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An Artist against the Third Reich

Ernst Barlach, 1933–1938

The conflict between Ernst Barlach, the most important German sculptor of the time, and the Third Reich is a remarkable episode in Hitler's war against modern art. Rather than accept repression passively, Barlach denounced the confiscation and destruction of his work as ideologically inspired and continued on his independent course. The author's discussion of Barlach's art and of his insistence on creative freedom is joined to an analysis of his opponents' motives and tactics. Hitler's ill-informed rantings against modernism in German art were nevertheless an internally consistent and politically effective critique of liberal culture. That despite Hitler's strictures some National Socialists advocated a "Nordic modernism" and tried to win Barlach to their cause exemplifies the cultural crosscurrents running through the Third Reich. Peter Paret's closely focused study of an artist in a time of crisis seamlessly combines the history of modern Germany and the history of modern art.

Peter Paret is Mellon Professor in the Humanities Emeritus of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and Spruance Professor of International History Emeritus of Stanford University. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a member of the American Philosophical Society, and recipient of the Society's Thomas Jefferson Medal. The German government has awarded him the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit. His research is divided between two fields: the role of war in history, on which, among other works, he has written the well-known intellectual biography *Clausewitz and the State* (1976); and the relationship between art and society. He is the author of *The Berlin Secession: Modernism and Its Enemies in Imperial Germany* (1980); a study of the decline of German liberalism as seen through art, *Art as History* (1988); and a collection of essays, *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840–1945* (2001). He combined his two areas of research in *Imagined Battles: Reflections of War in European Art* (1997).

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Those who created the Third Reich [will] determine not only its political but also its cultural development.

– Adolf Hitler, speech at the Reich party rally, 1934

Nothing can be more certain than that art is not subject to the strictures of a political view of the world.

– Ernst Barlach to the sculptor Adolf Wamper, 1934

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The illustrations follow p. 192. Height, width, and depth in millimeters.

1 Ernst Barlach before the Chapel of St. Gertrude in Güstrow, 1934. Photo: Berthold Kegebein. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
2 Ernst Barlach: *A Russian Couple*, 1906. Pencil and crayon, H. 200, W. 248. Private collection. Photo: Randall Hagadorn, Titusville. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
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5 Ernst Barlach: *Woman Walking*, 1910. Porcelain, H. 250, W. 125, D. 137. Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg. Photo: H.-P. Cordes, Hamburg. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.

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14 Ernst Barlach: Detail from carved paneling of a fireplace, 1916. Wood, H. 2,200, W. 1,300, D. approx. 180. (Destroyed in the Second World War.) © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.

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16 Ernst Barlach: *Mater Dolorosa*, The Kiel Memorial, 1921. Oak, H. 2,380[?], W. 2,210[?]. (Destroyed in the Second World War.)
17 Ernst Barlach: *Faust and Mephistopheles*, 1922. Woodcut. From Barlach's illustrations to Goethe's *Walpurgisnacht*, 1923. H. 188, W. 141. Private collection. Photo: Randall Hagadorn, Titusville. The woodcut was a model for the later charcoal drawing, reproduced in Ernst Barlach, *Zeichnungen*, Munich, 1935. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
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22 Ernst Barlach: *The Güstrow Memorial*, 1927. Bronze, H. 710, W. 745, D. 2,170. Photo: Uwe Seemann, Güstrow.
23 Ernst Barlach: *The Güstrow Memorial*.
24 Ernst Barlach: *The Fighter of the Spirit*, 1928. Bronze, H. 4,800. Before the University Church, Kiel, which was destroyed in the Second World War.

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27 Ernst Barlach: *The Hamburg Memorial*, 1931. Limestone. The relief: H. 7,560, W. 1,900, D. 90. Photographed before 1937.
28 Ernst Barlach: *The Dreamer* from *The Frieze of Listeners*, 1931. Oak, H. 1,095, W. 220, D. 120. Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg. Photo: H.-P. Cordes, Hamburg. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
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30 Ernst Barlach: *Pieta*. Study for The Stralsund Memorial, 1932. Clay under shellac, H. 645, W. 542, D. 220. Ernst Barlach Stiftung, Güstrow. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
31 Georg Kolbe: *You Have Not Died in Vain*. The Stralsund Memorial, 1935.
32 Ernst Barlach: *The Jolly Peg-Leg*, 1934. Bronze, H. 540, W. 305, D. 212. The Art Museum, Princeton University. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
33 Wilhelm Busch: Page from *Die fromme Helene*, Heidelberg, 1872.
34 Ernst Barlach in his studio, 1935. Behind him are the figures of *The Frieze of Listeners*. Photo: Berthold Kegebein. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.
35 Ernst Barlach: *Man Reading in the Wind*, 1936. Stucco under shellac, H. 470, W. 220, D. 310. Ernst und Hans

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36 Ernst Barlach: *Freezing Crone* (*Die alte Gewittersche*), 1937. Teak, H. 550, W. 340, D. 390. Ernst Barlach Stiftung, Güstrow. Photo: Uwe Seemann, Güstrow. © Ernst und Hans Barlach GbR Lizenzverwaltung Ratzeburg.

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queries contained in their evaluations of the manuscript for the publisher.

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