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Martin Schieder. *Expansion/Integration: Die Kunstausstellungen der französischen Besatzung im Nachkriegsdeutschland.* München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2004. 120 S. EUR 14.80 (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-422-06414-0.

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"No Other Ally Could Set Up Something Comparable": French Cultural Radiance Across the Rhine, 1945-1950

This sylph of a book opens with a telling anecdote about a 1948 exhibit at Freiburg's Institut FranÃ§ais, where ninety French prints–a gift from the occupation government to the Karlsruher Kunsthalle–were on display. Whereas the walls filled with French art revealed a new openness to modern art in Germany after twelve years of banishment from the public eye, the French were not yet ready to display the art of the German *Erbfeind*. At the same event, the Germans offered a token of appreciation to the relatively new MusÃ©e National d'Art Moderne. This Willi Baumeister painting has remained in storage in Paris ever since.

Just shy of one hundred pages before notes, Schieder's slim volume on art exhibits in the French Zone of Occupation is yet further proof of the value of the extended essay, common enough among European publishers, but sorely neglected in the United States. The format allows Schieder to use small details of the postwar art scene in the French Zone to tunnel outward and evoke larger themes. The example of the Freiburg exhibit points to the French strategy of cultural expansion as a substitute for France's faded diplomatic consequence in the aftermath of the Second World War, to French resistance to German culture, and to postwar German receptivity to French and indeed European culture as a means to gain distance from a *Blut-und-Boden*-based mentality. In addition, the essay contends with Germany's relation to modernism, the culture of occupation, the policy of reeducation, and Franco-German relations more broadly.

The title refers to what Schieder sees as the twin–if often competing–aims of French cultural policy in occupied Germany: French cultural expansion beyond the Hexagon and the integration of Germany into the democratic community of European nations. This was, in short, a strategy of dominance, taming, and seduction. Schieder argues that the tension between expansion and integration within the fine arts bureau reflected the broader political aims of the French administration. But he equally makes clear that culture needs to be taken seriously as an aspect of occupation policy.[1] For Schieder, cultural policies yielded important consequences in bilateral relations. By 1950, he suggests, French cultural

policy tilted more heavily toward integration and away from expansion. In this way, an evolution in French cultural policy helped bring about understanding between the two enemies of old. Schieder thus offers a positive assessment of French occupation politics.[2]

Schieder deploys the notion of French radiance (*rayonnement culturel*) to elucidate the French version of reeducation. French occupiers believed they could effectively combat Nazi groupthink by showing Germans the genius and variety of French art. Through the vehicle of modern art, exhibitions promoted freedom of expression and championed Enlightenment notions (most often understood as French in origin) of human potential; the French thereby once again exported ideologies of liberty and democracy across the Rhine. It could be profitable to push this line of thought further by examining all expositions in the French Zone, including the "historisch-dokumentarischen Austellungen" put on by the Direction de l'Information (i.e. photographs of the camps, an exhibit on 1848) in addition to those sponsored by the Service des Beaux Arts. Such comparisons would help reveal even more about French efforts of reeducation; moreover, they would shed light on the French attempt to resurrect the "good," cosmopolitan side of German *Kultur*,[3] a theme that here goes unexplored.

Schieder contemplates the comparison of occupations both diachronically and synchronically. First, he frequently contrasts post-1945 cultural policies to those during the interwar French occupation of the Rhineland, which he finds to have been less interested in reciprocal understanding. Despite some near-identical exhibits and similar rhetoric surrounding the shows of the two periods, he finds the French interacting with Germany in a new way after the Second World War. Notably, rather than simply imposing French culture on the German masses (what he calls "French cultural imperialism"), a new and growing emphasis on German contributions took into account the spirit of *VolkerverstÃ¤ndigung* . As a concession to the Germans, the French deigned to display German art; they thereby hoped to elude accusations of French "kulturelle HegemonialansprÃ¼che" and "einseitige Kulturpropaganda" (pp. 48-49). Second, the author draws comparisons to the other Allied occupiers of postwar Germany (especially Britain and the United States), who, according to Schieder, offered lesser artistic programs. The French government, he argues, aimed to impress not only the occupied but also its fellow occupiers. Therefore, exhibits in the French Zone often toured through all the western zones, which further extended France's reach into Germany.

According to the author, by approximately 1950, the French ended their pretensions of *rayonnement culturel*, gave the Germans more leeway in planning their own exhibits, and introduced more abstract art to Germany as well as German art to France. Schieder would do well to place such changes within the broader context of widespread budgetary cuts within the French administration as well as the structural changes in its administration accompanying the foundation of the Federal Republic (he does place them in the context of growing interest in the idea of Europe). If it is clear that multiple shifts ensued after 1949/50 in the arts, such shifts were the result of grander transformations in the Alled occupiers' relationships to the new nation.

The most illuminating sections of the book revolve around ideas of reception, first in terms of how the French imagined Germans would perceive modern art, and second in terms of how the German viewing public itself described the art on display. Exhibit organizers believed Germans first needed to be schooled in the modern canon to be able to make the jump to appreciate contemporary abstraction. Having missed twelve years of artistic developments in the modern movement, and worse yet, having learned to equate modern art with degeneracy, Germans needed–it was assumed–to be eased into the shock of the new. Instead of contemporary abstraction, relatively new, representational art was the order of the day, whether portraits of women by Picasso and Matisse or still-lifes by CÃ©zanne and Braque. The French government and many German art critics agreed that art was best interpreted through a chronological framework, which meant that the so-called degenerate art had to be "rehabilitated" before Germans could come to appreciate any postwar oeuvres.

This type of exhibition in turn led to charges of didacticism on the part of the French. Some German critics voiced suspicions about state-sponsored culture after so many years of indoctrination. Nonetheless, and despite the myriad difficulties of travel and limited spending money for such luxuries, these exhibits were popular. Press reviews and attendance statistics indicate that Germans wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to see modern art. In a riveting, indeed, moving section of the book, Schieder briefly cites the testimony of students at the "Meister franzÃ¶sischer Malerei der Gegenwart" exhibit. Most projected their personal experiences onto the paintings, as did one who discussed cubism as follows: "Innerlich hat uns aber dieses Erleben [des Krieges] alle irgendwo sehr verwundet, zerbrochen, geknickt, und wir sind eigentlich so, wie uns diese Maler sehen" (pp. 72-

74). Here, a more protracted discussion of the various youths' expressions about martyrdom/renewal, dissolution/wholeness, and hopelessness/solace could help layer our understanding of postwar German mentalities and perhaps even of the effectiveness of reeducation efforts.

Schieder bemoans the fact that he is the first art historian to examine the French occupation and its archives, though he duly acknowledges that historians such as Corine DeFrance and Stefan Zauner have carefully explored the French cultural administration during the Occupation. It is, in this sense, a disappointment that Schieder deals only intermittently with art *qua* art. Schieder's essay centers on French official exhibition policy and German reception–and is at heart about *Kulturtransfer*. He asserts that neither the exhibits nor the art are his main focus because context matters, but the art itself–and how people talked about it–are central aspects of that context and deserve more attention. What sort of discussions among French officials characterized the decision to display particular modern artists beyond that they were not noted collaborators? Was, for example, the deeply rooted Catholicism of Rouault seen as a point of commonality between the French and the south Germans? Did organizers find it important to show the Germans art by Jews, or was Chagall's Jewishness immaterial to the planners?

Schieder effectively describes the exhibits themselves–how the paintings were juxtaposed, who coordinated them–but leaves open as many questions as he answers. Indeed, his work points to the many avenues for future research. This is both the primary drawback and tantalizing allure of the extended essay. In sketching out an evocative portrait of a particular time and place, Schieder has left the reader with many lines to pursue. Avec le manger, vient l'appÃ©tit.

Notes

[1]. For overviews of the JÃ©rome Vaillant-Rainer Hudemann debates on the role of French cultural policy in occupied Germany see Corine DeFrance, *La politique culturelle de la France sur la rive gauche du Rhin 1945-1955* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1994), pp. 22-23; Stefan Zauner, _Erziehung und Kulturmission: Frankreichs Bildungspolitik in Deutschland 1945-1949. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1994), pp. 9-18.

[2]. This is in contrast to the common, older verdict that the French were particularly vengeful (via requisitions, the animus against German centralization, etc.) and that cultural offerings provided a "facade" to cover up such abuses. See Theodor Eschenburg, *Jahre der Besatzung 1945-1949* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983).

[3]. See, for example, Das hohe Kommissariat der franzÃ¶sischen Republik in Deutschland, Direction GÃ©nÃ©rale des Affaires Culturelles, *Goethe und Frankreich, 1749-1949. Zur ZweihundertjÃ¤hrigen Wiederkehr von Goethes Geburt veranstaltete Ausstellung* (Offenburg: Franz Burda, 1949).

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