammlung from 1800/Albertinum (lost in the war), historical photograph

The fragility of values in the period leading up to and around 1918 also brought forth quite different surprises. While from today's point of view conventional sculptors are occasionally reproached for having portrayed those in power after 1933 and thus for having taken a reprehensible path, a comparable willingness to compromise can also be observed in one of the most important representatives of Wilhelminian sculpture, Gustav Eberlein. In 1918, apparently he had nothing more urgent to do than to portray the representatives of the left-wing positions that had gained in importance with the Weimar Republic, even though they had long since died. (Eberlein's artistic counterpart, Reinhold Begas, was also no longer alive and therefore made no similar compromises.)

Eberlein, who had upheld the values of Wilhelminism all his life, now hypocritically turned to the fathers of Social Democracy and Communism, creating new icons of the new potentates, as it were, depicting Karl Marx with a Napoleonic gesture and Lassalle as a rhetorician with his hand clenched (figs. 69a, b); in contrast, August Bebel is depicted with his left hand resting on his chin and thus as a melancholic.¹⁴⁵ In the same year, another bust was created, which bore the inscription on the front: "Von Hindenburg, the victorious commander of the Eastern Army." For the first three men, the sculptor wrote a text containing passages such as the following:

"The task of monumental sculpture is to show the world all the great and creative achievements of mankind. No matter from which state it rises, from which nation it develops, and under which political situation it grows beneficially."¹⁴⁶



69 a, b Gustav Eberlein, *Ferdinand Lassalle* (left) and *Karl Marx* (right), 1918, material, dimensions, and whereabouts unknown



One would think that this was the stammering of an aging Wilhelminian sculptor who had lost his patrons and was now trying to create new gods in the old—even outdated—garb in an attempt to resist development. After all, Georg Kolbe, Käthe Kollwitz, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Franz Metzner, and Ernst Barlach were now the artists who set the tone, both at the academy and in contemporary art. The fact that the now powerless Eberlein wanted to serve new gods and thus a new power reminds us of how many of the next generation accepted similar turns and compromises a good decade later. When Kolbe continued his prewar work during this period and followed the *Tänzerin* (Dancer) in 1923 with an *Adagio* (fig. 70), it shows, perhaps in a simplistic way, that he continued to adhere to aesthetic values and had not come to the distressing point of compromising with power.

70 Georg Kolbe, *Adagio*, 1923, bronze, h. 81 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



71 Matthias Gasteiger, *Englands Schmerz (Der engl. Löwe)* (England's Pain [The English Lion]), ca. 1915/16, bronze, h. 16.5 cm, Künstlerhaus Gasteiger, Holzhausen

Violence and Irony

Glorifying violence was one thing, mocking the enemy was another. Around 1915/16, Matthias Gasteiger modeled a statuette of a crouching (English) lion, whose paw has fallen into a trap, with the inscription “Made in Germany” (fig. 71).¹⁴⁷ The animal roars, and the viewer laughs: German scorn takes on emblems of the enemy. German nationalism, born of hubris, ironizes the enemy in the year of the outbreak of war. This “derisive laughter” and explicit gloating implicit in the sculpture would not last very long. It was preceded by a similar illustration in the magazine *Simplicissimus*.¹⁴⁸

Epilogue

The 1920s, with their liberation from the remnants of realism, neo-Baroque, and Wilhelminian pathos, seemed to bring a caesura, a new beginning, a return to the design issues of sculpture that Adolf von Hildebrand, for his part, had already worked toward at the time. The pathos formulas of the constrained figures seemed to be history. And even in the hitherto untouched genre of animal sculpture, a sculptor like Ewald Mataré could take the place of August Gaul or Ernst Moritz Geyger. The latter’s colossal, over two-meter-high



72 Ernst Moritz Geyger, *Stier* (Bull), 1897–1900, marble, h. more than 200 cm, historical photograph



73 Adolf Strübe, *Stier* (Bull), 1936, bronze, h. ca. 140 cm, historical photograph

Stier (Bull, fig. 72),¹⁴⁹ created between 1897 and 1900, belonged to the tradition of Wilhelminian power and monumental subjects. The aggressive lowering of the head conveys a sense of power, even menace. The emphasis on the interior drawing and the colossal, voluminous conception appear like looming danger, as a hard form. Created in Florence, the work was brought to Berlin at the beginning of the twentieth century and installed there in the Humboldthain park. The art historian Johannes Guthmann wrote of it in 1909: “The motif is simple; but the stillness in the movement is filled, almost overloaded by the modulations of the surface.”¹⁵⁰ There is something unsettling about it, a kinship with Metzner and Lederer, a tendency toward the martial neo-Mannerism of the overdrawn internal form and the exaggerated expression of force. This stone bull, which is also documented by other, bronze casts, was lost until its fragments were found by chance. There were not only factual reports¹⁵¹ but also perfidious articles, such as in the Berlin newspaper *B.Z.* which, in April 2022, ran the headline “Archaeologists Discover Bull by Hitler Sculptor.”¹⁵² Born in 1861, Geyger was already well over seventy at the time of Hitler’s so-called rise to power; there are no known documents that he had any connection with the so-called “Führer,” but he did have a connection with the conservative forces. So what does such a headline actually say? It announces that there is an intuitive connection between Wilhelminian and National Socialist sculpture, but above all that differentiated studies are needed to analyze precisely the differences in this line of tradition of power and the use or abuse of power. However, the headline also points out that even in the harmless field of animal sculpture it was quite possible to make superficial connections, as a glance at Adolf Strübe’s *Stier* (fig. 73) from 1936 at the Reichssportfeld (today’s Olympiapark) in Berlin reveals. In this way, even a bull from 1936 can be linked to one from 1900. However, it is not only the motifs and design issues that are important, but also the contexts, so that the undeniable traditions do not lead to superficial, ideologically motivated, and at the same time erroneous conclusions.

Notes

- 1 This text is based on the evening lecture given at the conference *Georg Kolbe im Nationalsozialismus. Kontinuitäten und Brüche in Leben, Werk und Rezeption* (Georg Kolbe and National Socialism: Continuities and Breaks in Life, Work, and Reception) at the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin on September 1, 2022, but goes beyond the manuscript of the lecture.
- 2 J[osef]. A[nton]. Schmoll (aka Eisenwerth), "Rodin und Kaiser Wilhelm II.," in: idem, *Rodin-Studien* (Munich 1983), pp. 329–346, here p. 345.
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- 4 Bernhard Maaz, "Moderne Tendenzen in der deutschen Skulptur 1870–1914. Formfragen—Stilkunst—Symbolismus," in: *SeelenReich. Die Entwicklung des deutschen Symbolismus 1870–1920*, ed. Ingrid Ehrhardt and Simon Reynolds, exh. cat. Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (Munich 2000), pp. 177–215, here p. 186 [translated].
- 5 See: Julia Wallner, "Georg Kolbes zeichnerisches Werk und das Fehlen von Porträts," in: Maja Brodrecht and Arie Hartog (eds.), *Im übertragenen Sinne. Bildhauer zeichnen* (Dresden 2022), pp. 82–93, here p. 85.
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- 7 *Die Kunst für Alle*, no. 5, 1889/90, p. 24 [translated].
- 8 Ibid. [translated].
- 9 Ibid., p. 61.
- 10 *Die Kunst für Alle*, no. 6, 1890/91, pp. 333, 348; *Die Kunst für Alle*, no. 7, 1891/92, pp. 4–5, 281.
- 11 *Die Kunst für Alle*, no. 12, 1896/97, pp. 153, 218, 262.
- 12 Adolf Rosenberg, "Das Nationaldenkmal für Kaiser Wilhelm I. in Berlin," in: *Kunstchronik. Wochenschrift für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe* 7 (new sequence), no. 20, 1896/97, col. 305–311, here col. 308 [translated].
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- 15 Ibid., p. 51 [translated].
- 16 Friedrich Fuchs, "Adolf Brütt," in: *Westermanns Monatshefte*, no. 95, 1903, pp. 315–329, here p. 321 [translated].
- 17 See: <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/index.php/de/suche?term=Gefesselter> [last accessed May 20, 2023].
- 18 See: Bernhard Maaz, "Prometheus und das Künstlertum. Zur Instandsetzung der Freitreppe an der Alten Nationalgalerie," in: *Jahrbuch Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, no. 33, 1996, pp. 121–139.
- 19 See: Bernhard Maaz, *Nationalgalerie Berlin. Das XIX. Jahrhundert. Bestandskatalog der Skulpturen*, 2 vols. and accompanying CD-ROM (Leipzig 2006), vol. 1, p. 429.
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- 26 Maaz 2006 (see note 19), vol. 1, p. 313.
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- 32 Titus Burckhardt (ed.), *Zeus und Eros. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen des Bildhauers Carl Burckhardt* (Olten and Lausanne 1956), p. 87 [translated].
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- 35 Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London 1983), pp. 7, 30, 196.
- 36 Hubertus Kohle, "Wasserfreuden für das Volk. Das Müllersche Volksbad in München und die Volksbadebewegung," in: *Wasser im Jugendstil. Heilsbringer und Todesschlund*, ed. Peter Forster, exh. cat. Museum Wiesbaden (Berlin 2022), pp. 102–107.
- 37 Barbara Hartmann, *Das Müller'sche Volksbad in München* (Munich 1987).
- 38 "Pontier, Henri (Auguste H. Modeste)," in: Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker (eds.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 27 (Leipzig 1933), p. 248.
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- 44 *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago 1969), p. 197.
- 45 "Heu, Joseph," in: Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker (eds.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 16 (Leipzig 1923), pp. 603f., here p. 603.
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- 49 Quoted in: Günther Jachmann (ed.), *Adolf von Hildebrands Briefwechsel mit Conrad Fiedler* (Dresden n.d. [1927]), p. 198 [translated].
- 50 Maaz 2010 (see note 31), vol. 1, pp. 76–77.
- 51 Ibid., pp. 77–80.
- 52 Exh. cat. Deutsches Historisches Museum 2010 (see note 24), p. 244.
- 53 Maaz 1998 (see note 40), p. 39.
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- 55 Elmar D. Schmid and Sabine Heym, *Mathias und Anna Gasteiger. Aus einem Münchner Künstlerleben um 1900*, exh. cat. Nymphenburg Palace, Munich (Dachau 1985), pp. 64–66.
- 56 Ibid., p. 64 [translated].
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- 58 Alfred Kuhn, *Die neuere Plastik von Achtzehnhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich 1921), p. 78 [translated].
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- 60 Anita Beloubek-Hammer, *Die schönen Gestalten der besseren Zukunft. Die Bildhauerkunst des Expressionismus und ihr geistiges Umfeld*, 2 vols., PhD diss. Humboldt University, Berlin, 1997 (Cologne 2007), vol. 1, p. 85.
- 61 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 84 [translated].
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- 63 Beloubek-Hammer 2007 (see note 60), vol. 1, p. 84 [translated].
- 64 Kuhn 1921 (see note 58), p. 82 [translated].
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- 68 Renate Liebenwein-Krämer, *Säkularisierung und Sakralisierung. Studien zum Bedeutungswandel christlicher Bildformen in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols., PhD diss. Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, 1974 (Frankfurt am Main 1977), vol. 1, p. 344 [translated].
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- 75 *Max Klinger. Auf der Suche nach dem neuen Menschen*, ed. Ursel Berger, Conny Dietrich, and Ina Gayk, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin and Edwin Scharff Museum, Neu-Ulm, 2007/08 (Leipzig 2007), p. 137.
- 76 Conny Dietrich, "Kraft und Schönheit, Max Klingers Athletendarstellungen," in: *ibid.*, p. 40.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 41–42.

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- 85 *Geschlechterkampf. Franz von Stuck bis Frida Kahlo*, ed. Felix Krämer, exh. cat. Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main (Munich 2016).
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- 87 I am very grateful to Julia Wallner for this information.
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Georg Kolbe and Art Policy 1933–45

Aya Soika

“Franco and Beethoven, how can I manage this?”

**Georg Kolbe and the
Controversy over
Modernism: The Sculptor
within the Art Political
Situation of the Years
after 1933**

1 John Heartfield, *Brauner Künstlertraum* (Brown Artist's Dream), photomontage (copper intaglio, 38 × 27 cm.) with the caption: "Soliloquy in a dream: 'Franco and Beethoven, how can I manage this? The best thing I can do is to make a centaur, half animal, half human,'" published in the magazine *Volks-Illustrierte*, no. 29, July 20, 1938, Prague, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Art Collection



Kolbe had not even begun his portrait of Franco when, in July 1938, John Heartfield published one of his photomontages in the socialist magazine *Volks-Illustrierte* (fig. 1).¹ In the foreground, Kolbe sits, visibly distressed, with his forehead propped in his hand. Behind him is his *opus*, a hybrid figure with the head of Beethoven (alluding to Kolbe's commission for the Beethoven monument in Frankfurt am Main in 1939) and the body of the Spanish General Franco in uniform, a violin in his left hand, a dagger in his right. The ruins of Guernica are piled up on the pedestal; photographs of children's corpses are mounted between the general's leather boots. Heartfield thus alludes to the destruction of the Basque town on April 26, 1937, initiated by Franco, which cost the lives of several hundred civilians.

The actual subject of the collage is, however, the sculptor Georg Kolbe in his studio. Heartfield had probably read the announcement of the portrait commission in the Berlin press and now visualized a moral dilemma: Kolbe's desire to work for a cultural nation and ultimately serving barbarism. The question "Franco and Beethoven, how can I manage this?" is paradigmatic for Kolbe's balancing act between his own claim to a spiritualized, intellectually sophisticated art and the exploitation of his persona by National Socialist propaganda. In this way, Heartfield also touches on Kolbe's position between the modernists and the traditionalists, between skeptics and supporters, and not least between



2 Front cover of the publication Georg Kolbe. *Werke der letzten Jahre, mit Betrachtungen über Kolbes Plastik von Wilhelm Pinder* (with 64 intaglio plates), Berlin 1937

how he saw himself and how he was seen by others: between his *perceived* distance from the NS regime and the actual closeness that, by 1938, could no longer be overlooked. Heartfield also saw a conflict in the Franco commission because Kolbe could *not* be clearly assigned to the camp of the traditionalists, whose ideological proximity to the NS regime was indisputable. After all, Kolbe was one of the great sculptors of the Weimar Republic, which, after 1933, had also become a cultural-political target as the “time of the System.” Kolbe’s Heine monument and the Rathenau fountain had been removed in 1933 and 1934, respectively, as had his marble statue, the *Genius* (1928), in the opera house and his figure *Große Nacht* (Large Night, 1926/30) in the Berlin Haus des Rundfunks.² Despite the removal of these works, and despite Kolbe’s prominent position and esteem in the Weimar Republic, he had not disappeared from the scene after 1933 or fled into exile like the communist Heartfield. He remained publicly visible even under National Socialism. The art historian Wilhelm Pinder, who was open to National Socialism, considered precisely this continuity to be significant and emphasized it in his lavishly illustrated book on Kolbe, published in 1937 (fig. 2): “Our new Germany is also fortunate in that this master from an older generation stands out in the new age of great artistic expectations.”³ According to Pinder, Kolbe represented the continuation of a moderate modernism, the orientation of which was, in his opinion, compatible with the official view of art in the National Socialist state. Indeed, Kolbe’s thematic interests, such as his veneration of Stefan George, about

whom he compiled his own small collection of newspaper clippings on the occasion of his death in December 1933 and even published an obituary for,⁴ and his preoccupation with Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig van Beethoven reveal points of intersection with several of the German “intellectual heroes” whom National Socialism instrumentalized for its ideology after 1933.⁵

Kolbe’s Dilemma in National Socialism

In April 1934, Kolbe’s intellectual faculty was praised in the journal *Kunst der Nation*: “Never has there been a more spiritual sculptor in Germany”; Kolbe had “rescued the highest from neglected and barbaric times into the silence of art.”⁶ While the *Kunst der Nation* was a short-lived affair (its committed advocacy of a NS-compatible modernism led to its discontinuation in early 1935), the review stands *pars pro toto* for an interpretation of Kolbe that did not cause offense even in the culturally conservative reactionary camp. Despite their rough surface structure, Kolbe’s symbolic figures, with their figurative, antique-style physicality, hardly offered a target for attack. This was quite different, for example, from the work of the painter Emil Nolde, who was positioned as a “Nordic” Expressionist and as the “greatest visionary” with an editorial on the front page of the same issue of *Kunst der Nation*: a rhetoric strategy which did not succeed in the long run, despite all efforts and despite Nolde’s declarations of loyalty to the NS regime.⁷ While in Nolde’s case, opponents from the circle around Paul Schultze-Naumburg and Alfred Rosenberg regularly protested when he was once again celebrated as “Nordic,” there were no objections to newspaper articles with titles such as “Georg Kolbe, a Herald of the Nordic Attitude to Life”⁸ or “Nordic Beauty in German Art.”⁹ This was mainly due to the aesthetic characteristics of Kolbe’s work, which, in its comparatively classical formal language, was less provocative. In his treatise *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* (Purge of the Temple of Art, 1937), Wolfgang Willrich summed up Kolbe’s special position within modernism when he claimed that Kolbe was the only artist from the then popular publication series *Junge Kunst* (Young Art) who had “remained healthy,” and that “he, too, was at times on the verge of fashionable mannerism. All the others were predisposed to or participated in artistic degeneration or allowed themselves to be pushed into it.”¹⁰

Dispute about Modernism

With such questionable compliments, Kolbe found himself in a strange situation after 1933: around him, many of those with whom he had previously exhibited were being fiercely debated, while he himself remained unscathed, even celebrated. Kolbe experienced the controversy surrounding modernism firsthand, whether in the dispute over the exhibition *30 deutsche Künstler* (30 German Artists) at Galerie Ferdinand Möller, which was temporarily banned because of the participation of Emil Nolde and Ernst Barlach, and



3 “Die Jury an der Arbeit. Wie die Ausstellung des Deutschen Künstlerbundes vorbereitet wird” (The Jury at Work. How the exhibition of the Deutsche Künstlerbund is prepared): (left to right) Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, the sculptor Philipp Harth, Georg Kolbe, and Erich Heckel, in: *Magdeburger Zeitung*, probably May 1933, collection of press clippings, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

in which Kolbe presented two sculptures,¹¹ or on the occasion of the rally of the National Socialist German Students' League in Berlin at the end of June 1933, whose slogan was “Youth fights for German art,” and at which he was mentioned in the same sentence as Heckel, Nolde, Rohlf, Schmidt-Rottluff, Barlach, and Lehmbruck as “the forerunners of the art that National Socialism wants to continue in its spirit.”¹²

Kolbe was also directly affected by the disputes over the Deutscher Künstlerbund and its orientation. A photograph of the exhibition jury published in the *Magdeburger Zeitung* in May 1933 shows him standing between Philipp Harth and Erich Heckel, with his good acquaintance Karl Schmidt-Rottluff to his left (fig. 3).¹³ It was only with great reluctance that Kolbe accepted the chairmanship of the Deutscher Künstlerbund in early 1935, during an already extremely turbulent period. Then, in 1936—still under his chairmanship—the association was banned for exhibiting Expressionist works.¹⁴ As a co-organizer, Kolbe was also involved in the scandal surrounding the exhibition *Berliner Kunst in München* (Berlin Art in Munich) in March 1935, in which twenty-six works, including works by Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, and Nolde, had been excluded in advance.¹⁵ One final example of Kolbe's involvement in initiatives to promote a pluralistic modernism is the 1938 *Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art* at the Burlington Galleries in London. Was his work out of place there? The NSDAP party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, was outraged that Kolbe was included in London among the works shown in Germany in the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition. In a scathing polemical review entitled “Der Kunstschwindel in London” (The Art Swindle in London) it was emphasized that “Kolbe's sculptures, both in the previous year [1937] and this year [1938], were among

the main works in the exhibition at Haus der Kunst in Munich, which was representative of the artistic will of the new Germany.”¹⁶ The author, Robert Scholz, concealed the fact that Kolbe’s exhibit in London was his bronze bust of Paul Cassirer from the collection of Hugo Simon—that is, the portrait of a Jewish art dealer from a Jewish collection. John Heartfield’s question “Franco and Beethoven, how can I manage this?” could be varied: Paul Cassirer, Friedrich Ebert, and Max Liebermann were all portrayed by Kolbe; a few years later, he created portraits of the fascist General Francisco Franco and of Konstantin Hierl, head of the Reich Labor Service; in March 1934, he had also proposed to the Reich Chancellery to create a bust of Adolf Hitler. How can one explain Kolbe’s willingness to ennoble individuals from such opposing camps with bronze portraits? The inconsistency also shows that a categorization, as carried out by NS propaganda and continued in the opposite direction after the Second World War, in its narrow definition between “degenerate” and regime-compliant art, only inadequately describes the complex situation of conflict in which numerous modern artists and sculptors operated.

Kolbe’s Commitment to His Colleagues

What did Kolbe think about the cultural-political scuffles, about who was allowed to belong and who was excluded? He did not let all events pass him by without comment. At the end of May 1934, for example, at the invitation of the National Socialist German Students’ League, he wrote a statement entitled “An die deutschen Studenten!” (To the German Students!) that was published in the *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung* (fig. 4).¹⁷ On the controversial question of what constituted “German” art, he declared: “I know genuine German men of art whose work is very much misinterpreted. They are better, purer than many who profess to be.”¹⁸ He was probably referring, without naming names, to his acquaintances Schmidt-Rottluff and Heckel, and perhaps also to other controversial figures such as Barlach and Nolde. Kolbe warned against condemning them too hastily: “Every genuine man had to carry his faith alone,” a solo effort that he felt the younger generation could not comprehend. He concluded by explaining to the young National Socialists: “A Führer has rallied you and called upon you to march. What great fortune!”¹⁹ This sentence, however, does not appear in any of Kolbe’s drafts in his estate, neither in handwriting nor in typewriting. Is it possible that the newspaper’s editorial staff helped out here, and that the reference to the “Führer” did not come from Kolbe himself?

While the local Berlin chapter of the Students’ League actively supported modernism, the editorial staff of the *Studenten-Zeitung* in Munich was conservative. Kolbe would experience this firsthand in the context of his activities as a member of the commission during the preparations for the 1935 exhibition *Berliner Kunst in München*.²⁰ Kolbe himself was present for the set-up on March 14, but missed how, on the opening day, twenty-six of the works transported from Berlin to Munich for the show, including pictures by Schmidt-Rottluff, Heckel, and Nolde, were removed from the Pinakothek.²¹ When he read in the *Studenten-Zeitung* that the removal was an overdue signal—to “finally clarify

Prof. Dr. h. c. Georg Kolbe:

An die deutschen Studenten!

Dah die deutschen Studenten in ihrem Kampfblatt ein Wort von mir hören wollen, ist eine große Freude für mich, zeigt mir dieser Wunsch doch ein geistiges Bedürfnis meines Werkes mit der nationalen Jugend, die als Erbeiter des Stoffs streift, in den kulturellen Aufbau des neuen Deutschlands zu treten.

Leider bin ich kein Wertgemäßer, der Ihnen in großer Rede nie gehörte Dinge bringen kann. Sie wissen selbst auch schon um die Wege und Ziele, die vor Ihnen liegen. Es ist ein herrliches Gefühl und Erleben für uns Männer — daß heute eine Jugend sich leidenschaftlich in den Kampf um deutsche Kultur stellt. Von solcher Gemeinschaft und solchem Glauben mußten wir früher nichts. Kunst wurde damals nur „geplagt“ und „gehandelt“. Ein Führer hat es geschaut und zum Kampf aufgerufen. Welches Glück!

Vielleicht wollen Sie von mir eine Antwort hören auf die jetzt tausendfach aufgeworfene Frage, was deutsche Kunst ist. Wollen Deutsche wirklich darum diskutieren? Warum wissen wir alle eindeutig, was deutsches Dichten, deutsche Musik ist? Ja, wäre darüber ein Fragen überhaupt denkbar? So sicher sei also an der deutschen Jugend und so unklar unter deutschem Gehörten? Nein und hundertmal nein! Freilich ist vieles verstanden überwandert und entwirrt. Ihr werdet aber herausfinden, was echte Fragen lösen — wenn auch ihre Wesen sehr verschieden und nicht leicht verständlich scheinen. Versteht nicht gleich den, der kein Meister ist oder einen anderen, weil er Euch nicht göttlich genug scheint. Kunststillerische Schlagwörter sind gefährlich. Nach der Vorwurf, das Thema macht es nicht — weder ebend noch in aller Zukunft. Am meisten haben wir — am meisten ist deutsche Art zu erkennen. Ein Gutes ist der Deutsche.

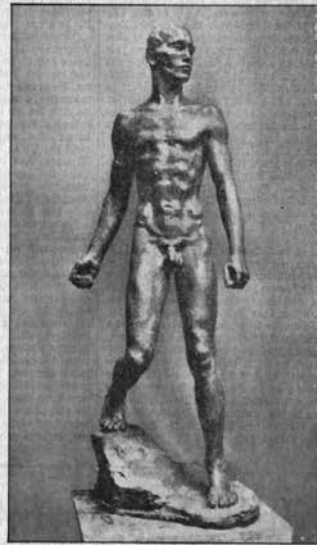
Ich fenne edle anrechte deutsche Männer der Kunst, deren Wert doch sehr mißachtet wird. Besser, reiner sind sie als viele, die sich laut bekennen. Eine Gedächtnis kann sehr heil sein. Haben Sie Mißtrauen gegen die gefassten Urteil. Denken Sie daran, daß wir nicht so glücklich waren, da kein gemeinsamer Welt über uns ausgesprochen wurde. Es wurde kein Vorhang vor uns aufgerissen. Jeder mußte seinen Glauben allein befehlen tragen — wenn er nicht in einem Künstlerverein als verkannter Meister sein Leben fristen mochte. Hier liegt viel edles deutsches Geistes.

Man will wieder ein hartes deutsches Volk leben und seine Form finden und seine Kunst. Ihr Jungen sollt ihr schaffen! Hochachtungsvoll steht das Ziel!

Georg Kolbe

vorgelassen, nur um das freudvolle Kelles willen, aber gar um das Eigenwillige abzuschaffen. Er darf auch die Bürger auf merkwürdig erscheinende Kunst hinweisen. Er soll sich dabei allerdings weitgehend des Platz der Mittel bedienen — Breiten hat seit Jahrhunderten in der Akademie der Künste ein vorzügliches Instrument.

Erstarrt bei künftlich mit Recht vor der entmenschten Verallgemeinerung gewarnt, nach der die Technik der Feind der Seele ist. Ich sehe mit ihm in unerschöpflichen Angriff auf so etwas, das uns im Welt-eifer der Wälder in eine schmale Lage bringen könnte. Aber ich merke ebenso heilig vor dem Zehler der vorrevolutionären Willenshaft, die da zu weigt, die Welt der Kunst, des Dichters und des Redners zu verabschieden und für heilig zu erklären; mir ist, als wäre ich die nächste Zeit einen überlappenden Zustand gegen die nur zivilisatorischen Fortschritte der Technik bringend, die langsam wie ein abstrakter Monismus wirken, und als bringe das Verlangen



Prof. Georg Kolbe

Jüngling, Bronze

4 Georg Kolbe's text "An die deutschen Studenten!" (To the German Students!) in: *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung. Kampfblatt der deutschen Studenten* 2, no. 9, May 31, 1934, p. 3

the boundaries of art, to clearly separate the spirits, and to irreproachably distinguish the sick [people and works] from the healthy"²²—Kolbe wrote to the author of the article, Hannes Kremer, who was also the head of the cultural headquarters of the Reich Leadership of the NS German Students' League and who had asked him the previous year for the position statement "An die deutschen Studenten!" Kolbe now explained to the young man: "I myself was appointed as a responsible member of the admissions jury, and I know what I did." And he continued: "Everything that was subsequently taken away in Munich, I fully stand behind as German works of art. Perhaps you are not at all familiar with these rejected works? I therefore tell you that not a single one of them belonged in the slightest to the category of those which you rightly critique in your article."²³

Kolbe's Stance

Kolbe felt that his colleagues were being judged unfairly, even by National Socialist standards. What he thought of the "rightly" criticized category, and who he counted among them, is not known. For Kolbe was committed to those modernists who were appreciated by national conservative circles and who had signaled their willingness to compromise through words and works. The fact that he was keen to remove his companions from the "firing line" is quite understandable, and his demand that they finally be included was anything but absurd: Heckel and Nolde were supported by some of the same patrons as

Kolbe, for example the industrialists and NSDAP members Wilhelm-Adolf Farenholtz in Magdeburg and Ernst Henke in Essen, whose political loyalty was not in doubt; and the same journalists who wrote about Kolbe—Fritz Hellwag, Bruno E. Werner, Paul Fechter, Gerd Theunissen—also positively reviewed the works of those already often ostracized after 1933. Kolbe's plea is supplemented by an article by the Hitler Youth leader Martin Hieronimi entitled "Jugend spricht. Völkisch or "Popular"? (Der nationalsozialistische Kunstanspruch und seine Verwirklichung in der Gegenwart)" (The Youth Speaks. Völkisch or "Popular"? [The National Socialist Claim to Art and its Realization in the Present]), which the sculptor included in his collection of newspaper clippings and commented on with the words "excellent and courageous"—rare praise in Kolbe's colored-pencil marginal notes. In the article, the author warns against rejecting things "which, despite their inner complexity, are thoroughly German and völkisch."²⁴

How, then, can Kolbe's cultural-political views in these early years of National Socialism be summarized? Apart from his conviction that the concept of "völkisch" (national-racial) in art was, in his opinion, too narrow, and that some of his colleagues also deserved to be appreciated by the National Socialists, much remains unclear about Kolbe's attitude toward National Socialism. A review of the archival documents in the Georg Kolbe Museum reveals numerous observations that suggest an ambivalent relationship to National Socialist cultural policies. It is surprising, for example, that Kolbe agreed with some of the statements made by the culturally conservative activist and opponent of modern art, Alfred Rosenberg, on the reorientation of art policy. In late September 1934, Kolbe commented in red pencil on Rosenberg's speech entitled "Die kommende Kunst wird monumental, werkgerecht und artgemäß sein" (The Forthcoming Art Will Be Monumental, True to the Work, and Appropriate to the Race). In the text, he found the passage on the struggle against national and religious kitsch to be "good"; he also liked Rosenberg's establishment of a connection between the Germanic people and the Greek brother nation.²⁵ Rosenberg's preference for an antique ideal of the human body was, under certain circumstances, a welcome confirmation of Kolbe's own work for, as late as the end of January 1933, Kolbe had complained that he was always ranked behind Ernst Barlach in the press coverage. At that time, he had written about his colleague Barlach: "He is and remains the awe-inspiring sculptor of the German soul—despite the fact that he often forms poorly and weakly—even the Nazis are beginning to pay homage to him."²⁶

Rosenberg's statements may thus have reassured Kolbe, for a certain rivalry with his fellow sculptors runs like a thread throughout Kolbe's career. Incidentally, the fact that Kolbe was still writing about the "Nazis" in January 1933 certainly suggests an inner distance from the NSDAP. In the first months after the seizure of power, Kolbe, too, would have been unsettled by the internal party squabbles and unsolicited decision-making at the base. The following comment from February 1933 is to be understood in this context: "How happy I am not to have an office: what loathsome fellows one must certainly have to encounter there!"²⁷ Here, Kolbe was presumably commenting on all those party lackeys who had gained the upper hand with the election victory. Both statements come at the beginning of twelve years of NS rule, in which party and state soon became

indistinguishable from one another, with the result that Kolbe increasingly came to terms with the situation and established himself within the regime.

This approximation was certainly also due to Kolbe's strong desire for commissions and recognition. Any attempt at a more concrete assessment of Kolbe's political views will inevitably remain fragmentary, since Kolbe, unlike many other artists, was very reluctant to comment on contemporary politics. However, he was a critical reader and closely followed developments in the cultural sector through his impressively diligent reading of newspapers. Two examples: He worked through Hitler's Nuremberg "Day of Culture" on September 5, 1934, in red crayon, putting a question mark over, among other things, Hitler's announcement, also relevant to him, that "perhaps the greatest cultural and artistic commissioning of all time" would pass over those whom Hitler called "charlatans."²⁸ What might he have thought of this announcement? Without further commentary in the margins, it is difficult to interpret what he meant by this emphasis. Another article Kolbe read carefully was about the two-year anniversary of the founding of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts on November 15, 1935. In it, underlined in red with a ruler, are, among other things, Goebbels's announcements regarding discrimination against Jewish artists: "The Reich Chamber of Culture is now free of Jews. Jews are no longer active in the cultural life of our people. Therefore, a Jew cannot be a member of a chamber."²⁹ Nor is it possible to reconstruct from this underlining how Kolbe—or perhaps his son-in-law Kurt von Keudell, with whom he shared the newspapers and who could have also marked these passages—stood with regard to one of the most important features of NS ideology: the systematic persecution of Jews, which also affected cultural policy.

"Call of the Cultural Workers"

Often mentioned in Kolbe literature in connection with the artist himself during the National Socialist era was his signature on the "Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden" (Call of the Cultural Workers) of August 16, 1934.³⁰ At first glance, the signing of this declaration of loyalty to Adolf Hitler in the context of the referendum of August 19, 1934 (regarding the unification of the offices of Reich President and Reich Chancellor) leaves little room for interpretation. How could it not be interpreted as pandering?³¹ However, it should be taken into account that presumably also in Kolbe's case—as in the cases of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Emil Nolde—the Reich Chamber of Culture asked for the signature only three days in advance and even enclosed the postage for the reply telegram.³² It must have been difficult to refuse such an urgent request. The manner in which Kolbe was approached puts into perspective the suspicion of ingratiation that has also existed for decades with regard to Barlach, Heckel, and Mies. In fact, the publication of the appeal was closely linked to the internal party struggle. With the list of signatories, the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda wanted to cleverly include the artists who were controversial within the party, such as Mies, Nolde, Heckel, and Barlach. The latter, for example, commented sarcastically that at least now he could no longer be accused

Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden

Die unterzeichneten Persönlichkeiten richten folgenden Aufruf an die Öffentlichkeit:

Volksgenossen, Freunde!

Wir haben einen der Größten deutscher Geschichte zu Grabe geleitet. An seinem Sarge sprach der junge Führer des Reiches für uns alle und legte Bekenntnis ab für sich und den Zukunftswillen der Nation. Wort und Leben setzte er zum Pfand für die Wiederaufrichtung unseres Volkes das in Einheit und Ehre leben und Bürgen des Friedens sein will, der die Völker bindet. Wir glauben an diesen Führer, der unsern heißen Wunsch nach Eintracht erfüllt hat. Wir vertrauen seinem Werk, das Hingabe fordert jenseits aller kittelnden Vernünftelei, wir setzen unsere Hoffnung auf den Mann, der über Mensch und Ding hinaus in Gottes Vorsehung gläubig ist. Weil der Dichter und Künstler nur in gleicher Treue zum Volk zu schaffen vermag und weil er von der gleichen und tiefsten Ueberzeugung kündet, daß das heiligste Recht der Völker in der eigenen Schicksalsbestimmung besteht, gehören wir zu des Führers Gefolgschaft. Wir fordern nichts anderes für uns, als was wir anderen Völkern ohne Vorbehalte zugestehen, wir müssen es für dieses Volk, das Deutsche Volk, fordern, weil seine Einheit, Freiheit und Ehre unser aller Not und Wille ist.

Der Führer hat uns wiederum aufgefordert, in Vertrauen und Treue zu ihm zu stehen. Niemand von uns wird fehlen, wenn es gilt, das zu bekunden.

Berner Beuemburg, Ernst Barlach, Rudolf G. Binding, Hans Friedrich Blund, Verleger Alfred Bruckmann, Richard Euringer, Professor Emil Fahrentamp, Erich Feyerabend, Gustav Frenssen, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Professor Dr. Eberhard Hanffstaengl, Guitav Havemann, Eich Heckel, Professor Ernst Hönig, Heinz Ihler, Hanns Johst, Georg Kolbe, Erwin Kolbenheyer, Werner Krauß, Franz Lent, Heinrich Lersch, Professor Karl Lörcher, Architekt Walter March, Agnes Miegel, Böries Freiherr von Münchhausen, Emil Nolde, Paul Pfund, Hans Pfizner, Professor Dr. Wilhelm Rinder, Wies van der Rohe, Professor Dr. h. c. Paul Schulze-Naumburg, Hermann Stehr, Richard Strauß, Joseph Thoral, Generalintendant Heinz Tietjen, Oberbürgermeister Dr. Weidemann, Arnold Weinmüller.

5 "Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden" (Call of the Cultural Workers), published in various daily newspapers, here without indication of the name of the newspaper, probably around August 18, 1934. In the right margin, Kolbe's comment on the composition of the signatories from artistically opposing camps: "köstliches Nebeneinander!" (delightful juxtaposition!)

Köstliches Nebeneinander!

of “cultural Bolshevism.”³³ Kolbe probably only noticed the range of signatories in the printed newspaper—he commented on it as a “delightful juxtaposition!” (fig. 5).³⁴ The publication of the appeal in the *Völkischer Beobachter* and elsewhere then also surprised Alfred Rosenberg, who complained in two letters to Goebbels personally that Nolde and Mies had been approached; finally, he even wrote to the head of the Reich Chancellery.³⁵ Compared to this power struggle over cultural policy, the actual content of the appeal played a subordinate role. It was rather the list of signatories that caused a sensation, not only within the party but also in art circles. Significantly, in an NSDAP party court case, the Hamburg museum curator Harald Busch defended his own advocacy of Expressionism by referring to the “Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden” and its signatories. To demonstrate the ambivalent attitude of the state and the party toward modern artists, Busch emphasized that Nolde, Heckel, and Barlach had been asked to sign by no less an authority than the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda—“together with those who had never yet been suspected and misunderstood, such as Schultze-Naumburg, Kolbe, and others.”³⁶ Busch argued logically that, given the list of names compiled by Goebbels’s staff, he could hardly be blamed for his own presentation of Nolde paintings in the Hamburger Kunsthalle.

Kolbe’s Self-Perception

With regard to Kolbe, it is noteworthy that Busch included him among those “who have never been suspected and misunderstood.” This assessment differs from Kolbe’s own self-perception, for the sculptor was not at all sure of his position in the first years after 1933. In fact, in 1936, his work was rejected as “Eastern European” and “African” in an internal report from the Reich Security Headquarters to the Gestapo.³⁷ The Office for the Preservation of Art, Cultural-Political Archive, accused him, among other things, of being a member of the Workers’ Council for Art, from which Kolbe rigorously distanced himself in 1937, dismissing it as a “spool” and a “small absurdity.”³⁸ The internal letter of 1936 remained without consequences and is by no means typical of Kolbe’s reception under National Socialism; nevertheless, it testifies to certain problems of attribution.³⁹ Even without knowledge of this extreme defamation, Kolbe carefully registered the rejections, was deeply dismayed by the dismantling of several of his works, and lamented that, in the years after 1933, he initially received fewer commissions than he had hoped. In August 1933, he wrote that “no one asks for ‘nothing.’”⁴⁰ A perhaps rather curious example of the fact that many commissions passed him by is the acceptance of the death mask of Paul von Hindenburg by Josef Thorak, a commission Kolbe commented on as a “put-up job.”⁴¹ And even a project promised to him such as the memorial in Stralsund which he called the “group of soldiers” was accompanied by uncertainty. In March 1935, he wrote about the planned erection of the soldiers’ memorial: “Who knows if this can be done without obstacles. There are still too many forces in opposition.”⁴² The fact that, in the meantime, Kolbe had been chosen at all also had something to do with the fact that Barlach, who had



6 Georg Kolbe, Stralsund war memorial, 1934/35, bronze on stone pedestal, h. 250 cm, historical photograph

originally been intended, had been rejected as a “cultural Bolshevik”⁴³ by the Reich Warriors’ Association, among others. Kolbe, on the other hand, was confronted with rather annoying differences of opinion, since the NSDAP district leader felt that his two male figures were too athletic and not heroic enough (fig. 6).⁴⁴ What Kolbe himself perceived as an affront and an ideologically motivated, fundamental criticism should not, in retrospect, be judged solely from his perspective. Another example from the same year: In the fall of 1935, Kolbe was asked by the responsible committee to tone up his *Ruhender Athlet* (Resting Athlete) for the Sportforum.⁴⁵ In October 1935 he therefore complained that his figures for the Sportforum were not what “the people out there want” and that they were “perceived as one-sidedly artistic”; he even came to the conclusion that he “was not seriously considered for the great tasks.”⁴⁶ Even with such an assertion, a distinction must be made between Kolbe’s self-perception and how he was perceived by others. For a representative of Weimar sculpture, Kolbe was surprisingly successful, more so than many of his sidelined colleagues although less so than Josef Thorak. And not all of the resistance and criticism Kolbe encountered in connection with commissions was politically motivated. In March 1936, for example, Kolbe was outraged by a newspaper reviewer who had written about his “limitations.” He commented: “How could this stupid devil have gotten so far ahead? Most likely as a ‘stowaway.’”⁴⁷ Was Kolbe surprised, for instance, that a journalist was still writing critically about him? And in July 1936, shortly before the opening of

the Olympic Games, Kolbe expressed his disappointment on a picture postcard showing an aerial view of the Olympic Village that he had not received free tickets to the Games. He wrote: "I will see only the 'Führer's' march [into the stadium]." ⁴⁸

This example also suggests that, compared to many of his artist colleagues, Kolbe was complaining on a high level. For while Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, for example, who was a frequent guest of Kolbe's, saw his hopes for official recognition shattered—first with the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in the summer of 1937, then with the imposition of a professional ban in 1941—an objective look at Kolbe's situation with regard to commissions shows that it had already begun to pick up momentum in 1936, although his annual income had already been comparatively high in previous years. ⁴⁹ Incidentally, Kolbe's moderate health also affected his productivity—a not insignificant factor. In 1937 he admitted: "If I were only between forty and fifty today, the situation [referring to his studio, which he jokingly referred to as a 'factory'] would look much better—but now my shaking bones are a serious hindrance. At least I am still working hard and running the show." ⁵⁰ In better health, Kolbe would have gladly taken on many more commissions.

The Request for a Portrait Session with Adolf Hitler

How did the sculptor Kolbe manage to maintain his successful course under National Socialism—despite occasional setbacks? ⁵¹ After all, a *conditio sine qua non* in the National Socialist dictatorship was to sufficiently demonstrate not only artistic talent but also one's own political reliability. Kolbe, however, was more circumspect; he did not join the NSDAP, but only the National Socialist People's Welfare organization, as, incidentally, did Mies van der Rohe and Max Pechstein. An overt conformism was at odds with his elitist view of society, and he was suspicious of anything too popular. ⁵² However, he was open-minded enough about the National Socialist regime and Adolf Hitler that in March 1934, through an acquaintance in Munich, he asked the Reich Chancellery for the opportunity to study Hitler at close range in order to create a large bust. The hitherto unpublished correspondence in the files of the Reich Chancellery in the Federal Archives in Berlin could be viewed in its original form by Elisa Tamaschke, Georg Kolbe Museum, in January 2023. It was already mentioned in an essay by Josephine Gabler in 1997 but was not commented on further at that time. ⁵³

Elisabeth Feder, the author of the letter to Hitler and his undersecretary Lammers, was the well-connected wife of Gottfried Feder, born in 1883, who knew Hitler personally and who had already given a speech at the party congress of 1923 [!] as financial policy spokesman of the NSDAP, founded in 1920, immediately after Hitler. In June 1933, Feder was appointed undersecretary in the Reich Ministry of Economics; at the end of March 1934, Hitler also appointed him Reich Commissioner for Housing Affairs. A co-founder of the Kampfbund Deutscher Architekten und Ingenieure (KDAI, League of German Architects and Engineers), he had stated in mid-December 1933 that once political opponents had been eliminated, "the way would soon be clear for the penetration of

art and science.”⁵⁴ It is not known when the connection between Kolbe and the Feders was established. It probably came about through the Munich-based painter Columbus [known as Colombo] Max, whom Kolbe knew from his student days and who wrote to Kolbe at the end of 1933 to remind him of himself.⁵⁵ In Kolbe’s appointment calendar, a visit by Colombo Max’s wife is noted in December 1934, together with a “Miss Feder.”⁵⁶ It therefore seems quite plausible that there was contact during these months and that Elisabeth Feder’s letter to Adolf Hitler (additionally addressed to the head of the Reich Chancellery, Undersecretary Hans Heinrich Lammers) was written in consultation with Kolbe. Here, it is stated:

“Prof. Georg Kolbe, Berlin, would like to make a large bust of the Führer and asks for a very short and casual session while the Führer is working or signing papers. Prof. Kolbe feels that it would be sufficient for him to study the Führer once up close in a relaxed setting. Prof. Kolbe is one of the best sculptors in Germany; there are many of his sculptures in public places in Berlin. He would then take the liberty of bringing the monograph of his works and presenting it to the Führer. He is a professor at the municipal Academy of Art in Berlin and has a very nice studio in the building on Heerstrasse. If you could forward this request, another first-class bust of the Führer would be attainable. With best thanks for your efforts and the request to contact Prof. Kolbe, I remain in humble gratitude, Heil Hitler, Elisabeth Feder.”⁵⁷

A response to Kolbe’s request came quickly. On the very next day, after personal consultation with Hitler, Undersecretary Lammers wrote a letter of refusal. In this letter, which was addressed not to Elisabeth Feder but to Kolbe personally, Lammers stated:

“Dear Professor! Mrs. Elisabeth Feder has asked me on your behalf to persuade the Reich Chancellor to grant you a meeting for the production of a bust. I have gladly presented your request to the Reich Chancellor, but to my regret I must inform you that the Reich Chancellor refuses on principle to make himself available for meetings for the production of a bust or a painting. I may humbly suggest that you try to get close to the Reich Chancellor on the occasion of a public event in order to study his features.”⁵⁸

After the war ended, Kolbe was thus spared having to explain himself in favor of a Hitler portrait, in addition to his bust of Franco. The letter of response from the Reich Chancellery has not been preserved in the Kolbe estate, nor is there any correspondence between Kolbe and Elisabeth Feder. This makes it impossible to reconstruct the initiative more precisely. For example, it is unclear whether Kolbe made a second attempt to portray Hitler in the late summer of 1939. According to the executor of the estate of Kolbe’s granddaughter and biographer, Maria von Tiesenhausen, Kolbe was commissioned to create a portrait of Hitler at the beginning of the Second World War. The personal

initiative of 1934 remained unmentioned. According to the granddaughter's recollection, Kolbe agreed, albeit hesitantly and "with a feeling of uneasiness." There was allegedly only one session, and a bust did not come about, because Kolbe had estimated twelve to fourteen sessions.⁵⁹ Such accounts should be treated with caution. The files of the Reich Chancellery suggest that sculptors were not commissioned to make portraits of Hitler; quite the contrary. As a rule, written requests for a portrait session to produce oil paintings or busts were promptly declined, usually with the recommendation to use Heinrich Hoffmann's photographs as a guide, and more rarely—as in March 1934 to Kolbe—with the suggestion to study Adolf Hitler's facial features at a reception or other event.⁶⁰ It also seems absurd that Kolbe would have requested twelve to fourteen sessions, since in March 1934 he had only suggested a "short and casual session." The oral recollection of Kolbe's granddaughter therefore seems questionable in many respects. It is conceivable that, in the alleged incident of 1939, Kolbe's request of 1934 was changed to the effect that it was no longer Kolbe who wanted to create a "large bust of Hitler," but rather that the commission was given to *him*. The two letters of March 1934 can also be used to interpret another story, one that is not time-specific. According to Kolbe's private pupil Liselotte Specht-Büchting, Kolbe commented on a request for a portrait of Hitler with the following statement: "He had portrayed Mr. Müller and Mr. Meier, why shouldn't he portray Mr. Hitler?"⁶¹ According to this recollection, the commission was subsequently not taken any further. Does this anecdote also have its origin in Kolbe's request of March 1934? Is it possible that the incident was narratively reshaped in such a way that Kolbe could no longer be perceived as an admirer of Hitler, but rather as a steadfast executioner of public commissions who relativized Hitler's significance by comparing him to "Mr. Müller and Mr. Meier," even making a joke about it?

The Franco Portrait and Its Public Reception

If there is a kernel of truth in the recollection that reached the executor of Kolbe's estate that a Hitler portrait by Kolbe was in the planning stages in the late summer of 1939, then the renewed attempt may have had something to do with the success of Kolbe's bust of Franco (fig. 7). In late 1938, Kolbe had portrayed Franco during the final months of the Spanish Civil War. He traveled to Spain for this purpose and visited the dictator in his private home in Burgos. The portrait was commissioned by HISMA in Salamanca, a German-Spanish front company set up with Hitler's approval to supply Franco's troops with weapons, war materials, and fuel.⁶² The bust of Franco, created by a German sculptor, was intended as a symbol of the German-Spanish alliance and was sent to Hitler by HISMA's managing director, Johannes E. F. Bernhardt, for his fiftieth birthday in April 1939. A few weeks earlier, Kolbe had also sent Franco a cast of the bust as a gift, accompanied by a reverential letter.⁶³ While Franco returned Kolbe's favor with a medal, Hitler thanked Bernhardt for the "bronze bust of Generalissimo Franco created by Professor Kolbe," about which he was "genuinely" pleased (fig. 8).⁶⁴ It is possible that Kolbe's portrait of



7 Georg Kolbe, *Francisco Franco*, 1938, bronze, h. 31 cm, historical photograph

Franco and its overwhelmingly positive reception in the German press in the spring of 1939 triggered Kolbe's desire to make a new attempt and once again propose to Hitler the creation of a portrait—but now with reference to the success of his Franco bust. This is conceivable, but it is also possible that the granddaughter's recollection is wrong in its chronology and refers to the earlier request of March 1934.

Kolbe's portrait of Franco was probably the only single work whose creation had been reported in virtually every region of Germany. While a photograph of the portrait session with Kolbe and Franco appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter* and several local dailies in early February 1939 (fig. 9), along with other short reports (roughly forty such clippings are preserved in an envelope in the Georg Kolbe Museum), Kolbe's report "Wie ich Franco modellierte" (How I Modeled Franco) followed in the subsequent weeks and was also printed in many newspapers. In it, Kolbe describes his impressions gathered during three portrait sessions in Franco's study in his private home in Burgos and sketches the image of a stern but amiable soldier and family man (fig. 10).⁶⁵ The Kolbe-Franco press coverage in February and March 1939, which coincided with the final phase of the Civil War and Franco's imminent victory, ended with the news that Kolbe had been awarded the Grand Order of the Red Arrows on May 20, 1939, the day after the great victory parade in Madrid. Since Heinrich Himmler also received the order, Kolbe's name now appeared in many newspaper reports next to that of "Reichsführer-SS Himmler."⁶⁶ Another envelope

Der Führer und Reichskanzler

Berchtesgaden, den 23. Juni 39

Sehr geehrter Herr Bernhardt!

Ihnen und den übrigen Herren der Hisma-Gemeinschaft danke ich herzlichst für die von Professor Kolbe geschaffene Bronzebüste des Generalissimus Franco, die Sie mir als Geburtstagsgabe durch den Chef meiner Präsidialkanzlei übergeben liessen. Ich habe mich sowohl über Ihr treues Gedenken als über das Kunstwerk selbst aufrichtig gefreut.

Mit Deutschem Gruß!



Herrn Johannes E. F. Bernhardt,
Leiter der Hisma,
Salamanca.

8 Letter from Adolf Hitler to Johannes E. F. Bernhardt, managing director of the German-Spanish front company HISMA in Salamanca, June 23, 1939, notarized copy from the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin



9 Francisco Franco at a portrait session with Georg Kolbe in Franco's house in Burgos, Spain, November 1938, published in the newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, 29 January 1939

in the museum contains more than forty press reports from May 20/21, 1939, entitled, for example: “Himmler and Kolbe Honored by Franco.” Kolbe was very pleased with the public reception. In his draft of a personal letter to Franco, dated March 17, 1939, he proudly noted the “interest and acclamation” of the public: “Your great kindness enabled me to create your portrait, which is everywhere received with great interest and acclaim by the German public.” And further: “I therefore take the liberty of presenting you with my work in bronze and humbly ask you to do me the honor of accepting it.”⁶⁷ Franco repaid Kolbe by awarding him the Grand Order of the Red Arrows in May. Recognition from one of the most important allies, who had just defeated the Communists in his country—and this with the help of German troops—was an unmistakable signal of Kolbe’s political reliability. It also illustrated the international reach and appreciation of his art.

Spanish Civil War

Even then, however, Kolbe’s portrait of Franco was met with incomprehension. Kolbe mentioned this to the emigrated art dealer Curt Valentin, perhaps as a proactive response to the many press reports that had just appeared: “There are people who cringe at the name [Franco]. But I found a splendid chivalrous man. I saw much of the country and its strengths.”⁶⁸ Given Kolbe’s reluctance to comment on politics and politicians, it

6.

Wie ich Franco modellierte

„Ich hatte den Auftrag bekommen, Franco zu modellieren“, erzählt Professor Kolbe. Wir sitzen in dem vertraulichen, lichten Atelier seines hellverputzten Hauses an einer der weltlichen Anfallstrassen Berlins. „Ich hatte erklärt, den Auftrag nur dann zu übernehmen, wenn man mir Gelegenheit gäbe, nach dem Leben zu schaffen. Man war einverstanden.“

Die Reise ging nach Saragossa, wo ich verabredetermaßen Franco treffen sollte. Als ich ankam, war er gerade nach Burao gefahren. „Sie werden nie eine Skulptur bekommen“, prophezeiten spanische Kollegen. Am besten habe damit sie zehn Minuten.“

Ich wartete. Als Franco aber nicht zurückkam, fuhr ich ihm nach Burao nach. Schon Zaar dauerte es, bevor er Zeit für mich fand. Dann aber fand er sofort zu meiner Verfügung.

Durch einen Kordon von Wachen gelangte ich zu ihm. Ich bin immer nervös, bevor es so weit ist, daß ich an eine Arbeit herangehen kann. Sobald ich aber Franco sah, streute ich mich über meine Aufgabe. Franco ist 46, von kleiner Statur. Sein Haar scheint an grau zu werden. Er ist ein strenger, verschlossener Soldat, ganz unauffällig und sehr lebenswürdig. Da ich nicht spanisch verstand, sprachen wir französisch.

Ich hatte mir drei Skulpturen ausbedungen. Sie fanden im Arbeitszimmer seines Wohnhauses in Burao statt. Da es an sein Zerstreuungsort, konnte ich Familienmitglieder ein und aus geben sehen. Es ist ja bekannt, daß Franco ein sehr inniges Familienleben führt. Außer seiner Frau und seiner einzigen Tochter Carmenita leben noch sein Schwager, dessen Gattin und Kinder in dem großen, von einem Garten umgebenen Hause.

Man hatte Franco zur Einführung ein Buch über mich gegeben, in dem meine Plakate abgebildet sind, worüber er mir sehr interessiert sein Gefallen ausdrückte. Etwas wunderte mich diese Zerknirschung, weil mein gesamtes Werk ja aus nackten Menschenfiguren besteht, und man in Spanien in diesen Dingen doch sehr streng denkt.

Franco hatte sich vorgestellt, daß er sitzen bleiben könne, während ich arbeite. Als ich ihn darauf hinwies, daß er sitzen müsse, sagte er sehr lebenswürdig: „Sitz, dann sehe ich.“ Und er hat gehalten, unbeweglich, ausdauernd, jedesmal fast zwei Stunden.

Während dieser Zeit empfing er seine Adjutanten und Generale zu Vorträgen, diktierte, gab Befehle, arbeitete angestrengt und fast pausenlos. Manchmal hat ich Etwas mehr nach links... nach rechts... Dann mußten sich diese Männer



Die Franco-Plastik von Kolbe

Aufn. Schwartzkopff

auf seinen Stuhl so weit wegdrehen, bis ich ihn sehen konnte, wie ich wollte.“

Worüber hat sich Franco während des Modellierens mit Ihnen unterhalten, Herr Professor?

„Von mir nahm er scheinbar überhaupt keine Notiz. Dann und wann ersuchte ich ihn allerdings dabei, daß er mich verloben beobachtete.“

„Aber irgend etwas wird er doch in zwei Stunden gefast haben“, werfe ich ein. „Der Sie werden etwas gefast haben!“

Kolbe überlegt. „Doch“, meint er, „wir haben über's Weiter gesprochen. — Franco war ein ideales Modell. Es gab nicht die actuellen Schwierigkeiten. Manche Bildbauer machen sich Zeichnenstücken und Ausnahmen des Modells als Arbeitsgrundlage. Obwohl die Zeit zur Ausführung der Arbeit äußerst knapp bemessen war, wollte ich gern Franco das Entstellen seines Bildnisstypus miterleben lassen. Ich hatte mir also ein Gerüst aufgebaut und einen Rahmen Ton mitgebracht, und so konnte er nun den Fortschritt der Arbeit verfolgen. Ich hatte das Gefühl, daß ihm meine Arbeitstechnik einen starken Eindruck machte. Denn, als sich der Kopf der Vollendung näherte, sagte er einmal ganz spontan: „Es ist doch wunderbar, wie ein Künstler die Sache anpaßt! Ich er hat mir von selbst noch eine vierte Sitzung an.“

Das Arbeiten ist ja auch eine Jagd gewesen. Ich mußte in den wenigen Stunden mit äußerster Konzentration arbeiten und war darüber jedesmal vollkommen erschöpft. Alle Teile und Teilschen dieses durchgehenden Gefühls mußten eingeplant werden.

Sie gehörten ja ihm, nicht mir. Ich sollte sie erst übernehmen, begreifen, wiedergeben. Sehen Sie sich einmal den Kopf an“, werde ich aufgefordert.

Das Kunstwerk steht auf einem kleinen Podest und macht auf den Betrachter einen Eindruck von sehr bestiger Unmittelbarkeit. An diesem Kopf hat das Leben modelliert, hat jeden Muskel herausgearbeitet.

„Sehen Sie sich diesen Mund an... wie knapp und deidiert... und die Nase, die Augen. Das sind Formen, hundert von Jahren alt.“

„Was hat Ihnen Franco zum Abschied gesagt, Herr Professor?“ „Ich habe noch immer auf eine persönliche kleine Handbemerkung, ein paar interessante Gesprächsleben oder dergleichen. „Gar nichts. Was sollte er sagen? Wir haben uns mit einem gegenseitigen „Danke schön!“ verabschiedet.“

Weiter nichts? „Ich bin enttäuscht, aber nur im ersten Augenblick. Denn findet das gemeinsame Schmecken zweier großer Männer nicht eine sehr bereichende Form des Einverständnisses?“

loz.

10 Lotte Zielesch's reportage „Wie ich General Franco modellierte.“ (Gespräch mit Professor Kolbe), (How I Modeled General Franco), published in various newspapers between late February and early May 1939, partially on the occasion of the German-Spanish Week of Culture in mid-March, here in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, May 6, 1939

is surprising that on several occasions he was explicit and downright enthusiastic about Franco. Knowledge of Franco's role in the Spanish Civil War apparently did not plunge Kolbe into conflicts of conscience, as Heartfield imagines in his photomontage. However, and this is also noteworthy, nowhere do we get an assessment of the Civil War from Kolbe. This is despite the fact that Kolbe and Günter von Scheven, who accompanied him on the trip, visited a front area during their four-week visit to Spain in November 1938.⁶⁹ Von Scheven reported: “I had to build a bridge between the horrors of the war and the beauty of the south. Light and darkness were always close together. Above all, Kolbe created a good portrait of Franco and thus ensured the success of the whole enterprise, despite all the tribulations.”⁷⁰ Which tribulations and which horrors of the war they actually saw are not mentioned. Kolbe would not have been sufficiently informed about the

deployment of the Legion Condor, a unit of the German Luftwaffe that was instrumental in the attack on the civilian population of Guernica. However, Picasso's painting *Guernica* (1937) had been on display a few hundred yards from Kolbe's sculpture *Große Verkündung* (Large Proclamation, 1937) at the 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris. The brutality of the Civil War was, of course, blamed in German propaganda not on Franco but on the Republicans. In view of Kolbe's statements, we can safely assume that he was on the side of Franco's nationalists⁷¹—unlike numerous leftist-leaning artists and intellectuals in England and France, and unlike John Heartfield in Prague and later in London. That Kolbe was understood by the NS regime as part of its ideological intervention in the Spanish Civil War is evident not only in the coverage of the Franco portrait, but also in the fact that he received an invitation to a reception on June 7, 1939, on the occasion of the return of the Condor Legion, after the secret of the Legion's existence had been revealed and was now being exploited all the more effectively for propaganda purposes.⁷² This reception at the Berlin Zoo was preceded the day before by a grand parade through the Brandenburg Gate with a state ceremony in the Lustgarten—a meticulously planned spectacle.

The Development of Kolbe's Reception under National Socialism

How did the commission come about in the first place, however? In 1980, Ellen Bernhardt, the wife of the aforementioned initiator Johannes E. F. Bernhardt, who was described as a “mediator between Franco and Hitler,” explained to Kolbe's granddaughter, Maria von Tiesenhausen: “The sculptors Breker and Thorak put us off somewhat because of their monumentality; moreover, they were busy with state commissions. Prof. Kolbe appealed to us more because of his humanity, which is expressed in all his works.”⁷³ Kolbe accepted immediately. Perhaps it was a special satisfaction for him that *he* had been asked, rather than Breker or Thorak. He had an ambivalent relationship with the two younger sculptors—he felt neither an artistic nor a personal connection to them. And at the same time, he had to accept that, from the second half of the 1930s on, he was regularly mentioned in the same breath—if not alongside or even behind them—in the media coverage.⁷⁴ In 1937, Thorak was even referred to as Kolbe's “twin brother,” while Kolbe's circle of acquaintances was amused by the “inflated rubber muscles” of “Pneumothorak.”⁷⁵

This shift could be summarized as the replacement of one narrative by another. As a representative of a free, pluralistic modernism and as a member of a circle that had been presented for the last time in the 1938 London exhibition, Kolbe had become invisible in Germany. Instead, by the end of the 1930s at the latest, he had advanced to being a representative of a national sculptural art that, in current news coverage, could no longer be separated from the NS state and its propaganda. A press photograph from July 1940 shows Kolbe sitting in the first row during Alfred Rosenberg's speech at the opening of the exhibition *Meisterwerke der Plastik in Berlin* (Masterpieces of Sculpture in Berlin), a show that aptly summarized the new canon—Karl Albiker, Breker, and Thorak, as well as



11 Georg Kolbe (first row, far left) listens to Alfred Rosenberg during his opening speech for the exhibition *Meisterwerke der Plastik* (Masterpieces of Sculpture) at the Künstlerhaus of the Verein Berliner Künstler, Berlin. The Italian ambassador Dino Alfieri (first row, second from right) was also present at this event, July 1940, historical photograph

Kolbe, Richard Scheibe, and Fritz Klimsch (fig. 11). The fact that Kolbe was also officially appreciated is evidenced amongst other things by the correspondence in preparation for his sixty-fifth birthday in April 1942. Adolf Ziegler suggested that Hitler award Kolbe the Goethe Medal.⁷⁶ The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, which initiated a congratulatory telegram from Goebbels and at the same time ordered the press release on this, also endorsed the proposal. The bearer of the news was Undersecretary Leopold Gutterer, who paid a surprise courtesy visit to Kolbe with two members of his staff. Was Kolbe pleased? Perhaps less than one might imagine, had he been aware that, the previous year, on May 6, 1941, Gutterer had informed Reinhard Heydrich in anticipatory obedience that his friend Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, as well as Emil Nolde and Edwin Scharff, had been banned from working.⁷⁷ And it was also Gutterer who, in 1940, had introduced an “obligatory marking of Jews” in Germany.⁷⁸ Gutterer is an example of the interconnectedness of different political spheres. Thus, the execution of state commissions was not merely “business as usual,” i.e., what sculptors simply do; Kolbe’s work and his person were instrumentalized without Kolbe having to profess himself in so many words.⁷⁹ Kolbe’s willingness to carry out public commissions, to accept honors, and to be celebrated as a sculptor in the politically conformist press had maneuvered him into a situation that was difficult for some to justify after the war.



12 Georg Kolbe, portrait of the Reich Labor Leader Konstantin Hierl, 1942, bronze, h. 50 cm, historical photograph

The painter Karl Hofer wrote to Kolbe at the end of 1945 that it was embarrassing “that you portrayed one or more of the swine for thousands of marks.”⁸⁰ Kolbe probably did not receive “thousands of marks” for his portrait of Franco or the bust of Reich Labor Leader Konstantin Hierl (fig. 12), as Hofer speculated, but his good contact with Hierl, who even became a minister without portfolio in the summer of 1943, led to various opportunities.

Reich Labor Leader Hierl and Hierlshagen

In September 1943, for example, Hierl arranged for his “workmen” to build Kolbe a new impact-resistant bunker and, at the end of 1943,⁸¹ the sculptor was evacuated to Hierlshagen—a labor service settlement in Lower Silesia named after Hierl—where they set up a studio for him in the so-called Kameradschaftsheim, a kind of military social club.⁸² A visit by Hierl is documented by various photographs in the estate (fig. 13), as well as by a newspaper article. Although Kolbe received preferential treatment thanks to Hierl, the conditions in Hierlshagen were modest. Kolbe himself reported: “The higher authorities of the RAD [Reich Labor Service] mean well with me and want to do everything to keep me happy and healthy here.”⁸³ For a later siege of Berlin, Kolbe was to be housed in Bad Belzig in a block of barracks for displaced persons built on the site of a RAD “maidens’ camp.”⁸⁴ After Kolbe’s death, Hierl was sentenced to first three and then five years in a labor camp, but was eventually released early. In the early 1950s, he continued to publish texts in which he did not renounce his National Socialist worldview.



13 Konstantin Hierl's visit to Georg Kolbe in Hierlshagen, 1944, historical photograph from the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

But what did Kolbe's worldview look like? Even in the last years of the war, he rarely expressed his thoughts on the matter. In a letter—written three weeks after the attack on the Soviet Union—Kolbe showed himself to be thoroughly influenced by NS propaganda:

“Meanwhile, the terrible judgment has fallen upon the Bolsheviks. A world catastrophe has begun. Roaring, bloodthirsty hatred has been given free rein and is rushing upon humanity like a plague. Believe me, it is very hard to sit at home without being able to do or say anything.”⁸⁵

These sentences do not address the war as a universal catastrophe, but rather the threat posed by the Soviet Union. With the “judgement against Bolshevism,” Kolbe adopted a description of the war of conquest and extermination that was common in those weeks, while the plague rushing toward humanity recalls the popular title of Alfred Rosenberg’s book, in which he used the plague as a metaphor for the threat to Europe posed by Bolshevism.⁸⁶ Among Kolbe’s acquaintances who had been drafted was Günter von Scheven, who died on the Eastern Front on March 21, 1942. For Kolbe, this was a particularly hard blow. In an obituary, he quoted from von Scheven’s field letters; in 1944, Kolbe even published a book about him.⁸⁷ Kolbe’s homage to von Scheven—and not least his own letters—testify to the attempt to exaggerate the war and the death of soldiers in a meaningful way, and thus to fit into the cult of the fallen of National Socialist war propaganda.⁸⁸

104 “Franco and Beethoven, how can I manage this?”

The End of the War

In early 1945, Kolbe's fear of revenge and annihilation at the hands of advancing Soviet troops seems to have been great; the suicide rate in eastern Germany rose rapidly during those months. In February 1945, after returning to Berlin, Kolbe feared that the property he had left behind in Hierlshagen would "now be trampled on by the Russians."⁸⁹ Two weeks later, Kolbe asked a friend, a Red Cross matron, how to take the two pills she had once given him, explaining: "It is necessary to know, just in case, with this prospect!"⁹⁰ Kolbe wanted to be prepared for the worst and did not rule out a death of his own choosing. Having survived the end of the war, however,⁹¹ he expressed surprisingly positive views of the Red Army soldiers toward the end of 1945: "The enemy had become a friend from the first minute."⁹² In 1946, Kolbe even wrote that he had had the good fortune to experience "the day of liberation by the Russians as a resurrection,"⁹³ a formulation that perhaps owed something to the addressee of his letter, Erich Cohn, to whom he wanted to reaffirm his rejection of the NS regime, since the New York-based art collector had asked in his last letter about the motives for Kolbe's Franco portrait.⁹⁴

After the war, circumstances had changed, and Kolbe had no difficulty in adjusting to them. While in 1938 he had described the Franco commission as the culmination of his good fortune,⁹⁵ for painters like Nolde it was now a "stroke of good fortune" not to have had such opportunities in the first place.⁹⁶ The Expressionists benefited from being among the victims of NS art policy. Kolbe could not claim this privilege for himself.⁹⁷ His commissions during the National Socialist era raised uncomfortable questions. Karl Hofer accused him of stabbing other artists in the back.⁹⁸ On the other hand, Kolbe himself was unburdened enough that he was asked for a certificate of exoneration in Breker's denazification proceedings, which he kept short and noncommittal. Kolbe attested to Breker's artistic transformation, which "sank under the strongest Nazi influence."⁹⁹ And he claimed to have visited Breker only *once*, and that *before* his rapprochement with Hitler. Had he actually forgotten the various mutual visits that his appointment diaries document for the period beginning in the fall of 1935?¹⁰⁰

This essay has sketched Kolbe as an artist who, at first, was caught between two stools and, in the end, drew ever closer to those whom, in January and February 1933, he had still regarded from a distance and with suspicion as "Nazis" and "despicable fellows." When he stated shortly before his death that he had been able to "keep himself aloof,"¹⁰¹ this may have corresponded to his self-perception; in retrospect, however, such a statement must be put into perspective. For soon, the NSDAP could no longer be separated from the state—a state that granted him an important role as a sculptor and honored him, and which he, Kolbe, by no means categorically rejected. The interplay of personal situation, political developments, and artistic creation created a complex dynamic. Kolbe's dilemma, as visualized by Heartfield in 1938, came back to haunt him a few times in the remaining years of his life (for example, through the uncomfortable questions posed to him by Hofer or Cohn); however—not least because of his career as a sculptor, which

had already reached its zenith before 1933—it hardly played a role in his canonization in the second half of the twentieth century. Kolbe’s partial estate, which only recently returned to the Georg Kolbe Museum after the death of his granddaughter Maria von Tiesenhausen and which contains, for example, some of the previously unpublished letters on the Franco portrait, could—together with new questions posed to art and artists of the modernist period—contribute to a future reassessment.

Notes

- I am very grateful to the staff of the Kolbe Museum, especially Elisa Tamaschke, for providing me with material. I would also like to thank Julia Wallner and Thomas Pavel for their careful reading and helpful comments.
- 1 *Volks-Illustrierte* (VI), no. 29, July 20, 1938. Until 1936, the VI was called *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (AIZ). It was published by Willi Münzenberg.
 - 2 The Heine monument in Frankfurt am Main (1912/13) was torn from its pedestal by SA men in 1933 and damaged in the process; the Heine monument in Düsseldorf (commissioned in 1931) was not even erected. The Rathenau fountain (1928–30) was installed in the Volkspark Rehberge in Berlin-Wedding and was dismantled in 1934. Kolbe also noted the removal of his *Große Nacht* figure from the Rundfunkhaus. It is noteworthy that it was possibly reinstalled two years later in the broadcasting station of the Ostmarken Rundfunk in Königsberg; its current whereabouts are unknown. See: <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/nacht/62905?term=Die%20nacht&position=0> [last accessed April 15, 2023].
 - 3 Wilhelm Pinder, in: *Georg Kolbe. Werke der letzten Jahre, mit Betrachtungen über Kolbes Plastik von Wilhelm Pinder* (Berlin 1937), p. 15 [translated].
 - 4 Georg Kolbe, “Stefan George, Statthalter des Geistes ...,” in: *Berliner Tageblatt*, December 5, 1933 (evening edition), quoted in: Maria Freifrau von Tiesenhausen, *Georg Kolbe. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Tübingen 1987), p. 137.
 - 5 See: Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago and London 2002); Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (eds.), *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton 2009).
 - 6 Gerd Theunissen, “Georg Kolbe,” in: *Kunst der Nation*, no. 7, April 1, 1934, p. 3 [translated]. There, it states: “Never has there been a more intellectual sculptor in Germany, never one in whom culture, in the sense of a very self-confident and fanatical taming of the chaotic impulses, is expressed more sensually and at the same time more intellectually.” Theunissen concludes with the words: “This sculptor has made man luminous; he has rescued the highest from neglected and barbaric times into the silence of art: the form of the body in the living spirit” [translated].
 - 7 *Ibid.*, p. 1 [translated].
 - 8 Walther Voigt, “Georg Kolbe: Ein Kündler nordischen Lebensgefühls,” in: *Politische Erziehung*, no. 7, July 1937, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 9 Heinz Flügel, “Nordische Schönheit in der deutschen Kunst. Zum 60. Geburtstag Georg Kolbes,” title of the newspaper unknown, April 16, 1937, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 10 Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art* (Munich and Berlin 1937), p. 73 [translated]. It is worth noting that Willrich visited Kolbe in 1937. See the letter from Georg Kolbe to Georg Biermann, November 9, 1937; quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 159, no. 213.
 - 11 In this exhibition at Galerie Ferdinand Möller in Berlin, which ran from July to September 1933, the following works by Kolbe were presented: *Kleine Pietà* (Small Pietà), 1928, bronze, and *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man), 1927, bronze.
 - 12 See: Otto Andreas Schreiber, “Bekenntnis der Jugend zur deutschen Kunst,” in: *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (DAZ), July 10, 1933. A few months later, Kolbe was asked by members of the National Socialist German Students’ League to participate in the debate about “German art” by submitting a written statement.
 - 13 N. N., “Die Jury an der Arbeit. Wie die Ausstellung des Deutschen Künstlerbundes vorbereitet wird,” in: *Magdeburger Zeitung*, undated [May 1933], copy, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin. The Magdeburg exhibition was already accompanied by controversy; in a letter to Hermann Göring dated June 25, 1933, Wilhelm-Adolf Farenholtz championed the artists under attack with a partly anti-Semitic argument. Reprinted in: Aya Soika and Bernhard Fulda, *Emil Nolde. Eine deutsche Legende. Der Künstler im Nationalsozialismus. Chronik und Dokumente*, ed. Bernhard Fulda, Christian Ring, and Aya Soika on behalf of the Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Nolde Stiftung Seebüll (Munich 2019), p. 60, doc. 13.
 - 14 For more on Kolbe’s role during the controversy surrounding the Deutscher Künstlerbund (DKB) after 1933, see: Josephine Gabler, “Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit,” in: *Georg Kolbe. 1877–1947*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin (Munich 1997), pp. 87–94, here pp. 89–90; Ursel Berger, “‘Einseitig künstlerisch.’ Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit,” PDF document, 2018, p. 5. See <https://web.archive.org/web/20190508074534/> <https://www.georg-kolbe-museum.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Einseitig-künstlerisch-mit-Bildern->

Titel-1.pdf [last accessed August 5, 2023]. Kolbe initially withdrew his promise to serve as a board member in 1935 when individuals in Magdeburg wanted to interfere with the autonomy of the DKB, but he eventually remained a board member until it was banned in 1936. On the occasion of the awarding of the Goethe Prize in early 1936, the sculptor Philipp Harth therefore congratulated Kolbe as follows: “It is not without humor that the prize winner is president of the art clan whose disgraceful exhibition had to be closed by the police for undermining artistic culture.” Letter from Philipp Harth to Georg Kolbe, February 1, 1936, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), pp. 150f., no. 188 [translated].

- 15 For more on this incident, see: Soika/Fulda 2019 (see note 12), p. 60, doc. 25, and pp. 102–103.
- 16 Robert Scholz, “Der Kunstschwindel in London,” in: *Völkischer Beobachter* (Vienna edition), August 3, 1938, p. 9, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin: “We can perfectly prove on the basis of the list of the exhibition ‘Entartete Kunst’ that, of course, neither Kolbe nor Slevogt were represented in this exhibition, that rather [...] Kolbe’s sculptures, both in the previous year and this year, were among the main works in the exhibition at Haus der Kunst in Munich, which was representative of the artistic will of the new Germany” [translated]. In fact, Kolbe’s sculptures *Junger Streiter* (Young Fighter) and *Junges Weib* (Young Woman) were exhibited at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) in 1937 and 1938, respectively. See: *London 1938. Defending ‘Degenerate’ Art. Mit Kandinsky, Liebermann und Nolde gegen Hitler*, ed. Lucy Wasensteiner and Martin Faass, exh. cat. The Wiener Holocaust Library, London and the Liebermann Villa, Berlin (Wädenswil 2018), on Kolbe esp. pp. 70, 72, 192, note 9.
- 17 Georg Kolbe, “An die deutschen Studenten!” in: *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung. Kampfblatt der deutschen Studenten*, vol. 2, no. 9, May 31, 1934, p. 3. The art historian Wilhelm Pinder had encouraged him to participate. See: letter from Georg Kolbe to Wilhelm Pinder, undated [ca. April/May 1934], quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), pp. 184f: “I am not familiar with this organization. Do you know anything about this forum, and would you advise me to go along with the editor’s request? Furthermore, not being particularly eloquent by birth, I do not think much of written confessions of all those who are to be represented. That being said, I am moved that the NS German students want to hear my voice” [translated]. After

the war, Karl Hofer held the contribution against him. See: letter from Karl Hofer to Georg Kolbe, December 1, 1945, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), pp. 184–185, no. 273.

- 18 Kolbe 1934 (see note 17), p. 3. Kolbe explained: “A gesture can be very hollow. Mistrust the swollen breast: Bear in mind that we were not so fortunate because no common spirit was poured out upon us. No curtain was torn open before us. Every true man had to carry his faith beside him alone—if he did not want to eke out a living in an artists’ association as a misunderstood Raphael. Here lies much genuine German conscience.” For, says Kolbe: “Art was then only ‘cultivated’ and ‘traded’; a Führer rallied you and called upon you to march. What great fortune” [translated].
- 19 Ibid. [translated].
- 20 See: *Berliner Kunst in München*, exh. cat. Neue Pinakothek, Munich (Munich 1935). The opening of the exhibition was scheduled for March 15, 1935, and a total of 280 works were to be shown.
- 21 In addition to Kolbe, Arno Breker, Arthur Kampf, and Leo von König were also members of the exhibition commission, which was coordinated by the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. In response to the protest of the Bavarian Minister of the Interior and Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, the submissions from Berlin were examined, with the result that twenty-six works were taken down on the day of the opening.
- 22 Hannes Kremer, “Eine Bilanz,” in: *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung: Kampfblatt der deutschen Studenten: amtliches Nachrichtenblatt des Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes NSDSB und der Deutschen Studentenschaft*, Munich, no. 11, 1935, p. 3, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 23 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hannes Kremer, May 25, 1935, copy, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. A draft of Kolbe’s letter is also preserved in the Georg Kolbe Museum.
- 24 Martin Hieronimi, “Jugend spricht. Völkisch oder ‘populär’? (Der nationalsozialistische Kunstanspruch und seine Verwirklichung in der Gegenwart),” in: *Der Türmer: Deutsche Monatshefte. Die Bergstadt* (Berlin 1935), pp. 73–76, GKM Archive, Berlin. Hieronimi also describes the “immense danger that—in a counteraction to the past, which is understandable in itself—the boundaries of true völkisch art are set too narrowly, that art itself is ‘organized’ far too much” [translated].
- 25 Alfred Rosenberg, “Die kommende Kunst wird monumental, werkgerecht und artgemäß sein,” in:

- Völkischer Beobachter*, September 27, 1934, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 26 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Ottilie Schäfer, January 25, 1933, 2 pages, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin: "I have good press myself—however—I always rank far behind Barlach—who is, moreover, very moderately represented. He is and remains the awe-inspiring sculptor of the German soul—despite the fact that he often forms poorly and weakly—even the Nazis are beginning to pay homage to him" [translated].
 - 27 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Julia Hauff, February 16, 1933, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 28 Adolf Hitler, "Neue Kunstgesinnung. Bekenntnis zum Genie – Absage an Konjunktur-Ritter und Romantiker," title of the newspaper and date of publication unknown [1934], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin. Kolbe put two exclamation marks, for example, next to the sentence highlighting the incompatibility of mysticism and modern times: "Your purported Gothic internalization fits poorly into the age of steel and iron, glass and concrete, of women's beauty and men's strength, of raised head and defiant spirit" [translated].
 - 29 "Zwei Jahre Kulturkammer," in: *Berliner Tageblatt*, November 15, 1935, evening edition, page number unknown, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 30 The "Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden," co-signed by Kolbe, was published in numerous daily newspapers, for example: *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), no. 230, August 18, 1934, p. 10. The short text with the signatories was published together with other declarations of loyalty by numerous professional and social groups.
 - 31 Ursel Berger interprets the signing as a public signal of conformity but emphasizes that Ernst Barlach's signature was far less criticized than Kolbe's. See: Berger PDF (see note 14), p. 5.
 - 32 Cf. the letter from the President of the Reich Chamber of Literature (signed Dr. Haupt) to Mies van der Rohe, August 13, 1934, with the text of the appeal as an enclosure, Mies van der Rohe Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; as well as the letter to Emil Nolde, August 13, 1934, likewise with the text of the appeal as an enclosure, reprinted in: Soika/Fulda (see note 13), pp. 76–78, docs. 20, 21.
 - 33 Letter from Ernst Barlach to Hans Barlach, August 31, 1934: "I co-signed the appeal of the 'cultural sector' and am thus free of the accusation of practicing cultural Bolshevism, until they pull it out of the bag again." Quoted in: Ernst Piper, *Ernst Barlach und die nationalsozialistische Kunstpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main 1987), p. 113, doc. 80 [translated]. See also: Berger PDF (see note 14), p. 7, note 29.
 - 34 "Aufruf der Kulturschaffenden," title of the newspaper and date of publication unknown, with handwritten comments by Kolbe, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 35 See: letter from Alfred Rosenberg to Joseph Goebbels, August 30, 1934: "This rejection [of Adolf Hitler towards Barlach, Nolde, and Mies van der Rohe] has also been expressed publicly several times with great unambiguity; and it therefore remains regrettable that precisely these attacked personalities were asked to sign the published essay." See also: letter from Alfred Rosenberg to Joseph Goebbels, October 20, 1934 (probably never sent). In this letter, Rosenberg again takes up the accusation that a government councilor from Goebbels's ministry had urged the "cultural Bolsheviks" to "stand up for the Führer after all." Both letters quoted in Piper 1987 (see note 33), pp. 113f., doc. 81 (Aug. 30), pp. 116f., doc. 84 (Oct. 20) [translated]; letter from Alfred Rosenberg to Philipp Bouhler, head of the Führer's Chancellery, January 25, 1935, BArch, NS 8/208, p. 169, quoted in: Soika/Fulda (see note 13), pp. 78, 86.
 - 36 Letter from Harald Busch to the Gau Court of the Hamburg NSDAP, September 28, 1935, BArch, R 9361-V/4555 [translated]; cf. Soika/Fulda (see note 13), p. 91.
 - 37 Letter from the Office for the Preservation of Art, Cultural-Political Archive to the Gestapo, Berlin, June 8, 1936, BArch, NS 15/69 (provision of and request for information to the Gestapo regarding culturally active persons): "After the revolt of 1918, the sculptor Professor Dr. Georg Kolbe signed the appeal of the (Marxist) 'Work Council for Art, Berlin.' Kolbe was a member of the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin in 1932–33 and received excellent support from the Jewish press. According to reliable sources, Prof. Kolbe is a high-grade freemason. In his art, the sculptor represents a line that today is rejected as 'African' or even 'Eastern European'" [translated]. The accusation of being a "freemason" lacked any basis.
 - 38 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Georg Biermann, November 9, 1937, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 159, no. 213 [translated]. Kolbe wrote: "This small meeting of artists with the important name was anything but capable of working and, after attending two or three meetings, seemed to me a small absurdity. That I held the of-

fice of chairman is a free invention. [...] This spook seems to me to have been forgotten by everyone except Mr. Willrich. At the time of his visit to me, Willrich unfortunately did not speak of this 'highly dangerous' matter" [translated].

- 39 In contrast, an examination conducted by members of the Reich Chamber in 1941 confirmed Kolbe's political reliability. See the cover letter from Ilkier, Reich Chamber of Fine Arts, to the President of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts, August 7, 1941, Berlin State Archive, A Rep. 243-04, no. 453. The enclosure confirmed: "With regard to politics, nothing detrimental has become known" [translated].
- 40 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Julia Hauff, August 4, 1933, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.592_004, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 41 See: Peter Engelmann, "Zum 19. August. Die Kunst und Adolf Hitler. Ein Besuch bei Joseph [!] Thorak," August 17, 1934, in: *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (DAZ), collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 42 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Grete Heimholdt, March 25, 1935, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.577, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. For more on the awarding of the commission in Stralsund, see: Dietrich Schubert, "Revanche oder Trauer über die Opfer? Kolbe versus Barlach – ein Soldaten-'Ehrenmal' für die Stadt Stralsund 1928–1935," in: Martin Warnke (ed.), *Politische Kunst: Gebärden und Gebaren* (Berlin 2004), pp. 73–96.
- 43 Schubert 2004 (see note 42), p. 85 [translated].
- 44 Ibid., p. 86.
- 45 See: Magdalena Bushart "Die Bildwerke auf dem Reichssportfeld in Berlin," in: Annette Tietenberg (ed.), *Das Kunstwerk als Geschichtsdokument: Festschrift für Hans-Ernst Mittag* (Munich 1999), pp. 129–143, here pp. 134f.
- 46 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hilde von Dirksen, October 1, 1935: "And I can report from here, from myself, that I am not at all suitable for the big tasks that you probably assume, indeed that you had to assume from earlier reports. Only this week, my large marble statue 'Genius 1928' [...] was removed from the opera house. It is the fourth of my works that does not fit into this period. From a private point of view, that does not mean much. But at the moment, there are still some enquiries and requests for collaboration. But what can I offer then?" He goes on to report on his commissioned work for the local sports forum on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and states that it is not what "people out there want"; they are perceived as "one-sidedly artistic" [translated]. Quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), pp. 146–147, no. 180. Cf. also Berger PDF (see note 14), p. 11.
- 47 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Julia Hauff, March 5, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.595_002, GKM Archive, Berlin. To whose review of the Berlin exhibition he was referring is unknown to the author.
- 48 Postcard from Georg Kolbe to Ottilie Schäfer, July 26, 1936, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin: "I have nothing to expect in terms of visits, and I will not see much of the competitions either, because I did not purchase an entrance ticket, and they did not give me one either—I will see only the 'Führer's' march [into the stadium]" [translated].
- 49 See the tax documents in the MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 50 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Julia Hauff, January 10, 1937, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.596_001, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 51 In 1937, Kolbe had even been proposed for the role of head of the Master Studio for Sculpture at the Prussian Academy of Arts by Arthur Kampf and Richard Scheibe, as, incidentally, was Arno Breker. Kolbe received twelve votes in the internal vote, the best result, followed by Gerhard Marcks and Wilhelm Gerstel with six votes each and Röll and Breker with three votes each. The Academy Senate's proposal was thus Kolbe, followed by Marcks and Gerstel. In the end, however, the position went to Arnold Waldschmidt, sixty-two years old and loyal to the line, who had been proposed by Bernhard Rust, Minister of Science, Education and National Culture, by way of a ministerial directive. See the minutes of the meeting on May 3, 1937, PrAdK 1123, pp. 142–143.
- 52 This was expressed, among other things, in the fact that he often made disparaging remarks about the "plebs"—for example, in his marginal notes made while reading the newspapers.
- 53 Gabler 1997 (see note 14), p. 94, note 13, with reference to the letter in the Federal Archives (BArch, R-II 43/960, Bl. 54–55).
- 54 Gottfried Feder, quoted in: Sigurd Rabe, "Wider den Kulturbolschewismus," in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, December 16, 1933 [translated].
- 55 See: letter from Columbus [Colombo] Max to Georg Kolbe, December 28, 1933, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.232, GKM Archive, Berlin. A letter to Kolbe from his wife Paula Max dated May 12, 1930 has been preserved. GK Estate, inv. no. GK.234, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 56 Cf. the entry in Georg Kolbe's appointment calendar for December 6, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "Mrs. Colombo Max with

- Miss Feder." In the telephone calendar for 1934, the entries do not begin until mid-September. Presumably, it was Ingeborg Feder. A telephone call by Elisa Tamaschke on February 22, 2023 with a granddaughter of Elisabeth Feder confirmed the close friendship between Elisabeth Feder and Colombo and Paula Max.
- 57 I am grateful to Elisa Tamaschke for passing this information on to me. Letter from Elisabeth Feder to Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler, additionally addressed to Undersecretary Lammers, March 28, 1934, Reich Chancellery Files, Personal Affairs of Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler, BArch, R 43-II/960 [translated].
 - 58 Letter from the undersecretary in the Reich Chancellery [Lammers] to Georg Kolbe, with a stamp on the letter noting the post date of March 29, 1934, Reich Chancellery Files, Personal Affairs of Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler, BArch, R 43-II/960 [translated].
 - 59 E-mail from Elisa Tamaschke to the author, November 13, 2022, in which she summarizes a conversation with the executor of the estate of the granddaughter regarding Kolbe's commission of a Hitler bust on the occasion of the urn burial in November 2022. According to earlier statements by Maria von Tiesenhausen to the executor of the estate, who was a friend, "a portrait session had taken place (Kolbe had drawn him [Hitler]), during which Hitler had asked how long these portrait processes would take Kolbe. Kolbe had answered that he needed an average of twelve to fourteen sessions. [...] Apparently, this was too much work for Hitler, and he subsequently canceled the planned portrait. Kolbe had been worried afterwards because he was uncertain about what this cancellation by Hitler might mean for him" [translated].
 - 60 The requests are documented in the Reich Chancellery files. See: R 43-II/960-963; 957, 959. I am grateful to Elisa Tamaschke for passing this information on to me.
 - 61 Quoted in Berger PDF (see note 14), p. 20, note 38 [translated].
 - 62 Founded in mid-1938, HISMA (Compañía Hispano-Marroquí de Transportes Limitada) was a Spanish-German front company that, through the German merchant Johannes Franz Bernhardt, made it possible to supply Franco's Nationalists with war materials from Germany during the Civil War and eventually to handle all German-Spanish goods traffic. For more on the role of the HISMA director who commissioned Kolbe and with whose widow Maria von Tiesenhausen was later in good contact, see: Clara Blume, *Die Sieger schreiben Geschichte. Mediale Inszenierungen von Johannes Bernhardt und der deutschen Intervention im Spanischen Bürgerkrieg* (Berlin, Bern, and Vienna 2019); Hans-Henning Abendroth, *Mittelsmann zwischen Franco und Hitler. Johannes Bernhardt erinnert 1936* (Marktheidenfeld 1978).
 - 63 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Franco, draft, March 17, 1939, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 64 Letter from Adolf Hitler to Johannes E. F. Bernhardt, Managing Director of HISMA, June 23, 1939, certified transcript, copy in the MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. After receiving the "bronze bust of Generalissimo Franco created by Professor Kolbe," Hitler wrote in his letter of thanks from Berchtesgaden to HISMA that he was "genuinely pleased both by your loyal commemoration and by the work of art itself" [translated].
 - 65 See the reportage: Lotte Zielesch, "'Wie ich Franco porträtierte,'" in various newspapers, different publication dates (ca. mid-March 1936), collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin. There, Kolbe is quoted as saying: "Franco is forty-six and of small stature. His hair is beginning to turn gray. He is a stern, reserved soldier, quite unpretentious, and very amiable. Since I do not understand Spanish, we spoke French. I had asked for three sessions. They took place in the study of his home in Burgos. Since it adjoined his dining room, I could see family members coming in and out. It is well known that Franco leads a very intimate family life. In addition to his wife and only daughter, Cormencita, his brother-in-law, along with his wife and children, live in the large house surrounded by a garden" [translated].
 - 66 See the collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin, e.g.: *Völkischer Beobachter*, May 21, 1939; *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 21, 1939; *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost Beuthen*, May 21, 1939; *Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung*, May 22, 1939.
 - 67 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Franco, draft, March 17, 1939, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "Excellency, Your great kindness enabled me to create your portrait, which is greeted with much interest and acclamation everywhere among the German public. With great gratitude, I therefore take the liberty to present you my work in bronze and to ask you humbly to do me the honor of accepting it" [translated]. The draft was the basis for the letter, which has not been preserved, that accompanied the bronze casting to Spain.

- 68 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Curt Valentin, February 9, 1939, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 69 Thus mentioned in the reportage by Lotte Zielesch (see note 65). There, Kolbe is quoted as saying: "I saw Seville, of course; but I also got to know an area of the front" [translated].
- 70 Letter from Günter von Scheven to his mother, December 4, 1938, typed transcript by Maria von Tiesenhausen, undated, quoted in: Udo von Alvensleben (ed.), *Briefe des Bildhauers Günter von Scheven* (Krefeld 1952) [translated].
- 71 Cf. the draft of the letter from Georg Kolbe to Captain Wilhelmi, German Embassy in San Sebastian, March 25, 1939, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "Exactly three months have now passed since my time with Franco in Burgos. I think with much passion of the days of great struggle for my work, in which your kind willingness to help made so much, indeed everything necessary, possible for me. It is a sincere need for me to thank you once again. Enclosed you will find a few photographs of the final result. In the meantime, so much has happened within your sphere of activity, compared to which my small field of work is nothing, which you may have already forgotten. I thus remind you of it, as well as of your promise to visit me, should you have the opportunity. Yours sincerely, your devoted GK (incl. 2 Franco photos)" [translated].
- 72 Invitation: "The national group leader of the Falange Espanola Tradicionalista y de las I. O. N. S. [Adolfo Pardo Redonnet] and Mrs. Pardo, on the occasion of the return of the Condor Legion to Germany, to a tea reception on Wednesday, June 7, 1939 at 5:00 p.m. on the premises of the Zoo," invitation card, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 73 Letter from Ellen Bernhardt to Maria von Tiesenhausen, July 16, 1980, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "My husband simply approached him (he was never shy) and asked Prof. Kolbe whether he would be interested in a trip to Spain and Franco's head. As far as I remember, Kolbe agreed without hesitation. Since my husband never appeared in uniform, and it was a civilian mission (the Hisma was an economic matter), Kolbe probably never had the impression that this was a party mission. It was, in fact, only my husband's idea and had a private character. [...] Once I asked him [Kolbe] about his opinion of Franco as a person (a sculptor understands more than we do about character traits). Kolbe answered me: 'The large eye sockets are a Mediterranean feature, therefore not an individual one. On the other hand, the very small, somewhat feminine, and curved mouth of men strangely indicates cruelty'" [translated].
- 74 See, among others: Kurt Lothar Tank, "Das Heroische als Schicksalsauftrag. Gedanken zur deutschen Plastik unserer Zeit," in: *Pariser Zeitung*, March 21, 1943, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 75 Letter from Rudolf G. Binding to Georg Kolbe, October 16, 1937, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.56, GKM Archive, Berlin: "For your amusement, [I] will reveal that one of my nice young men in Munich has named the colleague Thorak with his inflated rubber muscles as 'Pneumothorak'" [translated]. And the architect Paul Bonatz, in his birthday letter to Kolbe in 1942, made some remarks about Thorak's "boorish reliefs on the Reichsbank" and commented on the "kitschy Art Nouveau sweetness" of the 'Menschenpaar' [Human Couple] at the 'Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung.'" Letter from Paul Bonatz to Georg Kolbe, April 23, 1942, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.69, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 76 Letter from Adolf Ziegler to Joseph Goebbels, December 12, 1942, BArch, R55-97: "In view of his outstanding personality, I suggest, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, in addition to an honor by a congratulatory telegram from the Reich Minister, to request the awarding of the Goethe Medal for Art and Science by the Führer." On January 21, 1942, the head of the Presidential Chancellery of the Führer and Reich Chancellor confirmed to the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda: "The Führer will comply with your suggestion and award the Goethe Medal for Art and Science to the sculptor Professor Dr. h. c. Georg Kolbe in Berlin-Charlottenburg 9 on the occasion of his reaching the age of sixty-five on April 15, 1942, in recognition of his services to the German fine arts" [translated].
- 77 Letter from Leopold Gutterer to Reinhard Heydrich, May 6, 1941, BArch, R 55/21018, sheet 18. See the reprint in: Soika/Fulda 2019 (see note 13), p. 154 and p. 182, doc. 67.
- 78 Gutterer was also scheduled to participate in the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, which had taken place a quarter of a year before Kolbe's birthday visit; however, for scheduling reasons, he was unable to attend.
- 79 Thus, in November 1941, the Berlin regional director of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts, August Kranz, praised him as follows: "The sculptor Professor Kolbe [...] is at the forefront of German artists and beyond that enjoys world renown. His large ongoing commissions for the state, the party, and the Wehrmacht, as well as his obligations to the

- highest authorities in supplying representative art exhibitions of the Reich (even outside its borders) place him at the center of today's cultural events." Kranz continued: "It is unnecessary to emphasize the extraordinary and at least equally high significance of Kolbe as, for example, that of Prof. Arno Breker. But I would like to emphasize that the latter is still young and enjoys the courtesy of all public authorities," while Kolbe, at the age of sixty-five, has "no more time to lose" and thus cannot wait for better times. Incidentally, this letter was only about an increase in the coal supply for the studio; significant, perhaps, because privileges for Kolbe did indeed exist, but they were comparatively modest. See: letter from Prof. August Kranz, regional director of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts, to the coal distribution office, November 15, 1941, Berlin State Archives, A Rep 243-04, no. 45531001.
- 80** Letter from Karl Hofer to Georg Kolbe, December 16, 1945; quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 185, no. 274 [translated].
- 81** See: Helmut Großmann, "Hierlshagen berühmter Gast," in: *Sprotenhagener Tageblatt*, undated [May 1944], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin. In this reportage from May 1944, Kolbe was presented as a "victim of the bomb terror of the Anglo-American air gangsters" [translated].
- 82** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Konstantin Hierl, Kranzallee 19 [September 1943], draft, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. Cf. the letter from Georg Kolbe to Hermann Lempeler, January 13, 1944, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.607.1.9_001, GKM Archive, Berlin: "I live here primitively, but free. The thirty maidens are well raised and so childlike that their noise represents life after all" [translated]. At the beginning of March 1944, he wrote to Lempeler about his work: "After you have seen my smashed studio, you will understand with what feelings I sit here in this rural village exile. For me, the tumult seems to be over for good." Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hermann Lempeler, March 9, 1944, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.607.1.9_002, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 83** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Ottilie Schäfer, March 13, 1944, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [translated].
- 84** See: letter from Georg Kolbe to Annemarie Ritter, March 28, 1945, GK Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "In case B. [Berlin] is besieged, I have been assigned accommodation in the maidens' camp near Belzig in der Mark, because the residences of the outer ring would be evacuated. A dreadful notion!" [translated].
- 85** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hermann Lempeler, July 11, 1941, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.607.1.6_001, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 86** Cf. Alfred Rosenberg, *Pest in Russland! Der Bolschewismus, seine Häupter, Handlanger und Opfer* (Munich 1922), with later editions.
- 87** Georg Kolbe, "Der Bildhauer Günter von Scheven," in: *Kölnische Zeitung*, May 31, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin (reprinted in: *Der Bücherwurm*, October 1942, pp. 4–6); reprinted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), pp. 168–170, no. 238. See also: Georg Kolbe, *Der Bildhauer Günther von Scheven* (Dessau 1944).
- 88** Von Scheven interpreted the war of aggression as a spiritual and moral turning point. See, for example, his journal entry of July 8, 1941: "One can only precipitately express something of the experiences; the experiences alone are not decisive, but rather the purification and transformation into a form suitable for us." Quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 170 [translated]. For more on the subject, see: Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden. Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole* (Vierow 1996).
- 89** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hermann Lempeler, February 15, 1945, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.607.1.10, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 90** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Ottilie Schäfer, February 27, 1945, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [translated].
- 91** Maria von Tiesenhausen reported on a dramatic end of the war on Sensburger Allee: "Still a few days later, the first combat troops move on; they leave behind unspeakable devastation. Other troops follow, looting, desecrating the daughter's house, setting fire." In: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 31 [translated].
- 92** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hugo Körtzinger, undated [ca. late 1945, before the onset of winter], draft, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "I do not know how the transformation from war to peace took place in your area. Here, the last days were hell, which I already experienced on the side of the Russian tanks. The house was a shooting range, at which the German guns were aiming. But one thing I can say: The enemy had become a friend from the first minute. Everything is far behind us. [...] Some of the former enemies visit the sculptor. On the German side, however, it is still all too quiet; even today, without money it is impossible to exist" [translated].
- 93** Letter from Georg Kolbe to Erich Cohn, July 8, 1946, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see

note 4), p. 187, no. 279; also quoted in: Berger PDF (see note 14), p. 4 [translated].

- 94 Letter from Erich Cohn to Georg Kolbe, May 27, 1946, in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 187, no. 279; letter from Georg Kolbe to Erich Cohn, July 8, 1946, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 187, no. 278: "As a friend, I want to speak openly to you. When I talk to people who are interested in art, or when they see your works in our home, I am asked: 'Why did Kolbe make Franco's portrait?'" Kolbe responded to Cohn's question by saying that he did not see the reality clearly. Moreover, he said, it was a private commission. Here, Kolbe was mistaken in that the client was a front company founded with the help of the NSDAP to support Franco.
- 95 Letter from Georg Kolbe to the mayor of his hometown Waldheim, June 1938, draft, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: "A call to Spain to produce a bust of Generalissimo Franco and a commission from the Reich Youth Leader complete the good fortune I am now enjoying" [translated].
- 96 For more on the "stroke of good fortune," see: Peter-Klaus Schuster, "Die doppelte 'Rettung' der modernen Kunst durch die Nationalsozialisten," in: Eugen Blume and Dieter Scholz (eds.), *Überbrückt. Ästhetische Moderne und Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne 1999), pp. 40–47, here p. 45.
- 97 This, of course, does not mean that there were no sympathizers of National Socialism among those defamed; Emil Nolde's case is a prime example of this.
- 98 Letter from Karl Hofer to Georg Kolbe, December 16, 1945, in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 185, no. 274. Hofer offered Kolbe a professorship at the Berlin University of the Arts (HdK) in November 1945, but did not learn of Kolbe's text for the *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung* and of his portraits of Franco and Hierl until December. He did not withdraw his offer of employment but thought it wise to wait for the reactions first. In his letter, Hofer claimed that "one can rightly say that you stabbed the others in the back, because the gentlemen then bragged about their association with Kolbe" [translated]. Hofer was also aware that there had been other cases, such as Emil Nolde, who had denounced Max Pechstein as a Jew to the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1933.

99 Letter from Georg Kolbe to the public prosecutor of the denazification tribunal of the administrative district of Donauwörth, July 16, 1947, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.511, GKM Archive, Berlin: "I hereby affirm on oath that Professor Arno Breker cannot have been an opponent of Jews in earlier years, since he socialized with many Jews and also had a Jewish patron. I have no information regarding his private life during the Nazi period, because I was only once in his studio as in his home—and this before his rapprochement with Hitler. From then on, a transformation in his view of art also became visible, which was formerly close to the French view and now sank under the strongest Nazi influence" [translated].

- 100 See Kolbe's appointment and telephone calendars for the period 1935–38, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin: October 6, 1935: [appointment] "Arno Breker and wife"; November 12, 1935: "visit with Breker"; November 23, 1935: "visit with Brekers"; December 15, 1935: [appointment] "Arno Breker and wife"; March 11, 1936: "visit to A. Breker"; June 21, 1937: [appointment] "Arno Breker and wife"; October 16, 1937: [telephone] "Breker"; January 17, 1938: [telephone] "Prof. Breker" [!]; February 9, 1938: [appointment] "Breker"; May 4, 1938: [telephone] "Prof. Breker" [!]; May 8, 1938: [appointment] "Baron Uxküll/Breker and wife."
- 101 This was Kolbe's formulation in the letter to Erich Cohn, quoted above, in which he had to justify his portrait of Franco; letter from Georg Kolbe to Erich Cohn, July 8, 1946, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 4), p. 187, no. 279 [translated].

Paula Schwerdtfeger

Conceived in Space

Georg Kolbe's Exhibition

Participations 1933–42

There is hardly an important exhibition in Germany after 1933 in which Georg Kolbe was not involved. His works were included in all editions of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen* (GDK, Great German Art Exhibitions) at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich. Kolbe represented Germany at the Venice Biennale in 1934 and at the Exposition Internationale in Paris in 1937. He had solo exhibitions in Germany and abroad, participated in numerous annual and salon exhibitions, had gallery shows, and was represented in a number of presentations entitled *Plastik der Gegenwart* (Contemporary Sculpture) or *Meisterwerke deutscher Plastik* (Masterpieces of German Sculpture)—one such exhibition took place in Warsaw in 1938 under the artistic direction of Arno Breker.¹ Without a doubt, Georg Kolbe was an integral part of the exhibition system of the National Socialist era. In the early 1930s, he was still mentioned in the same breath as his former companions and colleagues Wilhelm Lehmbruck (died 1919) and Ernst Barlach (died 1938); but this changed in 1936, and even more so in 1937 after the *Erste Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (First Great German Art Exhibition) at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst and the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition opposite it in the Hofgarten Arcades in Munich. From this staged turning point onwards, one finds in the collection of newspaper clippings in the archive of the Georg Kolbe Museum the names Georg Kolbe, Josef Thorak, and Arno Breker. Added to this grouping are occasionally Richard Scheibe and Joseph Wackerle, as well as, very often, Fritz Klimsch—contemporaries, in some cases considerably younger than the already established Kolbe.

The exhibition participations alone do not say anything about the artist's position within the dictatorship.² The institutions, contacts, and cultural-political and political interventions of the regime are too different, as are Kolbe's works, some of which were from the 1920s and some of which were new productions characterized by a clear change in style. In the following, it will therefore be a matter of recognizing the nuances and finding words for them. Thus, although no clear positioning of Kolbe can be discerned, there are indeed slight differences between the NS regime's demands on representative art and Kolbe's own interests. Kolbe undoubtedly saw himself as German in the national sense and as a modern sculptor in the artistic sense. Moreover, no anti-Semitic or nationalist statements by him are known to date. Were his exhibition participations a non-verbal endorsement of the NS regime?

Where Does Kolbe Stand?

Kolbe was involved not only in representative exhibitions of the National Socialist regime, but also in several scandalous shows that represent milestones of the erratic and by no means straightforward NS cultural policy. The regime responded to these exhibitions with bans and censorship. In this context, the exhibition *30 Deutsche Künstler* (30 German Artists) by the National Socialist German Students' League at Galerie Ferdinand Möller in Berlin in July 1933 is notorious.³ Here, in addition to Ernst Barlach, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, August Macke, and Franz Marc, Georg Kolbe was to be presented

as an example of artistic freedom and cultural renewal through National Socialism. In this commitment to artistic modernism as genuinely National Socialist, the Students' League received the support of Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, who thus opposed Alfred Rosenberg's national-racial *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* (Militant League for German Culture) and other representatives of the national-racial camp. Kolbe was represented in the exhibition with two works from the late 1920s.

Three days after its opening, the exhibition was closed, and it reopened only after significant changes had been made—a victory for the national-racial opponents of Expressionism. Nevertheless, as Arie Hartog has noted, “Kolbe was mentioned in every review of the exhibition but was never the bone of contention.”⁴ The situation was similar in other exhibitions that sought to firmly establish Expressionism and other modern art movements. Kolbe was not the object of criticism, even in exhibitions for which he was jointly responsible for the organization, such as *Berliner Kunst* (Berlin Art) in Munich in 1935 and the exhibition *Malerei und Plastik in Deutschland 1936* (Painting and Sculpture in Germany 1936), organized by the Kunstverein Hamburg together with the Deutscher Künstlerbund, of which Kolbe was a member of the board.⁵ In contrast to many artists whose notoriety during the Weimar Republic stood in the way of continuity into National Socialism, for whom even the slightest abstract or expressive tendencies in their early work were enough to destroy their professional existence, and for whom advocacy of free autonomous art was interpreted in an extremely negative way, this surprisingly did not apply to Kolbe.

Only once did the debate over his works and person divide opinion, and that was when the organizers included a work by Kolbe in the exhibition *20th Century German Art* at the New Burlington Galleries in London in 1938. This exhibition presented German exile art one year after the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich. Kolbe's portrait *Paul Cassirer*, which was included in the exhibition, came from the Paris estate of Hugo Simon—to the displeasure of many anti-fascists who denounced Kolbe's prominent position in official NS art.⁶ And to the displeasure of the National Socialist press. The newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* reported extensively on the counter-exhibition after Adolf Hitler incited against it in his speech at the opening of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1938*.⁷ It was precisely on Kolbe that the National Socialist press made the case that the London show was “lying,” because no works by Kolbe had been included in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition. No art-critical judgment led to this commitment to the sculptor, but rather only the fact that his name was not to be found on the lists of the ostracized.⁸ This scandal also seems to have had no direct consequences for Kolbe.

Meanwhile, Joseph Goebbels transferred the Secessionist artists' associations to the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Chamber of Fine Arts), which, from 1935 onwards, had to approve all exhibition activities in advance.⁹ From that point on, the exhibition system was under state control. In Berlin, Goebbels additionally installed the *Ausstellungsleitung Berlin e. V.* (Berlin Exhibition Direction) with Hans Herbert Schweitzer as “Führer,” who had sole authority over the exhibits rather than a jury being involved. In terms of content, Schweitzer was close to the national-racial camp. However, he was



1 Exhibition view of the 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris with Georg Kolbe's *Große Verkündigung* (Large Proclamation, 1937, bronze, h. 165 cm) in the entrance hall of the German House, historical photograph

supported by Goebbels and thus politically strengthened, and his exhibitions competed with the traditional salon exhibitions such as the academy exhibition and the *Große Berliner*—a tradition in which Kolbe had successfully participated and with which he identified. Despite the increasing political control and centralization of the liberal artists' association and exhibition system, he did not withdraw from any of the survey exhibitions.

There is only one circle in which one searches in vain for Kolbe's name. He was absent from the first exhibitions organized by Alfred Rosenberg's national-racial *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* and his NS-Kulturgemeinde (Cultural Community). Exhibitions such as *Die Auslese* (The Selection) in Berlin in 1934 and *Heroische Kunst* (Heroic Art) in Munich in 1936 were intended to place the national-racial concept of art, which referred to the perception of artistic and thus racial values inherent in the blood, at the forefront of National Socialist art policy. Kolbe's works were not included in these exhibitions. Accordingly, at the beginning of the NS regime, they were not yet considered suitable for national-racial use.

The 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris is also informative with regard to the question of Kolbe's status within National Socialist art policy (or rather policies). His work *Große Verkündigung* (Large Proclamation, 1937; fig. 1) was placed there in the entrance hall of the *Deutsches Haus*, the “crematorium,” as the emigrated author Paul Westheim bitterly referred to Albert Speer's monumental German architecture.¹⁰ Kolbe's sculpture stood prominently in the entrance area of the pavilion, welcoming the international



2 Exhibition view of Georg Kolbe's special exhibition on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, Preußische Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1937, historical photograph

audience. But compared to the works of Josef Thorak, its appearance shrank to a marginal, albeit artistically fine, gesture. Thorak's martial figures were installed in the outdoor area of the pavilion, symbolically embodying National Socialism, statically directed against the Soviet movement, which confronted the German pavilion in the form of the Soviet pavilion dynamically striving forward. Thorak's giants, in a formal hardening of Wilhelmine historicism,¹¹ displayed that steely physicality that made the militant-looking, architectural gesture seem like a continuation of the national monument. Kolbe, on the other hand, seems to have been on a different terrain. His work, adorned with floral arrangements in the Secessionist tradition, seemed like a salute to the nineteenth century, which was coming to an end and turning toward modernism.

Thus, on the one hand, Kolbe was right in the very middle of the representative cultural-political events of the NS state; on the other hand, his position was clearly different from that of someone like Josef Thorak. The difference lies both in the artistic statement and in the placement granted to Kolbe and conceded to him by the regime. The fact that Kolbe was not averse to monumentalizing, large-scale sculpture, and that he even turned increasingly to this form in the 1930s, is shown by photographs from the academy exhibition in the spring of 1937, which was extended by a special exhibition in honor of Kolbe's sixtieth birthday (fig. 2). The fine human figures of his previous work seem like a different

species when compared with the coarse, broad-shouldered, and steadfast fighters of the National Socialist environment. These include the *Krieger-Ehrenmal* (War Memorial) in Stralsund from 1934/35 and the kneeling *Wächter* (Guardian) for the anti-aircraft barracks in Lüdenscheid-Buckesfeld from 1937, the latter reaching a height of approximately 225 centimeters. The figures were conceived as monuments, and Kolbe applied for further state and public commissions with them. With few exceptions, however, these were not realized, while the younger artists Josef Thorak and above all Arno Breker developed into artistic celebrities who, in factory-like structures, provided works for the new large-scale projects of the NS state.

Trapped in His Own Self-Image

In this phase of National Socialist cultural consolidation around 1937, the artistic director of the Badische Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Kurt Martin, planned a sculpture exhibition for the Kunsthaus Zürich.¹² Unlike other foreign exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale, this show was not organized by the state, although it was indeed supervised, censored, and also financed by ministerial authorities and placed under the honorary patronage of the German legation in Bern.¹³ According to Martin's correspondence with the participating artists, Joseph Goebbels personally approved the selection of works on the basis of photographs.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the exhibition was to be understood as a purely institutional undertaking and as a means of promoting the German state abroad. The German Consul General reflected the expectations of the exhibition to the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in Berlin, leaving out the mixed reaction of the press, saying that the exhibition's "deliberate renunciation of propagandistic accessories has touched the local public in a pleasant way."¹⁵

Caught between two stools, it was the task of the curator Kurt Martin to comply with the official censorships of Goebbels's ministry on the one hand, and the artistic demands of the Kunsthaus Zürich on the other. The director of the Kunsthaus, Wilhelm Wartmann, initially reacted coolly to the prospect of exhibiting contemporary German sculpture: "The Swiss [were] obviously not interested in a propaganda show."¹⁶ He agreed to the proposed selection only after Martin assured him that Germany would pay for the cost of packing and transporting the works to the Swiss border. Despite the very short lead time, Martin managed to make a selection for each of the six exhibiting artists: Georg Kolbe, Karl Albiker, Christoph Voll, Gerhard Marcks, Wilhelm Gerstel, and Otto Schliessler. Ernesto de Fiori, Edwin Scharff, and Ernst Barlach, who were originally scheduled to participate, were vetted out by the National Socialist authorities.¹⁷

On January 14, 1937, the exhibition opened under the title *Deutsche Bildhauer* (German Sculptors). One room was dedicated to each artist. Kolbe's selection in the main room subsequently traveled to the Kunsthalle Bern. On display were works by him from the previous ten years, including the sculpture *Große Nacht* (Large Night, 1926/30), which had been in the basement of the Haus des Rundfunks in Berlin since 1933. Apart from

this exceptional work, the selection corresponded to those of Kolbe's exhibitions that toured Germany unperturbed by National Socialist cultural policies. Whether at the Westfälischer Kunstverein in Münster in 1935 or at the Städtisches Museum in Hagen one year later, it was still possible to exhibit his classics of the 1920s, and in a way that honored the individual work as autonomous. Only the *Junge Streiter* (Young Fighter) from 1935 can be classified differently. The bronze had already been sold before the trip to Switzerland, and from there it went to the first *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Munich, where it was installed in the large Sculpture Hall.¹⁸

In his correspondence with Kurt Martin, the Kunsthaus Zürich, and the Kunsthalle Bern, Kolbe's self-image can be discerned in almost every line. He saw himself as one of the most important German artists, as a representative both of the state and of German art. It is this self-image that perhaps makes it understandable why an artist who was financially secure and had already established a successful career, despite both the protected, inferior competition of artists in National Socialist Germany and an apparent lack of conviction, could always be found in the vicinity of political leaders, sent his stylistically new works to exhibitions that could obviously be exploited for propaganda purposes, and granted his image rights even for political magazines of the SS or the national-racial circle. He considered his work to be so important that there was no question of withdrawing it. At the same time, his success in Switzerland, which was approved by the Ministry of Propaganda, shows that it was precisely his moderate sculpture that could positively promote Nazi Germany, because it was not actually propagandistic, but rather served, as it were, the autonomous concept of art, which continued to have priority abroad.

Although Kolbe was politely interested in the Zurich exhibition, he was quick to point out that not all of the works would be available. His special exhibition at the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin in the summer of 1937 was clearly more important to him. Kolbe let Kurt Martin know: "I also consider the show in Bern to have been undertaken in the public interest of German art, and I expect that it will not cause me any personal effort or expense."¹⁹ Martin thus also organized Kolbe's one-man show in Bern, took care of transport, packing, and the assumption of costs, and assured him that his works would be returned in time for the academy exhibition. Still, Kolbe was not satisfied. The reviews in Switzerland were not what he had hoped for: "We German sculptors are not very impressed by it."²⁰ In view of the low purchase volume in Zurich and despite the great initial interest, Kolbe was disgruntled: "After this cooling off, however, I am not very happy about the forwarding of my bronzes to Bern. After all, I was missing important pieces for my special show at the academy."²¹ It was to be the first academy exhibition after the political restructuring of the institution, under the new patronage of Hermann Göring, and the "curator" was now the Minister of Culture, Bernhard Rust.²²

Linking Up with Tradition at Haus der Deutschen Kunst

Contrary to the custom of competing with colleagues in such annual exhibitions, Thorak and Breker presented their works only to a limited extent in this context.²³ They preferred the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* which, within the now centralized exhibition system, was to present official NS art as a propagated “spearhead.” This was the platform on which Kolbe’s works were juxtaposed with the models and designs for state commissions by the sponsored artists. In the first years of the mass exhibition, the state-sponsored art formed a sculptural canon that identified the regime as a self-affirming system. The schematic “companion piece hanging” in the strictly axially symmetrical architecture of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst always produced the same prominent hanging surfaces per wall, per room, and across different age groups.²⁴ The adjacent works were subordinate to the axially emphasized, central works. The prominent hanging surfaces included both end walls of the Sculpture Hall, the middle position of the two side walls, and the center of the hall, which was only occasionally occupied. The state commissions and monument designs of the sponsored artists were emphasized by their prominent positioning as special artistic contributions and thus stood out from the mass of other works.

Georg Kolbe’s greatest success was probably the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* 1939, where he presented three female nudes on one of the aforementioned prominent end walls of the Sculpture Hall (fig. 3). On display there were *Amazone* (1937), *Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), and *Auserwählte* (The Chosen, 1939).²⁵ Opposite them on the other end wall was Josef Thorak’s bronze model of a horse (fig. 4), which, in a greatly enlarged ensemble of figures, was to crown the “Fuehrer’s grandstand” of the March Field on the NS party rally grounds in Nuremberg.²⁶ On the side walls, Arno Breker’s *Bereitschaft* (Readiness, 1939) on the one side and *Dionysos* (1936–37) on the other were accompanied by a large number of subordinate figures. The presentation of Kolbe’s bronze nudes as a triad follows the axially symmetrical hanging customary at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung*. *Hüterin* was emphasized by a pedestal that extended beyond the wall cladding otherwise considered as a yardstick. The architect, Paul Ludwig Troost, had deliberately set the wall cladding high enough to force the exhibition organizers to achieve “clarity” and to avoid overcrowding the wall surfaces.²⁷ Only in a few cases was this line abandoned, mostly in order to emphasize the relationship between moderate emphasis and lateral subordination. Elevated by the pedestals above eye level into the white space above the wall cladding that extended up to the ceiling, the three female nudes stood as a closed group in a pyramidal composition. The visitor viewed the sculptures from below, thus shifting the slightly larger-than-life format of Kolbe’s figures into monumentality. The pedestals of the three figures were placed directly in front of the wall and in a line—as were the rest of the pedestals, which ran along the outer edge of the room like a ribbon. Together with the height of the pedestals, the resulting view from below, and especially the otherwise undecorated design of the large exhibition spaces, this proximity to the wall made the sculptures appear flat, like architectural ornaments. The



3 Exhibition view of the Sculpture Hall of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939* in Munich with Georg Kolbe's bronze figures *Amazone* (Amazon, 1937), *Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), and *Auserwählte* (The Chosen, 1939), h. each ca. 220 cm, between paintings by Otto Albert Hirth, historical photograph

fact that the passageways were often accentuated by busts on pedestals to the right and left further emphasized this effect. Kolbe's female nudes appear as if they were "art in architecture" oriented to a façade.

Under the heading "From the Greeks to the Reichsautobahn," the reviewer Ludwig Eberlein wrote about the Sculpture Hall:

"It was a good idea on the part of the exhibition organizers to hang between the sculptures mainly such pictures that take their motifs from architecture [...]. In this way, one is always reminded that sculpture today works again for architecture, for the monumental buildings and squares that are being built in Berlin, Nuremberg, Hamburg, Munich, and not, as in the past, for museums."²⁸

The programmatic agenda of the third year of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* was thus grasped. In Hall 1, the prelude to the exhibition took the form of a large portrait of Adolf Hitler as a master builder: *Bildnis des Führers* (Portrait of the Führer, 1939) by Fritz Erler. Hitler is depicted in front of a fictional ensemble of a monument in front of temple-like buildings with both Nordic national-racial and antique influences. He is depicted as the uniformed "builder" of a new society and its monuments, flanked by the classical sexes as a reinterpretation of Adam and Eve: an *Amazone* by Paul Scheurle and



4 Exhibition view of the Sculpture Hall of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* 1939 in Munich with Josef Thorak's *Pferd* (Horse) at the front and Arno Breker's *Bereitschaft* (Readiness, 1939) centered on the left wall, historical photograph

a *Wettkämpfer* (Athlete) by Alfred Sachs. Within the uniquely consistent structure of the Sculpture Hall in 1939, Georg Kolbe's figures then assumed an important role. The *Völkischer Beobachter* thus discovered in Kolbe's "triad of nude girls with deer-slender limbs and high pure foreheads" a "riply blossomed classicism."²⁹

For the so-called Third Reich, the idiosyncratic reference to antiquity had a stabilizing effect on authority. When viewed together with the views of architecture or ruins by Otto Albert Hirth and Hermann Urban, Kolbe's works, as well as the other sculptures in the hall, entered into a dialogue that promised the monumental character of National Socialist art productions. The construction of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst, the procession for the annual opening on the "Day of German Art," and the emblem of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* with Pallas Athena were all influenced by Hitler's belief that the Teutonic and the ancient Greek were racially related. Architecture—and with it sculpture—was to be an eternal monument to the new order. The motifs of the paintings thus elevated Breker's sculptures, which were centrally emphasized on the side walls, to expressions of antiquity, which, however, they only feigned to be in their quotational setup.³⁰ The two discus throwers, in turn, to the right and left of the entering visitor, invoked the propagandistically successful 1936 Olympic Games. As with the medialization of the games, it was all about an ideologically guided, idealized physique, which the reviewer Walter Almon-Gros described in its suggestive power as follows:

“Here [in the Sculpture Hall], everything is large and free and uplifting. Noble statues rise up here, ideal images of a detached humanity. And by ushering oneself into their taut, noble figures, one rises up to their majesty oneself.”³¹

Pyramid versus Circle

Yet for all the suggested coherence of the Sculpture Hall, there was a crucial difference between the sculptures elevated above the masses: Thorak's and Breker's figures “were not made to be viewed on their own, but rather to develop their political effect in the context of buildings, texts, and images”—or in the context of an exhibition, as Magdalena Bushart points out.³² They are not autonomous works, but rather state commissions, created within the paradigm of their dependence on architecture, which was repeated like a mantra by the press.³³ Their power to convey—indeed, to embody—the hymnic veneration of ideological proclamation, as well as politically subdued power, emerged only in the context of large National Socialist buildings. It is therefore hardly surprising that these figures were also linked to the architecture of Haus der Deutschen Kunst. Equal to them in presentation and narration, however, were Kolbe's three nudes, which were by no means intended as architectural decoration for monumental buildings. They were created in the context of the personally pursued, long-term project *Ring der Statuen*, an ensemble of which various design stages exist in sketches and models (fig. 5) and which was not to be installed in Frankfurt am Main until after the war.³⁴ Male and female nude figures are arranged alternately on a circular ground plan, separated by slender stelae set against the organic-figural form as a cubic-architectural element. A gap in the circle of figures invites the viewer to enter. The center is lowered by steps. The viewer can either enter the horizontally organized row of spiritually and physically idealized figures as an equal, or encounter and view them from below in the center. The educational and uplifting effect presupposes the identification of the person entering with the figures, which correspond to the National Socialist ideal of the body.

Nevertheless, there is not inconsiderable difference to the National Socialist ideology as manifested in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung*. While in these art exhibitions the sexes were presented to the “Führer” as the prototypes of Adam and Eve, with the *Ring der Statuen* Kolbe developed a constellation in which the equality of the sexes also plays a role. The supersign of the arrangement of the figures is decisive for the impact of the work as a whole.³⁵ At the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939*, the *Amazone* and the *Auserwählte* were subordinated to the *Hüterin* in a pyramidal arrangement. The constellation of three banally follows the idea of the Führer principle, in which only one unit can stand at the top. In contrast, the figures in the circular supersign in the *Ring der Statuen* are presented as equals as part of an idealized community of higher beings. In contrast to this is, for example, Josef Thorak's fountain design *Das Urteil des Paris* (The Judgment of Paris, 1941; fig. 6), which is circularly organized but is by no means egalitarian. *Das Urteil des Paris* is characterized by an imbalance of power and voyeurism, emphasizing the principle



5 Georg Kolbe, draft model for the *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues), 1936, plaster on wooden frame, 18 × 60 × 60 cm, realized in Rothschildpark, Frankfurt am Main, 1954, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

of selection—or, in NS parlance, *Auslese*. The goddesses are exposed to the judging gaze of Paris, their arms outstretched in a strained manner, through which the sculptor attempted to make their otherwise barely discernible difference recognizable. The fact that Paris does not choose from among equals is again dictated by the supersign formation of the pyramidal constellation of three: The central female nude has a slightly raised pedestal that sets her apart. She also has a relatively symmetrical body layout in relation to the other two figures, as her arms are angled like two wings on either side, touching her breasts. This posture thus earns the figure its central position.

The same can also be said of Kolbe's *Hüterin*. In contrast to the two figures subordinate to her, the *Hüterin* has a different posture, with her arms reaching up to her plait as if by chance. She thus lacks the formal counterpart for the strict “companion piece hanging.” According to the logic of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, the three nudes, which were submitted together, could only be presented focused on the *Hüterin* as a central point, as long as the figures were to remain together.³⁶ That this did not necessarily correspond to the artist's idea, who preferred a knee-high pedestal, is shown by installation views of other exhibitions as well as by studio photographs. The viewer's gaze at hip level seems to have been ideal, allowing the figures to appear in a human, rather than monumentalizing, scale. For example, the two figures the *Junges Weib* (1938) and the *Hüterin* were both on view in the academy's spring exhibition in 1939, presented in a row with busts including Kolbe's portrait of Franco. The pedestals were knee-high and had been placed slightly away from the wall. The resulting spatial structuring counteracted the otherwise threatening decorative effect.



6 Exhibition view of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1941* in München, Hall 8, with Josef Thorak's model for the fountain *Das Urteil des Paris* (The Judgment of Paris, 1941), historical photograph

How differently the *Ring der Statuen* functions in comparison to the presentation in the *Großen Deutschen Kunstausstellung*, despite the pathos, despite the idea of the superior man, despite the overwhelming of the person entering, who rises to become a “majesty” as in the art exhibition—therein lies the difference between Kolbe’s works and the ideologies of National Socialism, which is difficult to determine. The overlap was large enough for Kolbe to submit his figures to NS exhibitions, where they could stand for a racial reference back to the “great age” of Greek antiquity, as well as for the “new man.” At the same time, beyond their circular arrangement, the isolated figures could be overwritten with the narrative of being bound to architecture. They did not inherently resist the pyramidal arrangement, nor did they in any way challenge the racialized interpretation as “taut, noble figures.” The classical ideal of human scale embodied by Kolbe’s nudes, on the other hand, lent itself to the tradition-building narrative of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939*, grounding Thorak’s mannered physicality and Breker’s theatricality.

The slight difference to the ideologies of National Socialism positioned Kolbe behind the two state artists. It is thus hardly surprising that the prominent placement of his works in later editions of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* was not repeated. The regime-legitimizing reference to antiquity was increasingly replaced by the glorification of war. Kolbe’s figures were relegated to the row of subordinate works, into the side rooms, or even onto the upper floor, which the sculptor experienced as declassification. In 1940,

he exhibited the nude *Flora* (1939/40) in the large Sculpture Hall and commented: “For my part, I have hardly anything to report. Only that the gr. K.A. [*Große Kunstausstellung*] is a terrible setback.”³⁷ There was no more room in the front row for Kolbe’s human scale. In his monograph *Deutsche Plastik unserer Zeit* (German Sculpture of Our Time), the author Lothar Tank thus accordingly judges that Kolbe was “the greatest sculptor of this transitional period.”³⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear that the younger generation, “if it is to fulfill its historical mission, must not follow Kolbe, but seek its own expression.”³⁹

Architecture of Sculpture

The link to tradition that Kolbe’s work offered to large-scale National Socialist sculpture was also evident in other, regime-stabilizing exhibitions. The exhibition *Meisterwerke der Plastik* (Masterpieces of Sculpture) at the Künstlerhaus in Berlin in 1940 had a canonizing effect—also with regard to Tank’s publication. It can be seen as Rosenberg’s attempt, after his initial failure in the field of exhibition policy, to achieve interpretive sovereignty through large-scale exhibitions. With this particular exhibition, Rosenberg’s office for the supervision of the entire intellectual and ideological training and education of the NSDAP, in this case the Main Office of Fine Arts, took up the canon that had become apparent at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung*.

“Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg opened the exhibition in the presence of representatives of the Wehrmacht and the Party, as well as the sculptors Kolbe, Breker, and Scheibe themselves,” wrote the newspaper *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* on July 3, 1940.⁴⁰ A photograph of the opening ceremony shows Kolbe sitting in the front row, with Richard Scheibe seated behind him (fig. 7). What significance *Meisterwerke der Plastik* played in his cosmos cannot be judged from the surviving sources.⁴¹ Only the catalog and the newspaper clippings that he routinely had sent to him document the exhibition in the archive of the artist’s museum. On view were works by Karl Albiker, Fritz Klimsch, Georg Kolbe, Richard Scheibe, Josef Wackerle, Josef Thorak, and Arno Breker.⁴² There was a clear focus on the work of the latter. Cut out on a black background, the head of the plaster model of his grim figure *Bereitschaft* adorned the cover. In his introductory text to the catalog, Robert Scholz sees the exhibited works as the result of the new start brought about by National Socialism, for the “new flowering of sculpture” had been triggered by architecture, the “mission of the state,” and the new ideological ideals of the body.⁴³ The emphasis on ideology as the actual creative force identifies him as a loyal disciple of Rosenberg. Scholz distinguishes the older generation with Klimsch, Kolbe, Scheibe, Wackerle, and Albiker from the “future-oriented expression” of Thorak and Breker.⁴⁴

On display by Kolbe was, among others, the bronze *Großer Kämpfer* (Large Fighter, 1938), referred to here only as *Kämpfer*. In the first hall, which was the main one, it had to assert itself against the large, gilded sculptures *Künder* (Proclaiming Nude, 1939–40) and *Bereitschaft*, which flanked the large plaster relief *Auszug zum Kampf* (Departure for Battle), under which Rosenberg’s opening speech was delivered (fig. 7). On the right side of the



7 Alfred Rosenberg's opening speech on July 3, 1940 for the exhibition *Meisterwerke der Plastik* (Masterpieces of Sculpture) at the Künstlerhaus Berlin; in the background: Arno Breker's *Bereitschaft* (Readiness, 1939); on the right wall in the back: Josef Thorak's *Fahnenträger* (Standard Bearer, ca. 1937); and in the front: Arno Breker's *Dionysos* (Dionysus, 1936–37), historical photograph

hall stood Breker's dark monumental sculpture *Dionysos*; next to it were Josef Thorak's *Fahnenträger* (Standard Bearer, ca. 1937) and *Schwertträger* (Sword Bearer, 1940).⁴⁵ Opposite the *Fahnenträger*, Fritz Klimsch's *Olympia* (1937) can be identified, which was purchased by Rosenberg. Kolbe's *Kämpfer* was positioned to the left of it—corresponding to the *Dionysos* opposite. Breker's large reliefs *Der Wächter* (Guardian, 1941) and *Kameraden* (Comrades, 1940) were also on display, although it is unclear exactly where. On display in another room were a self-portrait by Kolbe, as well as his *Hüterin*, *Auserwählte*, und *Amazonen*, now again on knee-high pedestals rather than in a pyramidal structure.⁴⁶

The thirty or so works are “symbolic images [...] of a new time, of a new and greater Germany, far beyond anything aesthetic,” was the verdict of the reviewer Felix A. Dargel.⁴⁷ In the reports, the formulated generational sequence is copied:

“In the works of these older masters [Klimsch, Kolbe, Wackerle], the atmosphere is one of restrained lyricism, a gentle music of forms. The youngest artist in the exhibition, Arno Breker, has a completely different manner of presentation. [...] Here, a new expressive will seeks its way in direct connection with the National Socialist experience of force.”⁴⁸

The extent to which the large sculptures were oriented to the standards of state architecture—the degree to which they achieved overarching power and monumentality—seems to have been the yardstick of evaluation. The main hall in particular did not miss its effect. Robert Scholz, now writing for the *Völkischer Beobachter* and without disclosing his authorship of the catalog, thus explains: “In the masterpieces of this hall, the intention of the new sculptural style, oriented towards the monumental and heroic, finds a particularly clear expression.”⁴⁹ In contrast, the author Walter Reichel in the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung* is astonishingly open in his criticism of Breker’s works exhibited here as slick and exaggerated, only to then justify their sharply contoured, “radiant nakedness”:

“How else could these forms, the swelling and steely taut limbs, hold their own in the glistening light of a gilded bronze, struck by the sun where their proper place is—on the pillars and portals of great state buildings!”⁵⁰

Reichel distinguishes Kolbe’s figures from Breker’s *Dionysos*, which is permeated by an “electrified power, almost increased to drunkenness [...]. A power that shows itself, that plays the role of the hero as if on a high stage.” In contrast, Kolbe’s figures are “like a warm breath” that beats against one. For Reichel, the “proud strength” of the *Kämpfer* came from within and found a noble balance in “the mastery of their possibilities.”⁵¹ Mannered expression tied to architecture is thus set against autonomous measure. The critic Carl Linfert also formulated the comparison that the exhibition designers provoked by juxtaposing the works. For him, Breker was “in possession of the expression that makes his triple-life-size figures suitable for state buildings.”⁵² In contrast, Kolbe’s “slowly advancing ‘Kämpfer’” lacked the polished gesture “that seeks the sparse edges of architecture as a willing setting.”⁵³

The old master Kolbe thus won the comparison with the younger state artist.⁵⁴ Few would have noticed the difference between his works and the narrative of architecture-bound sculpture, which Linfert named: “Kolbe’s figures are built for themselves; they can stand free and then, in their relationship to one another, perhaps form an ‘architecture’ of sculpture.”⁵⁵ He makes this observation on the basis of the nude female figures from the *Ring der Statuen*:

“Those who have noticed how quietly, almost indistinguishably, and without any decisive gesture, they point to each other, will immediately experience the profundity of such a mutable physiognomy, of which only the most delicate means of the sculptor can be certain.”⁵⁶

The idea of an architecture of sculpture is decisive for the classification of Kolbe’s work. It is spatially organized and not flat; it can be walked through but is difficult to photograph; it poses questions in sculptural language and offers solutions; it is idealized and spiritually interwoven, yet is not ideological or imperialistic; it is utopian in the sense that it cannot be located but it exists only as an ideal concept; and it appears temporarily, in a specific



8 View of Georg Kolbe's solo exhibition in the Preußische Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1942, historical photograph

constellation that need not be permanent. The architecturally bound and symbolically superelevated monumental sculpture of National Socialism in its eternal memorial character is a different sculptural problem than the questions of space, column, and statue that occupied Kolbe, as they did in his 1927 Glaspalast exhibition, and which he played through in his sculpture court in Berlin-Westend as well as in the *Ring der Statuen*. In 1932, he described his understanding as follows: "Sculpture is not a decorative element of architecture—but rather an independent work of art. [...] What I demand of the architect is not the surface of a wall, but rather space."⁵⁷

In his second solo exhibition at the Prussian Academy of Arts in 1942, Kolbe showed how this space could be filled with an architecture of sculpture (fig. 8). The photographic documentation of the arrangement reveals his real interest. The pairs of slightly larger-than-life figures stand in relation to each other in space, their movements seeming to react to each other. Visitors would walk through them, encountering them with their own bodies, seeking their own physical relationship to them, unsettled, perhaps also strengthened. This spatial structure does not correspond to the flat, strictly hierarchical constellation of three figures in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, which orders and assigns, defines a viewpoint for the viewer, and dominates those standing there in the monument.

Notes

- 1 Josephine Gabler, *Die Skulptur in Deutschland in den Ausstellungen zwischen 1933 und 1945*, PhD diss. Freie Universität Berlin, 1996, pp. 133–140; idem, “‘Deutsche Bildhauer der Gegenwart’ – Eine Ausstellung 1938 in Warschau und Krakau und ihre Vorgeschichte,” in: Eugen Blume and Dieter Scholz (eds.), *Überbrückt. Ästhetische Moderne und Nationalsozialismus. Kunsthistoriker und Künstler 1925–1937* (Cologne 1999), pp. 247–254.
- 2 Martin Papenbrock and Gabriele Saure (eds.), *Kunst des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts in deutschen Ausstellungen*, vol. 1: *Ausstellungen deutscher Gegenwartskunst in der NS-Zeit. Eine kommentierte Bibliographie* [Schriften der Guernica-Gesellschaft, vol. 10] (Weimar 2000), p. 479.
- 3 Hildegard Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg 1963), pp. 66–71; Gabler 1996 (see note 1), pp. 30–31; Dieter Scholz, “Otto Andreas Schreiber, die Kunst der Nation und die Fabrikstellungen,” in: Blume/Scholz 1999 (see note 1), pp. 92–108.
- 4 Arie Hartog, “Äußere Anmut oder innere Schönheit? Der erfolgreichste deutsche Bildhauer und seine Kritiker 1920 bis 1934,” in: *Georg Kolbe 1877–1947*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin and Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen (Munich and New York 1997), pp. 78–86, here p. 84 [translated].
- 5 See, with the exemption of the criticism by the radical, national-racial art historian Edgar Schindler: Kirsten Baumann, *Wortgefechte. Völkische und nationalsozialistische Kunstkritik 1927–1939* (Weimar 2002), pp. 383–285; see also: Gabler 1996 (see note 1), pp. 52–60.
- 6 Stephan Lackner and Helen Adkins, “Exhibition of 20th Century German Art, London 1938,” in: *Stationen der Moderne. Die bedeutenden Kunstausstellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, ed. Eberhard Roters and Bernhard Schulz, exh. cat. Berlinische Galerie – Museum of Modern Art, Berlin, 1988–89 (Berlin 1988), pp. 314–337, here p. 325.
- 7 “Dokument 10, 10.7.1938. ‘Das Bekenntnis des Führers zu Kunst und Künstler.’ Rede zur Eröffnung der Großen Deutschen Kunstausstellung in München,” in: Robert Eikmeyer (ed.), *Adolf Hitler. Reden zur Kunst- und Kulturpolitik 1933–1939* (Frankfurt am Main 2004), pp. 179–187, here p. 179; Robert Scholz, “Der Kunstschwindel von London,” in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, Berlin, August 1, 1938, p. 9.
- 8 The author for the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, Wolfgang Willrich, railed against Kolbe in the context of Galerie Flechtheim, whereby, in his opinion, Kolbe was the only one who had “remained healthy.” Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art* (Munich and Berlin 1937), pp. 53 and 73; for more on the inconsistencies regarding Kolbe’s classification, see also: Paul Westheim: “Geistige Führung. Hin und Her um Kolbe und Breker,” in: *Pariser Tageszeitung*, July 21, 1937, p. 4.
- 9 Baumann 2002 (see note 5), pp. 376–378.
- 10 “And as for the entrance hall of the German pavilion, it is not such an enticing place to stay anyway. If there was a draught in it too, you’d really think it was a meeting room for the waiting mourners.” Paul Westheim, “Geistige Führung. Hin und Her um Kolbe und Breker,” in: *Pariser Tageszeitung*, July 21, 1937, p. 4 [translated].
- 11 See the essay by Bernhard Maaz in this volume, pp. 24–78.
- 12 For more on the history of the exhibition, see: Gabler 1996 (see note 1), pp. 80–89. For the exceptionally kind provision of personal notes, copies, and the manuscript, the author expresses her sincere thanks to Josephine Gabler.
- 13 Ibid., p. 82.
- 14 Letter from Kurt Martin to Georg Kolbe, November 25, 1936, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin; letter from Kurt Martin to Karl Albiker, November 25, 1936, Kunsthau Zürich; State Archive Karlsruhe GLA dept. 441, no. 101.
- 15 Quoted in: Gabler 1996 (see note 1), p. 87 [translated].
- 16 Ibid., p. 83 [translated].
- 17 The attempt of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda to prevent the opening of the exhibition because of Christoph Voll’s participation was unsuccessful because the show had already opened; ibid., p. 85.
- 18 Copy of a letter from Ernst Henke to Haus der Deutschen Kunst, November 26, 1937, Kunsthau Zürich; State Archive Karlsruhe GLA dept. 441, no. 101; GDK Research, <https://www.gdk-research.de/de/obj19400411.html> [last accessed April 6, 2023].
- 19 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Kurt Martin, February 9, 1937, Kunsthau Zürich; State Archive Karlsruhe GLA dept. 441, no. 101; copy of the letter in the MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

- 20 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Kurt Martin, April 20, 1937, Kunsthau Zürich; State Archive Karlsruhe GLA dept. 441, no. 101 [translated].
- 21 Ibid. [translated].
- 22 Baumann 2002 (see note 5), p. 388.
- 23 Josephine Gabler, "Arno Breker – Von Paris nach 'Germania,'" in: Wolfgang Benz, Peter Eckel, and Andreas Nachama (eds.), *Kunst im NS-Staat. Ideologie, Ästhetik, Protagonisten* (Berlin 2015), pp. 73–88, here p. 80.
- 24 See: Marlies Schmidt, *Die "Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1937 im Haus der Deutschen Kunst zu München."* *Rekonstruktion und Analyse*, PhD diss. University of Halle, 2012, available online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.25673/823> [last accessed April 6, 2023].
- 25 In addition to the photographic views of Hall 2 of the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939*, the GDK Research database provides detailed information on the individual works: <https://www.gdk-research.de> [last accessed April 6, 2023].
- 26 Two other models of the horse were positioned on the garden side of the Reich Chancellery in 1939, so that they could be seen from Hitler's study. See: Magdalena Bushart, "Sensationslust und Geschichtsvergessenheit. Bildhauerei aus dem 'Dritten Reich,' heute," in: *vermacht. verfallen. verdrängt. Kunst und Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Christian Fuhrmeister, Monika Hauser-Mair, and Felix Steffan, exh. cat. Städtische Galerie Rosenheim (Petersberg 2017), pp. 26–36, here p. 31.
- 27 Schmidt 2012 (see note 24), p. 23.
- 28 Ludwig Eberlein, "770 Künstler – 1300 Bilder und Plastiken. Erster Rundgang durch die 'Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939' in München," in: *Das 12 Uhr Blatt*, Berlin, July 15, 1939 [translated].
- 29 Wilhelm Rüdiger, "Deutsches Leben in deutscher Kunst. Aus der Großen Deutschen Kunstausstellung im Haus der Deutschen Kunst in München," in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, July 15, 1939 [translated].
- 30 Max Imdahl, "Pose und Indoktrination. Zu Werken der Plastik und Malerei im Dritten Reich" [1988], in: *Artige Kunst. Kunst und Politik im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Silke von Berswordt-Wallrabe, Jörg-Uwe Neumann, and Agnes Tietze, exh. cat. Kunstsammlungen der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Kunsthalle Rostock, and Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg (Bielefeld 2016), pp. 17–23.
- 31 Walter Almon-Gros, "Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939. Deutsche Graphik und Plastik," in: *Der Führer*, Karlsruhe, July 27, 1939 [translated].
- 32 Bushart 2017 (see note 26), pp. 26–36, here p. 30 [translated].
- 33 For more on the context of their creation, see: *ibid.*, pp. 30–34.
- 34 See the essay by Ambra Frank in this volume, pp. 136–151.
- 35 For more on the concept of the "supersign," see: Felix Thürlmann, "Vom Einzelbild zum hyperimage. Eine neue Herausforderung für die kunstgeschichtliche Hermeneutik" [2004], in: Gerd Blum, Steffen Bogen, David Ganz, and Marius Rimmel (eds.), *Pendant Plus. Praktiken der Bildkombinatorik* (Berlin 2012), pp. 23–44.
- 36 All the works submitted by Kolbe were exhibited. See the index card on Georg Kolbe, Haus der Deutschen Kunst in the archive of Haus der Kunst, Munich. The author thanks Sabine Brantl for this information.
- 37 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Kurt Meinhardt, August 30, 1940, in: Maria Freifrau von Tiesenhaußen (ed.), *Georg Kolbe. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Tübingen 1987), no. 230, pp. 165f. [translated].
- 38 Kurt Lothar Tank, *Deutsche Plastik unserer Zeit* [edited by Undersecretary Wilhelm Bade and with a preface by Reich Minister Albert Speer] (Munich 1942), p. 48 [translated].
- 39 Ibid. [translated].
- 40 Felix A. Dargel, "Sinnbilder der Zeit. Rosenberg eröffnet eine Plastik-Ausstellung im Künstlerhaus," in: *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, Berlin, evening edition, July 3, 1940 [translated].
- 41 There is no entry for this in his appointment diaries'. A few days before the opening, "Scholz" and later "Rittich" called, possibly Rosenberg's employees, Robert Scholz and Werner Rittich. On the day of the opening, "Prof. Scheibe" called. No written correspondence with the organizers is known. The diaries of Kurt von Keudell, who was not in Berlin at the time, reveal nothing. The photo album with exhibition views from 1920 to 1946 shows a break after 1937. The last two exhibitions are no longer entered in red crayon, but rather in ballpoint pen: the academy exhibition in 1942 and the presentation at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main in 1946.
- 42 Exh. cat. *Meisterwerke der Plastik*, Künstlerhaus Berlin, July–August 1941, pp. 7–8.
- 43 Ibid., p. 4 [translated].
- 44 Ibid., p. 5 [translated].
- 45 See: Robert Scholz, "Große Kunst im großen Schicksal. Ein Gang durch die Ausstellung im Künstlerhaus," in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, Berlin, July 4, 1940.

- 46 Ibid.; see the installation view in: “Neue deutsche Kunst. Plastik-Ausstellung im Berliner Künstlerhaus,” in: *Solinger Tageblatt*, July 25, 1940.
- 47 Dargel 1940 (see note 40).
- 48 Edgar Schindler, “Meisterwerke der Plastik, Berlin,” in: *Das Bild*, Karlsruhe im Breisgau, July 1940 [translated]; cf. Bruno E. Werner, “Meisterwerke der Plastik, Berlin,” in: *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Berlin, evening edition, July 4, 1940.
- 49 Scholz 1940 (see note 45) [translated].
- 50 Walter Reichel, “Meisterwerke der Plastik. Gang durch eine Berliner Ausstellung,” in: *Neue Leipziger Zeitung*, Leipzig, July 14, 1940 [translated].
- 51 Ibid. [translated].
- 52 Carl Linfert, “Berliner Bericht. ‘Meisterwerke der Plastik,’” in: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Frankfurt am Main [*Montag Morgenblatt*, *Reichsausgabe*], July 8, 1940 [translated].
- 53 For Linfert, Breker’s figured faces contained “the utmost tension of will,” “often to the point of a screaming grimace”; *ibid.* [translated]. Linfert’s equally blatant criticism in 1941 became his undoing. Breker complained to Goebbels: Gabler 2015 (see note 23), pp. 73–88, here pp. 87f.
- 54 See: Josephine Gabler, “‘Das Monumentale [hat] nicht erst von bestimmten Größenmaßen an Geltung’ – Großplastik im Nationalsozialismus,” in: Wolfgang Ruppert (ed.), *Künstler im Nationalsozialismus. Die “deutsche Kunst,” die Kunstpolitik und die Berliner Kunsthochschule* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna 2015), pp. 231–243, here pp. 236f.
- 55 Linfert 1940 (see note 52) [translated].
- 56 Ibid. [translated].
- 57 Georg Kolbe, “Neues Bauen gegen Plastik?” in: *Wasmuths Monatshefte*, “Baukunst und Städtebau,” no. 8, August 1932, p. 381, quoted in: Gabler 1996 (see note 1), p. 46 [translated].

Ambra Frank

Georg Kolbe in Frankfurt am Main— Ambivalence and Opportunism

In his will, the sculptor Georg Kolbe, who died in Berlin in 1947, provided for the establishment of a foundation to “preserve and safeguard my work.” He bequeathed his artistic estate, as well as his studio building and library, to the foundation. He named the City of Frankfurt am Main—or rather the Städtische Galerie—as the foundation’s reversionary heir. In the event of the foundation’s dissolution, Frankfurt would have received first and foremost the artistic estate. In this sense, Frankfurt is also mentioned in the statutes of the foundation.¹

Kolbe’s decision to include Frankfurt in the bequest can also be justified by the large number of works acquired there during his lifetime. The works in the collection of the Städtische Galerie im Städel were acquired between 1919 and 1983. Among them are at least sixteen sheets of mainly nude drawings dating from 1912 to the late 1930s. In addition, the bronze sculptures *Frauenraub* (Abduction of Women, 1916) and *Verkündung* (Proclamation, 1923/1924) have been in the collection since 1919 and 1927, respectively. *Verkündung* is now once again installed in the garden of the Städel Museum.²

In the public space of Frankfurt am Main there are three monuments in bronze by Kolbe: the “Heine Monument” unveiled in the Friedberger Anlage in 1913, the “Beethoven Monument” erected in the Taunusanlage in 1951, and the *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues) installed in Rothschild Park in 1954. In addition, there is the bronze sculpture *Adam* (1919/21) in the Main Cemetery and the sculpture *Stehendes Mädchen* (Standing Girl, 1937) in the Goethe House. The latter work was acquired in connection with the Goethe Prize awarded to Georg Kolbe by the City of Frankfurt am Main in 1936.

This essay is based on a subchapter of the exhibition “*Divinely Gifted.*” *National Socialism’s Favoured Artists in the Federal Republic*, which was on view at the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) in Berlin in 2021. The exhibition dealt with the careers of several protagonists of the National Socialist art establishment in the Federal Republic of Germany—from the 1953 unveiling of the “Memorial for the Victims of July 20, 1944,” the design of which was commissioned from the former “divinely gifted” sculptor Richard Scheibe, to the controversy surrounding the bronze busts of the art collectors Peter and Irene Ludwig by Arno Breker in the late 1980s. The Georg Kolbe Museum supported the exhibition project with exhibits, including a plaster model of the *Ring der Statuen*. Kolbe was commissioned by public authorities to create the group of sculptures during the National Socialist era. Its completion after the end of the war in 1945 made it an interesting work for the DHM’s exhibition project. In the following, the scope of the research will be expanded, and the three monuments mentioned will be analyzed. These bronze sculptures were created over a period of almost forty years and in four state systems. As will be shown, the monuments and the history of their creation reflect a tension in the sculptor’s work, which is revealing for his activities under National Socialism. The Frankfurt-based art historians and museum directors Georg Swarzenski and Alfred Wolters were instrumental in the commissioning and realization of the works. In accordance with the question of how Georg Kolbe’s life and work fit into the context of National Socialism, the focus is on this period.

The “Heine Monument”

In June 1910, the Committee for the Erection of a Heine Monument approached Dr. Franz Adickes, Mayor of the City of Frankfurt am Main, to obtain permission to erect a monument in a public place. The committee, initiated by the Freie Literarische Gesellschaft (Free Literary Society) of Frankfurt, planned to finance the project through donations, and they also wanted to administer the competition process themselves. The city agreed. Georg Swarzenski, the director of the Städelsches Kunstinstitut at the time and a member of the committee, took charge of the competition. In addition to Georg Kolbe, he invited Fritz Klimsch and the Frankfurt-based sculptor Emil Hub to participate in the competition. The decision was made in favor of Kolbe, who then signed the contracts with Georg Swarzenski as the committee’s representative in August 1913. The unveiling took place in December of the same year. The Friedberger Anlage was chosen as the site.³

As requested by the committee, Kolbe did not create a portrait of Heinrich Heine, but rather an allegorical representation of poetry and lyricism. The design realized for Frankfurt features a young couple, with the male figure captured standing in a dancing movement. His arms are outstretched to either side, and his upper body is frontally aligned with the viewer. The hips are turned to the side. Viewed from above, the axes of the bodies almost form a cross.

Dance was a favorite motif in the visual arts at this time, including in Georg Kolbe’s sculptural work. He probably modeled the figures of the “Heine Monument” after the ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinsky and his partner Tamara Karsavina. Both belonged to the ensemble of the Ballets Russes, which also performed around 1911/12 in Berlin, where Georg Kolbe saw them. Kolbe drew both of them; they posed for him in his studio, and the drawings have been preserved.⁴

Since as early as 1912, there had been resistance and protests with an anti-Semitic background against the erection of a Heine monument in Frankfurt, often already during the German Empire. In 1923, Kolbe’s work was defaced with a swastika, presumably as a result of the failed NSDAP coup attempt in Munich in November of that year. Finally, in April 1933, the monument dedicated to the poet of Jewish origin was forcibly removed from its pedestal.⁵ A photograph from the estate of the sculptor Richard Scheibe, showing the monument standing on a wooden cart, appears to have been taken after the fall (fig. 1). In 1934, Richard Scheibe attributed the visibly bent pedestal and the male figure bent backward “at the ankles” to the fall.⁶

In the following years, the group of figures stood in the garden of the Städel, where it was given the innocuous title *Frühlingslied* (Spring Song). In 1947, it was reinstalled as a “Heine Monument,” this time in the Taunusanlage, a public park in the city, where it remains to this day.

In fact, the “Heine Monument” was not a public commission. Nor was it financed with public funds. It was created on the basis of a private initiative, although the committee included members of the city council and Georg Swarzenski held a municipal office at the time in his position as director of both the Städtische Galerie and the Liebieghaus. It was



1 The Heine monument by Georg Kolbe after it was toppled in April 1933, historical photograph

the first sculptural work by Kolbe to be placed in a public space in Frankfurt am Main. It was also the first time that Georg Kolbe and Georg Swarzenski collaborated on a large-scale project.

The “Beethoven Monument”

Also in the Taunusanlage and only 150 meters away from the “Heine Monument” is Georg Kolbe’s “Beethoven Monument.” Almost twenty-five years passed between the first sketches and the unveiling in June 1951. Some sources describe the “Beethoven Monument” as Kolbe’s “life’s work.”⁷ Kolbe’s “passionately expressed wish” in 1941 to have the monument for the City of Frankfurt made not in bronze as originally planned, but in marble, the “noblest material,” suggests that he also wanted to emphasize the group of figures.⁸ The monument was eventually cast in bronze.

In 1926, the City of Berlin announced a competition for a “Beethoven Monument,” which was to be erected as part of the redesign of Bülow-Platz (now Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the death of the composer (1770–1827). In addition to Kolbe, Ernst Barlach, Rudolf Belling, Hugo Lederer, and Edwin Scharff

were among those invited to participate. Kolbe produced at least three designs, two of which he submitted.⁹ None of the eight sculptors was able to convince the jury with a model, so the competition remained inconclusive.¹⁰

When the Kunstsalon Cassirer decided in 1928 to present the Beethoven drafts in a solo exhibition of Kolbe's works, the nationally minded author Rudolf G. Binding agreed to write a text on the "Beethoven Monument,"¹¹ which was published in the accompanying catalog. Binding wrote an "Aufruf" (Appeal) of several pages, in which he stated:

"This was his [Georg Kolbe's] draft design for a monument to the heroic German soul, the work of a secretive, shy year, in which the time had come for him to dare to do it. [...] Not like a cock in the night that does not know the time, a voice sounds here for an artist and his work, but because the time has come for the world-conquering German soul to express i t s e l f in a monument. May cities, may private individuals feel moved to erect this most German and humane monument for their people—it would be the true n a t i o n a l m o n u m e n t of the German people."¹²

No less convinced of Kolbe's work and, in contrast to Binding, elaborating on the musical and sculptural sensibility of the work, was the text by Georg Swarzenski, also published in the catalog that accompanied the exhibition in the Kunstsalon Cassirer in 1928.¹³ The son of wealthy and educated Polish Jewish parents, Swarzenski had been increasingly subjected to defamation and persecution by the National Socialists since the "seizure of power." He was suspended in March 1933, prior to the enactment of the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" on April 7, 1933.¹⁴

In 1906, Swarzenski was appointed director of the Städelsches Kunstinstitut. In 1928, he was then appointed general director of the Frankfurt museums, including the Städtische Galerie and the Liebieghaus. Despite his dismissal, Swarzenski remained in Frankfurt and headed the Städelsches Kunstinstitut until 1938; this was possible because it was a private foundation. A well-connected museum professional, Swarzenski was on friendly terms with Georg Kolbe, as evidenced by their surviving correspondence. He also advised Kolbe on the sale of the statue *Stehendes Mädchen*, which was purchased in connection with the Goethe Prize awarded to the artist in 1936.¹⁵ Kolbe was the first sculptor to receive the prize, which was established in 1927. He concluded his acceptance speech for the prize, in which the Prometheus motif played an important role, with the words:

"I accept the prize with heartfelt gratitude. But the 'honor' is, I think, for the whole of the fine arts, to which Goethe's heart was so close, and especially for the German sculptors from whom the new Germany now expects the greatest achievements."¹⁶

Georg Swarzenski was not present at the award ceremony and he wrote to Kolbe on August 7, 1936, that he had already not been invited for the first time the year before

and that he assumed that this had happened “not by mistake, but on purpose!”¹⁷ He went into exile in 1938—in the same year, Georg Kolbe was commissioned to produce a “Beethoven Monument” for the City of Frankfurt am Main.

From the Baltic resort of Heiligendamm, Kolbe wrote to Swarzenski on September 15, 1938:

“Dear friend, where might you be? [...] I have heard rumors about your plans, which cannot possibly make me happy, but which I must understand. Unfortunately, we are all old now and will soon be leaving.”¹⁸

Swarzenski had left Frankfurt in early September 1938 and emigrated to the United States. His contact was his son, Hanns Swarzenski, who was then working with Erwin Panofsky at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. In 1939, Georg Swarzenski began working at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Of greater importance for this essay, however, is his membership in the American Defense Harvard Group and his consulting work for the Roberts Commission. His name is associated with the “Cooper List of German Art Personnel” compiled by Paul J. Sachs after consultation with Swarzenski and Jakob Rosenberg.¹⁹ This means that Swarzenski was involved in the evaluation of German (art) personnel and, by compiling lists of names, suggested to the Allies persons who seemed suitable for reconstruction.

After Kolbe’s letter of September 15, 1938, cited above, no sources or references could be found that would suggest an attitude towards Swarzenski’s fate. The letters preserved in the archive of the Georg Kolbe Museum and the correspondence of intimate friends published in 1987 by Maria von Tiesenhausen—the sculptor’s granddaughter and director of the Georg Kolbe Museum from 1969 to 1977—ended in the late 1930s.

Due to the outbreak of the war, the “Beethoven Monument” could not be completed and therefore could not be unveiled as planned for the sixtieth anniversary of the opera house in 1940. The art historian Wilhelm Pinder, who had been a professor at the Institute of Art History at the Friedrich Wilhelms University in Berlin since 1935, therefore wrote to the mayor of the City of Frankfurt am Main, Friedrich Krebs, in May 1940:

“Although all my thoughts are with the Western Army, I would like to take the liberty of mentioning the issue of the Beethoven monument. [...] The idea of pushing through such a Beethoven monument during the war, of all times, is not only beautiful, it would be tremendous cultural propaganda.”²⁰

Pinder had written the letter only a few days after the beginning of the Western Offensive and the invasion of the Benelux countries by German troops. The attempt to convince Friedrich Krebs of the monument’s value for Nazi propaganda was unsuccessful.²¹

After the end of the war, Georg Kolbe’s connection to Frankfurt am Main consisted of his contact with the art historian Alfred Wolters, whose name appears as early as 1938 in documents of the City of Frankfurt concerning the “Beethoven Monument.”²² Alfred

Wolters came to Frankfurt in 1912 and was employed as an assistant to the director, Georg Swarzenski. After Swarzenski was appointed general director of the Frankfurt museums in 1928, Wolters was promoted to the position of director of the Städtische Galerie. He remained in this position throughout the NS era and until 1949, managing the collection of modern art that Swarzenski had built up and from which many works were confiscated in the course of the “Entartete Kunst” (Degenerate Art) campaign. Wolters also worked as an “expert for the determination of nationally valuable cultural assets” and examined the confiscated property of Jewish emigrants for the local foreign exchange office. After 1945, he assisted in the restitution of illegally acquired works of art.²³

A handwritten note on the person of Alfred Wolters reads: “Ask Dr. Swarzenski.” The note comes from a collection of documents from the Roberts Commission from 1943 to 1946. The American commission was part of the Office of Strategic Service (OSS).²⁴ It investigated the looting of art and damage to cultural institutions and monuments during the Second World War and compiled the “‘whitelist’ of German personnel.” Alfred Wolter’s name appears on the “whitelist,” which was completed in 1944. He was classified as “decent, honest, reliable, non-Nazi,” which meant that he could be called upon to assist in the reconstruction effort,²⁵ which Georg Swarzenski probably also advocated.

The biography of Alfred Wolters is ambivalent and politically difficult to interpret. It is precisely for this reason that his career as a leader in the “operational system” of art is so characteristic. As an experienced museum director with professional competence and outstanding knowledge of the museum location Frankfurt am Main, he was difficult to replace. Moreover, he had not taken a public position on National Socialism. Thus, he was able to continue working in the same position after the end of the war and despite his activities during the NS regime.

The fact that only Georg Swarzenski could be his judge seems to be suggested by the subtext of Wolters’s essay “Ein Bildnis Victor Müllers von Wilhelm Leibl” (A Portrait of Victor Müller by Wilhelm Leibl), published in a commemorative volume on the occasion of Georg Swarzenski’s seventy-fifth birthday in 1951. At the beginning of the text, Wolters describes a situation in 1933 in which he was appointed judge of what he calls an “ostracism” against Georg Swarzenski. What is probably meant is the “Kommission zur Durchführung der Untersuchungsangelegenheit Dr. Swarzensky [sic] und Gen.” (Commission for the Conduct of the Investigation into the Matter of Dr. Swarzensky [sic] and Ass.). Swarzenski was accused of having “corroded” “the good gallery property of the Städel with a large quantity of concoctions from foreign races and cultural Bolsheviks.”²⁶ Wolters’s recollection of this perfidious anti-Semitic smear campaign is followed by an art-historical treatise on a portrait of a man painted by Wilhelm Leibl around 1870. Wolters identifies the sitter as the Frankfurt-based painter Victor Müller, a fact that had not been previously documented. Knowing who the person is “automatically” leads one “to contemplate the picture with different, more discerning, and more perceptive eyes and to thus to perceive things in it that, without this knowledge, would probably never be recognized in their full artistic and human significance”: so reads Wolters’s ominous conclusion, which he cites for his own “exoneration.”²⁷ The essay, which Wolters begins with

“Dear Boss!,” can be read as a justification of his actions. He does not ask Swarzenski for forgiveness, but rather for understanding. Wolters and Swarzenski remained in personal contact after the end of the war, as Alfred Wolters reports in letters to Georg Kolbe.²⁸

Wolters spoke out in favor of Kolbe when it came to awarding public contracts by the City of Frankfurt. Like Swarzenski, he purchased works for the collection of the Städtische Galerie. As a member of the board of the Georg Kolbe Foundation, he represented Kolbe's designs before the city council and the City of Frankfurt. Kolbe had stipulated in his will that Wolters should become a member of this board. In the years following Georg Kolbe's death, Wolters had an intensive exchange with Margrit Schwartzkopff, the executor of his estate and founding director of the Georg Kolbe Foundation. Together, they pushed through the installation of the *Ring der Statuen* and the “Beethoven Monument” with the City of Frankfurt. Alfred Wolters had already pushed for the completion and erection of the “Beethoven Monument” only a few months after the end of the war. Casting had been halted in 1939 due to a shortage of materials and the general ban on casting; and even in 1946/47, it was not easy to obtain metal for completion. Thanks in part to Alfred Wolters's good connections and high standing with the military government, as well as Georg Kolbe's international reputation, the Noack fine art foundry in Berlin, which had been commissioned with the casting, soon received scrap metal (fig. 2). In addition, parts of a “Craftsmen's Fountain” by the “divinely gifted” Max Esser were melted down. Esser had been commissioned by the City of Frankfurt in 1935. Wolters justified the decision to Esser's widow in September 1947 by saying that the “Fountain of German Craftsmanship” was a “symbol of the Nazi era” and therefore could no longer be installed in the Federal Republic of Germany.²⁹ He did not explain why the “Beethoven Monument” was not such a symbol and what justified its installation after 1945.

In 1948, Kolbe's “Beethoven Monument” was finally completed (fig. 3). The ceremonial unveiling on a hill in the Taunusanlage took place on June 16, 1951. The city simultaneously hosted the first Bundessängerfest (National Singing Festival) in the postwar period, and in addition to a speech by the new mayor, Walter Kolb, a choir performed Beethoven's “Die Himmel rühmen des Ewigen Ehre” (The Heavens Are Telling) and “Die Flamme lodert” (The Flame Is Blazing), accompanied by a police band.³⁰

The group of figures in double life size consists of two female figures and one male figure: the *Rufender Genius* (Calling Genius), the *Sinnender Genius* (Contemplating Genius), and a male hero, the *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man). His closed posture with arms folded in front of the chest is defensive, although they could also open to the side in the sense of “using one's elbows” to signal assertiveness. To no small extent, it is formal-aesthetic criteria such as the pathos and the monumentality of the depiction that make Kolbe's “Beethoven Monument” compatible with a *völkisch* (national-racial) and NS-ideologically oriented reception. Binding, who also signed a “pledge of loyalty” to Adolf Hitler in 1933, continued to publish on Georg Kolbe's work during the Nazi era in Germany. In the monograph *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe* (On the Life of Sculpture. The Content and Beauty of the Work of Georg Kolbe), which appeared in several editions after 1933 in the series *Kunstabücher des Volkes* (Art



2 Employees of the Noack fine art foundry in front of Georg Kolbe's Beethoven monument, 1947, historical photograph



3 Georg Kolbe, Beethoven monument, 1926–47, bronze, double life-size, Taunusanlage, Frankfurt am Main, 2020

Books of the People) published by Rembrandt-Verlag in Berlin, he adopted the wording of his interpretations of the “monument to the heroic German soul” and the “German [...] soul-dominating” genius that he had first used in public in 1928.³¹ Although the text had been decisively altered, and the passage on the national monument is missing, the author and publisher must be described as leaning towards NS ideology. It should be noted that other interpretations of the monument are possible, including a discourse-immanent interpretation as (artistic) genius.

The question arises as to whether the interpretation of a work is sufficient for its instrumentalization, what significance the ideological exploitation in the NS era, as Pinder suggests for the “Beethoven Monument” in his letter to the mayor of Frankfurt am Main in May 1940, has for the consideration and evaluation in the present, and what significance the artist's intention continues to have in contrast to this.

If Kolbe's late work is only described as having been instrumentalized in a one-sided way, there is the danger of an ahistorical reception. The following consideration of the *Ring der Statuen* is intended to counteract a possible relativization of Kolbe's work during the National Socialist era in Germany.



4 Georg Kolbe, *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues), 1933–47, Rothschildpark, Frankfurt am Main, 2020

Ring der Statuen

Kolbe's design for an installation of seven nude sculptures arranged in a circle was purchased by the City of Frankfurt am Main in 1941. The roundel, nearly nine meters in diameter, was erected in October 1954 (figs. 4 and 5). Alfred Wolters was once again the persistent driving force behind the fulfillment of the 1941 contracts and the erection of the *Ring der Statuen*. The installation of the work was unanimously approved at a meeting of the Deputation for Science, Art, and National Education in October 1953. In March 1954, the same committee selected Rothschild Park as the site for the sculptural group.³² In contrast to the "Beethoven Monument" and also quite unusually, the city administration decided against a ceremonial unveiling. The press release states: "a laudation with many nice speeches" does not correspond to the "quiet, completely self-determined character of the work," and Kolbe's "art monument" is "clear, pleasing, and unambiguous."³³

From today's perspective, the location of the installation seems problematic. The seven bronze sculptures the *Junges Weib* (Young Woman), the *Hüterin* (Guardian), the *Auserwählte* (The Chosen), the *Amazone* (Amazon), *Der Jüngling* (Youth; developed further from a *Stehender Jüngling* [Standing Youth]), the *Junger Kämpfer* (Young Fighter), and *Der Sinnende* (The Thinker) are located on a site that the City of Frankfurt am Main "acquired" from Maximilian von Goldschmidt-Rothschild in 1937/38 under pressure from the National Socialist city administration. He was forced to sell his important and extensive art collection of nearly 1,400 objects in 1938 under the same conditions.³⁴ Alfred Wolters



5 It was only after Georg Kolbe's death that the *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues) was installed in Rothschildpark. The work consists of an architecture of basalt lava rhythmically arranged with stelae and seven larger-than-life bronze sculptures (left to right): *Amazon* (Amazon, 1937), *Junger Kämpfer* (Young Fighter, 1938/46), *Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), *Der Sinnende* (Thinker, 1941/47), *Die Auserwählte* (The Chosen, 1939), *Jüngling* (Youth, 1937/46), and *Junges Weib* (Young Woman, 1938)

was also involved in the transfer to municipal ownership as an appraiser on behalf of the mayor.³⁵

Four of the seven nude sculptures of the *Ring der Statuen*—the *Junges Weib* (1938), the *Hüterin* (1938), the *Auserwählte* (1939), and the *Amazon* (1937)—were presented at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) in Munich. In 1939, Adolf Hitler purchased a cast of the sculpture *Junges Weib* for 18,000 RM at the sales exhibition, which was also intended to be a showcase for “German” art. For the same price and in the same year, Bernhard Rust, then head of the Reich Ministry of Science, Education, and Culture, purchased the *Hüterin*.³⁶

The nude sculptures of the *Ring der Statuen* are exemplary for the development of human representation in Kolbe's work during the NS era. From the idealized and harmonious depiction of the nude, the development intensified towards the heroic and monumental image of man, towards pathos formulas and emotive compositions. The “true” essence of man was to be portrayed detached from all social contexts and societal ties. In the “art reporting” of the National Socialist state, Kolbe's nude sculptures were occasionally referred to as “immortal human nobility,”³⁷ thus following Wilhelm Pinder's interpretations in the monograph published by Rembrandt-Verlag in 1937. The “ethical appraisal” of Kolbe's depictions of humans as “noble” or “human nobility” was also taken up again by Alfred Wolters in a speech he gave in Düsseldorf in the summer of 1948 on the occasion of the opening of a Kolbe memorial exhibition.³⁸

In addition to the seven sculptures, which are slightly larger than life-size, Kolbe's design includes an eighth niche that is left free. This allows the viewer to enter the installation without having to pass through the narrow spaces between the sculpture and the column.

The planned interaction between the work and the viewer is ahead of its time. If the viewer remains in the free (eighth) position, they close the (human) ring and becomes part of the group of figures, among which are stereotypes of the National Socialist world view. In the (NS) historical context, the *Hüterin* represents the “bearer of blood and race” and can therefore be described as a Nazi racist stereotype.³⁹ The sculptures of the *Ring der Statuen* are reduced to the naked human figure, and their essential characteristics are therefore referred to primarily by the titles given to them by the artist.

As mentioned at the beginning, the exhibition “*Divinely Gifted.*” *National Socialism’s Favoured Artists in the Federal Republic* included a plaster model of the *Ring der Statuen*. Georg Kolbe, like Richard Scheibe and Fritz Klimsch, was on the list of the “divinely gifted” artists.⁴⁰ When the list was compiled in 1944, none of them was younger than sixty-five years old. The status of “indispensability” that accompanied the entry, which exempted individuals from military service and labor deployment, thus does not seem to have been a sufficient reason for their inclusion. Rather, it underscores their prominent position as “transitional artists” in the NS art establishment. Under German National Socialism, publicists loyal to the regime, such as Kurt Lothar Tank, stylized Klimsch, Kolbe, and Scheibe—sculptors born in the 1870s—as “saviors of the strong German form over a period of decay.”⁴¹ In the book *Deutsche Plastik unserer Zeit* (German Sculpture of Our Time), which Kurt Lothar Tank published in 1942 by Raumbild-Verlag in Munich, they stand for the preservation of values and form in the “period of decay” (as the Weimar Republic was also called in NS jargon) and defame as “form-destroying” modernism with its “isms”—and thus a concept of an enemy of the National Socialists. As a “preserving force of the German soul, they were to have an effect on future generations.”⁴² Tank described these artists as the keepers and defenders of “German art.”

Georg Kolbe spoke publicly about his work. With the *Ring der Statuten*, however, he publicly positioned himself in relation to National Socialism. The *Ring der Statuten* is an example of Kolbe taking the place that was offered to him in German National Socialism. He wanted to create for the “new Germany,” as he put it during his Goethe Prize speech in 1936. Since the late 1930s, his ideal had been the strong, muscular figure, which, especially in larger-than-life size, corresponded to the National Socialists’ ideas of art. He allowed himself to be celebrated by the NS art establishment, and from 1937 to 1944 he regularly participated in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich, which was propagated at the time as an important showcase for “German art.” The figures of the “Heine Monument” are not androgynous, but rather delicately built in comparison to the nude sculptures of the *Ring der Statuen* created twenty years later.

Georg Kolbe’s work can be described as ambivalent. The “Beethoven Monument,” for example, is not a clear commitment to the National Socialist state, but it can easily be connected to its ideology. With regard to the underlying question of Georg Kolbe in National Socialism, the ambiguity of an as yet undefined number of works and the (inevitable) ambiguity of a biography (Kolbe experienced four state systems and two world wars) should not lead to the assumption that his late work is equally ambiguous. It is questionable whether Kolbe’s work in the NS era can be adequately described by the overly

neutral and hesitant formulation of ambivalent activity. The depiction of the human figure and Kolbe's commitment to the NS state from the late 1930s onward testify to the willing conformity of the sculptor, whose work forfeits any totality. In contrast, it is necessary to take a clear and historically critical position. A further approach with the designation as opportunist makes a transfiguring aestheticization of Kolbe's late work impossible and includes the necessary categories of ethical and social action, which are necessary for a historical-critical consideration of Georg Kolbe's work during the National Socialist era.

Notes

- 1 See: "Stiftungsurkunde," typescript in the file "Briefwechsel Schwartzkopff, Margrit [with] Wolters, Alfred," 1949, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 2 Thanks are due to Thomas Pavel, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, for providing the information that *Verkündung* was on permanent loan in Lübeck until 2013.
- 3 Dietrich Schubert, "Frühlingslied"? Das Heinrich-Heine-Denkmal von Georg Kolbe in Frankfurt/Main (1910–1913)," in: *Heine-Jahrbuch* 34 (Stuttgart 1995), pp. 119–145. In his essay, Schubert mistakenly confuses the sculptor *Emil Hub* with *Fritz Hub*. In the above-mentioned letter from Georg Swarzenski to the "sculptors Klitsch, Kolbe, Hub," October 30, 1912 (GKM Archive, Berlin), the first names are not mentioned. It is highly probable, however, that this is the Frankfurt-based sculptor Emil Hub, who had been working as an independent sculptor in Frankfurt since the mid-1900s.
- 4 See: *Der schreitende, springende, wirbelnde Mensch. Georg Kolbe und der Tanz*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, and Edwin Scharff Museum, Neu-Ulm (Berlin 2003), p. 51.
- 5 Schubert 1995 (see note 3), p. 137.
- 6 See: letter from Richard Scheibe to Georg Kolbe, April 13, 1934, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.323, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 7 Margrit Schwartzkopff and Alfred Wolters in particular were convinced of the outstanding importance of the "Beethoven Monument" for Kolbe's oeuvre as a whole, which is also evident in the surviving correspondence from the years after Kolbe's death, as well as in Wolters's publication *Georg Kolbes Beethoven-Denkmal. Ursprung, Werdegang und Vollendung. Sinn und Bedeutung eines monumentalen Kunstwerks unserer Zeit; ein Deutungsversuch* (Frankfurt am Main 1952).
- 8 Excerpt from the minutes of the meeting with the mayor, September 27, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM.
- 9 See the "Entwurf Beethoven-Denkmal" (Draft Design) from 1926/39 and "Verwandte Objekte" (Related Objects) on the website of the Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/entwurf-beethoven-denkmal/62936>, and "Beethoven-Denkmal, großer Entwurf II" (Large Draft Design II) from 1926/27 with "Verwandten Objekte," <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/beethoven-denkmal-grosser-entwurf-ii-192627-ton/65743> [both sites last accessed May 16, 2023].
- 10 *Hamburger Illustrierte*, no. 43, n.d., KK Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 11 Postcard from Rudolf G. Binding to Georg Kolbe, December 11, 1927, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.46, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 12 Rudolf G. Binding, "Aufruf," in: *Das Beethoven-Denkmal von Georg Kolbe*, exh. cat. Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer, Berlin, 1928, unpaginated, GK Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 13 Georg Swarzenski, in: *ibid.*, unpaginated.
- 14 See: Konstanze Crüwell, "Ein bitterer Abschied. Georg Swarzenski, Städeldirektor von 1906 bis 1937," in: 1938. *Kunst, Künstler, Politik*, ed. Eva Atalan et al., exh. cat. Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main (Göttingen 2013), pp. 259–274, here p. 262. One of the first anti-Semitic and racist laws to be passed in Germany, the misleadingly titled Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service served the purpose of removing Jews, people of Jewish origin, and politically undesirable persons from the civil service.
- 15 See: letters from Georg Swarzenski to Georg Kolbe, June 19 and July 22, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.406, GKM Archive GKM. The sculpture was acquired by the Frankfurt-based association *Freies Deutsches Hochstift* in June 1937 for 4,000 RM. Georg Kolbe received the commission in August 1936.
- 16 Speech by Georg Kolbe on the occasion of the awarding of the 1936 Goethe Prize 1936, typescript, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 17 Letter from Georg Swarzenski to Georg Kolbe, August 7, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.406, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 18 Reproduced in: Maria Freifrau von Tiesenhausen, *Georg Kolbe. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Tübingen 1987), p. 161, no. 219 [translated].
- 19 NARA M1944. Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, 1943–1946, 239, 0008, p. 143.
- 20 Letter from Wilhelm Pinder, Institute of Art History, Friedrich Wilhelms University, Berlin, to the mayor of the City of Frankfurt am Main, May 15, 1940, Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main, Magistratsakten 7906 [translated].
- 21 The journalist Hans Eckstein called Wilhelm Pinder the "art pope of National Socialism." Hans Eckstein, "Hitlers Kunsthistoriker," in: *Die Neue Zeitung*, December 17, 1945 [translated]. Although Wilhelm Pinder must be viewed in a more differentiated manner, he remains, as Horst Bredekamp notes, "as

- a result of his theory of the 'special achievements' of German art and the ideology of the 'special essence' of the Germans which he advocated, one of the exponents of the nationalist fall from grace of art history." Horst Bredekamp, "Wilhelm Pinder," in: idem (ed.), *In der Mitte Berlins. 200 Jahre Kunstgeschichte an der Humboldt-Universität* (Berlin 2010), pp. 295–310, here p. 298 [translated].
- 22 Typescript with the reference line "Anonymous letter to the mayor, dated September 18, 1938," September 30, 1938; author: Alfred Wolters, Städtische Galerie Frankfurt am Main, ISG FFM, Magistratsakten 7906.
 - 23 Anna Heckötter, "Handeln im Zwiespalt. Ein Fazit zur Podiumsdiskussion 'Alfred Wolters. Direktor des Liebieghauses 1928–1949,'" <https://www.liebieghaus.de/de/einblicke/handeln-im-zwiespalt> [last accessed May 16, 2023].
 - 24 The Office of Strategic Service (OSS) was an intelligence agency of the United States War Department during the Second World War.
 - 25 NARA M1944. Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas, 1943–1946, 239, 0065, p. 15, and NARA M1941. Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points ("Ardelia Hall Collection"): OMGUS Headquarters Records, 1938–1951, 260, 0019, p. 135.
 - 26 Konstanze Crüwell, *Worte sind im Museum so überflüssig wie im Konzertsaal. Eine Hommage an Georg Swarzenski. Städeldirektor von 1906–1937* (Cologne 2015), p. 127 [translated]. See also: Tanja Baensch, "Das Museum als 'lebendiger Körper.' Die Geschichte der Städtischen Galerie im Städtischen Kunstinstitut bis 1945," in: Uwe Fleckner and Max Hollein (eds.), *Museum im Widerspruch: Das Städel und der Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin 2011), pp. 25–92, here p. 68.
 - 27 Alfred Wolters, "Ein Bildnis Victor Müllers von Wilhelm Leibl," in: Oswald Goetz (ed.), *Beiträge. Für Georg Swarzenski zum 11. Januar 1951* (Berlin et al. 1951), pp. 216–227, here p. 227 [translated].
 - 28 See: letters from Alfred Wolters to Georg Kolbe, March 12, 1946 and August 17, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 29 See: letter from Alfred Wolters to Frieda Esser, September 1947, and letter to the Department of Culture of the City of Frankfurt am Main, February 3, 1948, ISG FFM, Kulturamt 431, sheets 23 and 33.
 - 30 See: Vermerk Stadtkanzlei I. 5/Bu., Betreff "Aufstellung und Enthüllung des Beethoven-Denkmal," 18.5.1951, ISG FFM, Kulturamt 904.
 - 31 Rudolf G. Binding, *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe* [1933], 8th ed. (Berlin 1935), p. 51 [translated].
 - 32 See the presentation of the magistrate to the city council assembly "Aufstellung des 'Rings der Statuen,'" March 8, 1954, Frankfurt am Main, ISG FFM, I./Gr., Magistratsakten 7863.
 - 33 See: "Pressestelle der Stadt Frankfurt a. M., 'Ring der Statuen' im Rothschildpark," September 30, 1954, ISG FFM, Sammlung Ortsgeschichte S3/K/2536 [translated].
 - 34 The German Lost Art Foundation lists the research project "Raub und Restitution der Sammlung Goldschmidt-Rothschild," conducted by the Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main in 2009; https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/03_Forschungsfoerderung/Projekt/Museum-Angewandte-Kunst-Frankfurt/Projekt1.html [last accessed May 17, 2023]. Katharina Weiler has summarized the results of the provenance research on the collection; see: Katharina Weiler, "Die Kunstobjekte Maximilian von Goldschmidt-Rothschilds – Biographie einer Sammlung im Spiegel der Geschichte des Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main," in: Evelyn Brockhoff and Franziska Kiermeier (eds.), *Gesammelt, gehandelt, geraubt. Kunst in Frankfurt und der Region zwischen 1933 und 1945* (Frankfurt am Main 2019), pp. 139–153.
 - 35 See: "Gutachten über den Ankauf der Kunstsammlung Max v. Goldschmidt-Rothschild," undated, ISG FFM, Rechneiam IV, 2, p. 2.
 - 36 All works shown at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Munich, including details of buyers and prices, can be researched at www.gdk-research.de/en [last accessed May 17, 2023].
 - 37 For example, Wolfgang Schneditz titled a newspaper article "Zu Georg Kolbes neuen Schöpfungen" (On Georg Kolbe's New Creations) in an issue of the *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, published on December 9, 1942, "Unsterblicher Menschenadel" (Immortal Human Nobility).
 - 38 See: "Ansprache zur Eröffnung der Düsseldorfer Kolbe-Gedächtnisausstellung," August 1, 1948, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 39 The motif of the "guardian" is associated during the NS era with ideological and racist ideas. A well-known example is the painting *Die Hüterin der Art* (Guardian of the Race) by the draftsman and writer Wolfgang Willrich. It was used as the frontispiece of the 1937 book by the staunch National Socialist Willrich in the Munich publishing house Lehmanns Verlag, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine*

- kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art*, which was widely distributed.
- 40** See: BArch Berlin, R55/20252a. Georg Kolbe is on the “special list” of the list of the “divinely gifted,” along with the sculptors Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, who regularly carry out government commissions, and the painters Werner Peiner and Arthur Kampf.
- 41** Kurt Lothar Tank, *Deutsche Plastik unserer Zeit* (Munich 1942), p. 49 [translated].
- 42** *Ibid.*, p. 47 [translated].

Christian Fuhrmeister

At One Table: Breker, Klimsch, Kolbe, Göring, Hitler, and Mrs. Himmler Coteries, Circles, Dependencies

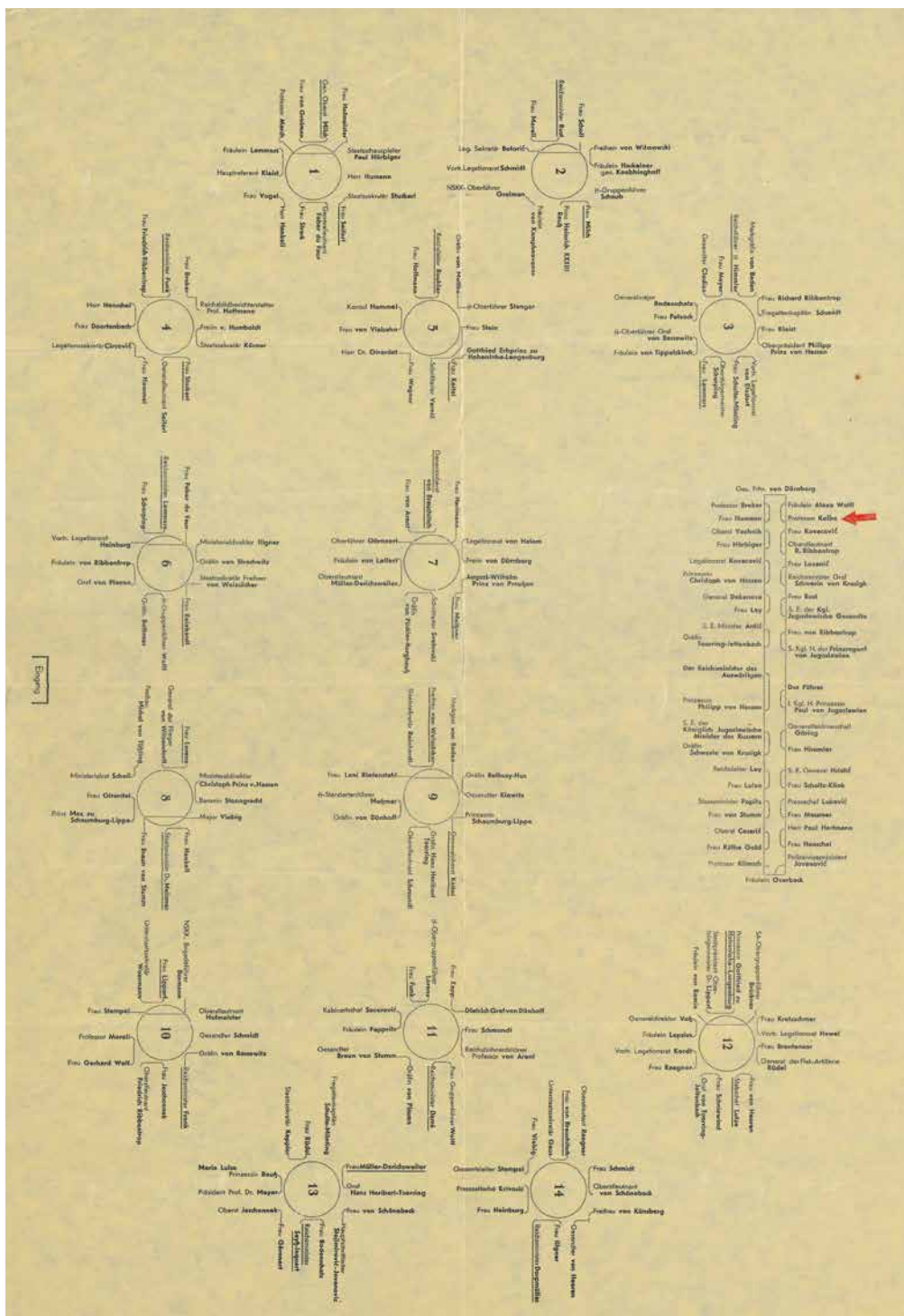
In the fall of 2021, the Georg Kolbe Museum issued an invitation to a workshop to be held on December 11, 2021, to provide insight into the artist's "second" estate, which had arrived in Berlin in the spring of 2020. Although it has already been mentioned on several occasions, the eminently discursive nature of this process, which is highly interested in scholarly exchange, should be emphasized here once again. For it is not a matter of course to discuss with colleagues, in a self-critical, cross-institutional, and open-ended manner, the latest findings and evaluations of sources and the resulting possibilities of interpretation. But the further unfolding of events—up to this conference volume—has clearly shown how absolutely right the courageous decision was to proactively integrate the new material into the research discourse in this way, instead of first reviewing, cataloging, evaluating, and researching it in-house, and then presenting or publishing it after several years.

In December 2021, in her cursory overview of the documents transported in some 100 moving cartons, Elisa Tamaschke of the Georg Kolbe Museum also showed a seating plan (fig. 1) that immediately electrified me—if only because the ephemeral character of seating arrangements and menus is diametrically opposed to both private and state traditions of storage and transmission. Yet it is praxeological-performative manifestations such as plans like these that, I argue, convey an idea of historical processes, structures, reference systems, and networks of players that correspondences and manuscripts do not allow in the same way—and neither do the artworks themselves. The seating plan reveals an internal logic that usually operates only in the background; we peer into the "gears of operation," or the infrastructural fabric that frames and accompanies discourses but which rarely comes to the fore, and whose nature and implications are even more rarely addressed.

We see a floor plan that can also be read as an experimental arrangement for a meticulously planned meeting of the top echelons of National Socialist society: people are deliberately and consciously placed—that is to say, in each case selected and combined with one another—like the ingredients of a dish, a medical prescription, or an experiment in a chemical laboratory. In this setting, the functionary elites of the state, the party, the government, the military, and the administration (and their wives) meet selected artists (and their wives—with the exception of Leni Riefenstahl, who did not follow the couple principle).

We see one long rectangular table and fourteen round tables as they were set for the dinner at the Hotel Kaiserhof (Wilhelmsplatz 3–5, opposite the Reich Chancellery) on June 3, 1939, on the occasion of the visit of Their Royal Highnesses Princess Olga and Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia to the Reich's capital, Berlin. The aristocracy is strongly represented—probably also in order to maintain the etiquette befitting their status vis-à-vis the royal couple.


But we also see a scheme and a model, a visualization, and a codification. Regardless of the concrete purpose, we can speculate on the question of whether this ideal image of a social configuration follows imperial-era models. If so, the modern, efficient, economically powerful, and militarily well-equipped NS dictatorship would have returned to



1 The seating plan for the dinner at Hotel Kaiserhof on June 3, 1939, on the occasion of the visit of Their Royal Highnesses Princess Olga and Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia to Berlin (overall view), Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

154 At One Table: Breker, Klimsch, Kolbe, Göring, Hitler, and Mrs. Himmler

2 The detail of the seating plan shows Adolf Hitler's central placement; the red arrow points to Georg Kolbe's seat, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

Ges. Ehr. von Dörnberg	
Professor Breker	Fräulein Alexa Wolff
Frau Humann	Professor Kolbe 
Oberst Vauhnik	Frau Kovacević
Frau Hörbiger	Oberstleutnant R. Ribbentrop
Legationsrat Kovacević	Frau Lozanić
Prinzessin Christoph von Hessen	Reichsminister Graf Schwerin von Krosigk
General Dekaneva	Frau Rust
Frau Ley	S. E. der Kgl. Jugoslawische Gesandte
S. E. Minister Antić	Frau von Ribbentrop
Gräfin Toerring-Jettenbach	S. Kgl. H. der Prinzregent von Jugoslawien
Der Reichsminister des Auswärtigen	Der Führer
Prinzessin Philipp von Hessen	I. Kgl. H. Prinzessin Paul von Jugoslawien
S. E. der Königlich Jugoslawische Minister des Äußern	Generalfeldmarschall Göring
Gräfin Schwerin von Krosigk	Frau Himmeler
Reichsleiter Ley	S. E. General Hristić
Frau Lutze	Frau Scholtz-Klink
Staatsminister Popitz	Presseschef Luković
Frau von Stumm	Frau Messmer
Oberst Cesarić	Herr Paul Hartmann
Frau Käthe Gold	Frau Henschel
Professor Klimesch	Polizeivizepräsident Jovanović
Fräulein Overbeck	

the construct of the “royal court” for an evening. It can be assumed, however, that the protocol conventions, specifications, or even constraints for selection and arrangement were decisive for this spatiotemporal codification of a state visit.

For our context—*Georg Kolbe and National Socialism. Continuities and Breaks in Life, Work, and Reception*—this source seems important to me. For it allows us to look at and into the close relationship between art and politics in the NS state. The precise determination of this relationship is crucial for a holistic understanding of detail and totality, micro and macro, point and panorama, document and narrative, source and context, individual work and oeuvre, circumstantial evidence/relic/trace and overall picture.¹ Thus, we face the challenge, also methodologically, of developing a coherent, plausible, and consensual interpretation.

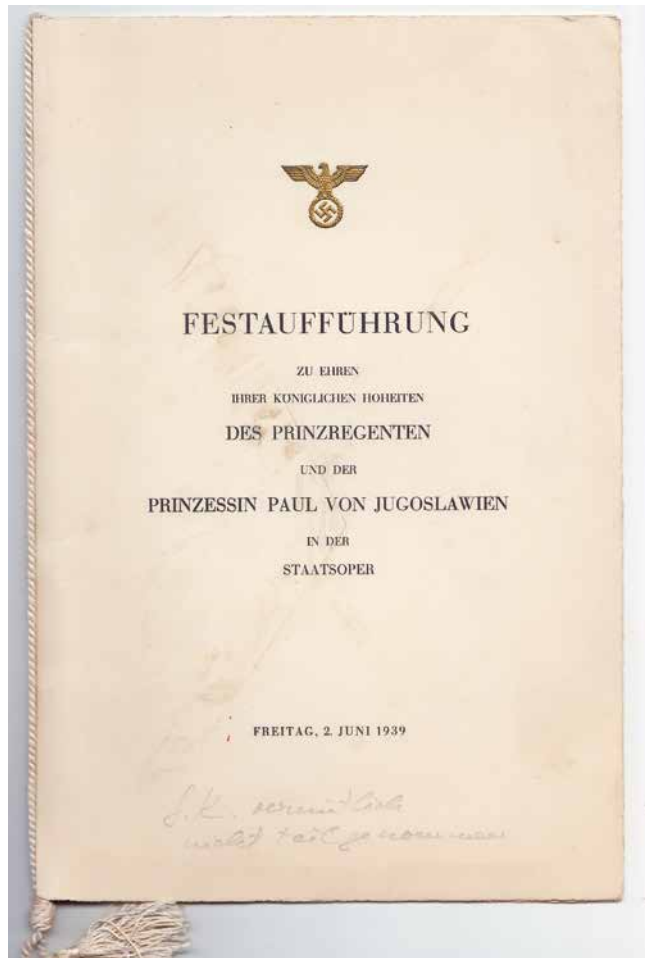
The only table which is rectangular rather than round stands out on the plan of the room. This is where the *crème de la crème* gathers—or are lined up (fig. 2). One quickly

recognizes the pairings of the dinner partners, such as that of Kolbe with a “Miss Alexa Wolff”—who probably cannot be identified with Alexandra von Wolff-Stomersee, since she had already been married twice, nor with the daughter of SS-Gruppenführer Karl Wolff (table 6) and “the wife of Gruppenführer Wolff” (table 11, paired with Reich Minister Darré), since the daughter’s name was Helga and she had only been born in 1934.

On the one hand, it is clear that the small Yugoslavian delegation was faced with, or rather seated opposite, a large number of German participants, and on the other, that both artists and women were placed next to or opposite the National Socialist functional elites in a contrasting manner. Nevertheless, these distinct pairing processes can be summarized in three categories that can be understood as dichotomous: gender (male–female), nationality (German–Yugoslav), and, with gray areas, occupation or primary field of activity (art/culture–politics/state). For our context, this seating plan—this case study of the dialectics of art and power—raises some questions, even in the visual evidence of the dotted lines of connection: What can (only) art overtly achieve for politics and propaganda? If the totalitarian dictatorship has the power to direct an unrestricted creative sovereignty, why are these steering impulses not implemented directly? What is this (uncanny?) spectacle of which we, the post-born, become aware eighty years later? Why do so many sculptors, but no painters or graphic artists, participate in this social event? Or are all these questions completely misplaced, because it is about the tangible geopolitical interests of the Reich, i.e., a kind of gift-wrapping for truly strategic negotiations and agreements? Would the cultivated conversation of this National Socialist “salon” thus be a lulling tactical maneuver to impress the trading partner and potential ally in the Balkans?

Let us draw an interim conclusion. At the long table, at which the forty-four most important guests are seated—including the two Royal Highnesses and the “Führer” Adolf Hitler, the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Field Marshal General and Reich Commissioner for the Four-Year Plan Hermann Göring, the Reich Minister of Finance Johann Ludwig Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, the Reichsleiter of the NSDAP and the German Labor Front (DAF) Robert Ley, and many others—the German sculptors Arno Breker, Georg Kolbe, and Fritz Klimsch are also seated. At no other of the fourteen tables with their twelve to sixteen participants (altogether 180, making a total of 224 people at this state banquet) are so many artists seated as here, in the actual immediate vicinity of the Reich leadership—a proximity that can hardly be classified as other than an appreciation of the three so different artists (Kolbe is fifty-two, Klimsch sixty-nine, and Breker only thirty-nine years old).

The dinner on June 3 was preceded by a festive performance at the State Opera on June 2 (fig. 3). From the fact that the phrase “G. K. presumably did not attend” has been noted in pencil on the opera program (presumably by Kolbe’s granddaughter, Maria von Tiesenhausen, due to missing entries in the appointment diary), it can be inferred in reverse that Georg Kolbe attended the dinner. Even for an artist as successful as he was under National Socialism (uninterrupted presence at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* [Great German Art Exhibition] in Munich from 1937 to 1943 with at least one exhibited figure, and in 1939 with three exhibits), the invitation to this representative social program



3 Program for the gala performance at the Staatsoper on June 2, 1939, on the occasion of the visit of Their Royal Highnesses Princess Olga and Prince Regent Paul of Yugoslavia to Berlin, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

must have been something special; a more significant statement of appreciation is hardly imaginable, if one disregards the state studios for Breker and Thorak.

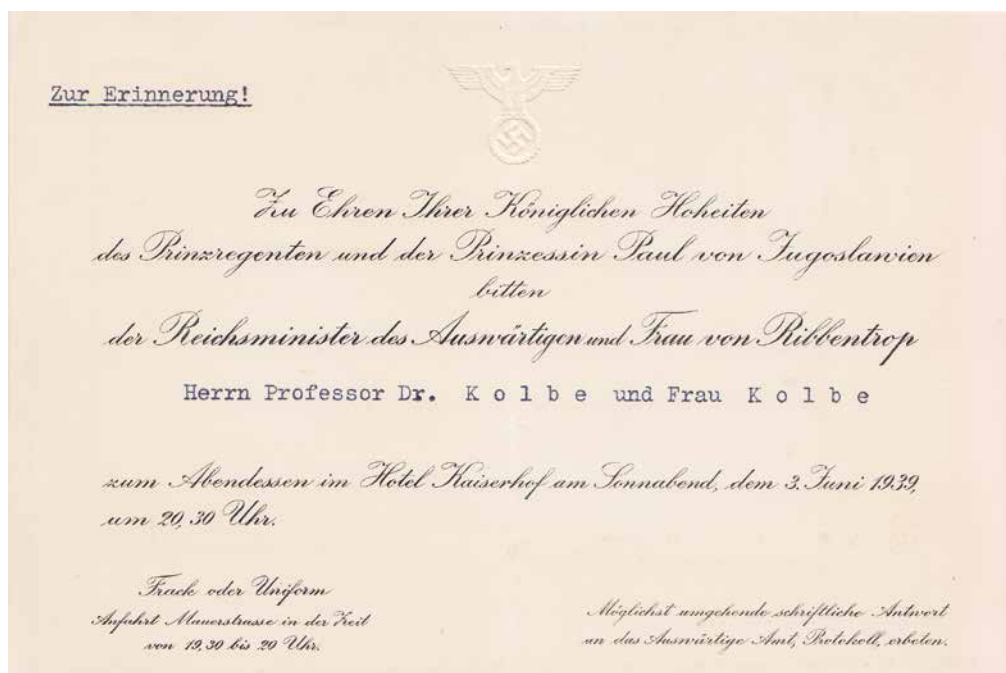
It is characteristic of Kolbe research, as well as of German art history in general, that this event in the summer of 1939 has nevertheless not yet received any attention. This is primarily due to the source situation (although at least 250 plans were probably printed), but also to the specific *déformation professionnelle* of the discipline, which Christoph Luitpold Frommel defined in a lecture in 1998 as the “linguistically adequate consummation of an aesthetic masterpiece.”² For as indispensable as this analysis of form and work is—the concrete examination of the artifact and the elaboration of its layers of meaning—the narrowing and fading out of the context is equally problematic, and the tunnel-vision view of figures, statues, and statuettes without consideration of the conditions of their production, distribution, and reception is limited in the truest sense of the word. The seating plan is thus a message in a bottle that sheds a flash of light on the context in which many works of the late 1930s were created.

In the 2018 study “‘Einseitig künstlerisch.’ Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit” (“Unilaterally Artistic.” Georg Kolbe in the NS Era) by Ursel Berger,³ we encounter a different line of argumentation regarding the matter under discussion here. “Kolbe’s formal language” had changed “in the late 1920s,” “independently of political implications.”⁴ A change is thus conceded, but at the same time a decidedly internal artistic development is claimed or made responsible for the—in part considerable—modifications. This is followed by the statement that Kolbe’s works, “even after 1933, were understood in the press as works of art and not as interpretations of NS ideology.”⁵

The fact is that even the nearly 3,000 landscape depictions in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen* (GDK) in Munich from 1937 to 1944—by far the most common motif or theme—were not direct “interpretations of NS ideology,” but were part of the established tradition of bourgeois ideas about art. Precisely for this reason, as Hans-Ernst Mittig was able to convincingly explain in discussions and conversations, these images had a system-stabilizing function, because they simulated a free space in the face of a dictatorship of surveillance and conformist media, or, dialectically speaking, they made possible the illusion of the absence of control and propaganda. Accordingly, the work of art contributes in an affirmative way to the continuation of the dictatorship precisely when it evades a blatant ideological indoctrination and servicing.

Basically, we can only make progress in the question of affirmation and criticism, approval of and distance to the regime, if we take into account the high volatility, the dynamics and thrusts of radicalization. The ideology and worldview of National Socialism, in particular, were not static, but were always performatively and praxeologically adapted to concrete conditions, as shown by the example of the Fraktur typeface, which was initially enforced but then abandoned for pragmatic reasons; similarly, the *Volksempfänger* (people’s radio receiver) replaced the *Thingstätten* (open-air theaters), which had sunk into complete irrelevance by the end of the 1930s. In examining Kolbe’s attitude toward National Socialism, we must therefore assume from the outset a latent state of tension, ambivalence, and ambiguity due to developmental processes on the part of both the artist and the system. The congruence or divergence can only be determined with a certain degree of precision on a case-by-case basis, not across the board and in general.

The *conditio sine qua non* for such an investigation—different, new, and in part even first-time—of Kolbe’s relationship to National Socialism is, on the one hand, the willingness to revise comfortable, simplistic, or relativizing perspectives of interpretation, and on the other hand, a further intensification of the study of sources. For the modeling of art-historical work to date, which has disregarded or even consciously ignored contemporary historical contexts and asymmetrical power relations, was due not least to an often solipsistic focus on questions of form. As indispensable as the autopsy of sources is, there is a certainty that the results will conflict with art-historical tendencies towards canonization—indeed, with the paradigms and traditions of value attribution themselves. A sculptor like Kolbe, who witnessed and in part helped to shape the crucial developmental processes of German modernist sculpture, inevitably runs the risk of being appropriated by simplistic narratives or becoming a pawn in bipolar and dichotomous patterns of



4 Invitation to the dinner on June 3, 1939, from Joachim von Ribbentrop to Georg Kolbe with the request to the invited to wear “tailcoat or uniform”

interpretation. Nevertheless, there is no alternative to a reevaluation; the need for this—of Kolbe and his work—is inescapable.

With regard to our case study, the seating plan, the question is not only “tailcoat or uniform” (fig. 4); we need to understand the spatiotemporal configuration and the network of relationships of this dinner. The fact is that various important players—a classification that is rather an understatement for Hitler, but applies to the Reich ministers Bernhard Rust (science, education, and national education) and Walther Funk (economics), as well as to the photographer and politician Heinrich Hoffmann—had a very concrete relationship with Kolbe: they were buyers of his works. In 1938, for example, Hitler purchased the almost life-size statue *Junges Weib* (Young Woman, 1938) for 18,000 RM; Rust bought *Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938) in 1939; Funk purchased the figure *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man, 1936) in 1940; and a private individual bought *Flora* (1939/40)—each of the latter three also sold for the handsome price of 18,000 RM, as if this amount were Kolbe’s standard price. Three figures were acquired by Charlotte Rohrbach and the *Flora* by Heinrich Hoffmann, the impresario of a photographic dynasty, Reich photojournalist, and influential intimate of the Führer’s inner circle.⁶

The seating arrangement thus represents, at least in part, a coterie, a network, even a cartel or oligopoly: people knew each other, they appreciated each other, and of course they also competed with each other, which is especially true for the three sculptors. In any case, all the protagonists of this evening were part of the National Socialist system, and

some also of the NS “operational system of art.” At the same time, the actual occasion, namely the state visit, must be regarded as quite precarious, since it falls into a phase in which the Gestapo, consulates, and legations, as well as secret and intelligence services, meticulously observed and reported on the mood toward the German Reich.⁷ The extensive documentation of the preparation and execution of the visit⁸ allows the diagnosis of a deliberately orchestrated campaign of deception when Hitler claimed in his toast that “the German people” had “no other goal than to move toward a secure future in a pacified Europe.”⁹ A few days later the State Secretary at the Foreign Office, Ernst von Weizsäcker, described the visit as “quite satisfactory.”¹⁰

The press coverage documented the participants of the dinner in the form of long lists: “Present on the German side were: a number of Reich ministers and Reich leaders, Reich governors as well as other leading personalities of the state, the party, and the Wehrmacht, the members of the German honorary service and the honorary escorts of the Yugoslav guests, as well as renowned representatives of business and art with their wives.”¹¹

What remains? Two aspects characterize this attempt to come to a conclusion. On the one hand, the seating plan retains its power of irritation as a historical source: How fundamentally osmotic must we conceptualize the relationship between the NS state and art, when the spheres of art and power were so close to each other, and even manifestly converged? Can we now, on the basis of this evidence, interpolate those other cases that have not been handed down in the same way? And which theory-based tools from which discipline seem appropriate for an argument? The seating chart opens a window that allows views whose meaning and significance have yet to be explored.

On the other hand, it can be said that the exclusive focus on the work of art itself is only conditionally useful, and only conditionally resilient, when it comes to determining Kolbe’s relationship to National Socialism. Precisely because we are accustomed to conceiving of work and context as separate spheres, the consideration of historical realities of life even requires, in a certain sense, a methodological reorientation of the subject of art history. Only this increase in complexity can do justice to the inevitably systemic character of artifacts. The wealth of documents, both written and visual, now available at the Georg Kolbe Museum is therefore both an opportunity and a mandate to further specify the precarious relationship between modernism and National Socialism as an examination of the structures of the analysis of the production, distribution, and reception of art in relation to intra- and extra-scientific factors, contexts, and power relations. This history of entanglements—that much is certain—is in turn multilayered and needs to be opened up and interpreted.

Notes

- 1 More on this line of thought in: Christian Fuhrmeister, "Punkt und Panorama, Kunstwerk und Kunststadt, Mikro und Makro," in: *Kunst und Leben 1918 bis 1955*, ed. Karin Althaus, Sarah Bock, Lisa Kern, Matthias Mühling, and Melanie Wittchow, exh. cat. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München, Munich (Berlin and Munich 2022), pp. 20–35.
- 2 In the context of the so-called "Small Art Historian Conference" at the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe on the theme "Art History—Self-Diagnosis of a Discipline," July 3/4, 1998.
- 3 An earlier version of this text from 2013—with only a few small-format illustrations—was entitled "Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit. Tatsachen und Interpretationen" (Georg Kolbe in the NS Era. Facts and Interpretations); I thank Elisa Tamaschke, GKM Berlin, for the kind reference. This older version is still available online at <https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/view/21308335/ursel-berger-georg-kolbe-in-der-ns-zeit-georg-kolbe-museum>. In the revised and retitled version from 2018, there are more and larger illustrations; the text has been modified, but Ursel Berger argues very similarly; <https://web.archive.org/web/20190508074534/https://www.georg-kolbe-museum.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Einseitig-künstlerisch-mit-Bildern-Titel-1.pdf> [both sites last accessed June 11, 2023].
- 4 Ibid. (2018 version), p. 19 [translated].
- 5 Ibid. [translated].
- 6 See: Sebastian Peters, *Heinrich Hoffmann. Hitlers Fotograf und seine Netzwerke zwischen Politik, Propaganda und Profit* (in preparation), <https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/forschung/ea/forschung/heinrich-hoffmann-hitlers-fotograf-und-seine-netzwerke-zwischen-politik-propaganda-und-profit> [last accessed June 11, 2023].
- 7 See, for example: PolAAA, RZ 211/103371, sheets 67 and 148; BArch R 43 II/1456b, sheet 87.
- 8 BArch R 43 II/1456b, sheets 93–140.
- 9 POLAAA, R 103324, sheets 16–17 [translated].
- 10 POLAAA, R 103324, sheets 53–54 [translated].
- 11 From press clipping from the Deutsches Nachrichtensbüro, the press agency of the Reich, June 5, 1939, in: BArch, R 43 II 1456b, sheets 147 VS and RS.

Georg Kolbe and the Art Market in National Socialism

“I am by no means in the position of having to sell my few bronzes at dumping prices.” Georg Kolbe’s Marketing Strategies

Preliminary Note

During his more than forty-year career as an artist, the sculptor Georg Kolbe worked with more than thirty different art dealers in Germany and abroad.¹ With each of these galleries, he developed very different business relationships. While many relationships remained episodic, others developed into long-term and intensive business partnerships. The surviving sources on this subject are as varied as the individual collaborations between the sculptor and “his” art dealers. The estates of many of the gallerists who were relevant to Kolbe have either survived only in fragments, are not publicly accessible, are not known, or—as in the case of Alfred Flechtheim—have been almost completely lost. For many years, there were also large gaps in the sculptor’s estate with regard to the art trade. With the acquisition of the estate of Kolbe’s granddaughter Maria von Tiesenhausen by the Georg Kolbe Museum in 2020, these gaps were significantly reduced. The more than 500 business documents and correspondences preserved in the holdings provide new perspectives on Kolbe’s marketing strategies and his relationship to important protagonists of the German art trade during the Weimar Republic and the period of National Socialism, and reveal the continuities and caesuras associated with them.²

I. “Artists and the Modern Art Trade”

Georg Kolbe repeatedly commented on aspects of the art market in prefaces and articles. In one of his most comprehensive statements on this subject, he formulated his ideal conception of an art dealer in the art magazine *Der Kunstwanderer* in 1928. For the January and February issues, the magazine had invited sixteen artists “of the most diverse ‘tendencies’” to an “*enquête*” (survey) entitled “Künstler und moderner Kunsthandel” (Artists and the Modern Art Trade)³ and was able to win over Kolbe, one of the most successful and sought-after sculptors at the time.

His solid position on the art market around 1928 was demonstrated, among other things, by the fact that he had the financial means to purchase a 2,000-square-meter plot of land in Berlin’s Westend and to build a modern studio and residential ensemble on it in the same year.⁴ Gallery exhibitions in New York, Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt am Main, and London,⁵ acquisitions by museums, such as the purchase of a *Kauernde* (Squatting Female Figure, 1927) by the City of Detroit for the Detroit Institute of Arts through Galerie Flechtheim,⁶ and public commissions, such as the so-called Rathenau fountain in Berlin’s Volkspark Rehberge,⁷ completed in 1928, also attest to his national and international reputation at this time.

These successes were largely linked to the commitment of various gallerists; and Kolbe’s contribution to the *Kunstwanderer* survey documents that he, too, was aware of the importance and necessity of a progressive and risk-taking art trade for the successful marketing of his own work:

“Artists make a clear distinction between the two representatives of the art trade: the one that deals only with old, long-recognized art and the one that takes care of living artists. It is the latter that is important to us. He should not only show accountability to the buyer, but above all to the artist. He must be a passionate friend not only of art, but also of the artists as people. This requires a strong, highly talented fellow. The expertise of even the most renowned museum professional cannot help him. This is not about the authenticity of a name, but the authenticity of an emerging talent that is still being discussed. His task is to believe in this talent himself and to inspire such belief in others. And whoever is able to do that, and is proven right, should also make a lot of money. No, this is not profiteering! Of course, he has to be a man of rank. Not like ninety percent of his colleagues, who conveniently grab only big names and open a shop with them. No, an art dealer must not only ‘undertake,’ he must also ‘take over.’ In this way, he becomes a friend and indispensable helper of art and artists; he becomes a guide for art lovers. How often have we met such a man?”⁸

In addition to all the appreciation for the “indispensable helpers,” the text reveals a hierarchical understanding of roles in which “the art dealer” is primarily obligated to the artists. A possible obligation of the artists to the dealers, on the other hand, does not seem to exist. The article also reveals reservations about much of the art trade at the time by suggesting that a large group of “comfortable entrepreneurs” faced off against individual “helping friends of the artist as a person.” Comparable dichotomous views of the art market can also be found among other artists and art dealers of the time and attest to the competitive situation in which they saw themselves—depending on their point of view—with French or “old” art.⁹ Kolbe’s business partner at the time, Alfred Flechtheim, also repeatedly propagated this competition.¹⁰ In his “Zuschrift aus dem Kunsthandel” (Letter from the Art Trade),¹¹ published in the March issue of *Kunstwanderer* in response to the artist survey, he was able to report from his perspective that a “large number” of the “living German [artists]” he represented “[...] make a more or less good living from the conversion of their output into money,” but he, too, lamented the “misfortune” that “in the prominent Bellevue-, Viktoria-, and Tiergartenstrasse only Old Masters, French Impressionists, Chinese tomb figures, and signed chests of drawers were traded.” According to Flechtheim, there was still “too much propaganda for old art” through exhibitions and the press; however, it was the exhibitions of “n e w” art that spread the word “that it is also c h i c to own a Kolbe or a Klee.”¹²

Although Flechtheim was undoubtedly the type of dealer Kolbe had positively sketched, in his definition the sculptor may well have initially had the late Paul Cassirer in mind, whom Kolbe had similarly characterized in his obituary for the gallerist two years earlier: “God grant young art a mediator of equal potency, a dealer who is both resourceful and passionate, who as a whole represents an artist’s man like Paul Cassirer.”¹³

II. Georg Kolbe and Paul Cassirer

Paul Cassirer's contribution to Georg Kolbe's artistic and economic rise is undisputed.¹⁴ Therefore, only a brief outline of their common path will be given here. Around the turn of the century, the art dealer had taken on a young generation of sculptors, whose most prominent representatives included Georg Kolbe, Ernst Barlach, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, and August Gaul.¹⁵ The first solo exhibition in November 1904 marked the beginning of the business relationship between Kolbe and Cassirer.¹⁶ Like other sculptors of his generation, Kolbe strove for artistic autonomy far removed from the Wilhelminian commissioned sculpture that was prevalent at the time.¹⁷ Through Cassirer, he gained the necessary access to the private art market and the corresponding circles of collectors. After the First World War, the gallerist remained an important partner for Kolbe, who became increasingly successful. The sculptor's works were repeatedly exhibited at the renowned Kunstsalon on Viktoriastrasse.¹⁸ When Paul Cassirer committed suicide in January 1926, Georg Kolbe paid him a last tribute by taking his death mask and designing the art dealer's grave. His connection to the Kunstsalon and Verlag Paul Cassirer, both of which were continued by Grete Ring and Walter Feilchenfeldt, remained after the death of the art dealer.

During his time with Cassirer, Georg Kolbe developed into not only a successful artist but also a professional businessman and relentless negotiator. Not least for this reason, it can be assumed that the collaboration with the art dealer was formative and fundamental for Kolbe's later actions on the art market. The progressive form of presentation of the Cassirer exhibitions, which differed in their systematics and concentration from the often overloaded exhibitions of conventional galleries in the German Empire, the close cooperation with private collectors and Secessionist exhibition institutions, and the marketing through high-quality photographic reproductions, as in the case of the joint publication *Bildwerke* in 1913,¹⁹ probably provided Kolbe with lasting standards for the successful positioning of his own work on the art market. Kolbe had pushed for a photographic documentation of his own works early on, and his preoccupation with Auguste Rodin most likely furthered this idea.²⁰ The Cassirer book, however, was the first professional use of his work photographs for a comprehensive marketing of his "Bildwerke" (sculptures). It can be observed that, from then on, Kolbe attached great importance to controlling and securing the distribution and use of his work photographs on the art market.²¹ Later illustrated book projects in which Kolbe was involved, such as Rudolf Binding's book, published in 1933 and subsequently reprinted several times, *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe* (On the Life of Sculpture. The Content and Beauty of the Work of Georg Kolbe)²² and the volume *Bildwerke. Vom Künstler ausgewählt* (Sculptures. Selected by the Artist),²³ published in 1939 as part of the Insel-Bücherei series, may also have been influenced by his experiences with the early Cassirer publication. With the hiring of Margrit Schwartzkopff as his photographer in the late 1920s, Kolbe finally professionalized this area.

In addition, it can be assumed that Kolbe recognized the importance of a private art market in the years of the German Empire, which could offer economic security in times

of restrictive state cultural policies, and the advantages of his own independence in this market. Even though Cassirer acted as Kolbe's main dealer of sorts for the years between 1904 and 1926, the sculptor opted early on for the lifelong principle of not tying himself exclusively to a single art dealer.²⁴ This independence gave him the freedom to sell numerous casts directly to collectors, museums, and other galleries, which in turn led to greater financial autonomy as his successes grew.

III. Georg Kolbe and Galerie Flechtheim

After Cassirer's death, Kolbe intensified his collaboration with Galerie Flechtheim (fig. 1). In March 1926, Flechtheim, who himself had received support from Cassirer in 1921 when he founded his Berlin branch,²⁵ donated a cast of the Cassirer portrait created by Kolbe (1925) to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, which can be interpreted on the one hand as a posthumous tribute to the deceased and on the other hand as a symbolic prelude to the collaboration.²⁶ The correspondence between the sculptor and the gallery, which was preserved in the new estate, began shortly thereafter, in October 1926, with the preparations for the first joint exhibition at the Düsseldorf branch in 1927.²⁷

From this point on, a collaboration developed that lasted more than six years and resulted in two solo exhibitions,²⁸ several group exhibitions, and numerous sales in Germany and abroad. Despite this successful partnership, the new sources document an occasionally strained relationship between Georg Kolbe and Alfred Flechtheim, who had in any case delegated Kolbe's day-to-day supervision to his two employees, Alex Vömel and Curt Valentin. In July 1930, the relationship between the sculptor and the gallery seems to have almost broken down. Kolbe's threat to withdraw from the business relationship and the reasons for the conflict can be reconstructed from a conciliatory letter written by Curt Valentin:

"We spoke at length about the Maillol affair. We both agreed that it was outrageous that you and Maillol did not meet. Flechtheim is also in complete agreement with us on this—and I must repeat that, in this case, Flechtheim did what was in his power. The fact that he did not have this power cannot be blamed on him.

Nor is there much point in talking in detail about Flechtheim himself; we have done that often enough. But if I may say one more word on his behalf, I would like to repeat that the many mistakes, which every sensitive person must take offense at, do not change anything or little about the fact that he stands up for the things he 'represents'—and he is perhaps the only art dealer in Germany today who is also willing to make sacrifices for the affairs of art. [...]

If the abundance of exhibitions he organizes gives the impression that he is, as you say, like a department store, 'interested in everything,' then, basically, there are not too many artists for whom he stands up and truly stands up. [...] Even if Barlach were now to join Galerie Flechtheim, I do not think that this

1 (left to right) Alfred Flechtheim, André Gide, and Georg Kolbe in front of Galerie Flechtheim in Berlin, 1930, historical photograph



could be a reason to draw your final conclusions about Flechtheim. [...] If you are not convinced of Flechtheim in this respect, then I may perhaps say that Vömel and I—if I may say so—will really and with all our love and friendship and in any case stand up for you and your work. That, at least, you know!”²⁹

The week before Valentin’s letter, the French sculptor Aristide Maillol had visited Berlin and, on that occasion, met Ernst Barlach at Galerie Flechtheim. The meeting was documented photographically and later used by the gallery for promotional purposes.³⁰ Because Barlach was able to meet Maillol, whom Kolbe greatly admired,³¹ while he himself was denied this privilege, Kolbe apparently felt slighted and no longer worthy of being represented by Flechtheim.

Kolbe’s subjective perception, however, was at odds with the actual commitment that Galerie Flechtheim had shown to him during this period, far beyond the borders of Germany. The previous year, for example, Flechtheim had sold another work, *Assunta* (1919/21), to the City of Detroit for the Detroit Institute of Arts.³² An exhibition at the Weyhe Gallery in New York in May 1929 also seems to have been realized in cooperation

with the Berlin gallery.³³ In addition, a comprehensive and much-discussed solo exhibition of Kolbe's work took place at Galerie Flechtheim in Berlin in March 1930.³⁴

Another reason for Kolbe's irritation was obviously the contract for an extensive casting program, which Flechtheim and Barlach had signed shortly before the Maillol meeting and which henceforth bound the presumptive competitor more closely to the gallery.³⁵ There was a pronounced rivalry with Barlach in particular, which was further expressed in the fact that Kolbe not only cut out and collected articles about himself, but also articles about his sculptor colleague.³⁶ An increasing presence of Barlach in the gallery's program apparently led Kolbe to a verbal all-out attack against the alleged Flechtheim "department store"³⁷ in order to strengthen his own market position.

The contractual agreement between Barlach and Flechtheim has been preserved in Barlach's estate as a summary in letter form.³⁸ Meanwhile, a 1928 contract between Kolbe and Flechtheim has been made available to researchers through the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen (fig. 2).³⁹ A comparison of these two "sculptor's contracts" reveals two different philosophies of self-promotion: while Barlach concluded a comprehensive framework agreement with Flechtheim, granting the latter exclusive distribution rights for sixteen works from the years 1907 to 1930, Kolbe granted the gallerist only the nationwide distribution rights for a *Sitzende* (Seated Woman)⁴⁰—with all other works remaining subject to negotiation. In contrast to Barlach, Kolbe also retained control over the production and quality of the casts and only passed the bronzes on to Flechtheim on commission. The fact that Kolbe himself limited his business partners' scope of action with such restrictive contractual conditions, while at the same time placing exaggerated expectations on the representation, once again demonstrates his utilitarian relationship to the art trade. The extent to which Kolbe's actions were guided by careerist and egocentric thinking remains to be examined in greater detail, especially with regard to his actions in the art industry during the National Socialist era.

Despite the obvious tensions, the collaboration between Kolbe and Galerie Flechtheim continued after 1930, as is well known, which may have been due in no small part to Curt Valentin's conciliatory actions.⁴¹ In 1931, another solo exhibition followed at Galerie Flechtheim, Berlin.⁴² One year later, presumably with the help of the gallery, Kolbe received a commission from the city of Düsseldorf for a monument to Heinrich Heine.⁴³ The fact that the gallery took on much more far-reaching tasks than simply the mediation of sales is further demonstrated by the Kolbe exhibition held by the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover in January 1933. With fifty sculptures and numerous works on paper, it was one of the most comprehensive presentations of Kolbe's work during his lifetime.⁴⁴ From the surviving correspondence in the archive of the Kestner-Gesellschaft, it is clear that Curt Valentin played a major role in the organization of the exhibition and the catalog, and that he clarified all questions in advance with the exhibition director at the time, Justus Bier.⁴⁵ In his correspondence with Bier, Valentin always had Kolbe's sensibilities in mind:

"The exhibition has been put together with a great deal of care and effort, and it is my wish that it will be a real success, hopefully also in material terms. In any case, I would like to ask you to refrain from exhibiting Barlach bronzes at this time. If you have created a new room on the ground floor, it would be good if the Kolbe exhibition could be placed so generously that it would gain even more weight by being presented in all of your rooms."⁴⁶

Some time later, Valentin confirmed receipt of the Kestner-Gesellschaft's room plan, which was to be supplemented with the respective positions of the exhibits and returned to Hanover.⁴⁷ This plan has not survived in the archive of the Kestner-Gesellschaft; however, a copy was found in 2020 in the new estate holdings at the Georg Kolbe Museum (fig. 3). Together with the exhibition views preserved in the estate (fig. 4), this plan documents Kolbe's last major retrospective before the NS era and completes the picture of an intensive collaboration between the gallery and the artist. It can also be proven that Curt Valentin took over the staging of the bronzes for the subsequent exhibition at the Kunsthütte Chemnitz.⁴⁸ Although Kolbe had also repeatedly collaborated with Galerie Gerstenberger in Chemnitz, most recently in 1932,⁴⁹ there was no question that Valentin, and not Gerstenberger's managing director Wilhelm Grosshennig, should represent the sculptor's interests locally, which points to the leading role of Galerie Flechtheim and Valentin in Kolbe's network of art dealers.

IV. Georg Kolbe and the Art Market between 1933 and 1945

The exhibition at the Kestner-Gesellschaft opened in the last days of the Weimar Republic on January 19, 1933, when it was already clear what the new political reality in Germany would be with the transfer of power to the National Socialists eleven days later.⁵⁰ It ended as scheduled on March 5, 1933, the day of the Reichstag elections, which were preceded by massive and brutal persecution of political opponents of National Socialism after the Reichstag fire and in which more than fifty percent of the eligible voters voted for the NSDAP and national conservative parties. The profound repercussions of the new power relations were also quickly felt in the art market. State-organized anti-Semitism and ever-increasing repression led to a wave of emigration, with many German art dealers and collectors of Jewish origin leaving the country. Galleries closed or suspended their exhibition activities.⁵¹ As a result, numerous collections and business structures no longer existed or were absent from the German art market.

The extent to which these repercussions also affected Kolbe is made clear by the biographical research on the Kolbe collectors listed in Ludwig Justi's Kolbe monograph published in 1931.⁵² Of these forty-five representative names, thirty-one were living in Germany in 1933. More than one-third of these individuals were subject to systematic exclusion and persecution after 1933. In addition, Alfred Flechtheim, Kolbe's most important gallerist at the time, fled Germany in October 1933.

V e r t r a g.

Zwischen Herrn Georg Kolbe, Berlin-W.10, Von der Heydtstr.7, und der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H., Düsseldorf und Berlin, wurde heute folgender Vertrag abgeschlossen:

§ 1

Herr Georg Kolbe übergibt der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H., Düsseldorf und Berlin den Alleinvertrieb der Plastik "Sitzende" für Deutschland. Als Nettopreis der Plastik in Bronze werden M.1000.- festgesetzt und als Verkaufspreis M.1500.-. Bei Verkäufen an Händler hat die Galerie Flechtheim 20% Rabatt zu geben, sodass in diesem Falle der Verkaufspreis M.1200.- ist.

§ 2

Es werden im Ganzen, vom heutigen Tage ab gerechnet, 10 Exemplare dieser Bronze hergestellt, welche der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H., Düsseldorf und Berlin zum Alleinvertrieb übergeben werden.

§ 3

Transport- Versicherungs- Verpackungs- und Reklame-Unkosten, die durch den Verkauf der Bronzen entstehen, gehen zu Lasten der Galerie Flechtheim G.m.b.H., Düsseldorf und Berlin.

- 2 -

2 Contract between Georg Kolbe and Galerie Alfred Flechtheim for the exclusive right to distribute the sculpture *Sitzende* (Seated Woman), 1928, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

§ 4

Georg Kolbe gibt der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H. die 10 Bronzen in Kommission; d.h. dieselben bleiben Eigentum von Georg Kolbe bis zur Bezahlung. Bei Barverkäufen ist der Nettobetrag sofort an Kolbe abzuführen; bei Verkäufen auf Ratenzahlung sind die Netto-Raten-Beträge sofort nach Eingang abzuführen. Im letzteren Falle übernimmt die Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H. das Obligo für den Käufer. Längeren Kredit als 4 Monate zu geben, ist der Galerie Flechtheim nicht gestattet.

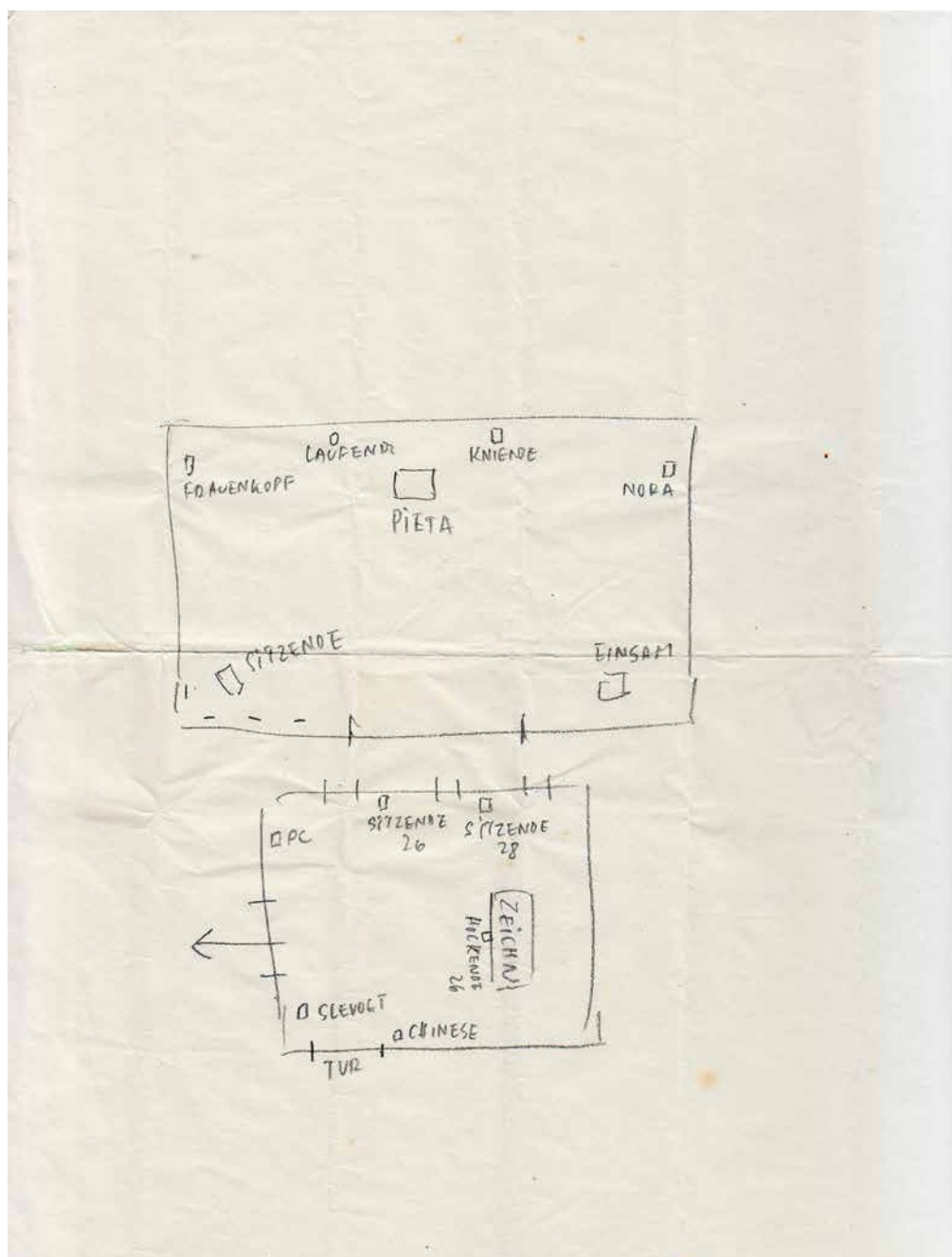
§ 5

Nach Verkauf dieser 10 Güsse steht es der Galerie Flechtheim frei, eine weitere Anzahl unter gleichen Bedingungen in Kommission zu nehmen, also den Vertrag zu verlängern. Steigerung der Gusspreise würde eine Aenderung der Netto- wie Verkaufspreise zur Folge haben.

Hinseldorf, 8. 5. 28.

Galerie Alfred Flechtheim
G.m.b.H.

Georg Kolbe



KESTNER-GESELLSCHAFT HANNOVER

FEBRUAR-MÄRZ 1933

Katalog



4 Exhibition views in the rooms of the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hannover, 1933, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin, historical photographs from Georg Kolbe's exhibition album compiled by Margrit Schwartzkopff

5 In the upper display window of Galerie Buchholz in Berlin is the *Kniende* (Kneeling Woman, 1930) by Georg Kolbe, ca. 1934, historical photograph



Despite Flechtheim's emigration, however, personal continuity prevailed in Kolbe's network of art dealers, which is why there was no major break. Flechtheim was replaced by his former employees, who had already worked closely with Kolbe while Galerie Flechtheim was still in existence as such. In the spring of 1933, Alex Vömel opened his own gallery at the Düsseldorf premises.⁵³ Shortly thereafter, Kolbe's assistant, Margrit Schwartzkopff, sent him photographs of six available Kolbe bronzes and an updated price list with the cautionary note: "Professor K o l b e expects the gallery to be satisfied with a moderate commission."⁵⁴ Curt Valentin⁵⁵ continued to work from Berlin. In November 1933, he wrote to the painter Paul Klee: "I will, of course, cooperate with Vömel. [...] The German sculptors (Kolbe, Marcks, Sintenis, etc.) are allowing me to represent them."⁵⁶ The following year, he moved to the Berlin bookshop and gallery of Karl Buchholz (fig. 5), which placed an emphasis on sculpture in its program and from then on regularly exhibited Kolbe's work (fig. 6). After Valentin's emigration in 1937, the gallery also represented the sculptor on the American market. The distribution of Kolbe's works in Germany continued almost seamlessly in 1933, as galleries such as Gerstenberger in Chemnitz and Nierendorf and Möller in Berlin also remained as business partners.



6 Exhibition catalog *Zeichnungen deutscher Bildhauer der Gegenwart* (Drawings by Contemporary German Sculptors), Galerie Karl Buchholz, Berlin, 1934

It can therefore be assumed that Georg Kolbe had a relatively solid market position at the beginning of the National Socialist era. Even in the following years, in which the NS state intervened massively in the cultural sector, this established position and the economic successes on the private art market were to change little. Kolbe's figurative sculptures could be publicly exhibited and traded in galleries throughout the entire period of National Socialist rule. Although today there is a broad consensus in art-market research that the market could continue to function well even for artists defamed by the National Socialist state—as long as they were members of the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Chamber of Fine Arts)⁵⁷—Kolbe's status nevertheless seems comparatively privileged. Despite the fact that individual works by Kolbe that were on public display, such as his Heinrich Heine monument in Frankfurt am Main, were attacked,⁵⁸ there is no evidence of a comprehensive defamation of Kolbe's art. On the contrary: with the probably best-known art-political diatribe of the so-called Third Reich, the book *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* (Purging the Temple of Art) published by Wolfgang Willrich in 1937, there is evidence that there was also recognition for Kolbe in *völkisch*, i.e., national-racial circles. Although the sculptor was mentioned in denunciatory enumerations because of his membership in the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Workers' Council for Art), as well as in the monograph written by Ludwig Justi in the series *Junge Kunst* (1931), Willrich went to great length to clarify in these passages that Kolbe had nevertheless "remained healthy" as an artist and was "of significance."⁵⁹

Thus Kolbe was able to continue working under the new cultural-political conditions without major restrictions. Since many of his business relationships had existed continuously since the years of the Weimar Republic, it is not surprising that there was likewise little change in his collaboration with individual gallerists. He continued to circulate his bronzes, prints, and photographs among art dealers in order to be present in as many regions of Germany as possible. At the same time, he carefully controlled which works and groups of works were shown when and in what context. Not every art dealer received the loans and consignments he requested. In May 1937, for example, Kolbe declined to have his solo exhibition in Mönchengladbach taken over by Galerie Vömel: "This collection is, however, not suitable for Düsseldorf—the objects have long been known. I do not have anything new, and besides, I'm tired of exhibitions."⁶⁰ This control and circulation could repeatedly put gallerists in the position of temporarily not having any of the sculptor's works on commission. Whether this temporary scarcity was partly Kolbe's intention must remain speculative. In any case, working with several art dealers at the same time created a competitive situation conducive to marketing, which strengthened Kolbe's position and often relegated the galleries to the role of supplicants. The sculptor continued to retain extensive control over the new casts of his bronzes, which he either passed on to the art trade on commission or explicitly on order at fixed prices and commissions, or sold directly from the studio. Prices and commissions initially remained largely the same before and after 1933, rising by ten to twenty percent in 1941, possibly due to the wartime shortage of materials and the resulting ban on casting.⁶¹

Deserving dealers and those who sold well, such as Alex Vömel, could also hope for a price concession—depending on the work and availability. However, the available sources also show how rigid Kolbe could be in financial matters. When the Basel collector Richard Doetsch-Benziger wanted to purchase a cast of the *Junge Frau* (Young Woman, 1929) through Vömel in December 1933 and asked for a discount, Kolbe wrote to the dealer: "please do not bother in this case. — I am by no means in the position of having to sell my few bronzes at dumping prices. It would be sinful for me to accept such underbidding."⁶² When Vömel nevertheless made the—ultimately successful—attempt to find a compromise and was initially unsuccessful with the collector, Kolbe reprimanded him: "you had bad luck—I had warned you strongly against it."⁶³ Towards Vömel in particular, Kolbe repeatedly acted in an authoritarian and reprimanding manner, underscoring the asymmetry of the relationship between the sculptor and the art dealer.

Although the episode ended with the sale of the sculpture to Doetsch-Benziger, it also shows that the sculptor was in the privileged position of not having to sell at any price. This was not least due to the continued high demand for his works, which did not cease in the years that followed. Alex Vömel, for example, reported in March 1940: "hardly a day goes by without people asking for your works."⁶⁴

The business correspondence with the Vömel, Buchholz, and Franke galleries preserved in the new estate sheds light on which of Kolbe's works were requested by art dealers and private collectors in the years after 1933 and which were offered by the sculptor when



7 Georg Kolbe, *Sitzende* (Seated Woman), 1926, bronze, h. 28.5 cm, historical photograph



8 Georg Kolbe, *Kniende* (Kneeling Woman), 1926, bronze, h. 54.5 cm, historical photograph

only a general interest in buying was expressed. An analysis of the correspondence with the three galleries shows that more than two-thirds of the sculptures mentioned date from the time of the Weimar Republic. In the actual sales of these three galleries that can be reconstructed, works from the 1920s and early 1930s also predominated. This may not be surprising for the years 1933 and 1934, since there were hardly any recent works by Kolbe available at that time, but it is nevertheless remarkable for the following years. The surviving invoices of the Noack foundry⁶⁵ also document a constant production of small sculptures from the time of the Weimar Republic between 1933 and 1940. In particular, the frequently cast sculptures *Sitzende* (1926, fig. 7) and *Kniende* (1926, fig. 8) were often requested or actively offered by Kolbe. There was also repeated interest in sculptures that had been planned as one-offs or had long since been discontinued due to their limited editions, such as *Adagio* (1923), *Einsamer* (Lonely Man, 1927), and *Klage* (Lament, 1921).

Accordingly, there were continuities not only in the art dealers and marketing strategies, but also in the works that were demanded and traded. One possible hypothesis is that the successes of the 1920s had already established a “Kolbe brand” before 1933, with which the public associated above all the female figures, mostly depicted in dancing poses, which had ultimately helped the sculptor to achieve his great popularity and represented his work in museum collections and in public spaces. This “brand” continued to function after 1933, and the art market was consequently less interested in innovations

than in works that were perceived as prototypical of Kolbe. Illustrated books with large print runs, such as Rudolf Binding's 1933 publication,⁶⁶ may also have contributed to this entrenched perception.

In contrast, Kolbe increasingly appeared in public projects and state exhibitions with large-scale, sometimes larger-than-life, muscular figures that reflected a changed ideal of the body that was compatible with NS ideology. This suggests that Kolbe—whose self-image may have been to continue to be perceived as one of Germany's most important sculptors—was primarily striving for success in the state cultural establishment with his new works, while a functioning art market provided him with security without much pressure to innovate. The new emphasis is also reflected in a quote by Kolbe that appeared in an exhibition catalog for the Haus der Kunst in Berlin in May 1938, which affirmed distorted images of National Socialist propaganda due to the use of the ideologically charged term “new Germany” and the irritating distinction between museums and private collections on the one hand and “the people” on the other: “While in the past, my works went to museums and private collections, today—thanks to the commissions of the new Germany—they find their way to the people.”⁶⁷

Kolbe's oscillation between the independent art market and the state exhibition business was also evident in 1941 during preparations for a solo exhibition at Günther Franke's Graphisches Kabinett in Munich (fig. 9). When planning began, the sculptor insisted that the “show had to be staged before the opening of the big Munich art exhibition [meaning the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) of 1941, at which Kolbe was represented with only one sculpture,⁶⁸ author's note], that is, in May.”⁶⁹ In addition, Kolbe made it a condition that no works by other artists be shown in parallel.⁷⁰ Both of these measures were probably aimed at minimizing the competition for his own exhibition in Hitler's proclaimed “capital of German art”⁷¹ and thus attracting as much attention as possible. This strategy apparently worked, for the surviving documents on the exhibition attest to the sale of almost all of the works on offer (fig. 10)—in this case, too, works from before 1933 predominated⁷²—and Franke regularly reported large numbers of visitors, occasionally also from abroad.

With twenty-three sculptures and seven chalk drawings, this was, according to current knowledge, the last major presentation of Kolbe's work to take place in the German art trade during his lifetime. The decline in business activities after 1941 is also reflected in the surviving art-dealer correspondence, which is significantly less frequent and extensive than in previous years. The main reason for this was the wartime ban on the casting of bronze, introduced in 1940, which led to a shortage of available works, especially since Kolbe refused to have designs already executed in bronze cast in zinc.⁷³ As evidenced by Kolbe's handwritten correspondence instructions to Margrit Schwartzkopff on a letter from Vömel dated October 1941, the sculptor began to withdraw consignment works from the art trade at this point at the latest: “What is still with Vömel? I demand back: bronzes!”⁷⁴ For the following period, only a few correspondences with Vömel and Buchholz have been preserved. They indicate that, from 1942 on, the sculptor did not provide the two remaining gallerists⁷⁵ with any sculptures or drawings, and that he concentrated only on



9 Catalog of Georg Kolbe's solo exhibition at the Graphisches Kabinett Günther Franke in Munich, 1941

exhibitions and commissions in the state art business until he left Berlin for Hierlshagen at the end of 1943.

Kolbe did not return until January 1945 and experienced the end of the war in Berlin. For the two years after the war until his death in November 1947, there is little information and correspondence regarding the art trade. Judging by the numerous works that Georg Kolbe sold directly from his studio to Allied military personnel and other interested parties after the end of the war, he was probably his own best art dealer during this period.⁷⁶ In October 1946, Kolbe was represented with two sculptures in the opening exhibition of Galerie Franz, Berlin.⁷⁷ Ferdinand Möller had resumed contact as early as April 1946.⁷⁸ However, his works were not included in the exhibition *Freie Deutsche Kunst* (Free German Art), which was co-organized by Möller the following August.⁷⁹ The correspondence with Curt Valentin, who supplied the sculptor with care packages from New York, could also be continued after having been interrupted by the war.⁸⁰ In May 1947, Alex Vömel contacted him full of energy: "Dear Mr. Kolbe, when will it finally be possible to show your works here again? The good old collectors are always asking for you."⁸¹

VERKAUFE u. ZAHLUNGEN

Graph. Kabinett Franke, München. Mai/Juni 41

<u>Werk</u>		<u>Zahlung</u>	<u>Teilzahlung</u>	<u>Käufer</u>
Kl. Liegende	24	500. -	³ 500. - erledigt	Dr. Hildebrand, Berlin
Statuette	25	700	700	Verleger Vötterle, Kassel
Sitzende	26	1200	1200	Leo Habig, Hagen
Kniende	26	2200	1.100.- 1100	Heberle, Bln.-Lichterfelde
Kopf Genius	28	600	600	Verleger Vötterle, Kassel
Kauernde	30	2200	{ 1.100.- 1.100.-	Oberregierungsrat Clemens, München
FLORA	40	2.500	2.500.-	Schubert/Siemensmeyer
Jungmadel	34	5000	2.500.- 2500	Dr. Adalbert Fischer, Frankfurt/Main
		14900	14900	
<u>ZEICHNUNGEN</u>				
Nr. 519		300.-	erledigt	Sesam / zahlungsfähig von Mangoldt
" 520		300.	"	Graph. Sammlung Albertinum, Wien
" 549		300	"	
532		300. -	erledigt	Reemtsma, Hamburg
" 547		300. -	"	Reemtsma, Hamburg
* 471		300.-	"	

12.VI.41

Abschlusszahlung

8.7.41

6.700.-

Stamm-Schw.

10 List of sales, Graphisches Kabinett Günther Franke, Munich, 1941, with notes by Georg Kolbe and Margrit Schwartzkopff, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin



11 Poster for the Georg Kolbe retrospective at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, August 1–October 31, 1948, organized with the support of Galerie Vömel, Düsseldorf



12 Exhibition view with works by Georg Kolbe at Galerie Alex Vömel, Düsseldorf, 1952, historical photograph

184 “I am by no means in the position of having to sell my few bronzes at dumping prices.”

Outlook

“The good old collectors,” of whom Alex Vömel reported, had to be patient for another year before Kolbe’s works could be shown again in Düsseldorf. In May 1947, Vömel could not have foreseen that this would be a memorial exhibition for the sculptor, who had died in the meantime (fig. 11), organized by the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in cooperation with Vömel. The group of stakeholders who henceforth endeavored to trade posthumously in the sculptor’s works repeatedly showed clear continuities with the years before 1945 and sometimes also before 1933. Thus gallerists such as Curt Valentin, Alex Vömel, and Ferdinand Möller continued to represent the sculptor’s work after 1947 (fig. 12). The administration of the artistic estate was taken over by Kolbe’s former assistant, Margrit Schwartzkopff.

In addition to the question of how Schwartzkopff organized the trade with objects from the estate and posthumous new castings, there is a need for further research on the continuities and breaks within the large group of collectors. The business correspondence in the new estate provides the names of numerous buyers and interested parties who acquired or inquired about Kolbe’s works through the art trade between 1933 and 1943. Future research on these individuals, in comparison with the catalogue raisonné currently in preparation, will provide a clearer picture of the contexts in which Kolbe’s works were collected and the extent to which the collectors’ circles changed after 1933.

Notes

- 1 To date, solo and group exhibitions and/or sales can be documented for the following galleries and art dealers (in alphabetical order): Ernst Arnold/Ludwig Gutbier (Dresden), Dr. Andreas Becker & Alfred Newman (Cologne), P. H. Beyer & Sohn (Leipzig), Alfred Bodenheimer (Darmstadt), Karl Buchholz/Buchholz Gallery – Curt Valentin (Berlin, New York), Gebrüder Buck (Mannheim), Bruno Cassirer (Berlin), Paul Cassirer (Berlin), Commeter (Hamburg), Otto Fischer (Bielefeld), Alfred Flechtheim (Düsseldorf, Berlin et al.), Günther Franke (Munich), Reinhard Franz (Berlin), Gerstenberger (Chemnitz), M. Goldschmidt & Co (Frankfurt am Main), Hans Goltz (Munich), Victor Hartberg (Berlin), Huize van Hasselt (Rotterdam), Marie Held (Frankfurt am Main), Dr. Jaffe – Alice Guttman (Cologne), Keller & Reiner (Berlin), Kleine Galerie (Berlin), Heinrich Kühl (Dresden), Carel van Lier (Amsterdam), Lutz & Co. (Berlin), Ferdinand Möller (Berlin), Gustav Nebehay (Vienna), Karl and Josef Nierendorf (Berlin, New York), Manfred Schames (Frankfurt am Main), Casimir Stenzel (Breslau, today's Wrocław), Justin Thannhauser (Munich, Berlin), F. C. Valentien (Stuttgart), Alex Vömel (Düsseldorf), Dorothy Warren (London), Erhard Weyhe (New York), Wildenstein & Co. (New York), Rudolf Wilschek (Berlin). There are also references to other art dealers; for example, Kunstsalon Abels in Cologne advertised the sale of Kolbe's works in 1928; cf. *Der Kunstwanderer* 10, nos. 1/2, August 1928, p. 511. In many cases, Kolbe's relationship to the individual art dealers remains a desideratum.
- 2 I would like to express my sincere thanks to the staff of the Georg Kolbe Museum, who have greatly supported my research with information, references, and digital copies: (in alphabetical order) Elisabeth Heymer, Carolin Jahn, Thomas Pavel, and Elisa Tamaschke.
- 3 "Künstler und moderner Kunsthandel. Eine Enquête," in: *Der Kunstwanderer* 10, nos. 1/2, January 1928, pp. 201–204, here p. 202.
- 4 For more on the acquisition and construction history of the property on Sensburger Allee, see: Ursel Berger and Josephine Gabler (eds.), *Georg Kolbe. Wohn- und Atelierhaus. Architektur und Geschichte* (Berlin 2000); Julia Wallner (ed.), *Moderne und Refugium. Georg Kolbes Sensburg als Architekturdenkmal der 1920er-Jahre* (Berlin 2021).
- 5 A list of Kolbe's solo exhibitions and more extensive group exhibitions is published in: Ursel Berger, *Georg Kolbe – Leben und Werk, mit dem Katalog der Kolbe-Plastiken im Georg-Kolbe-Museum* (Berlin 1990), pp. 180–181.
- 6 Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 28.113, <https://dia.org/collection/squatting-female-figure-51126> [last accessed June 10, 2023].
- 7 See: Thomas Pavel, "Steuerschraube oder Symbol der Kraft?" in: Julia Wallner (ed.), *Georg Kolbe* (Cologne 2017), pp. 112–121, here p. 121.
- 8 Künstler und moderner Kunsthandel 1928 (see note 3), p. 202 [translated].
- 9 For more on the market situation of "living German artists" and their promotion by the Kronprinzenpalais, and for two other examples of authors (F. Möller and K. Nierendorf), see: Gesa Jeuthe, *Kunstwerte im Wandel. Die Preisentwicklung der deutschen Moderne im nationalen und internationalen Kunstmarkt 1925 bis 1955* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 7] (Berlin 2011), pp. 35–37.
- 10 Flechtheim's texts on the subject of art dealing are published collectively in: Rudolf Schmitt-Föllner (ed.), *Alfred Flechtheim. "Nun mal Schluß mit den blauen Picassos!" Gesammelte Schriften* (Bonn 2010), esp. pp. 127–166.
- 11 Alfred Flechtheim, "Künstler und moderner Kunsthandel. Zuschriften aus dem Kunsthandel," in: *Der Kunstwanderer* 10, nos. 1/2, March 1928, p. 298.
- 12 All quotes in this paragraph: *ibid.* [translated; emphasis in the original].
- 13 Georg Kolbe, *Auf Wegen der Kunst. Schriften, Skizzen, Plastiken, mit einer Einleitung von Ivo Beucker* (Berlin 1949), p. 17 [translated].
- 14 See: Ursel Berger, "Wie publiziert man Skulpturen? Die Kolbe-Monographie von 1913," in: *Ein Fest der Künste. Paul Cassirer. Der Kunsthändler als Verleger*, ed. Rahel E. Feilchenfeldt and Thomas Raff, exh. cat. Max Liebermann Haus, Berlin (Munich 2006), pp. 201–213, here pp. 210–211; Berger 1990 (see note 5), p. 38.
- 15 For more on Cassirer and the sculptors of his gallery, see: Ursel Berger: "Paul Cassirer und seine Bildhauer," in: *Berlin SW – Victoriastraße 35. Ernst Barlach und die Klassische Moderne im Kunstsalon und Verlag Paul Cassirer*, ed. Helga Thieme and Volker Probst, exh. cat. Ausstellungsforum und Graphik-kabinett, Ernst Barlach Stiftung, Güstrow, 2003, pp. 47–62.
- 16 For more on the exhibition, see: Bernhard Echte and Walter Feilchenfeldt (eds.), *Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer. Die Ausstellungen 1901–1905*, vol. 2 ["Man steht da und staunt"], (Wädenswil 2011), pp. 571–598.

- 17 See: Kolbe's introduction to the exhibition *Moderne Plastik* (Modern Sculpture) at the Kunsthalle Mannheim (1912), published in: Kolbe 1949 (see note 13), p. 9.
- 18 Including three larger exhibitions in October/November 1921, October/November 1925, and March 1928.
- 19 Georg Kolbe, *Bildwerke* (Berlin 1913).
- 20 See: Berger 2006 (see note 14), pp. 204–207.
- 21 From 1927 onwards, Kolbe collaborated with the photographic archive of the Institute of Art History at the University of Marburg. From the late 1920s onwards, photographs were also distributed by Galerie Flechtheim. The example of the exhibition at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in 1933 reveals that the gallery also selected the illustrations in exhibition catalogs on behalf of the artist. Postcard from Curt Valentin to Justus Bier, December 14, 1932, NLA HA, dep. 100, no. 50; letter from Curt Valentin to Justus Bier, December 29, 1932, NLA HA, dep. 100, no. 50.
- 22 *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe, mit einer Ausführung von Rudolf G. Binding* (Berlin 1933).
- 23 Georg Kolbe, *Bildwerke. Vom Künstler ausgewählt, Geleitwort von Richard Scheibe* [Insel-Bücherei, no. 422], (Leipzig 1939). Significantly, the same title was chosen here as in 1913 for the Cassirer publication.
- 24 See: Berger 1990 (see note 5), p. 38.
- 25 In 1921, Cassirer had temporarily made two rooms available to Flechtheim. See: Ottfried Dascher, "Es ist was Wahnsinniges mit der Kunst." *Alfred Flechtheim, Sammler, Kunsthändler, Verleger* (Wädenswil 2013), p. 153.
- 26 See: letter from Alfred Flechtheim to Ludwig Justi, March 13, 1926, SMB-ZA, I/NG 999, sheet 212.
- 27 See: letter from Alfred Flechtheim to Georg Kolbe, October 11, 1926, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 28 The exhibitions took place in March 1930 and November/December 1931 at Galerie Flechtheim, Berlin. See: Georg Kolbe, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, 1930; Georg Kolbe, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, 1931.
- 29 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, July 20, 1930, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated; emphasis in the original].
- 30 "Flechtheim had cleverly used the morning to bring Maillol to his gallery and photograph him there with Barlach (who some time ago had refused to co-sign the invitation to the Maillol exhibition)" [translated]. Diary entry (edition text) by Harry Graf Kessler, July 15, 1930, in: *Harry Graf Kessler. Das Tagebuch 1880–1937*, online edition, ed. Roland S. Kamzelak (Marbach am Neckar 2019), EdView version 1.0 beta 3 (February 2023), <https://edview.dla-marbach.de/?project=HGKTA&document=10373> [last accessed June 10, 2023].
- 31 For more on Kolbe's admiration of Maillol, see Kolbe's 1925 review "Zu einem Buch über Maillol," in: Kolbe 1949 (see note 13), pp. 23–24 [erroneously dated 1928; information kindly provided by Thomas Pavel].
- 32 Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 29.331, <https://dia.org/collection/assunta-51116> [last accessed June 10, 2023].
- 33 The exhibition was advertised in the catalog of the André Derain exhibition at Galerie Flechtheim, among the "German exhibitions organized abroad by Galerie Flechtheim." See: *André Derain*, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, 1929.
- 34 See: exh. cat. Berlin, 1930 (see note 28).
- 35 See: Volker Probst, "Die Flechtheimsche Herrlichkeit verging, von Cassirers ist keinerlei Förderung zu erwarten ...". Ernst Barlach—Alfred Flechtheim," in: Ottfried Dascher (ed.), *Sprung in den Raum. Skulpturen bei Alfred Flechtheim* (Wädenswil 2017), pp. 353–386, here pp. 359–364.
- 36 These newspaper clippings have been preserved in the Archive of the Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin. They occasionally contain annotations and comments by Georg Kolbe.
- 37 The "department store" imputation on Kolbe's part can be found in the quoted letter from Curt Valentin. Although it can be assumed that Kolbe did not have a pronounced anti-Semitic worldview, it must be pointed out at this point that the negative connotation of the department store metaphor in relation to a Jewish business partner conveyed a widespread anti-Semitic resentment that was well known around 1930. See also: Hannes Ludyga, "Warenhausfrage," in: Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 4 [Ereignisse, Dekrete, Kontroversen], (Berlin and Boston 2011), pp. 432–434.
- 38 Letter from Alfred Flechtheim to Ernst Barlach, July 14, 1930, Archive of the Ernst Barlach Stiftung, Güstrow, inv. no. LM 100. The letter is also reproduced in: Probst 2017 (see note 35), pp. 360–361.
- 39 Contract between Georg Kolbe and Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H., Düsseldorf and Berlin, May 8, 1928, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 40 It has not yet been possible to clarify exactly which *Sitzende* is meant here.
- 41 Whether, in the final analysis, Kolbe would have actually left Galerie Flechtheim or whether this

announcement was merely a threat, must remain speculative.

- 42 See: exh. cat. Berlin, 1931 (see note 28).
- 43 In a congratulatory letter preserved in the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen, Alex Vömel wrote: "Do you remember how skeptical you were when we first talked about the Heine monument; [...] I told you then already that you should rely on us. [...] A. F. will also be pleased; he has done everything humanly possible in the matter." Letter from Alex Vömel to Georg Kolbe, May 9, 1932, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 44 See: *Georg Kolbe. Bildwerke, Zeichnungen, Radierungen, 1914–1932*, exh. cat. Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover, 1933.
- 45 Correspondence regarding the exhibition has been preserved in the Lower Saxony State Archives. See: NLA HA, dep. 100, no. 50.
- 46 Letter from Curt Valentin to Justus Bier, November 15, 1932, NLA HA, dep. 100, no. 50 [translated]. My thanks go to Thomas Pavel, Berlin, for the exchange and his advice on this matter. For more information on the exhibition, see also: Thomas Pavel: "'Ein wirkliches gutes Werk' für Hannover? Georg Kolbe's 'Menschenpaar' am Maschsee," in: Landeshauptstadt Hannover (ed.), *Hannoversche Geschichtsblätter*, vol. 74 (new sequence), 2020, pp. 22–50.
- 47 Letter from Curt Valentin to Justus Bier, December 20, 1932, NLA HA, dep. 100, no. 50.
- 48 In the exhibition register of the Kunsthütte Chemnitz, there is the note: "Present for the placement of the sculptures: Mr. Valentin, Galerie Flechtheim, Berlin." Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Archive, exhibition register of the Kunsthütte zu Chemnitz 1933–1937, p. 25 [translated]. I am thankful to Tatjana Fischer, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, for providing this information in October 2016.
- 49 See: Ulrike Saß, *Die Galerie Gerstenberger und Wilhelm Grosshennig. Kunsthandel in Deutschland von der Kaiserzeit bis zur BRD* (Vienna et al. 2021).
- 50 On January 14, 1933, the art dealer Karl Nierendorf wrote in his diary: "I had never noticed the worried expression and the dull, depressed mood as I did this time. [...] Even Flechtheim seemed depressed at the Cassirer opening, and his Valentin is also no longer the same." Quoted in: Stefan Pucks, "Zur Topografie des Berliner Kunsthandels 1918–1945," in: *Gute Geschäfte. Kunsthandel in Berlin 1933–1945*, ed. Christine Fischer-Defoy and Kaspar Nürnberg, exh. cat. Aktives Museum im Centrum Judaicum, Berlin (Berlin 2011), pp. 17–19, here p. 18 [translated].
- 51 See: Jeuthe 2011 (see note 9), pp. 52–60.
- 52 Ludwig Justi, *Georg Kolbe. Mit 32 Tafeln und einer Hebiogravüre [Junge Kunst, vol. 60]* (Berlin 1931), p. 13.
- 53 See: Axel Drecolli and Anja Deutsch, "Fragen, Probleme, Perspektiven—Zur 'Arisierung' der Kunsthandlung Alfred Flechtheim," in: Andrea Bambi and Axel Drecolli (eds.), *Alfred Flechtheim. Raubkunst und Restitution* (Berlin 2015), pp. 83–99, here p. 90; for more on Galerie Vömel, see also: Gesa Jeuthe, "Die Galerie Alex Vömel ab 1933—Eine 'Tarnung' der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim?" in: *ibid.*, pp. 107–115.
- 54 Letter from Margrit Schwartzkopff to Alex Vömel, May 12, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated; emphasis in the original].
- 55 For more on Curt Valentin, see: Anja Tiedemann, *Die "entartete" Moderne und ihr amerikanischer Markt. Karl Buchholz und Curt Valentin als Händler verfemter Kunst [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 8]* (Berlin 2013), esp. pp. 179–205.
- 56 Letter from Curt Valentin to Paul Klee, November 3, 1933, quoted in: Ralph Jentsch, *Alfred Flechtheim, George Grosz. Zwei deutsche Schicksale* (Bonn 2008), p. 16 [translated].
- 57 See: Anja Tiedemann (ed.), *Die Kammer schreibt schon wieder! Das Reglement für den Handel mit moderner Kunst im Nationalsozialismus [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 10]* (Berlin 2016); Gesa Jeuthe 2011 (see note 9).
- 58 The attacks on the Heine monument in Frankfurt am Main and the Rathenau fountain in Berlin are likely to have been directed primarily against the protagonists commemorated.
- 59 Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art* (Munich 1937), pp. 73 and 170 [translated].
- 60 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Alex Vömel, May 27, 1937, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 61 Cf. the net prices of the works *Sitzende* (Seated Woman, 1926) and *Kniende* (Kneeling Woman, 1926), in: letter from Margrit Schwartzkopff to Günther Franke, October 3, 1940, and in the price list of the exhibition at Graphisches Kabinett Günther Franke, Munich, March 28, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 62 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Alex Vömel, December 8, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 63 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Alex Vömel, December 14, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 64 Letter from Alex Vömel to Georg Kolbe, March 12, 1940, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

- 65 See the file on the Hermann Noack Bildgiesserei, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.480.1 (1930–39) and inv. no. GK.480.2 (1940–46), GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 66 Binding 1933 (see note 22). The book appeared in a total of nine editions until 1949. The ninth is an expanded edition.
- 67 *Kleine Kollektionen. Malerei, Plastik, Graphik*, exh. cat. Haus der Kunst, Berlin, 1938, p. 12 [translated].
- 68 See: *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1941 im Haus der Deutschen Kunst zu München*, exh. cat. Haus der Deutschen Kunst, Munich (Munich 1941), p. 49.
- 69 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Günther Franke, March 11, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 See: Adolf Hitler, “‘Kein Wiederaufstieg ohne Wiedererweckung deutscher Kultur und Kunst.’ Rede bei der Grundsteinlegung zum Haus der Deutschen Kunst in München,” in: Robert Eikmeyer (ed.), *Adolf Hitler. Reden zur Kunst- und Kulturpolitik 1933–1939* (Frankfurt am Main 2004), pp. 57–60.
- 72 See the list of sales and payments from the exhibition in the Graphisches Kabinett Günther Franke, Munich, June 12, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 73 See: letter from Georg Kolbe to Günther Franke, August 21, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 74 Handwritten note by Georg Kolbe on a letter from Alex Vömel to Georg Kolbe, October 15, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 75 Correspondences and more extensive collaborations with other art dealers are not known for this period.
- 76 Extensive lists of Kolbe's sales between 1946 and 1947 have been preserved in the estate added in 2020; MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 77 See: *Plastik und Bildhauerzeichnungen unserer Zeit. Erste Ausstellung vom 19. Oktober bis 30. November 1946*, exh. cat. Galerie Franz, Berlin, 1946.
- 78 Letter from Ferdinand Möller to Georg Kolbe, April 4, 1946, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.458, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 79 See: *Freie deutsche Kunst. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Graphik*, exh. cat. Amt für Volksbildung, Neuruppin, and Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Zermützel, Karl-Marx-Haus, Neuruppin (Zermützel 1946).
- 80 See: letter from Georg Kolbe to Curt Valentin, August 14, 1947, Curt Valentin Papers, III.A.15.[3], The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 81 Letter from Alex Vömel to Georg Kolbe, May 24, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

Wolfgang Schöddert

General von Einem, Kniende, Stehende

**Georg Kolbe with Ferdinand
Möller and Three Works on
Consignment from 1938**



1 Ferdinand Möller, ca. 1928; in the background on the desk is the small sculpture *Sitzende* (Seated Woman) by Georg Kolbe, historical photograph

In 1938, the gallerist Ferdinand Möller became a dealer in “degenerate” art (fig. 1).¹ By 1941, he had received eighty-nine paintings, ten sculptures, and nearly 700 works on paper from the holdings of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, most of them by artists he had represented as a gallerist since the 1910s and continued to do so.² He did not take on the only work confiscated by Georg Kolbe as “degenerate,” a print from the portfolio *Siebzehn Steinzeichnungen* (Seventeen Lithographs) published by the Freie Secession in 1921 in an edition of a hundred.³ Having previously been involved in the publication of the portfolio, he already owned the print. Möller is known for his involvement in the “exploitation” of “degenerate art.” In fact, before and during the 1940s, several thousand works from other contexts passed through his hands. Among them were sculptures by Kolbe in the mid two-digit range. Their number cannot yet be quantified more precisely, since titles, motifs, and editions of his casts are not clearly known. In 1938, Möller had possession of works with the titles *General von Einem, Kniende* (Kneeling Woman), and *Stehende* (Standing Woman). These were consignments from a deaccessioned stock of the art collections of the City of Düsseldorf, from the collection of a Jewish family, and from the possession of an air force officer.⁴ Business-wise, Möller and Kolbe went their separate ways at this time. Even before 1933, the sculptor coordinated the direct sale of his freshly cast sculptures with other dealers. An examination

of the three consignments cannot, therefore, add a new facet to the artist's attitude toward National Socialism. Instead, it sketches the contemporary day-to-day business of the gallery and the politically conditioned redistribution processes of Kolbe's small sculptures in the late 1930s. Both point to broader tasks. They concern the difficult clarification of the identity of Kolbe's figures. Especially for the period between 1933 and 1945, it is only possible to a limited extent to determine who owned or had possession of the casts, exhibited them, or offered them for sale. The Georg Kolbe Museum is working on these questions in the course of the inventory of Kolbe's sculptural works. Provenance and art-market research can support this mission and should share its results with the museum.

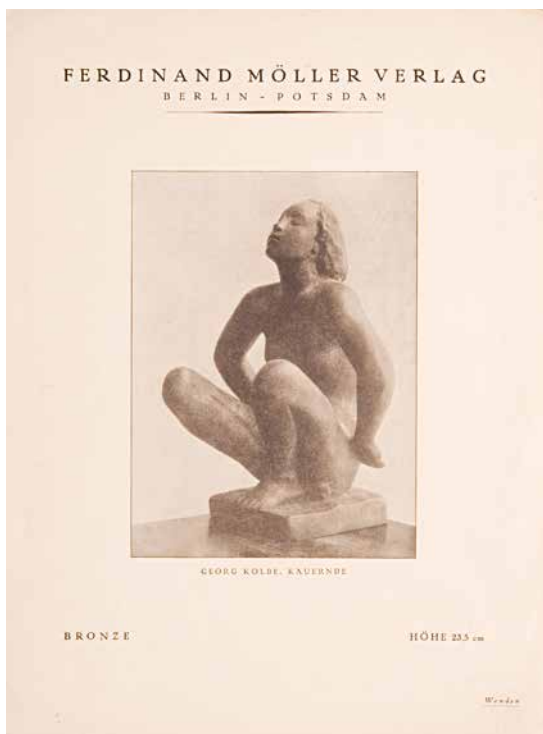
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In 1949, the contemporary witness Paul Ortwin Rave reported that "degenerate" art had been traded here and there along "secret and hidden paths."⁵ As a result of the reappraisal of the so-called "Schwabing Art Trove" from the apartment of Hildebrand Gurlitt's son, this report is now attributed to post-war strategies of exoneration.⁶ At the same time, recent art-market research no longer assumes that even works of a moderate Expressionism were traded "under the counter" from the second half of the 1930s at the latest.⁷ Despite all the state and ideological interventions in the art business, paintings, sculptures, and graphic works by "ostracized" artists were in demand, offered in writing, sent for viewing, and subsequently sold, even beyond the "Degenerate Art" campaign.⁸ Potentially, the entire production created up to that time was available, and the ongoing provenance research on NS-confiscated cultural property, which requires examining every work of art created before 1945, is particularly aware of this material dimension.⁹

Georg Kolbe's oeuvre includes about 1,000 sculptures.¹⁰ Beginning in the late 1890s, he worked with renowned art salons and galleries, participated in the sales exhibitions of the important artists' associations, and sold works directly from his studio.¹¹ The number of casts he put into circulation by the late 1930s is unknown. The frequency with which they returned to the market from the possession of the first buyers and were offered there again is also unknown. From the late 1920s onward, his works appeared continuously at auctions, where they were offered until the end of 1943, when trade was restricted due to the war.¹² After 1933, when owners of artworks wanted to or were able to avoid public sale through an auction house, the results of which were difficult to predict, they relied on the assistance of gallerists who were still accessible and active in this field.

The Time Together

In 1913, Möller began working at Galerie Ernst Arnold in Dresden and, after a short period of training, managed the Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) branch of the long-established art dealer. Möller may have met Georg Kolbe in 1916, when he exhibited at



2 Brochure for the small sculpture *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman) by Georg Kolbe, Galerie Ferdinand Möller, 1919



3 Georg Kolbe, *Maria Möller-Garny*, 1921, bronze, h. 36 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

the main gallery in Dresden.¹³ It is possible that a first business contact took place there. After Möller opened his own gallery in Breslau in 1917, where he wanted to “put myself, in particular, in the service of local art,”¹⁴ the Freie Secession in Berlin was interested in collaborating with him and appointed him as its managing director in 1918. Möller moved his gallery to Potsdamer Strasse in Berlin, one of the capital’s early art centers, and quickly established himself there as a respected dealer and publisher of modern German art. His work for the Freie Secession intensified his contact with Kolbe, who had exhibited with the association since 1914 and served on its executive board from 1919 to 1921. The fact that, in the year of his appointment, Kolbe granted him the right to distribute an edition, initially limited to fifteen casts, of the small sculpture *Kauernde* (Squatting Female Figure), which he had designed in 1917, is evidence of his initially good relationship with the young dealer (fig. 2).¹⁵ In 1921, he created a portrait of Möller’s wife, the painter Maria Möller-Garny, which was cast in bronze immediately afterwards (fig. 3).¹⁶ In June of that year, the portrait was exhibited as *Kopf M. M.* (Head of M. M.), along with a selection of his figures, in the exhibition *Potsdamer Kunstsommer* (Potsdam Art Summer), conceived by Möller and the painter and art writer Erich Hancke in the Orangerie in Park Sanssouci.¹⁷ Möller-Garny shared Kolbe’s interest in modern dance, and a cast of the 1919 figure



4 Georg Kolbe, *Tänzer Nijinsky* (The Dancer Nijinsky), 1919, bronze, h. 65 cm, historical photograph

Tänzer Nijinsky (The Dancer Nijinsky), installed in the courtyard of the Möller family's spacious home in Potsdam, underscored this connection (fig. 4).¹⁸

With the *Potsdamer Kunstsommer*, Möller had already positioned himself as an exhibition organizer beyond his ongoing gallery work, and the following year he also proved to be an internationally oriented organizer. In 1922, together with the art historian Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner, who was already well connected in the United States, he began preparing the exhibition *A Collection of Modern German Art*. The Anderson Galleries in New York were chosen as the venue. The show was announced to the invited artists as the first "representative exhibition of new German art in America."¹⁹ Kolbe, to whom Valentiner had dedicated the most important publication on his work to date in 1922, was to participate. In March 1923, he participated in the exhibition *Kreis der Brücke* (Circle of Die Brücke), which was important to Möller and during its run granted him the right to distribute another small sculpture, the newly created small *Sitzende* (Seated Woman), which, like the *Kauernde* before it, was initially to be cast in an edition of fifteen.²⁰

The exhibition opened in New York in October 1923. In addition to Kolbe, the sculptors Herbert Garbe, Emy Roeder, Milly Steger, Richard Scheibe, and Renée Sintenis, as well as the painters Maria Caspar-Filser, Heinrich Campendonck, Lyonel Feininger, Heinrich Nauen, Emil Nolde, and Max Pechstein took part.²¹ In total, the invited artists submitted more than 270 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper. Kolbe sent the sculptures

Assunta, *Klage* (Lament), and *Meerweib* (Mermaid), as well as several drawings.²² With this selection, he achieved a good success. Although Valentiner particularly emphasized *Assunta*, it remained unsold and was ordered back to Berlin in January 1924.²³ *Klage* and *Meerweib*, on the other hand, found new owners after only a short time.²⁴ The response to the new German art was generally good, but the sales of The Anderson Galleries did not generate the expected income for the artists. They had assumed that they would be able to achieve the same prices in the American market as they had in Germany. This proved to be a false conclusion, since not only was the price level of French art, which had long been established there, lower, but so was that of contemporary American movements. Moreover, because the rapidly rising inflation in Germany made it difficult to convert the value of the German mark into dollars according to the daily exchange rate, The Anderson Galleries, while maintaining their commission, ended up selling at prices that did not yield the net proceeds the artists had expected. When Möller arrived in New York after the opening, he organized a follow-up exhibition in the rooms of the book dealer Erhard Weyhe. He hoped to achieve better results under his own direction, but soon realized that the artists' price expectations made it impossible for him to work economically in New York and cover his own expenses.²⁵ He therefore came to the conclusion:

“that the market for German art can only be won if we are at least not more expensive than the well-known talented young American artists [...]. The German artists, who demand such high prices today, assume that people are waiting here for their works. This is a misconception!”²⁶

Meanwhile, the monthly rent of the Berlin gallery had risen to 71,250,000,000 [!] marks.²⁷ There were disagreements among the members of the Freie Secession about future exhibitions; the association's assets were losing value, and Möller was criticized for his absence.²⁸ Finally, the idea was floated that Alfred Flechtheim should replace him as managing director.²⁹ Upon his return to Berlin in January 1924, Möller resigned from the Freie Secession. Since his business opportunities had collapsed as a result of inflation, he also closed the gallery a short time later. He retired to his home in Potsdam and continued to run the business there in the style of a salon. Kolbe remained present with sculptures but was apparently no longer available for closer collaboration. When Möller reopened his gallery in Berlin in 1927 under improved economic conditions, works by the sculptor could still be seen sporadically in group exhibitions. However, after the controversial exhibition *30 deutsche Künstler* (30 German Artists) in the summer of 1933, which contributed to the heated discussion about modernism in National Socialism and provided a stage for National Socialist students oriented toward Expressionism, these participations also ceased. Kolbe opted for representation by other dealers.³⁰

“I only produce large figures...”

In 1937, the newly founded Buchholz Gallery Curt Valentin in New York offered Georg Kolbe a new perspective for the American market. With his henceforth regular participation in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition), he appeared at the same time alongside the leading illustrators of the National Socialist worldview. His sculptures could be seen in public spaces, and with the photographs by his assistant Margrit Schwartzkopff, more recent figures were “repeatedly paraded as prime examples of the Aryan race” in the politically conformist press.³¹ Kolbe was an established artist; and in November 1938, he also modeled the portrait of the Spanish General Francisco Franco. The year before, when his large bronze *Genius der Verkündung* (*Große Verkündung*) [Genius of the Proclamation (Large Proclamation), 1937] was presented in the tower hall of the German pavilion of the Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques dans la Vie Moderne in Paris, the Spanish Republic exhibited in its pavilion Pablo Picasso’s impressively accusatory painting of the bombing of the city of Guernica. And while prominent German exiles showed solidarity with the Republic, Kolbe agreed to portray the fascist dictator on behalf of the head of the Compañía Hispano-Marroquí de Transportes Limitada (HISMA), which handled arms and raw materials transactions between Spain and the German Reich. Unlike Kolbe, who was gaining recognition and received commissions, Möller found the art political climate turning against him in 1937, threatening the existence of his gallery. He had been a strong advocate of German art since 1917, and after the “seizure of power,” he had initially seen himself in harmony with active National Socialists who shared his interest in modern art. In March 1937, however, Wolfgang Willrich listed him among the leading art dealers and publishers of the “Red System” in his diatribe *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* (Purging the Temple of Art).³² Beginning in July 1937, the “Entartete Kunst” (Degenerate Art) campaign discredited the artists most important to him, and his previously regular exhibitions were declared “undesirable.”³³ When the exhibition *Entartete Kunst* came to Berlin in February 1938, the press wrote:

“It [the exhibition] aims to demonstrate the common root of political and cultural anarchy, to expose the decay and degeneration of art as cultural Bolshevism in the fullest sense.”³⁴

In August 1937, Möller initially assumed that there was no longer any possibility of selling certain works “at the moment.”³⁵ However, despite the fact that the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts was monitoring the gallery, he continued to deal with consignments almost without interruption, and in November 1937, for example, he sold works by Emil Nolde, Erich Heckel, and Paul Klee.³⁶ With the beginning of the “exploitation” of “degenerate art,” his first viewing of confiscated works in December 1938 at the latest, and a larger deal he successfully initiated, it became clear that Möller would be involved in further sales. This cemented his position as a dealer in modern art. If his work could previously be seen as promoting “cultural Bolshevism,” after his involvement in the “exploitation” of “degenerate



5 Advertisement of Galerie Ferdinand Möller in the magazine *Die Weltkunst* XII, no. 50, December 11, 1938

art” it could also be seen as supporting National Socialist policies. With Kolbe, it seems, he hoped to return to an exhibition business that was no longer “undesirable” to the leaders of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts. The sculptor Günter von Scheven, who had accompanied Kolbe on his visit to Franco and had exhibited with Möller as late as 1936, probably encouraged him to submit a request to this effect in early December. In this request, Möller referred to the portrait of the dictator, but Kolbe’s reaction was brief and dismissive:

“thank you very much for your kind letter and the offer of an exhibition. – What Scheven had in mind for new works, however, is not clear to me. I only produce large figures—no small sculptures were made—and I have already promised the Franco head to the upcoming academy exhibition. However, I would be pleased to welcome you at any time.”³⁷

After this rejection, Möller did not continue his earlier exhibition activities and concentrated his business on the already advertised buying and selling of nineteenth- and twentieth-century masterpieces (fig. 5). In April 1939, he once again moved into a new gallery space not far from the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts. It is not known how he presented his offer there. According to his account books, a *Kniende*—which he sold to the Berlin banker and diplomat Heinz von Böttinger for RM 2,500 on December 24, 1940—was the only work that he again settled directly with Kolbe until the end of the NS era.³⁸

General von Einem

Despite his mention in Willrich’s diatribe, Möller was to sell works from the art collections of the City of Düsseldorf that were to be deaccessioned beginning in March 1937.³⁹ The deaccessions concerned the holdings of the Galerie der Neuzeit, which had only opened in 1935. The building had been established as a museum of twentieth-century art but was closed again only one day later because visitors found the works on display too progressive.⁴⁰ After it proved difficult to make a compliant selection, it was decided to transform the institution into the Rheinisch-Westfälische Galerie. According to the name, only works by native Rhinelanders and Westphalians were to be shown there, and works



6 Georg Kolbe, *Karl von Einem*, 1915, iron, h. 34.5 cm, historical photograph

by all other artists were to be deaccessioned. Among other modern painters and sculptors, Otto Dix, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Edvard Munch, Max Pechstein, and Emil Nolde were affected.⁴¹ The decision to sell the works had already been made in December 1936,⁴² but its implementation continued beyond the “Entartete Kunst” campaign. The temporal proximity to the confiscation campaign suggests that the works from the Galerie der Neuzeit should be classified as “degenerate” and that the sales should be seen as anticipatory obedience in the “purging” of the Düsseldorf collections. There is no doubt that their sale was a reaction to the political rejection of modernism, but the ultimate reason for the intended sales from this collection was the lack of affiliation of the artists concerned with the Rhine-Westphalian region. This explains why not only was the stylistically and thematically unsuspicious portrait *General von Einem* (1915, fig. 6) by the Saxon-born Kolbe discarded, but another of his formerly three sculptures in the collection, *Badende* (Bather, 1919), was sold without an intermediary to Annelies von Ribbentrop, the wife of Joachim von Ribbentrop, Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴³

Möller received the portrait *General von Einem* on April 27, 1938, along with works by Renée Sintenis, Karl Albiker, Ernesto de Fiori, and Hermann Haller (fig. 7).⁴⁴ The portrait had been modeled in 1915 at the general’s headquarters in the French Ardennes. As early as 1916, it had already been exhibited as a lead cast at the Freie Secession in Berlin, as well as at Galerie Ernst Arnold in Dresden, so that Möller was probably familiar with it.⁴⁵ Düsseldorf acquired the cast on April 15, 1933, and Kolbe learned on May 6, 1933,

1735 17. IV	Kaufausstellungen des Stadt Düsseldorf.	Albino, Sialitka	1. 10.	750.-	1735
1736	do.	de Siori Jell-Hild	1. 10.	480.-	1736
1737	do.	Keller, Neumann	1. 10.	400.-	1737
1738	do.	Keller, Kopfmann	1. 10.	300.-	1738
1739	do.	Kolbe, General v.	1. 10.	600.-	1739
1740	do.	Kauker, Jell-Hild	1. 10.	500.-	1740
1741	Nicht Kleiner, Meier, Kuter des Kindes	General v. Kolbe	1. 10.	1000.-	1741
1741 19. IV	H. E. K. Koll, Königsallee-Kunstmärkte.	Kunstwerke, Koll	1. 10.	1000.-	1741

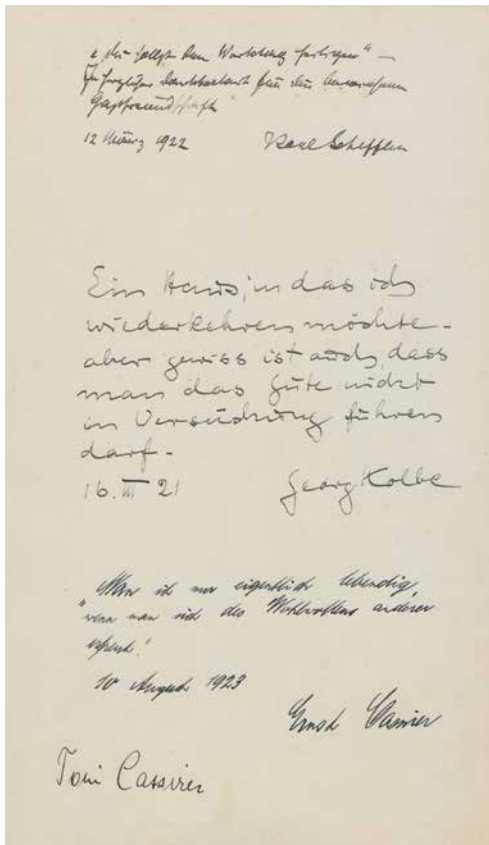
7 Goods receipt ledger of Galerie Ferdinand Möller, entry dated April 27, 1938, regarding the receipt of the portrait *General von Einem* by Georg Kolbe

in a letter from Curt Valentin on the letterhead of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, “that the Einem head was purchased in Düsseldorf at the price of RM 400.”⁴⁶ Valentin concealed the actual circumstances of the acquisition. Contrary to what he wrote, the portrait had been accepted as a partial payment for a loan from the City of Düsseldorf to Alfred Flechtheim.⁴⁷ According to correspondence at the time, the sculpture was an iron casting that was inventoried as an “anonymous gift.”⁴⁸ In 1938, however, Möller did not receive an iron casting but, according to the transfer list, a bronze.⁴⁹ He was able to sell some of the works that had come to the gallery along with the portrait *General von Einem*; he sent the rest back in two crates in April 1939.⁵⁰ It is possible that one of the crates also contained the portrait, since *General von Einem* can still be found in the art collections under the inventory number 0.1952.55. Not in iron or bronze, but as a lead casting.⁵¹

Kniende

In 1937, the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts noted that Möller had a “conspicuously high proportion of Jewish visitors.”⁵² This presumably included quite a few of his long-time customers, who were forced to sell under increasing persecution and deprivation of rights. Among them were members of the family of the Breslau-based textile manufacturer Carl Lewin. During the First World War, Lewin produced uniform fabrics for the German army. Max Liebermann painted portraits of him and other members of the family; and by 1921 at the latest, Kolbe was also a guest of the Lewin family (fig. 8).⁵³ In 1925, he created a portrait of the entrepreneur (fig. 9).⁵⁴ Portraits of other family members are also known. Lewin’s children and their partners shared their father’s interest in art. His son Leo Lewin was one of Möller’s early and important collectors. From Georg Kolbe, he acquired casts of the figures *Kauernde*, *Victoria*, *Capriccio*, and *Kniende II*.⁵⁵ Further purchases can be assumed. On March 6, 1933, his wife Helene Lewin wrote to Kolbe:

“As you will probably know, our financial situation has changed a great deal. We were forced to give up our house and also have to sell our art objects. Since we



8 Page from the guest book of the Breslau-based textile industrialist Carl Lewin, at whose home Kolbe was a guest in 1922, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin



9 Georg Kolbe, *Carl Lewin*, 1925/26, bronze, h. 34.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

do not know the current value of your sculptures and do not wish to sell the objects below value, I would like to ask you to let me know what you think the large kneeling dancer is now worth.⁵⁶

Contrary to what Mrs. Lewin probably expected due to the long-standing connection, it was not Kolbe himself who replied, but rather Margrit Schwartzkopff, who had apparently been unknown to her until then. She remained noncommittal and without empathy with regard to the collector's fate, held out the prospect of a sales price of approximately RM 2,500 in the "current economic situation," and kept the photos of the sculpture that had been sent along with the letter.⁵⁷

On December 8, 1938, Lewin's sister-in-law, Susanne Lewin, approached Möller and handed over to him a *Kniende* from her collection.⁵⁸ It was a bronze for which Möller noted no net proceeds to her. In doing so, he was possibly responding to Article IV of the "Ordinance on the Use of Jewish Property" of December 3, 1938, which prohibited Jewish citizens from freely selling jewels, precious metals, and works of art worth more

than RM 1,000.⁵⁹ According to the information that Margrit Schwartzkopff gave Helene Lewin in 1933 about the *Kniende Tänzerin* (Kneeling Dancer) and the RM 2,500 paid by Heinz von Böttinger for his *Kniende* in 1940, Susanne Lewin's *Kniende* would have fallen within the scope of the ordinance. Möller was unable to sell the sculpture and returned it to Mrs. Lewin on February 13, 1939. Shortly thereafter, Jewish citizens were required, under threat of punishment, to surrender objects covered by the ordinance to the state purchasing offices by March 31, 1939. Susanne Lewin and her husband were able to emigrate. Part of the family collection was saved.

Stehende

Erwin Braumüller lived in the Berlin district of Lichtenfelde. On December 3, 1937, Möller received from him a *Stehende* by Georg Kolbe.⁶⁰ Braumüller was an officer in the German Air Force.⁶¹ He rose to the rank of major general in a short time, was active in the armaments business, and was probably as familiar with the business activities of HISMA as he was with the role and operations of the German Air Force in the Spanish Civil War.⁶² Möller's account books suggest that on February 17, 1938, he sold the *Stehende* from the Braumüller collection, along with watercolors by Franz Marc, Erich Heckel, and Christian Rohlf, to the Jewish collector Alfred Rose, Hannover.⁶³ Rose also acquired a "portrait" by Anton Graff on February 16 and a "landscape" by Gustave Courbet on February 19.⁶⁴ Rose had been a customer of the gallery since the 1920s and, like Möller, had supported the artists' group *Blaue Vier* (Blue Four), founded by Lyonel Feininger, Alexej Jawlensky, Wassily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee.⁶⁵ On December 17, 1937, he consigned the paintings *Lote zur Welle* (Plummet to the Wave, 1928) by Klee and *Aufleuchten* (Luminosity, 1927) by Kandinsky to Möller.⁶⁶ On the same day, Möller offered *Lote zur Welle* to the Jewish painter and architect Heinrich Tischler in Breslau "as a particularly beautiful and typical work."⁶⁷ The offer included a number of other works, including Georg Kolbe's "*Stehende Frau* [Standing Woman], bronze statuette, height 45 cm, one of the artist's most charming small works."⁶⁸ Tischler probably did not purchase the works offered to him. In 1938, he was arrested and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp. He died on December 16, 1938, from injuries sustained there.⁶⁹ Rose managed to escape to England in February 1939, traveling on to Boston in 1941 and finally to New York in 1942.⁷⁰ He was able to export at least some of his art. *Lote zur Welle*, possibly still in his possession, was included in a Klee exhibition at Nierendorf Gallery in New York in 1941. What further path the *Stehende* took is uncertain.

Consolidating Traces

The events described are "snapshots" of the art trade in the late 1930s. Each of them could be explored in greater depth. The protagonists involved could be better profiled

and the works contextualized in their respective ownerships. In the best case, the various castings could be clearly identified and their further paths traced. It remains to be seen whether Alfred Flechtheim owned an iron casting of the portrait *General von Einem*, whether Möller took on a bronze casting, and what happened to the lead casting exhibited at Galerie Ernst Arnold in 1916. The *Kniende* that Möller sold to Heinz von Böttinger in 1940 may have been a 1926 casting of the *Kniende* from 1926. This figure was one of Kolbe's most popular sculptures at the time, and about sixty casts of the sculpture are known to have existed.⁷¹ Thanks to the research of Ursel Berger, we have the information that Böttinger's *Kniende* was a "kneeling girl figure with outstretched arms," and thus probably the 1923 work entitled *Victoria*.⁷² But which *Kniende* was still in the possession of the Lewin family in 1938, and which *Stehende* was acquired by Alfred Rose? Was he able to export his casting, and did he eventually have to sell it in New York, perhaps through Valentin? Did it stay with his family or remain behind in Germany? After 1933, Kolbe's figurative sculptures encountered a society in which respect for people became a rarity. At the same time, countless of his early figures were the subject of politically motivated redistribution processes. None of his sculptures were confiscated as "degenerate" art, but an as yet unspecified number became NS looted art and flight assets. The commendable reconstruction of the paths of his sculptures began decades ago. Tracing these also in the art trade during National Socialism was once almost impossible. Until recently, the contemporary market and its players had hardly been researched.⁷³ Both have since become the subject of art history, but the provision of clarifying sources still falls short of today's possibilities. If the relevant business records are structured and digitally indexed, provenance and object-related art market research can efficiently deepen the view of individual works and transactions and complement previous research results. Georg Kolbe's sculptures *General von Einem*, *Kniende*, and *Stehende* reveal connections of his oeuvre to persecuted Jews. If further traces of this context could be uncovered and condensed in a targeted manner, research on Georg Kolbe under National Socialism would be significantly and multifacetedly expanded.

Notes

- 1 Möller became proactively involved in the “exploitation” of the confiscated works. For the chronology of his involvement, see: Wolfgang Schöddert, “Vom Geist der Kunst und dem Ungeist der Zeit. Spuren der Galerie Ferdinand Möller aus den Jahren 1937 bis 1945,” in: Maike Steinkamp and Ute Haug (eds.), *Werke und Werte. Über das Handeln und Sammeln von Kunst im Nationalsozialismus* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle “Entartete Kunst,” vol. 5] (Berlin 2010), pp. 61–81, here pp. 69–71.
- 2 These figures are based on research by the “Degenerate Art” Research Center at the Freie Universität Berlin. See the Database “Entartete Kunst”: https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/db_entart_kunst/datenbank/index.html [last accessed June 19, 2023].
- 3 See: *ibid.*: NS Inventar EK-Nr. 1539, <http://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&lang=en> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. In 1990, Ursel Berger quoted the state of research at that time: Ursel Berger, *Georg Kolbe – Leben und Werk, mit dem Katalog der Kolbe-Plastiken im Georg-Kolbe-Museum* (Berlin 1990), p. 131, note 79. At that time, the lithograph EK 1539 was still considered by scholars to be a drawing. The *Stürzende* (Foundering Man), as mentioned by Berger, cannot be identified among the works confiscated in Kassel noted in the second volume (*Orte Göttingen bis Zwickau*) of the inventory of the “Degenerate Art” campaign (“Fischer List”), which only became public in 1996, and was not included in the database of the “Degenerate Art” research center as of 2003. For the works from Düsseldorf mentioned by Berger, see the section on *General von Einem* in this essay.
- 4 See the gallery’s goods receipt ledger “Wareneingangsbuch [Geschäftsbuch der Galerie Ferdinand Möller],” 1935–1939, Documentary Estate of Ferdinand Möller, Berlinische Galerie, no. 1739 *General von Einem* and no. 1874 *Kniende*. The *Stehende* already came to the gallery on December 3, 1937, and was registered as no. 1551; BG-KA-N/F.Möller-81-B9, <https://sammlung-online.berlinischegalerie.de/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&lang=en> [last accessed June 19, 2023].
- 5 Paul Ortwin Rave, *Kunstdiktatur im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg 1949), p. 66 [translated].
- 6 See: Nikola Doll, Uwe Fleckner, and Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen: “Die entlastende Moderne. Hildebrand Gurlitt und der Nachkriegsmythos vom inneren Widerstand,” in: *idem* (eds.), *Kunst, Konflikt, Kollab-*
oration. Hildebrand Gurlitt und die Moderne [Schriften der Forschungsstelle “Entartete Kunst,” vol. 14] (Berlin 2023), pp. 1–17, here pp. 5–8.
- 7 For more on the premises and results of recent research, see: Anja Tiedemann (ed.), *Die Kammer schreibt schon wieder! Das Reglement für den Handel mit moderner Kunst im Nationalsozialismus* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle “Entartete Kunst,” vol. 10] (Berlin 2016). Meanwhile, the narrative of under the counter sales persists. See: Uwe Fleckner, “Der Wert wertloser Kunst. Ideological Contradictions in the Trade in ‘Degenerate’ Modernism,” in: *Die Zerrissene Moderne. Die Basler Ankäufe “entarteter” Kunst*, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Basel (Berlin and Basel 2022), pp. 55–66, here pp. 58f.
- 8 Möller traded in Berlin until the closure of his gallery in November 1943 due to the war. See the gallery’s sales ledger “Verkaufsbuch V [Verkaufsbuch der Galerie Ferdinand Möller],” 1937–1943. BG-KA-N/F.Möller-74-B2, <https://sammlung-online.berlinischegalerie.de/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=223620&viewType=detailView> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. For written inquiries to Möller, cf. postcard from Dr. Wilhelm Moufang to Ferdinand Möller, February 9, 1945, BG-GFM-CII 2,202.
- 9 Catalogs of works document the scope of individual artistic production. One example is the oeuvre of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. On his death in 1938, he left behind approximately 1,000 paintings. See: Donald E. Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Mit einem kritischen Katalog sämtlicher Gemälde* (Munich 1968). Only fifty-two of his paintings were confiscated as “degenerate art.”
- 10 See: <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/ueber-die-online-sammlung> [last accessed June 19, 2023].
- 11 For more on Kolbe’s connections to the trade, see the essay by Jan Giebel in this volume, pp. 164–189.
- 12 See the mentions of Georg Kolbe’s works in the digitized auction catalogs of the years 1901–45 from the cooperative projects “German Sales” I and II; <https://www.arthistoricum.net/en/subjects/thematic-portals/german-sales/getty-provenance-indexr> [last accessed June 19, 2023].
- 13 See: *Der Cicerone: Halbmonatsschrift für die Interessen des Kunstforschers & Sammlers*, vol. VIII, nos. 15/16, 1916, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.26378#0359> [last accessed June 19, 2023].
- 14 Invitation to the opening of Galerie Ferdinand Möller, Museumsplatz 13, Breslau, on April 29,

- 1917, in: "Ausstellungsdokumentation der Galerie Ferdinand Möller in den Breslauer Jahren," BG-GFM-C, IV, I 1,1 [translated].
- 15 See: Ferdinand Möller Verlag, announcement regarding the small sculpture *Kauernde* by Georg Kolbe, Berlin, 1919, BG-GFM-C, I 25; text accompanying the "Kauernde," inv. no. P9, GKM Collection, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/kauernde/62856?term=m%C3%B6ller&start=24&position=25> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. See also Berger 1990 [see note 3], pp. 238–239.
 - 16 *Porträt Maria Möller-Garny*, inv. no. P285, GKM Collection, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/portraet-maria-moeller-garny/63052?term=m%C3%B6ller%20garny&position=0> [last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 17 In addition to the portrait of Maria Möller-Garny, the bronzes *Tänzerin* (Dancer), *Scherzo*, and *Auferstehung* (Resurrection) and the models *Liegende* (Woman Reclining) and *Jüngling* (Youth) were exhibited; see: Kunst-Verein Potsdam (ed.), *Potsdamer Kunstsommer 1921. Kunstausstellung in der Orangerie des Parkes von Sanssouci*, Potsdam, 1921, p. 31, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.48743#0033> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. For more on the exhibition, see: Jutta Götzmann, "Potsdamer Kunstsommer 1921," in: *Von Otto Mueller bis Max Kaus. Graphische Einzeldrucke und Mappenwerke aus dem Ferdinand Möller Verlag*, exh. cat. Potsdam Museum – Forum für Kunst und Geschichte and Potsdamer Kunstverein (Berlin 2010), pp. 30–39.
 - 18 See: *Tänzer Nijinsky*, inv. no. P188, GKM Collection, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/taenzer-nijinsky/63120?term=nijinsky&position=0> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. The casting in the Georg Kolbe Museum is a bronze from the collection of Bruno Adriani, who worked in the Prussian Ministry of Culture until 1930. Adriani was a frequent guest of the Möller family in Potsdam and was familiar with the cast there.
 - 19 See: letter from Ferdinand Möller to Maria Caspar-Filser, October 3, 1922, without a signature, in the holdings BG-GFM-D I [translated].
 - 20 Receipt of Galerie Ferdinand Möller for Georg Kolbe, April 7, 1923, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 21 See: The Anderson Galleries (ed.), *A Collection of Modern German Art: To Be Exhibited from October First to Twentieth*, exh. cat. The Anderson Galleries, New York, 1923, with an introduction by Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner pp. 2–9, https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/anderson_galleries1923_10_01/0001/image,info,thumbs [last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 22 See: "Anmeldung zur Ausstellung einer Gruppe deutscher Künstler in den Anderson Art Galleries in New York, Januar 1922," filled in by Georg Kolbe and dated November 23, 1922 [sic], in: "Ausstellungsanmeldungen Amerika," BG-GFM-D I,86. The titles *Assunta* and *Klage* can be identified via Kolbe Online. *Meerweib* is probably identical with the sculpture *Meerweibchen* (Little Mermaid) from 1921; cf. inv. no. P303, GKM Collection, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/index.php/de/objekte/meerweibchen/63127?term=Meerweibchen&position=0> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. In the exhibition catalog, *Klage* and *Meerweib* were titled *Complaint* and *Mermaid* in English; see: Anderson Galleries 2023 (see note 21), p. 12, nos. 110 and 111.
 - 23 See: radiogram from Moellergalerie to Moellerart NY, January 10, 1924, BG-GFM-D I,80.
 - 24 Works by Nauen, Pechstein, Scheibe, and Sintenis also sold quickly. See the copy of a press release, undated, BG-GFM-D I,42.
 - 25 As late as mid-November, Möller was considering opening a branch in New York and staying there provisionally. See: letter from Ferdinand Möller to Emil Nolde, November 13, 1923, BG-GFM-D I,1317.
 - 26 Draft of a letter from Ferdinand Möller to William [Wilhelm] Valentiner, November 29, 1923, not mailed, BG-GFM-D I,61 [translated].
 - 27 Letter from Erna Casper to Ferdinand Möller, December 4, 1923, BG-GFM-D I,66.
 - 28 Ibid.
 - 29 Ibid.
 - 30 See the essay by Jan Giebel in this volume, pp. 164–189.
 - 31 Berger 1990 (see note 3), p. 134 [translated].
 - 32 Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art* (Munich and Berlin 1937), pp. 171–172. Willrich saw in Kolbe a "healthy" and "important" artist; *ibid.*, p. 172 [translated].
 - 33 See the questionnaire of the Military Government of Germany regarding denazification, filled in by Ferdinand Möller and dated August 18, 1945, BG-KA-N/F.Möller-61-M61,177 [translated].
 - 34 Quoted in: Katrin Engelhardt, "Die Ausstellung 'Entartete Kunst' in Berlin 1938. Rekonstruktion und Analyse," in: Uwe Fleckner (ed.), *Angriff auf die Avantgarde. Kunst und Kunstpolitik im Nationalsozialismus* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst,"

- vol. 1] (Berlin 2007), pp. 89–158, here p. 103 [translated].
- 35 With this in mind, he returned works, for example, by Heinrich Campendonk and George Minne to their owners. See: letter from Ferdinand Möller to Dr. Erich Raemisch, August 20, 1937, BG-GFM-C,II 1,735, <https://sammlung-online.berlinischegalerie.de:443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=213128&viewType=detailView> [last accessed June 19, 2023] [translated].
 - 36 For more on the monitoring of the gallery, see the note in the personal file of Josef Nierendorf, LArch Berlin, A Rep. 243-04 no. 6306; cf. note 52 in this essay. For more on the sales in November 1937, see: Verkaufsbuch V 1937–1943 (see note 8), pp. 60–62.
 - 37 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Ferdinand Möller, December 13, 1938, BG-GFM-C,III 1,1106 [translated].
 - 38 Heinz von Böttinger was the brother-in-law of Lotte von Böttinger, who was portrayed by Kolbe in 1921. Since the family was acquainted with Kolbe, the sale via Möller is surprising. In the Kolbe Estate, there is no documentation of this sale.
 - 39 Letter from Hans Wilhelm Hupp, Kunstsammlungen der Stadt Düsseldorf, to Ferdinand Möller, March 19, 1937, BG-GFM-C, II 1,601.
 - 40 See: Katrin DuBois: "... fast alle führenden Meister dieser Zeit sind eben heute umstritten." Die Düsseldorfer 'Galerie der Neuzeit' 1934–1937 und die Gegenwartskunst im Nationalsozialismus," in: Düsseldorfer Geschichtsverein (ed.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Niederrheins [Düsseldorfer Jahrbuch, vol. 89]* (Essen 2019), pp. 297–320.
 - 41 Undated list, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf, Galerie der Neuzeit, Verschiedenes. Bestand: 0-1-4 Stadtverwaltung Düsseldorf von 1933–2000 (formerly: Bestand IV), shelf no. 3937.0000, sheet 145, https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.duesseldorf.de%2F%2Fstadtarchiv%2Farchivenrw%2F0%2F1%2F4%2FVz_9BD47EC5-E63A-4D3D-BCC9-7989300BA4B5_mets_actapro.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=145&cHash=adddf68032d7d8677df03d047f6ede9 [last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 42 Letter from [Hans Wilhelm Hupp], Kunstsammlungen der Stadt Düsseldorf, to Fred Kocks, December 28, 1936, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf (see note 41), sheet 141, https://dfg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.duesseldorf.de%2F%2Fstadtarchiv%2Farchivenrw%2F0%2F1%2F4%2FVz_9BD47EC5-E63A-4D3D-BCC9-7989300BA4B5_mets_actapro.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=141&cHash=c808678e60bb-3faa87e2af048450c179 [last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 43 List dated September 28, 1937. A third sculpture was sold through Galerie Bammann, Düsseldorf to a private collector. Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf (see note 41), sheet 219, https://dkg-viewer.de/show?id=9&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.duesseldorf.de%2F%2Fstadtarchiv%2Farchivenrw%2F0%2F1%2F4%2FVz_9BD47EC5-E63A-4D3D-BCC9-7989300BA4B5_mets_actapro.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=219 [last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 44 See: Wareneingangsbuch 1935–1939 (see note 4).
 - 45 Cf. *Porträt Karl von Einem*, inv. No. P130, GKM Collection, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/portraet-karl-von-einem/63162?term=Einem&position=0> [last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 46 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, May 6, 1933, GK Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, inv. no. GK.456.1, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/index.php/de/korrespondenzen/briefe-von-curt-valentin-galerie-alfred-flechtheim-berlin-und-von-der-bildgiesserei-hermann-noack-berlin-an-georg-kolbe/69055> [last accessed June 19, 2023] [translated].
 - 47 For more on the economic situation of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim in 1933, see the essay by Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen in this volume, pp. 208–225.
 - 48 The iron casting by Kolbe and the bronze *Singender Mann* (Singing Man) by Ernst Barlach were available for sale as of March 8, 1933. See the letter from the Städtisches Kunstmuseum, March 8, 1933, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf (see note 41), sheet 381, https://dkg-viewer.de/show?tx_dlf%5Bdouble%5D=0&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.duesseldorf.de%2F%2Fstadtarchiv%2Farchivenrw%2F0%2F1%2F4%2FVz_4B9EED11-F9FC-4548-93FB-647EC2706978_mets_actapro.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=381&cHash=7b6570c152d31d9fa0a59c3889be4c18. For more on the inventorying, see the letter from the Städtisches Kunstmuseum to the mayor of Düsseldorf, April 19, 1933, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf (see note 41), sheet 423, https://dkg-viewer.de/show?id=9&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.duesseldorf.de%2F%2Fstadtarchiv%2Farchivenrw%2F0%2F1%2F4%2FVz_4B9EED11-F9FC-4548-93FB-647EC2706978_mets_actapro.xml&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=423 [both sites last accessed June 19, 2023].
 - 49 List of Galerie Ferdinand Möller, April 27, 1938, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf 0-1-4-3776, sheet 701.

I thank Christiane Jungklaus, Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, for this reference.

- 50 Letter from Ferdinand Möller to Hans Hupp, April 6, 1939, Stadtarchiv Düsseldorf 0-1-4-3779, 6.4.1939, p. 683, with thanks to Christiane Jungklaus, Kunstpalast Düsseldorf.
- 51 The Kunstpalast Düsseldorf is involved in clarifying the provenance of this casting. For earlier research by the Georg Kolbe Museum, see the hanging file folder “von Einem,” GKM Archive, Berlin. I thank Elisa Tamaschke and Thomas Pavel, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, for making this available to me.
- 52 This was also determined for the galleries von der Heyde, Nierendorf, Gurlitt, and Fritze. Personal file of Josef Nierendorf (see note 36).
- 53 See the page from Lewin’s guestbook, GK Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, inv. no. GK.608, Archiv GKM.
- 54 *Porträt Carl Lewin*, inv. no. P125, GKM Collection, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/ewinit-carl-lewin/62146?term=ewin&position=1> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. The portrait was acquired from the family of the Carl Lewin in 1971. Berger 1990 (see note 3), cat. 86, p. 288.
- 55 Cf. inv. nos. P9, P209, P22, GKM Collection.
- 56 Letter from Helene Lewin to Georg Kolbe, March 6, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. I thank Elisa Tamaschke for making this available to me.
- 57 Letter from Margrit Schwartzkopff to Helene Lewin, March 16, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated], with thanks to Elisa Tamaschke.
- 58 See: Wareneingangsbuch 1935–1939 (see note 4), no. 1874. The entry in the goods receipt ledger names Mrs. Salo Lewin, without an address, as the owner. The following indications speak for her identity as Helene Lewin’s sister-in-law: On December 2, 1938, Cäcilie Markus, who is proved to be the daughter of Carl Lewin, was the last customer before Mrs. Salo Lewin (see: Wareneingangsbuch, no. 1870). Salo Lewin himself can still be traced on March 28, 1938 to the address Wittelsbacherstr. 26 in Berlin (see: Wareneingangsbuch, no. 1712). The index of the files of the Chief Finance President of Berlin-Brandenburg in the Brandenburg State Archives in Potsdam also assigns this address to his wife Susanne, née Gottstein. A surviving obituary for Carl Lewin identifies Salo Lewin’s wife as “née Gottstein.” After 1945, Susanne and Salo Lewin filed applications for restitution. The contents of the procedural files preserved in the Berlin State Archives were not evaluated for this essay. The inspection would be part of a more extensive provenance research.
- 59 See: “Verordnung über den Einsatz des jüdischen Vermögens” of December 3, 1938, *Reichsgesetzblatt Teil 1938*, pp. 1709–1711, article IV, § 14.
- 60 See: Wareneingangsbuch 1935–1939 (see note 4), no. 1551. Handed over at the same time were works by Otto Mueller, Alfred Partikel, Richard Scheibe, and August Gaul; *ibid.*, nos. 1548, 1549, 1550, 1552, 1553, 1554.
- 61 Braumüller’s listings in the Berlin address books document his affiliation with the army and his rise from major to general starting in 1937.
- 62 For further information on his activities, see: “Personalunterlagen von Angehörigen der Reichswehr und Wehrmacht,” German Federal Archives, Freiburg, BArch PERS 6/1130.
- 63 Verkaufsbuch V 1937–1943 (see note 8), p. 82.
- 64 *Ibid.*
- 65 See: Annette Baumann, “Scouts der künstlerischen Avantgarde im Norden – Herbert von Garvens und Otto Ralfs als Sammler und Händler der Künstler Baumeister, Ensor, Jawlensky und Klee,” in: Christopher M. Galler and Jochen Meiners (eds.), *Regionaler Kunsthandel. Eine Herausforderung für die Provenienzforschung?* (Heidelberg 2022), pp. 372–443, here pp. 413–417, URL: <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.978.c13774> [last accessed June 19, 2023]. For further information on the Rose family, see: Sabine Paehr, “Verfolgung während der NS-Zeit – Strukturen und Schicksale in den vormals selbständigen Gemeinden der Wedemark,” in: Gemeinde Wedemark (ed.), *Verfolgung und Zwangsarbeit in der NS-Zeit. Die Geschichte der Wedemark von 1930 bis 1950*, vol. 1 (Hannover 2016), pp. 13–64, here pp. 13–53.
- 66 See: Wareneingangsbuch 1935–1939 (see note 4), no. 1585 *Aufleuchten* and no. 1586 *Lote zur Welle*.
- 67 Letter from Ferdinand Möller to Heinrich Tischler, December 17, 1937, BG-GFM-C, II 1, 856, with attached list of works on offer, <https://sammlung-online.berlinischegalerie.de:443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=213408&viewType=detailView> [last accessed June 19, 2023] [translated].
- 68 *Ibid.* [translated].
- 69 See: Joseph Walk (ed.), *Kurzbiographien zur Geschichte der Juden 1918–1945* (Munich 1988), p. 366.
- 70 See: Baumann 2022 (see note 65).
- 71 According to information kindly provided by Thomas Pavel, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin.

- 72** Letter from Petra Schlemme to Ursel Berger, March 20, 2018, hanging file folder "von Böttinger," GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 73** See: Angelika Enderlein, *Der Berliner Kunsthandel in der Weimarer Republik und im NS-Staat* (Berlin 2006), p. 74.

Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen

The Binding Waiver

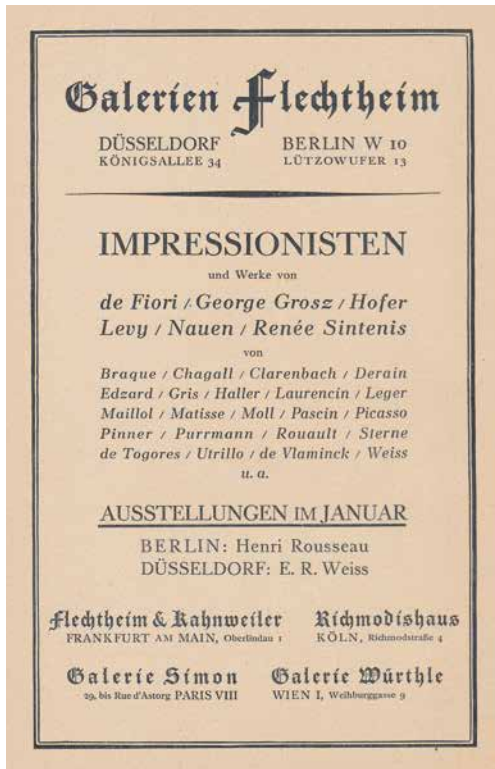
Georg Kolbe as a Creditor of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH

In January 1927, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim presented its first comprehensive exhibition of works by Georg Kolbe, marking the beginning of their business relationship.¹ By this time, Kolbe had developed from a young unknown artist into one of the most important German sculptors of the 1920s, supported by the constant encouragement of the art dealer Paul Cassirer.² The fact that Kolbe entered into an association with Galerie Alfred Flechtheim after Cassirer's tragic death in January 1926 may in turn be related to the latter's importance for Flechtheim.³ Knowledge of this development is crucial to understanding not only the beginning but also the end of the business relationship between the sculptor and his gallerist. Thanks to the newly discovered partial estate of Georg Kolbe⁴ in the holdings of the Georg Kolbe Museum and the correspondence it contains concerning Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, it is now possible for the first time to complete and concretize research into the history of the company, especially from 1933 onwards.

The Transformation into a Serious Art Dealer

"There are artists who are creators, but there are also creative art dealers."⁵ With this quotation, attributed to Pablo Picasso, Alfred Flechtheim began his obituary of his mentor Paul Cassirer, who had repeatedly provided essential impetus for his rise to become one of the most important gallerists of modern art in Germany. In retrospect, Flechtheim attributed the decision to open a gallery in Düsseldorf in 1913 to Cassirer's encouragement. On the occasion of the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne in 1912, Cassirer had urged him to "finally [...] become a serious art dealer."⁶ However, the beginnings of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim were soon interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. The gallery premises are said to have been converted into a military hospital during the war; in any case, the gallery's stock was auctioned off by Paul Cassirer and Hugo Helbing on June 5, 1917.⁷ At Easter 1919, the gallery was reopened at Königsallee 34 in Düsseldorf on the second floor of the banking house B. Simons & Co.⁸

Shortly thereafter, Cassirer supported Flechtheim's expansion plans, which included a second venue in Berlin in addition to the main gallery in Düsseldorf.⁹ Two additional investors, Max Lefson and Gustav Kahnweiler, were found to realize these plans.¹⁰ Max Lefson was co-owner of the publishing house Imberg & Lefson, where the Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer had most of its catalogs printed.¹¹ Gustav Kahnweiler was the younger brother of the Paris-based art dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, with whom Flechtheim had already been in contact at the time of the Cologne Sonderbund exhibitions.¹² The increase to three partners also made it possible to expand from two to three locations, so that the two additional galleries in Berlin and in Frankfurt am Main could be opened in October and November 1921, respectively.¹³ The latter was managed from the outset by Gustav Kahnweiler, who, however, like Max Lefson before him, left Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH as a shareholder in November 1925 and was relieved of his duties as managing director. The gallery in Frankfurt am Main remained open for business, albeit no longer as part of the Flechtheim GmbH.¹⁴ Kahnweiler's shares were taken over by Flechtheim, who thus became the sole

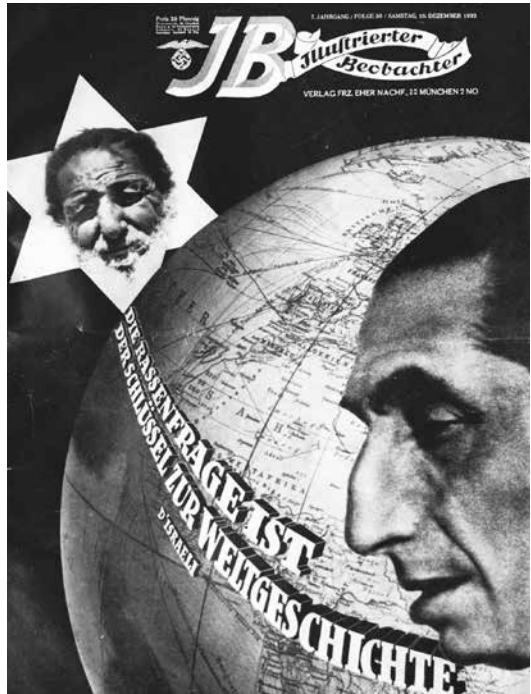


1 Advertisement of the Flechtheim galleries in the magazine *Der Querschnitt* 6, no. 1, January 1926

shareholder of the GmbH, which was now limited to the Düsseldorf and Berlin locations.¹⁵ After his formal departure from the company, Gustav Kahnweiler continued to run the gallery in Frankfurt, which now bore the name Galerie Flechtheim & Kahnweiler, until he fled the NS regime to London in 1933.¹⁶ What contractual format underlay the further connection to the Flechtheim company conveyed by the name is unknown, but the collaboration is evidenced by joint advertisements and the organization exhibitions (fig. 1).¹⁷ This is also reflected in a letter from Paul Alexander Vömel, known as Alex, to Georg Kolbe on the occasion of the sculptor's comprehensive exhibition in Düsseldorf in January 1927, when he asked "to send some of the sculptures to Galerie Flechtheim & Kahnweiler in Frankfurt am Main, as our exhibitions are usually shown there as well."¹⁸

The beginning of Kolbe's regular participation in exhibitions at the Flechtheim galleries coincided with the beginning of 1927, a period in which the structures of the art dealerships were once again changing. Alex Vömel was promoted from procurator to managing director in mid-February 1927, so that from then on, he represented the company on an equal footing with Flechtheim.¹⁹ Vömel's promotion was accompanied by the decision to expand the gallery's Berlin operations, and not just in terms of space. In addition to Flechtheim's niece Rosa Hulisch, known as Rosi, Curt Valentin was soon hired as an employee.²⁰ Valentin's presence in the gallery was very important to Kolbe, as expressed in a letter to Valentin in which Kolbe wrote: "For me, you represented Flechtheim!"²¹

2 “Die Rassenfrage ist der Schlüssel zur Weltgeschichte” (The Question of Race is the Key to World History) on the cover of the magazine *Illustrierter Beobachter* 7, no. 12, December 1932



From Crisis to Boycott

After the comprehensive presentation of works by Georg Kolbe in the Düsseldorf gallery in January 1927, there was a solo exhibition in the Berlin space in the spring of 1930 and one at the end of 1931.²² In the months between these two exhibitions, the effects of the Great Depression had reached Germany in dramatic fashion: in June 1931, the entire German banking system had collapsed, international capital had been withdrawn, and Germany had switched to a forced foreign exchange economy.²³ There are many indications that, with the beginning of the Great Depression, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH fell into deep financial difficulties.²⁴ In addition to the material worries, however, anti-Semitic attacks on Alfred Flechtheim's person increased. For example, in December 1932 and January 1933, his likeness was used for racist campaigns in the weekly magazine *Illustrierter Beobachter* to evoke impending doom and to promote National Socialism (fig. 2).²⁵ During the critical months of the NS seizure of power, Kolbe was represented for the last time in an exhibition co-organized by Galerie Flechtheim and presented under the title *Lebendige Deutsche Kunst* (Living German Art) at the Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer.²⁶ The last known exhibition activity of the Flechtheim galleries can be dated to mid-March to early April, 1933.²⁷ In Düsseldorf, Vömel had his own company registered in his name in the commercial register at the end of March 1933, the address of which was identical to that of the former Galerie Flechtheim.²⁸ The founding of Galerie Alex Vömel and the end of the Flechtheim galleries' exhibition activities thus coincided with the empire-wide

boycott of Jewish businesses and the appearance of an inflammatory article in the National Socialist magazine *Die Volksparole* demanding that the entire art scam be brought to bankruptcy and “the Flechtheim–Waetzold–Kaesbach system be exterminated.”²⁹

To the Creditors of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH

These developments must have led Alfred Flechtheim to believe that it was no longer possible to continue his business.³⁰ When Thea Sternheim introduced him to the auditor Alfred Emil Schulte in early September 1933, the decision seems to have been made to entrust him with the liquidation of the company.³¹ Even before Schulte’s role became official, the works on consignment available in Berlin were returned to Georg Kolbe on October 21, 1933.³² At this time, Flechtheim himself was no longer in Berlin. On September 29, 1933, he had arrived in Paris with Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, with whom he arranged to work for the Mayor Gallery in London by November 1933 at the latest.³³ To date, the last verifiable contact between Flechtheim and Kolbe was a letter Flechtheim sent from Paris in December 1933, in which he asked the sculptor for loans for a planned exhibition.³⁴ This document remains indicative of Flechtheim’s forced professional reorientation abroad, but it has now become apparent from the newly discovered partial estate that between 1933 and 1934 there was lively correspondence with Kolbe regarding the matter of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, and that the company’s continued existence ultimately depended on his goodwill.

Schulte first contacted Kolbe on October 28, 1933, as the “authorized representative of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Düsseldorf/Berlin and of Mr. Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin,” to inform him that it had become impossible to continue the art gallery due to the circumstances that had arisen, “in particular, however, due to the changes in the art market of which you are aware.”³⁵ Under the circumstances, he explained, liquidation of the company was the only option; in any event, the company as such would have to be dissolved. However, during the attempt to resolve existing liabilities, it had become apparent that the freely available and non-pledged assets consisted of art objects that had been completely devalued, as well as uncollectible accounts receivable. Thus there was no possibility of settling the claim that Kolbe had against the gallery.³⁶ Schulte therefore asked him, as well as all creditors, to waive the claim, since the only other option would be “to have bankruptcy proceedings instituted against the assets of Galerie Flechtheim and Mr. Alfred Flechtheim.”³⁷ After three weeks had passed without a reply, Schulte again asked Kolbe for a waiver, convinced that they agreed that “there is no point in making an inconclusive bankruptcy” that would only cause inconvenience and costs.³⁸ Instead, Schulte proposed “an out-of-court liquidation settlement, i.e., a settlement in which all existing assets would be at the disposal of the creditors.”³⁹ The out-of-court settlement sought by Schulte was to be a private, voluntary agreement between the debtor and his creditors aimed at averting bankruptcy and keeping the company in business. Further advantages would be that a settlement ratio could be determined independently, and no court costs would be incurred.

As Schulte explained to the creditors on February 1, 1934, the galleries in Düsseldorf and Berlin had been closed, relinquished, and rented to other parties between October and November 1933, and all but one of the employees had left the company by November 1, 1933. Flechtheim had also no longer received any remuneration or been able to make any withdrawals. Thus, the assets established at the end of October 1933 would be at the disposal of the creditors. However, since a number of the gallery's claims against debtors abroad were difficult to collect, the possibility of a liquidation settlement would only be possible through the waiver of a large part of the creditors.⁴⁰ Schulte had been promised a waiver of an estimated 120,000 RM by these creditors, dated February 1, 1934, should this have the effect of avoiding bankruptcy. The "pre-entitled claims (salaries, taxes, and other levies)" amounting to approximately 4,500 RM were offset by the assets of the gallery amounting to a maximum of 4,500 RM. What remained were "other receivables" amounting to approximately 20,000 RM.⁴¹ In order to persuade the creditors of this remaining 20,000 RM to waive their claims, a friend of Flechtheim's had declared himself willing, "for purely personal reasons," to provide a cash sum that would enable the payment of a twenty percent quota in the event of a liquidation settlement.⁴²

An "invoice statement" from Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH to Georg Kolbe shows that, as of September 30, 1933, the gallery owed the sculptor 1,828.35 RM (fig. 3).⁴³ The request for a waiver ultimately referred specifically to 1,815 RM.⁴⁴ Since Kolbe was one of the creditors for whom a quota of twenty percent was to be paid out, he could expect to receive 363 RM. In addition, in September 1933, he had already been assured that he would receive 1,340 RM, which the film director Josef von Sternberg still owed Galerie Flechtheim for the receipt of a bronze.⁴⁵ Kolbe had verbally promised to agree to the settlement, but made this conditional on the receipt of the promised 1,340 RM.⁴⁶ A letter from Rosi Hulisch from the beginning of March 1934 clearly shows the distress he caused all those involved at Galerie Flechtheim. She emphatically stressed to Kolbe her fear that the out-of-court settlement they were seeking might not come about because of him. Appealing to him that this could not be in his interest, she repeatedly asked for an early declaration of consent, not without referring to artists such as Paul Klee, Ernst Barlach, Hermann Haller, and Ernesto de Fiori, who had even waived their claims altogether.⁴⁷

By March 12, 1934, Schulte had succeeded in obtaining the agreement to a settlement from all creditors—with the exception of Kolbe.⁴⁸ After Kolbe had also declared the communication to be over by hanging up the telephone receiver, Schulte was only able to react irritably to the sculptor. Kolbe's view that Flechtheim had treated him immorally even provoked him to ask whether Kolbe's behavior could be called "morally right":

"If you want to throw moral principles into our conversation, then I would also ask you to look at the matter the other way around and consider whether you can justify the consequences of your behavior. If you persist in your refusal, bankruptcy procedures will have to be initiated. In this case, none of the creditors would get even a penny. Thus, by your behavior, you would harm all the others who need the money as much as you do, and there are certainly

Ich habe eine Forderung von Reichsmark 1815. —
gegen die Galerie Alfred Flechtheim G.m.b.H. bzw. gegen Herrn
Alfred Flechtheim. Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass einheitlich
ein Liquidationsvergleich über das Vermögen der Galerie Alfred
Flechtheim G.m.b.H. und des Herrn Alfred Flechtheim durchgeführt
wird; zu einem solchen Liquidationsvergleich erkläre ich mein Ein-
verständnis, unter der Bedingung, dass meine oben genannte Forde-
rung in Höhe von 20 % garantiert, und dass die Garantiequote spä-
testens bis zum 1. April 1934 bar ausgezahlt wird.

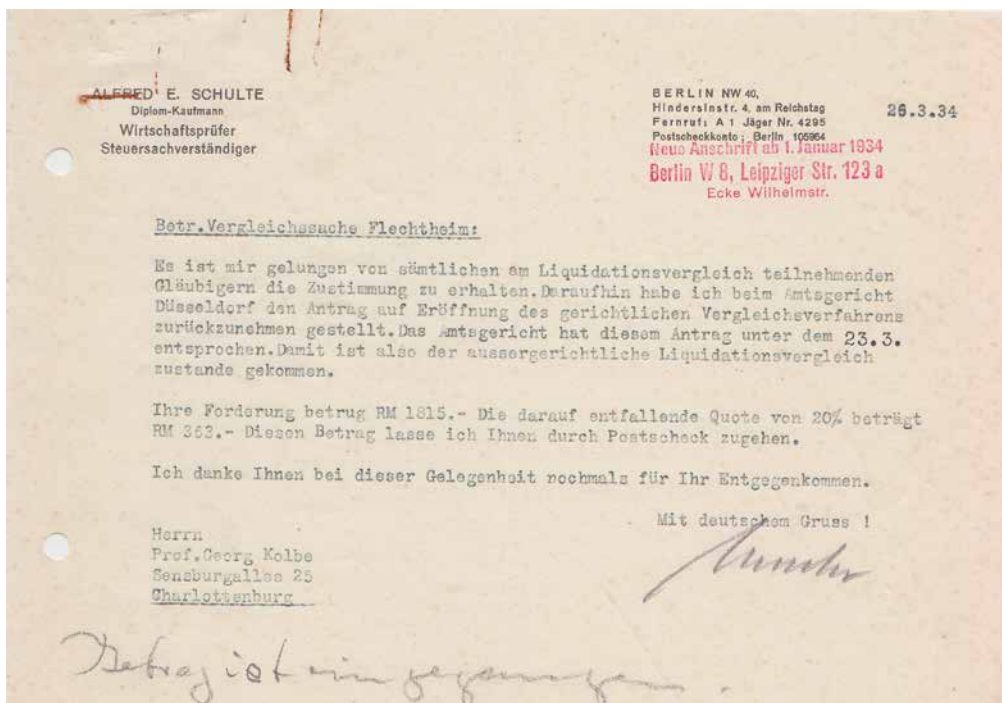
Meine Zustimmung bezieht sich in erster Linie auf einen ausserge-
richtlichen, evtl. auch auf einen gerichtlichen Liquidationsver-
gleich.

Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die Durchführung des Liquidations-
vergleichs durch den öffentlich bestellten Wirtschaftsprüfer Alfred
E. S c h u l t e in Berlin W 8, Leipzigerstrasse 123a, erfolgt.

An diese Zustimmung halte ich mich bis zum 1. April 1934 gebunden.

am 19. III unterzeichnet

4 Copy of the declaration of consent to the liquidation settlement (handwritten note "signed on March 19"), Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin



5 Letter from Alfred Emil Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 28, 1934, Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, Berlin

creditors who need the money much more than you do. If you consider this fact and then still stick to your—from a purely commercial point of view—incomprehensible line of action, then I may once again raise the question of what is morally right.”⁴⁹

Only a few days later, Schulte was forced to apologize for his words and reiterated that he had in no way wanted to coerce or pressure Kolbe:

“I also realize, dear Professor, that the agreement of the other artists, like yours, which I still hope for, means a great concession, for which I have to thank each and every one in the name of Mr. Flechtheim. Thus, if—I repeat—I have used a tone here and there that is out of place toward an artist, I hope you will excuse it.”⁵⁰

To legally secure the promised cession, Schulte enclosed a statement assuring that Galerie Alfred Flechtheim had waived its claims against Josef von Sternberg in favor of Kolbe.⁵¹ Only now did Kolbe give his consent to the liquidation settlement, and Schulte was able to announce on March 28, 1934 that the approval of all creditors had made it possible to withdraw the opening of judicial settlement proceedings in time, and that the out-of-court settlement had been successful (figs. 4 and 5).⁵² Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH was thus free of debt and could continue to exist for the time being.

The Aftermath of the Sternberg Case

Although Georg Kolbe had been able to note the receipt of the quota of twenty percent in the amount of 363 RM in the “Flechtheim settlement case,”⁵³ he continued to wait in vain for the claim against Josef von Sternberg that had been transferred to him. The Hollywood director’s debt to Galerie Alfred Flechtheim was based on the transfer of the bronze *Ruf der Erde* (Call of the Earth) by Curt Valentin in March 1933, payment for which had been made only in part. Even before the auditor appeared officially on the scene, Valentin had asked Sternberg to transfer the outstanding 1,340.10 RM directly to Kolbe.⁵⁴ The “Invoice Statement per September 30, 1933”⁵⁵ accordingly already reduced Kolbe’s credit balance by the expected transfer from Sternberg.⁵⁶ Since Kolbe did not want to give his consent to the settlement procedure until the payment had actually been received, the urgency to persuade Sternberg to act was extremely high. Accordingly, requests for assistance from Valentin and Hulisch were regularly addressed to him;⁵⁷ Schulte even seemed to threaten legal action.⁵⁸ After Kolbe had finally agreed to the settlement procedure despite the outstanding receipt of payment and this had come to a successful conclusion, Valentin had to revise his assessment of Sternberg as an “absolutely secure customer”⁵⁹ and admit that the latter was not even thinking of paying Kolbe what he still owed Flechtheim.⁶⁰ Instead, Sternberg took the view that he owed Kolbe nothing, “but rather to the Flechtheim company, which, as far as I know, no longer exists.”⁶¹ Moreover, he even had no recollection of the sum in question.⁶² Valentin, who had closed the deal in March 1933, found himself in an awkward situation: “[...] I am liable—along with Galerie Flechtheim, which, as the present representative, Miss Hulisch, will inform you in parallel, does indeed still exist—for the receipt of the justly existing claim.”⁶³

Valentin’s request to Kolbe to once again contact “Galerie Flechtheim, Attn: R. Hulisch” regarding the assigned claim⁶⁴ was commented on by the latter with an exasperated “Damnation!”⁶⁵ He was outraged by the whole affair and subsequently saw his doubts about the debt forfeiture confirmed. Disappointed, he informed Valentin:

“I cultivated our business relationship because I was in need of protection against the business practices of the art trade—your cluelessness, for I cannot assume otherwise, is, however, frightening to me. [...] Please consider what the obligations of a producer, a buyer, and his intermediary are. I have honored mine.”⁶⁶

Valentin, who had lost his employment with Flechtheim in the fall of 1933 and had since attempted to engage in art dealing on his own before finally joining Karl Buchholz in the fall of 1934,⁶⁷ was visibly anxious not to jeopardize the relationship, assuring the sculptor “that I always strive to and will represent your interests in connection with the art trade.”⁶⁸ Whether and how the tangled affair was finally resolved cannot be reconstructed. A payment deadline set by Hulisch for Sternberg of August 20, 1934 apparently passed, because as late as December 1934, the Düsseldorf branch of the Reichsbank

asked Kolbe about the current status.⁶⁹ Although Kolbe explained the hopelessness of the levy,⁷⁰ it can be assumed that, at least between Valentin and himself, an amicable solution could be found, because the connection between the two remained even after Valentin fled to New York at the end of 1936 due to NS persecution.⁷¹

The Liquidation of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH

The end of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim in Düsseldorf is commonly seen in the founding of Galerie Alex Vömel in late March 1933. However, this was not a takeover, but rather the creation of a separate company based in the former premises of Galerie Flechtheim.⁷² From April 1933 onward, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Düsseldorf, and Galerie Alex Vömel, Düsseldorf, officially shared the same business address, and Hans Maassen, who had been an employee of Galerie Flechtheim in Düsseldorf since November 1922, was still verifiably working there in his capacity until October 1933, for it was he who underwrote the invoice statements to Georg Kolbe and dated them “Düsseldorf, April 25, 1933” and “Düsseldorf, October 9, 1933,” respectively.⁷³ It was not until October 21, 1933 that the Düsseldorf business was deregistered with the commercial tax office;⁷⁴ a week later, the auditor Alfred E. Schulte introduced himself to Georg Kolbe as the general representative of “Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Düsseldorf/Berlin” and expressly noted “that the liquidation of the company has already progressed to such an extent that, as of November 1 of this year, no costs whatsoever will be incurred except for those for one employee.”⁷⁵ The “one employee” mentioned must have been Rosi Hulisch, who assisted Schulte and under whose private residential address the company’s office was temporarily registered after the abandonment of the Berlin gallery space.⁷⁶

The fact that Schulte succeeded in averting the dissolution of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH was already evident from the commercial register,⁷⁷ but the newly discovered partial estate of Georg Kolbe can further substantiate the events. The documents testify to close cooperation between Schulte, Hulisch, and Valentin, with the goal of reaching an out-of-court settlement, which was actually concluded by the end of March 1934 at the latest, because all creditors had agreed to waive their claims.⁷⁸ Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH could therefore continue to exist. Since July 1934, its address had been the new home address of Alfred Flechtheim and his wife Bertha, known as Betti, at Düsseldorfer Strasse 44/45, Berlin.⁷⁹

“The company Galerie Flechtheim GmbH continues to exist after the settlement proceedings have been concluded. However, no more exhibitions etc. will be organized. Mr. Flechtheim as managing director works closely together with art dealers in Paris and London.”⁸⁰

The decision to dissolve the company was finally made by Alfred Flechtheim on January 18, 1936.⁸¹ Rosi Hulisch was appointed as liquidator; on February 20, 1937, she notified



6 Betti Flechtheim and Rosi Hulisch, photographed by Thea Sternheim in the summer of 1931, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar, Heinrich Enrique Beck Foundation, Basel, historical photograph

the district court that the liquidation had been completed. Four days later, the company was deleted from the commercial register.⁸² Shortly thereafter, Alfred Flechtheim died as a result of severe blood poisoning in his right leg, which he had contracted in the winter of 1936.⁸³ The international obituaries testify to the esteem in which his work was held, while in Germany he was attacked as a “grain Jew from Odessa” and held jointly responsible for “degenerate” art.⁸⁴ In contrast, his former business partner Alex Vömel managed to continue his business in Düsseldorf and—after initial disagreements—established a business relationship with Georg Kolbe.⁸⁵ As a result, works by Kolbe were regularly on display at Galerie Vömel until the 1940s and enjoyed high demand: “There are visitors in my showrooms from morning to night, and hardly a day goes by without people asking for works by you.”⁸⁶

Rosi Hulisch, who had remained in Berlin, received her deportation order on November 4, 1942, and took her own life together with her mother Klara.⁸⁷ Betti Flechtheim had suffered the same harrowing fate a year earlier (fig. 6).⁸⁸

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, two aspects remain to be noted for research. First, it is once again evident that the history of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim is much more complex and multifaceted than commonly described and, as a consequence, that it had a financial impact on other players in the art market, especially the company's creditors. Second, Rosi Hülisch's activities on behalf of Alfred Flechtheim should receive more attention in the future. In particular, the period after the successful settlement proceedings beginning in April 1934 and the application for liquidation in January 1936 has so far gone largely unnoticed, although isolated activities testify to the fact that operations in Berlin did not cease completely.⁸⁹

Notes

- 1 See: Jan Giebel, “‘Und jetzt hat ihn Flechtheim.’ Georg Kolbe in der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim,” in: Ottfried Dascher (ed.): *Sprung in den Raum. Skulpturen bei Alfred Flechtheim* [Quellenstudien zur Kunst, vol. 11] (Wädenswil 2017), pp. 389–410, here pp. 394 and 396.
- 2 See: *ibid.*, pp. 389 and 393.
- 3 Paul Cassirer died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound on January 7, 1926. The fact that Georg Kolbe both took Cassirer’s death mask and designed his grave is a direct expression of the close connection between the two. Alfred Flechtheim had also received substantial support from his dealer colleague and paid posthumous homage to him by donating Kolbe’s portrait head *Paul Cassirer*, created in 1925, to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin on the occasion of the fiftieth birthday of its director Ludwig Justi in March 1926. See: *ibid.*, pp. 393 and 394; <https://id.smb.museum/object/965130/portr%C3%A4t-paul-cassirer> [last accessed March 17, 2023].
- 4 This partial estate comes from the estate of Maria von Tiesenhausen, née Maria von Keudell, Georg Kolbe’s granddaughter, who directed the Georg Kolbe Museum from 1969 to 1977 and published an edition of his letters in 1987. After her death, the estate came to the Georg Kolbe Museum and with it many previously unknown documents, especially letters, which have since been reviewed, catalogued, and researched.
- 5 Alfred Flechtheim, “In Memoriam Paul Cassirer,” in: *Der Querschnitt*, vol. 6, no. 2, February 1926, pp. 94f., here p. 94 [translated].
- 6 Alfred Flechtheim, “Zehn Jahre Kunsthändler,” in: *Der Querschnitt*, vol. 3, nos. 3/4, Fall 1923, pp. 151–156, here p. 151 [translated].
- 7 See: Christian Zervos, “Gespräch mit Alfred Flechtheim” [1927], quoted in: Rudolf Schmitt-Föllner (ed.), *Alfred Flechtheim. “Nun mal Schluß mit den blauen Picassos!”*, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Bonn 2010), p. 57; Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer and Hugo Helbing (eds.), *Galerie Flechtheim. Moderne Gemälde* [auction catalog], Berlin, June 5, 1917.
- 8 See: Monika Flacke-Knoch and Stephan von Wiese, “Der Lebensfilm von Alfred Flechtheim,” in: Hans Albert Peters, Stephan von Wiese, Monika Flacke-Knoch, and Gerhard Leistner (eds.), *Alfred Flechtheim. Sammler. Kunsthändler. Verleger*, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf and Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster (Düsseldorf 1987), pp. 153–213, here p. 163.
- 9 In order for Alfred Flechtheim to find a suitable space in Berlin without having to interrupt his business activities, Paul Cassirer temporarily made two rooms in his Kunstsalon available to him. See: Stephan von Wiese, “Der Kunsthändler als Überzeugungstäter. Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler und Alfred Flechtheim,” in: exh. cat. Düsseldorf/Münster 1987 (see note 8), pp. 45–57, here p. 51; Flacke-Knoch/von Wiese 1987 (see note 8), p. 167.
- 10 Flechtheim’s wife Bertha, known as Betti, left the company as a partner and sold half of her shares to Gustav Kahnweiler and half to Max Lefson. At the same time, the share capital was increased from 20,000 M (*Papiermark*) to 30,000 M, which was divided equally among the three partners at 10,000 M each. Gustav Kahnweiler and Alfred Flechtheim were registered as managing directors of the GmbH (limited liability company). See the notarized minutes of the shareholders’ meeting on April 16, 1921 in the Berlin State Archives, Charlottenburg District Court – Commercial Register, commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin, A Rep. 342-02, no. 66607.
- 11 For more on Max Lefson, see: Fritz Homeyer, *Deutsche Juden als Bibliophilen und Antiquare* (Tübingen 1963), p. 122; <https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/de/biografie/9595> [last accessed March 17, 2023].
- 12 For more on Gustav Kahnweiler, see: Gerhard Leistner, “Interview mit Gustav Kahnweiler (London, November 1986),” in: exh. cat. Düsseldorf/Münster 1987 (see note 8), pp. 23–24.
- 13 On April 16, 1921, the two additional galleries were established by the three partners Alfred Flechtheim, Gustav Kahnweiler, and Max Lefson in a shareholders’ agreement. See the notarized minutes of the shareholders’ meeting on April 16, 1921 (see note 10). The Frankfurt gallery was entered in the commercial register on August 9, 1921, followed by the Berlin gallery on August 16, 1921; see: *ibid.* For more on the openings, see: Rudolf Schmitt-Föllner, “Veröffentlichungen der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim,” in: Ottfried Dascher, “*Es ist was Wahnsinniges mit der Kunst.*” *Alfred Flechtheim. Sammler, Kunsthändler, Verleger* [Quellenstudien zur Kunst, vol. 6] (Wädenswil 2011), pp. 461–477, here p. 464.
- 14 See the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10). Max Lefson had already left the company in April 1923. In September 1924, a Cologne branch was set up for a short time, but was deleted from the commercial register in September 1925; see: *ibid.*

- 15 As a result of the currency reform, on January 22, 1925, the share capital of 30,000 M was converted to 500 RM (*Reichsmark*), so that Alfred Flechtheim paid 250 RM to Gustav Kahnweiler. See the shareholders' resolution of January 22, 1925 and register entry dated February 5, 1925 in the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 16 See the advertisement of the Flechtheim galleries in: *Der Querschnitt*, vol. 6, no 1, January 1926.
- 17 See the various advertisements of the Flechtheim galleries, in: *Der Querschnitt*, vols. 5–8, 1925–1928.
- 18 Letter from Alex Vömel, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, January 11, 1927, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. For more on the exhibition, see: *Georg Kolbe: Bronzen. Frans Masereel: Aquarelle. Erna Pinner: Tiergraphik*, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Düsseldorf, January 1927; Giebel 2017 (see note 1), p. 394.
- 19 See the shareholders' resolution of February 18, 1927 and the register entry dated March 21, 1927 in the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 20 See: Flacke-Knoch/von Wiese 1987 (see note 8), p. 163.
- 21 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Curt Valentin, June 27, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 22 See: *Georg Kolbe*, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, March 1930; *Georg Kolbe*, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, November 15–December 10, 1931.
- 23 See: Jan-Otmar Hesse, Roman Köster, and Werner Plumpe, *Die Große Depression. Die Weltwirtschaftskrise 1929–1939* (Frankfurt am Main 2014), pp. 54–55 and 77.
- 24 See: Dascher 2011 (see note 13), pp. 274–290.
- 25 See: “Die Rassenfrage ist der Schlüssel zur Weltgeschichte,” in: *Illustrierter Beobachter*, vol. 7, no. 12, December 10, 1932, front cover; “So? oder so? Das neue Jahr – Wegscheide der Zukunft!” in: *Illustrierter Beobachter*, vol. 8, no. 1, January 7, 1933.
- 26 See: *Lebendige Deutsche Kunst, Ausstellungsfolge in drei Abteilungen*, Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer, Berlin, and Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, December 10, 1932–mid-January 1933 (part 1), January 14–mid-February 1933 (part 2), February 25–late March 1933 (part 3). Works by Kolbe were shown in part two of the exhibition series.
- 27 See: *Theo Champion, Werner Gilles, E. W. Nay und Lilly Steiner*, exh. cat. Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin, March 15–early April 1933.
- 28 See: commercial register of Galerie Alex Vömel, Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf District Court, HRA 955; announcement of Galerie Alex Vömel, Düsseldorf, March 30, 1933, University and State Library Düsseldorf, KW 1527: “I have the honor to inform you that I have established an art gallery under the name Galerie Alex Vömel in the former premises of Galerie Flechtheim in Düsseldorf.” [translated] At the beginning of May 1933, Alex Vömel also resigned as managing director of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH. See the register entry dated May 4, 1933 in the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 29 Hendrik [Theodor Reismann-Grone], “Abgetakeltes Mäzenatentum. Wie Flechtheim und Kaesbach deutsche Kunst machten,” in: *Die Volksparole*, April 1, 1933, illustrated in: exh. cat. Düsseldorf/Münster 1987 (see note 8), p. 196 [translated].
- 30 In addition, Flechtheim's father, Emil Flechtheim, had died in May 1933, leaving no assets but rather debts, so that bankruptcy proceedings had to be opened against his father's company. See: Dascher 2011 (see note 13), p. 302.
- 31 See: Thea Sternheim, diary entry of September 8, 1933, quoted in: Thomas Ehrsam and Regula Wyss (eds.), *Thea Sternheim. Tagebücher 1903–1971* (Göttingen 2002). She then notes several lunches with Schulte at Flechtheim's home, suggesting a consensual discussion about how to proceed. Schulte even visited Flechtheim in Paris in mid-December. See: Thea Sternheim, diary entries of September 14, 16 and 19 and December 15, 1933, quoted in: *ibid.*
- 32 See: letter from Curt Valentin, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, October 19, 1933 (handwritten note “21.X.33”), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. The works on consignment in Düsseldorf remained there for the time being but were viewed by Curt Valentin in December 1933 and documented in handwriting in a letter from Alex Vömel to Georg Kolbe. See: letter from Alex Vömel, Galerie Alex Vömel, to Georg Kolbe, December 7, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 33 See: Thea Sternheim, diary entry of September 29, 1933, quoted in Ehrsam/Wyss 2002 (see note 31); Flacke-Knoch/von Wiese 1987 (see note 8), p. 197.
- 34 See: Giebel 2017 (see note 1), p. 407.
- 35 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, October 28, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 36 See: *ibid.*
- 37 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, October 28, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. The fact that Schulte was desperately trying to avert bankruptcy is clear from the repetition of the request: “In consideration of Mr. Alfred

- Flechtheim, who has got into this situation through no personal fault of his own, and for whom you would only cause personal inconvenience through bankruptcy, while you would have no advantages whatsoever, may I ask you to comply with my request"; *ibid.* [translated].
- 38 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, November 18, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 39 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to the creditors of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH and Mr. Alfred Flechtheim, February 1, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 40 *Ibid.*
 - 41 *Ibid.* [translated].
 - 42 *Ibid.* [translated].
 - 43 See: "Rechnungs-Auszug pr 30. September 1933," letter from Galerie Alfred Flechtheim to Georg Kolbe, October 9, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. As of April 1, 1933, Georg Kolbe's credit balance still amounted to 3,786.85 RM, so that the gallery's debts could be reduced by October 1933. See: "Rechnungs-Auszug pr 31 March 1933," letter from Galerie Alfred Flechtheim to Georg Kolbe, April 25, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 44 See: letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 12, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 45 See: letters from Curt Valentin, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, September 16, 1933 and October 10, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 46 See: letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, February 3, 1934; letter from Rosi Hulisch, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, March 2, 1934 (incl. a copy of the letter from Rosi Hulisch to Josef von Sternberg, March 1, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 47 See: letter from Rosi Hulisch, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, March 2, 1934 (including a copy of the letter from Rosi Hulisch to Josef von Sternberg, March 1, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 48 See: letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 12, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 49 *Ibid.* [translated].
 - 50 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 17, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 51 See: declaration of assignment, letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 17, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 52 See: letter from Rosi Hulisch to Georg Kolbe, March 19, 1934, copy of the declaration of consent to the liquidation settlement (handwritten note "am 19.III unterzeichnet"); letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 28, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 53 See the handwritten note: "Betrag ist eingegangen," letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 28, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 54 See: letters from Curt Valentin, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, September 16, 1933 and October 10, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 55 See: letter from Curt Valentin, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Georg Kolbe, March 10, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 56 See the handwritten notes: "Saldo 1828,35 – Sternberg 1340,10 / Ø 488,25," and "Rechnungs-Auszug pr 30 September 1933," letter from Galerie Alfred Flechtheim to Georg Kolbe, October 9, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 57 See: letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, February 3, 1934; letter from Rosi Hulisch to Josef von Sternberg, March 1, 1934 (copy as enclosure to the letter from Rosi Hulisch to Georg Kolbe, March 2, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 58 See: letter from Josef von Sternberg to Curt Valentin, June 11, 1934 (copy as enclosure to the letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 25, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 59 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 12, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 60 See: letter from Josef von Sternberg to Curt Valentin, June 11, 1934 (copy as enclosure to the letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 25, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 61 *Ibid.* [translated].
 - 62 See: *ibid.*
 - 63 Letter from Curt Valentin to Josef von Sternberg, June 13, 1934 (copy as enclosure to the letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 25, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 64 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 25, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 65 "Pfui Teufel!," letter from Georg Kolbe to Curt Valentin, June 27, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 66 *Ibid.* [translated].
 - 67 See: Anja Tiedemann, *Die "entartete" Moderne und ihr amerikanischer Markt. Karl Buchholz und Curt Valentin als Händler verfemter Kunst* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 8] (Berlin 2013), pp. 41 and 189.

- 68 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 28, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 69 See: letter from the Düsseldorf branch of the Reichsbank to Georg Kolbe, December 18, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 70 See: letter from Georg Kolbe to the Düsseldorf branch of the Reichsbank, January 2, 1936 (perhaps actually 1935, since it refers to the letter from December 18, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 71 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 67), pp. 41 and 190–194.
- 72 See: Axel Drecol and Anja Deutsch, “Fragen, Probleme, Perspektiven – zur ‘Arisierung’ der Kunsthandlung Alfred Flechtheim,” in: Andrea Bambi and Axel Drecol (eds.), *Alfred Flechtheim. Raubkunst und Restitution [Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, vol. 110]* (Berlin and Boston 2015), pp. 83–100. In a 2010 expert appraisal on the takeover of Galerie Flechtheim Düsseldorf by Alex Vömel, Axel Drecol comes to the conclusion “that the transition of the gallery from Flechtheim to Vömel cannot be described as ‘Aryanization,’ and that Vömel cannot be described in a historical sense as the ‘Aryanizer’ of the gallery’s entire stock of pictures” [translated]. See: Project ID KU04-2010 – “Untersuchung und Bewertung der Übernahme der Galerie Flechtheim, Düsseldorf, durch Alexander Vömel im März 1933,” <https://www.proveana.de/de/link/pro10000064> [last accessed March 20, 2023].
- 73 See: “Rechnungs-Auszug pr 31 March 1933,” letter from Galerie Alfred Flechtheim to Georg Kolbe, April 25, 1933; “Rechnungs-Auszug pr 30 September 1933,” letter from Galerie Alfred Flechtheim to Georg Kolbe, October 9, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 74 Since the Düsseldorf gallery had been deregistered with the commercial tax office on October 21, 1933, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce issued a reminder in January 1935 to move the company’s headquarters to Berlin. By resolution of July 9, 1935, the head office of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH was therefore moved to the private residence of Alfred and Betti Flechtheim in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Düsseldorf Str. 44/45, on July 12, 1935, and it was decided to dissolve the Düsseldorf branch. See the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 75 Letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, October 28, 1933, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 76 After the gallery’s Berlin premises were abandoned, the gallery’s office was temporarily located at Rosi Hülisch’s private address at Eisenbahnstrasse 66 in Berlin-Halensee. See the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10). For more on the role of Hülisch, see: letter from Rosi Hülisch, Berlin, to Josef von Sternberg, Hollywood, March 1, 1934 (copy as enclosure to the letter from Rosi Hülisch to Georg Kolbe, March 2, 1934), MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 77 The fact that Schulte was able to meet the deadline and conclude the proceedings by April 1, 1934, at the latest, can be seen in the minutes of the shareholders’ meeting of April 25, 1935, which reads as follows: “The out-of-court settlement was carried out last year by the auditor, Mr. Alfred E. Schulte.” Minutes of the shareholders’ meeting of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, April 25, 1935 in the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10) [translated]. Nevertheless, there has been erroneous talk of dissolution or liquidation in this context to date. See: Project ID KU04-2010 (see note 72); Dascher 2011 (see note 13), p. 319.
- 78 See: letter from Alfred E. Schulte to Georg Kolbe, March 28, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 79 After the move with Betti in June 1934 from Bleibtreustrasse to Düsseldorfer Strasse 44/45 in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, this new address was registered as the company’s office address in December 1934, and the company’s headquarters were moved here in July 1935. See the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 80 Letter from Rosi Hülisch, Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, to Josef von Sternberg, July 10, 1934, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 81 See the registration of the liquidation of the company dated January 18, 1936 in the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 82 See the commercial register files of Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH, Berlin (see note 10).
- 83 See: Flacke-Knoch/von Wiese 1987 (see note 8), p. 163; Dascher 2011 (see note 13), pp. 380–389.
- 84 International obituaries were published in the *Times* on March 10 and 11, and Paul Westheim reported on Flechtheim’s death in the *Pariser Tageszeitung*, noting that he had returned to art life as a partner in a London gallery. *Die neue Weltbühne* in Prague also published a three-page article about Flechtheim. See: Alex Vömel, “Alfred Flechtheim, Kunsthändler und Verleger,” in: *Imprimatur. Ein Jahrbuch für Bücherfreunde*, vol. V (Frankfurt am Main 1967), pp. 90–109, here p. 107; Paul Westheim, “Alfred Flechtheim gestorben,” in: *Pariser*

- Tageszeitung*, November 3, 1937; Dascher 2011 (see note 13), p. 289. For more on Alfred Flechtheim's defamation in Germany, see: Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen, "Verfolgte und Verführte. Die Aktion 'Entartete Kunst' als propagandistisches Kapital," in: Nikola Doll, Uwe Fleckner, and Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen (eds.), *Kunst, Konflikt Kollaboration. Hildebrand Gurlitt und die Moderne* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 14] (Berlin 2023), pp. 95–122, here pp. 109–114.
- 85** See: MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. From 2013 to 2016, a research project on the activities of Galerie Alex Vömel, Düsseldorf, was also conducted in the Art History Department of the University of Hamburg. See: Project ID LA07-II2012: "Die Liquidation der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim GmbH und ihre Folgen. Grundlagenforschung zum Handel mit NS-verfolgungsbedingt entzogener Kunst durch die Galerie Alex Vömel, Düsseldorf, und die Galerie Buchholz, Berlin," <https://www.proveana.de/de/link/pro10000179> [last accessed March 20, 2023]. A publication on Galerie Alex Vömel under National Socialism is in preparation by the author of this essay: Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen, *Auf schmalem Grat. Alex Vömel und der Kunsthandel im Nationalsozialismus* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst"] (Berlin, in preparation).
- 86** Letter from Alex Vömel, Galerie Alex Vömel, to Georg Kolbe, March 12, 1940, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 87** See: Dascher 2011 (see note 13), p. 411.
- 88** See: *ibid.*, p. 409.
- 89** See: "Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Restitutes Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Artillerymen to Heirs of Alfred Flechtheim," press release, October 4, 2018, <https://www.guggenheim.org/press-release/solomon-r-guggenheim-foundation-restitutes-ernst-ludwig-kirchners-artillerymen-to-heirs-of-alfred-flechtheim> [last accessed March 20, 2023].

Anja Tiedemann

**“... they exist; that’s
all I know.” The Works
of Georg Kolbe and Vesting
Order 3711**

When the United States entered the Second World War on December 18, 1941, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the so-called First Powers Act was passed at the same time. This gave the United States Alien Property Custodian the authority to confiscate the property of foreign nationals if the United States was at war with their home country and the person had property in the United States but did not live there.¹ This did not apply to the German emigre Curt Valentin when a large number of works of art were confiscated from his New York gallery in 1944.² Rather, it was his former employer and later business partner, the Berlin book and art dealer Karl Buchholz, who was affected.³ He had been in possession of numerous works on consignment to the gallery since its founding. They had remained his property when, due to the outbreak of war, he transferred his share in the gallery to Curt Valentin in September 1939.⁴ Among them were thirty-four works by Georg Kolbe.⁵ This study describes their history from the artist's studio to the auction in New York on December 8, 1944, with special reference to Vesting Order 3711 of the Alien Property Custodian in New York.

“One day, you will be more satisfied with me.” The Development of the American Art Market for Works by Georg Kolbe

Curt Valentin and Georg Kolbe knew each other from the Galerie Flechtheim in Berlin, where the aspiring art dealer had worked until his employer Alfred Flechtheim fled Germany in 1933 as a Jew facing persecution. The sculptor was a fatherly friend to the young man (fig. 1).⁶ In the fall of 1934, Valentin, who was already unemployed, was offered the opportunity to manage Karl Buchholz's new art gallery and he continued his earlier collaboration with Kolbe. There is evidence that Kolbe's works were exhibited and sold at the Buchholz Gallery in 1934 and 1935, and again from 1939 to 1941.⁷ It is very likely that his works were also traded in the intervening years.

At the beginning of the year 1937, Curt Valentin, who was classified as a “full Jew” under National Socialist racial laws, had to leave Germany. He planned to open a gallery in New York with Karl Buchholz as his business partner. Sculpture was to be an important focus, and Georg Kolbe was one of the desired artists.⁸ The sculptor was inclined toward this, for the opening up of the American market awakened in him, as in many of his fellow artists, the hope of acceptance and profitable sales. It was agreed that seven bronzes and thirty drawings by Kolbe would cross the Atlantic with the label “by my own hand.”⁹ However, one of the sculptures belonged privately to Valentin, who, as a Jew, was not allowed to own any works of art.¹⁰ It was simply included in the group of works destined for the United States. Buchholz had also purchased one sculpture at his own expense for sales purposes for the new gallery; the rest was the property of the sculptor and went to New York on consignment. There, Curt Valentin assigned each work an inventory number.¹¹ Apparently, however, he did not use the same information as in the commission agreements with Georg Kolbe but simplified the titles of the works.¹²



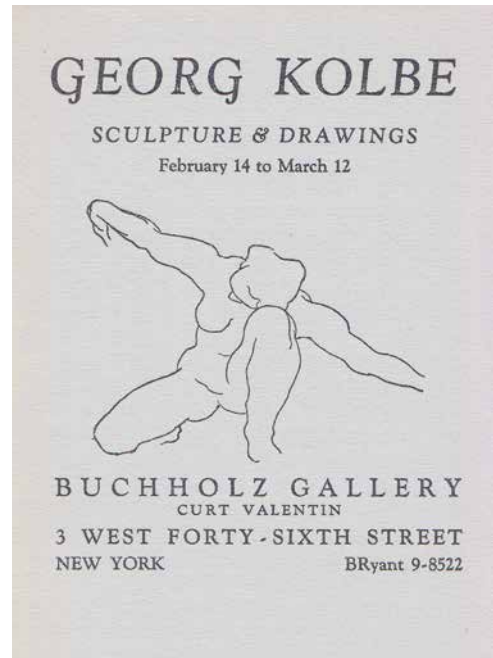
1 (left to right) Leonore von Keudell, Curt Valentin, Georg Kolbe, Maria von Keudell, undated, historical photograph

At this time, German modernist artists were virtually unknown in the United States.¹³ There was thus no promising market for works by Georg Kolbe. As a result, Curt Valentin struggled to sell the sculptor's work. In 1938, he even organized a solo exhibition, for which he received loans from a few American collectors in addition to the aforementioned consignment stock (fig. 2). The lack of success ultimately led Valentin to write to Georg Kolbe on June 15, 1938: "Please do not lose patience in this matter, although I must admit that you have reason enough to do so. One day, you will be more satisfied with me. Y o u may not need it, but I do."¹⁴ Despite all Valentin's efforts, a breakthrough in the American market continued to prove elusive. In 1939, he managed to sell three of Kolbe's drawings, but this was hardly enough to keep the artist afloat until the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939.¹⁵

"...so that, one day, my works will be in enemy territory." The Second World War and Its Impact on the American Art Market

When hostilities began, the New York business partners Karl Buchholz (fig. 3) and Curt Valentin parted ways. Henceforth, the Buchholz Gallery belonged to Valentin alone. Karl Buchholz's property there remained in the gallery as consignment stock. At the same time, the naval war in the Atlantic began, which was to have a considerable influence on the development of the art trade between Germany and the United States. From October 1939 onward, it became increasingly difficult for German ships to pass through enemy waters. The conquest of Dutch, Belgian, and French ports by German troops provided temporary opportunities to move cargo through Antwerp, for example. However, transporting and insuring works of art became increasingly risky and expensive. By June 1940, the naval war had escalated to the point where shipping was almost unthinkable. From time to time,

2 Exhibition catalog *Georg Kolbe*.
Sculpture & Drawings, Buchholz Gallery,
 New York, February 14–March 12, 1938



there were opportunities to send individual consignments by private courier. However, such opportunities were mostly serendipitous and required spontaneous action.¹⁶

While it had become almost impossible to ship works of art across the Atlantic to the United States, conversely there was no realistic possibility of sending works back to Germany. Of Kolbe's property, five bronzes and twenty-eight drawings were still on commission in New York, so that, in January 1941, the sculptor pondered the situation:

"I would like to draw your attention to a matter that often troubles me: the fate of my bronzes and drawings in your Newjorker [sic] branch. The war is still going on and is apparently going to spread over a wide area—so that, one day, my works will be in enemy territory. At the time, I gave them at the request of the good man Valentin—he could not sell them and never will. It is useless to hope for the distant future, and so I ask you to consider very carefully how these things can return home by any means. Unfortunately, in the meantime, all the routes have been blocked to such an extent that only a journey via Japan remains? You understand that I can no longer be pacified by 'probabilities,' etc."¹⁷

Georg Kolbe's thoughts revolved around rumors that the United States might enter the Second World War. His idea of bringing the works still in New York home via Japan was not far-fetched. For lack of better routes, Karl Buchholz had at least once managed to find a way through Russia and Japan and successfully transported works from the "Entartete Kunst" confiscation campaign to the United States via this route.¹⁸ This must have come to the attention of the sculptor, who received a response to his thoughts only



3 The book and art dealer Karl Buchholz, ca. 1938, historical photograph

two days later. The Buchholz Gallery was run by Georg von Hülßen,¹⁹ who wrote on behalf of Karl Buchholz, who was traveling at the time:

“Unfortunately, for the time being, there is no way to send larger art objects even via Siberia and Japan. One could perhaps try to send the drawings over as printed matter, as I sent several prints to New York a few months ago. It is a great risk, of course, and I believe that Valentin would find it particularly painful—especially now that he has to work like this without any support from Europe—should you prefer the uncertainty involved in sending them back to leaving them there.”²⁰

But Kolbe was not easily mollified:

“You must have misunderstood my letter about the New York bronzes and drawings. It was addressed to your boss. He should think about the matter. I really would like to have my works returned—or see them sold. After all, these are not a lot of socks to be kept in storage for the sake of the war. Here, in any case, there have been several requests for my works that are still there. Sending them back as printed matter is, of course, nonsense. Please present my letter to Mr. B u c h h o l z for his comments on his return.”²¹

Karl Buchholz had branches in Lisbon and Bucharest, which he visited frequently despite the war. And so it happened that he did not reply until five weeks later:

“I do not believe that the property there is in direct danger, since the company is an American one and therefore, even in the case of absolute war involvement, will in all probability not be harassed. Of course, I would ask Valentin to send the drawings back, but it is indeed better that they are there and continue to have an effect through their existence. I would rather pay for them, i.e., take them over permanently. Especially now, I think it is very important to have your works available in America on a case-by-case basis. Do not worry!”²²

Just a few weeks later, on June 22, 1941, Germany declared war on the Soviet Union, which would have made it impossible to transport art through Siberia and Japan anyway. In December 1941, the Americans also entered the Second World War. At this point at

the latest, the contact between Curt Valentin and Karl Buchholz broke off. Kolbe's premonitions had already been partially fulfilled.

With the entry of the United States into the war, Karl Buchholz as well as German artists and collectors living in Germany became enemies of the United States. Their property in America was in great danger, contrary to Karl Buchholz's assessment, but he could not know this in the spring of 1941. Instead, he proposed a meeting with the sculptor, the results of which he wrote down on April 21, 1941:

"I therefore hereby accept the five bronzes you kindly gave me on commission for New York, as well as the [...] drawings, and promise to pay you by the end of the year."²³ (See Appendix)

Kolbe responded in agreement, emphasizing once again his previously expressed disappointment with Curt Valentin:

"You know that I am not interested in money [...]. The letter you will send to Valentin is indeed very important, and I would be grateful if you would keep me informed.—The will is always greater than the deed—but it must not fall by the wayside as easily as with Curt Valentin."²⁴

The emigrated gallerist had fallen out of Kolbe's favor, if his letters to Karl Buchholz are to be believed. They document the sculptor's criticism that Valentin was not doing enough for him, that he had lost his way, that he was not concentrating on the essentials, and that he was, in general, exhibiting the wrong artists.²⁵ Admittedly, his comments to Karl Buchholz reflected his own expectations and desires. What it might have meant for a German art dealer to try to sell avant-garde German art in the face of anti-German sentiment in the United States remained unconsidered. The Americans' rejection of German art found growing expression in both museum activities and press announcements. Gallerists and art dealers encountered almost insurmountable obstacles when trying to sell works of German modernism. Established values, such as works by the French Impressionists, were far more popular than innovation, especially when it came to works by artists who were still virtually unknown in the United States. Curt Valentin and his colleagues were forced to adapt their exhibition program to the circumstances. The turn of the year 1940/41 marked an important turning point: from then on, German art was rarely exhibited. When works by German artists were sold, they were by Germans in exile, by artists who had already died, or by clear opponents of the NS regime.²⁶ The exhibition schedule of the Buchholz Gallery clearly shows that no exhibitions with German participation were possible after the spring of 1941.²⁷ Occasional exceptions included works of "degenerate art," which was considered "art of democracy," or works by artists who had left Germany, such as Max Beckmann and Paul Klee. After the United States entered the war, the situation worsened once again. Museums exhibited only American artists until the end of the war and beyond.²⁸

It seems that Georg Kolbe, contrary to what he told Karl Buchholz, was sympathetic to Curt Valentin's situation. In any case, no correspondence has survived in which he directly confronted the New York art dealer with his dissatisfaction. There is only one letter from the war years, written ten weeks after the events just described, which was a response to birthday wishes and does not document any resentment. Had Kolbe simply wanted to corner the Berlin art dealer and get payment for his work? Buchholz, for his part, was very interested in Kolbe's works during the war for his galleries in Berlin, Bucharest, and Lisbon. It is therefore possible that he did not want to upset the master and simply paid him. Financially, this transaction should not have been a problem. The demand for art was immense, and the necessary earning potential was certainly there.

“... they exist; that's all I know.” Vesting Order 3711 and the Consequences

It was not until July 1947 that contact between Kolbe and Valentin was verifiably reestablished. Kolbe thanked him for a most welcome package that Valentin had sent from New York.²⁹ Some letters seem to have been lost in the meantime. Contact between Kolbe and Buchholz, who had left for Madrid in early 1945 and never returned, is not documented. Whether the two ever had contact with each other again is questionable. The last letter from New York, dated September 15, 1947, reached the artist only two months before his death and reported on the progress of Vesting Order 3711:

“Unfortunately, all your sculptures and drawings were confiscated as enemy property during the war (they belonged to Buchholz). And I have only a vague idea where they went. They were all auctioned, somewhat obscurely; they exist, that's all I know. [...] I was not allowed to attend the auction myself, as I was a German citizen at the time.”³⁰

In fact, on May 29, 1944, 387 works of art were confiscated by order of the Alien Property Custodian under Vesting Order 3711 as the property of Karl Buchholz.³¹ Of these, 319 went to auction, which took place that same year on December 8.³² The difference of sixty-eight works was probably due to a license Valentin had received in advance. He was able to sell in the art market on behalf of the United States of America but found few buyers.³³ Advertisements for the auction were always of the same design and appeared in mid-November, for example, in *The New York Times*, *The Art Digest*, and *ART News*.³⁴

Seven bronzes and twenty-eight drawings by Georg Kolbe were included in this auction (figs. 4a–g). The sculptures were given individual lot numbers, while the works on paper were combined into two groups of thirteen and fifteen sheets, respectively.³⁵ In addition to his works, the auction also included works by other important artists, including Ernst Barlach, Max Beckmann, Edgar Degas, Otto Dix, Carl Hofer, Alexej Jawlensky,

Oskar Kokoschka, Käthe Kollwitz, Alfred Kubin, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Franz Marc, Gerhard Marcks, Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Renée Sintenis (fig. 5).

The horse breeder Theodora H. Pleadwell of the Muffet Farm in Poughquag, New York, purchased lot 31, Georg Kolbe's draft design for *Ruhender Athlet* (Resting Athlete), for \$200.³⁶ Ella Lewenz of Kew Gardens, New York State, purchased lots 33, 34, 35, and 37 for a total of \$1,233: Georg Kolbe's *Stehende* (Standing Woman, 1935; \$320), *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman, 1930; \$333), *Verkündigung* (Proclamation, 1934; \$222), and a group of thirteen drawings (\$358).³⁷ Originally from Dresden, Lewenz was a talented cinematographer who captured the life of her Jewish family on film after 1933. She emigrated to the United States, where the films were discovered after her death by her granddaughter Lisa Lewenz and edited into the documentary *A Letter Without Words*, which won the RIAS Berlin Radio, TV, and New Media Award in 2000.³⁸ Samuel C. Dretzin of New York City paid \$825 for lots 32, 36, and 38: Georg Kolbe's *Stehende* (Standing Woman, 1935; \$250), the draft design for *Ruf der Erde* (Call of the Earth, 1932; \$250), and fifteen drawings (\$325). He was a very active and eclectic collector who can be linked to numerous art auctions and often appears in the respective provenances.³⁹

All of the artworks seized by Vesting Order 3711 were identified as having once belonged to Karl Buchholz. After the war, however, it turned out that many of the works had not belonged to him at all but were merely confiscated under his name. There is evidence that this included works by Gerhard Marcks, Renée Sintenis, and Käthe Kollwitz, which the artists had sent to New York on commission.⁴⁰ In addition, some collectors placed selected works in the custody of Curt Valentin, probably out of fear that the National Socialists might also intervene in private collections of modern art.⁴¹

Georg Kolbe had cleverly put Karl Buchholz on the spot and was able to get his works sold just in time. Buchholz, on the other hand, lost a lot of money and was unable to come to terms with this for the rest of his life. In the 1960s, it is documented that he insisted on compensation from the Berlin Compensation Office and received an unknown but probably not very high sum, which Buchholz considered an "insult" to a holder of the Federal Cross of Merit.⁴² As late as the 1980s, he was still arguing with the Compensation Office, now claiming that the auction had yielded \$900,000.⁴³ This sum could only have originated in his imagination, however, especially since the total value of the 387 works of art had been estimated by the Alien Property Custodian at \$28,000. In the end, the Compensation Office referred to the correctly researched auction result of \$6,473.15, but in May 1984 awarded him a new compensation of DM 370 plus interest, for a total of DM 1,161.⁴⁴ Buchholz's reaction to this payment is not known.



4 a Georg Kolbe, *Stehendes Mädchen* (Standing Girl), 1935, bronze, h. 120 cm, historical photograph



4 b Georg Kolbe, *Sitzende* (Seated Woman), 1926, bronze, h. 28.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



4 c Georg Kolbe, *Verkündigung* (Proclamation), 1934/35, bronze, h. 65 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



4 d Georg Kolbe, *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman), 1930, bronze, h. 50 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



4 e Georg Kolbe, *Ruhender Athlet* (Entwurf) (Resting Athlete [Model]), 1935, bronze, 27 × 49.5 × 23 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



4 f Georg Kolbe, *Bewegungsskizze II* (Motion Sketch II), 1925, bronze, h. 24 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin



4 g Georg Kolbe, *Kleine Stehende* (Small Standing Woman), 1935, bronze, h. 77.5 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

Art property formerly owned by
Karl Buchholz

<u>LOT NO.</u>	<u>INVENTORY NUMBER</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
<u>28 Cont'd.</u>			
	1360	1	Etching entitled "Woman with Arrow" - 6"x4½"
	1362	1	" " "3 Women" - 9½"x7½"
	1363	1	" " "Head of a Girl" - 6"x4½"
	1361	1	Lithograph entitled "Seated Man" - 14½"x9"
<u>29</u> <u>2 Watercolors by Alex Jawlensky as follows:</u>			
	1229	1	Watercolor entitled "Study" - 10"x8"
	1230	1	" " " " - 10"x8"
<u>30</u> <u>2 Lithographs by Oskar Kokoschka as follows:</u>			
	1301	1	Lithograph entitled "Head of a Woman" - 30"x22½"
	1305	1	" " "Portrait of a Girl" - 23"x18"
<u>31</u>	144	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Reclining Athlete" - 11"x20"
<u>32</u>	145	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Standing Woman" - 32" high.
<u>33</u>	146	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Standing Woman" - 48" high.
<u>34</u>	147	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Crouching Girl" - 20"x14"x11"
<u>35</u>	148	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Listening" 10"x10"x7"
<u>36</u>	1966	1	Bronze sculpture by George Kolbe - entitled "Girl Looking Up" - 42" high.
<u>37</u>	<u>Drawings and Etching by George Kolbe as follows:</u>		
	151	1	Drawing entitled "Seated Nude" - 17½"x14½"
	153	1	" " "Nude" - 19"x15"
	155	1	" " "Nude" - 13½"x19"
	156	1	" " "Standing Girl" - 18½"x13"
	157	1	" " "Standing Woman" - 19"x13"
	158	1	" " "Kneeling Girl" - 19"x14"
	160	1	" " "Nude" - 16½"x13½"
	940	1	" " "Nude" - 16½"x14"
	941	1	" " "Nude" - 14"x12½"
	942	1	" " "Kneeling Girl" - 12"x14"
	943	1	" " "Kneeling Girl" - 18½"x12"
	944	1	" " "Seated Man" - 18½"x13"
	619	1	Etching entitled "Kneeling Girl" - 4 3/4"x7"

5 List of works confiscated and auctioned under Vesting Order 3711 (excerpt) including works by Georg Kolbe, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75.

Art property formerly owned by
Karl Buchholz

LOT NO.	INVENTORY NUMBER	QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION
38	19 Drawings by George Kolbe as follows:		
	945	1	Drawing entitled "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x13"
	946	1	" " " " "Nude" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	947	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18"x12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	948	1	" " " " "Kneeling Woman" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	949	1	" " " " "Standing Male Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	950	1	" " " " "Standing Girl" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	951	1	" " " " "Standing Nude" - 18"x11"
	952	1	" " " " "Standing Girl" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	953	1	" " " " "Standing Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	954	1	" " " " "Standing Man" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	955	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	956	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x12"
	957	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x12"
	958	1	" " " " "Nude" - 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	959	1	" " " " "Nude" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x14"
39	1056	1	Bronze sculpture by Kaethe Kollwitz - entitled "Waving Farewell" - 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"x6"
40	Lithographs, Drawings and Etching by Kaethe Kollwitz as follows:		
	831	1	Lithograph entitled "Versinkender" - 19"x15"
	834	1	" " " " "Death" - 17"x13"
	867	1	" " " " "Not (need)" - 7"x7"
	1884	1	" " " " "Beggar" - 17"x12"
	1895	1	" " " " "The Return" - 13"x14"
	987	1	Drawing entitled "Widow" - 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	806	1	" " " " "Death Leading Woman" - 23"x18"
	989	1	" " " " "In the Corner" - 17"x13"
	809	1	" " " " "Death and Girl" - 13"x18"
	1366	1	Etching entitled "Self-Portrait" - 8"x5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
41	Lithographs and Etchings by Alfred Kubin as follows:		
	1371	1	Lithograph entitled "Women of Weinsberg" - 11"x10"
	1373	1	" " " " "The Robber Knight" - 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1476	1	" " " " "Haunted House" - 12"x6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1477	1	" " " " "Horse" - 10"x10"
	1478	1	" " " " "Horse" - 10"x10"
	1479	1	" " " " "Woman Sleeping" - 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1480	1	" " " " "Pierrot" - 8"x12"
	1481	1	" " " " "Hunter and Woman" - 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1372	1	Etching entitled "Winter in the Wood" - 9"x12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1475	1	" " " " "Gulliver" - 13"x12"
42	Drawings and Watercolors by Alfred Kubin as follows:		
	1414	1	Watercolor - entitled "David and Goliath" - 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x11"
	1	1	" " " " "Faust und Lilith" - 13"x16"
	1443	1	Drawing entitled "Fisherman's Luck" - 15"x12"
	1444	1	" " " " "Country Orgie" - 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x13"
	1445	1	" " " " "Gottlieb" - 10"x12"
	1448	1	" " " " "Wild Bull" - 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
	1447	1	" " " " "Child Murder" - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x10"
	1448	1	" " " " "A New Robinson" - 13"x12"
	1449	1	" " " " "Shepherd" - 14"x10"
	1450	1	" " " " "Burglar" - 12"x11"

Appendix: Bronzes and Drawings by Georg Kolbe on Consignment to Galerie Buchholz, Berlin, and Buchholz Gallery, New York

The German titles of the bronzes and drawings given on consignment come from the correspondence between Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (GBB), and Georg Kolbe.⁴⁵ The titles of the drawings cannot be assigned due to missing information. The Buchholz Gallery in New York (BGNY) under the direction of Curt Valentin used different designations than Galerie Buchholz in Berlin, which were then probably adopted by the Alien Property Custodian. Reference is made to fig. 5, where the works brought to auction are listed.

The numbering of the drawings was done by the artist himself. No records of this have survived. The sheets were listed in the order in which they were mentioned in the consignment agreements.

These were also documented by the artist himself. No further records of this exist.

Insofar as they were confiscated, the information in the last paragraph of each entry is taken from the documentation of Vesting Order 3711. An assignment of the drawings to lot numbers 37 and 38 as well as their buyers was not possible due to missing information.

Bronzes

Kleine Sitzende (Small Seated Woman)

1926; bronze

December 2, 1936: purchased by Karl Buchholz on behalf of Curt Valentin (RM 900); officially owned by Karl Buchholz; due to racial laws, unofficially owned by Curt Valentin / January 1937: transfer to New York

No confiscation because private property of Curt Valentin

Entwurf zum Ruhenden Athleten / Reclining Athlete

1935; bronze / 11 × 20 in.

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNY on consignment (2,000 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (2,000 RM), remains in New York

Lot 31: sold for \$200 to Theodora H. Pleadwell

Kleine Stehende / Standing Woman

1935; bronze; 80 cm. / 32 in. high

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNY on consignment (1,600 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (1,600 RM), remains in New York

Lot 32: sold for \$250 to Samuel C. Dretzin

Stehendes Mädchen / Standing Woman

1935; bronze; 130 cm. / 48 in. high

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (3,500 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (3,500 RM), remains in New York

Lot 33: sold for \$320 to Ella Lewenz

Kauernde / Crouching Girl

1930; bronze; 49 cm. / 20 × 14 × 11 in.

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (2,000 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (2,000 RM), remains in New York

Lot 34: sold for \$333 to Ella Lewenz

Verkündung / Listening

1934; bronze / 10 × 10 × 7 in.

June 25, 1935: sent to GBB on consignment (800 RM) / latest December 1936: purchased by GBB / January 1937: transferred to New York

Lot 35: sold for \$ 222 to Ella Lewenz

Entwurf zum Ruf der Erde / Girl Looking Up

1932; bronze; 18 cm. / 42 in. high

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (1,600 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (600 RM), remains in New York

Lot 35: sold for \$250 to Samuel C. Dretzin

Drawings

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 59

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 199

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNy on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 212

June 25, 1935: sent to GBB on consignment (150 RM) / October 19, 1936: returned to Georg Kolbe / December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM)

Lot 37 or 38

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 277

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941:

purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

“Weibl.”

Chalk drawing; no. 278

October 11, 1934: sent to GBB on consignment (200 RM) / December 30, 1936: sent

to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / January 23, 1943: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 282

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941:

purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 284

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941:

purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 291

December 30, 1936: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / December 27, 1939:

purchased by BGNV (160 RM)

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 303

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / latest January 1939: sold through BGNV (160 RM)

[title unknown]

Drawing; no. 320

December 30, 1936: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York
Lot 37 or 38

Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)

Chalk drawing; no. 323

January 6, 1938: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York
Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 406

January 6, 1938: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / December 4, 1939: sold through BGN Y (160 RM)

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 410

January 6, 1938: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York
Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 415

January 6, 1938: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York
Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 430

January 6, 1938: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York
Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 440

January 6, 1938: sent to BGN Y on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York
Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 442

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 445

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 451

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 459

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 496

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 502

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 503

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNY on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)

Chalk drawing; no. 591

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)

Chalk drawing; no. 593

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Männerzeichnung (Drawing of a Man)

Chalk drawing; no. 597

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by GBB (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

34 Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 383

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by BGG (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

35 Frauenzeichnung (Drawing of a Woman)

Chalk drawing; no. 386

January 6, 1938: sent to BGNV on consignment (160 RM) / March 1, 1941: purchased by BGG (160 RM), remains in New York

Lot 37 or 38

Notes

I am grateful to my colleagues at the Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, for their valuable assistance. I would like to thank the Franz Dieter und Michaela Kaldewei Kulturstiftung for providing the financial means without which the digitization of the documents on Vesting Order 3711 would not have been possible.

- 1 See: *Plunder and Restitution. The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Asset. Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Holocaust Assets in the United States and Staff Report*, ed. Presidential Advisory Commission on the Holocaust Assets in the United States, Washington, D. C., 2000. See especially the chapter "'Vesting' Assets and the Office of Alien Property Custodian," pp. SR58–SR83; available online at: https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/pcha/PlunderRestitution.html/html/Home_Contents.html [last accessed May 11, 2023].
- 2 For more on the life and work of Curt Valentin, see: Anja Tiedemann: *Die "entartete" Moderne und ihr amerikanischer Markt. Karl Buchholz und Curt Valentin als Händler verfemter Kunst* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 8 (Berlin 2013), pp. 179–205.
- 3 For more on the life and work of Karl Buchholz, see: *ibid.*, pp. 11–34.
- 4 See: *ibid.*, pp. 16–20.
- 5 The complete Alien Property Custodian documents for Vesting Orders (V.O.) 3711, 4285, and 7114 were available as PDFs for this study. All three pertain to Karl Buchholz's property located in the Buchholz Gallery on the day of seizure. V.O. 4285 and 7114 were made after the fact and should be viewed as supplements to V.O. 3711. All three transactions were combined under Reference File F-28-42-E-1. The papers are preserved in the National Archives II, College Park, Maryland. They can be found under the following shelf numbers: RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75. Works by Georg Kolbe are documented only in V.O. 3711. A list of the seven sculptures and twenty-eight drawings was repeatedly given with the respective inventory number, artist's name, work title, and invoice date, whereby the latter probably refers to the date of receipt at the Buchholz Gallery.
- 6 See the correspondence between Curt Valentin and Georg Kolbe, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. Here, one finds a wealth of private details, far beyond the usual business exchanges.
- 7 See: Anja Tiedemann, "Nicht das erforderliche Verantwortungsbewusstsein gegenüber Volk und Staat," in: *idem* (ed.), *Die Kammer schreibt schon wieder! Das Reglement für den Handel mit moderner Kunst im Nationalsozialismus* [Schriften der Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst," vol. 10 (Berlin 2016), pp. 219–235, table "Von der Galerie Buchholz ausgestellte und verkaufte Werke Künstler der Moderne (1934–1943)," see here the entry "Kolbe."
- 8 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 190–194.
- 9 See the correspondence between the Buchholz Gallery and Georg Kolbe regarding commissioned sculptures and drawings, October 24, 1936, December 2, 1936, December 17, 1936, December 30, 1936, December 1936 [without precise date], MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 10 As a Jew, Curt Valentin was not allowed to own any art objects, which is why he smuggled his private bronze into Georg Kolbe's commission goods. The purchase was officially made by Galerie Buchholz, as Valentin would not have been allowed to act as a buyer, either. See the letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, September 15, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, which states that Valentin bought this work privately for himself. See also the check from the book and art dealer Karl Buchholz, December 2, 1936, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, which indicates that Buchholz, not Valentin, made the payment.
- 11 See: Exhibit A, Art property formerly owned by Karl Buchholz, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75, pp. 75–76, made available as a PDF for this study (see note 5).
- 12 The simplified work titles were probably adopted later in the course of Vesting Order 3711. The available sources for the works are not sufficient for a reliable identification of the drawings, but they are sufficient for the sculptures. The lost inventory books of Curt Valentin are still an unfortunate gap in the documentation.
- 13 See: Gregor Langfeld, *Deutsche Kunst in New York. Vermittler – Kunstsammler – Ausstellungsmacher, 1904–1957* (Berlin 2011). The dissertation examines the canonization of German modernism in the United States and repeatedly addresses the case of Georg Kolbe.
- 14 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, June 15, 1938, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

- 15 Letters from the Buch- und Kunsthandlung Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, April 18, 1939, and February 1, 1940, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 16 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 144–152.
- 17 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Karl Buchholz, January 23, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 18 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 144–152.
- 19 For more on the activity of Georg von Hülsen, see: *ibid.*, pp. 57–62.
- 20 Letter from Georg von Hülsen to Georg Kolbe, January 25, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 21 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Georg von Hülsen, January 28, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 22 Letter from Karl Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, March 1, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 23 Letter from Karl Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, April 21, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 24 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Karl Buchholz, April 29, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 25 See: letter from Karl Buchholz to Georg Kolbe, April 21, 1941, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 26 Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), p. 231.
- 27 For more on the exhibition activity at the Buchholz Gallery, see: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 261–267.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 219–238.
- 29 See: letter from Georg Kolbe to Curt Valentin, July 14, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 30 Letter from Curt Valentin to Georg Kolbe, September 15, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 31 For more information, see note 5.
- 32 See, for example, the announcement in *The New York Times* of November 19, 1944, where the exact number of works to be auctioned is noted. National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75, p. 28 of the PDF (see note 5).
- 33 See: License NY 598479-T, 15.2.1944, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75, p. 42 of the PDF (see note 5); Memorandum, 24.4.1945, *ibid.*, pp. 2–3 (pp. 53–54 of the PDF, see note 5). What Curt Valentin sold to whom or acquired for himself, and whether there were other possible reasons for the absence of the sixty-eight works, are topics for future research.
- 34 See the clippings of announcements in *The Art Digest* (November 15, 1944), *ART News* (November 16, 1944), and *The New York Times* (November 19, 1944), National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75, pp. 27–29 of the PDF (see note 5).
- 35 See: “Art property formerly owned by Karl Buchholz,” undated, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75, pp. 1–2 (pp. 56–57 of the PDF, see note 5).
- 36 See: “Exhibit 1 – On 1/1/45 property, in sale of art objects owned by Karl Buchholz, was awarded to the following,” undated, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75, p. 2 (p. 184 of the PDF, see note 5). No further information on the life of Theodora H. Pleadwell could be found, except that she was apparently a horse breeder. See the Google query: “Theodora H. Pleadwell Muffet Farm” [last accessed May 12, 2023].
- 37 See: “Exhibit 1 – On 1/1/45 property, in sale of art objects owned by Karl Buchholz, was awarded to the following,” undated, National Archives II, College Park (Maryland), RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75, p. 2 (p. 184 of the PDF, see note 5).
- 38 See: http://films.arsenal-berlin.de/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/3917 and https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lisa_Lewenz [both sites last accessed May 12, 2023].
- 39 See the Google inquiry “Samuel C. Dretzin” [last accessed May 12, 2023].
- 40 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), pp. 18–20.
- 41 Individuals interested in art collected modern art but did not show it to the outside world. As long as the authorities could not infer criticism of the regime, but only personal interest, this behavior was tolerated. Nevertheless, some collectors decided to move their collections, or parts of them, out of the line of fire. See: Anja Tiedemann, “Vom Narrativ des Verbotenen. Das Sammeln moderner Kunst im Nationalsozialismus,” in: Tiedemann 2016 (see note 7), pp. 1–15.
- 42 Handwritten draft of a letter from Karl Buchholz to the Ausgleichsamt Berlin, September 1965, SMB-ZA, Karl Buchholz Estate, Box F.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 See: Tiedemann 2013 (see note 2), p. 19 and note 66.

45 See: GKM Archive, holdings of the Buch- und Kunsthandlung Karl Buchholz, Berlin, 1936–1941. The English titles and further information on the respective works of art are taken from the documentation of Vesting Order 3711. See: National Archives II,

College Park, Maryland, RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 1 Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (1 of 2) Box 75; RG 131 P 55 File F-28-42 Section 3 (2 of 2) Box 75.

Analyses of Works and Georg Kolbe's Media Strategies

Olaf Peters

Participation without Participating— Georg Kolbe, Friedrich Nietzsche, and National Socialism

“Genuine art of the present must of necessity
be revolutionary, because it can only exist at all
in opposition to the existing order.”¹
Karl Löwith, 1941

This essay examines Georg Kolbe's work and career in the late Weimar Republic and from 1933 onward. At this time, Kolbe was intensively engaged with Friedrich Nietzsche's figure of Zarathustra. The perception of this figure and its interpretation in National Socialism is another topic of investigation. After all, a Nietzsche memorial hall was planned in Weimar, for the decoration of which Kolbe made an effort relatively late and was also consulted but did not prevail. In a first step, his career in the so-called Third Reich will be examined in light of both contemporary art journalism and its reception after 1945, with a focus on those of his works that might reveal a connection to Nietzsche. This is important because Kolbe's later *Zarathustra/Zarathustras Erhebung IV* (Zarathustra/The Rise of Zarathustra; p. 264, fig. 4) from 1943 is to be understood as a reaction to the relative loss of significance that Kolbe's works experienced in the context of sculpture in the Third Reich, and the figure itself is subject to a change in meaning. Before that, Nietzsche and National Socialism will be briefly discussed in order to be able to evaluate Kolbe's actions and position against this background as well. And finally, I will attempt to interpret Kolbe's concrete engagement with Nietzsche as an artistic response to specific circumstances, which turn out to be more coincidental than one might assume given the importance of the subject.

Georg Kolbe and the Third Reich

A look at the art journalism in the National Socialist state makes clear how esteemed and popular Georg Kolbe, who is considered one of the best-known sculptors of the Weimar Republic,² was even after the seizure of power. Rudolf G. Binding's influential and representative monograph from 1933, entitled *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe* (On the Life of Sculpture. The Content and Beauty of Georg Kolbe's Oeuvre), saw its sixth edition in 1936.³ The sculptural work and several drawings were comprehensively presented with ninety-five illustrations in total. Kolbe's position in the book series as a whole is noteworthy, as it was embedded in the palpable attempt to continue to provide journalistic support for artistic modernism in the early years of the NS regime. Binding's Kolbe monograph appeared as the second volume in the series *Kunstbücher des Volkes* (Art Books for the People), which featured overviews of, among others, Ernst Barlach (vol. 1), Käthe Kollwitz (vol. 3), Paula Modersohn-Becker (vol. 4), Edvard Munch (vol. 6), Renée Sintenis (vol. 11), and finally Wilhelm Lehmbruck (vol. 16)—all artists whose works were soon to be branded as degenerate. Kolbe was situated

within the context of Weimar modernism; and at the same time, a future perspective was opened up. Regarding Kolbe's works of the early 1930s, it was stated:

"The last figures—for the time being, the last—and yet perhaps only prefigures of other, later, latest figures—seize us with a closeness, as with the breath of the freshly born. [...] and then *Zarathustra*, like a welcoming of the gigantic—no measure frightens. The human measure lies deep down under this, like the world under the left of the rising *Übermensch*: blessing, repelling—while the right clenches flat to a fist in the knowledge of power and will."⁴

Kolbe was credited with future artistic potential, as it was speculated that perhaps he had thus far created only "prefigurations." His *Zarathustra*, associated with Nietzsche's philosophy, was specifically interpreted as gigantic and even as boundless; it both blesses and rejects.

The publishing house popularized the work of the above-mentioned artists through art postcards and large photographs, with Ernst Barlach, who was the subject of internal National Socialist disputes about the future of modern art in the new state, and Kolbe standing out quantitatively, followed by Fritz Klimsch and Ruth Schaumann. A brochure enclosed with the sixth edition lists twenty-six art postcards and nineteen large photographs of works by Kolbe as being on offer. Perhaps created in the context of Kolbe's preoccupation with Nietzsche at the time were *Der Einsame* (The Lonely Man, 1927/29) and the illustrated *Kniendes Menschenpaar* (Kneeling Couple, 1931); *Zarathustras Erhebung IV* (1943–47) does not appear on the list; and with *Athlet* (Athlete, 1935) and the *Krieger-Ehrenmal* (Soldiers' Memorial, 1934/35) in Stralsund, a different, sporting-military accent was set at the same time.

Publications on Kolbe were widely praised in the Third Reich and aimed at his emphatic establishment within the new state. Regarding Binding's volume, it was argued: "Not since 'Rilke's Rodin' has such an important work on sculpture been written." And about Wilhelm Pinder's book *Georg Kolbe. Werke der letzten Jahre* (Works of the Last Years) from 1937: "A new work on the great German sculptor, whom we today rightly place alongside Michelangelo and the Naumburg Master."⁵ A reference to recent modernism (in France) was thus still preserved, and Kolbe was at the same time accepted into the Olympus of sculpture since the Middle Ages.

However, such constructions proved to be fragile in several respects. For the years 1936/37, what has been said so far may not seem remarkable; but the fact that Bruno E. Werner's 1940 overview of German sculpture continued to cite and recognize the "degenerate" artists Lehmbruck and Barlach as pioneers may surprise today's readers. Kolbe continued to function prominently as a kind of hinge figure within a transitional generation, mediating between individual personalities and a new, first generation, with the *Stehende Frau* (Standing Woman, 1915), the *Selbstbildnis* (Self-Portrait, 1934), the *Große Pietà* (Large Pietà, 1930), and the *Menschengruppe* (*Menschenpaar*) (Human Group [Human Couple], 1937) illustrated as evidence of the development.⁶ That a legitimizing,

regime-supporting function could be decidedly ascribed to his work in this context is shown by the first pages of the publication. Following Fritz Klimsch's *Führer* bust, which appears as a frontispiece, Kolbe's *Großer Wächter* (Large Guardian, 1937) is illustrated directly next to the preface of the overview published in the second year of the war. To put it bluntly, one could say: The Führer and the armed youth flank and secure the development of German art, which, with the third illustration—a detail of Richard Scheibe's *Ehrenmal* (Memorial, 1930) in Biebrich am Rhein—was further and topically situated in the specific context of the war. Kolbe played a key role in this: as a kind of initiator of newer sculpture in Germany and in two ways as a guardian figure—normatively aesthetically and metaphorically militarily.⁷

The text emphasizes Kolbe's enormous importance, but also hints at a new and dangerous tendency: "To this day, the influence of his ingenious work dominates the broadest areas of sculptural creation in Germany and beyond its borders, although a countermovement is gradually emerging, especially in our own day."⁸ The author contrasted Kolbe's efforts, which, according to him, possess something hovering, something tremulous, and express soulfulness and at times melancholy, with the recent sculptural tendency toward static repose; Kolbe's "beautiful nonchalance" was contrasted with Richard Scheibe's "ascetic tautness." However, Kolbe was attested a "nobility" and "human dignity" peculiar to him, illustrated by his *Menschenpaar*, installed at the Masch Lake in Hannover in 1937.⁹ Two things seem important here. First, Kolbe's intense preoccupation with Nietzsche's "Zarathustra" plays no role in this publication, and the main work is not even mentioned; second, in Werner's view, Kolbe did indeed create architecture-related sculpture, but contributed little or nothing to the new monumentality of architecture-bound sculpture in the NS state, which was the focus in 1940. This becomes clear when the author grouped together by name Willy Meller, Josef Thorak, Arno Breker, Kurt Schmid-Ehmen, and Adolf Wamper to form a group that was meaningful and forward-looking in this respect.¹⁰

The aforementioned combination, the juxtaposition of Klimsch and Kolbe at the beginning of Werner's contemporary reference work, which might be worthy of its own consideration, was repeated with sharper tendency in May 1942 in the Reich Chancellery. Adolf Hitler, who a few weeks earlier had given his permission for the early awarding of the Goethe Medal to Kolbe,¹¹ monologued about art, first commenting on the heterogeneous quality of art magazines, and then maintaining with regard to the works of Kolbe that "the older the master became, the more they diminished in perfection. Klimsch, on the other hand, was becoming greater and more important with his works."¹² Subsequently—in typical Hitler manner—the possible development of an artistic late work was tied to physiological conditions—to eyesight; and astonishingly, the early work of Lovis Corinth, who in the meantime had been ostracized with regard to his late work, was dubbed "fabulous."¹³ Kolbe's verbal demotion corresponded to Hitler's verdict in 1940, which—as will be shown—had repudiated Kolbe's Nietzsche plans.

In 1942, Kurt Lothar Tank published the second essential overview after Werner's publication, entitled *Deutsche Plastik unserer Zeit* (German Sculpture of Our Time), with a preface by Reich Minister Albert Speer.¹⁴ The remarks reacted almost critically to Pinder's

panegyric to Kolbe published in 1937, when the latter's judgment is confirmed on the one hand, but is then turned into its opposite:

“we are convinced that Georg Kolbe is the greatest sculptor of this transitional period, and we appreciate the thoroughly German and—as has been said time and again—noble nature of his forms, and yet we believe that the generation born after 1900, if it is to fulfill its historical mission, must not follow Kolbe, but seek its own expression. It has already found this, as Breker above all proves, and it will increasingly fortify and convincingly proclaim this monumentally heroic attitude in the years to come.”¹⁵

Kolbe was actually erased from the canon of National Socialist art with such words, which signified a kind of poisoned praise and illustrate the aesthetic narrowing of NS art between 1937 and 1942. While he did not “disharmonize” with the new art of the present in 1942 and, according to Tank, could even fertilize it,¹⁶ his position was actually obsolete. A deeper reason for this was—and this leads back to Nietzsche—the unwillingness of the individual to subordinate or even submit, which Tank clairvoyantly identified in Kolbe. This may surprise today's viewers of Kolbe's sculptures of the 1930s and early 1940s, but it resolves itself through subtle comparative analyses of individual works.¹⁷

Tank noted critically: “At the center of Kolbe's world is man, not the state, which sets man superhuman tasks stretching to the limits of his physical and mental powers.”¹⁸ According to this, in the works of Kolbe, man stood opposite the state, which acted in a totalitarian manner; and the superhuman, with which Tank was concerned here, had nothing to do with Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*, but rather concerned the imposition and surrender to the “total war” proclaimed by Goebbels soon after the appearance of the book and the defeat at Stalingrad.¹⁹

After 1945, art-historical research dealt with Kolbe's late work in a completely different way, but in the evaluative and exclusionary result partly identically, as far as Kolbe was still considered to be of any importance at all. Nietzsche played a role here, which is interesting in terms of research history, because researchers looked at Kolbe's preoccupation with Nietzsche with a specific image of Nietzsche in mind, which could thus be defined in at least two ways: by Kolbe's reception in the Third Reich and by the personal interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy. Werner Hofmann—with direct reference to Nietzsche—spoke in 1958 with regard to Kolbe's figures of the 1930s of “stereotypical figures of the Third Reich” and of “tiresome repetition [...] muscular leader animals, to whom man as a herd-follower is supposed to offer his homage, agents of [a] radicalism hostile to thinking.”²⁰

At the beginning of the 1980s, Dietrich Schubert emphatically pointed out the art-historical desideratum (itself in need of explanation in terms of the history of science) of an analysis of “Nietzsche's forms of reification in the visual arts” and then first addressed this himself in an extensive essay that has become fundamental for research.²¹ With regard to National Socialism and Kolbe, however, his statements turn out to be very brief and, in

my opinion, underestimate the status of Kolbe's preoccupation. Schubert introduces his passage with a reference to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's and Peter Gast's abuse of her brother, in order to speak of a "turn toward the nationalist-fascist Nietzsche transformation."²² He characterizes Kolbe's figure, in the words of Werner Hofmann, as a "muscular animal" and speaks of the adoption of a widespread but "distorted image of Nietzsche." He then jumps to Josef Thorak's 1944 Nietzsche bust presented at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) in Munich, with words that were also intended to apply to Kolbe: "Josef Thorak's 1944 Nietzsche bust (plaster for marble), now lost, may be about the last in the Nazi representation and veneration of the philosopher abused for anti-Semitism, Aryanism, and violence."²³

Klaus Wolbert's pioneering study on sculpture in the Third Reich pointedly states with regard to Kolbe: "The works of Georg Kolbe led directly from the afterlife of Nietzsche's thoughts into fascism."²⁴ Wolbert argues in a differentiated manner, but quickly arrives at statements with moral connotations: "What is fatal about this iconography [of the *Ascending Man* as Zarathustra] is the undeniable fact that it foreshadowed specific figures of the NS image of man. And through his collaboration in the Third Reich, Kolbe himself showed that his theme could be effortlessly integrated without considerable modification." This culminates in the sentiment: "There need not be much doubt about the fundamentally inhumane, mass-despising substance of figures such as *Dionysos* or *Beethoven als Heros*."²⁵ It was and is necessary to start at these positions.

In her fundamental Kolbe monograph, Ursel Berger has taken a differentiated look at the issue of the development of his works in the 1930s based on the holdings of the Kolbe Museum. She recognizes for these years the "problem of the mechanical enlargements" of small sculptures, which then only required superficial treatment by the artist and could thus "slid[e] into a dry classicism" or—as in the case of the figures working with rough surfaces—"appear like oversized sketches."²⁶ The latter judgment applied to the *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man) of 1936, which is important for our context. Berger speaks of "clumsiness in the work period around 1930" and of the overcoming of this around the mid-1930s—especially, however, in the case of the female figures, while the male figures continue to be evaluated by her rather negatively.²⁷

In surveys of art in the Third Reich, Kolbe is mentioned but plays a subordinate role.²⁸ All in all, the ambivalent picture emerges of a Kolbe who was recognized, honored, and supported in the Third Reich, but whose work, at the latest around 1940, could be seen in central publications as having been very gradually replaced, if not as an aberration. In the art history of twentieth-century sculpture or NS art after 1945, Kolbe is ignored or marginalized.

Friedrich Nietzsche and the Third Reich

What is the fundamental situation with Friedrich Nietzsche—whose late work can also appear problematic for other reasons?²⁹ His philosophy and his statements on art

were perceived in an almost incomprehensible breadth,³⁰ and thus it can be said that “Nietzsche’s impact can hardly be overlooked.”³¹ His reception in the Third Reich includes the problem of a so-called proto-fascism—discussed after 1945—in the work of the philosopher, who died mentally deranged in 1900, and interlocks with the view of Kolbe’s artistic engagement with Nietzsche immediately before and during the Third Reich. In view of the extensive and controversial Nietzsche literature, possible answers will only be summarized here: Nietzsche was by all means viewed positively in the new National Socialist Germany, in no small part due to his reception by sections of the radical right prior to 1933.³² But this positive reception was perhaps smaller and shorter-lived than usually assumed, although Nietzsche’s language was partially transposed into the language of National Socialism. Adolf Hitler did not refer to Nietzsche by name in *Mein Kampf* or in his aforementioned “*Tischgespräche*”; he had visited the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar, although there seems to have been little conversation between the “Führer” and Nietzsche’s sister.³³ A well-known photograph from 1932 showing Hitler in front of a bust of Nietzsche conveys almost intimidated uncertainty with respect to the cult of genius surrounding the exceptional philosopher Nietzsche. The efforts for a Nietzsche memorial in Weimar were supported rather modestly by the “Führer” after a visit to Weimar in July 1934, and then concretely at the beginning of October of the same year, with 50,000 RM from his private treasury, although he increased this support at a later time.³⁴ The dates are interesting because it is precisely this period (1932) in which Kolbe’s intensive preoccupation with the figure of “Zarathustra” and its naming falls.

Numerous National Socialists invoked Nietzsche, but “Nietzsche’s work became first and foremost an essential part of the ideological training of the National Socialists and served to legitimize a new educational system.”³⁵ In his standard work on the reception of Nietzsche, Steven Aschheim cites abundant evidence for this; but also for the distancing from and even rejection of Nietzsche in the Third Reich—for example, on the basis of an alleged hereditary mental illness, as well as the fact that opponents of National Socialism invoked Nietzsche and his anti-anti-Semitism with good reasons, or by emphasizing his concept of the *Freigeist* (freethinker), which implied a fundamental critique of the state. The last point refers to a rationale in Nietzsche’s philosophy itself for the discrepancy between Kolbe’s conception of man and the supposedly total NS state alluded to by Tank in 1942 and cited above.

Nietzsche’s philosophy is nevertheless described in parts as “proto fascist,” as, for example, when he—albeit a good fifty years before the beginning of Hitler’s regime—advocated “the relentless destruction of all degenerate and parasitical elements.”³⁶ In this respect, he seemed to offer points of contact for a fascist or National Socialist reception, which is not surprising in view of the syncretic NS ideology. However, Nietzsche was discussed far more intensively and in a more intellectually sophisticated manner in fascist Italy than in National Socialist Germany. Nevertheless, several eliminatory passages in Nietzsche’s surviving writings and estate fragments, which—against the background of population explosion, urbanization, massification, and proletarianization in the second half of the nineteenth century—even outlined a physical mass murder of millions as a

possibility, by no means explain the murder of European Jewry as a concrete realization of a crime against humanity.

In a posthumous fragment, Nietzsche demanded the attainment of “that enormous *energy of greatness* which can model the man of the future by means of discipline and also by means of the annihilation of millions of the bungled and botched, and which can yet avoid *going to ruin* at the sight of the suffering *created* thereby, the like of which has never been seen before.”³⁷ Such passages can be located, among others, in the contemporary degeneracy and eugenic discourse of the nineteenth century, which was to become further radicalized and finally put the murder of human beings in perspective. In this context, it is said to have been Nietzsche who “brought about the turn toward anti-degenerative activism in Germany.”³⁸ In a well-founded study, Bernhard Taureck has pursued in detail the question of Nietzsche’s “proto-fascism,” by which he understands his rejection of the ideal of equality: “Nietzsche’s counter-ideal is called: slavery, rank order, caste order, Machiavellianism, war.”³⁹ However, despite partial confirmation, Taureck ultimately cannot come to a clear conclusion himself and confesses that this is hardly possible due to Nietzsche’s oscillation and iridescence, his metaphorical use of language.⁴⁰ A fundamental problem remains Nietzsche’s evasive ambivalence. Moreover, his project remains philosophical and spiritual, elitist-aristocratic, and related to the individual, in contrast—also perceived by historians of the history of eugenics—to socio-technological reforms with “the eugenic goal of breeding entire populations.”⁴¹

Nietzsche Reifications in Art

Nietzsche was already a myth during his lifetime and was revered artistically.⁴² Motifs from his philosophy can also be found in the early works of Kolbe.⁴³ Even before 1900, Fritz Schumacher had designed a Nietzsche monument, with a somber round temple crowned by a partially nude figure with raised arms. Henry van de Velde also designed a temple in 1911/12 and combined it with a stadium for Weimar, so that the philosopher would be honored, and his vision of a new man would take concrete shape in the athletic competition of youth.⁴⁴ In the field of sculpture, Max Klinger and Wilhelm Lehmbruck had created fundamental works between 1900 and 1918, while Otto Dix created an energetically charged, unique work. These were portrait busts or allegorical single figures.⁴⁵ In the field of graphic art and painting, Hans Olde, Edvard Munch, and Erich Heckel, among others, had created portraits before the First World War;⁴⁶ after the war, the Weimar avant-garde, including representatives of the Bauhaus in Weimar, continued to identify with Nietzsche. The founding director of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, attended the memorial celebration of the philosopher’s seventy-fifth birthday in October 1919.⁴⁷

Parallel to this, after the First World War, the Nietzsche community divided into two larger camps in terms of intellectual history. In summary, one can say: On the one hand, there was a right-wing conservative to fascist following, grouped not least around Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche in the Weimar archive, which had already been modernized by

Henry van de Velde in 1903; and on the other hand, there was a pan-European oriented group, who saw themselves as intellectual aristocrats and free spirits and had a center in Munich. This created a natural tension with the brown plebs in the so-called capital of the movement.

But how did Georg Kolbe concretely develop his “Zarathustra” figures? The research first postulates a fundamental change in his work around 1930, which Ursel Berger described to the effect that, before the First World War, the sculptor had tried to find an expression of the present life in his sculpture; since the early 1930s (especially after his trip to Greece in 1931), however, he wanted to create models for a “higher humanity,” a new elite.⁴⁸ Ideas for an engagement with Nietzsche and an artistic tribute to him can therefore already be identified from the late 1920s. They seem to have arisen naturally from the engagement with a monument to Beethoven and refer to Kolbe’s continued preoccupation with Max Klinger.⁴⁹ Kolbe’s efforts, however, were not only directed towards sculpture, but also towards a framing architecture. Thus, probably starting in 1928, he drew sketches for a Nietzsche memorial hall, which depict a pantheon-like circular building. At the same time, however, Berger points out elsewhere that “concrete [...] traces of Nietzsche’s ideas” cannot be detected in Kolbe’s work for a long time.⁵⁰ She explains the turning to Nietzsche and especially to Zarathustra primarily biographically in connection with the death of Kolbe’s wife. Subsequently, Kolbe stylized himself “Zarathustra-like” as a lonely man and worked “obsessively” on a tribute to Nietzsche.⁵¹

In order to fully comprehend Kolbe’s activities, one would have to take the final phase of the Weimar Republic as the historical context, the renewal of Kolbe’s interest in Zarathustra, already evident around 1900, as a continuation of the Beethoven models from 1926/27, Otto Dix’s parallel intensive, renewed preoccupation with Nietzsche during this time,⁵² Oskar Schlemmer’s *Folkwang Cycle* and the later Essen competition “Junge Deutsche Kunst” (Young German Art, 1934),⁵³ and finally the concrete plans for the Nietzsche memorial in Weimar, which were probably taken up again from 1933 onwards, as a zeitgeist phenomenon. Kolbe’s attempt was embedded in a general trend of the time,⁵⁴ Nietzsche, the new man⁵⁵ or even *Übermensch*, the political and economic crisis, modern memorial concepts in the Weimar era, individual artistic sensibilities, as well as particular, local cultural-political interests all intertwine in a complex way. We are dealing here with a plurality of approaches and responses.

Important with regard to Kolbe in our context are a number of sculptures: perhaps *Der Einsame* (The Lonely One) from 1927 (cast in 1929)—which can be seen as having been derived as a figure from the *Beethoven* model as well as from *Junger Mann* (Young Man) from 1926—must be interpreted as a still undecided, melancholy prelude, in which the artist’s personal situation, as well as Nietzsche’s connection between loneliness and creativity, formulated in Zarathustra, are embodied. It would thus stand in a central relation to the genius Beethoven, Nietzsche’s thinking together of the great, creative, and lonely man, and Kolbe’s artistic self-conception. The *Herabsteigender* (Descending Man) from 1927 (there is also a descending female figure from this year) can be connected with Nietzsche, since Zarathustra’s path is a downfall that ultimately opens the prospect of

an *Übermensch*, which Zarathustra himself is not yet. Downfall/descending and advent/ascending can both be connected to Nietzsche's teaching as different modes of time.

The *Dionysos* (Dionysus) from 1931/36 is directly connected with the artist's preoccupation with Nietzsche and is presumably based on studies after the model of the tall American dancer Ted Shawn.⁵⁶ The motif of dance, so central to Nietzsche, has thus migrated in Kolbe's work from the female (e.g., *Tänzerin* [Dancer, 1911/12]) to the male sex. The sculptural group *Emporsteigende Menschen* (Ascending People) from 1931/32—recognizable in a studio photograph as separate figures each approximately 160 cm tall and interpreted by Ursel Berger as the original idea for a Nietzsche monument⁵⁷—and *Menschenpaar* (Couple) from 1936, with which Kolbe won first prize in a competition and which was installed at the Maschsee in Hannover in 1937, also belong in this context, as do the individual descending and ascending male and female figures.

After the personal tragedy in 1927 (the death of Kolbe's wife Benjamine), together with the political and economic crisis of the Weimar Republic intensifying from 1929/30 onwards, and after the beginning of the National Socialist regime, Kolbe continuously and intensively dealt with a theme that had ambivalent connotations. It could, to a great extent, take on a compensatory character, because with it one could evade reality, could escape; but with it one could also try to begin anew, to shape the future.⁵⁸ It tied idealistic-utopian ideas to a new type of man, which overcame, surpassed the present and the contemporary man.⁵⁹ This is also found in Nietzsche, without being able to prove Kolbe's knowledge of the passage, because in *Ecce Homo*, he writes in reference to "Zarathustra": "man is to him a thing unshaped, raw material, an ugly stone that needs the sculptor's chisel." And: "I walk among men as among fragments of the future: of that future which I see."⁶⁰

In the context of the late Weimar Republic—and not only with the rise of the Third Reich—the sculptor Kolbe drew on Nietzsche and created, among other things, the figure of "Zarathustra." The decathlete Hermann Lempeler now served the sculptor as a model, so that these figures took on a trait of athletic exaltation.⁶¹ Around 1932/33, Kolbe noted for himself a breakthrough with regard to the naming of the figure of a large ascending man as *Zarathustras Erhebung I* (1932/33; p. 264, fig. 1), connected this with Nietzsche's philosophical theorem of the Great Noon (conceived by Nietzsche, who saw man on a trajectory between animal and *Übermensch*, as both a transition and a downfall), and also understood this as a kind of self-liberation. Kolbe spoke of his hitherto "freest position in the realm of the male body."⁶² The figure was connected with apparently self-selected and not commissioned designs and plans for the erection of a Nietzsche monument, to which the versions of the *Emporsteigendes Menschenpaar* (Ascending Couple) from 1931 and 1939 also belong. The *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues), conceived from 1933 onwards for the Rothschild Park in Frankfurt am Main and installed only posthumously in 1954—albeit with figures from the late 1930s⁶³—also follows on from this complex. A drawing, dated 1933, sketchily depicts "Zarathustra" in the center.⁶⁴

All this illustrates, despite all uncertainty regarding the exact dating, how Kolbe was able to connect several themes and concepts with the artistic exploration of Nietzsche,

to think them through in parallel, and to realize them in other contexts only loosely connected to the original idea. Kolbe's work possesses a relative semantic openness, which at the same time made it creatively flexible and susceptible to—possibly unintended—attributions of meaning. Whether Kolbe, in light of Hitler's rise to power and his documented closeness to Weimar, and with a view to his participation in the 1933 academy exhibition, perhaps only now came to assign his figures the identifying title *Zarathustra* must remain a matter of speculation. Ursel Berger assumes the naming *Zarathustra/Zarathustras Erhebung* for the year 1932.⁶⁵ However, there is a typewritten note by Kolbe dated 1933 (though later crossed out), which reads: "The name, the title is absolutely necessary for the public—little as I need it myself."⁶⁶ Based on this source in the estate, 1933 seems entirely possible as a year and would clearly date the naming to the early stages of the Third Reich. In another undated note with the heading "(Zarathustra !!!!!)," Kolbe noted first Nietzsche's view of Heraclitus and then Nietzsche's view of the Dionysian: "when the awestruck millions sink in the dust: this is when you will be able to approach the Dionysian."⁶⁷ Such a fragment could also hint at the actualization or concretization of *Zarathustra* in the new political context of the Third Reich—the artistic genesis of the figure, which has little or nothing to do with National Socialism, precedes a possible unifying semantic charge or even clarification undertaken by Kolbe.⁶⁸

Kolbe's Struggle for Form

We shall take another look at the finding of form as a creative process dependent on several factors. As early as the late 1920s, Kolbe had conceived monuments, among others, to the genius Beethoven and to the foreign minister Walter Rathenau (1928–30), who was assassinated by politically right-wing conspirators.⁶⁹ In this way, the artist had closely associated himself with the democratic Weimar Republic, since Rathenau was considered by the National Socialist anti-Semitic agitators to be a mastermind in a "Jewish conspiracy to sell off the German people," which had been identified by the *Völkischer Beobachter*, a party organ of the NSDAP.⁷⁰ Kolbe's approximately four-meter-tall, abstract-spiral Rathenau memorial fountain in the Volkspark Rehberge in Berlin was dismantled by the Nationalist Socialists in 1934.⁷¹ His Friedrich Ebert bust of 1925, as well as the aesthetically quite different Heinrich Heine monuments installed in Frankfurt am Main and planned in Düsseldorf, were also bound to displease the new powers that be because of their hatred of the Jewish literary figure.⁷² Kolbe thus occasionally became a victim of National Socialist cultural policy. Against this background, the Office for Preservation of the Arts with its Cultural-Political Archive even tried to discredit Kolbe to the Gestapo in 1936 as politically unreliable and artistically "degenerate." In addition to brief references to signatures, memberships, and support from the "Jewish press," it stated inherently contradictorily: "In his art, the sculptor represents a line that today is rejected as 'African' or even 'Alpine.'"⁷³

In contrast, in the fall of 1933, Kolbe and his colleague Gerhard Marcks found themselves called upon to collaborate with the new state:

“To our great astonishment, Kolbe and I were called out of our corner. We were at an initial meeting yesterday and, despite all our misgivings, came to the conclusion that we should indeed try to collaborate in order to assert our artistic views as far as possible. [...] In contrast to the *Kampfbund* [Militant League for German Culture], the state wants to support a modern group of artists.”⁷⁴

Kolbe's larger-than-life nude figures of women and men were then also accepted at all times in the Third Reich, although they had already been developed and implemented in the final phase of the Weimar Republic. Thus, abstractly speaking, we would either be dealing with an artistic National Socialism before the Third Reich or with the continuity of a specific aesthetic from the late Weimar Republic into the Third Reich, which did not necessarily have to be National Socialist, but could become so through the new context. Such subsumptions, however, may not lead much further and obscure the view of the processual nature of the work's development.

Specifically, based on previous research by Hella Reelfs, Ursel Berger has named a total of twenty works by Kolbe for the period 1931 to 1947, including sculptures and sketches, that are directly related to an artistic tribute to Nietzsche or Zarathustra;⁷⁵ in addition, there are the drawings for a memorial hall and the *Ring der Statuen*, as was documented on the occasion of a project carried out in the Kolbe Museum in 2000. We are dealing here with either a *Menschenpaar* (Berger names three versions for 1931/32—one of which is smaller than life-size and one approximately 180 cm high—and two for 1939) or a 250-cm-high (Large) *Emporsteigender* (Ascending Man, 1932). In addition, there is a *Torso Dionysos* from 1931/31 with a height of 210 cm, as well as a 260-cm-high *Dionysos* from 1931/36, which was cast posthumously and installed in the Georg-Kolbe-Hain. Distinguished from these is *Zarathustras Erhebung I* from 1932/33, seen in a studio photograph dated 1934 (p. 264, fig. 1).⁷⁶ In 1933, a drawing of the first *Zarathustra* figure and the approximately 250-cm-high plaster model were exhibited at the Prussian Academy of Arts, where they were highly praised and thereby politically staged as well as received.⁷⁷ This figure appears more strained than the *Emporsteigender*. The supporting leg is answered by a more outwardly turned, erect right leg. Arms and hands are simultaneously more rigid and more gestural; in the photograph, the shoulder area appears broader, the physiognomy somewhat aged, more mature. The mouth in particular has changed from a gentle smile to an expression of latent imperious contempt, as can be seen in the illustrations in Binding's Kolbe monograph.⁷⁸ By 1934, Kolbe had changed the head of *Zarathustra*, perhaps already adapting here to the new regime, especially since he had to perceive the dismantling of his Rathenau fountain as a serious problem in the new state. During this time, photos were taken that depict the “small Zarathustra model” in a niche or between pillars, simulating an architectural installation.

Thus far, the “model for a monument to Nietzsche,” which is dated to 1932 and is said to have been 40 cm high, has inexplicably remained undiscussed in this context. This model is remarkable because it shows an “Ascending Man” with raised arms that are formed to some degree into a ring. Here, Kolbe could have wanted to symbolically

express Nietzsche's Zarathustra and his doctrine of the "eternal return";⁷⁹ however, this was obviously not pursued and would also represent a singular case within Kolbe's oeuvre, which is why this remains doubtful. Kolbe had failed at expressing the spiritual dimension of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* from the very beginning by adapting the type of the athlete, as a comparison with Wilhelm Lehmbruck would demonstrate. The impressive possibility of an abstract form, as Otto Freundlich realized this in 1929 with the 200-cm-high *Ascension* (*Aufstieg*) in the context of the Cologne Progressives, can only be pointed out here.⁸⁰

A second version of *Zarathustra* from 1937 (p. 264, fig. 2) is illustrated in Wilhelm Pinder's monograph from the same year.⁸¹ Here, two models seem to have been produced: one 97 cm high and the other 250 cm high. This second and probably also a third version (250 cm high and smoothed) were discussed by the Nietzsche Archive from 1939 onwards in the context of a possible placement. Richard Oehler, a great-nephew of Nietzsche and a librarian in Frankfurt am Main, as well as being a member of the board of the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar, wrote to Kolbe on April 11, 1940, pointing out that Adolf Hitler himself had to be asked for permission to install the *Zarathustra*. For this reason, Kolbe was to have photographs made that would be presented to Hitler via Reich Minister and Chief of the Reich Chancellery Hans Heinrich Lammers. "I consider it very important that the Führer should receive an impression of the figure that is as perfect as possible."⁸² Kolbe had photographs of *Zarathustra III* (p. 264, fig. 3) enlarged to 60 cm and sent nine of these to Oehler in May 1940. Dr. Meerwald from the Reich Chancellery in Berlin wrote to Oehler on September 30, 1940, informing him of a scathing verdict: "The Führer considers the statue proposed by you to be totally unsuitable and has ordered that another artist be commissioned by the Reich Governor in Thuringia to produce a new design."⁸³

The third version is described as almost classicistic and smooth and would thus have been closer to Hitler's personal taste. Ursel Berger dates it to 1940 and thus to the year in which Kolbe could still expect his work to be installed in Weimar, whereby his position was also already contested. In Bruno E. Werner's overview of sculpture in the Third Reich quoted at the beginning of this essay, he was slowly replaced and overtaken by new tendencies. Could Kolbe have reacted directly to this with the third version, especially since he increasingly adapted himself aesthetically around 1938 anyway? The last *Zarathustra* version from 1943 was later criticized by Waldemar Grzimek to the effect that a will to ascend was no longer expressed.⁸⁴ Can this not also be seen as a specific aesthetic response by Kolbe? In her monograph from 1990, Berger illustrates this as *Zarathustras Erhebung* and as catalog no. 144 of the Kolbe Museum's holdings with the dates of execution 1932–47 and the casting date 1950; this conflating dating, however, obscures the process of creation, for it concerns the approximately 260-cm-tall fourth version, which was created between 1943 and 1947 with interruptions due to the war and was cast posthumously.

As a partial conclusion, one can state that Kolbe initially realized a design that had a positive effect on both himself and others, which was aesthetically conceived before Hitler came to power, but did not pose any problems in the new state—on the contrary. Perhaps it was only now, with regard to the title, that the figure was more clearly named, and this was possibly connected with Hitler's affinity for Nietzsche, which was clearly discernable

between 1932 and 1934 and which could give older ideas for monuments new topicality. However, despite all the efforts of Wilhelm Pinder and the Nietzsche Archive, the artist could not really succeed in the Third Reich; this was also dependent on Hitler's personal taste, which preferred the much simpler and smoother Klimsch, not to mention Breker and Thorak. Kolbe apparently tried to adapt, which would then be expressed in the third version of *Zarathustra* from 1940. In Weimar, the rejection of Kolbe's model gave rise to a certain sense of dismay, but above all to perplexity: "The Führer does not want Kolbe's Zarathustra! But whom should one present for a design? Breker? Should I also try Röhl? In any case, it must be an artist who appeals to Hitler. Thorak?" One considered approaching Albert Speer, who might have been able to help here, and consoled oneself in the knowledge that: "The only good thing about the whole matter is that Hitler is interested."⁸⁵

Ultimately, in light of the overall views of sculpture in the Third Reich, which distinguished the artist from contemporary tendencies toward monumentalization, and the looming defeat of the NS state, Kolbe turned his interpretation of Nietzsche perhaps even into its opposite. In 1943, the ascent of the figure of *Zarathustras Erhebung IV* is halted as if under duress and culminates in a state of rigidity. The figure, which was not cast until 1950—and could thus be re-contextualized and received in the young Federal Republic of Germany—cannot move on; it must stop and, at the same time, look the presence of the horror of 1943 in the eye with a sense of powerlessness, defiance, and shock. This subjects it to medusa-like petrification. Max Beckmann's painting *Prometheus* from 1943 might involuntarily come to mind as one "stuck" in the Caucasus. Beckmann's painting was a kind of slap in the face to his son Peter, who justified NS crimes, and responded to contemporary history.⁸⁶ In the same year, Kolbe reinterpreted the rise of Zarathustra—which could all too easily be interpreted as the rise of the NS movement—as a failure.

Grzimek's aforementioned commentary, which sought to identify a deficit, recognized the change, but perhaps misjudged its contemporary historical reference. Kolbe used the opportunity to expose and invert the affirmative pose-like aspect of National Socialist sculpture—to which he himself succumbed at times—at a late point in time.

Kolbe's inner distance, which broke through in 1943, was already expressed in a brief correspondence with Eleonore Wollenschläger at the end of 1939. He was pleased about her "extreme enthusiasm for Nietzsche," but criticized the interpretation of art through language as "literature" and did not exclude his biographer Rudolf Binding from this. Kolbe warned against a "pathos that leads into emptiness. Words [...] often in the superlative, produce hollow ecstasy."⁸⁷ He excluded Nietzsche's "incomparable [...] art of diction" and "unique enlightenment" from this and, at the same time, confessed that his struggle for a statue of Zarathustra, at that time firmly intended for Weimar, was still not over. Therefore, Wollenschläger should refrain from advertising with his work for her own Nietzsche proposition. Here, Kolbe's discord becomes clear, as he expressed criticism of the so-called art journalism of the time. He reported on his striving for a perfect sculptural solution—by his own admission not yet achieved—and yet tried to place his *Zarathustra* in Weimar.



1 Georg Kolbe, *Zarathustras Erhebung I* (The Rise of Zarathustra I), 1932/33, plaster, larger than life, historical photograph



2 Georg Kolbe, *Zarathustras Erhebung II* (The Rise of Zarathustra II), 1937, plaster, h. ca. 250 cm, historical photograph



3 Georg Kolbe, *Zarathustras Erhebung III* (The Rise of Zarathustra III), 1940, plaster, h. ca. 270 cm, historical photograph



4 Georg Kolbe, *Zarathustras Erhebung IV* (The Rise of Zarathustra IV), 1943/47, bronze, h. 260 cm, historical photograph



5 Georg Kolbe, *Menschenpaar* (Entwurf für das Nietzsche-Archiv in Weimar) (Human Couple [Model for the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar]), 1939, plaster, small-format model in a niche, historical photograph



6 Georg Kolbe, *Zarathustras Erhebung* (Entwurf für das Nietzsche-Archiv in Weimar) (The Rise of Zarathustra [Model for the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar]), 1939, plaster, small-format model in a niche, historical photograph

Difficulties with Regard to Placement

Under the conditions of the National Socialist regime, the preoccupation with Nietzsche could bring one close to the perpetrators; for Kolbe, however, it was perhaps a matter of participation without actually participating. He had already been dealing with a theme that then found continuation in the Third Reich. His previous reception, which was especially influenced by national conservatism, also allowed for this, but it was transformed in the Third Reich and became more racially influenced, as Arie Hartog has demonstrated.⁸⁸ It is, however, primarily a phenomenon of reception, which Kolbe seems to have addressed in phases; nevertheless, the analytical separation of reception history and formal analysis remains important.

When, for example, Nietzsche's great-nephew Richard Oehler, referring to Nietzsche's idea of "higher breeding," wrote: "This idea could also be excellently represented for all visitors of the Nietzsche Hall by works of visual art: for example, one could depict a young couple of Nordic-Germanic character [...], who wish to be married,"⁸⁹ and when Kolbe's *Menschenpaar* was discussed and prepared, as it were, by Oehler in 1935 as possible niche figures for the Nietzsche Memorial Hall (fig. 5), then these are considerations, which were probably conceived for Weimar in the precise knowledge of Kolbe's work, albeit

independently of him. The racial narrowing of the work's message is made independently of Nietzsche—whose thoughts on breeding are interpreted quite one-dimensionally⁹⁰—and Kolbe. Kolbe's work, however, allows for such instrumentalization.

"A spirit that avoids contact with judges and executioners deserves to be called free."⁹¹ In this sense, Kolbe was not free in the Third Reich. At the same time, Nietzsche opened up for him—in temporal parallel to reflections of Harry Graf Kessler⁹²—the possibility, on the one hand, to strive for a philosophically founded human ideal and, on the other hand, to regain a certain freedom in the course of the National Socialist regime through subsequent distancing and reflection.

The ideal concept of a higher human species, which art was supposed to advance with vivid models, could, however, be integrated into the initially vague ideas of a "species-pure" racial state. I would like to further elaborate on this. The art historian Wilhelm Pinder, who pandered to the new regime, published his Kolbe monograph in 1937. It contained an anecdote according to which a visitor to the sculptor's studio is supposed to have said: "When one has absorbed this world, one feels obliged to behave even more decently, by no means only in artistic matters, but in every situation that demands an attitude."⁹³ In the Third Reich, this could be ignored and perverted in the most brutal way. The inherently abbreviating call "to behave even more decently" cited in Pinder's anecdote could then become the bizarre yet consistent notion of "having remained decent" even as a mass murderer, as Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler claimed in one of his infamous Posen speeches.⁹⁴

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, George Bataille addressed the connection between Nietzsche and the SS; and at this point, one can briefly think Kolbe, Nietzsche, and the SS together, just as Aschheim brought the term "Untermensch" (sub-human), already used by Nietzsche, into direct connection with the infamous SS brochure of the same name from 1942. In it, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Zwei Menschen* (Two Humans) was contrasted with Josef Thorak's *Menschenpaar* rather than with Kolbe's. This would have been possible, of course, because the relevant NS literature, which condemned so-called "degenerate" art and promoted "German" art, perceived Kolbe in the late 1930s as an exception to the general decline of the Weimar era. In 1937, Wolfgang Willrich denounced the contacts between the modern Weimar art trade and art criticism and visual art, and then stated: "Among the German artists included in the long series of monographs *Junger Kunst* (list in the appendix!), only one artist has remained healthy—and even he was at times close to the limit of a fashionable style—Kolbe."⁹⁵ One year later, in 1938, Adolf Dresler then also contrasted Eugen Hoffmann with Kolbe and Klimsch in his book *Deutsche Kunst und entartete "Kunst."*⁹⁶

With his choice of Zarathustra, Kolbe aimed at a self-conquest of man in the sense of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, who, however, did not so much represent a racial ideal as embody a spiritual-moral ideal,⁹⁷ and the advent of the Great Noon—the vision of a feast for the "highest of the elect."⁹⁸ Nietzsche's promulgation of the *Übermensch* as an overcoming of nihilism and Hitler's propaganda image of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national or racial community) probably represent irreconcilable opposites anyway.⁹⁹ The idea of the Nietzsche

Archive in Weimar from 1935 to create a place of pilgrimage “for the great mass of the people” contradicts Nietzsche’s own thoughts on the phenomenon of the mass, which he tied to the concept of resentment and contrasted with a pathos of distance.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the idea of the Nietzsche memorial received rather insufficient support from those in power, which could testify to Nietzsche’s rather marginal importance for NS ideology and may also have had to do with Hitler’s attitude towards Paul Schultze-Naumburg, who built the Nietzsche memorial hall in Weimar but had already disappointed Hitler in 1934/35 during the interior remodeling of the Nuremberg opera house.¹⁰¹

The newspaper articles in Georg Kolbe’s estate reinforce this general impression. At the beginning of 1939, the shell of the memorial hall was completed, and Kolbe was also mentioned in this context, albeit only in the provincial press.¹⁰² Previously, a certain Dr. von Leers or the editors of the newspaper *Nationalsozialistische Landpost* had referred to Kolbe’s *Zarathustra* when illustrating Leers’s article on Zarathustra, Iran, and the “Nordic world of ideas” with a cutout of his head and chest.¹⁰³ In the small volume *Bildwerke*, published in the *Insel-Bücherei* series in 1939/40, co-designed by Kolbe, and with a text by Richard Graul, Nietzsche and the *Zarathustra* sculpture no longer played a role. As no. 26, the *Aufsteigender Jüngling* (Ascending Youth) was illustrated and dated to 1936. The strongly assimilated, smoothed figures from around 1937 onwards dominated the illustration nos. 30–41 (the last image being a back view of the sculpture *Stehender Jüngling* [Standing Youth] from 1939). As the final illustrations, Kolbe showed himself with a self-portrait) from 1934 next to a bust of Franco from 1938 and thus positioned himself politically.¹⁰⁴

Finally, the editions of the Kolbe monographs by Wilhelm Pinder from between 1937 and about 1939 (with print runs up to 20,000) also differ in that the first edition contains sixty-four intaglio plates, and pages 76/77 illustrate *Zarathustra II* as a “statue for a Nietzsche monument” with the (incorrect) height of 270 cm. In the subsequent editions, it is no longer included, and the illustrations, now expanded by four gravure plates, depict instead new bronze casts (from 1938) of women and men, which make a comparatively more official and also more conforming impression. While Kolbe himself took the initiative to have his *Zarathustra* installed in Weimar, it was taken out in a contemporaneous representative publication and replaced by works that conveyed an “official Kolbe” but avoided any possible controversy.¹⁰⁵

Georg Kolbe’s case is exemplary because it sheds light on the ambivalence of invention and reception (attribution of meaning) of forms in the early 1930s and also raises the question regarding the individual behavior of artists and their fate in the Third Reich. The example of Friedrich Nietzsche also addresses the highly topical problem of how to deal with artists and thinkers who expressed offensive or even inhumane thoughts: Nietzsche, because he was possessed by an anti-bourgeois furor and was obviously willing to think the extreme in a nihilistic age he diagnosed as such. His specific discussion of the phenomenon of cruelty, which he analyzed and advocated, has recently been subtly considered.¹⁰⁶ Several of his thoughts compromise Nietzsche from a historical perspective, and he “stands in stark contrast to all those values that are formative and determinative in contemporary

Western societies.”¹⁰⁷ Others, however—especially elitist, intellectual-aristocratic ideas—were suitable points of contact for a resistance against those in power during the Third Reich. And still others remain today possible thorns for an honest self-understanding, when, “in the hour of the perfect noon, the critical time is present, in which the abyss of the nihilism of an existence that has become aimless strives to overcome itself.”¹⁰⁸

The history of Nietzsche’s reception in the Third Reich includes, in addition to Kolbe’s continued reflections, the unique panel painting *Die sieben Todsünden* (The Seven Deadly Sins) by Otto Dix from 1933 with an inscribed Nietzsche quote and Hitler as a personification of Envy,¹⁰⁹ Heidegger’s Nietzsche seminars and lectures of the 1930s and 1940s,¹¹⁰ and the fascinating Nietzsche study of the exiled Heidegger student and critic Karl Löwith from 1935,¹¹¹ as well as the symptomatic failure of a Weimar memorial project in the form of a Nietzsche hall, for which a sculpture by Kolbe had been temporarily intended (cf. p. 265, figs. 5 and 6). As mentioned in the above, Adolf Hitler himself regarded the figure *Zarathustras Erhebung III* (cf. p. 264, fig. 3) as “totally unsuitable” and dismissed it.¹¹² On a suggestion of Count Solms, Kolbe had contacted the Nietzsche Archive earlier—and yet relatively late—in 1938. He reminded Richard Oehler of this in April 1939, since his *Zarathustra* was apparently finished and needed a placement. Kolbe encountered a muddled situation, because in Weimar, one was particularly dissatisfied with the designs of a seated *Nietzsche-Zarathustra* by Fritz Müller-Camphausen. Richard Oehler considered the sculptor to be the opposite of a “creative man.” To him, Kolbe seemed at this time “to be the best artist” to finish the stagnating artistic project; meanwhile, his brother Max had even forgotten about the existence of a six-member committee, of which he himself was a member, for the artistic design of the hall.¹¹³

Now, for a short time, Kolbe was being promoted by Richard Oehler, in that he was emphatically brought into play in Weimar, and his third *Zarathustra* version was to be installed.¹¹⁴ Hitler prevented this, and Richard Oehler—in view of this final decision against Kolbe’s possible involvement—somewhat resignedly fell back on his original idea, which, paradoxically, Müller-Camphausen had actually followed, but could not satisfactorily realize:

“I have the feeling that Hitler simply does not want a symbolic Zarathustra, but rather a real Nietzsche monument. That had been my original thought. I have always talked about creating something similar to Klinger’s Beethoven monument. Thus, if we get a huge Nietzsche-Zarathustra (of course somehow stylistically enhanced) enthroned high above in the apse, then that which I had always had in mind and that, I believe for sure, would also please Hitler, would be achieved. It would have to be a great artistic achievement, not something paltry like the design by Müller-Kamphausen.”¹¹⁵

It was symptomatic that the internally divided ruling elite and the self-proclaimed cultural elite of the Third Reich neither possessed nor could develop a uniform image of Nietzsche, nor did it have a consistent conception of art, and only in the rarest of cases did it have

qualitatively strong artists at its disposal. When asked from Weimar, the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini attempted to redeem them from this dilemma, which was equally due to intellectual and artistic averageness and inner-party personal competition. He quickly filled the intellectual and artistic vacuum with the gift of an ancient statue of Dionysus. In 1942, on the occasion of Nietzsche's hundredth birthday, the German Reich received an ancient Roman replica of a statue of Praxiteles which reached Weimar in the midst of a bombing raid in 1943, the final phase of the war now being underway. Placed in the empty niche of the hall of honor, it would have represented, according to Jürgen Krause, a typical "pseudo-solution,"¹¹⁶ palliating one's own creative incapacity. As the embodiment of a Dionysus Sardanapalus, it would also have involuntarily cynically exposed those in the know to Hitler's will to self-destruction and the destruction of the German people at the end of the war.¹¹⁷ Of course, Mussolini's gift had nothing to do with the somewhat forced and then also ambivalent sculpture of Kolbe, who continued to work on his *Zarathustra* despite the disappointment of 1940, or with Richard Oehler's original and resumed idea of a "Nietzsche-Zarathustra" in imitation and exaggeration of Max Klinger's *Beethoven*.

Notes

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- 1 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche. The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* [1941], trans. David E. Green (London 1964), p. 185.
- 2 See also, as essential overviews of the time: Willi Wolfradt, *Die neue Plastik* (Berlin 1920), pp. 74–76; Alfred Kuhn, *Die neuere Plastik von achtzehnhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich 1922), pp. 85–86. References to Rodin are clearly seen, and the quality of Kolbe is emphasized, but so is the notion that he could not be a permanent bearer of sculptural development. For all Kolbe's importance for official art in the Third Reich, this latent marginalization is repeated in this period. In Carl Einstein's epochal *Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte. Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 1926), Kolbe plays no role and is mentioned only as the owner of a work by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (p. 565). In the register of the third edition of 1931, he is missing completely. At the latest with Carola Giedion-Welcker's book *Plastik des XX. Jahrhunderts. Volumen- und Raumgestaltung* (Stuttgart 1955), Kolbe disappears from the canon of modern sculpture and has, as it were, merely historical value. On Kolbe's public perception, see: Arie Hartog, "Äußere Anmut oder innere Schönheit? Der erfolgreichste deutsche Bildhauer und seine Kritiker 1920 bis 1934," in: *Georg Kolbe 1877–1947*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin and Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen (Munich 1997), pp. 78–86; Arie Hartog, *Moderne deutsche figürliche Bildhauerei. Umriss einer Tradition* (Pulsnitz 2009), pp. 97–108. For more on the partial situating of Kolbe within Expressionism, see: "Kolbe," in: *German Expressionist Sculpture*, ed. Stephanie Barron, exh. cat. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983, pp. 132–135; Gerhard Kolberg, "'Was ist des Menschen Bild?' Skulpturen des Expressionismus," in: *Die Expressionisten. Vom Aufbruch bis zur Verfemung*, exh. cat. Museum Ludwig, Cologne (Ostfildern-Ruit 1996), pp. 200–219, here pp. 208f.; Anita Beloubek-Hammer, "Das 'Problematische' und das 'Gelöste.' Georg Kolbe und der Expressionismus," in: exh. cat. Berlin/Bremen 1997 (see note 2), pp. 71–77.
- 3 Rudolf G. Binding, *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe* [1933] (Berlin

undated [*1936]); cf.: Josephine Gabler "Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit," in: exh. cat. Berlin/Bremen 1997 (see note 2), pp. 87–94.

- 4 Binding *1936 (see note 3), p. 75 [translated]; illustrated on p. 92, detail on p. 38.
- 5 See the references at the end of the book by Bruno E. Werner: *Die deutsche Plastik der Gegenwart* (Berlin 1940).
- 6 In certain approaches, Werner perpetuates theses of the late Weimar Republic, when, for example, it was argued by Lothar Schreyer in 1931: "The sculptors of this in-between generation are thus late historians who want to liberate themselves from historicity, but who are also not predestined to determine the new sculptural form. Among these sculptors, Georg Kolbe (b. 1877), Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919), and Ernst Barlach (b. 1870) should be mentioned." Lothar Schreyer, *Die bildende Kunst der Deutschen. Geschichte und Betrachtung* (Hamburg, Berlin, and Leipzig 1931), p. 342 [translated].
- 7 For more on Georg Kolbe's *Krieger-Ehrenmal* (1935) in Stralsund, see: Dietrich Schubert, "Revanche der Trauer über die Opfer? Kolbe versus Barlach—ein Soldaten-'Ehrenmal' für die Stadt Stralsund 1928–1935," in: Martin Warnke (ed.), *Politische Kunst. Gebärden und Gebaren* [=Hamburger Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte, no. III] (Berlin 2004), pp. 73–96.
- 8 Werner 1940 (see note 5), p. 34 [translated].
- 9 Ibid., pp. 36–37 [translated].
- 10 Ibid., p. 157.
- 11 See the essay by Magdalena Bushart in this volume, pp. 312–330.
- 12 Quoted in: Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (Frankfurt am Main and Berlin 1991), p. 341, entry from May 30, 1942 [translated]. See also: Klaus Backes, *Hitler und die bildenden Künste. Kulturverständnis und Kunstpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Cologne 1988), pp. 98–99. The so-called *Tischgespräche* (table talks) as a contemporary historical source are not unproblematic, but the temporal coincidence of the special provision for Kolbe on the one hand and the art monologue with reference to Klimsch and Kolbe on the other seem to me to indicate a certain authenticity here.
- 13 Picker 1991 (see note 12), p. 342 [translated].
- 14 Kurt Lothar Tank, *Deutsche Plastik unserer Zeit* [edited by Undersecretary Wilhelm Bade and with a preface by Reich Minister Albert Speer] (Munich 1942).
- 15 Ibid., p. 48 [translated].

- 16 Ibid., p. 50 [translated].
- 17 Here, I continue to regard Max Imdahl's approach as fundamental. See: Max Imdahl, "Pose und Indoktrination. Zu Werken der Plastik und Malerei im Dritten Reich" [1988], in: idem: *Gesammelte Schriften*, 3 vols., vol. 3: *Reflexion, Theorie, Methode* (Frankfurt am Main 1996), pp. 575–590. Cf. the partly critical references in: *Artige Kunst. Kunst und Politik im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Silke von Berswordt-Wallrabe, Jörg-Uwe Neumann, and Agnes Tieze, exh. cat. Kunstsammlungen der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Kunsthalle Rostock, and Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg (Bielefeld 2016). See also the essay by Arie Hartog in this volume, pp. 278–293.
- 18 Tank 1942 (see note 14), p. 49 [translated].
- 19 For more on the historical context and the dissolution of the certainty of victory, see: Aristotle A. Kallis, "Der Niedergang der Deutungsmacht. Nationalsozialistische Propaganda im Kriegsverlauf," in: *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg, Band 9, Teil 2: Die Deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945* (Munich 2005), pp. 203–250, here pp. 231–235.
- 20 Werner Hofmann, *Die Plastik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main 1958), p. 73 [translated].
- 21 See: Dietrich Schubert, "Nietzsche und seine Einwirkungen auf die Bildende Kunst – Ein Desiderat heutiger Kunstgeschichtswissenschaft?" in: *Nietzsche-Studien. Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung*, no. 9 (Berlin and Boston 1980), pp. 274–282; idem, "Nietzsche-Konkreteformen in der Bildenden Kunst 1890–1933. Ein Überblick," in: *Nietzsche-Studien. Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung*, nos. 10/11 (Berlin and Boston 1981/82), pp. 278–327.
- 22 Schubert 1981/82 (see note 21), p. 313 [translated].
- 23 Ibid., p. 314 [translated].
- 24 Klaus Wolbert, *Die Nackten und die Toten des "Dritten Reiches." Folgen einer Geschichte des Körpers in der Plastik des deutschen Faschismus* (Gießen 1982), p. 163 [translated]. Cf. *ibid.* *passim* (e.g., p. 79 on Pinder's Kolbe monograph; p. 113 on the dismissal of Kolbe and Scheibe in 1933; the illustration of the decathlete in the context of sports sculpture on p. 191). Cf. also the new edition from 2018, which calls for a separate analysis.
- 25 Ibid., p. 165 [translated].
- 26 Ursel Berger, *Georg Kolbe – Leben und Werk, mit dem Katalog der Kolbe-Plastiken im Georg-Kolbe-Museum* (Berlin 2019), p. 109 and cat. no. 163 [translated].
- 27 Ibid. p. 116 [translated].
- 28 See: Reinhard Müller-Mehlis, *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich* (Munich 1976), pp. 126–132. "Kolbe was accepted and not merely tolerated; but he was not the artist of the new type," p. 131 [translated]; Backes 1988 (see note 12), pp. 98–99.
- 29 See the impressive volume: Heinrich Detering, *Der Antichrist und der Gekreuzigte. Friedrich Nietzsches letzte Texte* (Göttingen 2010).
- 30 See, for example: Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, 2 vols.*, vol. 1: *Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst* [1936/37] (Stuttgart 1998); Dieter Jähnig, "Nietzsches Kunstbegriff (erläutert an der 'Geburt der Tragödie')," in: Helmut Koopmann and J. Adolf Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth (eds.), *Beiträge zur Theorie der Künste im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main 1972), vol. 2, pp. 29–68; Georg Picht, *Nietzsche* (Stuttgart 1988), pp. 256–312; Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, UK 1992); Theo Meyer, *Nietzsche und die Kunst* (Tübingen and Basel 1993) [without any reference to Kolbe]; Salim Kemal, Ivan Gaskell, and Daniel W. Conway (eds.), *Nietzsche, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge, UK and New York 1998) [without any reference to Kolbe]. The connection between Schopenhauer's philosophy of art and Nietzsche's is also significant. See: Wolfgang Schirmacher (ed.), *Schopenhauer, Nietzsche und die Kunst* (Vienna 1991).
- 31 Meyer 1993 (see note 30), p. 154 [translated].
- 32 For more on this, see: Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus H. Ulbricht (eds.), *Handbuch zur "Völkischen Bewegung" 1871–1918* (Munich 1996); Stefan Breuer, *Ordnung der Ungleichheit – die deutsche Rechte im Widerstreit ihrer Ideen 1871–1945* (Darmstadt 2001); as well as, for the context of the reform movements around 1900: *Die Lebensreform. Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, ed. Kai Buchholz et al., 2 vols., exh. cat. Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt, 2001 [here, in vol. 1, the section entitled "Ideengeschichte, Geistesgeschichte und Weltanschauung"]. For more on the complex of Nietzsche and the so-called Conservative Revolution, see, most recently, the extensive anthology: Sebastian Kaufmann and Andreas Urs Sommer (eds.), *Nietzsche und die Konservative Revolution* (Berlin and Boston 2018); Milan Wenner, "Spannungsvolle Nähe. Oswald Spengler und das Nietzsche-Archiv im Kontext der Konservativen Revolution," in: Ulrike Lorenz and Thorsten Valk (eds.), *Kult – Kunst – Kapital. Das Nietzsche-Archiv und die Moderne um 1900* (Göttingen 2020), pp. 133–151.
- 33 See: Steven E. Aschheim, *Nietzsche und die Deutschen. Karriere eines Kults* (Stuttgart and

Weimar 1996), p. 259. The author refers to Albert Speer's diaries.

- 34 See: Jürgen Krause, "Märtyrer" und "Prophet." *Studien zum Nietzsche-Kult in der bildenden Kunst der Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin and New York 1984), pp. 222–223. On January 9, 1939, the Bielefeld daily newspaper *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten* reported on a further donation made by Hitler.
- 35 Aschheim 1996 (see note 33), p. 260 [translated].
- 36 Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," in: idem: *Ecce Homo*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh and London 1911), p. 73. In this context, Nietzsche speaks of "that new party of life-advocates, which will undertake the greatest of all tasks, the elevation and perfection of mankind." The one-sided, eugenic interpretation of such a passage casts a shadow on Nietzsche's iridescence. Cf.: Bernhard H. F. Taureck, *Nietzsche und der Faschismus. Eine Studie über Nietzsches politische Philosophie und ihre Folgen* (Hamburg 1989), pp. 154–190.
- 37 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power. An Attempted Transvaluation of all Values*, vol. 2, books III and IV, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (Edinburgh and London 1913), § 964, p. 368 [emphasis in the original].
- 38 For fundamental details, see: Peter Weingart, Jürgen Kroll, and Kurt Bayertz, *Rasse, Blut und Gene. Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main 1988), pp. 64–66 and 70–72, here p. 72 [translated].
- 39 Taureck 1989 (see note 36), p. 10 [translated].
- 40 Unfortunately, Aschheim did not take note of Taureck's differentiated study, which attempts to precisely map out Nietzsche's "proto-fascist" tendencies. A monumental, critical account is furthermore: Domenico Losurdo, *Nietzsche – der aristokratische Rebell. Intellektuelle Biographie und kritische Bilanz*, 2 vols. (Berlin 2009), cf. here vol. 1, part 3, section 19, pp. 580–600. A review of the articles in: Henning Ottmann (ed.), *Nietzsche-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (Stuttgart and Weimar 2011) [special edition], repeatedly results, in my opinion, in the fact that an evaluation as "proto-fascist" is problematic despite numerous, from today's point of view inhumane "values" of Nietzsche.
- 41 Weingart/Kroll/Bayertz 1988 (see note 38), p. 72, note 69 [translated].
- 42 See, for example: Anneliese Plaga, *Sprachbilder der Kunst. Friedrich Nietzsche in den Bildwelten von Edvard Munch und Giorgio de Chirico* (Berlin 2008); Gerda Wendermann, "Der einsame Wanderer. Edvard Munch malt Friedrich Nietzsche und dessen Schwester," in: Lorenz/Valk 2020 (see note 32), pp. 249–271. In the context of Expressionism, see: Gunter Martens, "Im Aufbruch das Ziel. Nietzsches Wirkung im Expressionismus," in: Hans Steffen (ed.), *Nietzsche. Werk und Wirkungen* (Göttingen 1974), pp. 115–166; James Rolleston, "Nietzsche, Expressionism and Modern Poetics," in: *Nietzsche-Studien. Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung*, vol. 9, 1980, pp. 285–301; Hans Ester, "Nietzsche als Leitstern des Expressionismus," in: Hans Ester and Meindert Evers (eds.), *Zur Wirkung Nietzsches* (Würzburg 2001), pp. 99–111; Anita Beloubek-Hammer, *Die schönen Gestalten der besseren Zukunft. Die Bildhauerkunst des Expressionismus und ihr geistiges Umfeld*, 2 vols. (Cologne 2007), here vol. 1, pp. 32–37 and 279–303; Louisa Theobald, *Arts and Crafts, Nietzsche und die frühe "Brücke." Studien zur Graphik Ernst Ludwig Kirchners* (Regensburg 2011). The essays and contributions of Dietrich Schubert from 1980 and 1981/82 (see note 21) continue to be fundamental. Taking the works of this author as a starting point, the central figure of Otto Dix and his reception of Nietzsche could be discussed in terms of research history, to which, in addition to Schubert, Otto Conzelmann and James A. van Dyke, among others, have contributed.
- 43 See: *Der schreitende, springende, wirbelnde Mensch. Georg Kolbe und der Tanz*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin and Edwin Scharff Museum, Neu-Ulm (Neu-Ulm 2003); regarding Nietzsche, the motif of dance, and Kolbe, see also: Beloubek-Hammer 2007 (see note 42), vol. 1, pp. 279–303 (on Kolbe, here pp. 301–302).
- 44 See: Krause 1984 (see note 34), pp. 154–212; und *Ihr Kinderlein kommet ... Henry van de Velde – Ein vergessenes Projekt für Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Thomas Föhl, exh. cat. Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar (Ostfildern-Ruit 2000); and for a further context: Helmut Scharf, *Kleine Kunstgeschichte des deutschen Denkmals* (Darmstadt 1984), pp. 207–301.
- 45 See: Christoph Schmälzle, "Die 'Wahrheit' der Gesichtszüge. Konkurrierende Nietzsche-Bilder in der Kunst um 1900," in: Lorenz/Valk 2020 (see note 32), pp. 273–295.
- 46 For detailed information on Olde, see: Anna-Sophie Borges, "Ecce Dementia? Friedrich Nietzsche in Fotografien und Radierungen von Hans Olde," in: Lorenz/Valk 2020 (see note 32), pp. 225–247.
- 47 For more on the complex of Nietzsche, Weimar, and his reception in the visual arts, see, fundamentally: Krause 1984 (see note 34); *Wege nach Weimar. Auf der Suche nach der Einheit von Kunst und Politik*, ed. Hans Widerotter and Michael Dorrman, exh. cat. Ausstellungshalle im Thüringer Landesverwaltungsamt, Weimar (Berlin 1999),

- here the essays and exhibits under the heading “Dionysos im 20. Jahrhundert,” pp. 155–215; Erhard Naake, *Nietzsche und Weimar. Werk und Wirkung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna 2000); Simone Bogner, “... den Ausbau und zugleich die Zusammenfassung der Nietzsche-Bewegung von Weimar aus und in Weimar.” Die Nietzsche-Gedächtnishalle von Paul Schultze-Naumburg,” in: Hans-Rudolf Meier and Daniela Spiegel (eds.), *Kulturreformer. Rassenideologie. Hochschuldirektor. Der lange Schatten des Paul Schultze-Naumburg* (Heidelberg 2018), pp. 47–59.
- 48** See: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 116 [translated]. Kolbe had been preoccupied with Nietzsche since 1900 at the latest, for example on the basis of his acquaintance with Raoul Richter and his Nietzsche Lectures, published in 1903 and reprinted several times. See: Raoul Richter, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Sein Leben und sein Werk. Fünfzehn Vorlesungen* (Leipzig 1903). I thank Thomas Pavel for this reference.
- 49** For more on “Beethoven” from 1926 onwards, which is dependent in phases on Klinger’s famous polychrome figure from 1902, see: Binding ⁶1936 (see note 3), pp. 51–57; Berger ²1994 (see note 26), pp. 100–105 and 305–307. Kolbe transforms a seated, portrait-like concrete figure flanked by two female genii into a seemingly rising, genius-like youth figure as the center of a more dynamic group of three. For more on Klinger’s *Beethoven*, see: Georg Bussmann, “Max Klingers ‘Beethoven’ in der 14. Ausstellung der Wiener Secession,” in: Jürgen Nautz and Richard Vahrenkamp (eds.), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende. Einflüsse, Umwelt, Wirkungen* (Vienna, Cologne, and Graz 1993), pp. 525–542; Thomas Strobel, “Beethoven – Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft im Geiste Richard Wagners,” in: Pavla Langer et al. (eds.), *Max Klinger. Wege zur Neubewertung* (Leipzig 2008), pp. 236–250.
- 50** Ursel Berger, “‘Herauf nun, herauf, du großer Mittag.’ Georg Kolbes Statue für die Nietzsche Gedächtnishalle und die gescheiterten Vorläuferprojekte,” in: Widerotter/Dorrmann 1999 (see note 47), pp. 177–194, here p. 181 [translated].
- 51** Ibid. [translated]; in this context, see also: Kurt Badt, “Feiern durch Rühmung” [1960], in: idem: *Kunsttheoretische Versuche. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. Lorenz Dittmann (Cologne 1968), pp. 103–140; on Nietzsche: *ibid.*, pp. 114–118. More essential, however, is Badt’s thought that the artist “seizes these processes together with the emotional impulses they give off by presenting them as an individual, solely responsible, for explicit shaping by highlighting, solemnly setting in the light, praising testimony for the thing itself” (p. 140 [translated]). This seems to me to have been the case with Kolbe’s intensive and long-term preoccupation with Nietzsche. For more on the topos of loneliness proposed by Berger, also with references to Nietzsche, see: Walther Rehm, “Der Dichter und die neue Einsamkeit,” in: idem, *Der Dichter und die neue Einsamkeit. Aufsätze zur Literatur um 1900* (Göttingen 1969), pp. 7–33.
- 52** See the references in: Olaf Peters, *Otto Dix. Der unerschrockene Blick. Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart 2013), pp. 165–175 and 196–205; and for more on a major work, see: Dietrich Schubert, “Otto Dix: 1933 – ‘Die sieben Todsünden,’” in: Uwe Kiessler (ed.), *Architektur im Museum 1977–2012* [commemorative publication in honor of Winfried Nerdinger] (Munich 2012), pp. 232–245.
- 53** See: Oskar Schlemmer. *Der Folkwang-Zyklus. Malerei um 1930* [vol. 1] and *Junge Deutsche Kunst. Der Folkwang-Wettbewerb 1934* [vol. 2], exh. cat. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and Museum Folkwang, Essen, 1993–1994 (Ostfildern-Ruit 1993).
- 54** See, in general: Christian Drobe, *Verdächtige Ambivalenz. Klassizismus in der Moderne 1920–1960* (Weimar 2022), on Schlemmer: pp. 120–133.
- 55** See: Alexander Gerster, Barbara Könczöl, and Janina Nentwig, *Der Neue Mensch. Utopien, Leitbilder und Reformkonzepte zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Frankfurt am Main et al. 2006).
- 56** See: exh. cat. Berlin/Neu-Ulm 2003 (see note 43), pp. 89f.
- 57** See: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 113.
- 58** With “Zarathustra,” Kolbe could also overcome a possible creative crisis, for the former formulated: “No longer to will, no longer to value, no longer to create! Oh, that this great weariness may never be mine!”, see: Nietzsche 1911 (see note 36): “Thus Spake Zarathustra,” § 8, p. 113.
- 59** Dietrich Schubert has presented in detail that surpassing or ascending does not have to be understood as a physical action by the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, who also dealt with Nietzsche and took his own life at a young age. See: Dietrich Schubert, *Die Kunst Lehmbrucks* (Worms ²1990), pp. 177–190; on p. 182 with reference to Herbert von Einem on the “open form” and on p. 184 on the elaborated “dialectical dynamics of upwards and downwards” [translated]. Elsewhere, Schubert speaks in view of the *Emporsteigender Jüngling* (Ascending Youth) of “the new male figure in the Nietzschean sense of the tension between eros and spiritual growth.” Dietrich Schubert, “Wilhelm Lehmbruck im Blick von Meier-Graefe,” in:

Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2015, pp. 147–166, here p. 150 [translated].

- 60 Nietzsche 1911 (see note 36): “Thus Spake Zarathustra,” § 8, p. 113.
- 61 The sports discourse of the time must also be taken into account here. See, among others: Birgit Bressa, “Vom griechischen Athleten zum deutschen Kämpfer. Klassische Körperbilder des Sportlers in der Skulptur der zwanziger bis vierziger Jahre,” in: Hans Körner and Angela Stercken (eds.), 1926–2002. *GeSoLei. Kunst, Sport und Körper* (Ostfildern-Ruit 2002), pp. 314–324; as well as, fundamentally: Stefan Lehmann, “Ideologisierte Utopie. Zum Nachleben des antiken Athletenbildes in der Kunst der Moderne,” in: *Ideale. Moderne Kunst seit Winckelmanns Antike*, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle (Saale) (Dresden 2018), pp. 16–41, here pp. 36–41.
- 62 Quoted in English in: Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art Under a Dictatorship* (New York 1954), p. 102. In the MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin, this is found on a typewritten page dated April 15, 1933 (“15.IV.1933,” Kolbe’s birthday), but this has been crossed out in pencil. The text can also be found in the section “Gedanken und Notizen 1931–1935,” in: Georg Kolbe, *Auf den Wegen der Kunst. Schriften-Skizzen-Plastiken* [with an introduction by Ivo Beucker] (Berlin-Zehlendorf 1949), p. 31.
- 63 See the essay by Ambra Frank in this volume, pp. 136–151.
- 64 See the illustration in: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 183.
- 65 Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 115.
- 66 Typewritten page (see note 62); quoted in English in: Lehmann-Haupt 1954 (see note 62), pp. 102f.
- 67 Typewritten page, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 68 Berger ²1994 (see note 26), pp. 115–116.
- 69 For more on the Rathenau assassination, see: Martin Sabrow, *Der Rathenau mord. Rekonstruktion einer Verschwörung gegen die Republik von Weimar* (Munich 1994).
- 70 Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 79 [translated].
- 71 See: *ibid.*, pp. 104–105 and 324–325.
- 72 See: *ibid.*, pp. 110–111 and 122–123; Dietrich Schubert, “‘Und er kriegt doch kein Denkmal, der Jude!’ – oder: ‘Der Leidensweg der Heine-Ehrung.’ Der letzte Heine-Denkmal-Wettbewerb vor der NS-Diktatur, Düsseldorf, Oktober 1929 – Mai 1932,” in: Wolfgang Karsten (ed.), *Radical Art History. Internationale Anthologie. Subject: O. K. Werckmeister* (Zurich 1997), pp. 430–449; *idem*: “Jetzt wohin?” *Heinrich Heine in seinen verhinderten und errichteten Denkmälern* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna 1999). See also: Ursel Berger, “Das Frankfurter Heine-Denkmal und Georg Kolbes Beitrag zur symbolischen Denkmalsform,” in: exh. cat. Berlin/Bremen 1997 (see note 2), pp. 61–70.
- 73 See the letter of June 8, 1936 in the Federal Archives, NS 15-69, copy in the GKM, Berlin [translated].
- 74 Letter from Gerhard Marcks to the painter Leo von König, October 3, 1933; quoted in: *Gerhard Marcks 1889–1981. Briefe und Werke*, selected, edited, and introduced by Ursula Frenzel (Munich 1988), p. 74 [translated].
- 75 See: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), pp. 337–339. Cf. also: Werner Stockfisch, *Ordnung gegen Chaos. Zum Menschenbild Georg Kolbes*, PhD diss. Humboldt University, Berlin, 1984 (typescript), pp. 131–132, which refers to Reelf’s preliminary work.
- 76 See: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 115, fig. 55. Both the large version of *Zarathustras Erhebung* and a small version from 1932 have not survived.
- 77 See: Hartog 2009 (see note 2), p. 105, with a reference to the review by Richard Biedrzyński in the *Deutsche Zeitung* of May 19, 1933, in which the “promulgation of the German spirit from the heritage of Nietzsche” allegedly visible in Kolbe’s *Zarathustra* is felt “particularly vividly and admonishingly” as a “revolutionary mission today, at the threshold of a national-political turning point of the empire,” and are connected with each other [translated].
- 78 Binding ⁴1936 (see note 3), unpaginated [p. 92].
- 79 See: Karl Löwith, *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* [1935] (Hamburg ⁴1986); Mirguel Skirl, “Ewige Wiederkehr,” in: Ottmann 2011 (see note 40), pp. 222–230.
- 80 See: Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg, *Otto Freundlich. Ascension. Anweisung zur Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main 1987); on p. 10 with a reference to Kolbe’s *Herabschreitender* from 1927 and the remark that “the exemplary nature of an attitude became apparent in the determination of gesture and facial expression” [translated].
- 81 Georg Kolbe. *Werke der letzten Jahre, mit Betrachtungen über Kolbes Plastik von Wilhelm Pinder* (Berlin 1937), pp. 76/77.
- 82 Letter from Richard Oehler to Georg Kolbe, April 11, 1940; copy from the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar in the GKM, Berlin.
- 83 Letter from Dr. Meerwald to Richard Oehler, September 30, 1940; copy from the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar in the GKM, Berlin.

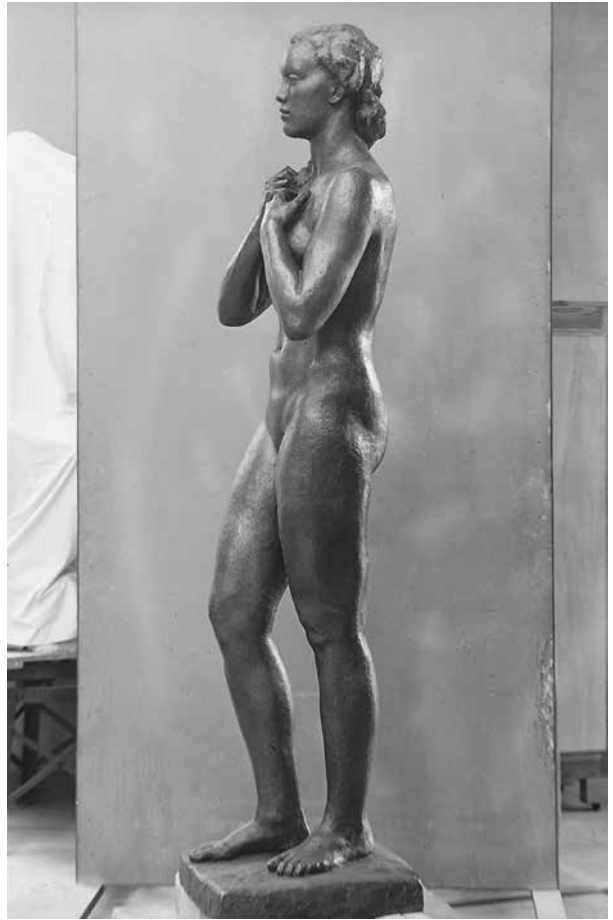
- 84 See: Waldemar Grzimek, *Deutsche Bildhauer des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts. Leben – Schulen – Wirkungen* (Munich 1969), pp. 81–87, here p. 86: “The elongated Zarathustra figure of 1943 lacks the volumetric weight to be able to make the will to ascend and an energetic stride convincing” [translated]. Also quoted in: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 339. Grzimek sees Kolbe as a “special position” and (p. 85): “His sculptures in the 1930s fit in with his artistic development, which may have been only insignificantly reinforced by those of the regime’s official representational mindset” [translated].
- 85 Letter from Richard Oehler to Max Oehler, October 3, 1940; copy from the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar in the GKM, Berlin [translated; emphasis in the original]. On October 8, Richard wrote again to Max Oehler, telling him that he wanted to inform Kolbe of the outcome of the matter. In this context, he mentioned Richard Scheibe in particular as an alternative.
- 86 See: Olaf Peters, “‘Gestaltung ist Erlösung.’ Zu Max Beckmanns anti-nazistischer Malerei der frühen 1940er Jahre,” in: Bertram Kaschek et al. (eds.), *Das subversive Bild. Festschrift für Jürgen Müller* (Berlin and München 2022), pp. 396–409.
- 87 Handwritten draft of a letter from Georg Kolbe to Eleonore Wollenschläger, December 19, 1939, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 88 Hartog 2009 (see note 2), pp. 97–108.
- 89 Richard Oehler, “Gedanken über die Nietzsche Gedenk-Halle,” copy of the manuscript; read to the head of the archives on September 6, 1935, as stated in a handwritten note by Max Oehler. Quoted in: Krause 1984 (see note 34), p. 224 [translated].
- 90 See: Thomas H. Brobjer, “Züchtung,” in: Ottmann 2011 (see note 40), pp. 360–301. On p. 360, he states: “The principal meaning of breeding for N. is a clearly cultural and moral one” [translated]—without negating the biological meaning that also occasionally arises.
- 91 George Bataille, “Nietzsche,” in: Jörg Salaquarda (ed.), *Nietzsche* (Darmstadt 1980), pp. 45–49, here p. 48 [translated]. Bataille’s text was first published in: *Critique*, no. 32, 1949, pp. 271–274.
- 92 At the end of 1932, Harry Graf Kessler spoke—based on Nietzsche—of a “New Man,” to whom he attributed chivalrous qualities: “If his creation is successful and is not disturbed by material misery and political strife, he will be a man in whom solidarity and responsibility will be the basic moral forces; physical health and beauty, as well as light, air, and sun, will be the basic elements of his lifestyle.” Quoted in: Burkhard Stenzel, “... eine Verzauberung ins Helle und Heitere.” Harry Graf Kesslers Ideen zur Kulturerneuerung in Deutschland,” in: Wolfgang Bialas and Burkhard Stenzel (eds.), *Die Weimarer Republik zwischen Metropole und Provinz. Intellektuellendiskurse zur politischen Kultur* (Weimar, Cologne, and Vienna 1996), pp. 37–55, here p. 50 [translated]; for more on the reversal of Graf Kessler’s Weimar plans after 1900 by the National Socialists from 1936 onwards, see: pp. 48–52. For more on the context, see: Peter Grupp, *Harry Graf Kessler 1868–1937. Eine Biographie* (Munich 1995), pp. 85–128 and 149–152; Theodore Fiedler, “Weimar contra Berlin. Harry Graf Kessler and the Politics of Modernism,” in: Françoise Forster-Hahn (ed.), *Imagining Modern German Culture 1889–1910* (Hannover and London 1996), pp. 106–125; Laird M. Easton, *The Red Count. The Life and Times of Harry Kessler* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 2002), pp. 99–115, 185–195, and 391–396.
- 93 Pinder 1937 (see note 81), pp. 6–7; quoted in: Berger ²1994 (see note 26), p. 116 [translated].
- 94 From Heinrich Himmler’s Posen speech of October 4, 1943, in which he deliberately openly addressed the “extermination of the Jews” before an audience of SS leaders and Wehrmacht generals. Quoted in: Wolfgang Michalka (ed.), *Das Dritte Reich*, 2 vols. (Munich 1985), vol. 2, p. 257 [translated].
- 95 Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art* (Munich and Berlin ²1938), p. 73 [translated]. The list in the appendix (pp. 170–171) itemizes sixty-three numbers (some double numbers), with Kolbe as no. 60 with the assessment in brackets: “(Arbeitsrat, the only artist of significance in the whole series)” [translated].
- 96 Adolf Dresler, *Deutsche Kunst und entartete “Kunst.” Kunstwerk und Zerrbild als Spiegel der Weltanschauung* (Munich 1938), plates pp. 78/79.
- 97 Cf. (contemporary and already differentiated): Hans Weichelt, *Zarathustra-Kommentar* (Leipzig ²1922), pp. 335–345. On the one hand, Weichelt points out that Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* was very much “conceived as a biological quantity” (p. 336) and, on the other hand, pathetically emphasizes that “the doctrine of the *Übermensch* was developed on the hot ground of ethical fervor” and that one could extract a “tremendous sense of responsibility” from it (p. 345) [translated].
- 98 Nietzsche 1911 (see note 36), p. 74.
- 99 For more on the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which has now become an important NS research topic, see: Michael Wildt, *Die Ambivalenz des Volkes*.

Der Nationalsozialismus als Gesellschaftsgeschichte (Berlin 2019), pp. 23–113.

- 100 See: Renate Reschke, "Masse," in: Ottmann 2011 (see note 40), pp. 279–280.
- 101 See: Krause 1984 (see note 34), p. 225. For more on Nuremberg and Weimar, see: Norbert Borrmann, *Paul Schultze-Naumburg 1869–1947. Maler, Publizist, Architekt* (Essen 1989), pp. 208–210.
- 102 The articles preserved in the estate appeared with basically identical wording between January 7 and 9, 1939 in the *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten* (Bielefeld), *Der Freiheitskampf* (Dresden), the *Zittauer Nachrichten*, the *Mittelschlesische Gebirgszeitung* (Waldenburg), and the *Egerer Zeitung*. Only Georg Kolbe was mentioned by name as a sculptor: "Now the most important German sculptors, among them Georg Kolbe, are already busy creating designs for a Nietzsche-Zarathustra monument" [translated]. The correspondence between Richard and Max Oehler as well as Georg Kolbe in April 1939 reveals that such an involvement of Kolbe had no official character on the part of the Nietzsche Archive but was now concretely discussed only in April/May 1939.
- 103 Dr. von Leers, "Wiedergeburt im Lande Zarathustras. Der Iran und die nordische Gedankenwelt," in: *Nationalsozialistische Landpost*, September 17, 1937. I would like to thank Dietrich Schubert for pointing out this article.
- 104 See: Georg Kolbe. *Bildwerke, vom Künstler ausgewählt, mit einem Text von Richard Graul* (Leipzig undated [1939/40]). See also the reference to Kolbe's "assimilation" using the example of *Venus and Mars* (1939/40) in: Dietrich Schubert: "Fliehende Liebe. 'Fugit Amor.' Auguste Rodins Liebespaar und verwandte Darstellungen," in: *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, vol. 3, no. LXVIII, 2017, pp. 159–178, here p. 173.
- 105 I thank Thomas Pavel for this and other references made at our meeting in Berlin on October 4, 2022.
- 106 See: Wolfgang Müller-Funk, *Crudelitas. Zwölf Kapitel einer Diskursgeschichte der Grausamkeit* (Berlin 2022), pp. 169–193.
- 107 Ibid., p. 171 [translated].
- 108 Löwith 1986 (see note 79), p. 110 [translated].
- 109 Otto Dix, *Die sieben Todsünden*, 1933, mixed media on wood, 179 × 120 cm, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. See, among others, the remarks by Birgit Schwarz in: idem, *Werke von Otto Dix*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, 1986; Schubert 2012 (see note 52); Peters 2013 (see note 52), pp. 199–201.
- 110 See: Heidegger 1998 (see note 30).
- 111 See: Löwith 1986 (see note 79). In 1941, in American exile, Löwith contrasted Nietzsche and Richard Wagner, resolutely adhering to Nietzsche's approach: "While Nietzsche, however, did not test his will for a spiritual revolution in any political reality, Wagner also participated in this intoxicating spectacle with the use of his person, first in Leipzig in 1830, where, according to his own statement, he took part in the destruction like a madman." Löwith 1995 (see note 1), p. 201 [translated].
- 112 See: Krause 1984 (see note 34), p. 231.
- 113 See: letter from Richard Oehler to Max Oehler, March 27, 1939, copy from the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar in the GKM, Berlin. At this time, Binding's Kolbe monograph had not yet been acquired by the Nietzsche Archive, and Richard Oehler suggested this. See also: letter from Richard Oehler to Max Oehler, April 22, 1939, with a reference to the temporally overlapping considerations of Kolbe and Oehler, copy from the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar in the GKM, Berlin.
- 114 See: Krause 1984 (see note 34), p. 232. Here, Krause cites Oehler's parallel consideration of reverting to the abstract symbol of the flame, which underlines the conceptual impasse of the efforts in Weimar.
- 115 Letter from Richard Oehler to Max Oehler, October 8, 1940, copy from the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar in the GKM, Berlin [translated].
- 116 See: Krause 1984 (see note 34), pp. 232–233 [translated]. See also the description in: Taureck 1989 (see note 36), pp. 80–81.
- 117 For more on Delacroix's famous painting *The Death of Sardanapalus*, see: Christine Tauber, *Ästhetischer Despotismus. Eugène Delacroix' "Tod des Sardanapal" als Künstlerchiffre* (Constance 2006).

Arie Hartog

What Does the Hüterin Guard?



1 Georg Kolbe, *Die Hüterin* (Guardian), 1938, bronze, h. ca. 210 cm, historical photograph

Georg Kolbe's *Hüterin* (Guardian), a bronze sculpture approximately 210 centimeters high and thus slightly larger than life, was created in 1938 (fig. 1).¹ It was the sculptor's first large figure after the publication of Wilhelm Pinder's monograph on his work.² In terms of reception history, Kolbe was at his zenith.³ The illustration section of the book concludes with a sketch of his *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues), an ambitious project of seven sculptures installed in a circle, which the sculptor had been working on since 1936 and for which three sculptures already existed. The *Hüterin* was the fourth figure in the series, and the only one without hanging arms. With her right hand, she holds her plait, and in the left hand her "secret."

Kolbe's friend and colleague Richard Scheibe (1879–1964) wrote about him in 1931 that in their time, for the first time since antiquity, the image type of the "calmly standing person with hanging arms" had returned.⁴ For this modern conception of sculpture, he referred to Adolf von Hildebrand's (1847–1921) book *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (The Problem of Form in the Visual Arts)⁵ and emphasized the formal aspects in his friend's work. He concluded with a mysterious, convoluted sentence: The standing

figures of Kolbe are “statues of free visual art that affirm the body.”⁶ With this, Scheibe emphasized that, although representation of the human body was at the core of this art, the form freely found for this purpose was at least as important. The peculiar, figurative use of the word “statue” can be explained by the fact that the author wanted to avoid the term “symbol.”⁷ It is not a particular sculpture but rather the entire oeuvre that carries this meaning. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the individual work, because only there does the freedom of the form become visible.

Today’s viewers see above all the object and the image of humanity it contains, as well as a proximity to the racial ideals that dominated the German media after 1933. The fact that Kolbe’s and Scheibe’s “calmly standing persons” corresponded to an earlier attempt to free modern figurative sculpture from claims to content is hardly perceived. The reduction of narrative aspects led to a focus on the depicted bodies, which took on a special significance in the National Socialist environment. If Kolbe’s sculptures are (partially) separated from this in the following, it is not in order to “rescue them hermeneutically.”⁸ They figured into the National Socialist art discourse and were actively placed in this cultural-political environment by both the artist and Margrit Schwartzkopff (1903–1969), Kolbe’s secretary and photographer. The sculptor meticulously followed what was written about him and responded to it by commenting on newspaper clippings and possibly in his sculptures. He was well aware that his work confirmed the illusion of a conflict-free and “racially pure” *Volksgemeinschaft* (national and racial community).

The *Hüterin* is a depiction of an unspoiled human being, and it can be read as a sculpture with which the artist positioned himself in his contemporary environment, referring to both history and the present. During the brief period between 1936 and 1940, when National Socialist art policies and their sculptural preferences were being consolidated, Kolbe was seen as a sculptor of a healthy image of humanity and as someone whose art, even before 1933, corresponded to the ideals that were valid thereafter. However, his work lacked a symbolic and heroic vein directed towards the future. For contemporary art critics, he was a transitional artist.⁹ From an art-historical point of view and classification, the *Hüterin* is one of the sculptor’s most important works, which illustrates his special position.

The Sculpture

The first bronze version of the *Hüterin* was cast in 1938.¹⁰ Kolbe presented it in March 1939 at the spring exhibition of the Prussian Academy of Arts at the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin together with the bust of Francisco Franco, which had been completed shortly before (fig. 2). He then sent it, along with two other figures from the *Ring der Statuen*—the *Amazone* from 1937 and the new *Auserwählte* (The Chosen) from 1939—to the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition) in Munich. There, the three were prominently displayed in the Sculpture Hall (fig. 7). Bernhard Rust acquired the *Hüterin* for the Reich Ministry of Science, Education and Culture. It cost 18,000 Reichsmarks—a clear



2 Spring exhibition of the Preußische Akademie der Künste, Berlin, March 1939, with three works by Georg Kolbe: *Junges Weib* (Young Woman, 1938), *Die Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), and in the center the bust of Francisco Franco (1938), historical photograph

indication of the artist's status. In 1952, it was transferred to the Nationalgalerie by the Berlin Magistrate along with the first cast of the *Junges Weib* (Young Woman, 1938), which Adolf Hitler had purchased in 1938 and also handed over to the ministry. In the 1960s, it stood in the colonnade courtyard under the title *Stehende* (Standing Woman) (fig. 3), and in 1988 in the Lustgarten in front of the Altes Museum. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was placed in the atrium of the Altes Museum, and in 2010 it was transferred from the Nationalgalerie to the Federal Ministry of Finance as *Fremdbesitz* (third-party ownership).¹¹ At the time of writing, the bronze, executed by the Noack fine art foundry in Berlin, is on permanent loan from the Federal Government to the Kunstgussmuseum in Lauchhammer, together with the *Junges Weib*. A second copy was cast in 1940 and has been part of the *Ring der Statuen* in Frankfurt am Main's Rothschild Park since 1951.

Ursel Berger suspected that the then seventeen-year-old tap dancer Evelyn Künneke was the model for the *Hüterin*.¹² She was unfamiliar with the studio calendar from the estate, which resurfaced in 2020. There, the abbreviation "MD" is found for the time when the figure was being worked on.¹³ Model studies and nature models were important, but Kolbe's sculptures are first and foremost constructions that were created in sculptural realization with and without a nude model. His drawings reveal a preference for curved lines, from which, in the sculpture, an interplay between differently stretched, mostly convex surfaces emerge. The (spatial) composition of the *Hüterin* does not play an important role either in contemporary reception or in art-historical research, but it is worth pointing out several aspects. First, the composition is dominated by an implied striding motif. The



3 Georg Kolbe's *Die Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), at the time titled *Stehende* (Standing Woman), in the colonnade courtyard in front of the Nationalgalerie, East Berlin, 1960s, historical photograph



4 The unit of measurement on the stomach of Georg Kolbe's *Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938)

right leg is slightly displaced forward. Both soles of the feet touch the pedestal without the pelvis tilting. The sculptor achieved this by extending the right lower leg. The shoulders and hips form almost horizontal axes. Second, the work is constructed in vertical zones that run parallel to the picture plane when viewed from the front, as Hildebrand wrote in 1893. The nipples and pubis, which are only slightly indicated, lie on the same plane. Viewed from the side, the upper body therefore appears to be leaning slightly backward. This detail is important in comparison to other German sculptors who exhibited at Haus der Kunst in Munich between 1937 and 1944.¹⁴ This is not a body with two breasts, but rather the belly, waist, and upper abdomen are a rhythmic sequence of sculptural units determined by a barely visible system of measurements. The fact that the navel is located approximately halfway between the nipples and the pubic region is in keeping with basic anatomical knowledge, but Kolbe divided the intervening volume into four equal parts (fig. 4). The two hollows above and below the navel are sculptural inventions. Following the measure that underlies this order downward, one discovers a small depression on the thigh at exactly the same distance.

Kolbe was concerned neither with a systematic approach that would run through his entire oeuvre, nor with a canon of beauty. The focus was on a comprehensible order within the individual work of art, which, in the case of the *Hüterin*, is marked by a measure that

is maintained. In this way, he took a position in a discussion among sculptors documented by his colleagues Ludwig Kasper (1893–1945) and Gerhard Marcks (1889–1981).¹⁵ They discussed the question of whether and to what extent stereometric order played a role for modern German sculpture. This had little to do with measuring bodies from a eugenic perspective, as practiced by contemporary race theorists. For Kasper, the emphasis on the architecture of the figure followed from Hildebrand's reception; Marcks, on the other hand, remained faithful to nature and sought a balance between stereometry and the natural model. Kolbe placed a different emphasis in this discussion, namely, as Scheibe wrote in 1931, on surfaces, "masses and weights that form the surfaces."¹⁶ A third formal feature of the *Hüterin* shows how freely the artist designed the volumes: he manipulated the cross section of the thighs so that, when viewed from the front, they develop a sculptural force because they literally have more depth.

The fourth formal feature of the *Hüterin* is the shifted triangle formed by the two forearms and the chin turned slightly to the right. The figure is designed frontally, which makes this axis shift an important design element. The fact that small deviations within a strict structure create a lively effect was part of the basic vocabulary in the environment of Kasper, Kolbe, and Marcks, each of whom dealt with archaic sculpture in the mid-1930s: Marcks had visited Greece in 1928, Kolbe and Scheibe in 1931, and Kasper in 1936. It is not improbable, although neither is it obvious, that Kolbe drew on early Greek sculpture in his "simply standing" and striding figures. An indication of this is a fifth subtle setting. Archaic kouroi, for all their frontality and even without pupils, often give the impression of looking down on the viewer—a result of placing the ears slightly higher than natural. Kolbe turned this "trick" around. The ears are positioned lower, so that the woman always seems to be looking over her audience—in other words, not making any reference relating to the viewer.¹⁷

Seen in this light, the *Hüterin* is a statement in the discussion of modern figurative sculpture in Germany in the 1930s and the relationship between perceived nature and developed form, which can be traced back to the middle of the previous decade. The return to Greek archaic sculpture, to minimal motifs of movement, and to frontality emphasized the formal aspects. This position was summarized in 1934 by Werner Haftmann in the journal *Die Kunst der Nation*. He referred to studio discussions and presented a radical reading of Hildebrand's and Hans von Marée's (1837–1887) theories in the direction of an "autonomous sculptural creed" that "also demanded of the viewer a new conception of sculpture in accordance with the structural laws of sculpture."¹⁸

Angle of View

In Frankfurt, the frontal perception of the *Hüterin* is determined by the recess in the center of the *Ring der Statuen*. In Lauchhammer, she now stands at ground level. The sculpture was designed for a pedestal height of roughly forty-five centimeters, so that the horizon for viewers standing in front of it is approximately at the level of the pelvis.



5 Spring exhibition of the Preußische Akademie der Künste, Berlin, March 1939, with three works by Georg Kolbe: *Junges Weib* (Young Woman, 1938), *Die Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), and in the center the bust of Francisco Franco (1938); to the far left the *Speerträger* (Spear Bearer, 1938) by Ludwig Kasper; published in the *Neueste Zeitung*, Frankfurt am Main, March 20, 1939

From this perspective, all the sculptural features of the figure can be seen, and it develops its greatest presence. This can be proved by the work itself and its composition, and it can be understood thanks to historical photographs that give clues to the artist's intention. In 1939, the Kronprinzenpalais was extended with a skylight hall, which allowed a sophisticated presentation of large sculptures. A photograph of the exhibition at the Academy of Arts (fig. 5) shows the *Junges Weib* and the *Hüterin* next to Kasper's *Speerträger* (Spear Bearer, 1938), which, without the spear, is somewhat smaller than Kolbe's two female figures,¹⁹ making their higher positioning worthy of note. Together with Fritz Klimsch's (1870–1960) *Galatea*, they dominated the space. Since Klimsch and Kolbe were members of the academy, it can be assumed that their wishes regarding the positioning of their works were taken into consideration. Margrit Schwartzkopff's photographs also suggest that the sculptor saw the horizon of vision at the level of the pelvis (fig. 6). At Haus der Kunst, on the other hand, the figure was presented higher, which meant that the aforementioned dimension disappeared from perception. In the Sculpture Hall, the works were always placed against the wall. The format of the pedestals was based on the skirting boards in the room, so that the sculptures (with the exception of the portrait heads) were never at eye level, just like the paintings. Above a certain size, this did not matter anyway, which suggests the building was designed with only huge formats in mind.



6 Georg Kolbe, *Die Hüterin* (Guardian), 1938, plaster, h. ca. 210 cm, historical photograph

There is a remarkable photograph depicting Adolf Hitler walking through the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1939* with Kolbe's three bronze figures in the background (fig. 7). The "Führer" pays no attention to them. Rather, his gaze seems to be directed at another work in the room: Arno Breker's (1900–1991) *Bereitschaft* (Readiness, 1939; fig. 8). The martial swordsman was positioned to face the door through which the higher party functionaries entered. The photograph of Hitler even suggests eye contact, which is possible because the figure, looking slightly down and almost twice life-size, was positioned lower than the other sculptures in the hall. Breker was represented in the large Sculpture Hall with four works, Kolbe with three. Never before had Breker and Kolbe been so prominently juxtaposed. In the case of *Bereitschaft*, consideration was given to the (theatrical) sculptural composition with its themes of force and purposeful tension. Breker became the darling of those in power. In the case of Kolbe's *Hüterin*, what remained in this context was the title, a motif, a human image, and sturdy legs.

Just as he followed the reception of his works in the press, Kolbe was also well aware of the exhibition conventions in Munich. Above all, he would have been aware of the height of the pedestals and the accompanying reduction of the figure to a distant effect. He would certainly also have known that the discussion of autonomous sculpture and scale that took place in private rooms and studios was irrelevant in this context. Here, he



7 Adolf Hitler visiting the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* 1939 in Munich; in the background, three works by Georg Kolbe: *Die Amazone* (Amazon, 1937), *Die Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938), and *Die Auserwählte* (The Chosen, 1939), historical photograph

was primarily a designer of healthy bodies. After the success of the sale of the *Junges Weib* in 1938, he could speculate that he would find a buyer for at least one of the three female figures he sent in. This means that whoever thinks about the *Hüterin* should situate it in various historical discourses.

One of these discourses surrounding Kolbe's art is that of the "ideal figure." Traditionally, this term refers to a sculptural work that does not saliently refer to a specific person. At the latest since the second half of the nineteenth century and with the widespread availability of photographs, this convention had been mixed, in the case of the nude figure, with popular and propagated notions of beauty, whereby the sculptural work of art itself hardly plays a role. The photographic reproduction becomes its proxy and, in part, a carrier of other content as well. This is clearly illustrated by Franz Kaufmann's photograph from the Munich exhibition, which dominates the reception of the *Hüterin* (fig. 9). The photograph was taken slightly from the side and from below, which makes the entire sculpture appear slimmer. The extension of the lower leg is visible in principle, but it is unlikely that anyone would have perceived this in the media context of the "Third Reich." In the photograph, the figure may correspond to notions of female beauty and a racial ideal,



8 Arno Breker, *Bereitschaft* (Readiness), 1939, plaster, h. ca. 300 cm, historical photograph



9 Georg Kolbe, *Die Hüterin* (Guardian), 1938, bronze, h. ca. 210 cm, historical photograph

but in the actual artwork, at the presentation height intended by the artist, this “ideal” turns out to be determined by pelvic obliquity and leg length discrepancy.

Art-Historical Classifications

Kolbe collected newspaper clippings—about himself, but also about his competitors. Judging by the number of articles preserved in the Georg Kolbe Museum Archive, he put Ernst Barlach (1870–1938), Breker, and Klimsch in this category.²⁰ The calendars that have now resurfaced reveal that, in the second half of the 1930s, he maintained contacts with Kasper and Marcks, with whom he was not in competition in the strict sense. Both sculptors moved on the fringes of the official art business in Germany, while Kolbe was at the

center. They were his interlocutors. The unsurprising fact that Kolbe moved in different contexts becomes visible in the sources.

At the center of the discourse on modern German figurative sculpture was the notion of a sculpture that, as Hildebrand put it, “wants nothing.”²¹ The narrative content of the work of art was to be subordinated to its composition. A central problem was the positioning of the upper extremities, since many gestures carry with them iconographic levels of meaning that had to be suppressed. The “hanging arms” of which Scheibe wrote belong in this context, as do the poses of the joined hands above the head favored by Kasper. In the case of the *Hüterin*, there are striking parallels to the work of Marcks, who preferred poses with the hands on the body; in early 1938, he had created a small work, *Zopfhaltende* (Woman Holding Her Plait, fig. 10), in which his typical combination of everyday observation and tectonics is evident. In contrast to the earlier works from the *Ring* with hanging arms, with his *Hüterin*, Kolbe took a similar motif developed in model studies and worked it into his composition. It is not unlikely that Marcks and Kolbe influenced each other. They saw the sculptural potential of the motif, especially the contrast between the surfaces of the body, which they both treated very differently, the detailed plait, and the fingers as a transition between them.

The other hand of the *Hüterin*, in which she probably carries her secret, is positioned above the breast. This eliminates several common iconographic patterns. She is neither an allegory of nature nor of chastity. The gesture, integrated into a careful triangular composition, is—like the gaze—not directed outward toward activity. The posture is reminiscent of a woman holding a chain pendant. If so, it could perhaps be understood as an allusion or even a response to Aristide Maillol’s (1861–1944) *Venus* from 1928, which exists in versions with and without a pearl necklace (fig. 11). The arms of the *Venus* reach into the space, while Kolbe’s *Hüterin* remains closed, in accordance with Kolbe’s Berlin context, which in turn could be interpreted in a nationalistic sense as a contrast to her French counterpart. The motif cannot be clearly assessed, and this was probably intentional.²² Kolbe was always the sculptor of postures wrapped in sculptures, the expression of which can be traced without being explicit.

An analysis of the figure and its art-historical context suggests that it was a thoroughly composed sculptural work of art that was exhibited at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in 1939 and integrated into the prevailing discourses. There, she was seen primarily as a representation of a healthy German woman. The *Hüterin* played a role in the media of the same ilk, and it can be assumed that the figure, slimmed down by the chosen perspective, as it appeared as a photograph in the magazine *Die Kunst im Dritten Reich*, prompted Klaus Wolbert to rename the work *Hüterin (der Art)* (Guardian [of the Race]) in 1982.²³ In doing so, he gave the sculpture a national-racial meaning that it formally does not possess, but confirmed how easy it is to interpret it in this way when the sculptural composition plays no role in perception.

A historical example of this strand of reception is offered by the magazine *Deutsche Leibesucht*, published by a nazified nudist organization of the same name. The *Hüterin* was reproduced there in 1940 along with other nude sculptures from the *Große Deutsche*



10 Gerhard Marcks, *Zopfhaltende* (Woman Holding Her Plait), 1938, bronze, h. 54.5 cm, historical photograph



11 Aristide Maillol, *Venus*, 1928, bronze, h. ca. 175 cm, historical photograph

Kunstaussstellung. It is an example of Wolbert's thesis that there is a shift in the media from nudes to sculpture, and how sculpture is thereby ascribed something exemplary.²⁴ The nude figures exhibited in Munich were praised for their natural unselfconsciousness, austere chastity, and Nordic beauty, which, in contrast to the artistic character of the individual work, was experienced and understood by the entire population.²⁵ This means, incidentally, that the formal qualities of artworks could also be part of the National Socialist horizon of reception. They were just never the focus of attention and thus provided an area in which modernist claims could be asserted. Conversely, Kolbe's *Hüterin* functioned in the sense of "racial grooming"²⁶ as long as no one saw or cared how and where the artist deviated from human anatomy and thus from nature, which, in the National Socialist context, was reinterpreted as racially pure.



12 Gerhard Marcks, *Die Hüterin* (Guardian), 1973, bronze, h. 165 cm, historical photograph

Titles

The woman as *Hüterin*, in the sense of “guardian” of family, faith, home, children, and tradition, is a fixed topos of conservative ideas of society. German racism supplemented this with racial hygiene, and together they resulted in the propagated National Socialist ideal of women. Various art historians have already established that this overloaded ideal and the reality of nude depictions in NS-era sculpture have little to do with each other.²⁷ One well-known example is *Hüterin der Art* by the painter and ideologue Wolfgang Willrich (1897–1948): a pre-1934 painting of a clothed, standing, pregnant blonde woman with her hands on her stomach that belonged to Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer SS. Wolbert and those who follow his interpretation to this day see the same theme in Kolbe’s *Hüterin* and see what she is guarding between her legs rather than in her left hand.²⁸

Statistically, it would probably be possible to prove that “Hüterin” as the title of a sculpture occurred more frequently in Germany during the “Third Reich” than in the period before or after. The historical value of such a statement remains to be seen. Two sculptures are documented, the one discussed by Kolbe and another one by Georg Türke (1884–1972), who exhibited *Hüterin der heiligen Flamme* (Guardian of the Sacred Flame) in Munich in 1943. From the period after 1945, only one work by Marcks is known (fig. 12), with which he memorialized his daughter Brigitte, who gave up her work to care for her parents. Again, not a progressive image of women, but it shows a spectrum of titles that expands when “Gardienne,” “Gardeuse,” “Hoedster,” “Keeper,” “Opatrovník,” or “Strażniczka” are searched for in neighboring countries.

Hüterin is perhaps an allegorical title, but it does not make the sculpture an allegory. It is a sculptural construction in plaster transferred into bronze, for which one or more women were models. *Hüterin* is certainly a descriptive title, since the person depicted is holding something. The work is in the tradition of modern German figurative sculpture and relates to a discussion going on among various sculptors in Berlin at the time, which was about comprehensible composition. This understanding makes aesthetic qualities visible. This work of art played a role in the publicity of the “Third Reich,” where it served the overriding racist ideals. This is not a contradiction, but rather a historical fact.

The proposal to consider the *Hüterin* as a major work of German sculpture of the second half of the 1930s, and to virtually demand its return to the Nationalgalerie, opens up new perspectives. In this work, the discourses of the time overlap, and an examination of the work reveals directions for future research, for example on the transitions between art history and “visual history,” or on the question of which media—as well as why and how—the artist supplied with photographs. In the case of the *Hüterin*, the subsequent art-historical reception was determined by a photograph published in the art media of the time that did not originate from Kolbe’s studio. In addition, the title was read in a one-sided way and the work itself was ignored. It is therefore worth returning to the fundamentals of art history²⁹ in order to approach the historical complexity by means of an interpretive description.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Antje Bräuer (Kunstgussmuseum Lauchhammer), Carolin Jahn, Thomas Pavel, and Elisa Tamaschke (Georg Kolbe Museum) for their comments and information. Since the editors invited only external scholars for this book project, I would like to refer to a recent, fundamental text by a staff member of the Georg Kolbe Museum: Thomas Pavel, “‘Ein wirklich gutes Werk’ für Hannover? Georg Kolbes ‘Menschenpaar’ am Maschsee,” in: *Hannoversche Geschichtsblätter*, no. 74, 2020, pp. 22–50.
- 2 Wilhelm Pinder, *Georg Kolbe. Werke der letzten Jahre, mit Betrachtungen über Kolbes Plastik* (Berlin 1937).
- 3 See: Arie Hartog, *Georg Kolbe. Receptie in Duitsland tussen 1920 en 1950*, PhD diss., Catholic University Nijmegen, 1989, pp. 57–61.
- 4 Richard Scheibe, “Dem Werk Georg Kolbes. Ein Bekenntnis zur Plastik,” in: *Georg Kolbe. 100 Lichtdrucktafeln* (with accompanying remarks by Georg Kolbe and an introduction by Richard Scheibe), ed. Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar Marburg (Marburg 1931), p. 9 [translated].
- 5 Adolf von Hildebrand, *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (Strasbourg 1893).
- 6 Scheibe 1931 (see note 4), p. 10 [translated].
- 7 See: Arie Hartog, “Feldzeichen. Beobachtungen zu Richard Scheibe 1925–1937,” in: *Nympe und Narziss. Der Bildhauer Richard Scheibe (1879–1964)*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, 2004, pp. 103–116.
- 8 See: Helmut Lethen, “Nachwort. Im Freiheitsraum der Kälte,” in: *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte. Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Berlin 2022), p. 314.
- 9 See: Josephine Gabler, “Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit,” in: *Georg Kolbe 1877–1947*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin and Gerhard-Marcks-Haus, Bremen (Munich and New York 1997), pp. 87–94.
- 10 Kolbe had created a (no longer existing) approximately 80 cm high model, which was enlarged in the foundry and subsequently reworked by the artist (GKM Archive, Berlin).
- 11 I would like to thank Dieter Scholz for information on the history of the *Hüterin* in the Nationalgalerie.
- 12 See: Ursel Berger, “Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit. Tatsachen und Interpretationen,” 2013, p. 18. The text can be found on the website of the Georg Kolbe Museum: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140901011620/http://www.georg-kolbe-museum.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Georg-Kolbe-in-der-NS-Zeit.pdf>. An illustrated, amended version was published by the Georg Kolbe Museum in 2018: “‘Einseitig künstlerisch.’ Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit”, URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190508074534/https://www.georg-kolbe-museum.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Einseitig-künstlerisch-mit-Bildern-Titel-1.pdf> [both sites last accessed March 25, 2023].
- 13 Probably “Modell Daute” (L. Daute). For references to Kolbe and his models in the calendars, I thank Thomas Pavel.
- 14 In the lecture and subsequent discussion, four sculptural traditions to be distinguished in the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen* were discussed in relation to the *Hüterin*.
- 15 See: Werner Haftmann, *Ludwig Kasper* (Berlin 1939), pp. 8–10. For more on Kasper and systems of measurements, see also: Regina Maria Hillert, “Gebaute Figur.” *Studien zu Leben und Werk des Bildhauers Ludwig Kasper (1893–1945)*, PhD diss. University of Saarbrücken, 2012 (Hamburg 2017).
- 16 Scheibe 1931 (see note 4), p. 5 [translated].
- 17 Media-specific references to antiquity in sculpture between 1920 and 1960 would be a worthwhile topic to add to recent research on “classicism” in the history of German art. Cf. Christian Drobe, *Verdächtige Ambivalenz. Klassizismus in der Moderne 1920–1960*, PhD diss. Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, 2018 (Ilmtal-Weinstraße 2022).
- 18 W[erner] Haftmann, “Grundsätzliches über neue Bildhauerei,” in: *Die Kunst der Nation*, vol. 2, no. 17, 1934, p. 2 [translated].
- 19 See: Hillert 2017 (see note 15), p. 396.
- 20 The part of Kolbe’s estate that came to the Georg Kolbe Museum in 2020 adds two aspects to the large collection of press clippings in the museum’s archive. First, it becomes clear which artists Kolbe considered competitors, and second, how precisely he followed the discussion about modern art in 1933 and 1934.
- 21 See: Arie Hartog, “Einführung. Moderne deutsche figürliche Bildhauerei,” in: idem, *Moderne deutsche figürliche Bildhauerei. Umriss einer Tradition*, PhD diss. Radboud University, 2009 (Pulsnitz 2009), pp. 9–21, here p. 12 [translated].
- 22 In the spirit of Aby Warburg’s “*Pathosformel*,” the lecture also presented the hand posture of a *Nemesis* not as a goddess of revenge and retribution, but rather as a “guardian” and guarantor of measure and order.
- 23 Klaus Wolbert, *Die Nackten und die Toten des “Dritten Reiches”: Folgen einer politischen Geschichte*

- des Körpers in der Plastik des deutschen Faschismus, PhD diss. University of Marburg, 1980 (Gießen 1982), p. 41; idem, *Dogmatische Körper – Perfide Schönheitsdikate. Bedeutungsprofile der programmatischen Aktplastik im Dritten Reich* (Berlin 2018). For a critique of this reinterpretation, see: Berger 2013 (see note 12), pp. 17–18.
- 24** Wolbert 1982 (see note 23), pp. 232–233.
- 25** K. B. [Karl Bückmann], “Von der Kunst zum Leben,” in: *Deutsche Leibesucht. Blätter für naturnahe und arbeitsgemäße Lebensgestaltung*, March 1940, pp. 409–413.
- 26** Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London 2008), pp. 76–142. The author introduced the term “racial grooming” (p. 89) to describe how German society was deliberately prepared, slowly and steadily, to accept racial doctrine and genetic selection as a matter of course. The recoding of the categories “natural” and “beautiful” into “racial” and “pure,” which was already common in racist circles before 1933, played an important role in this process. For more on the impact of this policy, see: Janosch Steuwer, “Ein Drittes Reich, wie ich es auffasse.” *Politik, Gesellschaft und privates Leben in Tagebüchern 1933–1939*, PhD diss. Ruhr University Bochum, 2015 (Göttingen 2017), pp. 242–352. Kolbe’s reception offers a great deal of material for a differentiated investigation of the functioning of art in the National Socialists’ educational project.
- 27** See: Silke Wenk, “Aufgerichtete weibliche Körper. Zur allegorischen Skulptur im deutschen Faschismus,” in: *Inszenierung der Macht, ästhetische Faszination im Faschismus*, exh. cat. Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin (Berlin 1987), pp. 103–118, here p. 118; Birgit Bressa, *Nach-Leben der Antike. Klassische Bilder des Körpers in der NS-Skulptur* Arno Brekers, PhD diss. University of Tübingen, 2001, p. 362.
- 28** Silke Wenk has often pointed out the unreflective sexist reading of depictions of women from the National Socialist era in art history. See, for example: Silke Wenk: “Hin-Weg-Sehen oder: Faschismus, Normalität und Sexismus. Notizen zur Faschismus-Rezeption anlässlich der Kritik der Ausstellung ‘Inszenierung der Macht,’” in: *Erbeutete Sinne. Nachräge zur Berliner Ausstellung ‘Inszenierung der Macht, ästhetische Faszination im Faschismus’* (Berlin 1988), pp. 17–32, here p. 22.
- 29** See: Jaś Elsner, “Art History as Ekphrasis,” in: *Art History*, no. 33, 2010, pp. 4–27.

Christina Irrgang

Continuity through Mediality Georg Kolbe in the Mirror of Self-Staging and Reproduction Photography

Little research has been done to date on the significance of the medium of photography for the reception of Georg Kolbe's artistic work. The fact that Kolbe endeavored to document his works photographically from the very beginning of his sculptural activity, and that he attached importance to their all-round view, including in photographs, has been emphasized by Ursel Berger in her essay "Wie publiziert man Skulpturen? Die Kolbe-Monographie von 1913" (How Does One Publish Sculptures? The Kolbe Monograph of 1913) in connection with Kolbe's art dealer and publisher Paul Cassirer.¹

Given that this is the beginning of a new field of research, the following considerations can only be an approach to the subject and should be seen as an attempt at a first assessment based on published material and archival documents. However, it should become clear how extensively and deliberately Georg Kolbe used the medium to represent his artistic work; indeed, he continuously had his sculptures, plaster models, sketches, and prints photographed from the beginning of his sculptural career, thus creating his own photographic archive of his artistic work and its genesis.

The art historian Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1877–1945), who, as a curator at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, focused his research on porcelain and ceramics, photographed Kolbe's objects as early as 1907² and worked for the artist until the mid-1920s. Around 1929,³ Kolbe hired Margrit Schwartzkopff (1903–1969) as an assistant photographer, who also worked as his secretary and photo archivist and, after Kolbe's death in 1947, became his executor as well as co-founder and director of the Georg Kolbe Museum. Kolbe's contact with the art historian Richard Hamann (1879–1961) and his son Richard Hamann-Mac Lean (1908–2000) proved to be a special connection. In 1929, on their initiative in the context of the Preußisches Forschungsinstitut für Kunstgeschichte (Prussian Research Institute for Art History) in Marburg, they began working on a portfolio of photographic views of Kolbe's artistic work, which was published in 1931.⁴ Georg Kolbe's involvement with the media is conspicuous in the context of his entire artistic career, but this Marburg Kolbe Portfolio also forms a prelude to further publications, in the context of which Margrit Schwartzkopff was able to emphasize her (photographic) view of Kolbe's work. The following analysis therefore concentrates on an examination of selected publications in order to trace Kolbe's reference to the medium of photography and the representation he ascribed to it.

Kolbe's attention to the opportunities offered by the photographic reproduction of artistic works could possibly be traced back to Auguste Rodin, whose studio he visited in Meudon in 1909.⁵ Rodin "instrumentalized [...] photography like no other artist before him, as the more than 1,000 photographs in the archives of the Musée Rodin in Paris attest,"⁶ Michael Klant notes, and continues: "Photographs served Rodin to check the play of light and shadow or the intended views of sculptures, to correct works *en chemin*, and even as models for drawings. Up until the 1890s, they were primarily working aids and private documents. From then on, more and more photographs were also published and contributed significantly to his fame."⁷

Visually, the medium was already present for Kolbe in 1887, as evidenced by a picture postcard of his class at the Académie Julian in Paris, which shows the art students



1 Georg Kolbe in his studio, 1940s, historical photograph

surrounded by photographic images hanging on the wall.⁸ Kolbe also surrounded himself with Rodin's photographic postcards, as suggested by a portrait of Rodin with pin marks from the estate holdings recently acquired by the Georg Kolbe Museum⁹ and as corroborated by Ursel Berger's previous research.¹⁰ It should also be noted that Kolbe had himself constantly portrayed at work in the studio by renowned photographers (fig. 1). While a striking portrait by Hugo Erfurth, published in the magazine *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* in 1924,¹¹ shows him in the style of New Objectivity with a black suit and bow tie in front of one of his large female sculptures,¹² *Die Dame* presented him in 1925 in a white smock in his studio (photo: Atelier O. Hartmann, Berlin)¹³—a theme that Kolbe took up several times in connection with his self-image, for example in 1930 in *Vanity Fair* with a whole group of sculptures in his working environment (photo: Atelier Binder, Berlin),¹⁴ in 1939 in the *Völkischer Beobachter* together with the dictator Francisco Franco while modeling the bust created by Kolbe,¹⁵ and in 1943 with his hand on his chin like Rodin's *Thinker* (photo: Georg Tietzsch, Berlin).¹⁶ Not least of all in the genesis of his self-image, it becomes clear how Georg Kolbe moved through political systems and societies: from the German Empire, through the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist regime, to

the country occupied by the victorious powers in the early postwar period. In the same continuity, he published photographic views of his works, for example in illustrated books published by Paul Cassirer (1913),¹⁷ Kurt Wolff (1922),¹⁸ and Rembrandt-Verlag (from 1933 onwards).¹⁹ In this context, the photographs, which oscillate between representation and self-observation, work and body images, are a mirror of this continuity, which must always be seen in relation to the respective political systems and images of society.

1907 – “Schnorr wants to come after Whitsun. He is a good photographer who enjoys his work.”²⁰

Little is known to date about the collaboration between Georg Kolbe and Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld; however, the latter produced photographs of Kolbe's works early on after his studies, which he completed with a thesis on the sculptural interior design of the Salem Minster,²¹ and alongside his subsequent position as curator at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin. The two collaborated between 1907²² and the mid-1920s. The glass plate negatives and silver gelatin prints of these photos came into the artist's possession. In 1912, Kolbe and Schnorr von Carolsfeld traveled together to Tunis.²³

What is striking about Schnorr von Carolsfeld's 1912 book on porcelain from European factories in the eighteenth century²⁴ is the narrative arrangement of the porcelain figures in relation to one another. For example, in a photograph of the group *Kavalier und Dame* (Cavalier and Lady) from the Wegely porcelain factory in Berlin (1752–57), two figures are shown facing each other, emphasizing not only the individual figures but also the conversational space between them in the photographic image.²⁵ As with the following example, the fact that the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin is listed as the owner suggests that the photograph can be attributed to Schnorr von Carolsfeld.²⁶ In the case of the *Biskuitgruppe nach Bouchers Lanterne magique*, Sèvres (Bisque Group after Boucher's *Lanterne magique*, Sèvres, ca. 1750), it becomes particularly clear how the perspective made visible in the reproduction photograph was chosen in such a way as to visualize for the viewer the process of looking that is inherent in the figurative representation of the scene.²⁷

A look at Schnorr von Carolsfeld's photographic images of Georg Kolbe's artistic work, which are listed in the digital database of the Georg Kolbe Archive, reinforces the observation that Schnorr von Carolsfeld's visual language was dedicated to experiencing the objects as spatially as possible. Various (undated) photographs of the *Porträt Benjamine Kolbe* (1902/03; fig 2)²⁸ reveal how the photographer approached the sculpture in order to capture and convey a visual diversity of the bust, especially its face. A dark background enhances the delicacy of the marble and highlights Schnorr von Carolsfeld's sense of relief structures, light and shadow gradients, and contrasts. The photographer also documented various steps in the artist's work and the effects of the material in the case of a figure such as the *Tänzerin* (Dancer, 1911/12)—as a wax model in front of a neutral background, as a colored plaster model in front of a curtain in the studio, and as a bronze in front



2 Georg Kolbe, *Benjamin Kolbe*, 1902/03, marble, h. 65 cm, historical photograph

of a brick wall in an all-around view, as well as “cropped” by means of retouched color accentuation in a deliberately chosen perspective.²⁹ The juxtaposition of studio photography and *plein-air* photography is evident in a large number of the images made by Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, which are to be researched in the Kolbe Archive and which, in their quantity, are always convincing in their originality. They suggest a close collaboration between the artist and the photographer, with photographs that may have served Kolbe both for his own study purposes during the progress of a particular work, as well as those that captured the character of a sculpture in pose, expression, gesture, dynamics, course of movement, and materiality in the best possible way in just one view or in a series of shots, for example, for the targeted marketing of the work of art or for its popularization, as in illustrated magazines of the 1920s.³⁰

1929 – “For the realization of our plan to photograph your new works well and thoroughly in the studio, I had reserved the last, not too busy days of the semester.”³¹

In 1929, Richard Hamann-Mac Lean, son of the art historian Richard Hamann, photographed Georg Kolbe's new works in his studio in Berlin. This inspired Richard Hamann,

then the director of the Preußisches Forschungsinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Marburg, to initiate an original project. With “photographic reproductions in a larger format,” Hamann wanted to encourage Kolbe to create a portfolio of photographic reproductions from all periods of his work.³²

The Kolbe Portfolio was published by the Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar (Department of Art History) of the University of Marburg in the summer of 1931, with the intention of “providing an overview of the artist’s entire oeuvre, but also to deposit documents of the present for future art-historical research.”³³ The edition consists of 100 collotype plates with approximately 180 large-format (32.5 × 45 centimeters) illustrations, including photographs by Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Margrit Schwartzkopff (designated as “Atelier Schwartzkopff”), and Richard Hamann-Mac Lean that had been taken since their collaboration in 1929. A preface by Georg Kolbe and an introduction by his artist friend Richard Scheibe with a “Bekenntnis zur Plastik” (Confession of Faith in Sculpture)³⁴ accompany the portfolio, which is bound in half cloth and which was offered for sale for 100 Reichsmarks. As a “luxury edition,”³⁵ the portfolio was offered in a special edition of initially thirty copies signed by Kolbe with an accompanying drawing at a price of 250 Reichsmarks.³⁶ The portfolio was sponsored by Galerie Alfred Flechtheim, where Kolbe had had solo exhibitions in Berlin shortly before, in 1930 and 1931.

The compilation of photographic reproductions includes images from various photographers. On the one hand, Kolbe’s sculptural works are emphasized in their singularity in individual views; on the other hand, series of images appear again and again that emphasize the corporeality of Kolbe’s objects (fig. 3). Here, it is striking that the series by the photographer Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld form a prelude with the *Porträt Benjamine Kolbe*, suggesting that they provided the style for the sequence-emphasized presentation within the portfolio. Later photographs also consciously rely on a narrative sequence of images. Worthy of special mention, for example, are the all-round depiction of the group of figures in *Entwurf für ein Beethovendenkmal* (Model for a Monument to Beethoven, 1926/27),³⁷ which emerges from the background almost as if in a montage, and the sequences of four views each, spanning several sheets, of the *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man, 1928)³⁸ and the *Junge Frau* (Young Woman, 1929),³⁹ which are depicted in frontal, side, and close-up views, respectively. The sculptures *Große Kriechende I* and *II* (Large Crawling Woman I and II, both 1927; figs. 4–6),⁴⁰ photographed in Hamburg’s Stadtpark, are positioned in the portfolio as a pair, one on top of the other and successively on two sheets with alternating perspectives; there is also a third sheet showing the faces of the figures turned towards each other, facing the viewer, and in close-up, respectively.

Since none of the photographic reproductions in the list of illustrations is assigned to the respective photographer, their authorship can only be reconstructed by comparing the images. The Kolbe Portfolio thus already contains forms of representation that point to the later work of Margrit Schwartzkopff. Express praise on Kolbe’s part, however, is only documented towards Richard Hamann[Mac Lean]: “Your rare empathy with my work combined with your mastery of the camera have made the work so good,” Kolbe



3 Georg Kolbe, *Stehende Frau* (Standing Woman), 1915, plaster, life-size, illustrated in: Georg Kolbe. *100 Lichtdrucktafeln, mit einem Begleitwort von Georg Kolbe und einer Einführung von Richard Scheibe* (Marburg 1931), figs. 18 a, b



4 Georg Kolbe, *Große Kriechende I + II* (Large Crawling Woman I + II), 1927, limestone, larger than life, Stadtpark Hamburg, illustrated in: Georg Kolbe. *100 Lichtdrucktafeln, mit einem Begleitwort von Georg Kolbe und einer Einführung von Richard Scheibe* (Marburg 1931), figs. 73 a, b

wrote to Hamann in June 1931, “from all sides, I already hear the best about the publication; do you think that a material [i.e., financial] success can also be booked?”⁴¹

Although Georg Kolbe’s relationship with Richard Hamann and Richard Hamann-Mac Lean cooled by 1943, and he distanced himself from them, Kolbe recognized the added value of his association with the Preußisches Forschungsinstitut für Kunstgeschichte. For Richard Hamann, who had been appointed to the University of Marburg in 1913 and had systematically built up a photographic plate archive at the institute from the very beginning, had already carried out “several photographic campaigns in collaboration with other art-historical institutions, for example for Franz Stoedtner’s ‘Lichtbildverlag’ [...] in Berlin.”⁴² By “recognizing the important role of photography for art history at an early stage,” he was “constantly endeavoring to obtain as many negatives as possible for the specially established plate archive.”⁴³ As early as 1914, he combined theory and practice, offering “photographic art-historical excursions” and producing reproduction photographs with his students, supported by photographic courses.⁴⁴ As Michael H. Sprenger notes, the Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar, with its library, photo collection, and publishing house, which had been founded especially for this purpose in 1922, flourished under Hamann’s leadership. In 1928, the department moved into new premises in the so-called *Jubiläumsbau* (Jubilee Building), which had been erected on the occasion of the university’s 400th



5 Georg Kolbe, *Große Kriechende I + II* (Large Crawling Woman I + II), 1927, limestone, larger than life, Stadtpark Hamburg, illustrated in: Georg Kolbe. *100 Lichtdrucktafeln, mit einem Begleitwort von Georg Kolbe und einer Einführung von Richard Scheibe* (Marburg 1931), figs. 74 a, b



6 Georg Kolbe, *Große Kriechende I + II* (Large Crawling Woman I + II), 1927, limestone, larger than life, Stadtpark Hamburg, illustrated in: Georg Kolbe. *100 Lichtdrucktafeln, mit einem Begleitwort von Georg Kolbe und einer Einführung von Richard Scheibe* (Marburg 1931), figs. 75 a, b

anniversary.⁴⁵ The Preußisches Forschungsinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, for which Hamann had approached Kolbe very early on, namely in 1929, the year it was founded, began its work in 1930. “The tasks of the institute were [...] the collection and systematic compilation of all illustrative material on the subject of art history.”⁴⁶ In retrospect, it is imperative to look at the institute with a critical eye; during the Second World War, it undertook extensive international campaigns to “document German cultural assets left behind” in the course of German occupations or expulsions,⁴⁷ as well as to produce photographic images of art monuments.⁴⁸ Hamann-Mac Lean was heavily involved. “All in all, the photographic campaigns during the war brought an enormous increase in negatives to the photographic archive. [...] In close cooperation with the ‘Kunstschutz’ [Office of Art Protection] and financed by funds granted personally by Adolf Hitler, Richard Hamann and the institute in Marburg took advantage of the opportunity to complete the photographic work they had begun in earlier years.”⁴⁹ “For a long time,” the photographic archive was considered to be “a uniquely rich source for art-historical research and journalism.”⁵⁰

“His target audience was the viewers, not the artists,” says Peter H. Feist of Richard Hamann.⁵¹ Thus, it is not surprising that when, in the fall of 1930, the Photographische Abteilung (Photographic Department) of the Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar, claiming to be the “sole image authority” in possession of photographic reproductions of Kolbe’s

works, sent the artist a letter asking him “not to make photographic reproductions of your works available to other persons,” Kolbe underlined this passage in the letter and commented in handwriting: “rejected.”⁵² A renewed request in 1934 for “exclusive rights” to all new photographs was again rejected by Kolbe.⁵³ Moreover, it was in the interest of the Photo-Abteilung (Photo Department), as the Photographische Abteilung was called from then on, to integrate Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld’s photographs into the holdings of the photographic archive and to “request permission to reproduce them in general,”⁵⁴ even asserting “reproduction rights”⁵⁵ in 1934. To this day, reproductions of Schnorr von Carolsfeld’s photographs can be found in the database of Foto Marburg, which, with some 1.7 million photographic images, is one of the world’s largest image archives of European art and architecture⁵⁶—reproductions such as that of the *Porträt Benjamine Kolbe* (1902/03), which are listed there without any reference to the photographer.⁵⁷ It can be assumed that these are those copies of the “Schnorr plates” that were made there (probably in 1931).⁵⁸

In 1930, Kolbe commented, with obvious justification, that the Photographische Abteilung should not be the “sole image archive” for photographic reproductions of his work: “I need a permanent local photographer for my future works.”⁵⁹ He was referring here to his photographer Margrit Schwartzkopff. For although “the ‘Kolbe business’ [was] flourishing”⁶⁰ through the Marburg publishing house—primarily through the sale of photographic images and “photo cards”⁶¹ (in silver bromide rotary printing), as well as the expansion of the range to more than 500 motifs⁶² in 1931 and the publication of the Kolbe Portfolio, which was “intended to serve the promotion and dissemination of his work,”⁶³ all of which Kolbe greeted with “applause”⁶⁴—he was still aware of the importance of his autonomy when it came to photographic reproductions of his works. Although Kolbe’s goal was to have all of his photographic material bundled in one place in the form of an archive, and he held out the prospect of the Marburg Institute for this purpose, “this does not mean unlimited freedom of exploitation,”⁶⁵ as Curt Valentin, at the time an employee of Galerie Buchholz in Berlin, noted on Kolbe’s behalf in the correspondence. In 1935, Kolbe once again requested that his rights be regulated in the form of a revised contract according to his needs.⁶⁶ Although, or perhaps because, Hamann tried to convince Kolbe that the reproductions of his works would provide a basis for art-historical research,⁶⁷ and Kolbe regularly earned revenue from the sale of postcards through Foto Marburg (until 1942),⁶⁸ he preferred to decide independently about the photographic reproductions of his works and their distribution, and to work together with Margrit Schwartzkopff on the further development of his photographic archive.

1943 – “Miss Schwartzkopff has been working exclusively for me for eleven years and during this time has created a very comprehensive image archive (roughly 1.5 thousand photographs), with which she has become publicly known as a photographer of my works [...].”

“[...] so that all state and party offices, the press, art publishers, followers of my art, etc., continually draw on it and from which my own needs must be constantly supplemented,” Georg Kolbe explained to the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Authority for the Fine Arts) in February 1943.⁶⁹ The reason for his letter was the directive of January 29, 1943 on the “freeing of labor important to the war effort”⁷⁰ regarding the photographer Margrit Schwartzkopff, who worked for him. In a report to the photographers’ guild, the author (Lesnick) asks “most urgently” that Margrit Schwartzkopff not be enlisted, “so that the sculptor Prof. Kolbe, who is at the forefront of German artists, will not be hindered in his work.”⁷¹ In his letter to the Reichskammer, Kolbe insistently and precisely emphasized Schwartzkopff’s value for his artistic work: Her ongoing photographic work had become an “artistic control” for him; she was familiar with his work “from all sides and from the ground up”; and her photographic work was also “indispensable” for the continued existence of his photographic archive—not least of all because Schwartzkopff had also taken over all office and archive work for him as his secretary.⁷²

So far, little is known about Margrit Schwartzkopff beyond her range of activities with Georg Kolbe. However, by examining her extensive photographic documents, the publications she accompanied, calendar entries, and correspondence about Kolbe’s art, it becomes clear that a large part of her life was dedicated to the work of Georg Kolbe. From time to time, she even ran Kolbe’s household.⁷³ After Kolbe’s death in 1947, she not only took over the administration of the photographic archive, but in 1949 also participated in the establishment of the foundation for the development, preservation, and mediation of Kolbe’s artistic legacy. In 1950, she became director of the Georg Kolbe Museum in the artist’s former residence and studio on Sensburger Allee in Berlin-Westend, a position she held until her death in 1969.⁷⁴

From Kolbe’s extensive photo archive, which Margrit Schwartzkopff fed with her own work from around 1930 to after Kolbe’s death, many of her photographs are now registered in the digital database of the Georg Kolbe Archive. Here, it becomes clear that Schwartzkopff—like Kolbe, who often presented himself in relation to his sculptures and their materials⁷⁵—sought an eye-to-eye relationship with the sculptures she photographed. For example, Schwartzkopff photographed the *Kopf der Tänzerin* (Head of the Dancer, 1911/12/29)⁷⁶ slightly from below, but in the field of vision of the bronze figure. The photographer opened up the body-field of the plaster model *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman, 1917)⁷⁷ through targeted lighting, creating space between the figure and the viewer and illuminating the upward-looking facial field, the shoulder and back sections, and the thighs of the seated woman. While Schwartzkopff’s lighting and choice of background emphasized the stillness and introspection of the aforementioned sculptures, in the case



7 Georg Kolbe, *Frauenhände* (Woman's Hands), 1927, bronze, h. 50.7 cm, historical photograph



8 Georg Kolbe, *Menschenpaar* (Human Couple), 1937, bronze, h. 285 cm, historical photograph

of large-scale works she was also adept at eliciting and accentuating the dynamism of sculpture in reproduction photography. While she photographed both the bronze and plaster versions of *Nacht* (Night, 1926/30)⁷⁸ in this way in various interior and lighting situations, as well as in perspective contexts, croppings, and details, in order to test different degrees of the object's effect in space and thus in the image, she staged the *Frauenhände* (Woman's Hands, 1927; fig. 7)⁷⁹ by emphasizing the materiality and form of the bronze quasi out of the object itself and thus entirely as photography.

Although Margrit Schwartzkopff described herself as a “technical photographer,”⁸⁰ her photographs reveal an attempt to transfer the atmosphere of the objects she photographed into the image, but also to establish relationships with the viewer, the interior space, or the public space surrounding the sculpture. It is thus not surprising that she succeeded in making Kolbe's *Emporsteigendes Menschenpaar* (Ascending Couple, 1931)⁸¹ appear larger and more towering than the trees surrounding them by occasionally placing the sculpture in an elevated position in the outdoor space, or in emphasizing the couple's larger-than-life size with hard shadows in the studio. The deliberate use of relationships and their differentiated effect in interior and outdoor spaces is again evident in her photographs of the *Menschenpaar* (Human Couple, 1937; fig. 8).⁸² In the studio, in relation to



9 Georg Kolbe, *Frauenstatue III* (Statue of a Woman III), 1933/38, bronze or brass, h. 212,5 cm, historical photograph

other sculptures as well as to windows and doors, the plaster sculptures also intrinsically evoke a different reading than those cast in bronze photographed near the banks of the Maschsee in Hannover, although both modes of representation herald the monumental.

Like Kolbe, who has been described as a “skillful synthesist,”⁸³ Schwartzkopff was adept at creating a synthesis of sculptural object and photographic image with her photographs. She seems to have succeeded particularly well in the illustrated book *Georg Kolbe. Werke der letzten Jahre* (Works of the Last Years), which was published in 1937 by Rembrandt-Verlag Berlin exclusively with photographic reproductions by Margrit Schwartzkopff in sixty-four intaglio plates and an accompanying reflection by the art historian Wilhelm Pinder (who supported National Socialist ideology) on the occasion of Kolbe’s sixtieth birthday.⁸⁴ Just as Pinder emphasized that, with each of his works, Kolbe provided a “role model” for society,⁸⁵ in the selection of her photographs Schwartzkopff also consummates the process of incarnation according to the National Socialist ideal of the body. Beyond skillfully arranged sequences, which occasionally create narratives within a group of sculptures or through varying views of individual figures, the volume as such presents a narrative: beginning with a *Selbstbildnis* (Self-Portrait, 1934) by Kolbe and a *Requiem* (1927) for his deceased wife Benjamin⁸⁶ to sculptures such as that of the



10 Georg Kolbe, *Junger Streiter* (Young Fighter), 1935, bronze, h. 225 cm, and *Große Verkündung* (Large Proclamation), 1937, bronze, h. 165 cm, illustrated in: Georg Kolbe. *Werke der letzten Jahre, mit Betrachtungen über Kolbes Plastik von Wilhelm Pinder (mit 64 Tiefdrucktafeln)* (Berlin 1937), pp. 66/67

larger-than-life *Frauenstatue III* (*Große Frauenstatue* [Large Statue of a Woman], 1934; a model can be seen in fig. 9)⁸⁷ and the soldiers' memorial in Stralsund (1934/35),⁸⁸ which visually support an ideal of the body and an image of the Germanic man propagated by National Socialist politics. The shiny surfaces of the bodies of the athletic figures highlighted in the photographic image are reminiscent of the staged images of bodies in the films of Leni Riefenstahl—majestic and solitary, profoundly and purposefully aligned with a concept of identity that is not further defined. Just as Schwartzkopff's photographic images intertwine in sequences, nonverbal dialogues also develop between them, such as on a double page between the *Junger Streiter* (Young Fighter, 1935) and the *Große Verkündung* (Large Proclamation, 1937; both fig. 10).⁸⁹ For the "proclamation" is evident both in Kolbe's sculptural bronzes and—through the choice of cropping and their visual combination—in the composed photographs in the form of intended images/role models.

Photographic technique, the dramaturgical arrangement of images, and communication skills: Schwartzkopff was adept at marketing both Georg Kolbe's art and her own photographic work. In her correspondence as Kolbe's secretary, she explicitly made recommendations and provided references to current publications, such as the 1931 portfolio work or Kolbe's 1933 publication at Rembrandt-Verlag.⁹⁰ She also regularly made appointments with representatives of illustrated magazines and publishers, as well as with press photographers, including the National Socialist propagandist "Presseillustration Hoffmann," as the calendar books of calls made from 1936 to 1941 and the visitor books from 1935



11 Margrit Schwartzkopff in the Georg Kolbe Museum, 1965, historical photograph

to 1938 reveal.⁹¹ Thus, after a visit by the photographer and “Reichsbildberichterstatter” (Reich Photojournalist) Heinrich Hoffmann on April 12, 1937, shortly before Kolbe’s sixtieth birthday, articles with photographs of Hoffmann appeared in the National Socialist press.⁹² One of them shows Kolbe in his usual style, wearing a white smock in his studio, looking at the small white sculpture placed on an elevated table, as if in dialogue with it, in a sensual/contemplative exchange.

A photograph from the newly acquired and cataloged estate holdings shows Margrit Schwartzkopff bent over a table with Kolbe’s photo postcards, which she is in the process of sorting (fig. 11).⁹³ In 1965, it almost seems as if nothing had ever changed for her and as if Georg Kolbe lived on in her reproduction photographs and her view of them.

Notes

- 1 Ursel Berger, "Wie publiziert man Skulpturen? Die Kolbe-Monographie von 1913," in: Rahel Feilchenfeldt and Thomas Raff (eds.), *Ein Fest der Künste. Paul Cassirer. Der Kunsthändler als Verleger* (Munich 2006), pp. 201–213, here pp. 204, 207.
- 2 GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/portraet-benjamine-kolbe/65398?term=Ludwig%20Schnorr%20von%20Carolsfeld&start=12&position=17> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 3 There is no record of the exact date that Margrit Schwartzkopff began working for Georg Kolbe. At any rate, it can be traced that, in 1931, she is represented in the Kolbe Portfolio with photographic images (see note 4), and that she must have shot the photographs for this in the context of the production of the work in 1930 at the latest; correspondence in her function as secretary can definitely be traced to 1933; GK Estate, inv. no. GK.477, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 4 Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar Marburg (ed.), *Georg Kolbe, 100 Lichtdrucktafeln*, with a preface by Georg Kolbe and an introduction by Richard Scheibe (Marburg 1931).
- 5 Kolbe mentions the (decisive) visit to Rodin's studio in Meudon, where he "saw Rodin in person," right at the beginning of his preface to the Kolbe Portfolio; *ibid.*, pp. 5–6 [translated]. For more on this, see also: Berger 2006 (see note 1), p. 205.
- 6 Michael Klant, *Künstler bei der Arbeit, von Fotografen gesehen* (Ostfildern-Ruit 1995), p. 86 [translated].
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 86f. [translated]. For more on the importance of the medium of photography for Auguste Rodin and his work, see also: *Licht und Schatten. Rodin. Photographien von Eugène Druet*, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin (Berlin 1994) [translated].
- 8 GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Ursel Berger, "Ausstellen, Sammeln, Publizieren. Zur Wirkung der Rodin-Photographien von Eugène Druet in Deutschland," in: exh. cat. *Licht und Schatten 1994* (see note 7), pp. 22–39, here pp. 28f.
- 11 *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* (Darmstadt 1924), p. 195, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 12 Hugo Erfurth photographed Georg Kolbe once again in 1932, see: https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj05239281?part=0&medium=rba_c007965 [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 13 *Die Dame*, no. 4, 1924, p. 7, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 14 *Vanity Fair*, 1930, p. 45, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 15 *Völkischer Beobachter*, no. 29, January 29, 1939, p. 3, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 16 GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 17 *Georg Kolbe. Bildwerke* (Berlin 1913).
- 18 *Georg Kolbe. Plastik und Zeichnung*, with 64 illustrations and a text by Wilhelm R. Valentiner (Munich 1922).
- 19 *Georg Kolbe. Vom Leben der Plastik*, with 90 illustrations and a text by Rudolf G. Binding (Berlin 1933); *Georg Kolbe. Werke der letzten Jahre*, with 64 intaglio plates and a text by Wilhelm Pinder (Berlin 1937); *Georg Kolbe. Zeichnungen*, with 100 illustrations and an introduction by Wilhelm Pinder (Berlin 1942).
- 20 Letter from Georg Kolbe to his friend and patron Hermann Schmitt, May 17, 1907, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.616.6_004, GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/korrespondenzen/brief-von-georg-kolbe-an-hermann-schmitt/69801?term=Ludwig%20Schnorr%20von%20Carolsfeld&position=9> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 21 Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *Der plastische Schmuck im Innern des Münsters zu Salem aus den Jahren 1774–1784 von Johann Georg Dürer und Johann Georg Wieland*, PhD diss., University of Leipzig, 2005 (Berlin 1906).
- 22 See, for example, the photo of *Porträt Benjamine Kolbe* in the GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/portraet-benjamine-kolbe/65396?term=Ludwig%20Schnorr%20von%20Carolsfeld&start=12&position=21> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 23 Ursel Berger, *Georg Kolbe. Leben und Werk* (Berlin 1990), p. 176.
- 24 Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *Porzellan der europäischen Fabriken des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin 1912).
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 118, see: <http://archive.org/details/porzellandereuro00schn/page/118/mode/2up?view=theater> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 26 Unfortunately, the publication does not indicate which photographs were taken by him.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 248, see: <https://archive.org/details/porzellandereuro00schn/page/248/mode/2up?view=theater> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 28 GK Estate, inv. nos. GKFo-0008_001, GKFo-0008_002, GKFo-0008_003, GKFo-0008_004,

- GK Fo-0008_005, GKM Archive, Berlin; see, for example: <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/portraet-benjamin-kolbe/65399?term=Ludwig%20Schnorr%20von%20Carolsfeld&start=24&position=24> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
- 29 See, among others: GK Estate, inv. nos. GK Fo-0100_010, GK Fo-0100_011, GK Fo-0100_015, GK Fo-0100_017, GKM Archive, Berlin; for example: <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/index.php/de/objekte/taenzerin-191112-bronze/66520?term=schnorr%20von%20carolsfeld%20t%C3%A4nzerin&position=11> [last accessed April 2, 2023].
 - 30 See the collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 31 Letter from Richard Hamann-Mac Lean to Georg Kolbe, September 16, 1929, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, box 17, folder 2, file: Foto Marburg, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 32 Letter from Richard Hamann to Georg Kolbe, July 16, 1930, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 33 Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar Marburg 1931 (see note 4) [translated].
 - 34 Ibid.
 - 35 Preußisches Forschungsinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Letter from Richard Hamann to Georg Kolbe, February 25, 1932, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 36 See: Photo-Abteilung des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars (ed.), *Georg Kolbe. Plastik und Zeichnungen. Aufnahmen im Archiv des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg* (Marburg 1931), unpaginated, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 37 Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar Marburg 1931 (see note 4), sheets 61 and 62.
 - 38 Ibid., sheets 78, 79, and 80.
 - 39 Ibid., sheets 85 and 86.
 - 40 Ibid., sheets 73, 74, and 75.
 - 41 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Richard Hamann[-Mac Lean], June 3, 1931, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 42 Judith Tralles, "Die Fotokampagnen des Preußischen Forschungsinstituts für Kunstgeschichte Marburg während des Zweiten Weltkrieges," in: Nikola Doll, Christian Fuhrmeister, and Michael H. Sprenger (eds.), *Kunstgeschichte im Nationalsozialismus. Beiträge zur Geschichte einer Wissenschaft zwischen 1930 und 1950* (Weimar 2005), pp. 263–282, here p. 263 [translated].
 - 43 Michael H. Sprenger, "Das kunstgeschichtliche Seminar und das Preußische Forschungsinstitut der Marburger Universität im Nationalsozialismus," in: Doll/Fuhrmeister/Sprenger 2005 (see note 42), pp. 71–84, here p. 72 [translated].
 - 44 Angela Matyssek, *Kunstgeschichte als fotografische Praxis. Richard Hamann und Foto Marburg* (Berlin 2009), p. 36 [translated].
 - 45 See: Sprenger 2005 (see note 43), p. 72.
 - 46 Tralles 2005 (see note 42), p. 264 [translated].
 - 47 Ibid., pp. 264–265 [translated].
 - 48 Ibid., p. 268.
 - 49 Ibid., p. 276 [translated]; see also: Ruth Heftrig, *Fanatiker der Sachlichkeit. Richard Hamann und die Rezeption der Moderne in der universitären deutschen Kunstgeschichte 1930–1960* (Berlin 2014), pp. 207–209.
 - 50 Peter H. Feist, *Beiträge Richard Hamanns zur Methodik der Kunstgeschichtsschreibung* (Berlin 1980), p. 6 [translated].
 - 51 Ibid., p. 8 [translated].
 - 52 Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar der Universität Marburg, Photographische Abteilung, letter from Schlegel an Georg Kolbe, November 8, 1930, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 53 Photo-Abteilung des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg, letter from C. Albiker to Kurt [sic] Valentin, January 12, 1934, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 54 See: *ibid.*; letter from Georg Kolbe to Schlegel, November 14, 1930, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 55 Photo-Abteilung des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg, letter from Albiker to Valentin (see note 53) [translated].
 - 56 See: <https://www.uni-marburg.de/de/fotomarburg/ueberuns/leitbild> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
 - 57 In a letter from the Photo-Abteilung des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg (from Albiker to Valentin), Kolbe's request to name the photographer is rejected: "We ask to refrain from naming the authors of the photographs taken by Schnorr von Carolsfeld, since it is not customary in our facility to mention specific names"; letter from Albiker to Valentin (see note 53) [translated].
 - 58 Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar der Universität Marburg, Verlag Photographische Abteilung, letter from Richard Hamann to Georg Kolbe, February 19, 1930/[1931], GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
 - 59 Letter from Kolbe to Schlegel (see note 54) [translated].
 - 60 Photo-Abteilung des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg, letter from Schlegel to Georg Kolbe, April

- 23, 1931, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 61** Letter from Richard Hamann to Georg Kolbe, February 19, 1930/[1931], GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 62** Letter from Atelier Georg Kolbe (on behalf of GK) to Schlegel, April 23, 1931, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 63** See: Kolbe. Plastik 1931 (see note 36).
- 64** Verlag des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars Marburg, letter from Freyhan to Georg Kolbe, August 28, 1931, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 65** Letter to the Foto-Abteilung des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars, November 15, 1934, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 66** Undated document, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 67** Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar der Universität Marburg, letter from Hamann to Georg Kolbe, April 25, 1938, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 68** Cf. correspondences and settlements from the years 1936 to 1942, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.532, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 69** Continuation of the quote in the heading: letter from Georg Kolbe to the Berlin head office of the Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, August Kranz, February 9, 1943, Berlin State Archives, A Rep. 243-04 no. 4531/MF-Nr. 84 [translated].
- 70** Letter from Lesnick to the photographers' guild, January 29, 1943 (BK/IV B 476), Berlin State Archives (see note 69) [translated].
- 71** Ibid. [translated]
- 72** Letter from Georg Kolbe to August Kranz, February 9, 1943, Berlin State Archives (see note 69) [translated]. From 1937 onwards, Schwartzkopff had worked as a secretary for Kolbe on three days in a permanent position; *ibid.*
- 73** Postcard from Georg Kolbe to Hermann Lempeler, February 15, 1945, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.607.1.10, GKM Archiv, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/korrespondenzen/brief-von-georg-kolbe-an-hermann-lempeler/69662?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff&start=600&position=611>. After Kolbe's studio was hit by a bomb in 1943, Schwartzkopff accompanied Kolbe to Hierlshagen (until early 1945); see: postcard from Georg Kolbe to Leihner, January 26, 1944, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/korrespondenzen/briefe-von-georg-kolbe-an-leihner/69647?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff&start=636&position=637> [both sites last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 74** See: Berger 1990 (see note 23), p. 197.
- 75** For example, Georg Kolbe at work in Hierlshagen in 1944, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 76** GK Estate, inv. nos. GKFo-0101_003, GKFo-0101_004, GKFo-0101_006, GKM Archiv Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/kopf-der-taenzerin-19111229-bronze/66269?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff%20Kopf%20der%20T%C3%A4nzerin&position=0> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 77** GK Estate, inv. Nos. GKFo-0169_004, GKFo-0169_005, GKFo-0169_006, GKM Archive Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/kauernde-1917-gips/66530?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff%20Kauernde&position=0> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 78** GK Estate, inv. nos. GKFo-0324_002, GKFo-0324_003, GKFo-0324_004, GKFo-0324_007, GKFo-0324_008, GKFo-0324_009, GKFo-0324_010, GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/nacht-192630-gips/67103?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff%20Nacht&position=5> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 79** GK Estate, inv. nos. GKFo-0342_001, GKFo-0342_002, GKFo-0342_010, GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/frauenhaende-1927-bronze/67209?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff%20Frauenh%C3%A4nde&position=1> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 80** Margrit Schwartzkopff initially ran her "Atelier für techn. Fotografie" (Studio for Technical Photography) at Yorckstrasse 84D in Berlin-Kreuzberg [see the reverse of the photograph *Kopf der Tänzerin* (1911/12/29), GK Estate, inv. no. GKFo-0101_003, GKM Archive, Berlin], and in the 1940s at Wewerstrasse 8E in Berlin-Spandau [see the reverse of the photograph of a bronze portrait of Leonore von Keudell, 1940, GKM Archive, Berlin].
- 81** GK Estate, inv. nos. GKFo-0404_001, GKFo-0404_002, GKFo-0404_003, GKFo-0404_004, GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/emporstiegendes-menschenpaar-1931-gips/67460?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff%20emporstiegendes%20Menschenpaar&position=3> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 82** See: GK Estate, inv. Nos. GKFo-0476_001, GKFo-0476_003, GKFo-0476_007, GKFo-0476_008, GKFo-0476_009,

- GK Fo-0476_014, GKM Archive, Berlin, <https://sammlung.georg-kolbe-museum.de/de/objekte/menschenpaar-1937-bronze/67834?term=Margrit%20Schwartzkopff%20Menschenpaar&position=11> [last accessed April 3, 2023].
- 83** “Kolbe, however, proved to be a skillful synthesist who fused elements of various models, which certainly accounted for his continuing success.” Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg, “Bildende Kunst. Plastik,” in: Eberhard Roters (ed.), *Berlin 1910–1933. Die visuellen Künste* (Berlin 1983), pp. 147–180, here p. 151 [translated].
- 84** Pinder 1937 (see note 19).
- 85** *Ibid.*, p. 13 [translated].
- 86** *Ibid.*, pp. 17–19.
- 87** *Ibid.*, pp. 48–51.
- 88** *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.
- 89** *Ibid.*, pp. 66f. Not all editions present this sequence in the same way. I am thankful to the Georg Kolbe Museum for pointing this out.
- 90** Letter from Margrit Schwartzkopff to Victor Mauser, March 16, 1935, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.231, GKM Archive, Berlin; letter from Margrit Schwartzkopff to J. Müller, May 14, 1935, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.242, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 91** Calendar books 1936–41 and visitor books 1935–38, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 92** *Der Freiheitskampf*, no. 104, April 15, 1937, BArch, archive group NS 5-VI-17638, p. 56. A portrait of Kolbe, also taken during this photo shoot, is printed in an article that calls Kolbe the “re-designer of antiquity,” in: *Bremer Zeitung*, no. 102, April 15, 1937, BArch, archive group NS 5-VI-17638, p. 53 [translated].
- 93** MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.

Magdalena Bushart

Georg Kolbe Celebrates His Birthday

Journalistic Strategies

In the public perception, the milestone birthdays of prominent artists always follow the same pattern. There are appreciative newspaper reports, which become more extensive with increasing age, congratulatory telegrams from politicians and cultural functionaries, the occasional award or medal, and, from the age of fifty, an additional retrospective exhibition that highlights the honoree's work. The celebrations and the journalistic response are indicators of the honoree's social status and market value, understood not only in financial terms but also in an idealistic sense. The more reports, events, and honors there are, the more important, valuable, and significant the work associated with the person is. On such occasions criticism is, at best, only hinted at; the focus of the tributes is on merit and the attempt at historical classification. The result is a tiresome uniformity—anyone looking for original assessments or individual comments will be bitterly disappointed by this type of text. This makes it all the easier to identify the patterns of argumentation used to justify a general assessment. They usually draw on several sources, such as recent monographs or the artists' own statements, and at the same time follow the rules of language shaped by current cultural-political discourses. In contrast to exhibition reviews, the texts lay claim to a certain politeness; they are not intended to be read as individual opinions or snapshots, but rather as a résumé of an overall performance up to a certain point in time. This claim makes them interesting for the analysis of contemporary reception: after all, the status, external perception, and self-portrayal of the artists are reflected here as if under a magnifying glass.

This also applies to the commemorations of Georg Kolbe's birthdays in 1927, 1937, 1942, and 1947, which were subject not only to changing market cycles, but also to changing political and ideological guidelines. Kolbe liked to present himself as a solitary creator who, unperturbed by the business and politics of art, concentrated exclusively on his sculptural work. As he explained to Wilhelm Pinder in 1934, for example, he did "not think much of the verbal affirmations of all those [...] who are supposed to represent [visually]."¹ The clear separation suggested by this attitude between the work and its contemporary reception, or the person of the artist and his position in the cultural establishment, lives on in Kolbe research to this day.² However, the sculptor certainly participated in the interpretation of his sculptures—not only by controlling, providing, and selecting illustrations, but also by "verbal affirmations" in conversations (for example, in the context of the so-called studio visits),³ speeches, and a not insignificant number of written position statements.⁴ At the same time, he used selected authors to comment on his work: in the case of Rudolf G. Binding, we know that at least some of the texts were written at Kolbe's request;⁵ in the case of Wilhelm Pinder, a similar constellation can be assumed. Kolbe also followed the press coverage very closely: he employed a clipping service and amassed an extensive (and partly annotated) collection of newspaper articles, which is now in the archives of the Georg Kolbe Museum. This collection, the composition of which may to some extent be due to chance, but which also reflects the artist's decisions about the nature and completeness of the documentation, forms the starting point for my reflections on how the components of status, external perception, and self-representation interacted in the reception of Kolbe in the "Third Reich."⁶ I am not concerned with the question of



1 Georg Kolbe at the awarding of the Goethe Prize, published in: *Frankfurter Wochenschau*, September 6–12, 1936, no. 37, p. 5

what is to be interpreted as adaptation and what as inner conviction, but rather exclusively with the analysis of textual propositions and their consequences. I would like to begin with an honor that was not tied to a birthday, but which had a significant impact on the reception from the mid-1930s onward: the awarding of the Goethe Prize by the mayor of the City of Frankfurt am Main in August 1936 (fig. 1).

From Traditionalist to Classic

The Goethe Prize, initiated in 1927 by the Frankfurt City Council, had acquired a national component in the “Third Reich”; after the statutes were amended in June 1933, the selection committee included not only local representatives from the fields of science, culture, and politics, but also the Reich ministers Bernhard Rust and Joseph Goebbels.⁷ The response in the regional and national press was correspondingly great. The award was announced in advance in all major newspapers and received extensive coverage afterwards. In his speech at the award ceremony, Mayor Karl Linder, a “man of the new Germany,” as Kolbe flatteringly characterized him in his letter of thanks,⁸ praised the artist’s perseverance and related it to the “obligation to fanaticism” that Hitler had demanded of the arts at the Nuremberg Rally in 1933:⁹ unperturbed by all fashions, Kolbe had always followed the path given to him and had created “symbols beyond all temporal bonds.” In the struggle for “harmony of content and form,” his work was related to Goethe’s and

was a “symbol of German form in general.”¹⁰ In his response, Kolbe spoke of the ideal of a harmonious, life-affirming art that nevertheless pursues a higher purpose: like the poet, the sculptor, “as an architect of the human body,” is always searching for “the clear—the exemplary”; like Goethe, he ceaselessly strives for “the interpretation of humanity and its improvement.”¹¹ At the same time, Kolbe distinguished himself from those colleagues who had lost themselves in the “problematic” instead of working toward “fulfillment”—he refrained from pointing out in the final editing of his manuscript that the desire for problems arose from a misguided “German fighting spirit.”¹²

The Goethe Prize recalibrated the public’s view of Kolbe. In the 1920s, Kolbe had declared the search for harmonious form to be the content of his work and had distanced himself from all forms of modernism.¹³ His work was received in this spirit, although the all-too-close ties to the sculptural tradition of the nineteenth century were increasingly criticized. This was evident not least in the tributes on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in 1927, which were rather reserved in their assessment of the artist’s contemporary significance. Even if one or two authors appreciated the “cultivated and pure effect” of the sculptures,¹⁴ the majority of the accolades left a faint feeling of unease. The art historian Curt Glaser, for example, attested Kolbe a “harmonious” talent, but one that had fallen out of time.¹⁵ The critic Fritz Stahl expressed the wish for more “emotional content,”¹⁶ and Paul Westheim, editor of the magazine *Das Kunstblatt*, a weighty voice in the Weimar Republic’s art establishment, lamented a striking lack of artistic passion.¹⁷ After 1933, it was primarily the competing ideological camps that determined reception: whether Kolbe was defamed as a “cultural Bolshevik” or celebrated as an important sculptor depended on party political calculations and personal preferences.¹⁸ This changed with the awarding of the prize. The artist was now placed in the vicinity of Goethe and ennobled as a classic; his sculptures acquired the rank of “symbols” or “role models.” By wanting the prize to be seen as dedicated to art in general, but especially to all sculptors “from whom the new Germany now expects the most,”¹⁹ Kolbe cleverly combined the recognition of his work with the demands of politics, without taking an ideological position. The success of this strategy can be seen directly in the congratulations from patrons and friends with varying degrees of closeness to the system. For some, the award was proof that Kolbe’s work had finally taken its rightful place in the National Socialist art establishment; others saw it as the continuation of a bourgeois understanding of culture.²⁰

Role Models, Symbols, Embodiments

The theoretical repositioning had been prepared by the conservative nationalist poet Rudolf G. Binding, who had written several texts on Kolbe since 1927. His monograph *Vom Leben der Plastik* (On the Life of Sculpture), published in 1933 in the *Kunstabücher des Volkes* (Art Books of the People) series by Rembrandt-Verlag and repeatedly reprinted until the postwar period, had been written in close consultation with the sculptor—Binding himself spoke of a “Binding-Kolbe book or Kolbe-Binding book.”²¹ The subtitle

Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe (The Content and Beauty of the Work of Georg Kolbe) was by all means to be understood programmatically: the point was to give a deeper meaning to the search for form. The poet placed the sculptures in a field of tension between timelessness and topicality. On the one hand, he described them as quasi divine figures evoking the ancient ideal of beauty, and on the other, as expressions of the “truth of our time.” In his view, this linked them to modern products such as automobiles, propellers, ships, and snowshoes:

“They have the same faith, the same gaze, the same confidence: they both seek something immutable, ultimate, most simple, irrefutable, inexorable.”²²

According to this model, nudes are both contemporary and eternal. They appeal to the senses and at the same time proclaim universally valid ideals; as “embodiments,” they are indebted to a supra-temporal “archetype,”²³ but they also function as symbols of the present that have been given form; they are drawn from life, but they also give a “premonition of something most pure, something superior, something detached.”²⁴ Of course, Binding wanted to see Kolbe’s future work tied to more concrete ideal concepts: after the drafts for a Beethoven monument (as “genius of highest will, highest thrust”) and the figure of the descending Zarathustra (as “spirit descending from the mountains as herald and commander”), “the man of action” was still missing as a third force.²⁵ Significantly, the question of who represented this “man of action” remained open; however, readers in 1933 might have associated quite concrete ideas with it. Whether and to what extent the exaltation of the sculptures arose in joint conversations cannot be clarified in retrospect.²⁶ What is certain is that Kolbe adopted the explanatory models. This is evident not only in his speech at the Frankfurt Goethe Prize ceremony, but also in a commentary on his group of sculptures *Menschenpaar* (Human Couple) that was written at about the same time. Very much in the spirit of Binding, he stated here: “Formed with sensual means, appealing to the senses, I have designed these people of high nature as a model of human dignity.”²⁷

Binding remained an important intermediary for Kolbe. Not only did he claim to have provided the impetus for awarding the Goethe Prize to Kolbe,²⁸ but he was also directly and indirectly involved in the press coverage of 1936. On the one hand, the Archiv für publizistische Arbeit (Archive for Journalistic Work), from which journalists could obtain the basic data for their essays, recommended his monograph as an aid to interpretation;²⁹ on the other hand, the poet contributed a series of essays on the occasion of the award, in which he praised the decision of the City of Frankfurt am Main in the highest terms. It was groundbreaking, he wrote, because it honored a work that “above all others can make visible what is German.” According to Binding, this includes “discipline and strength, simplicity, no poses, no exuberance, no ramblings.”³⁰ Under this premise, he stylized Kolbe as a shaper of national ideals:

“Does he think like his people? Do his people think like him? He has made visible the image of the world that lives in us, and a German city, well aware of what this means today, thanks him for it with the highest prize it can bestow.”³¹

In October 1936, Binding again varied his book and essay. In the journal *Das Innere Reich*, he focused on Kolbe's more recent works and stylized them as a “Hochbild des Menschen” (epitome of humanity), ideals of virtue given form, and, incidentally, counter-images to a socially critical or realistic modernism:

“The figures are not naked by chance, but naked as holy truth and for truth's sake. They despise the veiling, the adventitious, the clothing, the ingredient. [...] They despise the situation, the mood, almost the touching, for the sake of the embodiment. They are strong without the evasion of emotion. They are harsh and averse to flattery. They know no distortion, no age, no illness, no decrepitude. They are young and virile, chaste and feminine. They are taut and yet laden with form. They are disciplined and free. They live in their form. They bend under it, conforming to it as to a destiny.”³²

By referring to the symbolic character of the figures, Binding offered a pattern of interpretation that could be connected to National Socialist ideology on several levels without necessarily adopting its terminology. In its ambiguity, which could be interpreted as an affinity to but also as an affirmation of the “Third Reich,” it first unfolded its effect in the context of the award ceremony in 1936 and a little later in the tributes to Kolbe's sixtieth birthday in 1937.

In the journals of the NS organizations, the model was clearly linked to *völkisch* (national-racial) thinking. Here, the consciousness of tradition was explained as resistance to the aberration of modernism or the so-called “Systemzeit” (“time of the System,” i.e., the Weimar period), and the nudes were presented as embodiments of National Socialist ideals—sometimes directly, more often figuratively. A leader of the Berlin chapter of the Bund Deutscher Mädel (BDM, League of German Girls) saw in the female figures “everything we are looking for [...]: calm security, natural serenity, a quiet devotion, and a readiness for something greater than ourselves.”³³ The poet Max Wegner, on the other hand, identified the male figures in the SS magazine *Nordland* as “portraits of our faith, our devotion to the naked sword” and concluded: “This is the German man, this is his strength, this is his faith, this is his love, this is his willingness to fight!”³⁴ However, the exemplary nature of the figures could also be used as an argument against the avant-garde, which was defamed as degenerate. The magazine *NS-Frauen-Warte* illustrated Kolbe's *Emporsteigendes Menschenpaar* (Ascending Couple) from 1931/32 under the motto “Beauty and Purity in Expression and Form” and juxtaposed it with “degenerate” works by Ernst Barlach, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Oskar Schlemmer, and Pablo Picasso.³⁵ Finally, the monograph by the art historian Wilhelm Pinder, published by Rembrandt-Verlag in 1937 on the occasion of Kolbe's sixtieth birthday, can also be attributed to this model of interpretation—the

author described it as a “somewhat more detailed congratulation.”³⁶ Like Binding before him, Pinder sought to present the figure of a timeless presence. However, he attached great importance to a historical classification that would place Kolbe in the tradition of the great masters, on the one hand, and declare him a pioneer of the new, on the other: the artist had overcome the painterly ideas of his epoch and thus prepared the way for the “sculpturally noble age” that was now dawning. The author saw the reference to the present not so much in the form as in the attitude to life and the physical ideal of the “Third Reich”:

“He [Kolbe], as solitarily as all the masters of the late period, has discovered [...] his own beauty, his own great expression. And only now does the nobility of the body, the good conscience towards the Earth and the body all around appear as something general, as a true faith—and now one discovers with astonishment that the signs that we need have already been given, that the young girl, the athlete, the decathlete are already there!”³⁷

Because Kolbe’s work represents “the eternal life of our people,”³⁸ Pinder argued, the sculptor should be called upon more often in the future for state commissions, such as replacing the figures on the Siegesallee in Berlin’s Tiergarten: “Whole families of Kolbesque figures are just waiting to bear witness to the new Germany.”³⁹

This unambiguously physically oriented status as role models, as propagated by Pinder, received a further boost in the highly successful book of photographs, largely commissioned by Kolbe himself, which was published by Insel Verlag in 1939.⁴⁰ The commentary this time was written by Richard Graul, a former director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Leipzig, who had been acquainted with the artist for more than three decades.⁴¹ Graul spoke of the bronzes as a “family of the German people,” which was an expression of different sensibilities, but also of its own time:

“It is a family of our present, of a tremendous turning point in time, strong-willed and of a self-confident, proud attitude—a humanity whose form and nature Kolbe had already sensed and sought decades ago. Now that it stands before us, it is recognized with admiration as the ideal of German nationality.”⁴²

In the arts pages of the daily newspapers, the tone was less specific. Here, too, there was occasional talk of the “new German” that Kolbe had prepared with his sculptures.⁴³ On the whole, however, they left it at a vague reference to a “higher humanity” and spoke of “sculptural figures that elevate and educate by their very existence,”⁴⁴ of the “noble image of man that Kolbe created for his time and its longing for a lasting symbol,”⁴⁵ of the “struggle for artistic expression, which is also an expression of the time and even more so of its desires and longings,”⁴⁶ of the fact that the “image of a future type of man” is not drawn from the past, but rather from the present,⁴⁷ or of the fact that the figures, in their perfection, “stand among us not only as an image, but also as a role model.”⁴⁸

There were exceptions, such as when the art critic Paul Fechter focused exclusively on the aesthetic qualities of the sculptures,⁴⁹ or when Carl Georg Heise warned against looking for concrete messages in works of art.⁵⁰ On the whole, however, the ambivalent pattern prevailed, and it seems to have been accepted all the more readily since the abolition of “art criticism” and its transfer to “Kunstberichterstattung” (art reporting) clearly limited the scope for dissenting opinions.⁵¹ Basically, one could not go wrong with talking about symbols or role models: after all, the awarding of the prize had already provided political confirmation.

State Honors

The public honors for his sixtieth birthday were undoubtedly a high point in Kolbe’s career to date. In its spring exhibition of 1937, the Prussian Academy of Arts in Berlin dedicated a separate section to the sculptor which he was able to furnish himself (fig. 2); in addition to the flood of newspaper reports, there was a radio broadcast, which in turn was prominently announced with a photo spread in the radio magazine.⁵² Friends congratulated with a “Stammtischorden” (medal from the regulars’ table), the representatives of the NS state with official salutations.⁵³ The fifty-sixth birthday in 1942 was also lavishly honored. This is all the more remarkable because the general conditions had changed once again—not only because of the war, but also because of the cultural-political developments since 1937. In the field of sculpture, a new hierarchy had emerged, promoted by the large-scale construction projects of the state and the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellungen* (Great German Art Exhibitions), which were declared to be the showcase of National Socialist art, and which, in turn, were journalistically flanked by the magazine *Kunst im Dritten Reich*. The place of the older generation around Kolbe, Fritz Klimsch, and Karl Albiker was now taken by artists such as Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, whose work could be seen less as an anticipation than as a product of the “New Germany” and its ideology. At the same time, the representatives of the bourgeois arts pages had gradually disappeared from the daily newspapers. Not only those art critics who had been forced to emigrate had fallen silent, but also many of those who had remained: Karl Scheffler had already complained in 1937 that he could only congratulate Kolbe privately because he was no longer able to work as a journalist;⁵⁴ in 1942, Carl Georg Heise also combined his congratulations with the comment that, in contrast to the previous birthdays, he could not “publicly sing the praises of your [Kolbe’s] work” because he was “sinking further and further into the shadows as a journalist.”⁵⁵ At the same time, the press was bound by the “press instructions” of the “Deutscher Wochendienst” (German Weekly Service), which dictated to the authors the topics and content of their reporting.

As in 1937, Kolbe was honored with congratulatory telegrams from representatives from politics and culture,⁵⁶ a volume of his drawings with a text by Wilhelm Pinder,⁵⁷ a radio broadcast by Reichssender Berlin, and countless articles. Most importantly, on the afternoon of April 15, he received the Goethe Medal (fig. 3) from Leopold Gutterer, State



2 Exhibition view with works by Georg Kolbe in the spring exhibition of the Preußische Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1937, historical photograph

Secretary in the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, the heads of the fine arts and personnel departments, and the head of the Reich Propaganda Office; the accompanying congratulations from Goebbels came by telegram.⁵⁸ Like the Goethe Prize, the Goethe Medal for Art and Science was a carryover from the Weimar Republic; it had been established by Paul von Hindenburg in 1932. In the hierarchy of artist honors, it was placed above the title of professor (which Kolbe already held anyway),⁵⁹ but below the “Adlerschild des Deutschen Reiches” (Eagle Shield of the German Reich), which only three artists had received by 1944. Formally, the medal was awarded by Adolf Hitler, to whom the proposals were submitted by the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.⁶⁰ In 1941, the guidelines for awarding the medal were tightened in order to limit the number of recipients. Instead of recognizing individual achievements that were also relevant to cultural policy, the award was now to be given for the entire body of work; the award was to be the “crowning achievement of a lifetime’s work” and was therefore to be bestowed, if possible, on the seventy-fifth birthday and only in “exceptional cases” on the seventieth birthday.⁶¹ This applied to the majority of candidates. But there were also younger honorees: among the artists, these included the sculptors Josef Wackerle, Richard Scheibe, and Karl Albiker, the painters Ernst Vollbehr and Julius Paul Junghanns, and the architect Paul Bonatz. Like Kolbe, they received the Goethe Medal on their fifty-sixth birthdays, and Wackerle on his sixtieth. Such exceptions required justification. In Kolbe’s



3 On the occasion of the awarding of the Goethe Medal, Georg Kolbe receives Leopold Gutterer, State Secretary of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, in his studio on April 15, 1942, historical photograph

case, the various instances of the Reich Chamber of Culture argued with a standard phrase: this was a case of a “particularly outstanding artistic personality” who had “rendered lasting services to German art” and whose works were represented in almost all museums.⁶² Hitler approved the award in January 1942, but ordered that it be treated confidentially until the award ceremony.⁶³ The press, although informed in advance by the *Deutscher Wochendienst*, therefore reported only after the award with brief, always identical reports. On a private level, the honor was certainly noticed. The art historian Paul Clemen, for example, noted rather pointedly that “the Fuehrer had awarded him the same prize the year before—unfortunately only on my seventy-fifth birthday.”⁶⁴ The sculptor Wilhelm Saake was pleased that, with Kolbe, a “representative of good, honest art was deemed worthy of this award by a high authority,”⁶⁵ and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff hoped that Kolbe would be remembered “not only by the secret Germany—but also by the official one.”⁶⁶ With regard to the birthday tributes, however, the awarding of the Goethe Medal was only mentioned in weekly and monthly journals. This may have been the intention of Hitler and the Reich Ministry for Enlightenment and Propaganda. In this way, the artist could be honored without again being granted the central role in the cultural scene that he had been given in 1936 and 1937.

This was also evident in the content of the coverage. The press had already been alerted to the upcoming birthday by the *Deutscher Wochendienst* in January 1942, and was

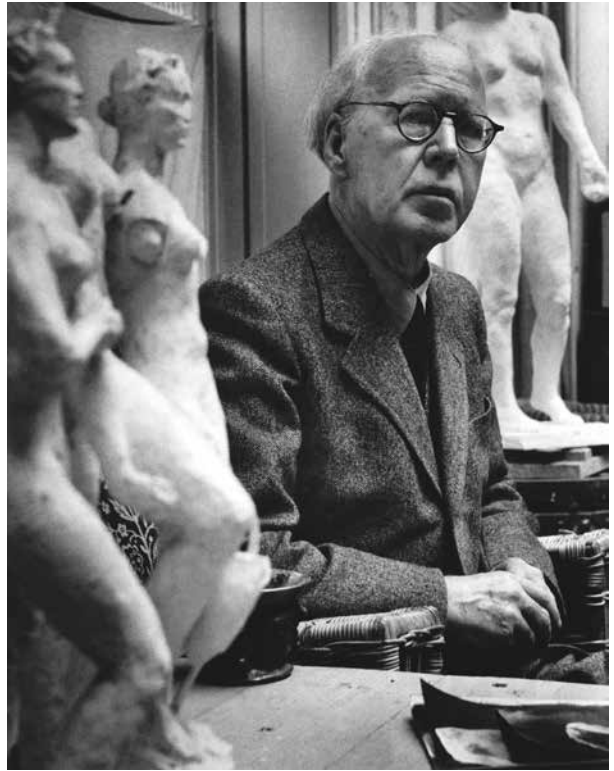
again called upon to report on April 14.⁶⁷ The newspapers dutifully complied with this request. The first was a tribute by Werner Rittich, which had already appeared on April 12 in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official newspaper of the NSDAP, and thus could have an exemplary effect. The article followed a simple pattern: first, the artist's importance was noted, then Kolbe's merit of having rediscovered nude sculpture as a means of expression was pointed out, and finally the "strong impetus" that the "new Germany" had given to Kolbe's work—away from the individual, towards the monumental—was mentioned, and the hope for further works for "völkisches Leben" (national-racial life) was expressed.⁶⁸ This structure, down to individual phrases, can be found in a number of smaller newspapers, where the image of the jubilarian is supplemented by further biographical details or the odd phrase from the repertoire of NS reporting. The obligatory reporting produced quite comical effects, as when the artist, who worked primarily in bronze, was hailed as a strong-willed "master of the chisel" in the *Täglicher Kreisblatt für Beeskow-Storkow*, the *Schweriner Kreisblatt*, and the *Senftenberger Anzeiger*:

"From his [Kolbe's] work speaks the will and the readiness for action of our days, his sculptures breathe power, and his art carved in stone carries the soul of today. [...] His figures in stone are an expression of hard times. Filled with a strong personal power. The new Germany gave the artist a strong boost. In the full force of his creativity, Kolbe will give us more works. Works in which he has erected a monument to himself, works that will outlast his life."⁶⁹

Although there were also voices that continued to follow Binding's and Pinder's example and once again evoked a "philosophical refinement" in the nudes,⁷⁰ there was now rarely any talk of role models or symbols⁷¹—this function had been taken over since 1938 by Arno Breker's nude sculptures, which also lacked attributes.⁷² Rather, one spoke of the "harmonious beauty" of the older works⁷³ and of the "heroic, calm, and collected conception" of the newer works,⁷⁴ occasionally also of the "purity of form."⁷⁵ The studio reports, often accompanied by photographs, painted a picture of an artist who was primarily at home in the world of his figures. The herald of the new had become an old master whose work was appreciated but no longer urgently needed.

Timelessly Time-Specific?

The model of the symbolic or exemplary had thus not become obsolete. On the contrary, we find it again in the tributes that appeared in April 1947 on the occasion of Kolbe's seventieth birthday and his death in November of the same year, but now under different auspices (fig. 4). The texts differ only in nuances from those used to celebrate the sixty-fifth birthday in 1942; at times, one cannot help feeling that the authors had merely rearranged and recoded their eternally identical text modules. The consciousness of tradition, which before 1945 had been interpreted as resistance to the changing fashions of



4 Probably the last photograph of Georg Kolbe before his death, taken by Herbert List, September 1947

the avant-gardes, indeed as a moral “bulwark of clear and clean Germanness” against the “corruption campaign planned by the Jews,”⁷⁶ was transformed into a sign of resistance to the “barbarism” of the “Third Reich,”⁷⁷ the *völkisch* “Germanness” into a “European Germanness,”⁷⁸ and the physical ideality of the new German people into a supranational commitment to human dignity:

“Kolbe’s figures are therefore not trumpeting theatrical heroes, not artisanal prima donnas, and also not power-mad musclemen, of which we have had enough in the last decade; they are people of inner nobility, people capable of making their own decisions, with controlled sensuality. [...] They are messengers of a profound and mature *humanitas* whose language is spoken by all peoples.”⁷⁹

Moreover, the talk of timelessness made the artist a beacon of hope for all those who perceived the “Third Reich” primarily as a disruption of their national self-image:

“Those who no longer know their way in and out of the evil confusion of the times, those who in a quiet hour would like to give an account of the good and the beauty slumbering in the heart, those who, in a word, would like to

recognize the genius of the German, in order to draw hope and to feel solid ground under their feet again, should immerse themselves in the multifaceted landscape of Kolbe's art—and such a viewer would have to be in a bad way if he did not find what he was looking for here: self-confidence and trust in the people from whom this artist also comes.”⁸⁰

Kolbe also updated his vocabulary. Instead of the “high type,” he now spoke of the “good in humanity” and instead of the “enhancement” of pure existence: “I want to educate/form [Ger.: *bilden*] people and speak with them for simplicity in humanity.”⁸¹

The arbitrariness of the definition that appears here does not diminish the importance of the model for the (respective) contemporary reception. After all, all the strands of interpretation presented here converged in the conviction that the figures, by virtue of their formal perfection, heralded a generally and supra-temporally valid ideal worthy of aspiration by all: nobility, high-mindedness, moral integrity, qualities that in turn could be linked to different ideological goals and could also be applied to very different artists—here, it should be recalled that even Arno Breker, who had created omnipresent “symbols” for the “Third Reich” on behalf of Albert Speer's General Building Inspectorate, was able to succeed once again after 1945 as a timeless “prophet of beauty.”⁸² The problematic nature of this pattern of interpretation was rarely addressed—and when it was, it was with an apologetic undertone that stylized Kolbe as a victim of circumstances:

“The vast number of his [Kolbe's] admirers did not always maintain the respectful distance that is required in front of the work of art. His sculptures succumbed to a popularity that, scattered in countless reproductions, diminished the real artistic pleasure in favor of the fashionable. Kolbe himself, far too much of an artist, unerringly pursued his path through this hustle and bustle around him, guided by a benevolent genius that made him create lasting works unlike any other of his epoch.”⁸³

Only Carl Georg Heise, who had always followed Kolbe's work sympathetically over the decades, fundamentally questioned his supra-temporal role model status. In his obituary, Heise acknowledged the achievements of the early Kolbe and his efforts to create an art beyond historicist or classicist specifications, but he also drew a clear line between the “masterpieces” and the “side shoots of his abundant production.” Above all, he linked the sculptor back to the historical context and thus to the ideology of the “Third Reich.”

“Did he [Kolbe] really surpass his time, or was he only shaped by it and transient like it? He did not die at the height of his fame. The time is past when a statesman thought that a race of Kolbe-humans should be raised, and when the little volume with illustrations of his works published by Insel Verlag was the most desired wish-fulfillment under the Christmas trees of the German youth.”⁸⁴

Critical tones of this kind remained the exception, of course; too great was the longing for an art that promised continuity, seemingly unencumbered by all political dangers, committed only to the true and the good, and apparently still too great was the longing for the “land of a more superior humanity.”⁸⁵ The exemplary “race of Kolbe-humans” had lost nothing of its efficacy even after 1945.

Notes

- 1 The formulation is found as a quotation from a letter by Kolbe to Wilhelm Pinder in the latter's reply of May 3, 1934, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.261, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 2 For more on Kolbe's reception, see: Ursel Berger, *Georg Kolbe – Leben und Werk, mit dem Katalog der Kolbe-Plastiken im Georg-Kolbe-Museum* (Berlin 1990); Arie Hartog, *Georg Kolbe. Receptie in Duitsland tussen 1920 en 1950*, PhD diss., Catholic University Nijmegen, 1989; Ursel Berger, "Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit. Tatsachen und Interpretationen," ePaper, Georg Kolbe Museum, November 4, 2013, <https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/read/21308335/ursel-berger-georg-kolbe-in-der-ns-zeit-georg-kolbe-museum> [last accessed July 1, 2023].
- 3 The format of the studio visit is found surprisingly often, with the authors for their part liking to emphasize the artist's taciturnity according to the motto "Create, you artist. Do not speak," only to report on a conversation after all; see, for example: Hoth, "Die Sprache wahrhaft genialer Schöpferkraft. Ein Neusalzer besuchte den Bildhauer Georg Kolbe, den Goethepreisträger 1936," in: *Nordschlesische Tageszeitung*, September 5, 1936, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 4 For more on Kolbe's own position statements, see the bibliography in Berger 1990 (see note 2), pp. 406–408.
- 5 This can be proven for the monograph published in 1933 and for the "Aufruf" (Appeal) for the realization of the Beethoven monument; see notes 21 and 26 below.
- 6 Unless otherwise noted, all articles cited here are from the collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 7 See the files on the Goethe Prize in the Prussian Academy of the Arts, Archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, PrAdk 0889.
- 8 Draft letter from Georg Kolbe to Karl Linder, September 1, 1936, MvT estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. In fact, Linder had been a member of the NSDAP since 1923, had first made a career in the Gau administration of Hesse before becoming mayor in 1933, and rose to the position of deputy Gauleiter of Hesse-Nassau in 1937; see: Bettina Tüffers, *Der braune Magistrat. Personalstruktur und Machtverhältnisse in der Frankfurter Stadtregierung 1933–1945* [Studien zur Frankfurter Geschichte, vol. 54] (Frankfurt am Main 2004).
- 9 Reprinted in: *Städtisches Anzeigenblatt*, no. 36, September 4, 1936, pp. 547–548, here p. 548. The famous Hitler quote from the Nuremberg Rally speech of September 1, 1933 reads in its entirety: "Art is a sublime mission that obliges one to fanaticism. Those who have been chosen by destiny to reveal the soul of a people [...] will suffer hardship rather than become unfaithful to the star which guides them from within." Quoted in: Adolf Hitler, *Führung und Gefolgschaft* [Die Erhebung. Dokumente zur Zeitgeschichte] (Berlin 1934), p. 23 [translated].
- 10 Ibid. The phrase "symbols beyond all temporal bonds" (*Sinnbilder jenseits aller zeitlichen Bindung*) belongs to the text of the award certificate.
- 11 Ibid. The speech was printed several times after the award ceremony, for example in the Frankfurt newspaper *Städtisches Anzeigenblatt* (see note 9, p. 548), the *Niederdeutscher Beobachter*, and the Goethe calendar for the year 1937 (next to a reproduction of the Stralsund memorial from 1936), all preserved in the collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin. It was also included in abbreviated form in the anthology of Kolbe's writings; see: Georg Kolbe, *Auf Wegen der Kunst. Schriften, Skizzen, Plastiken, mit einer Einleitung von Ivo Beucker* (Berlin 1949), p. 34.
- 12 See the manuscript of the speech with Kolbe's handwritten notes, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 13 "The German experiences art not with the eyes, but with the brain or the mind. He does not miss perfection of form where it is lacking. But I look only for this. [...] To take over tradition is considered as being influenced, as disgrace. What perversions, what suicide." Georg Kolbe, "Begleit-Wort," in: *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 53, 1923/24, pp. 195–196, here p. 196. Reprinted in Kolbe 1949 (see note 11), pp. 14–16.
- 14 Anonymous ["X"], "Kleine Chronik," in: *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, April 21, 1927, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 15 "A harmonious gift. A happily balanced talent. Georg Kolbe thus stands in a time in which art no longer seems to flow naturally from a joyful affirmation of this world, which burdens its own creation with the heavy problems of thought and theory." Curt Glaser, "Georg Kolbe," in: *Berliner Börsenkurier*, April 15, 1927, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive Berlin [translated].
- 16 "But it seems as if he must now, out of inner necessity, create figures of stronger emotional content

- and expression. For which we will now quietly wait with him." F. St. [Fritz Stahl], "Georg Kolbe wird morgen 50 Jahre alt," in: *Berliner Tageblatt*, evening edition, April 14, 1927, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 17 "When one speaks of Kolbe, one will always speak first of the cultivated taste of this sculptor, who gives an unusual refinement to everything he does. Taste has nothing to do with the artistic, with creative design as such. [...] Passions do not blaze as in the case of Munch, and blood does not race as in the case of van Gogh." Paul Westheim, "Georg Kolbe," in: *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, September 9, 1927 [translated]. Kolbe felt deeply offended by Westheim's judgment; he commented on the newspaper clipping with the words: "What kind of blood races in Mr. W.? That of a Dante, for example? I wonder what a pleb thinks of passion" [translated]. The request for return, also noted on the clipping, indicates that he passed the article on. It can be assumed that Carl Georg Heise's response, which appeared a short time later in Westheim's *Kunstblatt* of all places, was written at his instigation; see: Carl Georg Heise, "Georg Kolbe. Zu seinen neuen Arbeiten," in: *Das Kunstblatt*, November 1927, pp. 328–392.
 - 18 Berger 1990 (see note 2), pp. 120–131.
 - 19 Significantly, the reference to the "new Germany" is missing in the reprint of the speech held in 1936; see Kolbe 1949 (see note 11), p. 35.
 - 20 See the letters of congratulation from, on the one hand, Fritz Hellwag (August 5, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.148, GKM Archive, Berlin) and Fritz Behn (August 3, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.20, GKM Archive, Berlin) and, on the other hand, from Erich Heckel (August 10, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.144, GKM Archive, Berlin) and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (August 4, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.362, GKM Archive, Berlin).
 - 21 Letter from Rudolf Binding to Georg Kolbe, November 13, 1934, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.54, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. Elsewhere, Binding speaks of the book being as much Kolbe's as his own; see: letter from Rudolf Binding to Georg Kolbe, December 5, 1933, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.51, GKM Archive, Berlin. The suggestion that the poet should write a "preface" for an illustrated book came from Kolbe (see: letter from Rudolf Binding to Georg Kolbe, May 19, 1933, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.47, GKM Archive, Berlin); conversely, Binding submitted individual passages to the artist for his approval (see: letter from Rudolf Binding to Georg Kolbe, September 6, 1933, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.50, GKM Archive, Berlin). For this reason alone, it is unlikely that Binding's interpretative approach would have contradicted Kolbe's own convictions, as Ursel Berger assumes; see: Berger 1990 (see note 2) pp. 136–137.
 - 22 *Vom Leben der Plastik. Inhalt und Schönheit des Werkes von Georg Kolbe, mit einer Ausführung von Rudolf G. Binding* (Berlin 1933), p. 10 [translated].
 - 23 Ibid. [translated].
 - 24 Ibid., p. 16 [translated].
 - 25 Ibid., p. 20 [translated].
 - 26 In the case of the Beethoven monument, at least, there seems to have been an exchange of ideas between Binding and Kolbe: at Kolbe's request (see: Rudolf Binding's letter of acceptance to Georg Kolbe, December 11, 1927, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.47, GKM Archive, Berlin), Binding had written a fiery "appeal," in which he reported on a dinner in a larger circle in March 1927. Together, they had considered the problems of creating a monument to the composer, which, of course, had to be "at the same time a monument to the heroic German soul." After a long struggle, Kolbe developed exactly that: the "draft of a monument to the heroic German soul." Rudolf G. Binding, "Aufruf," in: *Das Beethoven-Denkmal von Georg Kolbe*, exh. cat. Galerie Paul Cassirer, Berlin, 1928, unpaginated [translated]. This corresponded to Kolbe's own self-evaluation: "It should not be Beethoven himself, not his portrait, but rather his translation—a Hero." Georg Kolbe, "Jenseits des Finanzministers und der Zeitleuchten" [1928], reprinted in: Kolbe 1949 (see note 11), pp. 21–23, here p. 22 [translated].
 - 27 Quoted in: Berger 1990 (see note 2), p. 356 [translated].
 - 28 Binding congratulated Kolbe by saying: "This year's award to you reminds me of last year. At that time, a man from the board of trustees approached me and asked [...] whether I knew of a worthy candidate for the Goethe Prize. At that time, I already named you; I had no other name, as you will surely believe me. But last year, they probably did not yet have the courage to choose you. It is good that they have it today." Letter from Rudolf Binding to Georg Kolbe, August 3, 1936, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.55, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
 - 29 Excerpts from the book were reprinted, for example, in the newspaper *Niederdeutscher Anzeiger*, August 28, 1936; the central statements are discussed by Ludwig Baer in an article in the *Fränkischer Kurier*: "Georg Kolbe," in: *Fränkischer Kurier*, undated [1936], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.

- 30 Rudolf G. Binding, "Georg Kolbe, der Bildhauer. Träger des Goethepreises der Stadt Frankfurt a. M. für das Jahr 1936," in: *Württembergische Zeitung*, August 1936, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin. The passage varies a similar list in the book. In 1933, however, "discipline and strength" were not yet part of it, but the renunciation of ecstasies and raptures was; see: Binding 1933 (see note 22), p. 10.
- 31 Binding 1936 (see note 30) [translated].
- 32 Rudolf G. Binding, "Hinweis auf die menschliche Gestalt. Mit einigen Abbildungen von Werken Georg Kolbes," in: *Das Innere Reich*, October 1936, pp. 802–804, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin; excerpt reprinted in: *Offenbacher Zeitung*, November 20, 1936, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 33 Anonymous [a leader of the Berlin chapter of the BDM], "Georg Kolbe und wir. Gestaltung von Reinheit, Kraft und Leidenschaft," in: *Das Deutsche Mädel*, undated [May 1936], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 34 Max Wegner, "Georg Kolbe. Der Bildner der deutschen Gestalt. Ein Besuch unseres Mitarbeiters Max Wegner bei Professor Dr. H. C. Georg Kolbe," in: *Nordland. Das Kampfblatt der Völkischen Aktion* 5, no. 2, January 15, 1937, Magdeburg, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. In the article, Kolbe is characterized as an opponent of the Weimar Republic who, in "complete solitude" and without any recognition in the art world, had exclusively followed his own path. The sculptor's parting words are put into his mouth: "Keep your ardent faith, you boys!" [translated]. The idea that Kolbe was preferably addressing the National Socialist youth may have been promoted by Kolbe's appeal in the *Deutsche Studentenzeitung* of that year; see: Georg Kolbe, "An die deutschen Studenten," in: *Deutsche Studentenzeitung*, May 31, 1934, p. 3, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 35 *NS-Frauen-Warte* 4, no. 20, 1935/36, pp. 630–631; cf. Stephanie Marchal and Andreas Zeising, "'Aus des Blutes Stimme.' Vermittlung und (Re)Kontextualisierung von NS-Kunst in der Zeitschrift NS-Frauenwarte," in: *Artige Kunst. Kunst und Politik im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Silke von Berswordt-Wallra-be, Jörg-Uwe Neumann, and Agnes Tieze, exh. cat. Kunstsammlungen der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Kunsthalle Rostock, and Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg (Bielefeld 2016), pp. 88–101, here p. 94 [translated].
- 36 Letter from Wilhelm Pinder to Georg Kolbe, April 14, 1937, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.262, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. In the book itself, Pinder called the birthday "an opportunity for avowal, i.e., by no means permission, to say more or less than one believes." Georg Kolbe. *Werke der letzten Jahre, mit Betrachtungen über Kolbes Plastik* by Wilhelm Pinder (Berlin 1937), p. 9 [translated]. Pinder had summed up his "belief" in a letter to Kolbe from 1934: "I too believe in the movement—and in you!" Letter from Wilhelm Pinder to Georg Kolbe, May 3, 1934, GK Estate GK, inv. no. GK.261, GKM Archive GKM, Berlin [translated].
- 37 Pinder 1937 (see note 36), p. 10 [translated].
- 38 Ibid., p. 15 [translated].
- 39 Ibid., p. 14 [translated].
- 40 The plans for the volume date back to January 1939 (publishing contract of January 12, 1939). As early as November 1940, the publisher reported the printing of the 111,000th to 120,000th copy, see: letter from Anton von Kippenberg to Georg Kolbe, November 1, 1940, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.527, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 41 See: Kolbe's letters to Hermann Schmitt, which admittedly do not paint a friendly picture of Graul: GK Estate, inv. no. GK.616.5_001-006, GKM Archive Berlin.
- 42 Georg Kolbe. *Bildwerke, vom Künstler ausgewählt, mit einem Text von Richard Graul* (Leipzig undated [1939/40]), p. 47 [translated].
- 43 Adele von Wahlde, "Die Welt Georg Kolbes," in: *Wilhelmshafener Zeitung*, 1936 (without precise day or month), evening edition, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 44 N. N., "Edle Plastische Gestalten," newspaper title unknown, undated [1937], no. 35, pp. 4–5, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 45 Dr. St., "Ein Gestalter des Harmonischen," in: *Nationalzeitung*, Hagen and *Nationalzeitung*, Essen, August 1936, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 46 F. A. Dargel, "Georg Kolbe 60 Jahre," newspaper title unknown, undated [1937], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 47 Fritz Hellwag, "Willenseinheit von Seele und Körper. Zum 60. Geburtstag Georg Kolbes (14.4.)," in: *Mitteilungsblatt der DAZ*, undated [1937], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 48 Heinz Flügel, "Nordische Schönheit in der deutschen Kunst," in: *Nationalsozialistische Landpost*, April 16, 1937, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 49 Paul Fechter, "Der Bildhauer Georg Kolbe. Zu seinem 60. Geburtstag am 15. April," in: *Berliner*

- Tageblatt*, April 14, 1937. The article varies Fechter's report on the awarding of the Goethe Prize; see: Paul Fechter, "Ein deutscher Bildhauer: Georg Kolbe bekam den Goethepreis," in: *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 1936, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 50** "Kolbe's sculptural work also urges us to communion. Like all true and superior art, it does not wish to devote itself to particular contents, but rather, on a deeper layer, to prepare the soul for that stillness and devotion from which alone creative humanity is able to breathe and act." Carl Georg Heise, "Georg Kolbe. Zum 60. Geburtstag," without note of the title of the newspaper [*Frankfurter Zeitung*], undated [April 15, 1937], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 51** Otto Thomae, *Die Propaganda-Maschinerie. Bildende Kunst und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit im Dritten Reich* (Berlin 1978), pp. 133 [translated].
- 52** Friedrich Karl Stockhausen's program aired on April 14 on Reichssender München; cf. *Berlin hört und sieht. Die reichillustrierte Funkzeitschrift*, no. 16, April 11–17, 1937, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 53** The newspaper *Neuköllnische Zeitung* reported in retrospect that, in 1937, Bernhard Rust and Baldur von Schirach, among others, had sent their congratulations to the artist, "in which the confidence is expressed that the brilliant artist 'may still create many works for the German people in mature freshness and health' and 'that the consciousness of the attachment to his work may always give him new strength to serve common ideals.'" Anonymous, "Goethe laureate Georg Kolbe 65 years," in: *Neuköllnische Zeitung*, April 15, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]. No letters from high-ranking politicians have been preserved in the Kolbe Archive; the list of well-wishers on the occasion of his fifty-sixth birthday shows that there must have been some; see note 56 below.
- 54** Letter from Karl Scheffler to Georg Kolbe, April 14, 1937, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.303, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 55** "Tomorrow is your fifty-sixth birthday. Three times I have been allowed to publicly sing the praises of your work on 'major' birthdays—but since it cannot be this time, and since I am, 'in the course of time,' sinking further and further into the shadows journalistically 'over time,' I would at least like to tell you personally that I am thinking of you and sending you my best wishes." Letter from Carl Georg Heise to Georg Kolbe, April 14, 1942, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.156, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 56** See the two lists of answered correspondence on the occasion of his fifty-sixth birthday, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin. Among the congratulators from politics listed there are, in addition to the State Secretary in the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, Leopold Gutterer, and the Ministerial Director in the Chamber of Culture, Hans Hinkel, the names of several mayors and lord mayors (of Frankfurt am Main, Posen, and Stralsund, among others), the district leader of the Delitzsch chapter of the NSDAP, as well as the General Culture Officer Walter Thomas from the Reich Governor's Office in Vienna.
- 57** Georg Kolbe. *Zeichnungen. Mit 100 Abbildungen und einer Einleitung von Wilhelm Pinder* (Berlin 1942).
- 58** Thomae 1978 (see note 51), p. 286. This telegram is also not (or no longer) among Kolbe's documents.
- 59** Kolbe was awarded the title of professor in 1918 by the Prussian Ministry of Culture; see Berger 1990 (note 2), p. 177.
- 60** Thomae 1978 (see note 51), pp. 195–196.
- 61** Statutory order of March 8, 1941, quoted in: Thomae 1978 (see note 51), pp. 190–191 [translated].
- 62** Thomae 1978 (see note 51), p. 286 [translated].
- 63** Ibid.
- 64** Letter from Paul Clemen to Georg Kolbe, April 17, 1942, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.83, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 65** Letter from Wilhelm Saake to Georg Kolbe, April 19, 1942, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.295, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 66** Letter from Karl Schmidt-Rottluff to Georg Kolbe, April 19, 1942, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.363, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 67** Thomae 1978 (see note 51), p. 286.
- 68** Werner Rittich, "Georg Kolbe 65 Jahre," in: *Völkischer Beobachter*, April 12, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]; the report can only be found in the collection of press clippings as a copy from the Federal Archives. Rittich had already dedicated a longer essay to Kolbe in February 1942; see: Werner Rittich, "Das Werk Georg Kolbes. Zum 65. Geburtstag des Künstlers," in: *Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich* 6, no. 2, February 1942, pp. 31–41, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 69** *Senftenberger Anzeiger*, April 15, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 70** Fritz Hellwag, "Georg Kolbe 65 Jahre alt," in: *Die Kunst für Alle* 56, June 1942, pp. 198–204, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

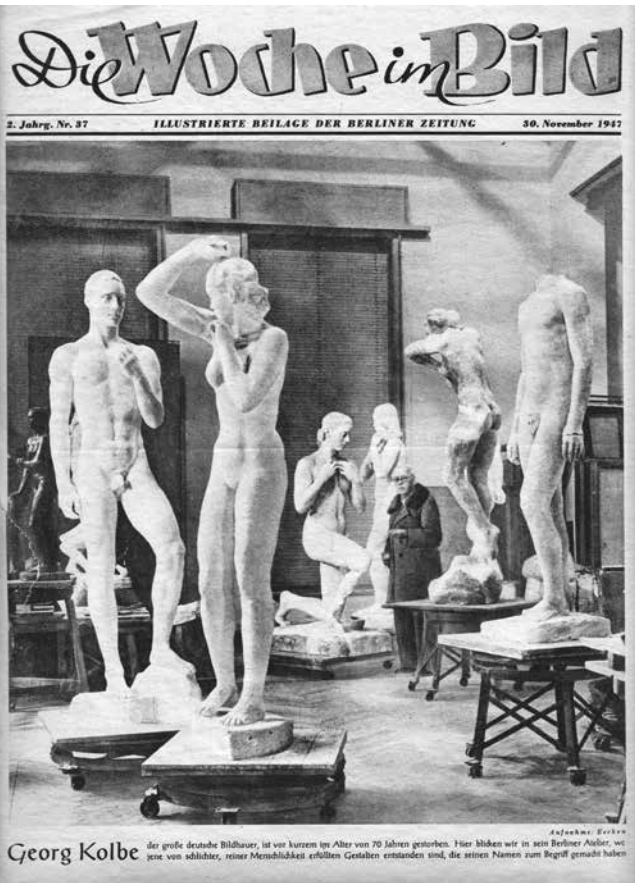
- 71** Among the exceptions are Kurt Mandel, for example, who describes a development “from the thoroughly spiritual sculpture to the symbolic” (Kurt Mandel, “Meister der weiblichen Anmut,” in: *Heilbronner Tageblatt*, April 14, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]), Adolf Meurer, who discovers in the figures “the eternal life of our people” (Adolph Meurer, “Stil und Antlitz der deutschen Plastik, Zum 65. Geburtstag Georg Kolbes am 15. April,” in: *Cottbuser Anzeiger*, April 15, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]), and the author C. K., who recognizes here “images of folkish humanity” (C. K., “Georg Kolbe 65 Jahre,” in: *Münchener Zeitung*, April 15, 1942, *Der Westen*, April 13, 1942, and *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 15, 1942, all collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated]).
- 72** For more on this problem, see: Magdalena Bushart, “Überraschende Begegnung mit alten Bekannten. Arno Brekers NS-Plastik in neuer Umgebung,” in: *kritische berichte*, no. 2, 1989, pp. 31–50.
- 73** Felix Zimmermann, “Gestalter harmonischer Schönheit. Zum 65. Geburtstag des Bildhauers Georg Kolbe,” in: *Dresdner Nachrichten*, April 15, 1942; Hermann Dannecker, “Gestalter des Menschen, Georg Kolbe zum 65. Geburtstag am 15. April,” in: *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, April 15, 1942, and *Steglitzer Anzeiger*, April 14, 1942, all collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 74** Anonymous, “Georg Kolbe. Zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 15. April,” in: *Familien-Magazin*, April 10, 1942, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 75** F. A. Dargel, “Die Stunde der Gnade. Zum 65. Geburtstag von Georg Kolbe,” in: *Allgemeiner Wegweiser*, undated [1942], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 76** Wegner 1937 (see note 34) [translated].
- 77** In the review by Ewin Redslob, for example, it is written: “The value of Kolbe’s life lies in the straightforwardness with which he pursued his own path. Hardly any of today’s German works stands out in the bizarre contours of contemporary events of the last four decades in such a clearly drawn outline, so unswervingly leading to the goal, as that which in Kolbe’s work points beyond the temporal into the eternal.” Edwin Redslob, “Jenseits der Zeit. Zu Georg Kolbes siebzigstem Geburtstag,” in: *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 15, 1947, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 78** In his congratulatory letter on the occasion of Kolbe’s seventieth birthday, Bruno Kroll described the sculptor as a representative of “a truly European Germanness, which can only be European if it is truly German.” Letter from Bruno Kroll to Georg Kolbe, April 17, 1947, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.193, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 79** Walter G. Oschilewski, “Anruf des Lebens. Georg Kolbe zum 70. Geburtstag,” in: *sie*, April 13, 1947, reprinted as an obituary [translated]. The word *humanitas* also appears in Alfred Werner’s tribute: “Gestaltetes Leben. Georg Kolbe zum 70. Geburtstag am 15. April,” in: *Der Morgen*, April 15, 1947, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 80** Gert H. Theunissen, “Gestalter und Kündler. Zum 70. Geburtstag Georg Kolbes,” in: *Tägliche Rundschau*, April 14, 1947, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 81** Georg Kolbe, quoted in: A. Marfeld, “Der Wille des Prometheus,” in: *Neue Zeit*, April 13, 1947, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 82** See: Arno Breker. *Der Prophet des Schönen. Skulpturen aus den Jahren 1920–1982, mit Texten von Ernst Fuchs, Katalog und Biografie von Volker G. Probst* (Munich 1982).
- 83** Dr. F., “Bekenntnis zur Plastik,” newspaper title and date of publication unknown [covered by a piece of adhesive tape from the Kolbe Archive], collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 84** Carl Georg Heise, “Abschied von Georg Kolbe,” in: *Die Welt*, November 25, 1947, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 85** F. A. Dargel, “Prof. Georg Kolbe gestorben,” in: *Telegraf*, November 21, 1947, collection of press clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].

Georg Kolbe after 1945

Maike Steinkamp

“Rightly forgotten”?

Georg Kolbe after 1945



1 Georg Kolbe in his studio, published in the weekly newspaper *Die Woche im Bild*. *Illustrierte Beilage der Berliner Zeitung* 2, no. 37, November 30, 1947

Georg Kolbe spent the end of the Second World War in his destroyed studio and home on Sensburger Allee in Berlin. He had returned there in January 1945, having been evacuated to Silesia a little more than a year earlier, in December 1943, after his house was destroyed in an air raid. Kolbe experienced the “day of liberation by the Russians as a resurrection,”¹ as he wrote in a letter to his patron, the collector and noodle manufacturer Erich Cohn in New York. In other statements, too, he repeatedly made it clear how glad he was that the National Socialist regime and its “megalomania” had been brought to an end (fig. 1).²

Yet compared to many others, Kolbe had not fared badly during the National Socialist period. He had already been one of Germany’s most successful artists in the 1920s, and this was not to change for the time being after the National Socialists seized power in January 1933. His popularity and his increasingly large-format, muscular, idealized depictions of the human body, which began in the early 1930s, made him compatible with the artistic ideas of the NS era. Although he was not one of the celebrated sculptor-stars such as Arno Breker and Josef Thorak, his sculptures continued to be appreciated. His works were thus included in numerous museum and gallery exhibitions, as well as in

official presentations; from 1937 onward, his sculptures were regularly shown at the annual *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Great German Art Exhibition), and he appeared internationally, too, with works at the Biennale di Venezia in 1934 and at the Exposition Internationale in Paris in 1937.³ He also received recognition on another level. In 1937, he became an honorary member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, where his work was honored in a special room; in 1942, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday, he was awarded the Goethe Medal for Art and Science; and finally, in 1944, like more than a thousand other cultural workers, he was placed on the so-called “Gottbegnadeten-Liste,” a list of “divinely gifted” artists who were indispensable to the regime and thus exempted from military service.⁴ However, the Heinrich Heine monument he created in Frankfurt am Main between 1910 and 1913 was damaged and removed in the early 1930s; the one planned for Düsseldorf was never erected; and the Rathenau fountain he created in Berlin in 1930 was dismantled in 1934. His limestone *Genius* (1927/28) was removed from the Berlin opera house,⁵ as was the large sculpture *Nacht* (Night, 1926/30) from the Haus des Rundfunks. Thus, Kolbe’s relationship to the National Socialist regime in the early years of the dictatorship was thoroughly ambivalent, and the artist did not publicly distance himself until the very end. Private letters and testimonies, however, reveal that he rejected the inhuman ideas of the new powers that be and continued to cultivate his friendships with artists who had now been declared “degenerate,” such as Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. He also never joined the NSDAP.⁶

At first the fact that Kolbe had not publicly distanced himself from the NS regime did not seem to matter after the end of the Second World War. Like many of his colleagues, he became involved in the newly founded cultural organizations in Berlin and thus continued his official activities during the years of the Weimar Republic. For example, he registered as a member of the Kammer der Kunstschaffenden (Chamber of Artists), even being appointed to its presidential council, and joined the Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (Cultural Alliance for the Democratic Renewal of Germany), founded in June 1945.⁷ The Kulturbund in particular was very active, with its Commission for the Fine Arts organizing exhibitions, lectures, and other cultural events. Kolbe’s involvement was limited, however, due to serious health problems. Other members of the Kulturbund included old friends such as Karl Hofer, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (who headed the local Kulturbund group in Chemnitz), Max Pechstein, Otto Nagel, Heinrich Ehmsen, Herbert Sandberg, and the sculptress Renée Sintenis, as well as the art historians Adolf Behne and Will Grohmann.⁸

As the names above make clear, it was primarily artists and cultural workers who had been successful during the Weimar Republic who, after the end of the war, became involved in organizations for a “new beginning” in culture and at the same time sought to regain their voice and influence. At numerous events, meetings, and lectures—often initiated by the Kulturbund—they discussed the role and tasks of a new, “progressive” art. The focus was on distancing themselves from NS cultural policies: a process that received active political support. In particular, artists who had been defamed as “degenerate” during the National Socialist era were intensively involved in cultural reconstruction, both by the

four occupying powers and by the new Berlin administration. As the painter Hans Grundig noted in an article in the magazine *Zeitschrift für Kunst* in 1947, no truly creative forces had been developed during National Socialism, so that “today we are faced with the serious fact that the generation of visual artists from 1918 to 1933 still represents the most advanced artistic forces that represent us beyond the borders of Germany.”⁹

Georg Kolbe's planned appointment to the newly founded Hochschule für bildende Künste (HdK, Academy of Fine Arts) in Berlin-Charlottenburg makes it clear that a connection to the period before 1933 was not always without pitfalls. The painter Karl Hofer had taken over as director in August 1945. Together with his deputy Heinrich Ehmsen, Hofer had succeeded in recruiting such colleagues as Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Taut, Max Kaus, Oskar Nerlinger, Max Pechstein, Renée Sintenis, and Georg Tappert, as well as the art historian Adolf Behne (and, after Behne's death in August 1948, Will Grohmann), to teach at the academy.¹⁰ He also wanted to bring Kolbe on board; he contacted him in November 1945 and offered him a professorship. Kolbe gladly—and surprisingly—accepted, since he had not considered teaching before the war.¹¹ Shortly thereafter, however, the past caught up with him. Hofer came across a statement by Kolbe that had been published in the NS-aligned student newspaper *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung* in 1934. In it, Kolbe had expressed his delight that German students saw an intellectual affinity between his work and that of the national youth who were to carry out cultural construction in the “new Germany.” However, the article is not as affirmative as it might seem at first glance; one also reads Kolbe's criticism of the National Socialists' restrictive cultural policies that defamed certain art movements, as well as his appeal to students not to simply follow art-historical buzzwords.¹²

Despite the discernible nuances, Hofer expressed his disappointment at the publication of the article, saying that everyone had believed that “inwardly, you [Kolbe] had felt far removed from this terrible society”¹³ and that he, Hofer, continued to believe this. He asked Kolbe for a credible explanation that would exonerate him, emphasizing that no one from the academy would hold this acclamation against him personally, but that there were others “who do not want to have lived twelve years in darkness and abandonment or in a concentration camp for nothing. They would come forward if you went public.”¹⁴ In addition, Hofer added in another letter to Kolbe two weeks later, on December 16, 1945, people knew—in contrast to himself and the other members of the academy—“that you have portrayed one or more of the bastards for umpteen thousand marks. This is now much more serious and embarrassing, because one can rightly say that you stabbed the others in the back, because the gentlemen then bragged about their association with Kolbe.” For himself, Hofer said, it was important that Kolbe, unlike the “bastard Nolde,” had not inwardly belonged to the perpetrators, but that the contemporary public might think otherwise.¹⁵

A written response by Kolbe to Hofer's letters has not been preserved. For the production of the Franco bust in 1938, to which Hofer indirectly referred in his letter, he justified himself to his friend and patron Cohn, to whom he wrote on July 8, 1946: “I would like to speak again about the Franco bust. First of all, I did not see the reality clearly, and

secondly, it was a private commission, formally interesting, which allowed me to get to know Spain. [...] I was grateful during those years to be able to remain on the sidelines, which was really no small thing.”¹⁶

In retrospect, Kolbe's justification seems opportunistic and naïve. Even if the explosive nature of the commission was indeed not clear to him, he was well aware of the discrimination against many fellow artists and their exclusion from public cultural life. But the possibility of receiving a prominent commission apparently outweighed this for the sculptor, who was used to success, and not only in this case.

Kolbe did not accept a professorship at the academy.¹⁷ In other areas, however, his lack of public distance from National Socialism had no consequences. On the contrary, he was visited in his studio by numerous allies, especially from the Soviet Union and the United States and, as a respected sculptor, was asked to sell some of his works to them.¹⁸ And he was also taken seriously as an authentic voice of the artistic community on questions of the further development of contemporary art: a role that he gladly accepted. As Schmidt-Rottluff had already written in the newspaper *Sächsische Zeitung* on January 8, 1946, the “pre-war artists” felt obligated to make the younger generation “think and see again.” The artists had made mistakes before 1933 that had contributed to the rise of National Socialism. In particular, the lack of contact with the people and the social isolation of the artists had fatal consequences. This must now change.¹⁹ Kolbe expressed a very similar view in a radio report also broadcast in January 1946. In the daily program “Stimme des Kulturbundes” (Voices of the Cultural Alliance), he spoke about the situation of sculpture in Germany and condemned both the “grandiloquent” sculpture of the Kaiser era and, above all, that of the “megalomaniacal” so-called Third Reich. What the sculptors presented, especially in the first small exhibitions after the war, was “admittedly not yet able to give an idea of future sculpture,” but even if one did not yet know what it would look like, one already knew what it would *not* look like:

“Sculpture will no longer be bothered by p r e t e n t i o u s, ostentatious commissions. It will be allowed to be simple. Certainly, there have been times of reasonable approaches that have encouraged the pursuit of pure form. We may be grateful for our tradition—it is, thank God, indestructible, even if many a great work has been destroyed—the spirit has remained and will live on and perhaps flourish even more. These works are based on the very great achievements of our ancestors, who led German sculpture to its heights. Now the coming time should protect us from the good being overrun by the inferior, by appearances, and by megalomania. It will be easier for us to recognize the truth; let it be our only teacher. The people, each individual human being, should become the starting point of the design. Working men and women will then be able to understand us better and follow us in our ways. Simplicity and love for the truth will captivate them; they will not pass by our works as if they were empty pots. There will be no more forced or dictated work, where the lack of freedom can be seen at first glance.”²⁰

Like Schmidt-Rottluff, Kolbe was concerned with closing the gap between art and the people—a common slogan that became increasingly important during the first post-war years, especially in the Soviet occupation zone. However, unlike there, where from 1947/48 onward, art was increasingly supposed to serve the people or the party according to concrete guidelines, for both Kolbe and Schmidt-Rottluff the freedom of art was of paramount importance. Kolbe initially interpreted the fact that questions of art were being discussed so vigorously as something positive, but he argued that the artists should be given some time to become creatively active again. On May 9, 1946, the first anniversary of the end of the war, Kolbe wrote in the newspaper *Tägliche Rundschau*, which was published in the Soviet occupation zone:

“In general, efforts to deal with questions of the fine arts are extremely lively at the moment. Exhibitions are springing up everywhere and are being discussed and criticized eagerly, although it is easy to understand those artists who say: ‘Let us first come to ourselves, so that after such terrible shocks to the world, the creative spark in the soul may light up again.’”²¹

Exhibitions

The sculptor himself participated in several of the exhibitions that were “springing up everywhere,” as Kolbe described in his statement to the *Tägliche Rundschau*. Kolbe was represented, among others, in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (General German Art Exhibition), which opened in Dresden in August 1946. This exhibition was the first major survey of contemporary art after the end of the Second World War, especially of art that had only recently been declared “degenerate.” It was organized by the Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands, the Saxon State Administration, and the Dresden City Council, and conceived by the sculptor Herbert Volwahn and the art historian Will Grohmann.²² The exhibition had a supra-regional appeal and included works from the Soviet, French, and American occupation zones. The presentation was a statement, a demonstration of regained artistic freedom after twelve years of the NS regime. On display were works by Expressionists, Bauhaus, and New Objectivity artists, and members of the Dresden ASSO (Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists), founded in 1928.²³ Most of the works were from the pre-war period, but there were also works from the war years, with figurative works dominating. However, the experience of National Socialism, war, and the misery of the post-war period were only sporadically reflected in the works on display. For example, the organizers included Otto Dix’s monumental triptych *Der Krieg* (The War, 1929–32), which was still considered compellingly contemporary. Hans Grundig’s *Vision einer brennenden Stadt* (Vision of a Burning City), the central panel of his triptych *Das Tausendjährige Reich* (The Thousand-Year Reich, 1935–38), was staged as a counterpart to Dix’s painting, which was based on memories of the First World War. Both were complemented by etchings



2 Announcement of the exhibition *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Dresden with Georg Kolbe's figure *Flehende* (Supplicator) and two figurative paintings, published in: *Tägliche Rundschau*, September 1946

by Lea Grundig from the graphic cycles *Unterm Hakenkreuz* (Under the Swastika) and *Krieg droht* (War Approaches), both from 1936.

Pain and sorrow were also evident in several sculptural works; the medium was well represented with nearly seventy exhibits. Along with works by Käthe Kollwitz and Ernst Barlach, Kolbe's small sculptures *Flehende* (Supplicator, 1944) and *Befreiter* (Liberated Man, 1945) were among the few sculptures or paintings that referred directly to the war and its aftermath. This disproportion is also impressively demonstrated in an announcement of the exhibition in the *Tägliche Rundschau*, in which Kolbe's *Flehende* is printed next to two harmless portraits (fig. 2). Kolbe had created *Flehende* in Silesia in 1944. It is a kneeling female figure with folded hands, looking to heaven for protection. After 1945, it was one of his most successful works; a total of ten bronzes were cast during his lifetime, and another ten were produced until the early 1960s. One of these was acquired by the *Tägliche Rundschau* in 1946, which donated it to the Nationalgalerie in East Berlin in 1958 (fig. 3).²⁴ In the 1940s, a second cast was acquired by the collector Hermann Reemtsma, with whom Kolbe remained in close contact after 1945.²⁵ The work *Befreiter* was also very popular. It was the first sculpture Kolbe made after the war, to which the title naturally alludes. The seated man, leaning forward with his hands in front of his face, is a powerful admonition and a reminder of the recently ended world war (fig. 4).

The fact that Kolbe's sculptures in particular refer to the circumstances of the time is rather unusual in his oeuvre, since not only his dancers and filigree female figures of the 1910s but also his more monumental figures created since the mid-1920s, are



3 Georg Kolbe, *Flehende* (Supplicator), 1944, bronze, h. 44 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie



4 Georg Kolbe, *Befreiter* (Liberated Man), 1945, bronze, h. 34 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

characterized by idealization and temporal indeterminacy. This was also true of his sculptures from the NS period, such as the nearly three-foot-tall female figure *Der Weg* (The Way, 1943), the third sculpture Kolbe showed at the Dresden exhibition. All three were shown in various exhibitions after the war. For example, Kolbe showed the *Flehende* at the *Ausstellung bildender Künstler* (Exhibition of Visual Artists) organized by the Kulturbund with the support of the Kammer der Kuntschaffenden, which ran from December 1945 to January 1946 and was conceived as a sales exhibition.²⁶ Six months later, in May/June 1946, he showed *Befreiter* and *Der Weg* together with two other bronzes (*Große Kauernde* [Large Crouching Woman, 1925/27] and *Statuette* [1925]) and two plasters (*Bildniskopf Max Liebermann* [Portrait Head of Max Liebermann, 1929] and *Großer Stürzender* [Large Foundering Man, 1940/42]) at the 1. *Deutschen Kunstausstellung* (1st German Art Exhibition), organized by the Central Administration for National Education in the Soviet occupation zone in Berlin. Held in the damaged Zeughaus Unter den Linden, it included nearly 600 sculptures and paintings that often directly addressed contemporary events, such as Kolbe's *Befreiter*, Kollwitz's *Klage* (Lament, 1938–40), and Hofer's *Frau in Ruinen* (Woman in Ruins, 1945). Also on view were works by so-called “proletarian revolutionary” artists such as Heinrich Ehmsen, Hans Grundig, Hermann Bruse, Alice Lex-Nerlinger, Otto Nagel, Oskar Nerlinger, Horst Stempel, and Magnus Zeller, as well as Ernst Barlach, Hermann Blumenthal, Max Pechstein, Richard Scheibe, Renée Sintenis, and Horst Tappert.²⁷ The

exhibition was praised in the *Tägliche Rundschau* by Carola Gärtner-Scholle, a staff member of the Fine Arts Department of the German Central Administration for National Education, as a new beginning and a stocktaking. In selecting the works of art, the organizers had in part deliberately focused on a creative period of about twenty years prior, which seemed to them to be suitable for giving young people access to this art. Such a presentation, which stands at the beginning of a new period in German art, would necessarily have to juxtapose heterogeneous artistic views, contents, and styles.²⁸

Kolbe was also well represented in the first major exhibition of the Berlin museums: *Meisterwerke deutscher Bildhauer und Maler* (Masterpieces of German Sculptors and Painters), which opened in October 1947, also in the former Zeughaus Unter den Linden, and which presented their accessible and preserved holdings. Responsible for the exhibition was Ludwig Justi, who had taken over as director general of the (former) Staatliche Museen after the war. For the presentation, Justi deliberately combined old and new art, as he wrote in the accompanying catalog, in order to give the public access to modernism through older art.²⁹ According to him, he wanted to open people's eyes again, so that they could see the art they had been deprived of during the NS regime. Works by Franz Marc, August Macke, Oskar Moll, and Karl Hofer, who had only recently been defamed as "degenerate," were presented. In addition, Käthe Kollwitz's son had given Justi her sculpture *Mutter mit Kindern* (Mother with Children, 1923/26) as a temporary loan. One of the main works was undoubtedly the triptych *Nacht über Deutschland* (Night over Germany, 1945/46) by Horst Strempel, in which the artist had impressively processed the horrors of the Second World War. As one of the modern protagonists of the Nationalgalerie's collection, Kolbe was also very well represented in this presentation. This is hardly surprising, since it was Justi who laid the foundation for modern sculpture in the collection with the acquisition of the *Tänzerin* (Dancer) in 1912. Kolbe had lent a total of seven sculptures, including the *Kauernde* (Crouching Woman, 1925), the *Genius* (1927), and the plaster model of the *Nacht* (Night), the bronze cast of which had been removed from the Funkhaus on Mauerstrasse after the seizure of power and subsequently disappeared. Justi had placed his monumental sculptures *Junger Streiter* (Young Fighter, 1935), *Pietà* (1930), *Großer Torso* (Large Torso, 1929), and *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man, 1936) in an impressive enfilade in the great hall of the Zeughaus (fig. 5).³⁰

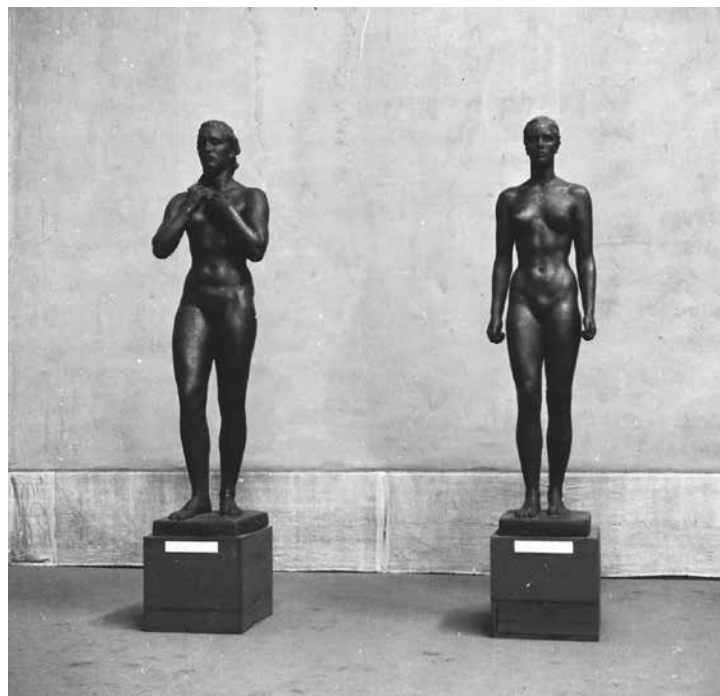
In the first two years after the war, Kolbe's works were also shown outside Berlin. For example, in 1946, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, the Städelsche Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt am Main organized an exhibition of works from its holdings; next to the Berlin museums, the Frankfurt museums had the largest collection of works by the artist. Kolbe had always been on good terms with the Städel's director, Alfred Wolters, who had published several texts on the sculptor and was responsible for many of the museum's acquisitions. On display were Kolbe's Heine monument, which had been removed in 1933, and the *Mädchenstatue* (Statue of a Girl, 1936/37), which the sculptor had donated to the Goethe House in Frankfurt when he was awarded the Goethe Medal. In addition, the figures that were to be installed in the *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues), commissioned in 1933, were also on display. In the 1930s, Kolbe was only able

5 Exhibition view of *Meister deutscher Bildhauer und Maler* in the Berlin Zeughaus, 1947, here with four works by Georg Kolbe: *Junger Streiter* (Young Fighter, 1935), *Pietà* (1928/30), *Weiblicher Torso* (Female Torso, 1925/29), and *Herabschreitender* (Descending Man, 1936), historical photograph



to complete work on the female figures—the *Junges Weib* (Young Woman) and the *Hüterin* (Guardian), both from 1938, as well as the *Amazone* (1937) and the *Auserwählte* (The Chosen, 1939)—which he presented prominently at the *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* in Munich in 1938 and 1939 (fig. 3). This circumstance apparently did not play a role in 1946; rather, the four women, together with the three larger-than-life male figures that Kolbe had just completed, were to demonstrate images of a new humanity in their “resolute worldliness” in the *Ring der Statuen* (fig. 6). The final installation of the *Ring der Statuen* in Frankfurt’s Rothschild Park did not take place until after Kolbe’s death.³¹ The exhibition also included images of various stages of the Beethoven monument, another project from the 1930s that was not completed until after Kolbe’s death.³² The actual model had been stored away during the war and returned to him damaged after 1945.³³ It was finally erected in Frankfurt in 1951.

In addition, there were a few smaller exhibitions to which Kolbe was invited, including one in September/October 1946 at the Städtische Kunsthalle Gera. He was obviously not entirely satisfied with this outcome. In August 1946, for example, he wrote to his American friend Cohn: “If Mr. Zigosser could succeed in exhibiting works by me, that would be a great satisfaction for me, because here [in Germany] there is still a great confusion of



6 Exhibition view with two of Georg Kolbe's figures from the *Ring der Statuen* (Ring of Statues), *Die Hüterin* (Guardian, 1938) and *Die Amazone* (Amazon, 1937), in the Georg Kolbe exhibition at the Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, 1946, historical photograph

views, and the work of sculptors is pretty much at the bottom of the list when it comes to interest in art.”³⁴

In general, the stock of works initially available to Kolbe after 1945 seems to have been relatively small. However, before his evacuation to Silesia, Kolbe had been able to leave a number of works, especially earlier ones, together with his studio building, in the care of his son-in-law, Kurt von Keudell, where they were still to be found after the end of the war.³⁵ Several plaster models and casts had been destroyed by bombing, both in the studio and in the Noack fine art foundry. The surviving figures at Noack were presumably brought back to Kolbe's studio in 1946 with the help of a few “Russian officers,” as the evening newspaper *Nacht-Express* reported, including the designs for the Beethoven monument in Frankfurt am Main.³⁶ In all, some 250 figures had survived. However, the loss of drawings and watercolors was considerable. In January 1947, for example, Kolbe wrote to the Hamburg collector Reemtsma: “How gladly I would return drawings to you if I still had any. I have lost about 700 sheets. Everything I owned. Most of them were stored here as my private property, together with museum objects from the Nationalgalerie, in the Zoo Bunker. The Russians took it over.”³⁷ And to the Wurzen Cultural Office he wrote: “If you had been informed about my [war] losses, you would understand me immediately. The few things available are already in exhibitions in Dresden, Gera, Berlin, and Potsdam.”³⁸ However, he did produce some new work after 1945, although he was in poor health, suffering from advanced cancer and further handicapped by an eye disease that led to blindness.

Kolbe was thus certainly in demand after 1945. With his death in November 1947, however, this popularity came to an abrupt end, although he continued to be honored sporadically as an “old master” in gallery exhibitions. In 1948 the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf dedicated a memorial exhibition to him, but due to the tense political situation, it had to do without loans from Berlin. Finally, in 1950, the Georg Kolbe Museum opened in the artist’s former studio building. Judging by the surviving press coverage, however, the general public took only moderate notice.

“Beyond Time” or “Rightly Forgotten”?

Shortly before Kolbe’s death, Edwin Redslob, former Reichskunstwart (Imperial Art Protector) of the Weimar Republic and then editor of the *Tagesspiegel*, a daily newspaper licensed in the American sector, praised Kolbe’s work as “beyond time” in a tribute on the occasion of the artist’s seventieth birthday. He wrote: “Hardly any of today’s German work rises above the bizarre contours of contemporary events of the last four decades in such a clearly drawn outline, so unswervingly leading to the goal, as that which in Kolbe’s oeuvre points beyond the temporal into the eternal.” The sculptor had resisted the “lure of National Socialist patrons” and, despite “dangerous attempts to fraudulently misuse his name for propaganda purposes, had worked in the silence of his Berlin studio, which meant the world to him.”³⁹

Gert H. Theunissen, another old companion who had written for *Kunst der Nation* in the 1930s, found a similar interpretation in his article “Gestalter und Kündler” (Creator and Herald) in the *Tägliche Rundschau*. He described Kolbe as a sculptor who was not affected by the “confusions of the times.” In his article, he wrote:

“Whoever no longer knows his way in and out of the evil confusions of the times, but whoever in a quiet hour would like to give an account of the good and beautiful that slumbers in the heart, whoever, in a word, would like to recognize the genius of the Germans in order to draw hope and to feel solid ground under his feet again, should immerse himself in the multifaceted landscape of Kolbe’s art—and such a viewer would be in a sad state if he did not find here what he was looking for: trust in himself and in the people from whom this artist also came.”⁴⁰

And in 1948, on the occasion of Kolbe’s memorial exhibition in Düsseldorf, the *Westdeutsche Blätter* wrote:

“Kolbe’s reputation is not rationed by any political dates; it was equally high both before and after 1933. He was not ‘for’ or ‘against’; he was an artist. That is his strength and at the same time his limitation. It would be easy to prove how the ideas of a Nordic-Germanic ideology of beauty nevertheless unconsciously

flowed into his work, or how he sacrificed his intimate sense of touch to the fashion for the 'monumental.' But one cannot deny that his errors had always remained artistic errors and that he had clearly withstood every mental challenge."⁴¹

Kolbe was certainly not as detached from the world and as unbroken as described by Edwin Redslob and others, especially the later executor of his will and first director of the Georg Kolbe Museum, Margrit Schwartzkopff—even if this image follows a diction that he helped to create. It is interesting to note that, in the first years after the war, Kolbe's person was interpreted as untouched by the political and social events of the time. However, he was not the unworldly artist, one of the last "great seers of divine essences,"⁴² as he was described in 1952 in an accompanying text in the visitor's booklet of the Georg Kolbe Museum. On the contrary, Kolbe was very much aware of the political circumstances and his role in them, as his actions under National Socialism as well as his commitment in the post-war period show. At the same time, there was no conscious change in his artistic work around 1933 or after 1945, or in his relationship to it. And perhaps this attitude also reveals the whole ambivalence of both the NS period and the early postwar years. Neither the National Socialists nor their followers disappeared after 1945. And at first, the followers in particular did not have to bear any visible consequences for their involvement and possible guilt in the NS system; on the contrary, they were integrated into the "reconstruction" of Germany. Kolbe gratefully accepted this task. Like many other artists, he took on a role-model function after 1945, even though he had not been one of the artists defamed as "degenerate." His role-model function was also emphasized by the sculptor Gustav Seitz, who wrote to Kolbe on the occasion of his seventieth birthday on April 14, 1947:

"You embody for us younger artists—you are not angry with us for saying this, are you!—the generation of Lehmbruck and Barlach, which stands exemplarily for a particularly lively time. We have always looked at your sculpture with admiration, and we are happy that in Berlin, which is so lacking in artistic talent today, a man like you is with us."⁴³

This positive assessment of his person and his work changed by the end of the 1940s at the latest. By this time, if it was still of interest at all, the status of figurative sculpture had already changed. Kolbe's work was no longer in keeping with the times. The triumph of abstraction, which in the West was interpreted as an expression of artistic freedom, was also becoming increasingly apparent in sculpture, which was initially even more caught up in a holistic, figurative image of man than was painting. But Kolbe's work did not find much resonance in the East, either; after all, the idealistic, timeless-looking female and male figures were not perceived as a contemporary response to an art under socialism—unlike, for example, the sculptures of Fritz Cremer, whose *Trauernde* (Mourning Woman) and

Anklagede (The Accuser), both from 1947–51, could be interpreted in a decidedly political context. It is not surprising, then, that as early as July 1949 the *British Art News* wrote:

“A few of the accepted leaders of yesterday have survived, but seem to exercise practically no influence on the younger men at all. Some of them like Carl Hofer and Georg Kolbe are even rejected as outmoded or working along lines unacceptable to the present generation of artists.”⁴⁴

And it was not only internationally that Kolbe's time was over in the 1950s. In 1957, Gottfried Sello wrote in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*:

“On April 15, 1957, Kolbe would have turned eighty. The public hardly took any notice of the day. An understandable reaction to false praise and overestimation. It is indeed *difficult* enough to discover the artist beneath the patina of pathos and the heroic German soul.”⁴⁵

Notes

- 1 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Erich Cohn, July 8, 1946, quoted in: Maria von Tiesenhausen, *Georg Kolbe. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Tübingen 1987), p. 187, no. 279 [translated].
- 2 Georg Kolbe, "Betrachtungen über den Bildhauerberuf in heutiger Zeit, Januar 1946," enclosure to a letter from Georg Kolbe to the Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (Cultural Alliance for the Democratic Renewal of Germany), January 6, 1946, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 3 See: Josephine Gabler, "Georg Kolbe in der NS-Zeit," in: *Georg Kolbe. 1877–1947*, ed. Ursel Berger, exh. cat. Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin (Munich 1997), pp. 87–94, here pp. 92–93, as well as the essay by Paula Schwerdtfeger in this volume, pp. 116–135.
- 4 See the essay by Ambra Frank in this volume, pp. 136–151.
- 5 After being removed from the opera house, the *Genius* was handed over to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, where it remains today; <https://id.smb.museum/object/959795/genius> [last accessed March 12, 2023].
- 6 See: Julia Wallner, "Georg Kolbe und die Skulptur der Moderne," in: idem (ed.), *Georg Kolbe* (Cologne 2017), pp. 22–24, here p. 24.
- 7 Inquiry from the founding committee of the Kulturbund, represented by Wolfgang Harich, to Georg Kolbe, June 26, 1945, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.469, GKM Archive, Berlin, and letter from Georg Kolbe to Paul Wegener, November 14, 1945, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 8 Magdalena Heider, *Politik – Kultur – Kulturbund. Zur Gründungs- und Frühgeschichte des Kulturbundes zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands 1945–1954 in der SBZ/DDR* (Cologne 1993), pp. 55–59.
- 9 Hans Grundig, "Sinn und Ziel der künstlerischen Ausbildung an der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Dresden," in: *Zeitschrift für Kunst*, no. 3, 1947, p. 68 [translated].
- 10 See: Christine Fischer-Defoy, "Kunst, im Aufbau ein Stein." *Die Westberliner Kunst- und Musikhochschulen im Spannungsfeld der Nachkriegszeit* (Berlin 2001).
- 11 Letter from Karl Hofer to Georg Kolbe, November 18, 1945, in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 1), p. 183, no. 270.
- 12 See: "Prof. Dr. h. c. Georg Kolbe: An die deutschen Studenten!" in: *Deutsche Studenten-Zeitung*, no. 10, 1934, p. 3, collection of newspaper clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 13 Letter from Karl Hofer to Georg Kolbe, December 1, 1945, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 1), p. 184, no. 273 [translated].
- 14 Ibid. [translated].
- 15 See: letter from Karl Hofer to Georg Kolbe, December 16, 1945, in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 1), p. 185, no. 274 [translated]. In addition to Franco, Kolbe had portrayed Konstantin Hierl, the head of the Reich Labor Service, in 1942.
- 16 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Erich Cohn, July 8, 1946, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 1), p. 187, no. 279 [translated].
- 17 Instead of Kolbe, his good friend and fellow sculptor Richard Scheibe was appointed.
- 18 See the records of Allies who visited Kolbe in the MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 19 See: Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, "Wege und Aufgaben der deutschen Kunst," in: *Sächsische Zeitung* [Chemnitz edition], January 8, 1946, p. 2 [translated].
- 20 Kolbe 1946 (see note 2) [translated].
- 21 Georg Kolbe, "Wahrhafte Pflege der Kultur," in: *Tägliche Rundschau*, Berlin, May 9, 1946, transcript of the article in the MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 22 See: Kathleen Schröter, "Kunst zwischen den Systemen. Die Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung 1946 in Dresden," in: Nikola Doll, Ruth Heftrig et al. (eds.), *Kunstgeschichte nach 1945. Kontinuität und Neubeginn in Deutschland* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna 2006), pp. 211–237.
- 23 See: *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, exh. cat. Stadthalle am Nordplatz, Dresden (Dresden 1946).
- 24 See the short text by Ursel Berger on Kolbe's *Flehende* (1944), in the online databank of the Nationalgalerie: <https://id.smb.museum/object/960333/flehende> [last accessed March 12, 2023].
- 25 Index card, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin.
- 26 See: *Ausstellung bildender Künstler*, exh. cat, December 1945–January 1946, Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (Berlin ca. 1946).
- 27 See: *1. Deutsche Kunstausstellung der Deutschen Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone*, exh. cat. Zeughaus, Berlin, May/June 1946 (Berlin 1946).
- 28 See: H. C[arola] Gärtner-Scholle, "Abbild deutschen Kunstschaffens," in: *Tägliche Rundschau*, May 22, 1946, p. 3.
- 29 Ludwig Justi, in: *Meisterwerke deutscher Bildhauer und Maler*, exh. cat. Museum im Schlüterbau, Berlin (Berlin 1947), p. 4.

- 30 In the catalog, the sculptures are partly illustrated under different titles. The *Junger Streiter* is titled as *Fünfkämpfer* (Pentathlete) and the *Herabschreitender* as *Schreitender* (Striding Man). See: exh. cat. Berlin 1947 (see note 29).
- 31 For more on the *Ring der Statuen*, see the essay by Ambra Frank in this volume, pp. 136–151.
- 32 See: Dr. Herzberg, “Menschliche Daseinsformen im Bildwerk, Eine Georg-Kolbe-Ausstellung,” title and date of the newspaper unknown, collection of newspaper clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 33 See: Frank 2023 (see note 31).
- 34 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Erich Cohn, August 17, 1946, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 35 Thomas Pavel, “‘Ich sah mich selbst auf diesem Sockel sitzen.’ Siehe Befreiter, 1945,” in: Julia Wallner (ed.), *Georg Kolbe* (Cologne 2017), pp. 137–139, here p. 138.
- 36 Frib., “Bei Georg Kolbe. Neue Werke des großen Bildhauers,” in: *Nacht-Express*, April 25, 1946, collection of newspaper clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 37 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Hermann Reemtsma, January 17, 1947, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 38 Letter from Georg Kolbe to Dr. Thomas, Cultural Office of the City of Wurzen, October 5, 1946, GK Estate, inv. no. GK.630.1, GKM Archive, Berlin [translated].
- 39 Edwin Redlob, “Jenseits der Zeit. Zu Georg Kolbes siebzigstem Geburtstag,” in: *Tagesspiegel*, April 15, 1947, [translated].
- 40 Gerd H. Theunissen, “Gestalter und Kunder: Zum 70. Geburtstag Kolbes,” in: *Tägliche Rundschau*, April 15, 1947, [translated].
- 41 N. N., “Dem Gedächtnis Georg Kolbes,” in: *Westdeutsche Blätter*, August 25, 1948, transcription [translated], collection of newspaper clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 42 Adolf Schleicher, “Georg Kolbe und wir,” in: *Georg Kolbe Museum* (Berlin ca. 1952), pp. 1–6, here p. 1 [translated].
- 43 Letter from Gustav Seitz to Georg Kolbe, April 14, 1947, quoted in: von Tiesenhausen 1987 (see note 1), p. 190, no. 285 [translated].
- 44 N. N., “The Arts in Germany,” in: *Art News & Review*, London, July 30, 1949, collection of newspaper clippings, GKM Archive, Berlin.
- 45 Gottfried Sello, “Georg Kolbe – zu recht vergessen?” in: *Die Zeit*, April 25, 1957 [translated].

**“An extraordinary
case of ambivalence”—
The American Reception
of Georg Kolbe during
and after the
National Socialist
Dictatorship**

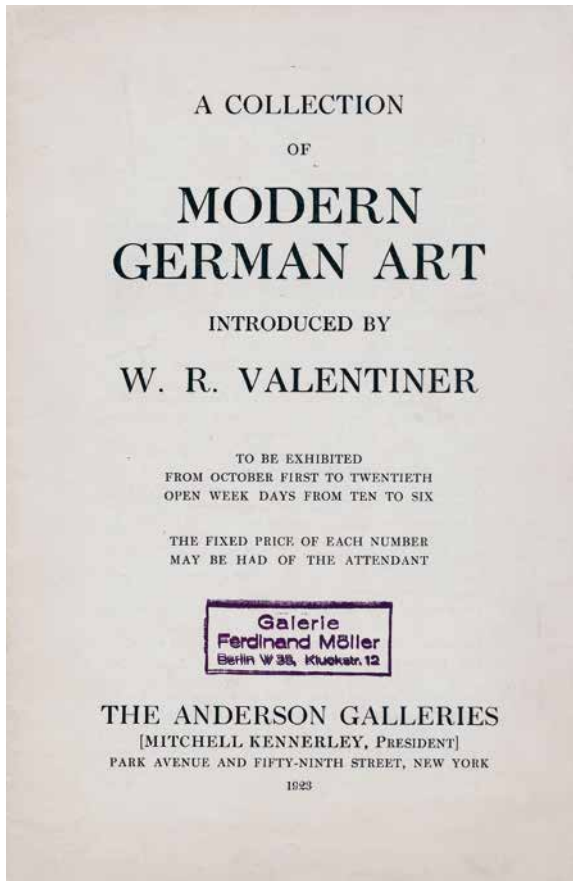
In his 1957 essay in the catalog for the landmark exhibition *German Art of the Twentieth Century* at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the art historian Alfred Hentzen wrote of German sculpture of the twentieth century: "The most important representatives of German sculpture have been known in the United States for a long time, better known than in any other country outside of Germany. Even before the First World War, the first works of Georg Kolbe had reached America, and after the war many others followed."¹ With this short summary, the art historian had established that Georg Kolbe was to be considered in the United States as one of the most important representatives of German sculpture of the twentieth century. This recognition, however, was not uncontroversial, nor had it experienced a continuous rise in the preceding decades. Rather, it must be noted that Kolbe's reception in North America required important advocates and, far more importantly in this context, underwent a transformation during the National Socialist dictatorship, from an esteemed and recognized artist to a hostile representative of the NS regime to a sculptor who, after the end of the Second World War and his death in 1947, once again became esteemed and appreciated.

The reception of the German sculptor in the United States began in the early 1920s. Although Kolbe had already made a marble bust for the German Pavilion in Saint Louis in 1904, his first significant exhibition participation did not occur until 1923 at The Anderson Galleries in New York, when *A Collection of Modern German Art* presented three bronzes and five drawings by the artist (fig. 1).²

Already three years earlier, in 1920, the magazine *American Art News* had reported on the exhibition participation at the Free Secession in Berlin: "Georg Kolbe, who has become quite famous, sent three bronze figures, the 'Dancer' being exquisite in every detail."³

On the occasion of an exhibition of the work of the Berlin-based sculptor at the Neumann Gallery in New York in 1927, the German curator Carl Georg Heise comprehensively explained the artist's significance to American readers for the first time. In the magazine *Art in America*, he introduced his monographic treatise with laudatory words: "Who is the greatest German painter? One might give a hundred different answers. Who is the greatest German sculptor? This question can be answered in one way only. Georg Kolbe."⁴ Heise considered especially those sculptures by Kolbe that captured moments of movement to be masterpieces: *Tänzerin* (Dancer, 1911/12) from the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, as well as later works such as *Assunta* and *Lucino* (both 1921). The fact that Heise's appreciation did not reflect a singular recognition in the North American context is also evidenced by the numerous acquisitions made and collections received during this period. Of particular importance was the Detroit Institute of Arts, which purchased the work *Auferstehung* (Resurrection, 1919/20) in 1927 and *Assunta* in 1929. The director of the institution at the time was the German-born art historian Wilhelm Valentiner, who had already published an extensive monograph on Kolbe in 1922.⁵

Probably the most important public recognition during this period in the context of a museum exhibition came in 1931, when the artist was represented with eight works in the exhibition *German Painting and Sculpture* at The Museum of Modern Art in New



1 Exhibition catalog *A Collection of Modern German Art*, The Anderson Galleries, New York, 1923

York (fig. 2).⁶ The museum's press release reiterated Heise's assessment from a few years earlier: "In addition to Belling and de Fiori the exhibition includes eight works by Kolbe, the most famous of living German sculptors."⁷

By the time the National Socialists came to power, Georg Kolbe had thus gained considerable recognition among the American public. A few years later, however, this positive reception would change fundamentally. As the National Socialist regime's hostility toward modern and contemporary art in Germany became more widely known, culminating in the 1937 exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) and the extensive confiscations of works from various museums and public collections, the efforts of American curators to provide a forum for defamed art increased.

At first, Kolbe was excluded from the critical to openly horrified attitude of the American art world toward the atrocities of the National Socialist regime. However, the presentation of his work in the exhibition *Twentieth Century German Art* at the New Burlington Galleries in London in the summer of 1938 at the latest fundamentally changed the view of Georg Kolbe in the United States as well. With 269 works by sixty-five artists, the London exhibition was the most comprehensive presentation of German art in England



2 Exhibition view of *German Painting and Sculpture*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1931, historical photograph

before the Second World War.⁸ The organizers, led by the British curator and art critic Herbert Read, focused on German modernism, especially Expressionism, thus sending a clear signal against the anti-modernist fervor in Germany. Efforts were obviously made to make the presentation appear apolitical; in the accompanying exhibition catalog, the organizers went so far as to state: “The organisers of the present exhibition are not concerned with the political aspect of this situation; they merely affirm one principle: that art, as an expression of the human spirit in all its mutations, is only great in so far as it is free.”⁹ Given the choice of works and the timing of the exhibition, however, it could no longer be apolitical. Not surprisingly, the leftist-leaning Artists’ International Association demanded in a leaflet: “go and see expelled and banned art.” For the Association, a visit to an exhibition was at the same time a commitment to a democratically constituted, liberal political order: “Why does Hitler expel artists? Because fascism is afraid of those who think, of those who seek truth, of those who speak the truth.”¹⁰

However, the organizers’ interest in maintaining the exhibition’s apolitical appearance ultimately led to a scandal in which Georg Kolbe was to play a central role—and which had a decisive impact on the artist’s reception in the United States. As a concession to the British policy of appeasement, the critical author Thomas Mann was removed from the list of patrons in London, and at the same time Georg Kolbe, an artist already officially recognized by the National Socialists in Germany, was added to the exhibition list. Despite the



3 Georg Kolbe, *Paul Cassirer*, 1925, bronze, h. 32 cm, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin

fact that the selected work—the portrait of the Jewish art dealer Paul Cassirer (fig. 3)—was not an expression of NS propaganda, his participation in the 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris and his acceptance of public commissions were seen as ingratiation with the regime in Berlin and had made him *persona non grata* in exile circles. The controversy eventually went so far that the Freier Deutscher Künstlerbund (Free German Artists' Association) in Paris, represented by the exiled artists Eugen Spiro and Gert Wollheim, sent a letter of protest to the curator in charge, Herbert Read, stating: "Mister Bear has explained that the London committee decided to exhibit the sculptor Kolbe as well: 'for historical reasons.' [...] With this, the exhibition management has gone so far as to want to exhibit Nazi artists as well, which must be taken as a surprising concession to the spirit that committed that 'injustice' [sic!] against the German artistic community."¹¹ Herbert Read responded diplomatically to the harsh accusations: "The decision [...] followed logically from the decision to present the exhibition on a non-political basis. We made that decision in the interests of those artists who are still living in Germany [...] Kolbe's name was merely mentioned as an example of the kind of artist who might have to be included to justify our non-political attitude."¹² Read's conciliatory words, however, did little to

defuse the conflict. For many critics and artists, the London exhibition project remained an expression of political pandering to National Socialist art and cultural propaganda. The art critic William Hickey even went so far as to claim: "They are even including work by at least one artist who is still OK in Germany. It might have been better to go the whole hog & include, without comment, paintings by HITLER himself & his special protégés, leaving it to critics & connoisseurs here to draw their own moral."¹³ Obviously, for the London organizers, Kolbe represented a still viable middle course of an artist who had received recognition in the NS regime, who had remained in the country, and yet was not to be understood as a political artist. It was precisely this depoliticization, however, that was met with vehement protest and fostered the negative judgment of Kolbe as a follower or regime artist that would cling to him until his death in 1947 and beyond.

This description of Kolbe as a lackey and beneficiary of the NS regime was then also reflected in the reception of the artist in the United States. Numerous correspondents had reported extensively on the London exhibition in American magazines and newspapers, and the art public had also been able to form their own impressions on site.

The American efforts to promote the ostracized German modernism were then obviously clearly influenced by the negative press from London. As in London, attempts were made from the late 1930s onward, especially on the East Coast, to organize exhibitions that would be perceived as a determined statement against the art and cultural policies in the German Reich. Following on the heels of the exhibition at the New Burlington Galleries, an exhibition of German art opened at the Milwaukee Art Institute on June 1, 1939, which was subsequently shown at the City Art Museum in Saint Louis, the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City, and the San Francisco Museum of Art. Of the seventy-six works, however, not one was by Kolbe.

However, Georg Kolbe's work did not disappear completely from the exhibition scene in the United States. Galleries in particular continued to make an effort to represent the sculptor and exhibit his work. In the spring of 1937, for example, the gallerist Curt Valentin opened the New York branch of the Berlin-based Buchholz Gallery with a group exhibition under the rather neutral title *Opening Exhibition: Sculpture and Drawings*, which included works by Ernst Barlach, Georg Kolbe, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Gerhard Marcks, Richard Scheibe, and Renée Sintenis, thus following the list of artists at Galerie Flechthelm. With Barlach, Lehmbruck, and Marcks, three of the six artists presented were featured in the same year in the defamatory exhibition *Entartete Kunst* in Munich. The central importance of the gallerist Curt Valentin for Kolbe's "survival" in the American discourse is evidenced by the fact that he not only presented the now much-criticized sculptor in his own gallery spaces but was also a generous lender for museum presentations.

In January 1939, the Springfield Museum presented ninety-four works by German artists in the exhibition *Modern German Art*, with Curt Valentin as the principal lender. Five of these works were by Georg Kolbe—on loan from the Buchholz Gallery: the bronzes *Tänzerin* (Dancer), *Selbstporträt* (Self-Portrait, 1925), and *Badende* (Bathers, 1926), as well as two nude drawings.

In November of that year, only two months after the German Reich's invasion of Poland, the exhibition *Contemporary German Art* opened at the Institute of Modern Art in Boston. Here as well, Kolbe was prominently represented with five works, namely the terracotta sculpture *Stehendes Mädchen* (Standing Girl, 1906)¹⁴ from the private collection of Curt Valentin, as well as four bronzes: *Mädchenkopf* (Head of a Girl), also from Valentin's collection, *Tänzer* (Dancer, 1913) from the Germanic Museum at Harvard University, *Herabsteigende* (Descending Woman, 1926) from the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, and a self-portrait from the Buchholz Gallery.

The two exhibitions in Massachusetts were finally followed in 1940 by *Landmarks in Modern German Art* at Curt Valentin's Buchholz Gallery in New York. Here, Valentin presented Expressionist painting—primarily by representatives of the Brücke and the Blauer Reiter—as well as four sculptural positions: Ernst Barlach, Georg Kolbe, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, and Gerhard Marcks. Included in an exhibition entitled *Landmarks*, and presented in the context of modernism, which had been ostracized by the National Socialists, Kolbe's oeuvre, albeit represented by only one work (*Standing Girl Looking Up*, 1920), was here freed from any possible hostility as an aesthetic conforming to the regime.

With the entry of the United States of America into the Second World War in December 1941, the number of exhibitions of German art was drastically reduced. The only other counter-model to the defamatory exhibition of 1937 was the 1942 exhibition *New Acquisitions: Free German Art*, featuring works by Ernst Barlach, Max Beckmann, Käthe Kollwitz, and Emil Nolde at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. This exhibition, however, was not meant to be just another event in the series of presentations of German art. Alfred H. Barr Jr., the museum's founding director and curator of the exhibition, saw it more as an attempt to present the “actual” artistic achievements of German modernism, since previous exhibitions in America had, in his opinion, shown rather unrepresentative examples of artistic creation. Regarding an exhibition planned for 1940 at The Museum of Modern Art, he had written to a collector: “the reason we are doing this is what I have heard—this is confidential—that there is a large exhibition of German art, rather badly chosen, touring museums. It seems to be doing a lot of harm so far as the reputation of German painting is concerned and is even causing people who are not in sympathy with modern art to say, with a certain relief, that Hitler is right.”¹⁵ His scathing judgment referred to the aforementioned exhibition in Milwaukee.

Barr's presentation was intended not only to showcase the latest additions to the collection, but also to make a political and art-historical statement. This politicized reading of the most recent acquisitions is especially significant when compared to the eponymous presentation of recent acquisitions and gifts two years earlier, in 1940. Here, several works by Kolbe from the prominent collection of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, wife of the influential industrialist and patron John D. Rockefeller II, were almost tacitly added to the collection. While other artists were introduced in the press release for the 1940 exhibition with words such as “striking,” “masterpiece,” “sensitive,” etc., Georg Kolbe—for the sake of the completeness of all gifts—was listed with only a half-sentence.¹⁶ And in 1942, his work was not among the acquisitions. Instead, according to the museum's press release, the

intention was to support those artists who had been persecuted or marginalized by the National Socialists:

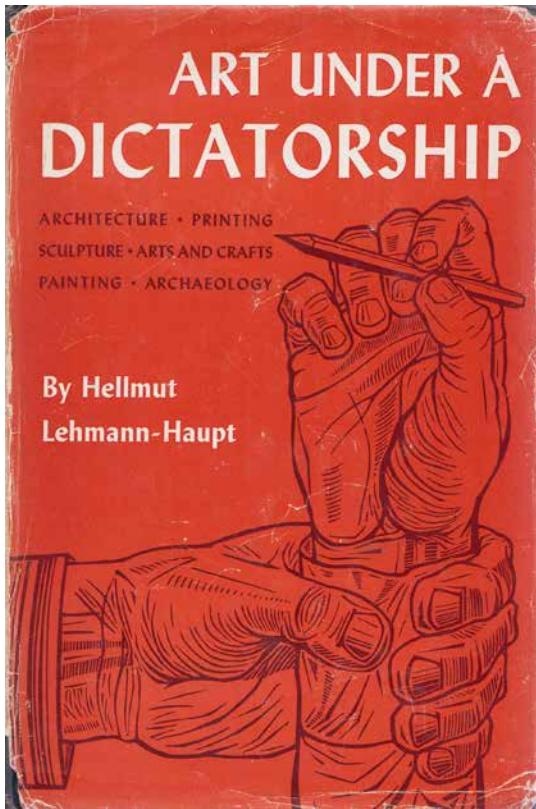
“The Museum of Modern Art announces the acquisition of several works by German artists not approved by the Nazi government. [...] Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum, makes the following statement regarding the acquisitions of Free German Art: ‘Among the Freedoms which the Nazis have destroyed, none has been more cynically perverted, more brutally stamped upon than the Freedom of Art.’ [...] But German artists of spirit and integrity have refused to conform.”¹⁷

The curator did not count the sculptor among these artists of integrity and nonconformity. This is evidenced by private correspondence between members of the occupying forces in the spring of 1947, which made Alfred Barr’s opinion of Kolbe abundantly clear:

“From the Wiesbaden director I learned that Military Govt. had found enough metal to have Kolbe’s head of Beethoven cast for posterity. No one at the ETO seemed to be aware of Kolbe’s Nazi record. [...] By chance I happened to list the whereabouts and activities of some of Germany’s modern artists (including Kolbe) in a letter to Alfred Barr when I wrote him asking for his new Picasso book. Since his museum has some Kolbe sculpture, I even thought that the Museum had possibly instigated the Beethoven head casting. Imagine my surprise when he answered that Kolbe had not done any important work for the past 20 years, had accepted too many Nazi sculpture orders to be thought of as anything other than pro-Nazi, and had even gone so to Spain to make a head of Franco. I also gathered that Barr hardly shared our concern for the aging old man.”¹⁸

Thus, at the end of the war, Georg Kolbe appeared in the United States as an artistic personality with two opposing readings. On the one hand, as the most important representative of German sculpture without any political association; on the other, as a follower, if not an accomplice, of the National Socialist regime, whose neoclassical style was a compliant expression of propaganda and ideology. To resolve this contradiction and reinterpret it in favor of the artist required eloquent advocates after the end of the war. In addition to numerous German museum directors, art critics, and art historians, American connoisseurs of German modernism also spoke out on Kolbe’s behalf. Among them was Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, a German-born member of the American occupation forces, who argued in his book *Art Under a Dictatorship*, published in 1954 with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation (figs. 4 and 5):

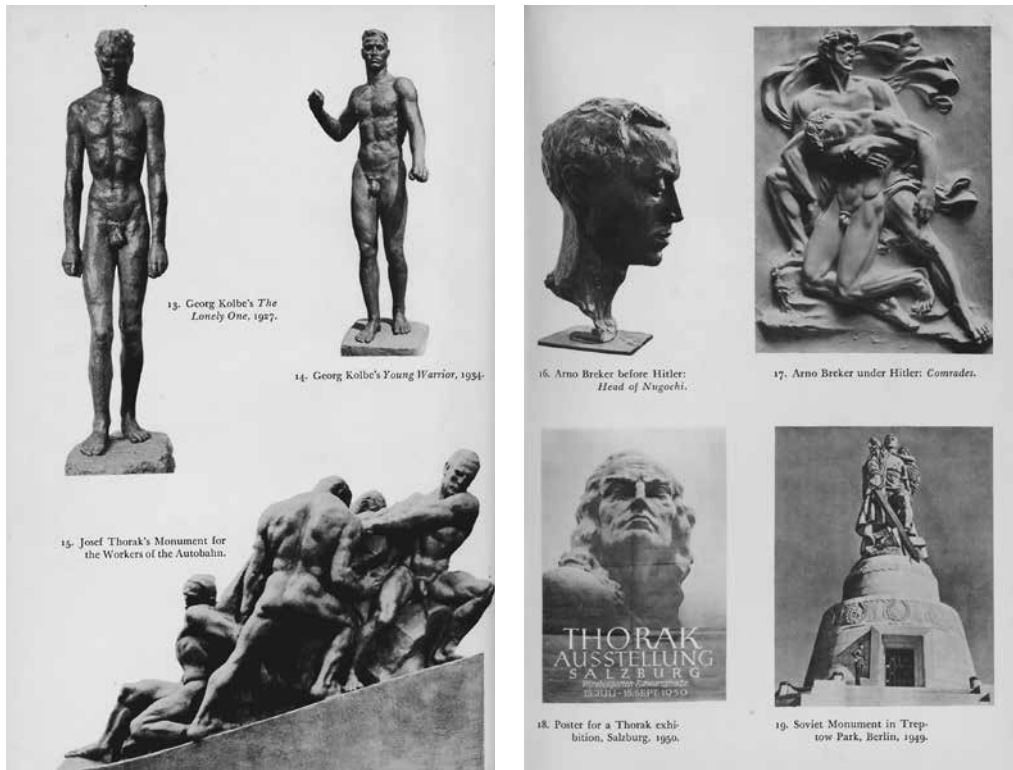
“Georg Kolbe, the great German sculptor, defended modern architecture. He pointed out that Mies van der Rohe had repeatedly used his own figures in



4 *Art Under a Dictatorship* by the German American art historian Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, published in New York in 1954

happy combination with modern buildings. If the new architect used unadorned, flat wall spaces, he did so intentionally and for good aesthetic reasons. Merely decorative additions, he wrote indignantly, were not the real task of the sculptor. Taken by itself, this stand would seem to place Kolbe in opposition to the official Nazi doctrines. Actually, he was not in opposition, was not a member of a small but valiant group of culturally resisting elements. Nor was he, on the other hand, an outright Nazi-sculptor as were Breker and Thorak. The position of this undoubtedly great sculptor was an in-between one, neither quite 'white' not yet really 'black,' an extraordinary case of ambivalence."¹⁹

According to Lehmann-Haupt, it was primarily titles and patrons that made Kolbe a follower, i.e., more indicative of a "mild sort of co-operation."²⁰ Titles such as *Youthful Warrior* and *Athlete in Repose*, as well as his soldiers' memorial in Stralsund, were seen as expressions of this closeness to the regime. To put Kolbe's attitude toward the NS regime into perspective, the author concludes with a quote from the artist about his own work *Zarathustra* (1943):



5 Double page from Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt's *Art Under a Dictatorship* from 1954, with images of several works by the artists Georg Kolbe, Arno Breker, and Josef Thorak

"It is a relief that this figure finally found its form. To be sure, perhaps I had to climb yet beyond this. This is as far as my strength has carried me, and this fulfilment is up to now my freest position in the realm of the male body. A high plane has therewith been entered. The name, the title is absolutely necessary for the public – little as I need it myself. The great powerful man who liberates himself, that was the task, that also was the way to my own freedom. Zarathustra is the commonly understood symbol."²¹

Accordingly, Kolbe's works of the early 1940s were for the artist less a stylistic adaptation to the National Socialist regime than the starting point of a formal or stylistic development that Kolbe perceived as an act of liberation.

While for Lehmann-Haupt it was the titles and the patrons that had brought the artist close to the regime—and by no means an adaptation of his style—in the eyes of the art critic Alfred Werner, it was precisely this stylistic adaptation that had pleased the National Socialists only a few years later. In 1957, the author judged: "Except for the sculptor Georg Kolbe (whose work had become sufficiently academic to please the Nazis), not a single important artist chose to collaborate with the Hitler regime"²²—a notoriously inaccurate assessment of the political stance of not a few artists.

Lehmann-Haupt's "mild sort of co-operation" and Werner's comments that Kolbe's style was "sufficiently academic" to please the Nazis without any intervention on his part then allowed members of the American military administration after 1945 not only to visit the aging sculptor in his studio, but also to issue commissions and rare casting permits. In addition to Lehmann-Haupt, guests in the studio included Richard F. Howard, head of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives program, and even the military governor of the American occupation zone, General Lucius D. Clay.²³

Soon after the end of the war, Georg Kolbe was thus able to rely on a high-ranking network of new supporters within the occupying power. Their positive assessment of Kolbe's political stance and the interpretation of his work during the National Socialist dictatorship contributed significantly to the artist's rehabilitation in the United States, where he was at best regarded as an insignificant follower, but above all as one of Germany's most important sculptors. Thus, in 1957, Georg Kolbe was able to regain undisputed recognition at The Museum of Modern Art and, as mentioned at the outset, was described by Alfred Hentzen as being firmly anchored in the North American discourse.

Notes

- 1 Alfred Hentzen, "Sculpture," in: *German Art of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Carnduff Ritchie, exh. cat. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1957, pp. 141–183, here p. 141.
- 2 The author would like to thank Thomas Pavel, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin, for important information on early exhibitions of Georg Kolbe in the United States.
- 3 [A. L. W.], "Berlin," in: *American Art News* 18, no. 38, 1920, p. 2.
- 4 Carl Georg Heise, "Georg Kolbe," in: *Art in America*, April 1927, pp. 136–138, here p. 136.
- 5 Another example of an early museum acquisition is the gift of *Ascending Woman* (1926) to the Albright Knox Art Gallery (now the Buffalo AKG Art Museum) in Buffalo, New York in 1927.
- 6 See also: Jan Giebel, "'Und jetzt hat ihn Flechtheim.' Georg Kolbe in der Galerie Alfred Flechtheim," in: *Sprung in den Raum. Skulpturen bei Alfred Flechtheim* (Wädenswil 2017), pp. 389–437.
- 7 MoMA press release date March 13 [1931], available online at: https://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/54/releases/MOMA_1929-31_0054_1931-03-13.pdf [last accessed February 25, 2023].
- 8 For more on the controversy surrounding the exhibition in London, see: Jennifer McComas, *The Politics of Display: Exhibiting Modern German Art in America, 1937–1957*, PhD diss., Indiana University, 2014.
- 9 "Introduction," in: *Exhibition of Twentieth Century German Art*, exh. cat. New Burlington Galleries, London, 1938, pp. 6–7.
- 10 "Hitler Attacks London Art Exhibition," Records of the Artists International Association, TGA 7043.17.2, Tate Gallery Archives, London (TGA).
- 11 Letter from the Freier Deutscher Künstlerbund to Herbert Read, May 11, 1938; Archive of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Eugen Spiro Archive, 3/39 [translated].
- 12 Letter from Herbert Read to Gert Wollheim, May 17, 1938, Archive of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Eugen Spiro Archive, 3/60.
- 13 William Hickey, "Banned but Cautious," in: *Daily Express*, July 6, 1938.
- 14 In the catalog for the exhibition, it was presumably wrongly dated 1916. It is probably a *Stehendes Mädchen* from 1906 in the respective dimensions, which, although made of stucco, was considered terracotta and was also called so by Georg Kolbe, which in turn could have been adopted by Valentiner. Thomas Pavel is to be thanked for this reference to the dating.
- 15 This exhibition in The Museum of Modern Art did not come to fruition; see: letter from Alfred Barr to Paul E. Geier, October 5, 1939; quoted in: Vivian Endecott Barnett, "Reception and Institutional Support of Modern German Art in the United States, 1933–45," in: *Exiles + Emigrés. The Flight of European Artists from Hitler*, ed. Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, exh. cat. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, and Nationalgalerie, Berlin (Los Angeles 1997), pp. 273–284, here p. 279. Barr took up the idea of "free art" once again in the fall of 1942; see: "The Museum Collection," in: *The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art*, no. 1, 1942 (*The Museum and The War*), pp. 3–19, here p. 19: "THE MUSEUM COLLECTION / is a symbol of one of the four freedoms for which we are fighting — the freedom of expression. / Composed of / painting / sculpture / architecture / photography / films / industrial design / from 25 countries it is / art that Hitler hates / because it is modern, progressive, challenging (Hitler insists upon magazine cover realism or prettiness) / because it is international, leading to understanding and tolerance among nations (Hitler despises the culture of all countries but his own) / because it is free, the free expression of free men (Hitler insists upon the subjugation of art)" [emphasis in the original].
- 16 MoMA press release dated March 6, 1940, available online at: https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325165.pdf?_ga=2.247782087.1972304125.1670428747-416995297.1669896063 [last accessed February 23, 2023].
- 17 MoMA press release, undated, available online at: https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325320.pdf [last accessed February 23, 2023].
- 18 Letter from Virginia Fontaine to Carter and Kitsy Higgins, April 1, 1947, Paul and Virginia Fontaine Archive, Austin, Texas.
- 19 Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art Under a Dictatorship* (New York 1954), p. 101.
- 20 Ibid., p. 102.
- 21 Georg Kolbe, quoted in: Lehmann-Haupt 1954 (see note 19), pp. 102f.
- 22 Alfred Werner, "The Miracle of Postwar German Art," in: *The Antioch Review* 17, no. 3, Fall 1957, pp. 366–373, here p. 368.
- 23 See also the address book and calendar of the artist, MvT Estate, GKM Archive, Berlin.

Appendix

Short Biographies of the Authors

Professor Dr. Magdalena Bushart

Magdalena Bushart studied art history in Berlin, Vienna, and London. She received her doctorate from the Freie Universität Berlin in 1989 (*Der Geist der Gotik und die expressionistische Kunst*, Munich 1990) and her post-doctoral degree from the Technical University of Munich in 2002 (*Sehen und Erkennen. Albrecht Altdorfer's religiöse Bilder*, Munich 2004). From 2006 to 2008, she was a professor at the University of Stuttgart. Since 2008, she has been the head of the Department of Art History of the Institute for Art History and Historical Urban Studies at the Technical University of Berlin. She is the spokesperson of the research group “Dimensions of Techne in the Fine Arts. Manifestations/Systems/Narratives,” funded by the German Research Foundation. Her research focuses on the visual arts of the early modern period, art discourses of the classical modernist period, and the interdependencies between formative processes and artistic techniques.

Ambra Frank M. A.

After completing her master's degree in art history and theater studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Ambra Frank worked as a freelancer for Kunstraum München and the publishing house edition metzel until 2019. From 2020 to 2022, she was a research associate at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin for the exhibition “Divinely Gifted.” *National Socialism's Favoured Artists in the Federal Republic*. She currently manages the office of Kunstraum München and is writing her dissertation on the exhibition *Kunst im 3. Reich. Dokumente der Unterwerfung* (Frankfurter Kunstverein, 1974).

Professor Dr. Christian Fuhrmeister

After completing his teaching degree in Oldenburg, Christian Fuhrmeister received his doctorate in Hamburg in 1998. Following an assistance curatorship at the Sprengel Museum Hannover, he held a position in the Department Kunstwissenschaften at LMU Munich. He has been a staff member of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte since 2003 and received his post-doctoral degree from the LMU Munich in 2013 (since 2020: professor without tenure). His work focuses on the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, including art under National Socialism, the transfer of cultural property, and provenance research. Further information is available at <https://www.zikg.eu/personen/fuhrmeister> [last accessed July 17, 2023]; publications are listed in Kubikat.

Jan Giebel M. A.

Jan Giebel studied art history and history at Osnabrück University. Since 2014, he has worked first as a research assistant and then as a research associate at the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin, where he co-curated an exhibition on sculptors at the Flechtheim Gallery in 2017. From 2017 to 2021, he was a research assistant at the Institute of Art History at Osnabrück University. Since 2021, he has been a provenance researcher at the Gustav Lübcke Museum, Hamm.

Dr. Arie Hartog

Arie Hartog is the director of the Gerhard Marcks House in Bremen. He is the chairman of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bildhauermuseen und Skulpturensammlungen, and researches the history of sculpture in the twentieth century and the posthumous development of sculptural oeuvres of the classical modernist period. His publications include *Hans Arp. Skulpturen – eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme* (Ostfildern-Ruit 2012); Marc Gundel, Arie Hartog, and Frank Schmidt (eds.), *Bildhauerinnen in Deutschland* (Cologne 2019); and *Prager Skulpturen* (Cologne 2022).

Dr. Christina Irrgang

Christina Irrgang is an art and media scholar, author, and musician. She received her doctorate from the Karlsruhe University of Art and Design with a thesis on photographic image strategies in National Socialism. Since 2010, she has been writing and publishing texts on contemporary art. Her most recent publications include *Durch Fotografie denken. Christina Irrgang und Detlef Orlopp im Gespräch* (Berlin 2022) and *Hitlers Fotograf. Heinrich Hoffmann und die nationalsozialistische Bildpolitik* (Bielefeld 2020).

Dr. Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen

Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen studied art history and business administration, completing her doctoral studies in 2008. From 2008 to 2016, she worked for Coordination Office for Provenance Research in Berlin, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, and the Degenerate Art Research Center at the University of Hamburg. From 2017 to 2020, she held the Liebelt Endowed Professorship for Provenance Research at the University of Hamburg. Since 2020, she has been an advisor to the office of the Advisory Commission on the return of cultural property seized as a result of Nazi persecution, especially Jewish property; and since 2023, she has been the academic coordinator of the research project “Law without Law. Past and Present of the Restitution of Nazi-Confiscated art” at the Chair of Civil Law and Modern Legal History at the European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder).

Professor Dr. Bernhard Maaz

Bernhard Maaz studied art history, among other subjects, and has been on the staff of the Nationalgalerie der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin since 1986, ultimately serving as the deputy director of the Nationalgalerie. In 2010, he was appointed director of the

Kupferstich-Kabinett and the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister in Dresden. Since 2015, he has been the general director of the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen in Munich. He has published various source texts on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as texts on museum construction and history, on nineteenth-century art with a special focus on sculpture from the French Revolution to the First World War (Nationalgalerie collection catalog 2006, overview 2010), and on painting and drawing from the Middle Ages to the present.

Professor Dr. Olaf Peters

Olaf Peters studied art history, philosophy, and modern history at the Ruhr University Bochum. In 1996, he received his doctorate with a dissertation on New Objectivity and National Socialism. From 1998 to 2004, he was an assistant at the Institute of Art History at the University of Bonn, and in 2002/03, he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. In 2004, he completed his postgraduate studies at the University of Bonn with a thesis on Max Beckmann. From 2004 to 2006, he was a senior assistant at the Institute of Art History at the University of Bonn. Since 2006, he has held the chair for modern and contemporary art history at the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Neue Galerie New York – Museum for German and Austrian Art, and has curated exhibitions at the Staatliche Gemäldesammlungen Dresden, the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle (Saale), and the Neue Galerie New York. He is currently working on a book about art in the so-called Third Reich.

Dr. Kathleen Reinhardt

Kathleen Reinhardt studied literature, cultural studies and aesthetics, and Black studies at the University of Bayreuth and the University of California, Los Angeles. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on African-American art at the Freie Universität Berlin and the University of California, Santa Cruz. She has been the director of the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin since late 2022. Previously, she was curator of contemporary art at the Albertinum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. She has taught at the Braunschweig University of Art, the Freie Universität Berlin, and the Berlin University of the Arts, among others, and writes for *ARTMargins*. She has received grants for her scholarly work from the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Fulbright Commission.

Dr. Wolfgang Schöddert

Wolfgang Schöddert is a research associate for provenance and art market research at the Berlinische Galerie. He studied art history, urban planning, and European ethnology in Bonn, and received his doctorate from the Technical University of Berlin. In 1993, his first research on the art trade under National Socialism resulted from his collaboration with the French artist Christian Boltanski. Since 2021, he has been involved in the development and implementation of the project “German Sales Primary Market. Gallery Publications in the German-Speaking Countries (1871–1949),” funded by the German Research Foundation.

Dr. Dorothea Schöne

Dorothea Schöne studied art history and political science at the University of Leipzig. From 2005 to 2006, she was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Riverside; and from 2006 to 2009, she worked at the LA County Museum of Art (LACMA) as a curatorial assistant for the exhibition *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures*. From 2010 to 2014, she worked as a freelance curator and art critic. In 2015, she received her doctorate in art history with a dissertation on postwar modernism in Berlin. For her research, she received a Robert R. Rifkind Scholar-in-Residence grant (2019), a Doina Popescu Postdoctoral Fellowship at Ryerson University, Toronto (2015), a Getty Library Research Grant, and a DAAD travel grant (2011). In 2012, she was a fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C., and in 2018, she was a guest curator at the HOW Art Museum in Shanghai. In 2021, she was awarded the Hans and Lea Grundig Prize. Since February 2014, she has been the artistic director of the Kunsthaus Dahlem in Berlin.

Dr. des. Paula Schwerdtfeger

Paula Schwerdtfeger studied art history in Göttingen and Munich. In 2020, she received her doctorate from the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. After an assistance curatorship at the Sprengel Museum Hannover, she has been working as a freelance art historian and curator. She has been publishing texts on twentieth-century art since 2011. She curated, amongst others, the exhibition *Formen, die ihr Wesen treiben* (2021) and co-curated *Gegeben sind. Reuterswärd, Fahlström, Duchamp* (2022), both in conjunction with the Sprengel Museum Hannover. At the end of 2023, her publication *Raum – Zeit – Ordnung. Kunstaustellungen im Nationalsozialismus* will be published, as the ninth volume in the series *Brüche und Kontinuitäten. Forschungen zu Kunst und Kunstgeschichte im Nationalsozialismus*.

Professor Dr. Aya Soika

Aya Soika teaches at Bard College Berlin; her research centres on 20th century art. She co-curated the 2019 exhibition *Emil Nolde – A German Legend. The Artist during the Nazi Regime* (Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin) and, in parallel, *Escape into Art? The Brücke Painters in the Nazi Period* (Brücke Museum, Berlin). In 2021/22, as part of her interest in the reception of non-European cultures by artists such as Emil Nolde and Max Pechstein, she was involved in the exhibition *Whose Expression? The Brücke Artists and Colonialism* at the Brücke Museum. The *Handbuch Werkverzeichnis – Œuvrekatalog – Catalogue raisonné* published with two colleagues in 2023 follows on from her work on the catalogue raisonné of Pechstein's paintings (2011).

Dr. Maike Steinkamp

Maike Steinkamp studied art history, German language and literature, and Romance studies in Bonn and Parma. In 2007, she completed her doctorate on the reception of “degenerate” art in the Soviet occupation zone and the early GDR. From 2001 to 2004, she worked at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn and the Deutsches Historisches Museum

in Berlin. From 2005 until 2012 she worked as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Art History of Hamburg. In 2009, she was a visiting professor at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. From 2012 to 2017, she was a curator at the Arp Foundation, Berlin/Rolandswerth. Since the beginning of 2018, she is a curator at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin. She has published numerous essays on twentieth-century art and art politics, especially on the 1930s and the postwar period.

Dr. Elisa Tamaschke

Elisa Tamaschke studied art history and Protestant theology in Leipzig. From 2011 to 2016, she was a research associate at the Institute of Art History at the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, where she completed her doctorate with a dissertation on the Swiss artist Otto Meyer-Amden. After working as a research associate at the Georg Kolbe Museum and the Arp Foundation, Berlin/Rolandswerth, she is now Curator and Head of Exhibitions, Research and Publications at the Georg Kolbe Museum. Together with Julia Wallner, she chaired the conference for the present publication and is the project manager for the scholarly processing of the partial estate of Georg Kolbe, which the museum received from Canada. She publishes on modern and contemporary art.

Dr. Anja Tiedemann

Anja Tiedemann studied art history and received her doctorate from the University of Hamburg with a dissertation on “degenerate” modern art and its American market, focusing on Karl Buchholz and Curt Valentin as dealers in ostracized art. She is in charge of the digital catalogue raisonné of Max Beckmann's paintings, the concept of which she was responsible for developing and implementing. She is an expert on the art trade under National Socialism, and has also been project coordinator of the Kaldewei Cultural Foundation since 2021.

Dr. Julia Wallner

Julia Wallner studied art history, literature, and political science in Marburg, Madrid, and Freiburg, and received her doctorate in 2006 with a dissertation on the texts of Jenny Holzer. After working as a curator at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, she was director of the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin from 2013 to 2022. During this time, she was able to intensify contact with Georg Kolbe's granddaughter, Maria von Tiesenhausen, and thus achieved the return of the partial estate of Georg Kolbe to the museum. Since the summer of 2022, she has been the director of the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, Remagen. She has been responsible for numerous exhibitions and publications on art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with a focus on sculpture in the context of contemporary historical issues and social dimensions, including Alberto Giacometti (2010), Jean Arp (2015), Auguste Rodin and Madame Hanako (2016), Alfred Flechtheim (2017), and Thomas Schütte (2021).

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Georg Kolbe Museum

Georg Kolbe (1877–1947) is one of the most important modernist sculptors of the first half of the 20th century. The internationally well-connected Berlin artist was successful throughout the eras of the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and National Socialism, as well as in the period immediately after the Second World War. His work from the years 1933 to 1945 in particular raises critical questions. Numerous archival materials are now newly accessible. The contributions assembled in this volume place research on Georg Kolbe's artistic work and its reception during the National Socialism era on a new foundation.

With contributions by

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Ambra Frank

Christian Fuhrmeister

Jan Giebel

Arie Hartog

Christina Irrgang

Gesa Jeuthe Vietzen

Bernhard Maaz

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