

ART, IDEOLOGY, & ECONOMICS

■ IN ■ NAZI ■ GERMANY ■



The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts

ALAN E. STEINWEIS

ALAN E. STEINWEIS

ART, IDEOLOGY, & ECONOMICS IN NAZI GERMANY

THE REICH CHAMBERS

OF MUSIC, THEATER, AND

THE VISUAL ARTS

The University of North Carolina Press

Chapel Hill & London

© 1993

The University of
North Carolina Press
All rights reserved

Manufactured in the
United States of America

The paper in this book meets the
guidelines for permanence and durability
of the Committee on Production
Guidelines for Book Longevity of the
Council on Library Resources.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-
Publication Data

Steinweis, Alan E.

Art, ideology, and economics in Nazi
Germany : the Reich chambers of Music,
Theater, and the Visual Arts / by
Alan E. Steinweis.

p. cm.

Originally presented as the author's
thesis (doctoral—University of North
Carolina, Chapel Hill).

Includes bibliographical references and
index.

ISBN 0-8078-2104-7 (cloth: alk. paper)

ISBN 0-8078-4607-4 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Arts, German. 2. National
socialism and art. 3. Arts—Economic
aspects—Germany. I. Title.

NX550.A1S75 1993

700'.943'09043—dc20 93-7059

CIP

Portions of this book originally appeared
in somewhat different form in "The
Professional, Social, and Economic
Dimensions of Nazi Cultural Policy: The
Case of the Reich Theater Chamber,"
German Studies Review 13, no. 3
(October 1990): 442-59; "Weimar
Culture and the Rise of National
Socialism: The *Kampfbund für deutsche
Kultur*," *Central European History* 24,
no. 4 (1991): 402-23 (published by
Humanities Press International, Inc.,
Atlantic Highlands, N.J.); "German
Cultural Imperialism in Czechoslovakia
and Poland, 1938-1945," *International
History Review* 13, no. 3 (August 1991):
466-80; and "Hans Hinkel and German
Jewry, 1933-1941," *Leo Baeck Institute
Yearbook* 38 (1993): 209-19, and are
reprinted by permission of the
publishers.

00 99 98 97 96 6 5 4 3 2

**ART, IDEOLOGY,
AND ECONOMICS IN
NAZI GERMANY**

FOR MY PARENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While researching and writing this study I benefited from the advice of mentors, friends, and colleagues. I am especially grateful to Professor Gerhard L. Weinberg of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who directed the doctoral dissertation on which this study is based, and who continues to set an example through his scholarship and humanity. I am also deeply indebted to Professor Konrad H. Jarausch, whose scholarship and suggestions have influenced my own work immensely. Also at Chapel Hill, Josef Anderle, Donald Reid, and Lloyd Kramer graciously served as readers for the dissertation and made many valuable suggestions.

Charles W. Sydnor, Jr., and Sybil Milton carefully critiqued earlier drafts of this manuscript, pointing out problems and opportunities for improvement. Geoffrey Giles of the University of Florida has on many occasions shared with me his insights into the society and culture of Nazi Germany. I am also grateful for advice, comments, and support from Donna Alexander, Dolores Augustine, Earl Beck, Doris Bergen, Rich Bodek, Bruce Campbell, Lamar Cecil, Karen Clarke, Glenn Cuomo, Volker Dahm, Jürgen Falter, Carole Fink, Johnpeter Grill, Gerald Heberle, Larry Eugene Jones, Michael Kater, Joseph Klaitz, Bob Kunath, Brian Ladd, Daniel Mattern, John Mendelsohn, Ursula Mertin, Carl Pletsch, Pamela Potter, Doris Reif, George Riordan, Ron Shearer, Bernd Sösemann, George Stein, Ralph Turner, Wolfgang Wippermann, Ed Wynot, and Rainer Zitelmann.

At archives in Germany I almost always encountered friendly and helpful staff members. This holds true especially for the Bundesarchiv Koblenz and the Berlin Document Center. The present director of the BDC, David Marwell, and his immediate predecessor, Daniel Simon, placed their collections and staffs at my disposal during several long visits. I would also like to express my appreciation to the library staffs at the University of North Carolina and at Florida State University. The interlibrary loan specialists at the latter institution have shown great resourcefulness in tracking down esoteric items.

I was fortunate to receive financial support from several sources. The German Academic Exchange Service awarded me a doctoral research grant that enabled me to spend the 1984–85 academic year in Berlin and Koblenz. In 1988–89 I returned to Germany for fifteen months as a postdoctoral fellow at the Free University of Berlin in the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, a program sponsored by the Social Science

Research Council and financed by the Volkswagen Foundation and the German Marshall Fund. I am particularly grateful to program coordinators Claudia Wörmann and Monika Medick-Krakau, who cut through red tape so that the fellows could get things done. A first-year faculty summer grant from Florida State University enabled me to spend an additional two months in Berlin in 1990, and a grant from the FSU Council on Research and Creativity gave me the opportunity to prepare the final manuscript in the summer of 1992. Support from the Norman and Bernice Harris Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln helped bring the book to fruition.

I am grateful to the University of North Carolina Press for taking on this project. Lewis Bateman lent his encouragement from an early stage, Ron Maner shepherded the manuscript through the publication process, and Christi Stanforth carefully copyedited my prose.

At home, Catherine Clarke patiently abided my preoccupation with the completion of this book. Finally, my greatest debt is to my parents, to whom this book is dedicated. Their integrity, compassion, dignity, and goodness, which survived the camps of Nazi Europe intact, provide compelling proof of the ability of the human spirit to overcome evil and adversity.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations appear in the text. For a list of abbreviations used in the notes, see page 177.

ADMV	Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein
ASSO	Assoziation revolutionärer bildender Künstler
BDA	Bund deutscher Architekten
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront
DeMuV	Deutscher Musiker-Verband
KdF	Kraft durch Freude
NSBO	Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische deutsche Arbeiterpartei
NSKG	Nationalsozialistische Kulturgemeinde
RDOO	Reichsverband deutscher Orchester und Orchestermusiker
RVbK	Reichsverband bildender Künstler Deutschlands
SA	Sturmabteilung
SD	Sicherheitsdienst
SS	Schutzstaffel

**ART, IDEOLOGY,
AND ECONOMICS IN
NAZI GERMANY**

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments, ix

Abbreviations, xi

Introduction, 1

- CHAPTER 1** Art and Culture in the Weimar Republic:
The Economic, Institutional, and Political Context, 7
 The Weimar System of Professional Representation, 9
 The Impact of the Depression, 14
 The Neocorporatist Impulse, 17
 National Socialism and the Arts in the Weimar Era, 20
- CHAPTER 2** Nazi Coordination of the Arts and the Creation of
the Reich Chamber of Culture, 1933, 32
 Nazification of the Arts, 34
 Toward a Kulturkammer, 38
- CHAPTER 3** Evolution of the Chamber System, 50
 Neocorporatism and Second Coordination, 1934–1936, 51
 Administrative Centralization, 1935–1941, 59
 The Struggle for Control over Civil Servants, 63
 The Struggle over Amateur Artists and Audiences, 69
- CHAPTER 4** The Varieties of Patronage, 1933–1939, 73
 Work Creation, 74
 Regulating the Arts, 79
 Conflicts over Professionalization, 83
 A Balance Sheet: Prosperity Amid Hardship, 94
 Altersversorgung: Old-Age Pensions, 98
- CHAPTER 5** Germanizing the Arts, 103
 The Purge of Non-Aryans, 104
 A Jewish Chamber, 120
 Other Victims of Paragraph 10, 126
 The Apparatus of Censorship, 1933–1939, 132

CHAPTER 6 Mobilizing Artists for War, 147
 Economic Bust and Boom, 148
 The Purge Intensifies, 157
 Wartime Censorship, 163
 Mobilization for Total War, 168

Conclusion, 174

Notes, 177

Bibliography, 217

Index, 227

A section of photographs can be found following page 72.

INTRODUCTION

The arts occupied a central position in the ideology and propaganda of National Socialism. Yet despite the existence of a number of fine scholarly and popular studies of the subject, the research potential of the Nazi regime's policies toward the arts remains largely untapped.¹ The Reich Chamber of Culture, or Reichskulturkammer, in particular, stands out as an institution that merits far more attention than it has received.² Created by the Reich Cabinet in September 1933 upon the initiative of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, who became president of the mammoth new organization, the Kulturkammer was designed to "promote German culture on behalf of the German Volk and Reich" and to "regulate the economic and social affairs of the culture professions." Subdivided into separate chambers for music, theater, the visual arts, literature, film, radio, and the press, this organization encompassed several hundred thousand professionals and influenced the activities of millions of amateur artists and musicians as well. Most of what we know about the Kulturkammer and its chambers relates to the purge and censorship dimensions of their responsibilities, although even these require far more investigation.³ Meanwhile, the economic, social, and professional dimensions of chamber policy have been largely overlooked. During the years of Nazi rule, the culture chambers implemented, or attempted to implement, numerous measures designed to ameliorate the material hardships that had long confronted German artists and to secure a modicum of long-term economic stability for the traditionally crisis-ridden art professions.

It is hoped that this study of the Chamber of Culture will contribute to an emerging scholarly literature on Nazi artistic and cultural policy, which aims at achieving a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the Nazi regime and the German art world.⁴ One of the most persistent generalizations to have emerged from almost five decades of postwar research on Nazi Germany is the notion of a German artistic and cultural establishment at the mercy of a totalitarian regime determined to mobilize the arts in pursuit of its own ideological ends. Explicitly or implicitly, historians have characterized the relationship between the regime and the art world as one in which a powerful state-party apparatus manipulated malleable and sometimes enthusiastic artists. According to this view, a regime exercising absolute power engineered the "de-Jewification" (*Entjüdung*) of German cultural life, carried through the purge of Marxists,

imposed blacklists and other forms of censorship, and promoted a "Germanic" aesthetic. The regime is understood as having "steered"⁵ the activities of German artists into ideologically acceptable channels, employing subventions, prizes, and titles as incentives and resorting to monetary fines, professional bans, and even concentration camps when it became necessary to discipline wayward artists. Although diverse patterns of resistance, collaboration, and adaptation on the part of German artists have been acknowledged, the picture usually painted is one in which the regime acted and German artists reacted.

Although there is much truth in this characterization, it runs the risk of obscuring a more complex reality. It devotes insufficient attention to continuities in the professional and economic agenda of the German cultural establishment from the Weimar Republic through the Nazi period. Moreover, it presupposes a clearer distinction between officialdom and cultural elite than actually existed during the Nazi years, and thereby overestimates the degree to which policy affecting artists originated *outside* the art world. By extension, it overlooks key areas of consensus between official policy and prevailing sentiment in the art world. Consequently, it tends to place too much emphasis on the regime's reliance on coercion and not enough on factors accounting for artists' passive compliance and active collaboration with the regime's cultural policies.

Several attributes of the existing scholarship account for these interpretational shortcomings. Historians have focused mainly on the careers of prominent artists while devoting little attention to the institutional and economic factors that shaped cultural policy. In particular, the trend toward unionization and professionalization in the arts, already far advanced in several fields at the time of the Nazi seizure of power, has received little attention.⁶ The predominant and somewhat romantic image of the artist as loner, although no doubt applicable in numerous cases, conflicts with a historical reality in which professional associations and unions played a significant role. The "coordination" of the German art world in the first years of the Third Reich involved not so much the expansion of state power directly over individual artists as the radical reform of an existing constellation of occupational organizations. From the very first, the Nazi strategy for cultural administration entailed not the atomization of individuals but rather the consolidation of a nascent professional "estate" system inherited from the Weimar Republic. In remolding existing organizations into the Kulturkammer and its subsidiaries after 1933, the Nazi regime transformed what had been primarily a system of occupational representation into a means for cultural regulation by the state. By focusing on this process, this

study also hopes to contribute to the growing literature on the history of German professionalization.⁷

Having taken insufficient account of institutional continuities, historians have not been prompted to evaluate the connections between the goals and policies of the pre-1933 professional organizations and those of their Nazi-era successors. Consequently, whereas censorship, purges, and the ideological instrumentalization of the arts in the Nazi era have been subjected to thorough (though hardly conclusive) investigation, a plethora of urgent problems that confronted the German art world both before and after 1933 have been examined only superficially. These problems included severe unemployment among professional artists in all fields, uneven and insufficiently rigorous systems of professional education and certification, and a social insurance system that was fragmentary at best.

Focusing on the Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts, this study seeks to examine the Nazi-era experiences of the German art professions in the parallel and interrelated contexts of purges, censorship, professional reform, economic regulation, and social policy. It is, therefore, not an exercise in cultural history in the traditional sense. Its emphasis is less on the substance of artistic and cultural life in the Nazi years than on the political, professional and economic environment in which German artists were compelled to function. It concentrates in part on the structure of decision making, seeking to ascertain where and in whose interest cultural policies were formulated. Additionally, it emphasizes concrete, material issues, such as work creation, social insurance, minimum wage statutes, and certification guidelines, all of which had been matters of high priority to the art professions before 1933 and which remained at or near the top of the art world's agenda during the Nazi era.

Despite an emphasis on nonaesthetic questions, this study will offer conclusions with significant implications for the long-term impact of National Socialist rule on German culture. By examining the cultural establishment's record of successes and failures in professional, social, and economic reform in the early years of Nazi rule, the study will contribute to an understanding of the response of German artists to cultural *Gleichschaltung*, or "coordination." More generally, by elucidating the economic and professional context of cultural life, the study will help to explain the widespread acquiescence of German artists in artistic censorship and racial and political "purification."

The study's simultaneous concentration on three of the Culture Chamber's seven subsidiaries allows for a comparative approach while avoiding too diffuse a focus. The selection of the Chambers of Theater, Music, and

Table I.1
Membership of the Reich Chamber of
the Visual Arts, ca. 1937

<i>Professional Groups</i>	<i>Members</i>
Architects	13,750
Landscapers	520
Interior designers	500
Sculptors	3,200
Painters and graphic artists	10,500
Commercial graphic artists	3,500
Pattern designers	1,000
Copyists	230
Art and antique dealers	1,500
Art print dealers	360
Total	35,060

Source: Wulf, *Die bildenden Künste*, p. 109.

the Visual Arts, to the exclusion of the others, is by no means arbitrary. These three chambers encompassed individuals whose main activities directly involved the arts, whereas the members of the Chambers of Radio, the Press, and Literature engaged in a variety of activities that were often only tangential to the arts. Although the Film Chamber would have made a logical fourth institutional component of this study, I have decided to leave that chamber to historians who specialize in the relatively highly developed field of National Socialist film studies.⁸ The groups contained in the three chambers under analysis represent diverse historical patterns of occupational and professional development prior to 1933. Whereas the Chamber of Visual Arts consisted by and large of free professionals, the membership of the Theater Chamber was composed mainly of salaried employees, while the Music Chamber comprised a mixture of free professionals, salaried employees, and wage workers. These distinctions, rooted in the institutional structure of the German art world inherited by the Nazi regime, become important in attempting to explain the varying degrees of success attained by the chambers after 1933 in the areas of economic and professional reform.

As illustrated by Tables I.1–3, which summarize membership figures for 1937, each of the three chambers under examination was a large and diverse organization in its own right. This study, therefore, does not attempt to examine chamber policies and operations in their totality. Instead, it concentrates on a limited number of specific issues—an approach which can

Table I.2
Membership of the Reich Music
Chamber, ca. 1937

<i>Professional Groups</i>	<i>Members</i>
Composers	3,000
Entertainment musicians	60,000
Serious musicians	27,000
Concert managements	2,000
Music publishers	600
Music dealers	3,000
Total	95,600

Source: Ihlert, *Die Reichsmusikkammer*.

help elucidate general patterns and which, it is hoped, can suggest a fruitful approach for further research. More concretely, this study focuses mainly on chamber subgroups composed of members who were directly involved in artistic creation or performance, such as musicians, actors, painters, and sculptors. In contrast, it offers a much more limited examination of the technical occupations and business entrepreneurs (e.g., publishers) encompassed by the chambers.

Unpublished documentation, augmented by published primary and secondary sources, serves as the main basis for this study. Unfortunately, much chamber documentation was destroyed in the war. The surviving chamber subject files are deposited primarily in the German Federal Archive (Bundesarchiv) in Koblenz, as are collections of several Nazi state and party agencies whose activities impinged directly on the chambers, most notably the Propaganda Ministry. The files in Koblenz are supplemented by a large collection of chamber personal files stored in the Berlin Document Center. These hitherto underexploited membership files furnish the researcher with a wealth of information about the impact of official policy on German artists. Based on these files, this study seeks to provide answers to questions that have not previously been subjected to empirical analysis. For example, biographical data contained in the files has been used to analyze the politicization of artists as reflected in membership in the NSDAP and affiliated organizations both before and after 1933. Materials from the Document Center's collection have also made it possible to reconstruct the Nazi racial and political purge of the art world with a good deal more precision than has heretofore been possible.

Also of value to this study are the well-preserved records of the Baden state government, deposited in the General State Archive in Karlsruhe, as

Table I.3
Membership of the Reich Theater
Chamber, ca. 1937

<i>Professional Groups</i>	<i>Members</i>
Artistic theater personnel	22,000
Variety and cabaret artists	12,000
Dancers	5,000
Puppeteers and "show people"	2,000
Theater publishers	100
Total	41,100

Source: Hinkel, *Handbuch*, pp. 253–59.

well as those of the Bavarian government, found in the Bavarian Main State Archive in Munich. These regional collections contain copies of documents that did not survive in the central files of the chambers or the Propaganda Ministry. These German archives were supplemented by captured German records available in the United States as microfilm publications from the National Archives and by official Kulturkammer publications available in German and American libraries.