

*Rückkehr aus dem Exil: Bildende Künstler und Architekten in der SBZ und frühen DDR.* By Andreas Schätzke. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1999. 279 pp. €34.77 (paperback).

In Munich in 1937 the National Socialists showed that they had learned enough from Dada to devise a very modern way of ridiculing the modern art they hated. By then, many German artists had realized what direction official policy was going in and had left the country. Others—including most famously Max Beckmann—were now prompted to do likewise. Others again—Otto Dix, Christian Schad and Rudolf Schlichter amongst them—remained in Germany in various states of compromised unhappiness. The defeat of the Third Reich put paid to the careers of many—but by no means all—of those artists who had thrived on Hitler's beneficence, and then the first post-war General German Art Exhibition in Dresden in 1946 returned to the disparaged works of the Weimar Republic. Some spectators were touched to see old friends again, but the visiting public at large was not impressed with these disturbing reminders of difficult times.

Andreas Schätzke's clear and well-researched volume deals with the similarly difficult experiences of those painters, sculptors and architects who spent time in unwanted emigration and then returned to the traumatic conditions of post-war Germany. The focus is on those who chose the Soviet Zone/German Democratic Republic, in many but not all instances for political reasons. Those readers not already very familiar with the cultural politics of the early GDR will find few names known to them: John Heartfield certainly, also perhaps Lea Grundig, Horst Stempel and the Dutch architect Mart Stam. The experiences of the less well-known artists give, however, a vivid portrayal of the cultural rebuilding of eastern Germany and its incipient political perversion. They are also interwoven with accounts of better-known figures such as George Grosz, Wilhelm Lachnit and Hans Grundig.

Schätzke's introductory chapters discuss definitions of 'exile' and 'emigration', drawing attention to the very different personal intentions and experiences of the artists outside Germany. A large number arrived in Britain, where the exhibition of 'Twentieth Century German Art' was held at the New Burlington Galleries in July–August 1938. Rather than a display by the recent refugees, it showed, however, largely the work of better-known figures such as Kirchner and Marc (both already dead), Beckmann and Klee (in Amsterdam and Bern), and Kokoschka (not yet in London). In December 1938 the 'Freier Deutscher Kulturbund' was founded in London, and came to include about one hundred artists. A smaller number had migrated to France, and even fewer—and these mostly architects—to the Soviet Union. There, experiences could be dire, such as for the sculptor Will Lammert. Banished to Kazan, he was not allowed to return to Germany until 1951 and was then discouraged from discussing his experiences under Stalin's rule. For others too after 1945 it was not easy to make their way back home. Lea Grundig was initially prevented by the authorities in Palestine/Israel from returning to Europe. She arrived in Prague in 1948 and in Dresden only in 1949, where she was reunited with her husband Hans. Part of the reason for the delay was, however, her own anxiety about the decision to return to Germany.

While Schätzke is good at identifying patterns of emigration and return, he is also very sensitive to these intensely personal dilemmas. The biographical format—which occupies nearly three-quarters of the book—provides an extremely useful resource for anyone wishing to develop further research in this area. Some twenty artists are discussed in detail, and a good many more in briefer summary. The narrative is thereby somewhat fragmented and repetitive, however, and the formulation of SED cultural policy is viewed primarily through the personal experiences of the artists. This does have its advantages too, though. We see how their work was first encouraged as antifascist and humanistic, and then how it fell out of favour when the party line shifted to a more dogmatic Socialist Realism in the early 1950s. Through the personal and group histories we see how somewhat different paths were taken in Berlin and Dresden. And we receive a strong impression of the opportunities for artists and architects, but also of the pressures put upon them. When public murals were *de rigueur* in the late 1940s, René Graetz, Horst Stempel and others collaborated enthusiastically to produce them. Only a few years later they witnessed them being painted over.

Ultimately, the antifascist rhetoric of the SED found common cause with that of the

régime it had displaced, and there was little comfort for free-thinking artists. Cultural proletarianism replaced racist petit-bourgeois attitudes, and there was some similarity between them. Just as Dresden visitors in 1946 had called in the exhibition comments book for a return to 'Munich art', so in 1949 the SED theoretical journal *Einheit* published an article by Heinz Lüdecke which detected fire in the Nazi smoke: 'Und die Nazis hätten die Kulturschande ihres Hetz- und Vernichtungsfeldzugs gegen die sogenannten "Entarteten" nicht betreiben können, wenn nicht tatsächlich etwas entartet gewesen wäre: das Verhältnis einer volksfremd gewordenen Kunst zu einem kunstfremd gewordenen Volk' (p. 206). Schätzke shows that the fate of many artists who came home after 1945 with purpose or optimism could be dismal and frustrating indeed.

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