

**Aspects of Inner Emigration in Hannah Höch**  
**1933 – 1945**

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## Abstract

The Third Reich is still a sore point in German history and in many areas it is still rarely dealt with. This also applies to many artists who did not flee Nazi Germany but are known as artists of the “inner emigration” such as the German artist Hannah Höch. The dissertation closes this gap in the reception of Hannah Höch by analyzing and reviewing this “dark period” from 1933 to 1945.

In public perception the “inner emigration” of artists is a very controversial theme that went from total ignorance of the fact to denial and accusations of corruption to an idealization as the only true resistance. The essay illustrates Hannah Höch’s personal path into inner emigration and shows how she survived between opposition and conformity. Using public records in addition to diaries and personal statements, it clears up some common misconceptions.

### **Declaration**

This is substantially my own work and where reference has been made to other research, this has been acknowledged in the references and bibliography.

Monika Wenke, MAS, January 2010

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# I. Introduction

The German artist Hannah Höch is widely known for her Dada period, for the invention of the photomontage and for being the only woman in Dada Berlin. Even though Dada was undoubtedly an important and formative time in her career, she went on to follow a rather independent course in her work, which appears to have been difficult to handle for art history and only in recent years finds its way to final acknowledgement. Especially one period is still missing in order to be able to appreciate the whole oeuvre of Hannah Höch and the times that made her into the artist she was: the Third Reich and the period of inner emigration. It is not that Hannah Höch's inner emigration is not widely accepted and it is mentioned in many publications as a catch phrase<sup>1</sup>, but it has hardly ever been analysed. The present dissertation shall try to close this gap. Especially, about the war years little is known about the artist who always was a person very interested in society and societal changes. This can be seen all throughout her work from her earlier Dada photomontages depicting the *High Finance* (Fig. 1) in 1923 or Mussolini banned by Asta Nielsen in the painting *Roma* (Fig. 2) in 1925 to photomontages about the men who landed on the moon (Fig. 3) in 1969. Common perception and most literature suggest that Hannah Höch was banned from exhibiting and probably even from working during the Third

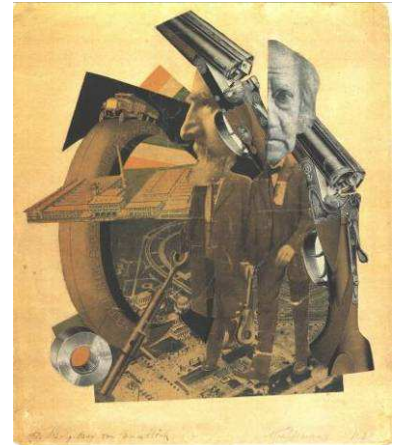


Fig. 1: *High Finance*, 1923, Galerie Berinson, Berlin



Fig. 2: *Roma*, 1925, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

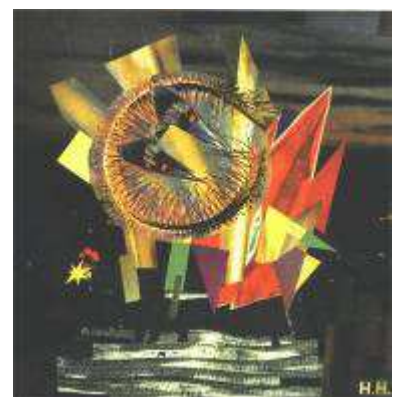


Fig. 3: *To the Men that conquered the Moon*, 1969, Carlberg Hofheim

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<sup>1</sup> Lanchner, C., 'Later Adventures of Dada's "Good Girl"', in *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, Walker Art Centre (ed.) (Minneapolis, 1997), pp.133-138  
or Ellen Maurer, *Hannah Höch - Jenseits fester Grenzen*, Berlin 1995, pp.36-43

Reich.<sup>2</sup> But is this even true?

Writing a dissertation about a German artist during a very formative time in the history of the country, of which the fundamental changes still echo through time, to this day in Great Britain might seem strange to many people. Nevertheless, taking a short look into the German attitude in dealing with this particular time of recent history will answer these pressing questions of why now and why not in Germany.

To understand the “why now?” it is essential to take the demographic situation of the nation into consideration. Until a very short time ago most positions of power were still manned by a generation who, even though it would have been too young to have actively taken part in the war, still was very heavily and directly influenced by the war and its aftermath. Therefore an open and objective discussion of a topic concerning this “dark” era would have proven very difficult as it would have vividly reminded many of possible personal failings and shortcomings.

The latter point of why not in Germany is essentially a further extension of the argument above. Even though the generation that witnessed and participated in the war is slowly waning their ideological shadows are still looming over the heads of the younger generation which is in this time attempting to shed these restraints. In the light of recent developments in Germany and assisted by the end of access restrictions to many documents of that time it will most likely be possible to reach an objective point of view into events during the Third Reich free from the constraints of the German post-traumatic social consciousness.

## **I.1. Methodology**

Art history in general and all the publications about Hannah Höch until now only relied on Höch’s diaries, her archive and interviews with her and more rarely with contemporary witnesses. This led to situations as described by her biographer Heinz Ohff who after weeks

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<sup>2</sup> W. Haftmann, *Verfemte Kunst*, (Cologne, 1986), p.265



and weeks of interviewing Hannah Höch accidentally found out that she was once married.<sup>3</sup> A fact she actively tried to hide by striking the name of her husband completely out of her memoir.

In addition to the documents from Hannah Höch's personal archive that many previous authors have used, this essay shall also have a closer look at official documents of the National Socialist regime and its cultural institutions. Furthermore it will incorporate the personalised files of the Third Reich about Hannah Höch, which up to this point have not found their way into public circulation.

The first part will try to define the elusive term „inner emigration“. In a second part the political reality of artists in the Third Reich will be taken under closer scrutiny. In light of those first two parts the essay will then take chronologically a closer look at the personal path of Hannah Höch into inner emigration.

## **I.2. The Term “Inner Emigration”**

The authorship of the term inner emigration is uncertain. Commonly it is attributed to Frank Thiess in a controversy with Thomas Mann in 1945. Thiess used the term in defence against the accusation of Thomas Mann suggesting that any literature produced within Nazi Germany should be destroyed. In his defence Thiess answered Thomas Mann's accusation with the statement that the inner emigrants

*„did not abandon their sick mother Germany. It was only natural [for us] to stay with her“.*<sup>4</sup>

Even though Thiess claimed to have coined the term already as early as the thirties, this is not proven. Despite the attribution of the term to Thiess, the concept was already widely known during the Third Reich as becomes obvious on the example of the artist Ernst Barlach who

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<sup>3</sup> Ohff, H., ‘Heiligensee’, in *Hannah Höch - Eine Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.1), E. Roters, H. Ohff (eds.) (Berlin, 1995), p.305

<sup>4</sup> T. Mann, F. Thiess, W. von Molo, *Ein Streitgespräch über die äußere und innere Emigration*, (Dortmund, 1946), p.3. All translations are my own if not stated otherwise.

claimed already in 1937:

„ (...) *to be forced to live the life of an emigrant in my own country* (...)“<sup>5</sup>

Due to the inherent subjective component of inner emigration it is very difficult to give an objective external definition of the concept. The idea is very much dependent on the public reception of the inner emigrant and the perception of the whole concept of inner emigration. Throughout the post-war period the perception of inner emigration has undergone dramatic changes. It swung from the accusation of idleness and even collaboration right to the glorification of inner emigrants as part of the active resistance<sup>6</sup>. In fact inner emigration is situated somewhere along the line between open opposition and conformity.

In the light of this often politically exploited discussion it becomes apparent that a generalised approach to the concept of inner emigration is insufficient. Therefore it is necessary, as Beate Marks-Hanßen already stated, to take the personal situation and circumstances of the individual artist into consideration in the determination of his/her status as an *inner emigrant*.<sup>7</sup>

## II. Political Reality

First evidence of the growing influence of the National Socialists occurred already in 1929, years before the seizure of power by Hitler. Wilhelm Frick, a National Socialist, was elected to the National Assembly of Thuringia and named Minister of Education. Under his ruling first works from Otto Dix, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky were removed from the castle museum in Weimar and Oskar Schlemmer's Bauhaus murals were destroyed.<sup>8</sup> Even though

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<sup>5</sup> E. Barlach, *Als ich vom Verbot der Berufsausübung betroffen war*, 1937

<sup>6</sup> Cp. B. Marks-Hanßen, *Innere Emigration? Verfehlmte Künstlerinnen und Künstler in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, (Berlin, 2006), pp20-30: after a period of negligence during the 1950s, followed an era of damnation in the 1960s, leading to the idealisation of inner emigration as active resistance during the 1980s.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p.248

<sup>8</sup> L.H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: the Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World*

after public protests<sup>9</sup> against these methods the communists called for a vote of confidence and subsequently Wilhelm Frick and his associates were removed from their posts in 1931, they were back soon and regained full power with the takeover of the National socialists in 1933.

Shortly after the appointment of Hitler as chancellor and after the burning of the *Reichstag*, the emergency decree for the protection of state and nation came into effect and the constitutional legality was abolished.

In order to facilitate the synchronisation of every aspect of German society the new government established a *Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda* under the leadership of Joseph Goebbels. Later in the year Joseph Goebbels instigated the creation of a *Reichskulturkammer* in order to control the artists.<sup>10</sup> Many unacceptable artists were removed from teaching positions under the *Act for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service* and the first exhibitions showcasing degenerate art were already established. In spite of that, National Socialist cultural policy did not have a clear position at first. Goebbels and the Reich youth leader Baldur von Schirach made an effort to establish Expressionism as national style while the NS-cultural community favoured an art in the tradition of the old masters.<sup>11</sup> In a ground breaking speech on cultural policy during the party congress of 1934, Hitler turned against the „art spoilers, the cubists, futurists, Dadaists and so on” and led the way to a pure Germanic art.<sup>12</sup> Hitler preached an art rooted in the blood and a national tradition but newly interpreted for the sake of the masses.<sup>13</sup> With his concept of a heroic *blood and soil* art and by demonizing modernism Hitler hit the nerve of his time – even an art interested audience had

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War, (New York, 1994), pp.8-9,10,11; von Maur, K., ‘Im Schatten der Diktatur – Zum Beispiel Oskar Schlemmer’, in *Zwischen Widerspruch und Anpassung*, Akademie der Künste (ed.), (Berlin, 1978), p.18; according to Karin von Maur the removal of the paintings and the destruction of Oskar Schlemmer's mural happened in October 1930.

<sup>9</sup> On the 21 December of 1931 there was a call for a combined protest against the rape of artistic freedom in the Rheinisch–Westphälischer Generalanzeiger signed by celebrated artists as Max Pechstein, Kurt Weil or Carl Zuckmayer.

<sup>10</sup> Reichskulturkammergesetz vom 22. September 1933, RGBI, p.661

<sup>11</sup> Marks-Hanßen, *Innere Emigration?*, p.48

<sup>12</sup> Hitler, Rede auf der Kulturtagung des Reichsparteitages im Appollotheater, Nürnberg, 5. September 1934

<sup>13</sup> Marks-Hanßen, *Innere Emigration?*, pp.49-50

turned away from the avant-garde already since the 1920s. Under the growing influence of a right wing press, modernism had been stigmatized with slogans like cultural bolshevism or decadence.<sup>14</sup>

The cultural boom proclaimed by Hitler did not arise and the situation did become more and more dismal after the Olympic Games in 1936. The modern department in the National Gallery in the Palais im Kronprinzenbau in Berlin was closed down and art criticism was forbidden in favour of linguistically controlled art reports. The following year the *First Big German Art Show* opened its doors in Munich and a day later the *Degenerate Art Show* came into being. The synthesis of both shows was supposed to suggest the success of the national cultural policy and help people to distinguish between good art and bad art.<sup>15</sup> While the *First Big German Art Show* did showcase popular art that was in line with the National Socialist doctrine, the *Degenerate Art Show* exhibited paintings that were classified as Jewish or cultural Bolshevik on the basis of the influential pamphlet of Wolfgang Willrich *Cleansing of the Temple of Art*.<sup>16</sup> The 650 works of art exhibited in the *Degenerate Art Show* were confiscated from museums and the show toured Germany until 1942.<sup>17</sup> Frustratingly to the organisers the exhibition was a success and Goebbels noted in his diary:

*“The exhibition Degenerate Art is a great success and a massive blow. The Führer is on my side against all hostility.”*<sup>18</sup>

While the artist Emil Nolde remembered that he received “*appreciative letters from friends of the arts*” after the exhibition.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> G. Bollenbeck, *Tradition. Avantgarde. Reaktion. Deutsche Kontroversen um die kulturelle Moderne 1880 – 1945*, (Frankfurt, 1999), pp.275ff. According to the author the expression cultural bolshevism was a central theme in the last years of Weimar Germany. The deprecatory term expresses the fear of Russian anarchy.

<sup>15</sup> Cp Marks-Hanßen, *Innere Emigration?* p.51

<sup>16</sup> W. Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels: eine Kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art*, (Munich, Berlin, 1937)

<sup>17</sup> Cp S. Barron, *'Degenerate Art:' The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, (New York, 1991)

<sup>18</sup> Goebbels, J., *Tagebücher, 1935-1939*, Ralph Georg Reuth (ed.) vol.3, (Munich/Zurich, 1992) p.1106

<sup>19</sup> E. Nolde, *Mein Leben*, (Cologne, 1976), p.392

The decree about the confiscation of degenerate art became effective in 1938 meaning that all confiscations from public and private museums became legal. Nevertheless, in sharp contrast to a wide spread belief, this did not mean that this law authorised confiscation of artworks from private collections without further condemning factors.<sup>20</sup> However this act opened the path to the selling of confiscated art works at auction in Luzern and culminated in the burning of “unusable” art works at the Berlin fire brigade headquarters in 1939. Drawing on the participation of the artists in the *Reichskulturkammer* in official exhibitions, competitions and commissions, the Regime tried to establish their cultural policy and commonly display its understanding of art.

## **II.1. Reichskulturkammer**

All artists were centralised in the Reichskulturkammer which replaced all former artistic associations, organisations and unions. The Reichskulturkammer, subdivided into seven independent chambers – one of which was the chamber of visual arts – should promote the arts and had responsibility for all economic and social affairs of the cultural professions.<sup>21</sup>

The independent single chambers of the Reichskulturkammer were organised as public corporations and did not get any state funding. Goebbels, whose Ministry of Propaganda the Reichskulturkammer was subordinate to, headed the latter as well.

All natural persons and juristic entities that were active in the production, distribution or reception of visual arts were pooled together in the Reichskulturkammer for visual arts. Membership was compulsory in order to be allowed to work but could be denied for certain reasons such as being foreign, being Jewish, being married to a Jew, not being willing to assimilate or even being unreliable. Expulsion due to unreliability could have occurred for failing to submit a certificate of Aryan descend, failing to notify the chamber of changes of address, failure to pay the membership fee<sup>22</sup> or any criminal records. All social security was

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<sup>20</sup> Gesetz über die Einziehung von Erzeugnissen entarteter Kunst vom 31. Mai 1938, RGBI, p.612

<sup>21</sup> Erste Durchführungsverordnung der Reichskulturkammer 1. November 1933 RGBI

<sup>22</sup> Since November 1934 the Reichskulturkammer charged a membership fee.

depending on the membership in the chamber of visual arts and was lost with expulsion.<sup>23</sup> Even worse for the people concerned was the total ban from profession that was connected with the exclusion and could be enforced by the Gestapo.

In the course of the consolidation of institutional powers the membership in the Reichskulturkammer for many artists came about automatically through the membership in other artist organisations. An important component for the incorporation procedure as well as for later controls was the detailed check of the artist. This meant a background check about political views and connections even prior to 1933<sup>24</sup> as well as proof of the professional qualification by submission of smaller original art works or photographs of bigger ones. The president of the Reichskulturkammer Joseph Goebbels was very sceptical about this practice for

*„Mankind is prone to the error, that short-sightedness, envy and jealousy may all too easily get an upcoming genius barred from the Chamber, but they cannot prevent a genius to carve its name into immortality.”<sup>25</sup>*

Even though Goebbels decreed twice that an evaluation of the artistic quality of a member or a candidate was illegal, artists were regularly asked to present recent works. This could have happened in order to evaluate their work due to various circumstances<sup>26</sup> or simply to incorporate them in the chambers database to arrange commissions.

In 1937 the chamber of visual arts of the Reichskulturkammer counted circa 100 000 members<sup>27</sup>, two years earlier at the annual conference it was already declared free of Jews.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Marks-Hanßen: *Innere Emigration?* p.80

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.69

<sup>25</sup> ‘Erlass des Präsidenten der Reichskulturkammer über das Verbot von Eignungsprüfungen’ cit. U. Faustmann, *Die Reichskulturkammer. Aufbau, Funktion und rechtliche Grundlagen einer Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts im nationalsozialistischen Regime*, (Aachen, 1995), p.98

<sup>26</sup> E.g. If they were filing applications for material support or journeys abroad. Marks-Hanßen suggests that they were probably asked for sample works too if they turned up in degenerate art exhibitions.

<sup>27</sup> Cp Frescot, Janos, ‘Zeittafel’, in *Zwischen Widerstand und Anpassung*, Akademie der Künste (ed.), (Berlin, 1978), p.82

<sup>28</sup> S. Friedländer, *Das dritte Reich und die Juden*, vol. 1: Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939, (New York,

Literature about National Socialist cultural policy and artist's biographies very often suggest that disagreeable or degenerate artists were subject to a general ban from exhibiting.

According to newer research this seems not to be entirely accurate: a general ban from exhibiting would only have occurred subsequently to a ban from profession.<sup>29</sup> Even though a general exhibition ban did not legally exist, it was, for certain artists, very difficult to exhibit their works and it was a very common procedure that exhibitions were impeded or closed by local officials. The *Reichskulturkammer* on the other hand did take action by banning certain, specific paintings officially from being exhibited.<sup>30</sup> The common misconception of a general ban from profession or at least a general exhibition ban for all “degenerate” artists and especially the artists of the inner emigration is closely connected with the artists themselves and their own statements after the war. A very typical example is the painter Ernst Wilhelm Nay who declared in an interview in 1958:

*(...) ground the colours myself, because I could not afford to buy them, and later on, since I was not registered as a painter, I was not allowed to buy them (...)*<sup>31</sup>

Nay's wife Elly depicted the situation in an even more dramatic way, stating that they were always afraid that somebody would see Nay painting and would report him to the Reichskulturkammer “*because of the painting ban*”.<sup>32</sup>

Even though Beate Marks-Hanßen in her book *Innere Emigration?* stated that Nay was actually a member of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts under the number M4519, the legend of his painting ban still lingers on. Marks-Hanßen found out that similar inconsistencies exist for various artists of the inner emigration.<sup>33</sup>

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2007), p.134

<sup>29</sup> Cp Marks-Hanßen, *Innere Emigration?* p.86

<sup>30</sup> Cp ibid p.86

<sup>31</sup> Nays records November/December 1958, cit. Nay, E.W. in exhibition Catalogue, (Cologne, Basel, Edinburgh, 1990), p.29

<sup>32</sup> W. Haftmann, *E. W. Nay*, (Cologne, 1960), p.52

<sup>33</sup> Cp Marks-Hanßen, *Innere Emigration?*, pp.80-81

This is only one example amongst many for a common misconception and inconsistency of the situation of artists in the Third Reich. It shows vividly that official documents of the time should be incorporated into research next to interviews with contemporary witnesses, newspapers and other documents.

One reason for the inconsistent account of artists about the inner emigration in later years may be found in the perception of the inner emigrants. Everybody who had stayed on in Germany during Hitler's dictatorship found him- or herself under the general suspicion of collaborating or even actively supporting the Regime.<sup>34</sup> This was especially true for artists who were supposed to fulfil a special role in the society promoting citizenship and freedom. These circumstances and probably the time span between the actual events and their account of them, may have led some people to a different perception of their own situation during the time of the Third Reich.

### **III. Hannah Höch's path into inner emigration**

In the same way as the assumption of power by the National Socialists, the changes in society and the full extent of the regime did not happen over night, the drifting of the artist Hannah Höch into inner exile happened gradually. Hannah Höch and her path into inner exile can not be understood without knowing about her life and her personal situation beginning before the Third Reich and finishing after the end of the National Socialist era.

A further problem in the treatment of Hannah Höch's gradual retreat into inner exile lies in the inherent style pluralism of the artist's work. This is a factor with which art history has struggled in the evaluation and classification of Hannah Höch as part of the artistic world throughout her career.<sup>35</sup> The tendency to work in more than one style at a time and also the pluralism of subjects under consideration makes a definitive positioning very difficult. She painted flowers at the same time as she created photomontages, took on symbolic themes

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<sup>34</sup> Cp ibid pp.29ff

<sup>35</sup> Merkert, J., "Wie eine Biene und der Mond" oder die Ganze Hannah Höch', in R. Burmeister (ed.), *Hannah Höch. Aller Anfang ist Dada*, (Berlin, 2007), p.140



about love and birth at the same time as she painted landscapes.

The Berlin Dadaist period was the first and very formative period for the young Hannah Höch. She was the only woman in the exclusive Dada club and maintained an artistically strong, yet destructive relationship with Raul Hausmann.



Fig. 4: Cut with the kitchen knife through the Weimarer Bierbauchkultur, 1919, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

The couple developed the technique of the photomontage together and influential works such as *Cut with the kitchen knife through the Weimarer Bierbauchkultur* (Fig. 4) derive from that time, as a good example for the fundamental use of photomontages as means of a highly socio-critical art form. Photomontages were ideal for political and socio-critical art since they were cut from actual newspapers and magazines as their basic building blocks.

After their separation in 1922 Hannah Höch formed strong artistic relationships with the European Avant-Garde. She was very good friends with Kurt Schwitters, Laslo Moholy-Nagy and Theo van Doesburg and knew Piet Mondrian, Hans Arp and many others. In 1926 Höch met the writer Till Brugmann during a trip to Holland. The two women became engaged in an intimate relationship and only returned to Berlin in November 1929. In Holland Höch had been able to establish her first solo exhibition and she was able to tie in with this success by participating in the mammoth *Film and Foto Exhibition* which travelled internationally to several cities throughout 1931. Privately she reconnected with her Berlin friends and colleagues, visited soirees at Arthur Segal's and saw Myona Friedländer, Adolf Behne and Georg Muche regularly. During 1931 she even renewed her friendship with Raoul Hausmann. Regardless of her seemingly successful career and personal contacts she stated later in life in an interview with Eduard Roditi:

*„From 1930 onwards I lived in growing isolation. During my stay in Holland, I had lost contact with the Berlin art world. When I came back to Germany the atmosphere for artistic*

*activities was not very favourable.*“<sup>36</sup>

Yet she participated in various exhibitions, joined the German League for Independent Film and the National Federation of Visual Artists of Germany.

Höch's photomontages of the early 1930s were increasingly political again and are reminiscent of the photomontages of the Dada period until 1921.<sup>37</sup> While even the photomontages from the late twenties very often had social components or referred to social questions, they hardly ever focused directly on politics and had even reached a more personal level depicting often the female role.<sup>38</sup>

Exceptions, and the only paintings with a clearly political implication in the mid 1920s, are the two oil paintings *Roma* (Fig. 2) and *The Journalists* (Fig. 5) from 1925. They play a special role in the oeuvre of Hannah Höch for even though they are painted in oil they use the principles of photomontages. In *The Journalists* six people are represented in front of a curtain-like background. Their heads do not fit their bodies or are even depicted without any torso as newspapers cut-outs. The title of the painting is pinned on a notepad with a needle as a tromp-l'oeil effect. This painting will still be important later on in connection with degenerate art.

In 1931 Hannah Höch created some influential photomontages with obvious socio-critical content and „a political tone that had been missing since 1922“.<sup>39</sup>

The montage *Flight*, (1931) (Fig. 6) shows a figure



Fig. 5: The Journalists, 1925, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin

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<sup>36</sup> Cp Roditi, E., 'Interview with Hannah Höch', in *Dialoge über Kunst*, (Wiesbaden, 1960), p.66

<sup>37</sup> E.g. *Dada-Rundschau*, 1919 or *Cut with the Kitchen Knife through Weimar bier belly culture*, 1919/20

<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, a more detailed description would go beyond the scope of this dissertation but an example for socio-critical photomontages is the series from an Ethnographic museum, 1930. Photomontages depicting female roles: *Dompteuse*, 1930 or , *The Dream of His Life*, 1925

<sup>39</sup> Boswell, P., 'Hannah Höch: Through The Looking Glass', in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.16

half woman half chimpanzee pursued by a bird with a man's face. The upraised bird's wing suggests a Nazi salute and the bird's face slightly resembles Adolf Hitler.<sup>40</sup> *The Small P* (1931) (Fig. 7) was originally called *The Small Pg* as Hannah Höch noted on a photo of the work.<sup>41</sup> *The Small Pg* refers to Parteigenosse, a member of the National Socialist party, who is illustrated as a mix between an adult man and a bawling baby. It is very notable that the upper head of the figure resembles very much pictures of Joseph Goebbels. After his appointment by Adolf Hitler as spokesman of the party in 1930, he had already established himself as the public face of the NSDAP in 1931. In his dedication and his demeanour he could be seen as the archetype of the party member. It is unknown when or under what circumstances the name was changed to *The Small P* but it is likely that, due to the fact that the National Socialist party was already very strong, such a direct reference to them would have been dangerous. The following year brought the first repressions from the rising Regime to the artist.

Höch had established a reputation for her work in photomontage beyond the scope of Germany and the Netherlands and she was invited to participate in the *Philadelphia Salon of Photography of 1932*, the *Exposition internationale de la photographie* in Brussels as well as to her first solo show in Germany at the prestigious Bauhaus in Dessau.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, this exhibition never happened because the Bauhaus in Dessau was forced to close down due to lack of funding by the newly elected National Socialist city council.<sup>43</sup>

Already in January the flat of Hannah Höch and Till Brugman had been burgled and many valuable documents and even diaries seem to have vanished.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Liška, P., 'Der Weg in die innere Emigration', in *Hannah Höch, 1889-1978: Ihr Werk, ihr Leben, ihre Freunde*, Die Galerie (ed.), (Berlin, 1989), p.64

<sup>41</sup> The photography is part of the Hannah Höch archive in the Berlinische Galerie. According to Maria Makela *the Pg* is still evident in form of indentations created from the artist's pen when the collage is held in a raking light, cp Makela, M., in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.119

<sup>42</sup> Cp Höch, H., *Hannah Höch, eine Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), R. Burmeister and E. Füllus (eds.), (Berlin, 1995), pp.449, 451-452, 458-459, 465

<sup>43</sup> E. Maurer, *Jenseits fester Grenzen*, p.28

<sup>44</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol. 2 (pt.2), letter from the senior public prosecutor, 7.5.1932, p.452; Biographers did suggest that the burglary was politically motivated and provoked the two women to move to another flat. Cp R. Burmeister, *Hannah Höch - Aller Anfang ist Dada*, (Berlin, 2007), p.174



Fig. 6: Flight, 1931, Institute für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart

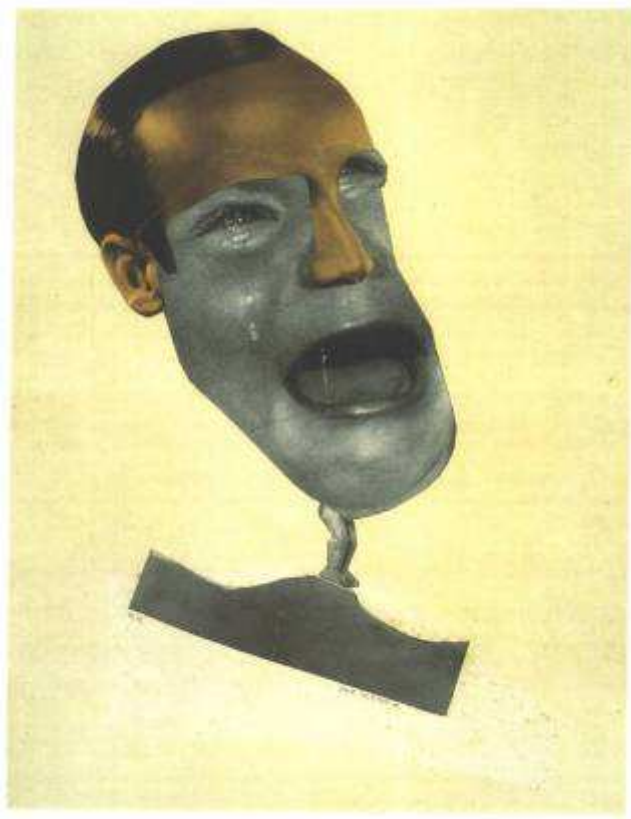


Fig. 7: The Small P, 1931, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

With the assumption of power of the National Socialists the situation grew even more acute: the two women refused to fly the Nazi flag outside their window on official holidays and were subsequently subjected to visits from Nazi officials on several occasions and even received an official warning as the artist remembers in an interview.<sup>45</sup> She answered a letter she received from the artists' co-operative to which she belonged requesting her to officially declare her support for National Socialism and to prove her Aryan descent, with a simple „no“. Subsequently she immediately resigned from the organisation and sent Till Brugman to collect the paintings she had on sale in the shop of the cooperative.<sup>46</sup>

Höch created collages such as *The Eternal Schuhplattler* (1933) (Fig. 8). Schuhplattler is a very traditional Bavarian folk dance. Falling in line with the glorification of tradition in the National Socialist doctrine it was popular in the Third Reich. The single body parts of the two dancers are completely out of proportion and they look like ridiculous buffoons jumping up and down with their mouths open. The collage seems like a mild mockery and caricature of the changing society similar to the ones Höch made in the Dada years. In accordance with this observation Maria Makela remarked that Höch's aesthetic strategy of mismatching colour and scale of the various body parts reflects her works from the Dadaist period.<sup>47</sup> Totally different in its aesthetic strategy as well as in its statement is the oil painting *Savage Outbreak* (Fig. 10) which originates in the same year. A male figure seems to be „born“ from the head of the female figure in the foreground. In her own words the artist explained:

*It was created in 1933 when it became unmistakably clear that the German „manhood“ had started this savage outbreak of arrogance, lack of rights and madness of a world conquest. By that time the women, especially the mothers accepted that downfall with great concern, mistrust but resignation. I wanted to record that.*<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> E. Roditi, 'Interview with Hannah Höch', in *Arts* 34, no.3, Dec. 1959, p.24

Thomas Ring mentioned in a letter to Höch an „unpleasant visit“ she had had in her old flat and asked if any of his valuables had been taken as well. See Thomas Ring to Hannah Höch, 10 June 1933, *Lebenscollage*, vol. 2 (pt.2), p.485. It is unclear if he refers to the robbery over 1 ½ years before or to visits of NS officials.

<sup>46</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol. 2 (pt.2), Künstler-Läden E.V., 28.4.1933, p.500 (33.25), letter draft to the Künstler-Läden E.V., May 1939, p.501 (33.27)

<sup>47</sup> Makela, M., *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.) (Minneapolis, 1997), p.122

<sup>48</sup> Letter to Grohmann 1964, cit. E. Maurer, *Jenseits fester Grenzen*, p.29





Fig. 8: The Eternal Schuhplattler, 1933 Collection Thomas Walther, New York



Fig. 9: Sevenleague Boots, 1934, Hamburger Kunsthalle



Fig. 10: Savage Outbreak, 1933, Landesbank Berlin

Initially, Hannah Höch had still international exhibitions, participated again in the *Deuxieme exposition internationale de la photographie et du cinema* in Brussels, was invited to the *International Salon* in Philadelphia for a second time and even seems to have sold very reasonably as a letter from Ditte van der Vies-Heyting suggested.<sup>49</sup> Having been a member of the National Federation of Visual Artists, Höch had automatically become a member of the Reichskulturkammer in November 1933 when the National Federation of Visual Artists was closed down.<sup>50</sup> Her membership number is M 8568.

But the pressure by the new regime was now on and many of her friends and colleagues started to leave the country. Hannah Höch and Till Brugman must have felt menaced too and letters from friends who had already left Germany suggest that they planned to flee the country.<sup>51</sup> But even though they spent the time from July to September in Holland they returned to Berlin in the beginning of October. More and more artists started to emigrate: Raoul Hausmann had already left in 1933, Laslo Moholy-Nagy emigrated in 1934 and Schwitters spent most of his time in Norway. Hannah Höch remained in Germany but with emigration such a timely theme, it does even translate into Hannah Höch's art. The collage *Seven-League Boots* (1934) (Fig 10) seems to tell a tale about leaving. Two female legs with a snail shell jump or run over a hamlet. With the next step, they seem to vanish into the distance. The body belonging to the legs is not visible, as if it has retreated like a snail into its shell. *Seven-League Boots* gains special importance because it is Hannah Höch's last photomontage referring to a prevailing topic after the politically loaded collages of the years 1930 to 1932. Although the subject is highly topical, the method she uses reminds of fantasy and fairy tales. The work is the transitioning piece to an inward turn and a step into a private realm of imagination and fantasy. Peter Boswell rightly observed that „*Höch's inward turn was almost surely also a reaction to the increasing use of photomontage to propagandistic*

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<sup>49</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), exhibition catalogue: deuxième exposition internationale, Juni–Juli 1933, p.501 (33.28)

Letter from the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 14.2.1933, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.479 (33.4)

Letter from Ditte van der Vies-Heyting, 6.1933, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.489 (33.15)

<sup>50</sup> She states in the questionnaire of the Reichskulturkammer to have executed a profession that requires membership in the chamber of visual arts since its existence, Questionnaire, 25.2.1942, RbK, M 8568

<sup>51</sup> Letters from Getrud Ring, 20.6.1933; Otto Nebel, 22.10.1933; Thomas and Gertrud Ring, 28.10.1933; Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.487 (33.14), p.492 (33.18), p.493 (33.19)



ends in the mass media.“<sup>52</sup> In conjunction with an exhibition of her photomontages in Brno, Czechoslovakia, she wrote about the contrasts between the „applied“ photomontage techniques used in advertising and the „free-form photomontage“, which is „an art form that has grown out of the soil of photography“:

*The peculiar characteristics of photography and its approaches have opened up a new and immensely fantastic field for a creative human being: a new magical territory, for the discovery of which freedom is the first prerequisite. ... Whenever we want to force this „Photomatter“ to yield new forms, we must be prepared for a journey of discovery, we must start without any preconceptions; most of all, we must be open to the beauties of fortuity. Here more than anywhere else, these beauties, wandering and extravagant, obligingly enrich our fantasies.*<sup>53</sup>

The times for using photomontage as the medium of choice for taking on political, socio-critical or prevailing subjects were over and would not come back - in a dreamy, fantastic way – until years after the end of the war.

1934 was a difficult year for Hannah Höch: she became critically ill with an exophthalmic goiter and underwent surgery in summer. The operation certainly saved her life, but left her physically, emotionally and financially devastated. Not having any health insurance, she was paying for the operation until 1938.<sup>54</sup> This might have been the time and the reason why she became a member of the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt (NSV)*, a sub-organisation of the NSDAP that provided health services and support for the poor.<sup>55</sup> In the literature it has been suggested that dissenters of the Nazi regime often became members of the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt* to protect themselves.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Boswell, P., 'Through the Looking Glass', in Walker Art Centre (ed.), *The Photomontages*, (Minneapolis, 1997), p.17

<sup>53</sup> Höch, H., 'A few words on photomontage', translated by Jitka Salaguarda in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, M. Lavin, (New Haven, London, 1993), pp.219-220

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Höch's niece Eva-Maria Rössner, Tübingen, August 2009

<sup>55</sup> Höch stated to be a member of the NSV in a questionnaire by the Reichskulturkammer, 25.2.1942, RbK M 8568

<sup>56</sup> E. Hansen, *Wohlfahrtspolitik im NS Staat*, (Augsburg, 1991), p.36

It took almost a year until Höch had fully recovered from her illness. During a hiking trip in the Dolomite Alps where she went to recover she met Kurt Heinz Matthies. The relationship with Till Brugman was already strained for some time: *My resilience suffered from her strong personality and her immense ego and I needed to find back to myself and return to me*<sup>57</sup>, she remembered later. By the end of the year the two women separated and Kurt Heinz Matthies became her partner in life. That year she had her last significant professional appearance abroad until after World War II with an exhibition at the Kunstzaal D'Autretsch in The Hague.<sup>58</sup> The following year she had only six small watercolour paintings in an exhibition of the Kunstverein Mannheim and one photomontage in an exhibition called *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.<sup>59</sup> While she had paid a membership fee of 16 Reichsmarks in 1934, the fee of 12 Reichsmarks in 1935 was waived because she had probably earned too little and she was exempted from the contribution as well in the estimate of the Reichskulturkammer for 1936.<sup>60</sup>

The relationship with Heinz Matthies was a difficult one and „took much of her energy“ as she confessed in a letter to Matthies in 1943.<sup>61</sup> Matthies, a would-be pianist, twenty-one years her junior was a very unstable man driven by his torments and agony.

In the first year of their relationship she painted *Anxiety* (Fig. 11). The painting seems to be a reference to Edvard Munch's famous *Scream* (Fig. 12) and it picks up all the nightmarish emotions Munch implied. But while the figure in its desperation in Munch's painting seems to be passive and frozen in distress, Höch's solitary woman seems to defend the endless loneliness of the leafless avenue behind her with her protecting hands.

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<sup>57</sup> H. Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, (Berlin, 1968)

<sup>58</sup> In the questionnaire of the Reichskulturkammer she stated to have exhibited at *Big Berlin Art Exhibit* continuously, 25.2.1942, RbK M8568. No proof has been found that she participated in the exhibition after 1934

<sup>59</sup> Kunstverein Mannheim: R Burmeister, *Aller Anfang ist Dada*, p.178;  
MoMa: Makhholm, 'Exhibition History', in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.213

<sup>60</sup> Account statement 1937, RKK M8568

<sup>61</sup> Letter to Matthies, 1942/43, H. Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (dept 2), pp.663-669

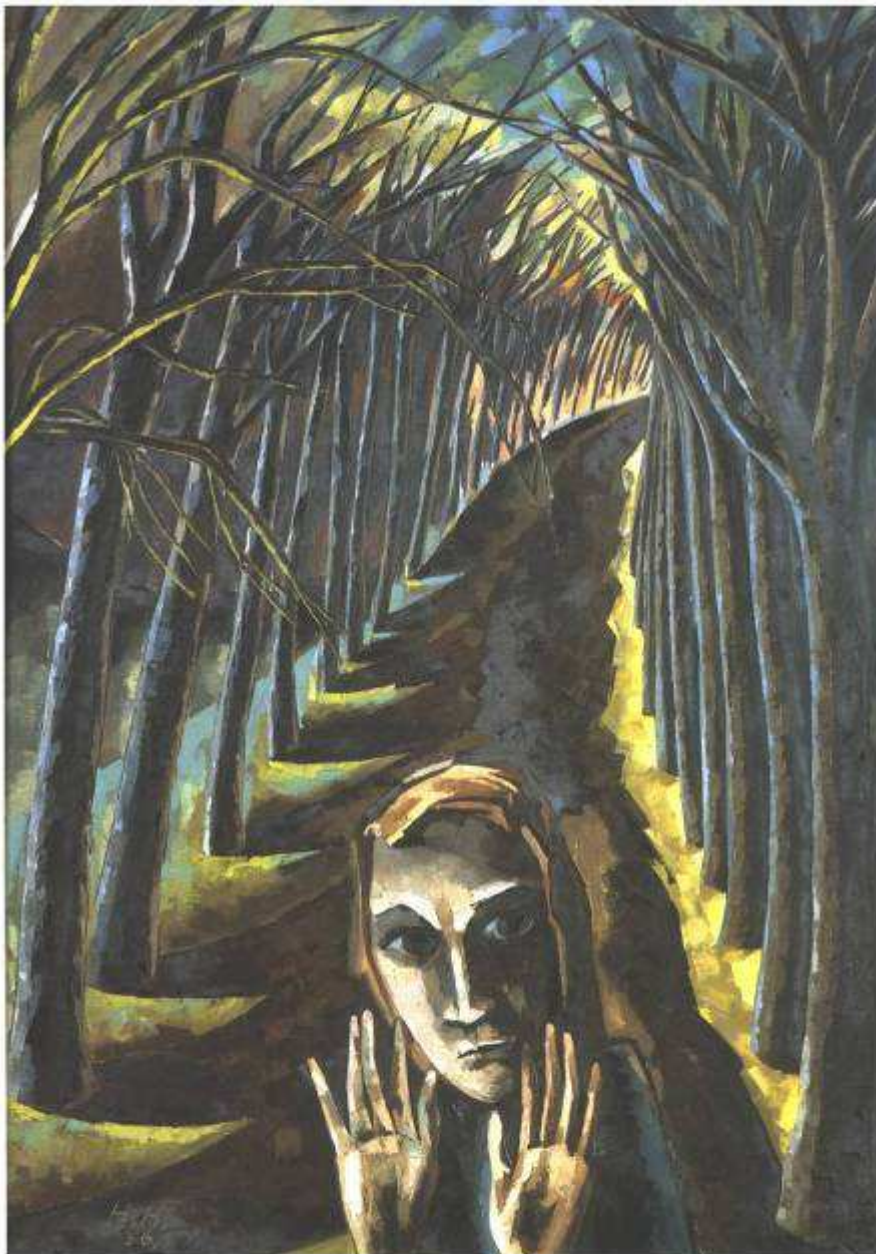


Fig. 11: Anxiety, 1936, Galerie Remmert, Dusseldorf

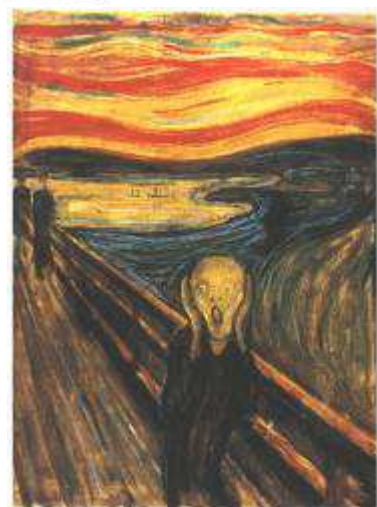


Fig. 12: Munch, Scream, 1892 - 1910, Munch-Museum, Oslo

The woman's face shows anxiety, despair even rage as if she wants to hold something off from breaking into the lonely avenue. The painting seems to reveal all Höch might have felt in the face of the awareness of the regime's threat to all the artists deemed „degenerate“ and a growing loneliness brought about by the emigration of most of her friends.

In the book *Cleansing of the Temple of Art*, which provided the framework for the *Degenerate Art* exhibition, Hannah Höch was vilified as *cultural Bolshevist* along with other members of the November Group, a political artist group in Germany formed in 1918. Although her painting *The Journalists* (Fig. 5) had been illustrated in the book<sup>62</sup>, she was not included in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition, „for the simple reason that it was limited to artists in public collections“.<sup>63</sup> The defamation as a degenerate artist did obviously not have any direct consequences for Höch as there is no record in her file with the Reichskulturkammer of her being mentioned in Willrich's book or as a member of the November Group.<sup>64</sup> However, it seems to have had an impact on Höch as she got the book as a present in the year of its publication and collected newspaper articles about degenerate art.

In Munich Höch visited the *Degenerate Art* show for the first time, and many more visits followed over the years to come. „It is notable how disciplined the visitors are after the public baiting. Many people are stony-faced and there is obviously lots of opposition. There is hardly any talk,“<sup>65</sup> she noted in her daybook.

During that time, Höch started to accompany Matthies who worked as a merchandiser marketing the welding material Gussolit throughout Germany and later Italy too. Matthies financial success and the possibility to travel with him even during the war provided her with a certain kind of freedom.<sup>66</sup> Höch's biographer Heinz Ohff called it „escape trips“ from the

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<sup>62</sup> W. Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels*, (München, Berlin, 1937), p.54

<sup>63</sup> Boswell, P, 'Through the Looking Glass', in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.16

<sup>64</sup> The reason for her not being mentioned in her file as a member of the November group might have been that the painting *the Journalists* was already from 1925 and the November group did not exist any longer. However, even though Höch's personal archive does not imply any consequences or repercussions, her official file is not completely preserved.

<sup>65</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.585

<sup>66</sup> Matthies letters are filled with proud references to his financial success at trade fairs. Gussolit, essential to the welding of large machine parts was in great demand in World War II and allowed Matthies to travel

restraints and constant threats in Berlin by the National Socialists.<sup>67</sup> These escapes however could not hide the fact that Höch was frustrated with her situation as an artist and the lack of approval from the outside world. After retrieving some watercolour paintings from an art dealer, she confided in her diary:

*„Unfortunately, he sold nothing. It would have been so important! Not because at this moment I have nothing to eat, but because even the few people I still see don't take me seriously because what I do brings in no money. Even if I copy nature as they understand it.“*<sup>68</sup>

This remark is testimony that she was willing to adapt to a certain extent to the prevailing taste or at least that she filtered very carefully what she showed to the public. She might have acted according to the same principle as her good friend Kurt Schwitter's whose wife had written to her already in 1933:

*„Kurt won't show new ideas or artistic things publicly here any longer. He only exhibits naturalistic paintings here to earn some money, so he can work for himself in private.“*<sup>69</sup>

In accordance with her ability to feel at home in various styles and genres of painting, she was probably even able to stay true to herself painting flowers or landscapes. But Höch was hardly done with her dreamlike, symbolic compositions containing a hidden criticism, which she created even if there was no public to approve of it. She still created, as well, photomontages and used the medium now to create fantastic, surreal landscapes with it.

*Sea Serpent* (Fig. 13), dated 1937, illustrates a curious creature with three heads passing through the misty green space that in the distance appears to be water but could be sky too. The effect, creating uncertainty about the medium in which the sea serpent is suspended:

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extensively, cp Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), Diary 1937-1940

<sup>67</sup> Ohff, H., 'Heiligensee', in Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.305

<sup>68</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.589 translated by Carolyn Lancher in 'Later Adventures', in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.133

<sup>69</sup> Letter Helma Schwitters to Höch April 1933, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.482 (33.8)

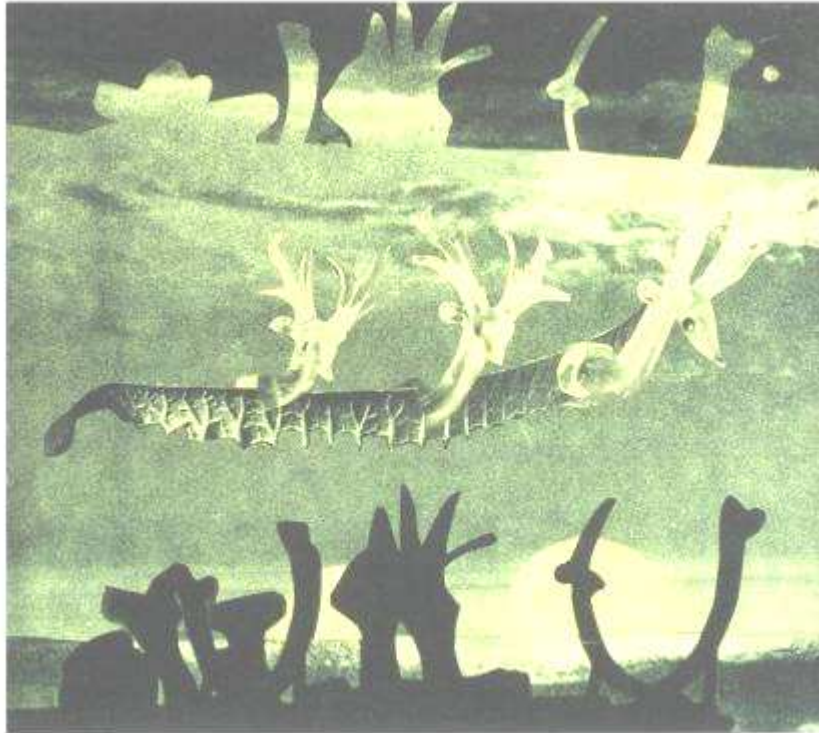


Fig. 13: Sea Serpent, 1937, Institute für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart

water or sky, is attained by two horizon lines in the collage. The bottom of the page is illuminated by a setting sun, on the upper part of the photomontage is the water line with a night sky and a pale moon. The air/water section is in all probability a cut out from sky but it could be interpreted as rolling waves. The fantastic forms and plants on the bottom of the collage are repeated as cut-outs or negatives on the upper horizon. Two horizons, water or air, positive and negative, black and white plants, all rely on the idea of the equality of things that Höch promoted. Not only one sun but two, one of which is half hidden set at the lower horizon. Maybe it is there to add light to the picture. Maybe it is there to emphasize that the viewer is tricked here.

Intriguingly, the viewer is able to perceive the world from two different points of view as he would never experience it in real life. The first perspective is the one catching the eye immediately: the dark plants, the setting sun over the sea and the creature suspended in mid air. The second is as it would appear from the perspective of the sea serpent. Peering over an expanse of water it would see the plants at the upper part of the collage white since they are illuminated by the sun at its back.<sup>70</sup>

In 1937 Höch's personal life took once again a difficult turn. During a trip to Nuremberg with Matthies he was arrested for committing various sexual offences against minors. Hannah Höch was so ashamed that she did not even confide in her diary. Matthies already had prior convictions for similar offences and in this trial he even confessed homosexual tendencies. Nevertheless, Höch, who had known this before, stood by him and gave character references for him. She even signed her letters with "Heil Hitler". This was a sign of assimilation not even the accused Matthies saw as necessary. In their verdict of one year imprisonment and voluntary castration, the judges acknowledged the "*good influence that his fiancée, Hannah Höch, has on him*".<sup>71</sup> This is quite remarkable for a "degenerate" artist like Hannah Höch.

Nevertheless, the situation put Höch under immense pressure but being on her own again she started to work intensely. Besides illustrating book covers, she worked on posters for the

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<sup>70</sup> Cp Lancher, C., 'The Later Adventures', in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.135

<sup>71</sup> Court record Kurt Heinz Matthies, county court Berlin in 1938, A Rep. 358-02, Landesarchiv Berlin. The file is partly destroyed by a shell splinter.



Reimann Schule<sup>72</sup> and even had a public commission for eleven works, from the „airship ministry“ as she mockingly wrote in her diary, meaning the Reich Air Ministry. This mocking connotation ties in with a comment she wrote earlier in 1937. On that occasion she commented on the meeting between “*Hittler*” and “*Mousolini*” in Munich<sup>73</sup>. The spelling mistakes do seem to be a reminiscence of the old Dadaist mockery of her earlier days.

The works she did in this financially restrained situation did probably not fulfil her artistically but she did not have a chance to withdraw into herself but had to cope with daily needs. Shortly after Matthies return from prison the couple married. „*I needed a child, he needed a mother*“ she characterised the relationship later on<sup>74</sup>.

Despite her private circumstances, Höch was always very aware of the constant threat by a hostile authority to others. Repeatedly she mentioned the personal fate of friends and fellow artists or political occurrences in her diaries. These diary entries range from the exclusion of another female artist from Reichs Chamber of Visual Arts to the Jewish pogroms. Very notable for the more personal entries in this context is the deportation of her friend Walther Hirschberg. He was a Jewish composer who was deported to a concentration camp and later released when he was able to produce his travel documents to Paris.<sup>75</sup> This way to force the emigration of unwanted ‘subjects’ was, in contrast to popular belief, common practice.<sup>76</sup> She painted the symbolic oil painting *Eviction from Paradise* (Fig. 14) which is dated 1938, according to Höch's daybooks. The painting shows a naïve-naturalistic idyll with tropical plants and peaceful animals. A huge angel floats over the whole scene who has already evicted the human couple which vanishes in the dark. Karolin Hille pointed out that the angel bears an astounding resemblance with the bronze angel by Ernst Balach with the head of

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<sup>72</sup> Although Höch used the name Reimann Schule in her diaries, the school was already renamed in 1936 after the deportation of the founder. The Reimann School was a private school for design.

<sup>73</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.587

<sup>74</sup> Ohff, H., ‘Heiligensee’, in Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.306

<sup>75</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), pp.597,609,612

<sup>76</sup> Distel, B., ‘Die letzte ernste Warnung vor der Vernichtung – Zur Verschleppung der “Aktionsjuden” in die Konzentrationslager nach dem 9. November 1938’, in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 11* (1998), pp.985-990



Käthe Kollwitz that had been demolished by the Nazis a year earlier (Fig. 15).<sup>77</sup> The painting is a riddle like most of her paintings and collages. Who are the people evicted from Paradise? The Jews? The National Socialists? Or is it just the end of all innocence?

Literature about Hannah Höch and her personal accounts later in life always suggested that she had by that time already lost all contacts to other artists or colleagues and was not allowed to exhibit.<sup>78</sup> However, her diaries, daybooks and letters tell a slightly different story.

Höch did not withdraw from those remaining friends under surveillance from the Nazi regime and even tried to establish professional contacts with the gallery Nierendorf in order to sell some watercolours or even to get an exhibition.<sup>79</sup> The repeated trips with Matthies allowed her to see old friends and colleagues such as the ‘degenerate’ artists Willi Baumeister and Oskar Schlemmer, who had both lost their jobs at art schools in 1933.<sup>80</sup> Baumeister and Schlemmer, both of whom had had paintings in the *Degenerate Art* exhibit of 1937, were old companions of Höch from the November Group and among the few who had stayed on in Germany. Their inner emigration took a completely different shape from Höch's. While the circumstances had forced Oskar Schlemmer to work as a house painter continuing his oeuvre only by painting small landscapes in oil, Baumeister painted „completely abstract“.<sup>81</sup> He worked on the series „Eidos“, abstract paintings of the primitive state of nature, which allowed him to indulge in his own reality.<sup>82</sup> Schlemmer on the other hand was totally devastated, unhappy with his landscape paintings he did only view art works at this time.

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<sup>77</sup> Hille, K., ‘Der Faden, der durch alle Wirnisse des Lebens hielt’, in *Aller Anfang ist Dada*, R. Burmeister (ed.), (Berlin, 2007), p.89

<sup>78</sup> Maurer, *Jenseits fester Grenzen*, p.29

<sup>79</sup> Letter Paul Ferdinand Schmidt to Hannah Höch, 20.1.1939, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.616 (39.1)

<sup>80</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), 13.4.1939, 19.4.1939, 26.4.1939, pp.628-629

Meetings with Höch are also mentioned in the diaries of Willi Baumeister, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart Archiv Baumeister. The research in the Oskar Schlemmer Archiv at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart did not yield any mention of a meeting between Schlemmer and Höch.

<sup>81</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.628.

<sup>82</sup> G Boehm, *Willi Baumeister* (Stuttgart, 1995), p.30.



Fig. 14: Eviction from Paradise, 1937, lost 1938



Fig. 15: Ernst Barlach, Engel, replica

Certainly, these meetings with like-minded people became less and less and Hannah Höch must have been in a constant balancing act between adaptation and resistance. Höch, who loved the cinema and went regularly to see movies, would have seen the newsreels as well. She was very well informed about the political situation, as her diaries show. She knew about the persecution of the Jews, had seen her friends flee the country and, at the outbreak of World War II, poured out her misery over a whole page of her diary (Fig. 16).<sup>83</sup> Yet now she did something very strange.



Fig. 16: Hannah Höch Diary

### III.1. The war years – exile in one's own country

Only two weeks after the declaration of war she bought a house with a vast garden in the small community of Heiligensee on the outskirts of Berlin. Instead of emigrating to foreign lands she settled for emigration in her own country. Two decades later she explained:

*It is actually because this part of Berlin is so quiet and so little known that I moved (...). Under the Nazi dictatorship, I was much too conspicuous and well-known to be safe in Friedenau, where I had lived for many years. I knew I was constantly being watched and denounced there by zealous and spiteful neighbours, so I decided (...) to look around for a place in a part of Berlin where nobody would know me by sight or be at all aware of my lurid past as a Dadaist, or (...) a Cultural Bolshevik. I bought it at once and moved all my possession here, and that's also how I managed to save them. If I had stayed in Friedenau my life's work would have been destroyed in an air raid.*<sup>84</sup>

Höch had in fact a vast collection of Avant-Garde paintings and sculptures „enough to take [her] and all the Dadaists to the gallows“.<sup>85</sup> The art works were gifts or swaps with her fellow artists since the first decade of the century and she combined works of Hans Arp, Schwitters, Hausmann, Hulsenbeck and even Kandinsky in her collection. Additionally, she

<sup>83</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.636

<sup>84</sup> Höch, 'Interview with Hannah Höch', in E. Roditi, *More Dialogues on Art*, (Santa Barbara, 1984), p.96

<sup>85</sup> Höch, 'Interview with Hannah Höch', in E. Roditi, *Dialoge über Kunst*, (Wiesbaden, 1960), p.62

had collected inopportune or even forbidden books since the assumption of power by the National Socialists and owned a big library. Initially, Höch must have felt so secure in the secluded realm of her new home, that she decorated the walls with the degenerate paintings.<sup>86</sup>

In her diary Höch mentioned repeatedly how happy she was with the garden and it is obvious that Berlin and the war must have seemed far away from the reality of this new life at the heart of nature.

Life appears to have calmed down with the new house and the circumstances of life gave her time and space to engage again in photomontages. *Nile II* (Fig. 17) is reminiscent of a dream of foreign lands. The collage is in tune with the general tendency of Höch's paintings and photomontages of that period, depicting surreal, dreamlike lands of fantasy. The statue of the goddess Isis presides over the dreamscape with red floating objects all around the scene. On the left hand side a blue tit sits in the reed cut out from rippling water. It is notable that the material she cuts out with her scissors for her photomontages in that time is very often from the 1930's.<sup>87</sup>

*Never Keep Both Feet on the Ground* (1940) (Fig. 18), could stand as a leitmotiv for Hannah Höch's life as Julia Dech rightly suggested.<sup>88</sup> Peter Boswell implied an „*escapist attitude*“ of the artist which obtains shape in the collage *Never Keep Both Feet on the Ground*.<sup>89</sup> Peter Boswell might have a point here, but more than the wish to flee reality or politics the work is evidence of a wider perspective in life and Hannah Höch's internal freedom.

Höch's relationship with Matthies did get more harmonic and in the summer of 1940 she accompanied him to Italy. She did not mention any quarrelling in her diaries and the „*phony war*“ that would hit Germany directly only in 1941, was even further

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with Eva-Maria Rössner, Tübingen, August 2009

<sup>87</sup> Makela, M., in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.76. The Isis statue is from an issue of „Die Koralle“ from 1934.

<sup>88</sup> Dech, J., 'Marionette und Modepuppe, Maske und Maquillage: Beobachtungen am Frauenbild von Hannah Höch', in *Hannah Höch*, Götz Adriani (ed.), (Cologne, 1980) p.92

<sup>89</sup> Boswell, P., 'Through the Looking Glass', in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.17



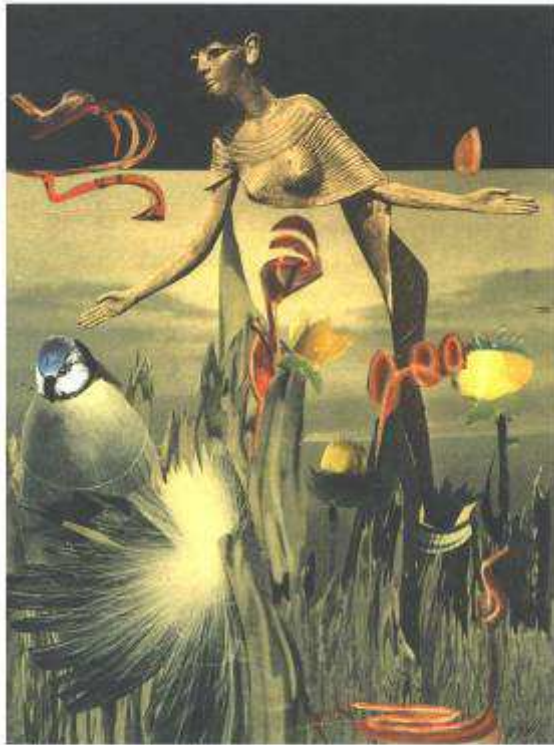


Fig. 17: Nile II, 1940, Collection Peter Carlberg, Hofheim



Fig. 18: Never keep Both Feet on the Ground, 1940, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart



Fig. 19: Black Swans, 1940, private collection



Fig. 20: Leviathan, 1940, private collection

away under the Italian sun. Naturally, she saw and realised the constant war preparations in Italy too but she blocked the thought and her diaries are filled with reports about visits to museums and reflections about the landscape. They returned after over three months in December 1940 from this escape trip to their “chosen place of emigration” in Germany. The painting *Black Swans* (Fig. 19) was probably created during or shortly after the Italian trip under the influence of the war ships Höch had seen in La Spezia. Abstract swans circle a pond in blue and yellow. Black and blue flags fly at the edges of the pond. The calm presence of the swans, having turned their heads all in one direction discloses them as an armada with deadly intentions.

During this time many of Höch's paintings started to contain masks, as a symbol of having a secluded identity. The gouache *Leviathan* (Fig. 20) shows a masked figure holding a baby in her arms and smiling down on the turtle-like Leviathan who looks back cross-eyed. The masked figure has put the arm around the child as if to protect it from the Leviathan while shooing it away with the other one. On the right side a black flower sprouts and on a leafless tree a bird appears to fall in tune with the figure's shooing.

In April 1941 the war finally hit Germany and Hannah Höch was probably often alone at home since her husband was still travelling as a merchant. Matthies only came back from Italy in August. In his letters he described Italy as a paradise but he referred also to Höch's garden and her plants as a garden Eden. Nature and her garden were extremely important to Hannah Höch.

Meanwhile Höch painted the oil painting *Mountainscape* (Fig. 21). The scene is set in a hostile mountain landscape. The observer appears to be close to the ground because the rocks in the foreground are on the same level as the viewer. The view leads in the distance towards a bleak mountain range. Despite the hostile environment various plants and flowers seem to have fought their way into the sun and sprout on the poor ground. The sun comes out in the distance behind a cloud and shines on the plants clinging to life in the foreground. An orange moon is visible behind the mountain range on the other side. Showing that life is possible in the most hostile environment, the painting is very symbolic. Sometimes this life is still very small and feeble and one has to crouch down to even see it. The sun and the moon symbolise the hope that there will be light and change.

Höch spent much time in her garden which is reflected in her paintings where the garden and nature in general are a constant theme. But Hannah Höch was not a creature withdrawn from

the world in her private realm of nature and fantasy. She had always recorded social realities and conditions and did the same now in her cycles *Time of Needs* (Fig. 22) and *Death Dance* (Fig. 23). Both cycles, developed between 1942 and 1945, are watercolours and illustrate the horrors of war in a very graphic way.

For New Years Eve 1941 Höch and Matthies gave an invitation to close friends as the architectural critic Dr. Adolf Behne and the author of the critical book “Film censorship” from 1934 Dr. Kurt Zimmereimer. Höch noted in her diary that they were „*all looking very concerned into the new year*“.<sup>90</sup> Shortages of supplies were already common and even painting materials and colours could only be bought with a special supply card.<sup>91</sup> In February 1942 Höch applied for a supply card for painting materials at the Reichskulturkammer. Since her membership file was apparently old, she was asked to fill in a new membership questionnaire, to hand in photographs of her important works for the archive and to account for her income for the years 1936 to 1939. Höch sent back the questionnaire, stating under the question: *In which major exhibitions were you represented with your works? Große Berliner Kunstausstellung continuous, Juryfrei Kunstausstellung Berlin continuously, [illegible]. Deutsche Kunstgemeinschaft (German Art Community).*<sup>92</sup> It is unclear what Höch meant by the term „continuously“. Höch had participated repeatedly in the *Große Berliner Kunstausstellung* between 1919 and 1933 but it is unclear if she still participated in the exhibition after 1933.<sup>93</sup> The last evidence for her participation in the *Juryfreie Ausstellung*, was found in 1931.<sup>94</sup> The *Juryfreie Ausstellung* existed only until 1933.<sup>95</sup> Earlier literature had always suggested that Höch had not participated in any exhibition for the whole twelve years of the Third Reich,<sup>96</sup> but later research has found exhibition participations up to 1936 and letters show that Höch searched actively, even though probably unsuccessful, contact with art

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<sup>90</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.2), p.669 (42.4)

<sup>91</sup> Mitteilungsblatt der Reichskulturkammer der bildenden Künste, vol.5/1940, issue 11–12, p.2

<sup>92</sup> Questionnaire 1942, membership file Reichskulturkammer Hannah Höch, M 8568, Landesarchiv Berlin. The questionnaire is completed in two different hand writings: one is Höch's, the other is Heinz Matthies'.

<sup>93</sup> Höch's name is not mentioned in the catalogues of 1940 to 1942.

<sup>94</sup> Makhholm, K., ‘Exhibition History’, in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.212

<sup>95</sup> In 1934 the exhibition was renamed into *Free Art Show*, and probably seized to exist very soon due to the National Socialist cultural policy and the support for the exhibition of the Jewish merchant Wertheim.

<sup>96</sup> Ohff, H., ‘Die Ausstellungen’, in Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.300





Fig. 21: Mountainscape, 1941, private collection



Fig. 22: Times of Need, 1942-45, private collection

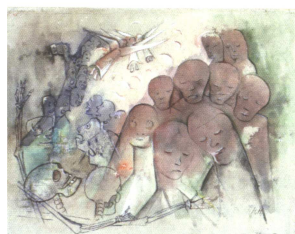


Fig. 24: Deathdance I-III, 1942-45, Berlinische Galerie

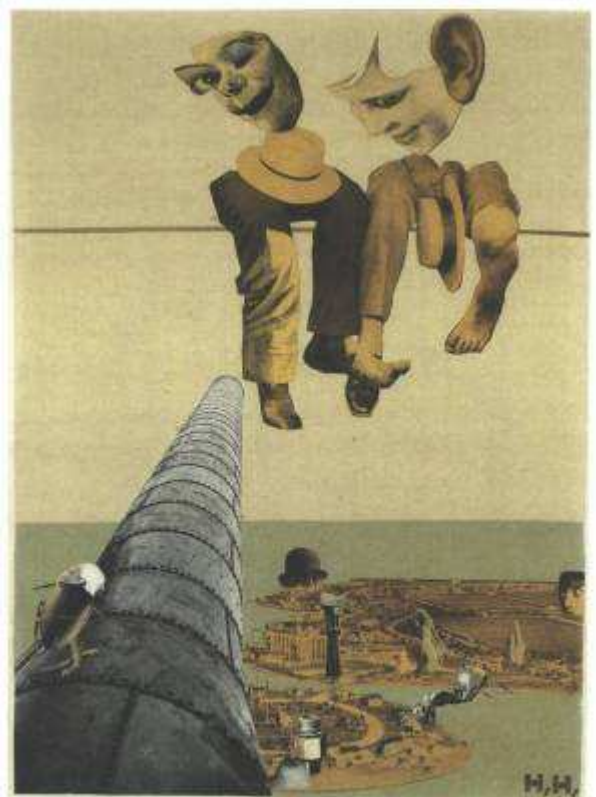


Fig. 23: From Above, 1926, Collection Louise Rosenfeld Noun, De Moines



dealers in 1939.<sup>97</sup> For these reasons and Höch's statement in the questionnaire her participation in exhibitions during the Third Reich can not be ruled out completely. Under the section of membership of the NSDAP or its subdivisions Höch stated to be a member of the NSV. This membership, in a seemingly harmless and social organisation may have existed as a cover, as argued before. It is notable though that since 1936 the NSV contained a charity for „German Visual Arts“ which organised exhibitions.<sup>98</sup>

Höch's application to the Reichskulturkammer was successful and she received a coupon for painting material.

Matthies' business interests appear to have been very successful with the war and the couple even went hiking for the summer holidays. In the fall Matthies and Höch separated following the visit by an old friend of Höch, the pianist Nell d'Ebneth, for whom Matthies left her. The separation left Höch devastated. On top of this personal disaster for Höch, the journal *Applied Photography* illustrated her photomontage *From above* (1926/27) (Fig. 23) as example for „un-German“ photography. The article read:

*„This picture, that we chose, stirs memories of a long forgotten past. But it is not so long ago that pictures such as this could pass as German photography (...) Especially in the foreign media, these Jewish manifestations were always able to pass themselves off as the latest, and of course German progression (...) Even though some innocent middle Europeans believed in the past that such experiments merited at least a discussion, we now recognise, enlightened, a picture such as this as the manifestation of the utter absence of true creativity, concealed by an impertinent ruse.“*<sup>99</sup>

Höch continued work on the *Death Dance* (Fig. 24). All three paintings of the Triptych illustrate the horrors of death. In the first painting a group of ghostly, anonymous figures moves from the back of the right side to the left front side where death already lingers. One of the figures tries to stop them but does not seem to have a chance. The two figures already on

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<sup>97</sup> Letter from Schmidt, 20.1.1939, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.2), p.616 (39.1)

<sup>98</sup> Hilfswerk für deutsche bildende Kunst, NSVD 1937/38, p.220

<sup>99</sup> Stiewe, W., 'Fotomontage in der Bildpresse', in *Gebrauchsphotografie*, 1942/no 8, p.151, translated by Otto Kroymann.

the right side are already dead: they are discoloured and their souls seem already to have left the body. In the second painting bodies lay on the ground or are suspended in the air. A skull in the foreground looks directly out of the painting; in the background a sad face watches the bodies. Skeletons spread their arms in the foreground of the third painting. The ghostly people arrive in a long trail. Souls are flying away and the figures further down the road watch them in shock. All three paintings use the same compositional method of an undefined, scarcely coloured image space. All figures seem to be ghostly apparitions, an undefined human mass in an undefined zone and time.

In the beginning of 1943 she must have applied again for a coupon for painting materials. She must have handed in photographs of her more undisputed paintings as the Reichskulturkammer had requested the previous year, for her file contains a written evaluation of her works.<sup>100</sup> The evaluation stated that her „*artistic capacity [was] average.*“ The evaluation went on: „*Some of the works are dilettantish but for social reasons she is eligible (...).*“<sup>101</sup> The Reichskulturkammer had only seen landscapes and flowers in oil and watercolour as the document states.

Finally, Hannah Höch was totally isolated in her garden. She hardly saw anybody and mail correspondence was limited to a minimum. In a letter to her friend Thomas Ring she wrote:

„ *I live very isolated in my house and the piece of earth which is enclosed by a fence. (...) If my back hurts, I go to the easel. If the eyes hurt, I go outside [gardening].*“<sup>102</sup>

### III.2. The Meaning of the Garden

Höch's biographer Heinz Ohff had said: "*Hannah Höch that is Dada and Garden*"<sup>103</sup> and her nephew Peter Carlberg had declared in a film about his aunt: "*the art of Hannah Höch can't*

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<sup>100</sup> Membership file Reichskulturkammer Hannah Höch, M 8568, Landesarchiv Berlin

<sup>101</sup> Evaluation Hannah Höch, 7.1.1943, M 8568

<sup>102</sup> Letter to Ring, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.2), p.676 (43.7)

<sup>103</sup> H. Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, (Berlin, 1968), p.9

*be understood without the garden.*”<sup>104</sup>

The Garden had always played a vital role in Höch's life. As a child she had learned to graft roses from her father. Later in life she always had many plants and green, flowering balconies to which her friends referred in letters. But never was the garden and her plants more important than at the time of her final withdrawal into inner emigration.

Initially, the garden fed Höch during the war years and helped her to survive, with its fruits and vegetables, times of bitter need. But the garden had to “*catch her emotionally*” as well in times when she needed a “*retreat*” as she confessed in a letter to Matthies in 1942.<sup>105</sup>

Höch spent many hours a day in her garden. She worked, grew fruit and vegetables or painted the garden in various versions from summer to winter from mild and beautiful to fierce and unsettling. She wrote to Thomas Ring:

*“After some emotionally burdened paintings, I painted flowers and plants (...) in the consciousness that nothing is more justified as to trace these adorable forms and to try and eternalise them visually.”*<sup>106</sup>

In her growing isolation the garden became more and more a partner with whom she even communicated and the flower paintings resembled personal portraits of single flowers.<sup>107</sup>

In her dealings with nature lay her personal and artistic philosophy influenced by Dadaism and the philosophical ideas of a life philosophy of Henri Bergson, Simmel and Friedländer. Equality of things and a constantly gradually changing nature signified Hannah Höch's life and work.<sup>108</sup> Hannah Höch was always an un-adapted, independent person which is testified by her extraordinary life as a young woman who studied art at the turn of the century while

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<sup>104</sup> P. Carlberg, *Diptam Baumzingel Bunter Mohn – Der Garten meiner Tante Hannah Höch*, (Berlin, 2007)

<sup>105</sup> Letter to Matthies, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.2), pp.663-669

<sup>106</sup> Letter to Ring, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.2), p.676 (43.7)

<sup>107</sup> Maurer, *Jenseits fester Grenzen*, p.136

<sup>108</sup> Merkert, J., “Wie eine Biene und der Mond” oder die Ganze Hannah Höch’, in R. Burmeister (ed.), *Hannah Höch. Aller Anfang ist Dada*, (Berlin, 2007)

other women married and had children. “(...)A woman who lived unmarried with a man and later with a woman against all conventions.”<sup>109</sup>

When Höch bought her beloved garden, the former air field had been split up into allotments. It was common practice that the horticultural society regulated what kind of plants had to be planted on all of the allotments.<sup>110</sup> The search for a national identity had let the National Socialists to a *blood-and-soil* ideology which surfaced even in landscape gardening.<sup>111</sup> “Garden art”<sup>112</sup> existed only in the racial idea of a national style incorporating exclusively indigenous plants planted in a natural design. Exotic plants were frowned upon because “*it is only a small step from the exotic to the abnormal.*”<sup>113</sup> In 1939 the landscape gardener Joseph Pertl coined the term “degenerate horticulture”.<sup>114</sup> Höch did not comply with these racial ideas of beauty or conventions. She owned huge exotic cactuses<sup>115</sup>, planted the non-indigenous Dittany<sup>116</sup> and grew and crossbred various forms of poppy.<sup>117</sup> In that way the creation of her garden was perhaps her most open form of resistance against the National Socialist Regime.

The plants together with the buildings formed five protective layers around the house<sup>118</sup> which made it a safe heaven during the terrors of the war years.

This enclosed sanctuary, which Matthies referred to as „*your little island*“<sup>119</sup>, became Höch's

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<sup>109</sup> Olivier, A., ‘Hannah Höch: die einzige Frau unter den Berliner Dadaisten’, in *Anpassung oder Verbot – Künstlerinnen der 30er Jahre*, A. Olivier, S. Braun (eds.), (Dusseldorf, 1998), p.102

<sup>110</sup> Sturm, Bauersachs, *Ich verreise in meinem Garten – Der Garten der Hannah Höch*, (Berlin, 2007), p.59

<sup>111</sup> Wolschke-Bulmann, Gröning, ‘The National Socialist Garden and Landscape Ideal’, in *Art, Culture and Media under the Third Reich*, Etlin (ed.), (London/Chicago, 2002), p.73

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*

<sup>113</sup> Gröning, Wolschke-Bulmann, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst und Landespflege*, p.51 cit. according to Mader, *Gartenkunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, (Stuttgart, 1999), p.75

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*

<sup>115</sup> According to an interview with Eva-Maria Rössner, these cactuses had been gifts long before the war by Höch's uncle.

<sup>116</sup> Brockhaus Enzyklopädie, F.A. Brockhaus (ed.), (Mannheim, 1988)

<sup>117</sup> *ibid*

<sup>118</sup> Sturm, Bauersachs, *Ich verreise*, p.31

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Matthies, 18.8.1944, Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2, (pt.2), p.678 (44.3)

reality, her world against the *Gegenwelt* that she called the „*illusory world of National Socialism*.“<sup>120</sup> Höch's painting nature and beauty was as much painting the reality as painting the horrors of war. In that way her attitude towards life in general is best understood through her garden: a place where becoming and decay happen in a constant cycle with the seasons, independent from humans, politics or even time. This is an idea of equality of things deriving from Dadaism and is closely linked to the philosophy of life of Henri Bergson and her friend Myona Friedländer. In this world outlook a "Reich of a thousand years" can not exist and Hannah Höch did therefore not believe in such.<sup>121</sup>

Under the influence of long nights of bombardments which she spent in her garden instead of her cellar or the far away shelter, Höch created the photomontages *Light Sails* (1943–1945) (Fig. 25) and *Dream Night* (1943–1945) (Fig. 26). Both collages are coloured only in shades of black and white which in both cases illustrates the night lit by the lights of the air raids. In *Light Sails* fantastic plants rise up to the sky. Their white Calyxes are illuminated against the sky. On the right hand side luminescent triangles fall down from the sky. *Dream Night* appears even more fantastic. A spiderlike creature<sup>122</sup> sits on top of an exotic plant. More spiderlike forms lie on the ground half hidden by leaves. A glimmering ball is suspended in the air. All the light comes from the middle section of the collage, from small fires. In their surreal approach both paintings resemble the *Sea Serpent* (Fig. 13) from 1937.

By now Höch was so isolated that she „sometimes did not speak a single word for weeks“<sup>123</sup> as she remembered in an interview in 1968.

The painting *Figurines with Egg* (1943) (Fig. 27) appears to be a last rebellion in the light of an apocalyptic sentiment. Two figures float around a luminescent egg. The scene is set in an undefined space that does not allow the viewer to draw any conclusions of time or place. Both figures wear long robes but one is male the other female. The male figure appears to be mentally absent or at least very passive while the female figure looks horrified with her

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<sup>120</sup> Höch, 'Lebensüberblick 1958', in *Hannah Höch*, exhibition catalogue, Pawlow, K. (ed), (Gotha 1993), p.78

<sup>121</sup> Höch, 'Interview with Hannah Höch', in E. Roditi, *Dialoge über Kunst*, (Wiesbaden, 1960), p.68

<sup>122</sup> According to P. Boswell the cut-out is from an orchid, in *The Photomontages*, Walker Art Centre (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1997), p.159

<sup>123</sup> H. Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, (Berlin, 1968), p.21

circular eyes wide open. She looks directly out of the painting at the viewer and raises her hand as if to stop somebody from touching the egg. Ellen Maurer described in her brilliant book *Jenseits fester Grenzen* the meaning of the egg as the „cosmic egg“, the „archaic symbol of eternity“, which needs to be protected.<sup>124</sup>

The inner emigrant Hannah Höch therefore took her plea to stop war and destruction to the outside world by addressing the viewer of the painting directly.

As the Russians were advancing on Berlin Höch buried all her treasures of „degenerate“ art and literature in two chests in her garden. Some time before she had felt that it was no longer safe to have them openly on the walls of her house and had taken all the paintings down. Initially, she had hidden them behind a wooden partition in her attic.<sup>125</sup> While all the neighbours had „Russian visits“<sup>126</sup> as Höch called it in her diary, she herself and her brother Danilo, who stayed with her for the last days of war, were „spared any trouble.“ They stayed hidden.

On the first of May 1945 the war was finally over in Heiligensee. In Berlin though there was still shooting, Höch noted in her diary:

*„An unspeakable thankful feeling in my breast. A twelve-year period of suffering, which was forced upon us by a crazy and inhuman, yes, bestial clique, with all the means of evil power, with all the means of the spirit, with all the means of barbarism, that didn't shrink from any crime, is at an end. In my soul is a peace that I haven't felt for years.“*<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Maurer, *Jenseits fester Grenzen*, p.268

<sup>125</sup> Ohff, H., 'Heiligensee', in Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.330

<sup>126</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.684 (45.4)

<sup>127</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.685, translated by Maria Makela



Fig. 25: Light Sails, 1943-46, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen



Fig. 26: Dream Night, 1943 - 1946, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen



Fig. 27: Figurines with Egg, 1943, private collection





Fig. 28: The End, 1945, Landesbank Berlin

Artistically Höch marked the end of the Nazi era by painting a companion piece to the painting that illustrated the beginning of National Socialism: *Savage Outbreak* (Fig. 9). The painting is called *1945 (The End)* (Fig. 28). Both paintings correlate in form and composition. The male figure, which breaks away from the female figure in *Savage Outbreak*, appears to be dead, since the eyes are closed and the body seems limp. The female figure looks sad. Her gaze appears to be aimed on the viewer. The background of *1945* is lighter than in *Savage Outbreak*, the brushstrokes are very expressive.

As the war was now over Höch resumed contact again with the world and the art scene. In September 1945 she gave a lecture about „Symbolism in visual art“ and in December she participated in her first post-war exhibition. In 1946 she was recognised as an renown artist and therefore received a food coupon which allowed for the best food available.<sup>128</sup> She renewed contact with the friends who had gone into exile such as Schwitters but she kept on living in the seclusion of her house and garden in Heiligensee. Höch's biographer Heinz Ohff contemplated that Höch never quite returned from her *inner emigration*.<sup>129</sup> This may well be true, as the following anecdote suggests which emphasises the meaning to Höch of her beloved garden again: When she received a professorship honoris causa in 1976 she is said to have exclaimed: „*I need to tell that to my garden. My flowers will be happy about it.*“<sup>130</sup>

## IV. Conclusion

Hannah Höch really was a classical inner emigrant, surviving the war withdrawn from the Regime and society in her garden. As with probably most inner emigrants her reasons were doubtless political as well as personal. In the reception of artists after the war, external or inner emigration during the Third Reich were considered as the only way to maintain Modernism in art and the artists of the inner emigration were idolized to political dissidents or even oppositional forces. But inner emigration is situated somewhere between opposition and

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<sup>128</sup> R Burmeister, *Aller Anfang ist Dada*, p.181

<sup>129</sup> Ohff, H., 'Heiligensee', in Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.331

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Eva-Maria Rössner, cp Sturm/Bauersachs, *Ich verreise in meinem Garten*, p.77

conformity as mentioned above and the heroizing of the artists has led to a selective perception of their biographies. The research has shown that it is necessary to review their monographs and include public records and documents in addition to personal statements and artistic works.

The inner emigrants lived under circumstances in which they basically tried to survive, and Hannah Höch was no different. Even though she tried to withdraw into her private realm, she was not able to avoid being still part of society and as such she participated as member of the Reichskulturkammer in the cultural life of the Regime. In contrast to monographs and even personal statements<sup>131</sup> she participated in exhibitions, had at least one public commission and received working materials from the Reichskulturkammer during the Third Reich.

These findings do not mean that Hannah Höch was less of an inner emigrant or by any rate a worse one. But it shows that Höch's inner emigration is something different from the pure refusal of interaction with the Regime and more than just silent political dissidence. It is longing not for a personal freedom but for the freedom of art. Hannah Höch's art is a mirror of the world in its entirety and from all perspectives. For her belief in the equality of all things and the different perspectives she wanted to show in her paintings, Höch was able to remain true to herself by painting flowers and landscapes. But for the same belief in equality she still needed to paint as well perspectives of life not well received by the Regime, for which she had to go into inner emigration. She painted in an untimely time, paintings she had to hide straight away not knowing whether or when she would be able to show them to the public.<sup>132</sup> It did not matter: for her artistic aspiration was towards something spiritually higher striving for universal equality.

*"I want to obliterate the set boundaries, that humans, in their arrogant hybris, have set around everything in their reach [...] Today I might paint the world through the eyes of an ant yet tomorrow I might paint it seen from the moon [...]"*<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ohff, H., 'Die Ausstellungen', in Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.1), p.300

<sup>132</sup> Cp Roters, E., 'Hanna Höch – Die Künstlerin, in Hannah Höch', in *Ausstellung Kyoto 1974*, no page

<sup>133</sup> Höch, *Lebenscollage*, vol.2 (pt.2), p.365 (29.34)

And Max Ernst added: *We tried the impossible!*”<sup>134</sup>

In this aspiration towards equality, Hannah Höch’s art was released from the constraints of time and space. Her work was, in the words of Otto Dix, painted for another century. Nevertheless, her art always came from the midst of the society, and was inter alia highly political and socio-critical.

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<sup>134</sup> Ernst, M., ‘Gespräch mit dem Künstler Max Ernst’, in Radiobroadcast WDR 1953, cit. Hille, K., ‘Der Faden, der durch alle Wirnisse des Lebens hielt’, in *Aller Anfang ist Dada*, R. Burmeister (ed.), (Berlin, 2007), p.94

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