

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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LECTURE ON ART UNDER THE DICTATORSHIPS

TO BE GIVEN BY ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

An informal narrative lecture, "Art Under the Soviet and Nazi Dictatorships," including many personal experiences and observations, will be given by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., on December 10 at 8:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street. A large number of slides, collected by Mr. Barr from various countries over the past 25 years, will show not only the art which the dictators suppressed but also the art they encouraged and approved.

Mr. Barr will begin with his own first-hand recollections of the Nazi revolution and its effect upon the artists and architects he knew in a typical German city. He will describe how modern artists were pilloried by the Nazis and denounced by their academic rivals, how their exhibitions were closed, their teaching positions lost and their works thrown out of museums and sold abroad. Modern architecture, too, was suppressed along with the Bauhaus school.

Hitler, himself a disappointed academic painter, insisted upon painstaking realism or pompous neo-classicism. His favorite subjects were German landscapes, wrinkled peasants, blonde nudes, Brown Shirt troopers and his own portrait. Mr. Barr will give highlights of the huge Haus der Kunst exhibitions in Munich from 1937 to the last one in the spring of 1944, and of the auction of "degenerate" works of art, many of which are now prized by American museums and collectors. Nazi art, however, is as dead today as the Nazi regime. It inspired little emulation abroad.

In the U.S.S.R., much earlier than in Nazi Germany, the political leaders imposed their tastes and prejudices in art upon independent artists. In both totalitarian countries the suppression of modern art was abetted by academic artists and met with the approval of large sections of the public untrained in art and unconcerned with freedom.

However, in Soviet Russia for the first two or three years after the October Revolution modern art was given free play. Such artists as the abstract painter Kandinsky made great efforts to

spread art education throughout the country. Nevertheless, Lenin felt that the energy of artists must be subject to the interests of the new state. One by one, between 1920 and 1922, such major artists as Chagall, Gabo, Kandinsky, went into exile and the schools of modern art were padlocked or taken over by academic artists. Abstract and expressionist Russian art was eliminated from the museums.

The official pressures brought to bear not only on painting but also on the theatre and movies will be described from observations made by Mr. Barr on a trip to the U.S.S.R. in 1928 when he noted the reluctance of artists to show their abstract work to anyone, the censorship of films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, the latent atmosphere of anxiety in the studios.

By 1930 successful Soviet painters and sculptors were using subject matter and a realistic style calculated to make an immediate appeal both to the commissars and the great masses of people. Elaborate scenes of the revolution and the civil wars, of the political and military heroes of the Soviet regime were accompanied in the late thirties by scenes of Russia's military past. Soviet industry and agriculture were celebrated and regional or class types portrayed. Portraits of Communist leaders, especially Stalin and Lenin, were painted or modeled by the hundreds. Deviations from "Socialist Realism," a dogma proclaimed in 1932, were ordinarily condemned and the artists disciplined. Conforming artists, however, were honored and well paid.

In 1947, after the period of comparative good will between Russia and the West, the Communist leaders in foreign countries were instructed to enforce the tenets of Socialist Realism. Some striking contrasts between the work of foreign artists, particularly in Italy and France, before and after this high pressure proselytizing will be shown in slides. Mr. Barr will also show works owned by the now barred Museum of Modern Western Art in Moscow, the greatest collection in the world of French paintings from the early years of this century. Cézannes, van Goghs, Matisses can no longer be seen and even the work of Picasso, a Communist Party member since 1944, is anathema to Pravda and the Soviet authorities.

Tickets available at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street
Members \$1.50; non-members \$2.00