VISUAL CULTURES AND GERMAN CONTEXTS

Art and Resistance in Germany

EDITED BY

Deborah Ascher Barnstone &
Elizabeth Otto

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Art and Resistance in Germany

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Introduction: Welcome to the Resistance!

Elizabeth Otto and Deborah Ascher Barnstone

In the limbo time of late Fall, 2016, when so many were still reeling from Donald Trump's surprise election to the United States' presidency, but he had not yet been inaugurated, the two of us met in Munich for a conference on "Passages of Exile." Over the course of several days, we were part of an international group of scholars considering how the journey into exile—the passage itself—left traces in the work of artists, architects, writers, and filmmakers.[1] Although our shared work was focused on the past, participants' despair at recent unexpected political events in the U.S. and elsewhere was palpable. It was particularly fresh in everyone's minds that a philistine bully had been elected to the post that many still considered as leader of the free world. But equally as disturbing was the fact that this was one of many previously unthinkable populist earthquakes, including the United Kingdom's squeaker vote earlier in the year in favor of "Brexiting" and the shocking rise to power of right-wing parties in countries including Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Switzerland. Painful as these recent events were, they were lent a particular perspective by our location. Infamously, Germany had become a paradigmatic freethinking democracy after the First World War but then quickly devolved into a dictatorship of genocidal racists by the early 1930s. Germany of 2016 was, however, also a country that had just generously opened its doors to significant numbers of refugees from Syria and elsewhere *and* seen a strong right-wing backlash to that action.

When the conference ended, the two of us retired to a Munich bar for a late-night postmortem and began to discuss ways to activate our research and to work collectively with other scholars for positive change. *Art and Resistance in Germany* is the result of these efforts. "Resist" has become a watchword of our time; it crops up as graffiti in our cities and as bumper stickers on our cars, a short message to express dissent, convey solidarity, and invite activism. In this volume, authors look to the past century to consider in particular how creative people found new ways to express dissent, challenge injustice, and, in short, to resist.

United in researching works made by filmmakers, authors, architects, playwrights, composers, and artists—cultural producers working in often dangerous situations where they felt called to stand against governmental oppression—the authors of *Art*

[1] Following the conference, Burcu Dogramaci and Elizabeth Otto produced *Passages of Exile* (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2017), an edited volume of essays. Some of these were first presented at the conference, including papers by both Deborah Ascher Barnstone and Elizabeth Otto.

and Resistance in Germany responded to our initial call to investigate "Cultures of Resistance." The project began with three days of fiery, interdisciplinary presentations at the 2017 German Studies Association's annual conference, in which some of this volume's papers were germinated; other contributions were written subsequently. At the same time, many of us have engaged in various forms of protest against right-wing parties and governments' policies and actions, and we have sought to build coalitions to support refugees, immigrants' rights, women's rights, and minority rights—as in the Black Lives Matter movement, among others. As a form of collective action, this book argues for the imperative of uniting our historical scholarship with our concern to chart a better future. As a form of activism between covers, *Art and Resistance in Germany* seeks to inspire readers likewise living through troubled times.

One particular image helps to illuminate the project of *Art and Resistance in Germany*; it was produced not in Germany or even Europe, but in the US, and is drawn from the Internet, our now-ubiquitous ecosystem for sharing not just images but also political content, a platform that has also been deployed nefariously and cynically to foster the rise of right-wing groups. This picture bridges time by linking iconography rooted in Germany's most notorious historical epoch to the present through a technique made famous by artists like John Heartfield: humor. Masquerading as the cover to a book titled *Mein Covfefe*, the picture was uploaded to the content sharing website Reddit on May 31, 2017, by an artist called Joman, in response to Trump's 12:06 a.m. Twitter post of that same day. Trump's short missives have become a hallmark of his term; they ooze his own daily cocktail of self-serving nationalism, narcissism, and populism. The May 31 message began with familiar words, only to take a surprising turn: "Despite the constant negative press covfefe," he posted. And that was it. Many believe that the president fell asleep mid Tweet, a logical explanation for how such nonsense could have remained visible throughout the night in the feed of a man famously obsessed with his media appearance. Meanwhile, the Internet exploded with playful speculative definitions of "covfefe."[2] Later that day, then-White-House Spokesman Sean Spicer stated—or perhaps he quipped?—that "the president and a small group of people know exactly what he meant."[3] The word has had staying power, particularly among those who want to highlight Trump's lack of presidential qualities. Joking "covfefe" slogans are widely available on T-shirts and mugs; it garnered the vote for 2017's Word of the Year from readers of *The Telegraph*.[4]

[2] Matt Flegenheimer, "What's a 'Covfefe'? Trump Tweet Unites a Bewildered Nation," *The New York Times*, May 31, 2017. Available online: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/31/us/politics/covfefe-trump-twitter.html [accessed Feb. 5, 2017]. For further reactions, see Elle Hunt, "What is Covfefe? The Tweet by Donald Trump that Baffled the Internet," *The Guardian* (US Edition), May 31, 2017. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/31/what-is-covfefe-donald-trump-baffles-twitter-post [accessed Feb. 6, 2017].

[3] Louis Nelson, "Spicer Refuses to say Trump's 'Covfefe' Tweet was a Typo," *Politico*, May 31, 2017. Available online: https://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/31/trump-covfefe-tweet–238967 [accessed Feb. 5, 2017].

[4] Joe Shute, "Revealed: Telegraph's Word of the Year," *The Telegraph*, December 29, 2017. Available online: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/12/29/revealed-telegraphs-word-year/ [accessed Feb. 5, 2017].

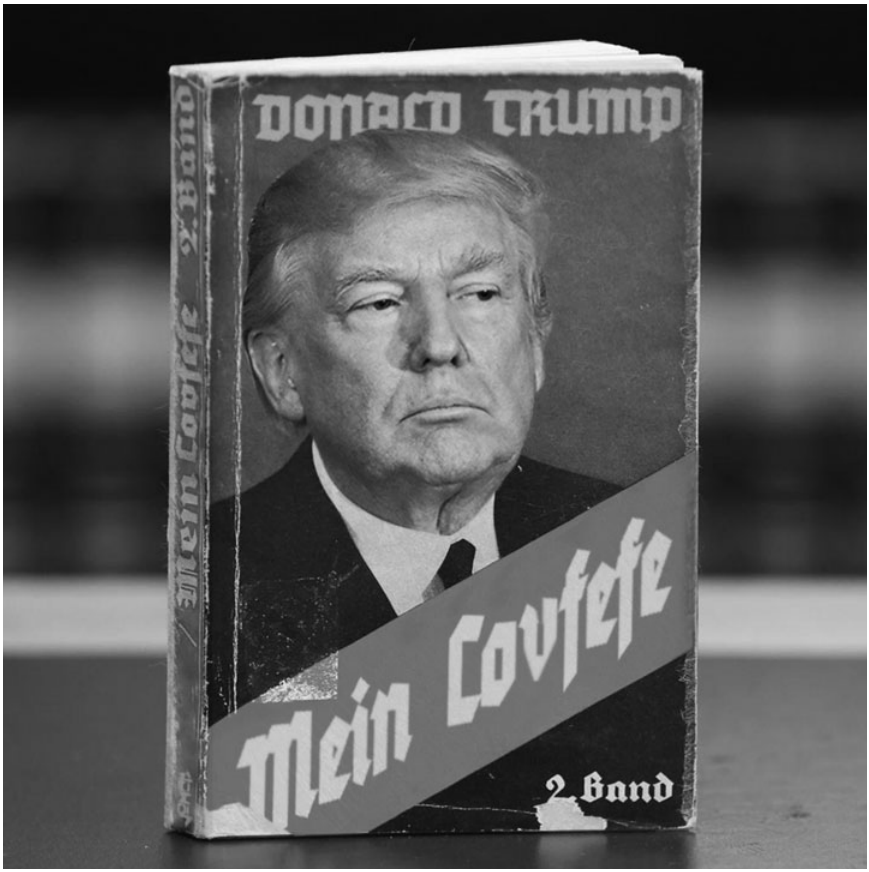

Figure 0.1: Joman, *Mein Covfefe*, 2017, internet meme. Printed with permission of the artist.

In contrast to the general Schadenfreude at yet another presidential gaff, Joman's *Mein Covfefe* is chilling. As Sabine Kriebel points out in her contribution to this volume, "A joke on the face of it, the montage also links Trump's political program to that of Hitler's right-wing, racist, authoritarian, narcissistic text, *Mein Kampf*."[5] A century after his rise to prominence with the 1920 founding of the National Socialist German Workers' Party—the Nazis—and the 1925 publication of his autobiographic screed *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler remains the extreme example of political evil personified. His image fosters comparison because he is still always beyond compare.

Like Joman's appropriated malapropism, our book engages the injustices of the Nazi era with essays that probe the possibilities and limits of resistance to that totalitarian regime. Against the backdrop of our own time's alarming rise in right-wing populism

[5] See Sabine Kriebel's essay in this volume. It was through her essay that we first became aware of Joman's work.

and resurgent nationalism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, and demagoguery, *Art and Resistance in Germany* argues that we can find both solace and inspiration by examining how historical and contemporary cultural producers have sought to resist, confront, confound, mock, or call out situations of political oppression. Essays address a broad spectrum of historical moments and media, as well as a range of targets and strategies. For our book's cover we have selected one of the best examples from the tradition of resistant art, Heartfield's anti-fascist *Alle Fäuste zu einer geballt* (All Fists Clenched as One), originally the cover of the October 1934 *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (Workers' Illustrated Newspaper). Through the blunt but artful symbolism of his montage, Heartfield literalizes the solidarity implied by the raised fist and makes a direct plea to ordinary citizens: "show the Fascists your violence!" He calls for them to rise up as a united front. As co-editors, we have provided the book's first essay, "How Art Resists," which considers the question of art and politics in the present and offers a systematic typology of modes and strategies of creative resistance. The rest of the book is organized in four sections that move through art's resistant strategies to offer a variety of perspectives on questions of creativity as resistance within the German context.

The essays in Part I, "Art that Alters Worldviews," explore how artworks may shift viewers' perceptions—and thus, perhaps, change their minds. Such art often resists oppression by "speaking truth to power," in the words of the Quaker slogan.[6] Patrizia McBride's "*Cut with the Kitchen Knife*: Visualizing Politics in Berlin Dada" offers a new interpretation of Hannah Höch's famed 1919 collage through the lens of the artist's feminist perspective, which moderated her critique of Weimar's new political order and her embrace of Dada's political aspirations. Kevin Berry follows with "Walter Gropius's Dammerstock and the Possibilities of an Architectural Resistance," an examination of a major housing project as Gropius's deliberate attempt to question the political economy and the efficacy of mass housing schemes of the interwar Republic. Nina Lübbren's "Authority and Ambiguity: Three Sculptors in National Socialist Germany" explores a range of reactions to the advent of dictatorship through the work of three female sculptors and the quandaries posed by their medium, one that so easily lends itself to monumentalizing statecraft.

Part II, "Art That Inspires Action," probes artworks as calls to political engagement. In "Teach Your Children Well: Hermynia Zur Mühlen, George Grosz, and the Art of Radical Pedagogy in Germany between the World Wars," Barbara McCloskey argues that a highly original but nearly forgotten children's book offers a novel approach to children's leftist political education—as well as a deeper context in which to consider Grosz's work. Jennifer Kapczynski's "Parting Shots: Ella Bergmann Michel's *Wahlkampf 1932* (*Letzte Wahl*)" argues that abstraction beckons subtly to resistance in Bergmann Michel's avant-garde documentary short-film engagement with the end of democracy and the ascent of fascism. And in "War Feeds its People Better: *Mother Courage* and the

[6] Stephen G. Cary (writing as Chairman of the Executive Board of the American Friends Service Committee), "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence," pamphlet published March 2, 1955. Available online: http://www.quaker.org/sttp.html [accessed Feb. 28, 2018].

Limits of Revolutionary Theater," Noah Soltau contends that today's celebrity-led resistance to right-wing politics only extends so far.

Part III, "Art That Critiques Symbols," engages art that resists by representing, reconfiguring, or questioning political symbols. "Montage as Meme: Learning from the Radical Avant-Gardes," by Sabine Kriebel, draws parallels between the photomontage of yore and today's memes by analyzing them both as pictorial tools of resistance. James van Dyke's "On the Possibility of Resistance in Two Silverpoints by Otto Dix" subtly scrutinizes two of Dix's portraits to suggest that they question the stereotype of the German Jew and push back against Nazi propaganda. Kathleen James-Chakraborty's "A Whisper Rather than a Shout: Ursula Wilms and Heinz Hallmann's *Topography of Terror*" explores how, through their design for the Topography of Terror Museum, members of a little-known German architecture praxis—rather than one of the many, nearly de rigueur "starchitects" for such projects—successfully transformed the site of the former headquarters of the Nazi Schutzstaffel (Protection Squadron, better known as the SS) into a space commemorating resistance to the Nazis.

Finally, Part IV, "Art That is Created in Acts of Resistance," reflects on artworks that activate by inviting participation in their making. In "From Anti-Nazi Postcards to Anti-Trump Social Media: Laughter as Resistance, Opposition, or Cold Comfort?" Peter Chametzky uncovers the stories of Germans who resisted National Socialism by creating and sharing artistic postcards that had clever, veiled messages, a practice often deployed today in political protests. In "Opera as Resistance: The Little Match Girl and the Terrorist in Helmut Lachenmann's *Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern*," Joy Calico interprets a highly-abstract, experimental opera's sound elements as an engagement with the radical politics of West Germany's post-Second World War Red Army Faction. Verena Krieger's "Montage as a Form of Resistance Aesthetics Today: Marcel Odenbach and Thomas Hirschhorn," concludes the volume with analysis of two contemporary artists who use the medium of photo-collage to engage both Germany's violent past and the ongoing state-sponsorship of violence today.

We are both tremendously grateful to our contributors for answering the call to look to history for examples of how creative people have resisted political oppression. These authors are our day's proof that the keyboard is mightier than the sword! We are indebted to Margaret Michniewicz, our wonderful editor at Bloomsbury Academic who supported this project with great enthusiasm from its earliest stages. Two anonymous peer reviewers offered extremely helpful feedback at key points in this book's creation. Elizabeth Otto wishes to acknowledge the Frank H. Kenan Fellowship at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, which supported her during our work on this book.

1

How Art Resists

Deborah Ascher Barnstone and Elizabeth Otto

> *Imagination is the chief instrument of the good. . . . Art is more moral than moralities. For the latter either are or tend to become, consecrations of the status quo, reflections of custom, reinforcements of the established order. The moral prophets of humanity have always been poets even though they spoke in free verse or by parable. . . . Art has been the means of keeping alive the sense of purposes that outrun evidence and of meanings that transcend indurated habit.*
>
> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*[1]

In November of 2014, 250 Neo-Nazi activists again converged on the tiny town of Wunsiedel, Bavaria, for their annual pilgrimage to the former burial place of the Nazi Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess. After years of anguish and ineffective attempts to stop the annual invasion, locals decided to meet this unwanted political agitation with creativity and humor. Their clever gambit was to initiate a clandestine walkathon, for which local individuals and businesses could "sponsor" one of the right-wing activists—without the invading marchers' knowledge or consent—at ten Euros per kilometer. The Neo-Nazis unwittingly raised 10,000 Euros through participation in the event the villagers named "Rechts gegen Rechts" (Right against Right); all funds were donated to an organization that supports those seeking escape from such extremist groups. The organizers were able to transform the political march into a performance-art piece by meeting marchers with a set of banners with double meanings and puns like, "If Only the Führer Knew," the name of a famous satirical novel about Adolf Hitler (Figure 1.1).[2]

Bananas passed out to the unwitting walkathon participants were labeled, "Munition 1" and "Mein Mampf" (local dialect for "my chow") a play on the name of Hitler's memoir *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*).[3] This reframing leant a deep sense of ironic comedy

[1] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 1934), 362; cited in James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2.

[2] Otto Basil, *Wenn das Führer wüßte* (Munich: Molden, 1966) (Vienna: Milena, 2010).

[3] Jon Blistein, "Neo-Nazis Tricked into Raising Thousands for Anti-Extremism Charity," *Rolling Stone*, November 18, 2014, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/neo-nazis-tricked-into-raising-thousands-for-anti-extremism-charity–20141118 [accessed February 12, 2018].

Figure 1.1: "If only the Führer knew!" Banner flown during the marches in Wunsiedel, Bavaria in 2017. © Rechts gegen Rechts.

to a situation that, for years, had been a local source of tension.[4] Yet the Rechts gegen Rechts action can also be considered as a form of public performance that borders on art. Seen in this light, it is also an example in a long-standing tradition of using media culture and art as political weapons, tools wielded powerfully against fascism by myriad artists like John Heartfield in his photomontage *Adolf the Superman Eats Gold and Spouts Junk* (1932), Max Beckmann in his painting *Birds' Hell* (1938), Charlie Chaplin, with his daring 1940 Hitler spoof *The Great Dictator*, and Walt Disney Productions' 1943 pro-US animated short, *Der Fuehrer's Face*, which, improbably, starred Donald Duck. While artistic interventions may not eliminate offensive political groups or politicians, they help diffuse tensions and raise awareness, and they may also increase participation from people who are reluctant to engage in overt political demonstrations but wish to have their resistance and opposition recognized.

The marches in Bavaria are symptomatic of what appears as a stark, worldwide lurch to the right that has seen the election of right-wing populists such as Rodrego Duterte in the Philippines and Donald Trump in the United States, and center-right politicians like Norway's Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, collaborating with that country's far-right

[4] Elena Cresci, "German Town Tricks Neo-Nazis into Raising Thousands for Charity," *The Guardian*, November 18, 2014. Rechts gegen Rechts is now an annual event that has spread to other European countries: http://rechts-gegen-rechts.de/ [accessed February 14, 2018].

"Progress" party. Shortly after Britons marginally voted to leave the great experiment of the European Union with "Brexit" in 2016—a move fueled in part by anti-immigrant and nativist sentiments—the far-right Austrian Freedom Party won more than twenty-six percent of the votes in that country's 2017 elections, and the anti-immigrant and radically homophobic Jobbik party continued to make news as Hungary's third largest. Only one year later, *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD, Alternative for Germany)—with its platform of thinly veiled Neo-Nazism—entered the national parliament for the first time, with record results and over twelve percent of the seats, making it the third largest party. Both France and the Netherlands likewise have recently witnessed serious leadership challenges from their right-wing parties, *Le Front National* (FN, The National Front) and *De Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV, The Party for Freedom). While they are located in countries that have very different cultural and political traditions, these candidates and parties share a nationalist, anti-immigrant, and populist approach that seems to have growing appeal. Citizens, politicians, and academics on the left have been reeling as they wonder why what used to be fringe beliefs—seeming relics of a politically backward past that would soon die out—are instead gaining currency. And while the trend is global, the turn of events is perhaps most disturbing in Germany, given its dramatic history; it began the twentieth century as a monarchy, but after the First World War turned quickly to a lively experiment in democracy, which was cut short by the rise of National Socialism. Once Germany was again defeated in the Second World War, the period of the Cold War saw the country split into the German Democratic Republic, a member of the Eastern Bloc that was wholly dominated by the Soviet Union, and the Federal Republic of Germany, democratic and capitalist, yet with barely-concealed ties to the Nazi past.[5]

Resistance

"Resistance" is a now oft-used term across disciplines including sociology, political science, German history, art theory, and art history, yet scholars share little consensus on its meaning, which makes it difficult to construct an analytical framework for its use. In spite of the lack of consensus, political scientists, sociologists, and historians still have a more developed vocabulary of resistance than historians of art, architecture, film, and media culture, so it is helpful to look to their literature first.

Scholar of political resistance James C. Scott offers a simple but incisive definition of resistance as one way people respond when they feel oppressed by the more powerful in society.[6] Scott sees at least two types of resistance: what he calls "everyday resistance," which is informal and often spontaneous, and resistance that is organized, formal

[5] While there is extensive scholarly literature on each of these historical periods, a nuanced overview is available in: Mary Fullbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015).

[6] See James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xv–xxiii and James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

political activity. Both forms of resistance attempt to register disagreement with public policies or particular politicians. In addition, resistance can occur at the individual level or in groups.[7] In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* Scott distinguished between public acts of resistance that are easily recognizable, and covert acts that are private critiques of power made in political contexts where criticism and resistance cannot be expressed in public because the oppressed group lacks political power. These categories of resistance—spontaneous vs. organized, individual vs. group, and public vs. covert—are of particular use in analyzing Germany's National Socialist period, when overt resistance was often difficult if not impossible. Lastly, Scott identified three qualities that many acts of resistance share, including creative works made with resistant intent: a response to injustice; an engagement in an "ideological struggle"; and a reaction against the "appropriation of symbols" in a way that rankles.[8]

Political scientists and sociologists have other important tools for distinguishing types of resistance, namely as either violent or non-violent, the latter also referred to as "civil resistance." The sociologist Kurt Schock defines resistance as "the sustained use of methods of nonviolent action" and "non-routine political acts" against oppression and injustice.[9] And according to Erica Chenoweth and Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, non-violent methods can include protests, marches, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations that are "outside the defined and accepted channels for political participation defined by the state" including forms of artistic expression.[10]

As several scholars in sociology have revealed, dissident culture appears when power relationships are out of balance; when those in positions of political, economic, and social power abuse the public trust in some way. This can include economic policies that seem to favor the rich over the poor; situations of repeated indiscriminate police violence; conditions of unchecked racial tensions stoked by the government; and circumstances of perceived inequities in public amenities, social programs, and opportunity, to name just a few factors that provoke resistant action. As sociologists Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner assert, resistance always describes directed action of some kind and embodies oppositional intent. It is "expressive behavior that inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or prevents alternatives to cultural codes."[11] Expressions of resistance can take many forms; everyday resistance can range from foot dragging to throwing a spanner wrench in machine works, or from marching in the streets to spraying graffiti on urban surfaces. It can involve online actions like tweeting opinions and images, posting material on Facebook and Instagram, and signing and sharing online petitions. In the arts, resistant activities can range from

7 Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale, 1977).

8 Scott, *Weapons*, xvii.

9 Kurt Schock, "The Practice and Study of Civil Resistance," *Journal of Peace Research*, 50: 3 (2013), 277.

10 Erica Chenoweth and Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, "Understanding Nonviolent Resistance: An Introduction," *Journal of Peace Research*, 50:3 (2013), 271.

11 Victoria L. Pitts, "Reclaiming the Female Body: Embodied Identity Work, Resistance and the Grotesque," *Body ad Society*, 4:67, cited in: Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," *Sociological Forum*, 19:4 (2004), 538.

creating slogan-bearing posters to found-text collages, from composing silent performance art to catchy songs, from writing poetry to painting, from building installations to shooting film; in short, any medium can become the vehicle for a message of resistance if deployed with oppositional intent.[12]

Hollander and Einwohner also identify intent and visibility as critical elements in the sociological literature on resistance. Resistance has two different audiences: "targets (i.e. those to whom the act is directed) and other observers (who may include onlookers at the time of the resistance, the general public, members of the media, and researchers)."[13] Early scholarship on resistance, which focused on large-scale protest movements and revolutions whose members confront their targets directly and openly, took for granted that resistance is visible and easily recognized as resistance.[14] Yet the everyday resistance that James Scott studied from his political science point of view, and in fact much of cultural resistance, is often quietly subversive and largely invisible except to those in the know. Scholars debate whether visibility and recognition are necessary to classify an act as resistant. Here, intent plays a role; if an action was meant to be resistant but was not recognized as such by its target audience or by others, some scholars like Scott still accept it as resistant; for them, some forms of quiet resistance are intentionally concealed but might still have a subtle impact, like stealing from an employer as retaliation for substandard wages, thus, a quiet mode of resisting the power structure of an entrenched class system.

For over sixty years, historians have debated the meaning of "resistance" in a particularly nuanced conversation in relationship to the National Socialist regime, in which they have debated whether or not resistance was even possible for Jews and non-Jewish Germans and, if it was, what it looked like under those particular conditions of extreme pressure.[15] Many of the leading figures writing on German history contributed to this long tradition of resistance studies, including Hans Mommsen, Martin Broszat, Ian Kershaw, and Detlev Peukert.[16] Like their colleagues in political science and sociology, they considered power relationships, violent and non-violent actions, and visibility of actions and intent, but the special circumstances of the Third Reich and Holocaust have added dimensions to their discourse, particularly in relation to the

[12] Hollander and Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," 533–54.

[13] Hollander and Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," 541.

[14] Hollander and Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," 539.

[15] Martyn Housden, *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002) 160–99; Michael Geyer and John W. Boyer, "Introduction: Resistance against the Third Reich as Intercultural Knowledge," *The Journal of Modern History*, 64, Supplement, *Resistance Against the Third Reich* (1992), 1–7; Alf Lüdtke, "The Appeal of Exterminating 'Others': German Workers and the Limits of Resistance," *The Journal of Modern History*, 64, Supplement, *Resistance Against the Third Reich* (1992), 46–67.

[16] Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale, 1989); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Martin Broszat, "A Social and Historical Typography of the German Opposition to Hitler," ed. David Clay Large, *Contending with Hitler: Voices of Resistance in the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Hans Mommsen, "Resistance against Hitler and German Society," in *From Weimar to Auschwitz: Essays in German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) 208–23.

question of what constitutes resistance within the Nazi context, the moral implications of specific types of action, and potential risks or consequences for a resister. Since overt opposition to the regime was extremely dangerous, much resistance was covert and relatively small in scale, although Jews in the Warsaw ghetto did mount a relatively large armed resistance in 1943.[17] Resistance also took myriad forms, including individual and group activities, planned and spontaneous actions, small-scale subversions—such as the postcard protests Peter Chametzky discusses in this volume—and complicated plots, like attempts to assassinate Hitler. These debates make clear how difficult it is to define resistance in a narrow way. And because so many who resisted either subsequently fled Germany or did not survive the Nazi period, ensuing political resistance in Germany often drew on models from outside of the country, even as those activists were, in part, still struggling with the Nazi past that was all around them but largely suppressed in favor of a narrative privileging the "Wirtschaftswunder"—the economic miracle of a country that rebuilt itself to become a capitalist powerhouse.[18] Debates in German history also chart how essential the subject of resistance is to Germany past and present, and they underscore the rich and varied types of resistance that exist and can be implemented across different media, including the arts.

Turning to the question of cultural production, the definitions and debates from the fields of political science, sociology, and history give structure to considering art as resistant. Yet cultural production also has its own specific properties. For example, while intent can be debated in many realms, the question of intent is less contentious in the arts than in other areas, since art is always intentional. Art today has a very broad range—it encompasses traditional media like drawing, painting, and print making and newer media like photography, collage, and film, high art like opera, ballet, and classical music as well as popular art like posters, cartoons, memes, and advertising. Resistance can, and has, been incorporated into every artistic medium conceivable.

What Can Art Do?

Political activism in Germany has long been abetted by artistic production. Art can be used as an instrument of political activism to provoke a response in the body politic, register a protest, or resist or attempt to change unwanted policies and opinions. Since dissident culture appears when power relationships are out of balance, when those in

[17] There were numerous smaller Jewish ghetto uprisings in Vilna, Mir, and Lachva, to name just three, but none as large as the one in Warsaw. There was also resistance in the concentration camps. For example, see James M. Glass, *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Conference on Manifestations of Jewish Resistance*, Jerusalem April 7–11, 1968 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1971); Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland, 1942–1944* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984); and Joseph Rudavsky, *To Live with Hope, to die with Dignity: Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997).

[18] On all of these points, see Charity Scribner's "Buildings on Fire: The Situationist International and the Red Army Faction," *Gray Room* 26 (2007).

positions of political and social power abuse the public trust in some way, art—with its powers of multivalent communication and opportunities for double-speak—becomes an ideal instrument with which to challenge existing mechanisms of power and cultural dominance. As art historian Ariane Della Dea points out, "Art condenses meaning and demands and draws supporters to the cause through metaphors for and depictions of oppression or the oppressor."[19] This property is part of art's potency as a tool; it allows artists to embed many levels of meaning in a single work, including meanings the artist might later disavow. It thus provides cover against potential persecution in certain instances, and it allows viewers to choose their level of engagement and understanding.

There are four primary ways that artistic resistance can operate.[20] First, artists can make objects that help us see the world in new ways—that literally alter our *Weltanschauung* or world view. They do so through framing devices that alter viewer perceptions or through commentary that calls our attention to aspects of a situation or event that we may not have considered before. A second type of resistant art has the potential to inspire people to organize and to act. Third, artistic resistance can also itself function as political resistance when it critiques a set of accepted conventional cultural symbols and meanings. Fourth and last, art-making can be a form of political resistance in and of itself. Of course, resistant art often performs multiple functions simultaneously; nevertheless, these four categories are a useful way of evaluating differences and similarities in artistic strategies of resistance.

The confluence of Germany's charged political landscape since the early twentieth century, a period known for its deep national veneration for the arts, culture, and intellectual pursuits, makes Germany rich in examples of artistic resistance. Berlin in particular has been the site for many activist protests and installations, and for the production and exhibition of resistant art of all kinds. Its status as the capital city before 1945 and since 1990, its location as ground zero of divided Germany during the Cold War, and its status as Germany's center for experimental culture for nearly the entirety of the past hundred years—with the exception of the Nazi period, during which culture was regulated and weaponized—has made Berlin an obvious site for political activists of all kinds.

Tracing a range of types of artistic resistance created during disparate time periods and in a range of locations allows us to illustrate the breadth and depth of work made in Germany, work that makes the subject of this volume so compelling to students and scholars of culture both inside and beyond Germany. In the rest of this essay, we will explore examples of the four ways that art can resist: art that alters viewers' worldview; art that intends to inspire action; art that critiques conventional symbols; and art that is forged in the act of resisting itself.

[19] Ariane Della Dea, "Representation of Resistance in Latin American Art," *Latin American Perspectives*, 39:3, (2012), 6.

[20] We are indebted to Stephen Duncombe for his insights here. Duncombe wrote about "cultural resistance" more broadly but his categories apply to art as well. See Stephen Duncombe, "Introduction," *Cultural Resistance Reader* (London: Verso, 2002), 5–7.

Art that Alters Worldview

There are many instances of art created in order to provide a different, or corrected, view of the world as a means of political resistance. Two examples from very different moments in German history illustrate the range of such work: Georg Grosz's art from the 1920s exposed the depravity of the Weimar Republic's politicians and the struggles of everyday Germans in post-World War One Germany; by contrast, Josephine Meckseper uses contemporary art installations and photography to critique and resist the neoliberal order.[21]

Born Georg Ehrenfried Gross, the artist Anglicized his first name to "George" and changed his last name to "Grosz" shortly before his friend Helmut Herzfeld became John Heartfield; both were protesting the nationalism that they experienced in the First World War, in which they served. Grosz's many lithographs, paintings, and pen and ink drawings, sometimes embellished with watercolor, showed brutally honest aspects of the war's aftermath to his countrymen, who were largely shielded from the true state of things. Although some critics and historians refer to Grosz's work as satire, others recognize its utter seriousness as social critique.[22] Grosz wrote of the situation in Germany after the First World War, "All moral codes were abandoned. A wave of vice, pornography, and prostitution enveloped the whole country. . . . The streets became ravines of manslaughter and cocaine traffic, marked by steel rods and bloody, broken chair legs."[23]

Works like Grosz's 1922/3 folio of eighty-four offset lithographs and twenty-six watercolors titled *Ecce Homo* epitomizes his approach. The name means "Behold the Man," an ironic commentary on the subjects of Grosz's images, which show the worst sides of humanity, a subject rarely shown in art—the things we normally wish to avoid beholding. The name is also a traditional subject in Christian art, where Jesus Christ is shown as mocked prior to his crucifixion, and he is often shown wearing the crown of thorns. By referring both to Christian iconography and his own contemporaries, Grosz casts both church doctrine and his contemporaries in an unflattering light by sarcastically portraying the very human vices Jesus supposedly died to redeem. Plate XVI is a watercolor from the series that pictures a group of urban figures, rendered in line work and bright colors (Figure 1.2).

[21] Liam Gillick, "Josephine Meckseper," *Interview*, November 21, 2008, https://www.interviewmagazine.com/music/josephine-meckseper [accessed February 16, 2018] and Barbara McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party: Art and Radicalism in Crisis, 1918–1936* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[22] George Grosz, *George Grosz: An Autobiography*, trans. Nora Hodges (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and McCloskey, *George Grosz and the Communist Party*, esp. Chapter 1, "War and Radicalization, 1914 to 1918" (11–47), and Chapter 2, "Dada and Communist Revolution, 1919 to 1923" (48–103); and Wendy Maxon, *The Body Disassembled: World War I and the Body in German Art 1914–1933*, diss. University of California, San Diego, 2002.

[23] Grosz, *Georg Grosz*, 119.

Figure 1.2: George Grosz, "Print XVI," *Ecce Homo*, 1922/23. Offset lithograph, 10.4 × 7.9 in., 26.4 × 20 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Estate of George Grosz, Princeton, NJ / VG Bild-Kunst. Copyright Agency, 2018.

Using a technique almost akin to collage, Grosz superimposes partial images of six figures onto a fractured urban architecture that suggests the broken society he portrays. The figures are types that populated many of his interwar images: a crippled, unshaven, blind man, dressed like a proletarian; a strutting officer in decorated full regalia; two smoking businessmen—one who looks positively sinister and another who seems self-satisfied; and a woman—likely a prostitute who may have the start of venereal disease—in a fashionable hat with crooked teeth and her eyes rolled back into her head to form a frightening expression. Emerging from the unclear mist at the composition's center is

the faint outline of a man who appears to be in a military coat and the Pickelhaube, the helmet German soldiers wore in the First World War. Grosz has collapsed perspective in a way that eliminates spatial and, by implication, social hierarchy. The two most respectable looking of his subjects are the soldier and the beggar; their more serene profiles tie them together and suggest that the apparent distance between the economically fortunate and unfortunate, as well as the politically powerful and the disenfranchised, may not be so great. This cautionary political message is aimed at both the average German and the elites, who Grosz believed were abdicating their constitutional obligations to the people. By speaking truth to power, Grosz hoped to raise awareness of the plight of many of his fellow citizens.

Josephine Meckseper takes a very different approach to Grosz, by directly engaging the political system and revealing it and historical events in a new light. In 1998, the artist mounted an unsuccessful bid for a Senate seat in the United States, not because she expected to win, but in order to make a statement about the nature of contemporary politics. As John Reed asserted, Meckseper's "qualifications" for office included having "two grandfathers in the SS, an uncle who was a radical leftist and member of the West German communist party, and an aunt who at 16 became involved with the ill-fated Baader-Meinhof gang."[24] The run for Senate was intended to change notions of who should have political power; instead of the typical white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant man, she presented a white, German-born immigrant woman who was an artist.

Meckseper's work inserts itself in the space between the political right and left in order to alter perceptions of the political landscape. According to Meckseper, "Artists face the obvious accusation of elitism. The fundamental principle of my work is that it critiques capitalism in very specific ways. . . . Instead of 'aestheticizing' political issues, I try to change perspectives."[25] The bid for office was part of a larger project in which she also staged photographic images of political protest and counterculture to re-frame how these function in contemporary society (Figure 1.3).

In the photographs, such as *RAF Tray* (Red Army Faction Tray), in which she inserts herself into an historical image of her aunt who was close friends with Ulrike Meinhof, co-founder of the Baader-Meinhof terrorist group, Meckseper shows protest culture as a form of youth fashion.[26] Meckseper's aunt sits in the foreground, a stunning blonde woman dressed in a black evening gown; Meckseper stands behind, dressed in a low-cut, sparkling, black, sequined dress. Meckseper offers her aunt a silver tray with a matchbox that has the RAF logo on it, literally tempting her with fire.[27] The curls of smoke behind the women recall the early RAF actions—bombings of the Frankfurt Kaufhof and Schneider department stores in 1968. The RAF initially sought to attack what it saw as the abhorrent capitalist culture in 1960s and 1970s West Germany in

[24] John Reed, "Josephine Meckseper," *Bomb*, 84, July 1, 2003, https://bombmagazine.org/articles/josephine-meckseper–1 [accessed February 16, 2018].
[25] Reed, "Josephine Meckseper."
[26] Pamela M. Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012) 136.
[27] Scribner, "Buildings on Fire," 35.