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DUTCH NEOREALISM, CINEMA, AND THE POLITICS OF PAINTING, 1927–1945

Stephanie Lebas Huber

Dutch Neorealism, Cinema, and the Politics of Painting, 1927–1945

This study offers a radically new perspective on Dutch Neorealism, one that emphasizes the role of film as an apparatus, the effects of which, when emulated in painting, can reproduce the affective experience of film-watching.

More of a tendency than a tightly defined style or "ism," Neorealism is the Dutch variant of Magic Realism, an uncanny mode of figurative painting identified with Neue Sachlichkeit in Germany and Novecento in Italy. Best represented by the Dutch artists Pyke Koch, Carel Willink, Charley Toorop, Raoul Hynckes, Dick Ket, and Wim Schuhmacher, Neorealism—as demonstrated in this book—depicted societal disintegration and allegories of looming disaster in reaction to the rise of totalitarian regimes and, eventually, the Nazi Occupation of The Netherlands. The degree to which these artists exhibited either revolutionary or reactionary sentiments—usually corresponding with their political affiliation—is one of the central problematics explored in this text.

The book will be of interest to scholars working in art history, World War II history, and film studies.

Stephanie Lebas Huber is an independent scholar based in New York.

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Designed cover image: Pyke Koch, *Het Wachten* (The Wait), 1941, gray charcoal and pencil drawing, 122 × 302 cm. © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Ernst Moritz. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

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Dedicated to Manon and Chloé

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Introduction

Pyke Koch's 1941 gray charcoal and pencil preparatory study, *Het Wachten* (The Wait; Figure 0.1), illustrates the stifling social reality of the Occupation-era Netherlands, one that only briefly came to pass between the years 1940 and 1945. As historical events ultimately decided, this short-lived regime left behind unfinished traces of a grander plan, not unlike the intended, yet unrealized painting that Koch's drawing *The Wait* had mapped out. Now hanging in the galleries of the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, Koch's large-scale sketch depicts five modern women gathered on a street after dark, all in fashionable wartime attire that includes wide-brimmed hats and long overcoats with broad-shouldered silhouettes. Though standing near one another, these women would be better described as atomized units, typical of strangers who keep to themselves while waiting for public transportation. There are no clues of any verbal or even non-verbal forms of communication transmitted among them, with one possible exception being an exchange between the two women farthest from the viewer. Yet, with their faces lit by unseen overhead streetlamps and partially obscured by the shadows of their hats, it is impossible to tell whether these two figures are making eye contact or looking past one another. Harshly lit and deeply shadowed, this black-, white-, and gray-toned scene resembles a tense moment immortalized in cinema—either a still or single frame—derived from the emerging genre of film noir. The question implied by the title and by the stasis of the standing group fills the airless composition: what, or whom, are these five women waiting for?

Though Koch rendered *The Wait* in a figurative mode, its style and tone do not add up to the mimetic naturalism associated with academic or nineteenth-century realism, nor does it resemble contemporary Soviet Socialist Realism and its National Socialist counterpart. In 1978 art historian J. W. (Hans) Mulder described Koch's work as evoking a *dubbelzinnigheid*—referring to a double meaning, ambiguity, or contradiction—in that it "idealizes the threat, while rejecting it at the same time."[1] The refusal of coherent narrative, the preternatural stillness, and psychological estrangement evident among the figures all conform to the traits of so-called "Magic Realism," a figurative idiom that came to the fore in Europe in the early 1920s in reaction to the physical and economic devastation of World War I. Neither politically reactionary nor progressive, Magic Realism has presented a conundrum of definition for critics then and now, although—as in this work by Koch—it typically works against the perception of optimism or clear didactic messaging. In The Netherlands, critics used the term Neorealism to describe the Dutch variant of Magic Realism. Pyke Koch was one of its chief representatives alongside Carel Willink, Raoul Hynckes, Dick Ket, and Wim Schuhmacher, as well as Charley Toorop, a singular woman artist often grouped under this label. As was the case with practitioners in other

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Figure 0.1 Pyke Koch, *Het Wachten* (The Wait), 1941, gray charcoal and pencil drawing, 122 × 302 cm.

Source: © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Ernst Moritz. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

countries, the Dutch Neorealists melded references to their own historical national traditions with modern motifs and subject matter, a strategy that augmented the palpable tension within their pictures. By contrast to Italy and Germany, where Magic Realism developed and ebbed in the 1920s, this aesthetic tendency flourished in The Netherlands a decade later, precisely when the former two countries submitted fully to totalitarian control. While the German Occupation would eventually make use of Neorealist painting for a brief time, the inherent dubbelzinnigheid of the Neorealists' style and subject matter was ironically at odds with the demand for unambiguous distinctions in Hitler's National Socialism.

Indeed, *The Wait* presents a sum of contradictions that responds to the dramatic environment in which Koch and his peers reached the peak of their careers. Koch undertook this drawing in the second year of the Nazi occupation of The Netherlands (1940–1945) after the Nationaal Socialistische Beweging in Nederland (Dutch National Socialist Movement), or NSB, had taken power. Shortly thereafter, *The Wait* was reproduced in the Party's Dutch propaganda magazine *De Schouw* and then purchased by its newly installed Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten (Department of Public Information and the Arts, or the DVK), modeled after Joseph Goebbels's propaganda ministry in Germany. Demoting abstraction and overtly modernist styles, the DVK sought instead to buy works of art that embodied the spirit of the Dutch people by representing a "grand vision" of a strong Dutch race, a brother Aryan *volk* in the eyes of the National Socialists. Yet Koch's urbane group of women (and their masculine trench coat attire) hardly conformed to the Nazis' own model of "Great German Art," one that sanctified blood-and-soil images to underscore the ancestral, racial lineage between certain physical types and their landscapes.[2] Given the palpable tension and ambiguity of *Het Wachten*, the reason as to why the DVK would have prized this work—and those by other Neorealists—presents a historical and cultural paradox that merits art historical scrutiny.

Neorealisme (or Neorealism), which is now the most used term among Dutch art historians for the painters demonstrating this tendency, was also an appellation preferred by

critics at the time that these artists were working. Yet over the years, *Magische Realisme*, *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* (Neue Sachlichkeit) and *Nieuw Realisme* all have taken a turn as the label of choice to describe the works of Koch, Willink, Toorop, Hynckes, Schuhmacher, and Ket. In a quest to best describe the elusive qualities of an unreal or heightened realism, a debate over definitions arose that resulted in many competing terms. Moreover, the terms Neue Sachlichkeit and Magic Realism, both coined in Germany in the mid-1920s, have been often applied interchangeably, even though their usage has proven more overlapping than identical. To this end, it is important to note that the influence of German artists categorized under these labels—and to a certain extent the German labels themselves—shaped the reception of this style once it came to be practiced by Dutch artists beginning in the late 1920s.

While both terms entered Dutch art discourse simultaneously, Neue Sachlichkeit, or *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* in Dutch (sometimes translated to New Objectivity in English) quickly fell into disuse for several reasons, one being the above-mentioned association of the term with Germany. For better or for worse, The Netherlands' eastern neighbors loomed large as important progenitors of the style. Germany had proven itself as a fertile birthplace for this new figurative idiom, particularly in the years just following the Armistice, when the country was still reeling from wartime casualties as well as the economic devastation caused by reparations to the Allied powers.

Although the Neorealists have been studied in depth in their native Netherlands, their careers and their work remain little known outside of that country. While building upon the Dutch secondary scholarship on the Neorealists and recent, international studies on Magic Realism, this book offers new interpretations of both, based on archival research and interdisciplinary methodologies. Within the history of Magic Realisms, Franz Roh's 1925 book *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (After Expressionism: Magic Realism. Problems of New European Painting) remains the seminal text. While Roh's ideas may have originated in tandem with Gustav Hartlaub's 1925 Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition, it was the former's book, published that same year, that achieved international influence and reach, even including reproductions of paintings by Joan Míro, Pablo Picasso, Jean Metzinger, and Tsugouharu Foujita. Roh's text soon led the Italian poet Massimo Bontempelli to promote a literary movement inspired by the style with the founding of his journal *900: Cahiers d'Italie et d'Europe* (900: Papers of Italy and Europe) (1926–1929). More famously, José Ortega y Gasset's Spanish-language translation (1927) influenced Latin American writers to produce a distinct local counterpart to Bontempelli's movement, under the rubric of *mágico realismo*, which is perhaps the best-known iteration of this idiom—in either the literary or visual arts.[3] Even the Dutch developed their version of this writing style in the 1930s, which included many good friends of the Neorealists, such as Menno ter Braak, Edgar du Perron, Martinus Nijhoff, and Ferdinand Bordwijk. The writers, however, retained the moniker *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* no longer used to describe the painters.[4]

The heterogeneity of this critical category, absent an internally motivated set of principles, has made Magic Realism into a sometimes all-encompassing term prone to subjective, and even ill-suited, readings. Occasionally overused, the extensive application of this label has also led to accusations that it is a reductive, catch-all term, wielded indiscriminately. Franz Roh and other art historians have since acknowledged that Magic Realism was not in the service of any single ideological or philosophical agenda.[5] What linked the various practitioners of this aesthetic was a shared tendency marked by static figures, solid forms, smooth surfaces, and frigid, sober environments: features that evoked ideas

of confinement and restraint. Such qualities could be seen in the work of the Dutch variant, as well as another point of unification: a palpable sense of internal contradiction. Perhaps for this very reason, a handful of scholars have occasionally revisited its defining characteristics over the years, extending the use of "Magic Realism" to describe other artists, such as American painters Jared French and George Tooker.[6] Each new assessment led to the expansion of the label's definition, particularly following a return to the study of Magic Realism in the 1970s and '80s. The malleability of the label over the course of its historical trajectory has at times caused it to be freighted with historical associations from which certain artists (Dutch or otherwise) have tried to take their distance. In the decades that followed World War II, Magic Realism also had to contend with its perceived association with fascism in certain circles, in The Netherlands and elsewhere.

Beginning with the Neorealists' seminal years of 1927–1929, this book will demonstrate how the painters in question responded over time to the threat of National Socialism from its ascent to power in 1933 and into the Occupation. Their portraits, still lifes, and landscapes reveal the pressures exerted on Dutch national identity—one that traditionally took pride in tolerance and openness—as a result of the rise of Nazism in neighboring Germany. While Neorealism was at times subversive, it was also a style characterized by a series of tensions articulated in the individual artist's selection of subject matter and thematic references, as well as his or her choice of technique. In contrast to the earliest interpretations of Neorealism as one in a panoply of modernist approaches from De Stijl to Expressionism, I note that critics had by the mid-1930s begun to pinpoint the ways that the Dutch Realist style was distinct from other currents.[7] The six artists most prominently featured in this study are not the only Dutch painters identified with this figurative idiom. Even in their own time they defined Neorealism in the eyes of the critics, the public, and one another in ways that shaped retrospective accounts. Due to this habitual early classification, paintings by five of the six were exhibited in official DVK exhibitions and reproduced in its propaganda magazines—in most cases without the artists' consent. This book asserts that the Neorealists' paintings created under the auspices of (and sometimes purchased by) the propaganda ministry should not be read as espousing the values of the National Socialist cultural regime per se, but instead express the doubts, anxieties, and ambivalence that epitomized the Dutch experience of a democracy collapsing under political duress from without and within.

One of the central problems addressed in this book is the difficulty of delimiting "Realism" in an age of competing scholarly and vernacular definitions of the term. While Devin Fore pushed questions of Realism into full interdisciplinary focus in his 2012 book *Realism After Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (MIT Press), my study seeks to write a discrete history of the concept, which entails painting with a much smaller brush. It is also important to note that the term Realism and the theoretical underpinnings that inform it are also not definitionally bound to the nineteenth-century French originators such as Gustav Courbet or Honoré Balzac, as Fore would have it. Indeed, the Dutch case shows us that the banality of the denomination and its ties to figuration often meant that local varieties of Realism were often defined using distinct etymologies, such as those pertaining to the Early Netherlandish tradition. Furthermore, the numerous interwar figurative idioms that arose across Europe cited a plethora of past art historical periods, depending on the context—from Carlo Carrà's indebtedness to Giotto in Italy, to Otto Dix's channeling of Matthias Grünewald and Gustav Hartlaub's frequent references to the Nazarenes in Germany, and finally to the Neorealists'

quotations of Early Netherlandish painters (and the Dutch Baroque)—a fact noted by their contemporary critics. Along with these references comes a host of other culturally specific issues concerning national identity in the context of post–World War I Europe. This book will focus on just one country with a particularly strong "realist" tradition—The Netherlands—to disentangle one of these histories.

This book also aims to change and enrich our understanding of the workings and effects of Magic Realism as a style through a new intermedial approach. In addition to addressing the telling differences of periodization (the 1930s versus the 1920s), I contend that Dutch Neorealism distinguishes itself from other European variants because of its profound relationship to cinema at a moment of an identity crisis for the medium. I argue that the "magic" or unsettling effects in Neorealism are the result of specific pictorial strategies that these painters derived from both the techniques and the viewing experience of silent film, and which they merged with allusions to their native painting traditions. Most of the Neorealists (except for Toorop) emulated the scrupulous detail of Early Netherlandish painting, while all of them knowingly played with venerable genres of the Dutch Golden Age, if only to make the familiar strange. To that end, these artists were drawn to the ability of film to dictate the newest outer boundaries of Realism via the most technologically proficient verisimilitude available at the time, an effect that had long historically placed the adeptness of an advanced medium in a constant state of avowing its relationship to artifice. Furthermore, the attempt to mimic filmic effects that imitate and manipulate the mind's psychological processes such as attention, which can be recreated in the close-up, or disorientation through trick camera work, differs significantly from the mere replication of a film still or photograph. My analysis of the role of cinema in Neorealism reveals that these painters consciously engaged in a *paragone* between moving and static mediums, bringing about a comparison of their respective powers of heightened—or uncanny—illusionism. The influence of film on the artists' work also demanded a different kind of beholder's share, as seen in the way that many Neorealist canvases captured affective reactions to the film-watching experience. I also document the artists' level of involvement with the national cinema club the Nederlandsche Filmliga (The Dutch Film League), and the specific films screened there and elsewhere. All six artists under discussion—in different ways—astutely developed this intermedial synthesis of cinema and painting, rife with fruitful anachronisms, to capture the instability of the period. Film produced the sense of estrangement that permeates the Neorealists' images, projecting beyond the canvas to the psychological space of the viewer.

The Neorealists' retention of their native tradition can be seen in the artists' reflexive treatment of genre as a taxonomic system. Long used to define a particular subject as much as to describe it, *genre* was an important tool for the emerging art market of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic; by the twentieth century, this categorization system had entered the domain of cinema. In this book, I claim that the generic valences evident in the Neorealist idiom made reference to historic capitalist incentives particular to painting, which were coextensive with cinema when updated to the interwar moment. In fact, the entire concept of "genre" as derived from literary studies suggests the existence of a categorical essence—one that had taken on the appearance of a dialectic between internal and external exigencies in the twentieth century.[8] Within this understanding of the concept, the outer form shapes and scaffolds the creative product, while the inner one gives the subject specificity. The resulting friction from these twin identities acting in concert—and occasionally at odds—shares a formal resemblance with one overarching

metaphor that guides my interpretation of the Neorealist painters. In this book, I see these Dutch artists as operating within a set of shifting centripetal frameworks, dating from the critical labeling of their work in the late 1920s to the co-option of their aesthetic during the German Occupation. In fact, the definitional imposition of genre onto a work of art, whether as a blueprint, a structure, a label, or a contract, is itself a scientific form of reading, one that fit well into the myriad of rationalizing approaches common to interwar Europe.[9] In any case, genre—or generic purity—necessitates narrative clarity in order to recognize its own borders, a fact frequently undermined by the Neorealist painters observed in this book.

It is important to note that the Neorealist paintings emphasized here—produced between the late 1920s and mid-1940s—came about at a time when film genres were coalescing, cinemas were transitioning to sound technology, and the international industry was reconfiguring itself. The artists discussed in this book may have demonstrated a shared aesthetic tendency, but they did not always actively use the terms Neorealist or Magic Realist to describe their work, nor did they organize exhibitions under those labels. Such a determination occurred organically, initially by critics, then by curators, and on rare occasion by the painters themselves. I would argue that this process of naturalization via critical interpretation has a similar potential to overwrite auteurial autonomy. Being bound by the generic parameters set by critics meant that the artist (painter) or auteur (filmmaker) could also distinguish their own critical voice from the established norms.

In my view, the influence of cinema over modern artists leading up to World War II—and more specifically those working in the various idioms of Realism—while prolific, has thus far gone undertheorized precisely because of the ubiquity of this popular medium. What did it mean, for example, that the Berlin Dadaists nominated Charlie Chaplin *Ehrendada* (Honorary Dada), and that avant-gardists around the world from George Grosz to Fernand Léger, to Mexican *estredentista* Ramón Alva de la Canal, all referenced Charlot in their work? It is my belief that these examples show that the global reach of this new medium could reduce the likeness and characteristic performances of figures like Chaplin to the function of a sign—in effect, a brand primed for appropriation and subversion—with speed and efficiency. While the example of Chaplin demonstrates the new purchase of celebrity identities within the popular cultural order of the day, references to his well-trod characters are just one in a myriad of examples of the way in which the early twentieth-century media ecosystem penetrated more traditional modes of art-making.

Any scholarship that does explicitly address the influence of cinema on early twentieth-century artists has been primarily the domain of media studies. Analyses from this field often take into consideration the unique ability of film to render the immaterial nature of time and space material, due to the reliance on manipulation via the editing process, and its requisite recombination of elements derived from reality. Marshall McLuhan, for example, described Cubism as a reaction to the invention of the moving picture, and the sudden instantaneousness of the medium.[10] Likewise, Tom Gunning emphasized the "protean" and "fugitive" nature of cinema, which relied upon memory while also asserting its status as a physical fact.[11] Delving into pre-cinematic examples of time-lapse photography, Marta Braun has demonstrated that Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographs provided modernist painters such as Marcel Duchamp with a model for depicting the passage of time in the way that his long exposures captured chronological continuity onto a single frame.[12] Malcolm Turvey has pushed back against the idea that film simply reproduced the distracted conditions of modern life. He noted that the distinctly

curated perceptual conditions of cinema tend to reduce the number of stimuli, rather than replicate the multiplicity that they enjoy in nature.[13] Turvey argued that avant-garde filmmakers, much like painters, used their chosen medium to work through certain contradiction in their opposition, or lack thereof, to bourgeois modernity.[14] More recently, Jennifer Wild characterized the canvases of avant-gardists such as Picasso as painted versions of the film apparatus, in both their technological and ideological presentation.[15] While none of these scholars wrote specifically about the implications of cinema and its aesthetics on the various iterations of Realism reemerging during the interwar period, their work has certainly laid down a path for the study of figurative painting through a filmic lens. Indeed, much like in film, the kind of Magic Realist artifice seen in the work of the Dutch Neorealist painters or other variants of this style is quite self-conscious in the way that it fabricates reality. In many ways their paintings attempt to put in visual terms the unrepresentable qualities of cinema that rely heavily on affective experience and the sensorium.[16]

The six chapters that make up this book follow the historical trajectory of the Neorealists from their categorization by critics, curators, and dealers beginning in the early 1930s. In total, the book explores a series of indirect reactions to the external context that, in part, helped shape the stylistic idiom as well as the politics of its practitioners. In the first half of the decade, material realities of the Great Depression as it was experienced in The Netherlands help to frame the artists' shift away from Old Master themes while exploring the alienating effects of cinema. The latter half of the book concerns the approach of World War II and the realization of the German Occupation in The Netherlands. I explore the impact of competing ideological milieus on their paintings as well as the conflicting critical interpretations that attempted to reframe their work in light of the rapidly changing political context.

Chapter 1, "Magic Realism in The Netherlands: Neorealism in Context" accounts for numerous critical, curatorial, and terminological framings that brought these six artists into discourse with one another. I describe this grouping as "centripetal" in the sense that the conceptual formation of Neorealism or Dutch Magic Realism in The Netherlands was exerted by outside pressures. Situating the artists' biographies within the political, social, and cultural milieu of the interwar and Occupation years, this chapter also examines the anti-chauvinist and pragmatic attitudes that constituted popular notions of Dutch national identity at the time. In so doing, the country allowed for the coexistence of numerous heterogeneous concepts of Dutch national identity in the early twentieth century, a fact mirrored in the ideological makeup of the Neorealists. As explained in this chapter, key to understanding Dutch identity and its manifestation in visual culture is the distinct definition of "Realism" in The Netherlands and its insistence on tactile and material qualities of the world in ways that are symbolic. Returning to this concept of Realism in the early twentieth century, while also following the influence of Franz Roh, the Neorealists brought into their work references to both this historical definition and to the new material qualities introduced by mass media technology, specifically film.

Chapter 2, "Open/Closed: Dutchness and Traditional Genres in Crisis" considers how the Neorealists reimagined the scrupulous realism of Jan van Eyck, the genre scenes of Frans Hals and the *vanitas* still lifes of Pieter Claesz to comment upon the state of Dutch national identity in the interwar period. These artists subverted traditional techniques and motifs of the Old Masters to picture the existential threats to Dutch civic life and prosperity. This chapter discusses the relatively late arrival of

the discipline of art history to The Netherlands, which had the effect of hindering any Dutch claims over the Netherlandish Old Masters that were being fought over in French and Belgian exhibitions, as well as in German texts. While their work beginning in 1929 and on into the early 1930s referred to the Early Netherlandish and Dutch Baroque Old Masters, the Neorealists did so in such a way as to undermine common national myths. Thus their work should be seen as an expression of diminished national pride and powerlessness in response to the ongoing financial crisis and the international rise of totalitarian regimes.

Chapter 3, "A Paragone between Film and Painting—or—Film as a New Visual Model" establishes the ways that the Neorealists used film as a twentieth-century model for visualizing reality that had evolved from historical concepts of metaphysical or scientific vision in the Low Countries. This chapter posits that film should be seen as a new twentieth-century model for vision in The Netherlands in a way that was comparable to the camera obscura in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I claim that the Neorealists did not merely copy film in their paintings, but rather carried out a transmedial paragone, or competition between the two mediums. I introduce the Nederlandsche Filmliga, with which Toorop, Koch, and Schuhmacher are believed to have been affiliated—a cinema society that promoted film as an art form rather than a commercial product. The Filmliga also produced an eponymous journal that included criticism and theory about what art film was doing. In this chapter I demonstrate the ways in which certain Filmliga debates came to the fore in their paintings through the artists' imitation of a filmic materiality, a depiction of relative time, and certain cinematic perspectives such as the point-of-view shot.

Chapter 4, "The Self-Portrait and the Politics of Ambiguity" focuses exclusively on the Dutch self-portrait tradition to more pointedly interrogate the problem of genre as an unstable category in the 1930s Netherlands. This chapter takes into consideration cinema's influence in destabilizing both this genre and Dutch national mythology, by virtue of the medium's potential as an ideological apparatus. Centering on the only two extant self-portraits by Pyke Koch—both of which were shown at the 1938 Venice Biennale—and then situating them alongside the self-portraits of his contemporaries, Charley Toorop, and Dick Ket, this chapter demonstrates how Koch's self-portraits underscore the diminished state of the Dutch grand narrative, a fact laid bare at the Holland pavilion at the Biennale. Grounding this interpretation of Koch's paintings in Louis Althusser's concept of "interpellation," meaning to hail, I argue that Koch's 1937 self-portrait was responding to two distinct, yet overlapping, cults of celebrity at the time: Benito Mussolini as strongman and the film actress Maria Falconetti as martyr in *La passion de Jean d'Arc* by Carl Dreyer (1928). This reading helps to elucidate the inherent ambiguity and nuance present in these two self-portraits, one of which was about to take a prominent place in a Nazi propaganda campaign during the German Occupation.

Chapter 5, "Neorealism Under the Occupation" details the expansion of Nazi ideology into The Netherlands following the German Occupation and the establishment of the Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer, or NKK. Based on the German Reichskulturkammer, which strictly controlled all cultural life through a top-down system, the Kultuurkamer in The Netherlands was established with the idea of better facilitating the use of cultural policy to aid the country's absorption into the Greater Germanic Reich, where it would be known as Westland. This chapter examines the place of the Neorealists' aesthetic

within this context. Despite eliciting mixed reactions from some Dutch National Socialist officials, I argue that the style became favorable to the most influential members of the Kultuurkamer and the Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten or DVK (propaganda department) due to the influence of Pyke Koch, who came to work for the DVK. With Koch's blessing, the more ambiguous or undefined aspects of the Neorealists' paintings were ignored and reframed as mere revivals of the Dutch Old Master tradition. Koch helped to shape the taste of DVK leader Ed Gerdes, who then sought to collect Neorealist works for exhibition and reproduction in propaganda magazines. Except for Charley Toorop, paintings by all the Neorealists represented in this book were co-opted by the DVK.

Chapter 6, "Representing 'Westland' and the Greater Germanic Imagination" concerns the specific ways in which the Kultuurkamer—accommodating the leadership's taste for powerful, traditional, but also modern-looking images—appropriated certain Neorealist paintings to represent the face of its organization. This chapter addresses the relative cooperation of some artists (Koch and Hynckes) and the resistance of others (Willink and Toorop) to the Kultuurkamer's use (or co-option) of their work. The Kultuurkamer and DVK sought to foster a strong cultural bridge between The Netherlands and Germany through the promotion of Dutch-German exchange exhibitions and the publication of the propaganda magazine *De Schouw*. The Neorealists' paintings featured prominently in the exhibitions, where they figured among some of the only examples already purchased by the DVK. Their work also graced several covers of *De Schouw*, including the very first issue. I argue that the use of their paintings by the regime points to not only the early influence of Koch, but also the ease of reframing their artwork in such a way that overlooked any ambiguities. For a brief time before the Kultuurkamer pivoted toward increasingly conservative imagery, the Neorealists' paintings were poised to become the avatar of a Pan-Germanic identity.

While De Stijl artists Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, Bart van der Leck and others sought to invent a purified, universal, utopian, aesthetic that aligned with a unified set of principles, Neorealism offered an idiom that was impure, markedly Dutch, dystopian, and lacking any basis in a common doctrine of shared ideals. Koch, Willink, Toorop, Hynckes, Ket, and Schuhmacher resembled many of the other national variants of Magic Realism in their level of organization: exhibiting a diversity of styles, subjects, and ideologies, and neglecting to form an official group. As in every country in which this enigmatic idiom presented itself, Neorealism lacked any founding principles. The absence of cohesion among these artists reflects the fractured assemblage of political affiliations then afflicting Europe and which impeded political solidarity in The Netherlands.

Many parallels can be drawn between the fragmented political identities of interwar Europe and the polarization caused by the recent rise in nationalist rhetoric in Western Europe and the United States in recent years. Considering these correspondences, it is imperative to revisit earlier histories of strident nationalism and the intersections between visual culture and political propaganda. By looking closely at the ambiguities inherent in their work that have become obscured over time in conjunction with the underlying conditions that brought this work into being, a more complete representation of life in interwar and Nazi-occupied Europe can be brought to light. Furthermore, the crucial role that film played in influencing their painted articulations of this highly mechanized and politically polarized climate may also reveal how cinema has impacted other figurative—especially Magic Realist—painters from this period.

Notes

1 Hans Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting: Een onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930–1945* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978), 79.
2 See Claartje Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer: Geschiedenis en Herinnering* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 46.
3 Franz Roh, "Realismo mágico: Problemas de la pintura europea más reciente," translated by José Ortega y Gasset, *Revista de Occidente* 16, no. 48 (June 1927), 274–301. Maggie Ann Bowers claims that the addition of the "-al" in Magic(al) Realism denotes a literary style that is distinct from Magic Realism and is steeped in connotations relating to anti-colonialist struggle. See Maggie Ann Bowers, "Delimiting the Terms," in *Magic(al) Realism*, *the New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 20–31. For more on Bontempelli and Magic Realism see Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 110–111.
4 *Forum* (1932–1935) journal, edited by Menno ter Braak and Edgar du Perron, is considered to be one of the foremost publication venues for the movement. See also Gillis J. Dorleijn, "Challenging the Autonomous Realm of Literature: Nieuwe Zakelijkheid and Poetry in the Dutch Literary Field," in *Neue Sachlichkeit and Avant-Garde*, edited by Ralf Grüttemeier, Klaus Beekman, and Ben Rebel (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 19–49.
5 See Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), 115–116. See also Seymour Menton, *Magic Realism Rediscovered: 1918–1981* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1983), 51.
6 As cultural historian Irene Guenther has noted, the glut of Magic Realist–themed exhibitions and publications that proliferated since the 1960s stretched the meaning of the term beyond recognition. See Irene Guenther, "Magic Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts During the Weimar Republic," in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 33–34. Roh's basic definitions, however, continue to prove useful.
7 One reviewer in 1931 described the modern Dutch art of the day as exhibiting an "onsamenhangend karakter" (an incoherent character). "Hedendaagsche Europeesche Kunst. De internationaal tentoonstelling te Brussel. Veel Verwarring en Weinig Stabiliteit," *De Maasbode* (June 26, 1931), 5.
8 Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 2, 7.
9 Ibid., 14; Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 110.
10 Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium Is the Message," in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, edited by W. Terrence Gordon (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964, 1994), 7–21. See also Standish Lawder, "Film as Modern Art: Picasso, Survage, Kandinsky, Schönberg" and "The Abstract Film: Richter, Eggeling, and Ruttmann," in *The Cubist Cinema* (New York University Press, 1975), 19–64.
11 Tom Gunning, "Cinema and the New Spirit in Art Within a Culture of Movement," in *Picasso, Braque and Early Film in Cubism*, exh. cat. (New York: Pace Gallery, 2007), 20–23.
12 Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 228–319.
13 Malcolm Turvey, *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 16, 169.
14 Ibid., 14–15, 45.
15 Wild argued that the Cubists helped hone a new kind of viewer in his or her contemplation of the canvas. Examining the impact of film exhibition technologies on avant-garde painters in the early twentieth century, Wild suggested that many early projection methods redefined concepts of space as it related to the screen, offering a new kind of "interspatial address." Jennifer Wild, "Seeing Through Cinema," in *The Parisian Avant-Garde in the Age of Cinema, 1900–1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 32, 37.
16 See also Marina Grishakova, "The Myth of Total Cinema," in *The Gesamtkunstwerk as Synergy of the Arts*, vol. 42, edited by Massimo Fusillo and Marina Grishakova (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2021), 83.

1 Magic Realism in The Netherlands
Neorealism in Context

Identified from the outset by a variety of appellations, there wasn't really a precise moment when the aesthetic tendency variously named Neorealism, Nieuw Realisme, Magic Realism, or Nieuwe Zakelijkheid officially emerged in The Netherlands. While it did not constitute a coherent style or "ism" in an official sense, the origin story of this impulse comprised a loosely defined, sometimes conflicting narrative whose key players remain the subject of debate, the finer points of which this chapter will attempt to elucidate. If there had ever existed one single overriding shared or core identity among these artists, it was that the very affinities that defined and thus unified the artists working in this polyonymous tendency were first recognized by entities other than the artists themselves, primarily critics, dealers, and curators.

One way to visualize the above-described phenomenon in its critically derived formation, I would propose, is through a model of centripetal influence. Such a paradigm—albeit imperfect—elucidates an external dynamic of containment whereby various professionals, through their introduction of common themes and identifying terms, steered the interpretation of work by such as Pyke Koch, Carel Willink, Raoul Hynckes, Charley Toorop, Dick Ket, and Wim Schuhmacher, ultimately deciding the trajectory of their careers. I argue that within this framing, multiple spheres of influence arose, from the local to the international, each one nested within the next, responding to similar, yet distinct forces. These artists certainly demonstrated the same interest in pragmatism, progress, rationalization, and streamlined appearances that preoccupied other exemplars of this global trend, such as the German artists of Neue Sachlichkeit. However, the forenamed painters also asserted a modern take on objective reality, while presenting a contradictory form of nationalism that derived from a definitively Dutch outlook.

One leading theory is that the Neorealist aesthetic officially emerged in 1930 at an exhibition at the P. de Boer Gallery in Amsterdam, where critics noted distinctions in the foreign influences that had been impressed on the painters Kor Postma, Pyke Koch, and Carel Willink. Writing for *De Telegraaf*, Kasper Niehaus observed that while the former appeared to have drawn from French Surrealism, the latter two represented the two branches of German Neue Sachlichkeit, Koch was the Dutch equivalent to Otto Dix's verism, while Willink channeled the Neoclassical wing.[1] Briefly dubbed "The Pigeons" due to the shared theme of birds that appear in their paintings, a concerted attempt to forge an official group did not materialize.[2]

Over the next few years, a different realignment asserted itself, eventually pushing Postma to the periphery. All three artists showed together again in late 1931 at an exhibition held at Frans Buffa and Sons, one of the most important art dealerships

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operating in Amsterdam at the time. Of the fifty-odd paintings on display, those that stood apart for the press included canvases by Postma, Willink, Koch, Toorop, and to a lesser extent Hynckes and Schuhmacher. Koch's painting *Bertha van Antwerpen* (Bertha of Antwerp), 1931, was typical of his series of hard-boiled female types often modeled after the likeness of Asta Nielsen; his titles play on the "stage names" adopted by prostitutes, commonly derived from combining a chosen name with the city where they worked. Willink exhibited *Rustende Venus* (Resting Venus), 1931—essentially a portrait of his then wife Wilma. Fugitive patches of green and orange color in the painting detach themselves from the figure and background, competing with the highlights that never fully commit to the composition. In its distillation of ephemeral, atmospheric effects to a bare essence, the canvas evokes the qualities of a roused dream. Above anything else, critics noted the cynical character of these exhibitions, describing the works on display as reactionary and even surprising considering the relative youth of the artists who already seemed drained of life.[3] One writer for *De Maasbode* stated "The time of the new order of things, of a renewed and yet again traditionally pure pictorial vision has not yet arrived; but little by little comes the clarification, of the increasing powerlessness of the dark."[4]

Standing out above the rest was Charley Toorop's painting *Twee naakten* (Two Nudes; Figure 1.1), 1930, which critics described as exhibiting something "coarse" and "unpleasant."[5] Currently held in the permanent collection of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, this highly veristic work features a pair of unidealized, somewhat contorted, and very naked female sitters. A dark-haired woman stands in profile, the creases on her neck and below her eyes appear exaggerated, emphasizing her advanced age relative to the younger female figure seated before her. The more youthful woman with a blondish tinge sits in three-quarter profile, twisting her body in an unnaturalistic way. Pressing her knees tightly together and pushing her chest into the light, while still leaving half of her face obscured, this figure lays bare a fluctuating arrangement of forms, and demonstrates

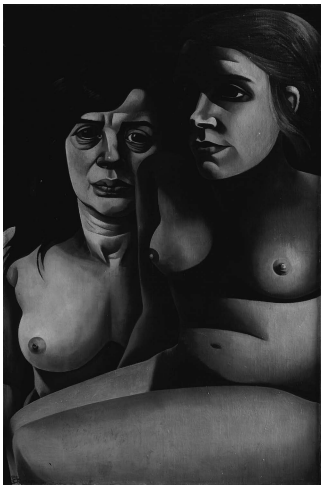

Figure 1.1 Charley Toorop, *Naaketen* (Nudes), 1930/1932, oil on canvas, 132.5 × 92.5 cm.

Source: Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (photo: Stedelijk Museum). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

the way that the singular light source renders each side of her body quite differently depending upon the shadows produced. Toorop's painting—like many others cited in the reviews for the 1931 Buffa and Sons show—likely perplexed critics for many reasons, one being the challenge of its categorization, which seemed to straddle the verism of Otto Dix with the uneasy nudity of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

The following year, a similar lineup of Neorealists, exhibiting many of the same canvases—this time without Kor Postma—stole the show at an exhibition held by the Sociëteit voor Culturele Samenwerking (Society for Cultural Cooperation) at the Excelsior building in The Hague.[6] In his review, critic Cornelis Veth centered Charley Toorop's paintings above all others, noting how her "aggressive" nudes dominated the exhibition. He also mentioned the different articulations of "zakelijkheid" (matter-of-factness) in the work of Willink, Koch, and Hynckes.[7] The next year it became clear that a new idiom had arrived, when critics—who had just begun to recognize Dick Ket's work—immediately compared his canvases to the aforementioned painters. In one of two articles that he wrote on Ket's 1933 exhibition at the Carel van Lier gallery, Jan Engelman described the artist's choice of color as "internalized" and "psychically charged," although lacking the "drama" of Hynckes, the "cruelty" of Koch, and the "literary" character of Willink.[8]

What these exhibitions and their critical reception brought to bear was the fact that Magic Realism—alternatively known as Neorealism in The Netherlands—was better understood as an idea imposed onto these artists from the exterior, rather than a declaration of shared values. The fact that the painters given this name were grouped and labeled by critics had led to an ambivalence among some, but not all, of the artists deemed representative. The only certainty was that Neorealism had manifested as a stylistic tendency rather than an organized movement with a specific ideological or aesthetic agenda. While Koch, Toorop, Willink, Hynckes, Ket, and Schuhmacher sometimes exhibited together and shared overlapping social circles, they, like their counterparts in Germany never formalized their affiliation or wrote a manifesto.[9] Rather the numerous agents of the art world assigned them a designation—one that they inconsistently applied—and which sometimes included the aforementioned surrealist Kor Postma, Dutch symbolist Jan Mankes, and the younger artist Edgar Fernhout, who happened to be Charley Toorop's son. Retrospective exhibitions have added Johan Mekkink, a follower of Dick Ket to this list as well.[10]

What was it then, that possessed so many Dutch cultural commentators to diagnose the sudden emergence of figuration in the late 1920s in this way? I would argue that certain capitalist interests, primarily industry-led modes of classification had already begun to trickle into critical assessments of the Neorealists' work. Emerging in a post–World War I moment and formed as ambivalent coterie of dispersed and unaffiliated artists with no shared, guiding principles, the formulation of Neorealism as a formal category by its critics has an origin story distinct from, but not totally dissimilar from that of the film genre.

While it was by no means new for an outsider or critic to supply the name to an emerging aesthetic tendency—a fact also true of Fauvism and Cubism—the lack of a core set of principles or leader distinguished ambivalent groupings of figurative tendencies like Neorealism at a time when the manifestos of the Futurists, the Surrealists, and even the anti-movement statement of the Dadaists had so dominated critical framings. I would argue that the classification of these Dutch painters—like other loosely affiliated artists working in a vaguely similar manner—more closely resembles a commercial objective, not unlike that of the film industry and its use of genre as a category. What separates

these two concepts lies in the financially incentivized level of organization on the part of the film industry, one that tasked itself with assaying and promoting popular genres for the dependability of their profit-making potential.[11] At stake here is the fact that the persistence of genre as a system of categorization implies the presence of an audience of viewers or art buyers, who in turn helped shape the end product through their market-acquired expectations.[12] Like the expansive and varied iterations of Magic Realism as a pan-European painting idiom, the film genres of the western or the musical, for example, were ultimately reified by virtue of the critics' cumulative identification of a larger phenomenon. The same can be said, I would argue, of the origins of Dutch Neorealism, and of Magic Realism writ more broadly. It is not insignificant that many of the critics who covered these exhibitions wore many hats, often also producing film columns, where they participated in the repeated recognition of film tropes, just as certain genres—such as the gangster or detective film—began to emerge.

Naturally, there remain underlying etymological questions pertaining to the aforementioned labels and their use. "Realism," was certainly not new to The Netherlands, which had a long and storied relationship to the concept dating back to the fifteenth century. Amid the experimentations in Dada and Surrealism, which never really caught on in the Dutch context, there was a desire among critics to promote an aesthetic in line with the return to figuration witnessed in Germany, Italy, France, and elsewhere. Many of those writing on the subject first turned their attention to the highly naturalistic stylings of De Brug (The Bridge) a Dutch modernist group founded in 1926 that included Charley Toorop, Rudolf Bremmer, Jan Wittenberg, and Truus van Hettinga Tromp, among others.[13] It was not until the turn of the next decade, however, that these same critics began to identify the arrival of a definitive—and sometimes misanthropic—tendency, one in need of its own name.

There is little doubt when observing the references made in the critical texts, of the influential role played by Franz Roh's 1925 book *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Post-Expressionism: Magic Realism. Problems of the Newest European Painting). Having surfaced in the late 1920s, Neorealism only lagged behind Roh's observations by a handful of years, and would not receive mention in his text until the French translation included them in the preface.[14] Nevertheless, the figurative paintings by Koch, Willink, Toorop, Hynckes, Ket, and Schuhmacher—particularly those produced during the 1930s—pushed Roh's inquiries into objectness and objectivity in ways that confronted a culturally specific definition of Realism based in the Early Netherlandish tradition. The implications of adopting a figurative mode during such a period of heightened nationalism is further complicated by its stylistic range as well as the lack of a shared core aesthetic objective.

Like the numerous figurative tendencies that materialized across Europe during the interwar years, Neorealist painting has been difficult to disentangle from the moment of heightened nationalism in which it emerged. This problem was further complicated by the introduction of a nationalist ethos in The Netherlands, a viewpoint that historians had long thought antithetical to the essential Dutch character. Indeed, if we are to take seriously the words of prominent pundits, the idea of what it meant to be Dutch had, by the interwar period, come to reflect the cumulative values of its historical epochs, from Burgundy, to the Dutch Revolt, to World War I, all of which placed in high esteem the principles of tolerance, pragmatism, and civic-mindedness. From academic treatises to essays in popular journalistic venues, expressions of Dutchness during the 1920s and early '30s often reflected upon a culture that was cosmopolitan rather than nationalistic—a

confluence of French, German, and English cultural influences.[15] One common refrain articulated in the postwar years was that the Dutch prided themselves on their ability to consistently admit new immigrants, learn from their best qualities, and then absorb and integrate the best of all foreign ideas into their culture.[16]

As a neutral nation during both world wars, The Netherlands held a vulnerable political position from 1914 onwards that was intertwined with its unique notion of national identity. Unlike Italy and Germany, the national consciousness of The Netherlands was not affected by humiliating defeat; nor were there attempts at revolution from either the left or right. Moreover, unlike Belgium, France, and the United Kingdom, The Netherlands remained physically untouched by World War I, although it still suffered economic consequences from the conflict.[17] The Dutch created instead an alternative nationalism of difference based on values of tolerance and openness. To be sure, this counter-conception of "national identity" was itself an exploitable myth, and one that was vulnerable to outside geopolitical crises, particularly in the 1930s with the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, as the corpus of Neorealist images attests. At a time when fascism was on the rise for Italy and Germany, the relatively new notion of "Nationalism" did not have the same potency in the twentieth-century Netherlands.[18]

It was during the interwar period when historians such as Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) sought to identify the historical underpinnings of Dutch national identity to define a moral and cultural standpoint that was unique to The Netherlands. Huizinga traced what he believed to be the archetypal Dutch spirit back to the Duchy of Burgundy (1032–1477), wherein each region had its own sovereign *patria*, from which the concept of the pragmatic burgher who was respectful of differences originated.[19] His hypothesis helps to explain the cultural aversion towards governmental centralization and preference for medieval-style corporatism. He saw the nation's anti-nationalistic character as indicative of its potential to occupy a unique place in European politics—as a *gidsland* or "guiding country" that could serve as mediator among its surrounding bellicose neighbors.[20] In essence, he described a kind of Dutch exceptionalism that championed sensible action and coexistence over heroic grandstanding and expansionism.

There exists a parallel between this middle-way approach and exhibition practices in and around Amsterdam beginning in the mid-1920s. Artists and organizers sought ways to foster an atmosphere of unity, universalism, and internationalism among working modernists. In 1926, a virtual League of Nations comprising artists from the major stylistic currents in The Netherlands assembled the organization Architectuur, Schilderkunst, Beeldhouwkunst (Architecture, Painting, Sculpture), better known as ASB. This photograph of the group in February of 1928 (Figure 1.2) captures them at their first ASB exhibition, which included one of the group's co-founders—the muralist Peter Alma—standing alongside Charley Toorop, who is posing with primitivist sculptor John Rädecker, Nieuwe Zakelijkheid architect Frits Staal, De Stijl architect Gerrit Rietveld, Amsterdam School architect Sybold van Ravesteyn, and Carel Willink.

As exemplars of a yet-to-be-named emerging figurative tendency, Toorop and Willink could not have better represented the stylistic poles—or rather spectrum—that was Neorealism. Toorop was known for her flat compositions and expressionistic figures that critics often described as "masculine" or "virile." Indebted to the emotive stylings of Vincent van Gogh, Toorop had by that point begun to introduce into her repertoire a relatively crude painting technique as well as an emphasis on the lives of working, agricultural classes. The only child of Jan Toorop, who helped to train and support her financially, Charley had by the late 1920s established herself as one of the most well-connected

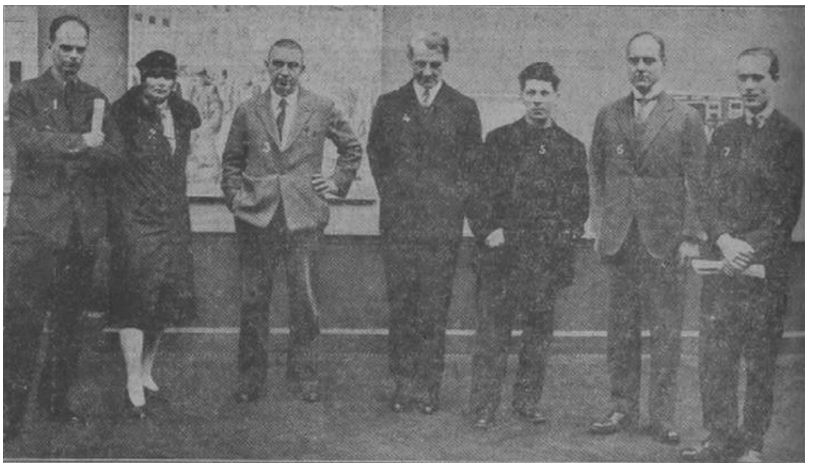

Figure 1.2 Photograph taken February 4, 1928, at the opening of the first ASB exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. *Left to right*, Peter Alma, Charley Toorop, John Rädecker, Frits Staal, Gerrit Rietveld, Sybold van Ravesteyn and Carel Willink.

Source: Published in *De Courant* (February 6, 1928): 4.

forces in the Dutch art world. Her studio and home in Bergen dubbed De Vlerken (The Wings) was just starting to become an important salon/gathering place for artists and poets, when in 1926—the same year in which she founded ASB—Toorop moved back to Amsterdam into an apartment on Leidsche Gracht.

Carel Willink also took up quarters in the very same neighborhood, not far from the Rijksmuseum. Having moved frequently throughout the 1920s, the itinerant painter abandoned his studies in medicine while in Berlin to train as an artist under the German critical realist Hans Baluschek at the International Painting School and had for a time briefly joined the Novembergruppe. His movements throughout the decade coincided with his experiments in a variety of artistic idioms, from the Paul Klee–inspired compositions he made in Germany from 1922–1923 to the tubular forms of Fernand Léger during his time in Paris at the studio of Henri Le Fauconnier. When this photograph was taken in 1928, he was just beginning to settle into the mature figurative style that would sustain him for the rest of his career, one marked by a stark sobriety and refined technique.

The Belgian-born painter Raoul Hynckes was encouraged to show at the second ASB exhibition held in 1929, having received an invitation through his connections with De Kring (The Circle), also based in Amsterdam.[21] It was around that time that Hynckes was shifting away from his prior Cubist influences and began moving toward the mature style reminiscent of the Dutch Old Masters that would reach its full realization in 1933.[22] After a brief Impressionist period in the 1910s while at the Académie Royale des Beaux Arts in Brussels, and his conscription in the army during World War I, Hynckes fled to the neutral Netherlands, where he began painting the still lifes for which he became so well known.[23] Inspired by trends he saw in French Neoclassicism and the Bergen School, he first filled his repertoire with images of pots, jugs, guitars, and music sheets, which often appeared stylized and geometricized.

It was Toorop, however, who truly burnished her credentials as a leader, spearheading numerous artistic circles that included ASB. In 1926, she penned an open letter laying

out her hopes for the organization, undersigned by Willink, Piet Mondrian, and Bart van der Leck, among others. In the manifesto-like declarations of her prose, she declared that the group would embrace any and all stylistic directions popular at the time that represent the best of young working artists. They would form a union to organize better exhibitions and bring young Dutch artists into contact with foreign associations, and in the process, strengthen any bonds between art movements or art forms. This union, she claimed, would help broaden the public's interest in modern art as well.[24]

Toorop's words resonated with a social fact that is unique to The Netherlands, and one that was reaching its zenith in the early twentieth century. Since the late nineteenth century, The Netherlands had been organized according to a politico-denominational segregation system called *verzuiling*, a concept that loosely translates to "pillarization," in which different political and faith-based communities divided into "pillars" were granted the authority to run their own institutions, from schools and news sources to banks and hospitals. Introduced to accommodate the plurality of thought and creed that had existed in the nation since it had established its sovereignty in 1581, the Dutch developed this unique solution that nevertheless had some unintended consequences, which included a kind of social compartmentalization. While it afforded The Netherlands a degree of distance from the homogeneity cultivated in other European countries, the lack of a strong national identity and inter-community social connections became a liability during the interwar period, when the rise of Nazism in nearby Germany demanded greater political consensus. As the war approached, the push to reform pillarization to foster coalition-based expressions of moral outrage did not come to fruition.[25]

Exacerbating this lack of cohesion on the cultural front, certain newspaper staff critics tended to champion works of art that suited the interests of the political or denominational pillar that aligned with their respective journalistic outlet. This meant that Surrealism and its emphasis on what some critics perceived as bourgeois individualism did not receive much coverage because it lacked a worthy social purpose.[26] As luck would have it, the inherent dubbelzinnigheid of the Neorealists' aesthetic and subject matter opened their paintings to interpretation. Their work could be read in different ways to convey a message ascribable to a particular worldview. Conservative critics such as Kasper Niehaus emphasized the artists' indebtedness to Old Master painting traditions. At times, the personal relationships that these painters forged with certain critics, combined with their heterogeneous political persuasions, played a part in influencing the writers' critical analyses.

Echoing the ideological silos that resulted from the verzuiling system, the painters demonstrating a Neorealist tendency ran the gamut in their political affiliations, or lack thereof. Charley Toorop occupied the far-left portion of the political spectrum: she became a member of the Socialistische Kunstenaarskring (Socialist Art Circle) in 1930 and joined the Communistische Partij van Nederland (the Dutch Communist Party) after World War II.[27] Wim Schuhmacher, who had known Toorop since his days in the Bergen School artist colony, also held socialist views throughout his life. Willink, by contrast, was much more politically ambiguous. He, like Dick Ket, was largely a skeptic of the major parties and critical of the parliamentary system and its effectiveness.[28] The politics of Belgian-born Raoul Hynckes were equally difficult to define and were often borne out of financial necessity.[29] The one artist who most distinguished himself from the rest politically was Pyke Koch. Born in the small town of Beek in the province of Limburg, he had been based in Utrecht since pursuing his studies in law. While at university in 1920 he joined a conservative youth organization called the Utrechtsch Studenten Corps, a

group who four years later declared its allegiance to fascism in its newspaper Vox Studiosorum.[30] Before the war Koch joined the Verbond van Dietsche Nationaal Solidaristen (Union of Diets National Solidarists), also known as Verdinaso, a political movement modeled on the corporatism practiced in Fascist Italy, and which envisioned a future ethno-state uniting The Netherlands with Flanders.

It is perhaps then not surprising that such a mix of worldviews failed to result in the formation of a clearly defined artistic movement guided by a set of shared principles. This absence of an ism was not by any means a predicament exclusive to these Dutch painters, and the fact that the defining terms of this figurative idiom had been diagnosed by critics speaks to the more widespread use of the term "Magic Realism" and its origins in Germany, where it emerged from critical discourse, rather than from the artists themselves. Debates over the name first began in 1922 in the pages of the Berlin-based publication *Das Kunstblatt* (The Art Paper), which circulated a questionnaire that sought a name for the new tendency. Museum director Gustav Hartlaub inserted himself, settling on the label "Neue Sachlichkeit."[31] Corresponding with Munich art historian Franz Roh, Hartlaub developed the idea for an exhibition under that title, held at the Kunsthalle Mannheim in 1925, where he was the director. Taking over the curatorial role entirely, Hartlaub ultimately expanded the show into two wings—the socially critical left-leaning verists represented by Otto Dix and George Grosz and the more conservative, timeless, classical "right" wing of Kanoldt and Georg Schrimpf.

Exchanges between the two curators laid the foundation for Roh's book *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Post-Expressionism: Magic Realism. Problems of the Newest European Painting), which formed the theoretical basis of Magic Realism.[32] Originally intended for sale at the traveling version of the Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition, Roh's book differed from Hartlaub's concept for the exhibition in that it consistently resisted assigning a political bias to the new figuration, asserting instead its dedication to identifying a confluence of prewar stylistic developments.[33] According to Roh, Post-Expressionism—a designation that he used interchangeably with Magic Realism—embodied a tension between a "devotion to the world as it exists before us and the will to create one in opposition to it."[34] It was likely for this reason that Roh credited Carlo Carrà more than de Chirico with ushering in the new style, due to the way in which the former conveyed a "measured emptiness" in his canvases, while the latter carried out a series of endless negations.[35]

The term Magic Realism has long been plagued by the fact that Roh never concisely defined the word *magische* found in his subtitle. Drawing inspiration from everyday reality, such as middle- and working-class dwellings, factory settings and mundane household objects, Magic Realism, according to Roh, synthesized opposing aesthetic qualities, such as the organic and the man-made.[36] According to Roh, by combining deformation with transcendence, Magic Realism took a studied, critical distance from reality, as opposed to the emotive and chaotic fervor that characterized the prewar movement. He described it as having evolved beyond Expressionism; as something embedded within, rather than trying to escape from the visible world.[37] In all of the vague, expository prose of his book, he came closest to ascribing a definition to the term when he distinguished the concept of "magic" from that of the "mystical," noting the former's evocation of something "secret" hidden behind outward appearances.[38]

Even Carel Willink eventually addressed the slippery nature of the label in his 1950 essay *Schilderkunst in een kritiek stadium* (Painting at a Critical Stage), clarifying his own philosophy of "Magic Realism," a term that he used reluctantly and always in

quotation marks due to the negative political associations that it had acquired during the war years.[39] He argued that the tendency rendered visible what was not immediately optically perceptible, such as the depiction of psychological alienation as literally manifest in physical deformities or representations of confinement. In this way, Magic Realism was not so different from abstract art, which conveyed a world that existed, but which could not be seen. Like the fictive, but highly naturalistic aesthetic offered by cinema, the representational nature of Magic Realism, Willink argued, made it ideal for depicting the harsh truths about the ongoing cultural crisis.[40]

It was only just before the emergence of the Neorealist aesthetic in The Netherlands—in 1926—that the seeds were first sown for Dutch critics to take the same kind taxonomic analyses that had become the norm in German scholarship. On October 21 of that year Professor Gerhardus Knuttel delivered a gloss on the interwar return to figuration at the University of Utrecht in which he used the word "classicizing" to describe his observation of a new formal approach.[41] While he mostly focused on other European countries, Knuttel also detected an inclination toward both precision and figuration in the work of De Brug (The Bridge). He even applied the label "Nieuwe Objectiviteit" (New Objectivity) to describe their work.[42] Coming one year after the Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition in Mannheim, Germany and one month after the publication of Jean Cocteau's book *Rappel à l'ordre*, Knuttel's lecture stood apart from art discourse outside of The Netherlands in the 1920s that characterized the return to figuration in nativist terms.[43]

Knuttel stressed the "self-discipline" of this new "Classicism" in service to community interests.[44] He saw it as an aesthetic embodied in the new spirit of the age: a time of major transitions perceptible in the youthful bodies of the period, such as short hair on women and shaved faces for men—new, streamlined grooming trends that Knuttel likened to machinery and modern architecture.[45] He described this emerging "business-like" attitude as one that was not dogmatic, in that it could include the architects of the Amsterdam School as well as artists and designers working in De Stijl.[46] Using the term *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*, Knuttel also placed Piet Mondrian and Bart van der Leck under the label, viewing them as being in conversation with the "Purists" Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier.[47] Acutely aware of the recent scholarship in Germany, Knuttel cited Hartlaub's 1925 exhibition in Mannheim, but ignored the verist contributions to that show, focusing only on the "logical" and practical" principles in the overriding aesthetic that could be applied to modern industrial engineering and infrastructure design.[48] He even paraphrased text from *Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus*, but reinterpreted Roh's emphasis on "das Ding an sich" (the thing in itself) through the lens of Purism.[49] Unlike the evolved form of Expressionism that Roh had described in his book, this emerging tendency to "objectify" human emotion, according to Knuttel, aimed to realize a shared, universal form of expression rather than give form to the subjective experience of the individual.[50]

Unique to Knuttel's take on the return to figuration is the way that he framed this new "Classicism" as revealing a desire to articulate a set of shared utopian and universalist values that transcended geographical boundaries. Identifying the emerging tendency as one that emanated from Europe and particularly concerned the West, or rather anywhere that "the white race leaves its mark on society," Knuttel characterized it as the aesthetic equivalent of the gidsland. It had the potential to enable social coalescence in unparalleled ways, binding the then current generation of artists together across cultural divides through a variety of subtle spiritual evocations.[51] According to Knuttel, the tendency allowed for deeper social- and self-knowledge in the way that it promoted an

understanding of the zeitgeist.[52] His description of this emerging tendency as one that was socially binding—like a spiritual balm that could heal Europe from its wartime memories and the lingering resentment of the Treaty of Versailles—was distinct from Return to Order treatises published in other European countries. Knuttel's words reflected the neutral position of The Netherlands during World War I; in contrast to their bellicose neighbors, the Dutch did not need to demonize an enemy with which the nation was previously at war, nor justify a sense of national pride in the aftermath of a humiliating defeat.[53] The development of Dutch Neorealism, however, soon undermined this idea of using art as a unifying force.

Three years after Knuttel's lecture, Gustav Hartlaub's Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition first held in Mannheim in 1925, made its way to the Stedelijk Museum, where it went on display in May of 1929.[54] This iteration of the show displayed many of the same artists included in the original, such as George Grosz, Rudolf Schlichter, Carl Mense, and George Schrimpf, as well as several others who were not, like Franz Radziwill, Christian Schad, and Carl Grossberg. The organizers capitalized on a new trend toward figuration among Dutch artists as witnessed in a similar tendency emerging of select individuals associated with artist societies in Amsterdam such as the Onafhankelijken (Independents) where Koch and Ket exhibited as well as ASB.

In the accompanying catalogue to the Stedelijk exhibition—which neither mentions nor quotes from Hartlaub's original essay—Amsterdam critic Kasper Niehaus specifically and repeatedly cited Roh's book *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus* throughout the text. He lamented the fact that the Munich art historian likely did not know about any Dutch examples of the style that had been "flourishing" in The Netherlands, because it was not intensely propagandistic. Offering the examples of Sal Meijer and Dirk Berend Nanninga, Niehaus claimed that the style's presence in The Netherlands had pre-dated the Stedelijk show, but that the Germans first gave it a name.[55] In the years following the Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition at the Stedelijk, critics including Niehaus began to observe in the work of Pyke Koch, Carel Willink, Raoul Hynckes, Dick Ket, Charley Toorop, and Wim Schuhmacher, among others, echoes of this new enigmatic figurative idiom sometimes synonymous with Neue Sachlichkeit, a stylistic trend known for its cold visual sobriety and emphasis on banal subject matter, and which went by many other names: Classicism, New Realism, or Neorealism.[56]

The Stedelijk show had an important impact on the evolution of the figurative idiom that was already percolating in The Netherlands. Two paintings by Pyke Koch even appeared in an exhibition running tandem with the 1929 Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum representing works by the Onafhankelijken group whose work, Niehaus claimed, resonated with the Germans on display in its emphasis on "reality."[57] At the 1929 Stedelijk show he presented two canvases: *Achterbuurtrapsodie* (Rhapsody of the Slums), 1929, a painting of an Amsterdam street lined with row houses and a cart filled with mannequin heads, and a street musician, as well as *Portret Asta Nielsen* (Portrait of Asta Nielsen), 1929, depicting his favorite screen actress, who was by that time an aging but still internationally popular film star.[58]

While the show did not have large attendance numbers, it was frequented by a self-selecting group of art connoisseurs and painters drawn to the idiom. One of those artists was Dick Ket, whose figurative approach is thought to have been greatly affected by the 1929 Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition. Although he flirted with Expressionism as an art student at the Kunstoefening (Academy of Decorative Arts) in Arnhem, Ket quickly transitioned to his mature style in the same year as the show.[59] It was also at this time

that he began his artistic career by sending his work to the Amsterdam artist society Arti et Amicitiae (For Art and Friendship) to become a member.[60]

Mixed reactions to the Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition among artists later declared the quintessential practitioners of Neorealism echoed the disunity at the heart of the stylistic idiom. For example, Charley Toorop did not see her work reflected in the Stedelijk show. She never saw or described herself as painting in a manner similar to the German Neue Sachlichkeit artists and rejected what she had seen in the 1929 Stedelijk show as "journalism" and overly intellectualized "barbarism." Claiming her work to be German in essence rather than Dutch, due to its emphasis on tragedy, Toorop made sure to take her distance from the "moralizing and hateful" paintings of George Grosz and Otto Dix.[61] Besides, she had begun to focus on the everyday lives of the proletariat—especially agricultural workers—figures who were more politically invested in working-class solidarity, the collective, and the dignity of labor.

Among other artists demonstrating a Neorealist tendency, the influence of this 1929 exhibition on their development is difficult to surmise. Koch had only very recently taken up painting after auditing courses in Old Master techniques and art history while at university and soon settled into his mature style in the early 1930s.[62] The show's impact on the oeuvres of Carel Willink, Raoul Hynckes, and Wim Schuhmacher is equally oblique. None had an abrupt transition into favoring closed forms and finished surfaces, although all three would ultimately do away with any Cubist, or abstract-inspired aesthetic practices by the turn of the new decade. Willink was living in France at that time and would only transition to his characteristic figurative style in the early 1930s when he returned to Amsterdam. Hynckes did not introduce his famous vanitas themes into his repertoire until around 1933, a time that his biographer J.H. van der Hoop identifies with the artist's true embrace of the Neorealist aesthetic.[63] The subject matter in autodidact Wim Schuhmacher's paintings remained unchanged from the beginning of his career in the 1920s, although his style became even more conservative, with stabilized perspectives and more clearly defined backgrounds. Like everything else tracing the origins of Neorealism as a figurative idiom in The Netherlands, the story of the Stedelijk is but one single facet.

In the imagination of local art critics, however, the Stedelijk show cast a long shadow on the Dutch figurative painting that succeeded it. Perhaps because of this exhibition, *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*, the Dutch transliteration of the German Neue Sachlichkeit, was briefly used in the late 1920s and early 1930s as an identifier that could draw a closer connection between the Dutch painters, the German artists on display at the original Mannheim exhibition, and the other traveling shows. In fact, Neue Sachlichkeit was a broad-reaching term that captured the cultural zeitgeist of early 1920s Germany due to its references to the clear-eyed economic pragmatism of the Dawes plan, the highly efficient promise of American Taylorism, and the sometimes-conflicting interests of democracy and consumerism.[64] This imposition of a foreign label should be seen as an early attempt by critics and curators to align these artists with a known quantity, forging a generic relationship that would allow an art-going public to better understand this emerging figurative trend. Notwithstanding such critical framings, the use of the term Nieuwe Zakelijkheid in The Netherlands was short-lived and never adopted by the artists themselves in a programmatic sense, nor did they embrace the use of a group label. At the heart of this denomination, however, was the identification of a stylistic idiom that foregrounded "thingness" in its subjects and surface treatments. Zakelijkheid, like Sachlichkeit, can loosely be translated into English as having the properties of matter-of-factness, but this

definition is inextricable from its root word *zaak* (the rough equivalent of *Sache* in German), which refers to both "thing" and "fact."[65] The "thing" in this case suggests the quotidian object in all of its inexpressive banality.

Perhaps that is why—as Franz Roh rightly observed—during the interwar period, precisely rendered man-made environments and their ordinary contents (objects and furnishings) came to be seen as the last immutable domain of stability in a world ravaged by technological progress. It is for this reason that the artists working in a Magic Realist manner, in The Netherlands and elsewhere, tended to locate their subjects in mundane settings, such as middle-class interiors, nondescript city streets, and vaguely recognizable buildings that play upon memory due to their resemblance to actual structures. In these locations—best visualized by the paintings of Carel Willink—often-solitary figures are forced to reconcile with the palpable tension that threatens the last safe provinces of the everyman. In one example titled *De Jobstijding* (Bad Tidings; Figure 1.3), 1932, a woman runs across a cobblestone street, letter in hand; the implication of the combined image and title is that she is trying to deliver an urgent piece of news to the man strolling on the sidewalk. Having depicted the female subject as if she is frozen in place, Willink suspends any sense of resolution: the letter and its potentially deleterious contents, presumably foreshadowed by the threatening sky above, can never be delivered. Within this blissful moment of ignorance before the bad news arrives, the artist places the beholder in the objective position of knowing that the man—at least in theory—is about to receive it. What does Willink then take as his subject other than the ambiguity that results from the irresolute and open-ended nature of the composition? In my view it is a scene that—more than anything else—reproduces for the viewer a sensation of tension through the experience of a permanently thwarted conclusion.

Figure 1.3 Carel Willink, *Jobstijding* (Bad Tidings), 1932, tempera on canvas, 73.6 × 104.9 cm.

Source: Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

What *Bad Tidings* also introduces—like many paintings produced by Willink and other Neorealists from this period—is an open question about the treatment of the human figure as something denuded of motivation by virtue of its reference to motion and the refusal of a completed action. If we are to push this reading of Willink's 1932 painting further, it could also be said that the overdetermination of the figure's inanimate status engages the trope of the automaton. In this case, Willink represents a problem elucidated by Magic Realism that operates in two directions: the humanization of the object and the objectification of the human. One of the central problems that Roh elaborated upon in his book was *Dingschärfe*, or "Thingness." The German art historian explained this concept in *Nach Expressionismus* as an object in a state of being, which explained the return to solid figuration after Expressionism and the tension that sits beneath the surface.[66] He emphasized the "magic of being" in a thing that already exists, describing it as existence crystallized, and rejecting analyses of the period that viewed the new emergent style as purely objective and not responding to the chaos of the period.[67] According to Roh, these critics overlooked the spiritual quality of Magic Realism that helped to explain the underlying tension between idea and reality.[68]

Roh's insistence on the inorganic quality of manufactured products from the modern age added another dimension to the idea of "thingness" as a substance that is in any way synthetic or characterized by a standardized materiality. The machine, Roh argued, had become a symbol; an instrument that could communicate the inherent dualism between the man-made and the organic. For this reason, Roh did not view geometric abstraction—specifically *Konstruktivismus* (Constructivism)—as mutually exclusive to this new spirit.[69] Referring to Bauhaus artists Vasily Kandinsky and Paul Klee specifically, Roh claimed that the "Constructivists" began to introduce a scientific vision of the world into their practice by presenting the image of a new artistic practitioner who synthesized the human with modern technology.[70] His inclusion of Georg Scholz's 1923 oil *Fleisch und Eisen* (Flesh and Iron; Figure 1.4) among the illustrations in

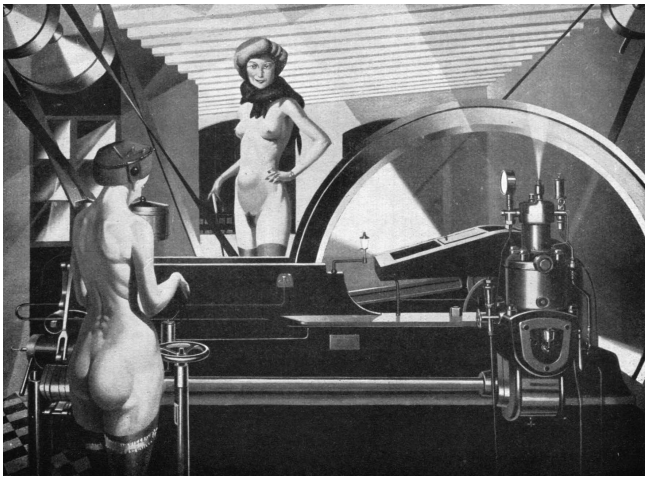

Figure 1.4 Georg Scholz, *Fleisch und Eisen* (Flesh and Iron), 1923, oil on canvas, 75 × 100 cm.

Source: Reproduced in Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der Neuesten Europaischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann), 1925. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, and Klinkhardt & Biermann.

Nach Expressionismus embodies this intersection of the machinic and the organic (human). It depicts two women typed as prostitutes, completely nude except for a few accessories—a hat, a cane, thigh-high stockings, and a shawl—standing around a steam engine. The heavy chiaroscuro modeling on their bodies appears as stylized and geometricized as the sleek surface of the machinery; flesh becomes metal and metal flesh. This painting has even been described as a twentieth-century allegory of technological progress in which the female body symbolizes nature alienated from its original state as it is confronted by the specter of mechanical innovation.[71]

Indeed, there is an additional meaning of the term zakelijkheid—as it applies to Neorealist imagery—that denotes the suitability of a thing in relationship to its intended purpose; or rather the way that an object's form and functionality embody the mass production system that brought it into being. In that sense, the material and sometimes tactile qualities resulting from modern technological processes are inextricable from the complex definition of this term. Such an aesthetic was not new to the history of art in The Netherlands, which had a long tradition of both exploiting and mimicking modern technology to emphasize the sense of tactility and thus the solidity of things, often by using optical instruments. After all, the technique of verisimilitude in Dutch painting originates with the work of the Early Netherlandish painters and has long been held in esteem. In many instances the Dutch/Flemish hypervigilance towards optical truth responded to—and sometimes even anticipated—the introduction of new, often Dutch-invented technologies, such as the microscope and the telescope in the seventeenth century.

The use of the word zakelijkheid, however, was prone to slippage; in the Dutch context it began to take on significations that referred to the values of sobriety, simplicity, and democratization specific to the Calvinist tradition. Critics began consciously using the term in ways different from the German Sachlichkeit.[72] Writers Jan van Heugten and Menno ter Braak applied the label to poetry, architecture, and even the non-objective paintings of De Stijl. Due to its overly elastic application and the fact that it was viewed as a German transliteration, Nieuwe Zakelijkheid as an artistic designation quickly fell into disuse in the 1930s. In 1929 the critic Albert Plaesschaert suggested the term *Nieuw Realisme*, now shortened to Neorealism, which also connoted ideas of objective truth or matter-of-factness, conveying the traditional Calvinist concepts of honesty, sobriety, and introspection. He first coined it because he sought something concise and in his view something that was essentially Dutch (i.e., simpler, pragmatic) than what was considered to be a clearly German-derived Nieuwe Zakelijkheid.[73]

Albert Plaesschaert's suggestion for a new designation was but one example of the many ways in which art critics working in the 1920s and '30s Netherlands interpreted the Neorealists' paintings. Art writers played an outsized role in influencing the kinds of work that would be shown at exhibition. In fact, this issue was so prevalent that a group of artists set up a "critic commission" that attempted to block problematic reviewers—more specifically Plaesschaert himself—from accessing galleries and tipping the scales to the benefit of certain artists over others.[74] Favoritism was also a charge directed at many of these journalists, who had close friendships with the artists, such as Pyke Koch and Jan Engelman, Toorop and Hammacher, Jan Greshoff and Carel Willink, or Raoul Hynckes and Plasschaert.

It is also the case that the inherent ambiguity of this style served certain critics who saw a potential for reading polemic into the Neorealists' work. This is true in the framing of Neorealism within the pages of *Forum*, an important Dutch literary magazine from the period, edited by the writers Menno Ter Braak and Edy du Perron. The journal began to

reproduce the paintings of Koch, Willink, and Toorop in 1932 along with critical interpretations of their work. One commentator reviewing *Forum* for the *Twentsche Dagblad* appreciated the inclusion of the Neorealists' work in the magazine precisely because of the way that it forced the reader to wrestle with the difficulty of quantifying it. Projecting imagined reactions to the juxtaposition of word and image, the journalist described an exercise that was "intellectual" rather than simply "pictorial," one that emphasized "neither beauty nor love, but only the truth (although hardly reality!)," while encouraging the audience asks themselves "What kind of art is that!"[75] As a result of this literary contextualization, the Neorealists' paintings fulfilled the journal's objective to promote polemic and grapple with varied perspectives rather than becoming engrossed in poetics.[76]

Still, other critics argued that the new figuration emerging in The Netherlands shared an aesthetic lineage with what Roh had observed in Germany. Kasper Niehaus, also an artist, helped shape the reception and interpretation of this new tendency in his journalism, often using the term Magic Realist to describe the artists and making many references to Franz Roh's book, beginning with a 1926 review for *De Telegraaf*.[77] In that article, he remarked upon Roh's ignorance of the emerging figurative "realist" tendency in The Netherlands, and reiterated the urgency of publicizing, or conducting "Dutch artistic propaganda" to ameliorate this deficiency. Niehaus's insistence on a rapprochement with Roh's ideas persisted throughout the decades that he wrote about the artists. I believe that it is for this reason—as well as Niehaus's particular affinity for the work of Hynckes and Schuhmacher—that the label stuck to some artists more than others.

During the interwar and Occupation periods Niehaus's use of "Magic Realism" led the term to be used interchangeably with Neorealism, the preferred choice of critic Simon Pierre Abas.[78] By 1946 Gerrit Kouwenaar remarked upon the arbitrary application of all terminology used to describe these artists, claiming that both Magic Realism and Neorealism had become indistinguishable as labels for representatives of the "Dutch version of Neue Sachlichkeit."[79] In one widely cited example of this critic-imposed categorization, Abas used the designation of Neorealist in reference to Carel Willink's 1934 canvas *Het gele huis* (The Yellow House; Figure 1.5), citing the painting as an illustrative example of this new aesthetic inclination, which the critic distinguished from Freudian-derived Surrealism. Depicting a stately but unidentified townhouse at the end of the city block, the right side of the canvas opens into an abandoned plaza. Save for two crumpled pieces of paper lying in the cobblestone street, all evidence of human existence has been eliminated, or denied, as in the windows that merely reflect the barren trees on the other side of the street, disallowing a view into the home. The scene is entirely plausible, but its Eugène Atget-like emphasis on this unpeopled urban space implies an uncanny encounter with the everyday, work-a-day environment, or what Abas described as "impossible to experience as that of the world in which we eat and drink."[80]

S. P. Abas was one of a handful of art critics working during this period who formed a strong opinion around this new idiom, and the kind of designation that the writers hoped to give to it. He preferred to use the term Nieuw Realisme to describe the artists' indebtedness to the Dutch "realist" tradition as it was termed, while also acknowledging their uncanny departure from it.[81] In fact, it was Abas who first tied together Pyke Koch, Raoul Hynckes, and Carel Willink in a famous article for *De Vrije Bladen* titled "Painters of Another Reality" from 1937, considered for decades to be the defining original text on Neorealism.[82] While their labels were always applied in a manner that was consistently inconsistent, Willink, Hynckes, and Koch were most frequently grouped together, both during the interbellum years and in retrospectives. These three artists always maintained

Figure 1.5 Carel Willink, *Het gele huis* (The Yellow House), 1934, oil on canvas, 100 × 74 cm.

Source: Collection Museum Arnhem (photo: Peter Cox). Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

a certain ambivalence about this nominal affiliation, which they sometimes embraced and at other times rejected.[83]

To my mind, what these critical interventions ultimately produced was a centripetal mode of categorization that delimits the interpretive boundaries of the artwork under discussion, in effect filling the void left by the lack of an artist group. After all, since the manifesto had become de rigueur within avant-garde circles by the mid 1920s, what were critics and curators to do with this unaffiliated tendency that lacked any sort of stated aims or cohesive goals other than to suss out the terms themselves?

As a flow of energy contained by the coordination of several external forces and an internal anchor, centripetality, when used as a metaphor, describes the group-identity formation of the Neorealists as a byproduct of their art context. It was the critics' repeated attempts to supply identifying words that effectively tethered these artists around a fixed pole, nominating them either Neorealist or Magic Realist, while ultimately closing ranks behind an accepted definition. Such an orientation is echoed many times over in the origin story of this aesthetic, but is also visually present in the closed forms, tight facture, and introverted representations of sociality found in Neorealist painting. Unsurprisingly, these same descriptors have also appeared in English-language translations of Franz Roh's book *Nach Expressionismus*. Appearing near the end of Franz Roh's Wölfflinian schema, which contrasts the essential characteristics of Expressionism and Post-Expressionism, the English version of the text uses the word "centripetal" to translate the original German phrasing of *In ihnen festsitzend* (clinging to itself), while "centrifugal" is used for *Gegen die Bildränder arbeitend* (Pushing toward the edges of the picture).[84] The essence

of such movements—directed by a force void of conscious, deliberate action—effectively describes the aesthetic operations of both the Expressionists and the Magic Realists. It is also true, however, that in the search for a generic disposition, this centripetal pull can also be seen as initiating something generative, wherein the artists each in their own way also begin to recognize a common alignment in their aesthetic interests. In this sense, their later work shares a modus operandi with films of the well-established genres: both cinema and Magic Realism responded to a market built on audience expectations. In some cases, however, the product diverted from or even subverted certain characteristic and well-established tropes of the generic referent.

The art market also contributed to this effect by encouraging—although never successfully bringing into being—the intentional formation of an artist community with shared texts and exhibitions organized under a single banner. Art dealer Carel van Lier even tried to make the linkage among these artists official. Beginning in the late 1920s van Lier regularly assembled group and solo exhibitions centered around Hynckes, Ket, Koch, Schuhmacher, Willink, and Charley Toorop as well as her son Eddy Fernhout. His support for them had reached such a level that, by the 1930s, van Lier himself suggested that the artists form a group, an idea that Willink quickly dismissed.[85] Nevertheless, this attention from both dealers and critics helped to frame the Neorealists going forward.

Over the years there have always remained certain figures who do not hold neatly to the center, but who have instead been pulled towards this core identity in a centripetal manner. Wim Schuhmacher and Dick Ket, for example, have at times been considered to be more peripheral, or retrospective additions to the conceptualization of Neorealism, which really began in earnest with the 1960 exhibition "De bange Jaren '30" (The Frightening '30s) at the Modern Art Museum in Arnhem.[86] While Schuhmacher's place within more tightly bound definitions of the neorealist tendency may certainly be secondary in comparison to Koch, Willink, Hynckes, and even Toorop, I would argue that he had long been identified by critics—especially Jan Engelman—as sharing an aesthetic impulse with these aforementioned artists, particularly as his style matured (or "ripened") toward the mid-1930s.[87] An important point of distinction can be made in regard to Schuhmacher's background as a craftsman. He began his career painting houses as an assistant to the interior decorator Carel Adolph Lion Cachet, and even designed stage sets.[88] Forgoing academic training, the self-taught Schuhmacher began to work early in traditional, naturalistic easel painting with portraits, still lifes, and landscapes—genres that he continued to address when he came to be grouped among the emerging figurative tendency. Schuhmacher's greatest critical champion was Kasper Niehaus, who became the artist's biographer, and gave him a slightly different framing—labeling him a Magic Realist alongside Hynckes, Koch, and Willink.[89] One such representative example is his painting titled *Het huis van Cervantes in Toledo* (The House of Cervantes in Toledo; Figure 1.6), in which Schuhmacher depicts a structure that had long been thought to be the residence of the author of Don Quixote.[90] In this work the artist has chosen a seemingly traditional genre—interior architecture—but makes a number of stylistic choices that elicit an uncanny rendering of a real space, from his insistent monocular perspective, to the slightly off-kilter balcony, to the extreme vantage point into the open loggia, all rendered in his wavering, gauzy handling of paint.

By contrast, Dick Ket did not receive critical attention until relatively late—and his success was cut short by his untimely death. After completing his training as a painter at the Kunstoefening, Ket came to prominence in 1929 only once he became a member of Arti et Amicitiae.[91] Unfortunately, the next year he remained isolated in his childhood

Figure 1.6 Wim Schuhmacher, *Het huis van Cervantes in Toledo* (The House of Cervantes in Toledo), 1934, oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm.

Source: Museum MORE, Gorssel (photo: Peter Cox). Permission of Wilma Schuhmacher and Jan van Geest.

home in the small town of Bennekom due to a congenital heart defect (tetralogy of Fallot) that took his life at the age of thirty-eight. Despite his personal misfortune, the period of isolation from 1930 to 1940 proved to be his most productive.[92] His prolific personal correspondence during that period also shows that he greatly admired the work of the Old Masters—from Leonardo da Vinci to Hieronymus Bosch to Rembrandt and Raphael—while also showing appreciation for his contemporaries Hynckes and Schuhmacher, even using the term Nieuw Realisme to describe his own style.[93] These varied influences came across in his own practice. In his *Zelfportret met rode geranium* (Self-Portrait with Red Geranium; Figure 1.7) from 1932 for example—painted in his period of social and artistic solitude—Ket brought into conversation several personal and art historical references, all executed using the painstaking van Eyckian technique for which he had become known. The composition itself has previously been compared to Bortolomeo Veneto's *Allegorical Figure*, 1505–1507, in its combination of three-quarter profile with a gaze trained at the picture plane, half-exposed chest, and precious manipulation of the titular geraniums.[94] Other references are much more personal, however, such as the medicine bowl and horseman marionette (a reference to his last name "Ket," meaning "horse" in the local dialect of West Frisian). Beyond that, the mirror's edge, a common theme in Ket's self-portraits that I will address in Chapter 4, exhibits the artist's interest in self-reflexivity at this time when an intense and pervasive emphasis on interiority defined his life.

In any case, despite the evolving prefixes and qualifiers that have been attached to these appellations—Neo-, *Magisch* (Magic), or *Nieuwe* (New)—the word "Realism"

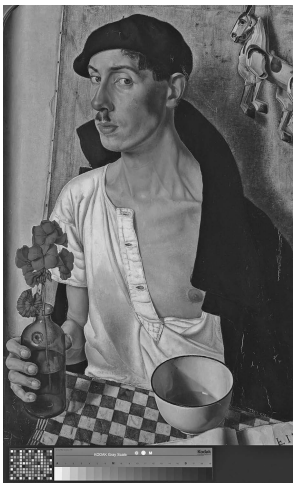

Figure 1.7 Dick Ket, *Zelfportret met rode geranium* (Self-Portrait with Red Geranium), 1932, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 54 cm.

Source: Collection Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (photo: Studio Tromp).

has remained a near constant. Steeped in references to the French nineteenth-century movement in the literary and visual arts, Realism has long been a complicated term with a unique meaning in Dutch art discourse stemming from the Early Netherlandish Painters (also known as the Flemish Primitives). In fact, the brand of "Realism" that Koch, Willink, Toorop, Hynckes, Schuhmacher, and Ket produced during the interwar and Occupation years was seen as a revival of sorts: an updated, impure return of Early Netherlandish painting infused with modernist influences such as cinema.

It should also be noted that this interwar figurative tendency as it existed in The Netherlands also brought with it certain cultural baggage that was deeply embedded in the nation's revered painting traditions. Neorealism, by virtue of its prefix "neo," suggests an updated version of "Realism," or more specifically "Dutch Realism," which loosely refers to a technique or subject matter that is depicted with truthful precision and which has a historical basis in Netherlandish art. Although Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, Hans Memling, and Hieronymus Bosch may have used their precise technique to visualize the Duchy of Burgundy's lavish material wealth in accordance with their patron's demands, the Flemish Primitives' demonstrated fidelity to their subject matter also suggests a groundedness in reality that is found at the heart of the pragmatic Dutch worldview.[95] In early twentieth-century art historical debates, the Netherlandish tradition was also seen as distinct from the Italianate Classicism practiced in the art academies of Europe because it had one foot in the medieval past.[96] It valued visual truth over idealism, as demonstrated by its artists' faithful observation of the textures and materials that make up the natural world.

In fact, some art historians at the turn of the twentieth century went so far as to dub the Early Netherlandish painters as the "first moderns" due to their devotion to optical "truth" in contrast to the Italian tradition's insistence on a classicizing idealism and

perfection.[97] According to the writer Belgian Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert, Jan van Eyck's inscrutable depiction of reality pointed to the future of artistic practice. It prefigured John Ruskin's idea that art could be something larger than ourselves, while remaining humble in comparison to nature.[98] Joris-Karl Huysmans, a French novelist of Dutch descent, characterized the "Realism" exhibited by the "School of Flanders" as vividly channeling the spirit of Catholic mysticism that was so influential in The Netherlands of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[99] He recognized a sense of strife in their depictions of distorted bodies and religious themes and drew parallels between this imagery and the decadence of fin-de-siècle Europe in his novels such as *Là-bas* (The Damned), published in 1891.[100] Similar expressions of strain and anxiety can also be found, for example, in the airless atmosphere in Carel Willink's *Wilma*, 1932, or the narrative stasis of *Bad Tidings*, 1932. Wim Schuhmacher accomplished a similar effect in his 1926 painting *The Russian*, but using vantage points that are at once claustrophobic and disorienting. Likewise, Dick Ket's meticulous textural layering and contradictory perspectives in paintings such as *Still Life with Boat Poster*, 1931, deny any easy understanding of his constructed spatial arrangements or the identity of their contents.

Indeed, the *contained* quality of Neorealism—embodied in its flawless technical execution—when paired with such imperfect spatial and anatomical proportions, recalled the intensity of Jan van Eyck.[101] One prominent example of this phenomenon can be seen in Pyke Koch's *De Schiettent* (The Shooting Gallery; Figure 1.8) from 1931, which takes as its subject a female carnival worker standing between a counter with a rifle and a wall of moving targets. Having modeled his subject on the silent-era actress—the Danish performer Asta Nielsen—Koch took care to painstakingly recreate her famously large, wide-set eyes and bow-shaped mouth, here drawn out to a flat scowl. Channeling the tight facture of van Eyck, Koch combines latter's meticulous handling of detail with an exaggerated understanding of the figure's bodily proportions, particularly her facial features. Koch, however, distinguishes himself from the Early Netherlandish Old Master in his treatment of color, replicating the desaturated character of black-and-white film in the wan face of this Asta-inspired figure. He also enhanced the definition between lights and darks, by de-emphasizing the subtle grays and flesh tones and bringing out the artificial nature of her pancake stage makeup. This verisimilitude was a technique that extended from Early Netherlandish painting to the Dutch Baroque masters and beyond. Running across all Dutch painting genres, a certain dubbelzinnigheid allowed artists to illustrate "truth" in the form of fidelity to nature while also practicing deception in the artful disguise of painting's artifice.[102] Van Eyckian in origin, the exaggerated use of this technique in paintings by Pyke Koch, Dick Ket, and at times Raoul Hynckes references back to the Early Netherlandish tradition of Realism. Rather than conveying religious connotations that transcend the lived world, the Neorealists' paintings projected a secular tension between psychological interiority and an externalized experience of reality.

To achieve this sense of dissonance between outward appearances and internal content, many Neorealist painters used techniques that signaled a material connection to their native Old Masters. Like many Neue Sachlichkeit artists in Germany, such as George Scholz, Otto Dix, and Christian Schad, certain Dutch Neorealists, among them Pyke Koch, Carel Willink, Dick Ket, and Wim Schumacher consulted Max Doerner's manual *Malmaterial und seine Verwendung im Bilde* (Materials of the Artist and Their Use in Painting).[103] First published in Germany in 1921, the book would not be translated into Dutch until after World War II. For those Dutch artists who could read

Figure 1.8 Pyke Koch, *De Schiettent* (The Shooting Gallery), 1931, 170 × 130 cm.

Source: Collection Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (photo: Studio Tromp). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

German, Doerner's manual provided detailed explanations of oil, tempera, fresco, and high glaze techniques practiced by Holbein, Rembrandt, and Jan van Eyck. It has been claimed that the revival of these techniques with the aid of Doerner's book gave interwar artists the means to produce paintings that sought to deny artistic subjectivity as much as possible under the dictum of New Objectivity. By adopting these exacting methods, artists could articulate their aim of restoring order to the chaos that defined the era.[104] The Neorealists' use of these techniques also reveals the illusory nature of this renewed interwar "objectivity," which in fact was highly subjective.

How then did this perverse revival of a fifteenth-century tradition participate in the overarching centripetal framework? In fact there had always been an internal motivation in Early Netherlandish painting, one expressed in spiritual terms. By looking into dominant interpretations of van Eyck's process and subject matter—most notably Craig Harbison's work on the medieval concept of Realism—we can pinpoint a notion of materiality that I argue is traceable to the observations of Franz Roh. As Harbison noted, the philosophy of Medieval "Realism" posited that universal truths as well as abstract ideas are perceptible in the material world. Hidden symbolism can reveal itself in the crisp detail of physical objects and in nature itself.[105] According to this definition, symbolic meaning is embedded beneath the physical surface. The tendency of certain

Early Netherlandish artists—Jan van Eyck in particular—to depict in painstaking detail the surface of things reveals an attempt to indirectly communicate ideas of the supernatural that exist in the everyday material world. In his 1436 painting *Madonna met kanunnik Joris van der Paele* (Madonna Adored by the Canonicus van der Paele) now at the Groeningemuseum in Bruges, for example, van Eyck painted every crease, crack, wrinkle, and loose thread with microscopic accuracy. Painting in this way allowed van Eyck to arrive at the supernatural truth that was the basis of God's infinite vision of the world. Offering the ability to see all things in their totality at one time, this type of vision provided something miraculous in its granularity.

For Harbison, van Eyck's religious subjects presented a version of reality transfigured by a spiritual essence that "used the visible world to transcend itself," taking liberties with the "real" to such a degree that symbolic clues could hide in plain sight.[106] The pair of spectacles in Joris van der Paele's hand, for instance, helps construct a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds via the object's allusion to clairvoyant perception.[107] Depicting this scene with such clarity that it verges on *trompe l'oeil* illusionism, van Eyck tapped a spiritual undercurrent that exists beneath the surface, calling to mind Roh's definition of Magic Realism as something hidden behind the appearance of things. In their combination of symbolic references to religious faith with a rational, experience-based understanding of the world, van Eyck's paintings anticipated by 500 years the secular iterations of modern spirituality that Roh championed.

It is my contention that the restrained symbolism that Jan van Eyck and Johannes Vermeer embedded within their crystalline depictions of space, form, and texture presaged the verisimilitude witnessed in paintings by Magic Realists in general and Neorealists in particular. In his 1925 book Roh described Post-Expressionism as a revival of the fusion between the minutiae of the miniature and the grand scale of monumental art forms that had characterized the moment of transition between the late Gothic era and the Renaissance.[108] This observation was also noted by Kasper Niehaus in the Stedelijk Museum 1929 Neue Sachlichkeit catalogue. Giving a brief synopsis of *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus* in the introduction, Niehaus made note of Roh's emphasis on the miniature and its ability to convey the infinite through the artist's insistence upon truth to nature, their dedication to extreme clarity, and their precise rendering of overwhelming detail.[109]

For Roh, the emerging "Post-Expressionist" tendency embodied in Magic Realism emphasized the miraculous nature of thingness as it appears before our eyes, distinct from the desire to flee reality that he identified in Expressionism. This new style, Roh claimed, was distinct from nineteenth-century Realism precisely because it was aware of its own interiority. By working from life, Post-Expressionist artists (Magic Realists) could accentuate the power of an object's spiritual content in ways that did not necessarily identify with any particular faith.[110] Having fully entered the secular age of the twentieth century, the "object" that Roh described embodied a "thingness" with an uncanny resemblance to the gravitas of traditional religious tropes. By asking what spiritual questions, if any, defined modern man, Roh effectively pointed a finger toward an emerging devotional vacuum and the capitalist imperatives vying to fill it.

This new art form that Roh called for was to reflect a modern iteration of man—one who sought a middle way—but who was not apolitical.[111] According to Roh, the secret geometry of Expressionism had not disappeared, as it was still manifest in its horizontal extensions and elevations. Rather Post-Expressionism, by his estimation, was a synthesis: a tension between the organic and the mechanical, one that presented an empathic,

but at the same time petrified form.[112] There is perhaps no better articulation of Roh's Post-Expressionist middle way than the Neorealists' treatment of surface. Texture played a central role in explicating tactility by bridging visual and haptic sensorium. The intensity with which Raoul Hynckes articulated textural refinements in works such as *Doodskop* (Skull; Figure 1.9), 1933, for example, relies upon the artist's inordinate attention to textural imperfections and overwhelming detail in the woodgrain, rusted metal, sponge-like bricks, and crumbling cement. In this painting a loose and broken cinderblock slab, a metal rack, and a disassembled wall of staggered bricks frame the scene. Rusted pincers, a mallet, and a bent nail lie alongside the skull on a bed of concrete. Unable to take in all the minutia at once, the viewer is unwittingly subjected to a competition demanding his or her optical attention. These paintings, and so many others like them, humanized the mundane world of man-made objects through their devotion to "thingness" and the process of reinscribing through the act of describing.

As an idiom, Neorealism can be said to have officially reached an inflection point by the mid-1930s due to external circumstances. The year 1933 would be an important juncture for both The Netherlands and for Dutch painting. That was when Jan Engelman, writing on the Dick Ket exhibition at the van Lier gallery, witnessed a certain contained "realist" quality in the artist's work that referred to the Early Netherlandish forebears, signaling something distinct about the Dutch context. He emphasized the way that Ket's indebtedness to the northern tradition, combined with his heavy introspection, likely appealed to buyers feeling the brunt of the financial crisis; he wrote that Ket offered something solid, familiar, yet also imbued with the mysteries of the microcosmos.[113] It was also at this time that Hynckes achieved his characteristic style—an aesthetic turn steeped in cynicism, one that expressed disdain for the "pretentious idiots" with their "bourgeois happiness" who hang paintings of flowers on their wall. He said, "I like to disturb these people, because that stupid happiness is not right." For that reason, he wanted to "throw a little skull in their parlor."[114] All labels aside, by mid-decade the material and tactile attributes of

Figure 1.9 Raoul Hynckes, *Doodskop* (Skull), 1933, oil on canvas, 73 × 98 cm.
Source: Collection Museum Arnhem (photo: Museum Marc Pluim Fotografie).

the "thing," in and of itself, and the stability of its various identities—both literal and symbolic—began to turn in on itself.

I view this tension, ironically, as comprising the loose connective tissue that allowed the Neorealist tendency to materialize in The Netherlands. The various designations that pulled this aesthetic in different directions—historical, topical, and practical—is crucial to this story and results from the essential lack of an overriding ism. Over the course of the 1930s the work of Koch and Willink, along with Toorop, Hynckes, Schuhmacher, and eventually Ket would be assembled in numerous group shows, beginning with exhibitions at Buffa and Sons and the Excelsior building in The Hague.[115] As they were repeatedly brought together over the decade, any agreements or disagreements about reading their work, through a politicized lens, manifested as internal frictions.

Naturally, there exists a counterpart to the centripetal tendency. To maintain its momentum, the centrally tethered force necessitates the constant presence of an oppositional current of power, which pushes back against the inward flow. Mimicking this radial compulsion, Neorealism, and the larger stylistic umbrella of Magic Realism courted an aesthetic that embodied—and even contained—an adversarial relationship between external pressure and internal free will, as seen in the common motifs of enclosure and psychological dissonance that frames the figure within his or her surroundings.

As a stylistic tendency that was essentially formed in the minds of critics, dealers, and curators, it is worth noting that Neorealism's combination of centralized orientation and internalized friction also pertained to other exterior pressures. This same phenomenon can, for example, be observed in the agitation that would later come to pass between The Netherlands and its German occupier. Such cases—both aesthetic and political—imply a question about the role of self-determination in defining one's own aesthetic, national, or social identity and the ability to push back against certain power or capitalist frameworks designed to define and conquer. It is also no surprise that such an orientation came into being at a time when the powerful, newly invented construct of nationhood was so predominant. For these reasons among many others, I argue that the conflict between style and subject matter—or between idiosyncrasy and perceived aesthetic conservatism—is the essential quality that binds the Neorealists together.

Notes

1 See Kasper Niehaus, "Drie Onzer Moderne Schilders," *De Telegraaf* (November 14, 1930), 13.
2 José Vovelle, "La Nouvelle Objectivité en Hollande," in *Les Réalismes, 1919–1939*, edited by Jean Clair, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1980), 166.
3 "Tentoonstellingen. Moderne Nederlandsche schilderkunst bij Frans Buffa en Zonen," *Het Volk* (September 22, 1931), 11.
4 "Moderne Nederlandsche Schilderkunst. Tentoonstelling te Amsterdam. Bij Buffa de Kalverstraat," *De Maasbode* (September 12, 1931), 5.
5 Ibid.; Kasper Niehaus, "Krachtige Manifestatie der Jongen. Moderne Nederlandsche schilderkunst bij Buffa," *De Telegraaf* (September 4, 1931), 4.
6 Works by Leo Gestel, Charles van Eyck, and Herman Kruyder also appeared in the show.
7 Cornelis Veth, "Moderne Schilders in Den Haag," *De Telegraaf* (December 30, 1932), 5.
8 Jan Engelman, "Dick Ket. In de Kunstzaal van Lier," *De Tijd* (December 30, 1933), 5.
9 With the possible exception of the state-sponsored Novecento artists in Italy, the various international exponents of Magic Realism did not organize themselves into official artist collectives. The Novecento artists were only briefly and tenuously unified by Mussolini's lover Margherita Sarfatti in an effort to find an official national style.
10 See J.H.M. van der Marck, *Neorealism in Painting*, exh. cat. (Arnhem: Museum Arnhem, 1960), this catalogue accompanied the exhibition "De bang Jaren '30." See also Ype Koopmans,

Magie en Zakelijkheid: Realistische schilderkunst in Nederland 1925–1945, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders Uitgeverij, 1999); Ype Koopmans, *In de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012).

11 Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 55–62.

12 Ibid., 16.

13 Mieke Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland: Critici kiezen positie, 1925–1945* (Rotterdam: Nai010 uitgevers, 2016), 14–24.

14 Franz Roh, *Réalisme magique. Problèmes de la peinture européenne la plus récente*, translated by Jean Reubrez (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2013).

15 See Johan Huizinga, *Nederland's Geestesmerk* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1934–1935), 4, 16.

16 Former director of the Stedelijk Museum Edy de Wilde described this as a defining feature of Dutch openness. Douwe Fokkema and Frans Grijzenhout (eds.), *Dutch Culture in European Perspective 5: Accounting for the Past, 1650–2000* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 36.

17 This difference was also linked to historical circumstances. Italy and Germany had only recently unified in the nineteenth century, whereas The Netherlands had done so in the sixteenth, and had endured an unsuccessful reunification with the southern provinces (modern-day Belgium and Luxembourg), which ended in revolt in 1830.

18 Josip Kešić and Jan Willem Duyvendak have more recently coined the term "anti-nationalist nationalism" to describe the current manifestation of this tendency. See Josip Kešić and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "Anti-Nationalist Nationalism: The Paradox of Dutch National Identity," *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (2016), 581–597.

19 Johan Huizinga, "How Holland Became a Nation," in *Lectures on Holland, Delivered in the University of Leyden During the First Netherlands Week for American Students, July 7–12, 1924* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1924), 268–270.

20 See Johan Huizinga, *Die Mittlerstellung der Niederlande zwischen West und Mitteleuropa* (Berlin: Teubner, 1933), 284–303; Jo Tollebeek, "At the Crossroads of Nationalism: Huizinga, Pirenne, and the Low Countries in Europe," *European Review of History* 17, no. 2 (April 2010), 198.

21 Max Meijer and Ype Koopmans, *ASB: Architectuur-Schilderkunst-Beeldhouwkunst. Nieuwe Beelding en Nieuwe Zakelijkheid 1926–1930*, Arnhemse Cahiers, no. 6, exh. cat. (Arnhem: Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, 2004), 41.

22 Marieke Jooren, "Raoul Hynckes," In *de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, edited by Ype Koopmans and Mieke Rijnders (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 91.

23 Hynckes was stationed at Liège. When the city surrendered to the Germans, Hynckes left for The Netherlands. See J. H. van der Hoop, *Raoul Hynckes* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1940), 13.

24 Meijer and Koopmans, *ASB: Architectuur-Schilderkunst-Beeldhouwkunst*, 10–11.

25 Niek van Sas, "The Netherlands: A Historical Phenomenon," in *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: Accounting for the Past: 1650–2000*, edited by Douwe Fokkema and Frans Grijzenhout (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 62.

26 Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland*, 25.

27 Other SKK members include Otto Dix, George Grosz, Moholy-Nagy, Gerrit Rietveld, Franz Siewart, and Pieter Alma.

28 Ket criticized the Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij (Social Democratic Workers' Party or SDAP) for being corrupted by monied interests. See the letter from Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer dated February 11, 1940, RKD, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, inv. Nr. 4, letter 177, 5.

29 Hynckes's politics during his youth are difficult to ascertain. Circa 1930 he did illustrations for *De Meiroep* (May Call), a journal for the Arbeiders Jeugd Centrale (Youth Workers Central). AJC was a socialist youth-group for the SDAP, which at the time was heavily critical of capitalism. Meiroep was edited by the Party chairman and later Dutch Resistance figure Koos Vorrink. Socialist designer Fré Cohen did the layouts. While this paid work for the SDAP is not evidence of political affiliation, it may demonstrate Hynckes's penchant for economic opportunism. See "Chronologische overzicht van de geschiedenis der Arbeiders—jeugdbeweging (AJC Chronology)," IISG, Archive 04322 Koos Vorrink, inv. no. 187, 34.

30 See Mieke Rijnders, "'De Voorstelling waarin ik leefde' De Politieke Wereld van Pyke Koch," *De Wereld van Pyke Koch*, edited by Marja Bosma, Roman Koot, and Mieke Rijnders, exh. cat. (Zwolle and Utrecht: WBOOKS and Centraal Museum, 2017), 44.
31 This debate was sparked by the 1920 Darmstadt show German Expressionism. Wilhelm Hausenstein characterized the return to figuration as evidence of Expressionism's ineffectiveness, while Paul Westheim saw it as regressive. In 1922 Westheim circulated the questionnaire in *Das Kunstblatt;* he and others liked the label "New Naturalism." See Sanda Agalidi, "The Mannheim Exhibition of 1925 and the Idea of New Objectivity," PhD dissertation (University of California, 1995), 15–25.
32 Roh first used the term "magic" to describe the characteristics of this style in the article "Kay Nebel und die Wendung in der Malerei," *Die Kunst für alle: Malerei, Plastik, Graphik, Architektur*, no. 1 (October 1924), 10–14.
33 The book project was originally supposed to focus on Munich artist Georg Schrimpf. See Christian Fuhrmeister, "Hartlaub and Roh: Cooperation and Competition in Popularizing New Objectivity," in *New Objectivity Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933*, edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2015), 44–46.
34 Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925, 40.
35 Ibid., 77. See also Emily Braun, "Franz Roh: Tra postespressionismo e realismo magico," in *Realismo Magico: Pittura e scultura in Italia 1919–1925*, edited by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, exh. cat. (Milan: Mazzotta and Galleria della Scudo, 1989), 60.
36 See Franz Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, preface. Following this brief definition in the first page of text, Roh uses the word "magic" five times in the course of the entire book, on pages 38, 40, 70, 78, and 102. On page 38 of the book he describes a "real, identical landscape that looks so confusingly similar to an existing one" and a "very familiar and yet a magical world." See also Braun, "Franz Roh," 57.
37 See Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, esp. "Die neuen Gegenstände," 22–26.
38 See ibid., preface.
39 See Carel Willink, *Schilderkunst in een kritiek stadium* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1950), 26, 38.
40 Ibid., 41–42.
41 Gerhardus Knuttel, *Het Classicisme en de kunst van heden. Openbare les gehouden op 21 October 1926* (Utrecht: University of Utrecht and A. Oosthoek Uitgevers, 1926). Mieke Rijnders identifies Knuttel's 1926 lecture as signaling the development of this new style. It should be noted, however, that Theo van Doesburg began to introduce the Dutch art world to the return to figuration in Italy as early as 1925. See Theo van Doesburg, "De dood der modernismen," *De Stil. Maandblad voor nieuwe kunst, wetenschap en kultuur* 6, no. 9 (1924–1925), 22–26. Knuttel later championed the Neorealists when they came to prominence. See Mieke Rijnders, "De bange jaren '30. Beeldvorming van een tijdvak en zijn kunstenaars," in *In de Schaduw van morgen*, 65–66.
42 Knuttel, *Het Classicisme en de kunst van heden*, 11–12. Other members of De Brug included Joseph Teixeira de Mattos and Jan Lodeizen. For information on the role of De Brug for developing a Realist idiom in the interwar Netherlands see Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland*, 18.
43 See Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant, *Après le cubism* (Paris: Éditions des commentaires, 1918).
44 Knuttel, *Het Classicisme en de kunst van heden*, 10.
45 Ibid., 11–12.
46 He cites the Bijenkorf building in The Hague as an example. See ibid., 21.
47 Ibid., 15.
48 Ibid., 12.
49 Ibid., 13
50 Ibid., 11.
51 Ibid., 20.
52 Ibid., 22.
53 Knuttel's view appears to have been inspired by the French Return to Order—more specifically the classicizing yet also modern form of the figurative revival promoted by Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant in *Après le cubisme* (After Cubism).

54 See Kasper Niehaus, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, May 1929) and Gustav Hartlaub, *Ausstellung "Neue Sachlichkeit": Deutsche Malerei seit dem Expressionismus: Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim 14. Juni–13. September 1925,* exh. cat. (Mannheim: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1925).
55 Niehaus, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 1. A later French translation of Roh's *Nach-Expressionismus* would mention the Neorealist painters in the preface. See Franz Roh, *Postexpressionisme. Réalisme magique. Problèmes de la peinture européenne la plus récente*. Translation by Jean Reubrez (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2013), 10–11.
56 See A. M. Hammacher, "Charley Toorop," *Forum. Maandschrift voor Letteren en Kunst* 1, no. 7 (1932), 443–449 and S. P. Abas, "Schilders van een andere werkelijkheid. Raoul Hynckes, Pijke Koch, Carel Willink," *De Vrije Bladen* 14, no. 10 (1937), 1–22.
57 Kasper Niehaus, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 1.
58 See *De Onafhankelijken Vereeniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars, Amsterdam, Voorjaarstentoonstelling, 11 May–10 June 1929*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1929), 19.
59 Alied Ottevanger, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de Dick Ket*, exh. cat. (Paris and Valenciennes: Institut néerlandais, Musée des beaux-arts, 1995–1996), 9.
60 Alied Ottevanger, *Dick Ket: Over zijn leven, ideeën en kunst* (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders Uitgeverij, 1994), 12–13. He would have his first breakthrough solo show at the Carel van Lier Gallery in Amsterdam in 1933–1934. See Alied Ottevanger, "Vier Studies," PhD dissertation (Vrije Universiteit, 1995), iv.
61 In this same interview Toorop both praised and maligned the Germans. She claimed that she appreciated modern German art (also describing Piet Mondrian's paintings as German in essence). A few lines later she stated that "there is something fascist about the Germans." See "Kunst: Een gesprek met Charley Toorop," *Het Huisgezin* (March 29, 1930), 3de Blad, 1.
62 He took a course on the Materials and Techniques of the Old Masters at Utrecht University under Jan-Jacob Lijnst Zwikker. See Carel Blotkamp, *Magie et réalisme: Tendances realists dans la peinture néerlandaise de 1925 à 1945*. Paris: Institut néerlandais, 2000, 16.
63 van der Hoop, *Raoul Hynckes*, 15.
64 See Jost Hermand, "Neue Sachlichkeit: Ideology, Lifestyle, or Artistic Movement?," *Dancing on the Volcano. Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*, edited by Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), 57–68.
65 *Zakelijkheid* will continue to be used in place of the English translation due to the untranslatability of the word. Rose-Carol Washton Long has pointed out that Neue Sachlichkeit can be loosely translated to either New Tangibility or New Impartiality. See Rose-Carol Washton Long, Introduction, "Section III: The Critics and the 'Demise' of Expressionism," in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, edited by Rose-Carol Washton Long (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 279–80, 331, note 38. For further discussion of the meaning *Sachlichkeit* see Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918–1924* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1999), xix.
66 Roh observed a return to "Thingness" (Dingschärfe) beginning with the work of Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Henri Rousseau, and Walter Spies. See Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, 103.
67 Ibid., 30. He talks about it in the sense of reconquering territory. He used the term "Magic Realism" again on page 40, stating that it contains both abstraction and empathy in the way that it maintains a tension between abandoning the world and constructing it.
68 Ibid., 71.
69 Roh was referring to Bauhaus Constructivism, citing Vasily Kandinsky and Paul Klee specifically when discussing Konstruktivismus. Ibid., 75.
70 Ibid., 75.
71 Elke Frietsch, *"Kulturproblem Frau": Weiblichkeitsbilder in der Kunst des Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Böhlau-Verlag GmbH, 2006), 179.
72 The term Nieuwe Zakelijkheid began to be used to describe a style of design that was functionalist, based on basic design principles, and affordable for the lower classes. See Klaus Beekman, "The Terms Nieuwe Zakelijkheid, Neue Sachlichkeit and Nieuw Realisme in Art Criticism of the Dutch paper De Groene Amsterdammer," in *Neue Sachlichkeit and Avant-Garde*, 179, 181.
73 Klaus Beekman, "The Terms Nieuwe Zakelijkheid, Neue Sachlichkeit and Nieuw Realisme in Art Criticism of the Dutch paper De Groene Amsterdammer," in *Neue Sachlichkeit and*

Avant-Garde, edited by Ralf Grüttemeier, Klaus Beekman, and Ben Rebel (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 174–175.

74 Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland*, 30–31.

75 W.L.M.E. van Leeuwen, "Over Literatuur," *Twentsche Dagblad Tubantia en Enschedesche* Courant (July 30, 1932), 3de blad, 1.

76 Willem Mooijman (ed.), *Forum: Brieven, citaten, dokumenten en knipsels* (Rotterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar, Uitgave van het Nederlands Letterkundig Museum, 1969), 13.

77 It should be noted that in this review and in the mid-1920s in general, Niehaus was not referring to the Neorealists, but rather Dutch figurative painters that included: Sal Meyer, Jaap Nanninga, Jacob Bendien, Simone Nieweg, and Dirk Nijland. Anonymous (Kasper Niehaus), "Bibliotheek der schilderkunst. Post-expressionisme, door Franz Roh. Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925," *De Telegraaf* (January 26, 1926), 9, cited in Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland*, 49.

78 S. P. Abas, "Schilders van een andere werkelijkheid," 3–20; Kasper Niehaus, "Nieuwe Zakelijkheid," in *Levende Nederlandsche Kunst* (Amsterdam: Bigot en Van Rossum, 1942); Gerrit Kouwenaar, "Willink Onder Valse Vlag," *De Waarheid* (November 2, 1946).

79 Kouwenaar, "Willink Onder Valse Vlag."

80 Abas, "Schilders van een andere werkelijkheid," 6.

81 Ibid., 6.

82 Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland,* 264.

83 For example in a dedication that Willink wrote on Dick Ket after the latter's death in 1940, he grouped himself, Ket, Hynckes, Koch, and Schuhmacher together under the label of the "nieuwe zakelijken." See ibid., 229, note 2.

84 See Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, 120 and Irene Guenther, "Magic Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts During the Weimar Republic, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 36.

85 José Vovelle, "La Diffusion du surréalisme dans les pays néerlandophones: 1920–1950, vol. 1," PhD dissertation (L'Université de Paris, Panthéon-Sorbonne I, 1984), 182.

86 Ype Koopmans, "Realisme in Nederland: Werkelijkheid en onwerkelijkheid," in *Magie en Zakelijkheid: Realistische schilderkunst in Nederland 1925–1945*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders Uitgeverij, 1999), 12.

87 In 1927 Engelman described Schumacher and Willink as practicing a similar kind of Calvinist sobriety. See Jan Engelman, "Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam," *De Nieuwe Eeuw* (September 15, 1927), 1565, cited in Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland*, 132 and 138, note 5. See also Jan Engelman, "W. Schuhmacher. Sterke en oorspronkelijke persoonlijkheid," *De Tijd* (March 9, 1934), 5. By the mid-1930s Engelman was using the term "Nieuwe Realisten" to group Schuhmacher alongside Koch, Hynckes, and Willink. See Jan Engelman, De Tentoonstelling van Beeldende Kunst," *Kroniek van hedendaagsche Kunst en Kultuur*, vol. 2, issue 8 (June 1937), 249.

88 Schuhmacher designed a set for Georg Kaiser's Expressionist play *Gas*, which premiered at the Stadschouwburg in Amsterdam on March 3, 1928.

89 Kasper Niehaus, *Levende Nederlandsche Kunst*, 84–96, cited in Rijnders, *Realisme in Nederland,* 158.

90 The Museum MORE in Gorssel has identified this structure as the Posada de la Sangre, which was destroyed during the Spanish Civil War.

91 Ottevanger, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de Dick Ket*, 9.

92 Ottevanger, *Dick Ket: Over zijn leven,* 26.

93 For references to Leonardo da Vinci and Bosch see RKD, letter from Dick Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer dated July 18, 1936, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, Inv. Nr. 1, letter 16; for reference to Raphael, see RKD, letter from Dick Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer, August 4, 1936, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, Inv. Nr. 1, letter 17; for reference to Rembrandt see RKD, letter from Dick Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer October 14, 1936, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, Inv. Nr. 1, letter 25. Alied Ottevanger has addressed Ket's appreciation for Hynckes and Schuhmacher, particularly the way that the latter synthesized the depth and effects of the Old Masters in his still lifes. See Ottevanger, *La vie et l'oeuvre de Dick Ket*, 28.

94 Vovelle, "La Nouvelle Objectivité en Hollande," 170.

95 See Wessel Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, edited by Bernhard Ridderbos, Henk Th. van Veen and Anne van Buren (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 256–257.
96 Ibid., 260.
97 Ibid., 253.
98 Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert, *Études sur l'art flamand: La Renaissance septentrionale et les premier maîtres des Flandres* (Brussels: Bruxelles Librairie nationale d'art et d'histoire g. van Oest, 1905), 174.
99 See Joris Karl Huysmans, *Écrits sur l'art: 1867–1905* (Paris: Bartillat, 2006), 459, 464–466, 471, 478.
100 See Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," 273–274.
101 The tight facture of Magic Realism corresponds with one of the qualities on Roh's schema, which he contrasted against the loose brushstrokes of Expressionism.
102 Even art writing from the Golden Age addressed this idea, such as Franciscus Junius's 1637 reference to Philostratus in which he stated that an effective painting should depict "delusions" that are "pleasant, so doth it not deserve the least reproach." See Alan Chong, "Contained Under the Name of Still Life: The Associations of Still-Life Painting," in *Still-Life Paintings from The Netherlands 1550–1720*, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Rijksmuseum, Cleveland Museum of Art, and Waanders Publishers, 1999), 30.
103 Willink received a 1928 edition of the manual on his birthday on March 7, 1932. Before Doerner's text he consulted Paul Schultze-Naumburg's *Die Technik der Malerei* (published in 1920), which he likely got while in Berlin. His copy of Doerner is at the Carel Willink Archive at Ruysdaelkade 15, Amsterdam. See also Koopmans and Rijnders, *In de Schaduw van Morgen*, 183. Wim Schuhmacher apparently disagreed with the way that Doerner reconstructed Old Master methods, although his specific points of disagreements are not known. However, it is believed that he still consulted Doerner's book due to a lack of other options. See Jan van Geest, *Wim Schuhmacher: Meester van het Grijs* (Arnhem: Jan Brand Boeken, 1991), 302. For more on Doerner's book and its influence on the work of Willink, Koch, and Ket, see Jan Brand and Kees Boos (eds.), *Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten: In de verzameling van het Gemeentemuseum Arnhem*, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992), 15.
104 Stephanie Barron, "New Objectivity: German Realism After Expressionism," *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933*, 20.
105 See Craig Harbison, "Realism and Symbolism in Early Flemish Painting," *Art Bulletin* 66, no. 4 (December 1984), 598–599.
106 Ibid., 589–590.
107 At that time, eyeglasses were used exclusively for reading and it was highly unusual to see them in a donor portrait. Stephen Hanley noted that the spectacle lenses magnify the text on the unidentified manuscript, implying a connection between the book and the enthroned Madonna seated before him. The fact that van der Paele is looking up from his reading to gaze at them implies that he is viewing his prayer in real time, as physically embodied in the real world. Stephen Hanley, "Optical Symbolism as Optical Description: A Case Study of Canon van der Paele," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Winter 2009), 4–5. See also Craig Harbison, "Visions and Meditations in Early Flemish Painting," *Simiolus* 15 (1985), 101.
108 Roh uses the term "Miniatur" in his text, which refers to the tradition of manuscript illumination. He saw a parallel in the "miniaturism" of Verists Otto Dix and George Grosz in the way that their work presented the worst sides of humanity with microscopic, albeit caricatured exactitude. See Roh, "Das Unterlebengrosse (Miniatur)," in *Nach Expressionismus*, 58–60. The finely detailed technique required to produce miniatures forms the basis of the Early Netherlandish school of painting. Some art historians have even attributed a number of miniatures to Jan van Eyck. See Krul, "Realism, Renaissance, and Nationalism," 280.
109 Niehaus, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, 3.
110 Roh uses the word *geistige* (spiritual), 36.
111 Olaf Peters reads this political middle way as existing between the American-style liberalism that influenced Weimar culture and anti-democratic currents. See Olaf Peters, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Nationalsozialismus: Affirmation und Kritik 1931–1947* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1998), 29–30.

112 Roh completed his dissertation at the University of Munich under the supervision of Heinrich Wölfflin. Perhaps for this reason much of his writing tends to bear the imprint of Wölfflin's linear/painterly schema and tends to view art historical progression as cyclical. Roh noted that oppositional movements tended to coexist, such as Impressionism and the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes for example. He argued that the coexistence of Expressionism and Post-Expressionism was evidence of this same phenomenon. See Roh, *Nach-Expressionismus*, 19.
113 Jan Engelman, "Dick Ket," *De Gemeenschap*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1934), 127–130.
114 van der Hoop, *Raoul Hynckes*, 15.
115 Works by Koch, Willink, Toorop, Hynckes, Schuhmacher and Ket were brought together for the International Exhibition in Brussels in 1935.

2 Open/Closed
Dutchness and Traditional Genres in Crisis

As one of the premier architects of twentieth-century cultural history known for taking an anthropological approach to the study of attitudes and values, cultural historian Johan Huizinga held authority when verbalizing the characteristics of the Dutch spirit. In 1934 he wrote:

> A conscious folk criticizes their own flaws, and we do not lack this [trait], so much so, that the danger of falling into the opposite evils of national self-vilification is not always avoided. All the same, the austerity and modesty of our national dignity undoubtedly remains a popular virtue of the purest caliber. It is most closely related to a very important quality, which again we owe not to our own merit but to our position, namely our openness to the recognition of the value of the foreign. We have all the windows of our house open and let the sea breeze and the wind blow freely through them.[1]

In the above-quoted essay, Huizinga argued that the Dutch had long seen themselves as historically bound by a common culture that valued religious and cultural pluralism rather than belonging to a nation-state defined by hard geographical borders and racial attributes.[2] Perhaps because of these qualities, The Netherlands—unlike its European neighbors—resisted the nationalistic fervor of the early twentieth century, an attitude reflected in the government's neutral stance during the Great War, as well as the art of the period.

The "open" state that Johan Huizinga described acknowledges a tacit cultural policy that had long existed in The Netherlands since—or even before—the inception of the Dutch Republic. Although Huizinga was referring to Dutch society's acceptance of immigrants, his words also found an unexpected visual analogue in the desolate urban scenes that Carel Willink painted throughout the 1930s. Willink often peopled his city streets with a single figure or a disparate group standing at a social distance. In 1934, however, he produced three cityscapes completely devoid of all human presence. One such canvas from that year, *Huisje met twee hulstboompjes* (House with Two Holly Trees; Figure 2.1) plays with the theme of the open window in its representation of opacity, reflection, and shadow.[3] In this work Willink very clearly demarcates the presence of glass panes in four of the windows on the top story that have been hit by a beam of sunlight. The fifth window on the far-right side hints at the idea of an open window by revealing the curtains sitting just behind, while the white bar of light on the left side shows that it is actually closed. Both panes in the dormers above, however, are angled in such a way that leaves no question about their open status, offering an unoccluded view of the city and the

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Figure 2.1 Carel Willink, *Huisje met twee hulstboompjes* (House with Two Holly Trees), 1934, oil on canvas, 89 × 67 cm.

Source: Private collection. Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

elements. In this and in other paintings that he produced in 1934—the same year as Huizinga's essay—Willink does not overtly display the presence of a human figure, although the top storey of the home may imply it. As for the rest of the house, any indication of an open invitation to outsiders remains ambiguous at best.

In fact, dating back to the seventeenth century, the Dutch window free of curtains or other hindrances had become a recognizable trait in cities throughout The Netherlands. As a marker of separation—or lack thereof—between the private and public domain, this unadorned architectural feature was sometimes described as quintessentially Dutch, an attribute that dissipated when crossing the border into Germany or Flanders.[4] Suggesting openness or honesty, the enlarged, unencumbered window communicates the idea of having nothing to hide, a social value that can be traced back to the core Calvinist cultural tenets of the Golden Age. When moving to a new town, for example, the gradual opening of curtains and removal of any other obstructive coverings signaled to the rest of the community one's readiness for social integration.[5] Extended to such a broad-reaching liminal, cultural concept, the window was a perfect local metaphor for addressing relationships to the outsider and insider alike.

There remains an underlying tension in Willink's reference to this signifying practice in his iteration of a destabilized genre—in this case the Golden Age cityscape. As this

chapter will show, he was not alone in his subversion of traditional tropes. Many of the painters working in the Neorealist idiom adopted genres that became synonymous with the Dutch Golden Age, a period proudly associated in the national consciousness with the Dutch Republic. The civic virtues of the latter were incarnated in the venerable and venerated painting of the seventeenth century: the egalitarian format inherent in the poses of the group portraits; the proud landscapes by Ruisdael; the bustling cityscapes by Jan van der Heyden, and the gamut of still lifes, from those representing the humble, if prideful, meals of Dutch-made cheese, bread, and beer, to the ostentatious pronk pieces filled with exotic foodstuffs, displaying the power and extent of the Dutch global trade. In line with larger trends in international figurative painting, it is my contention that these artists turned to their own artistic heritage to subtly comment upon the insecurities of contemporary life and politics, upending those very genre traditions synonymous with the Dutch Golden Age to render uncanny and strange scenes of contemporary life and subjecthood. It is for this reason that the question of genre comes under scrutiny in this chapter. As an externally derived system of coherence, genre may purport to elicit certain transhistorical truths, while it in fact exhibits a rather fickle identification, often dependent on the ever-changing whims of public opinion.

Much like the definitional problems associated with the aesthetic tendency of Magic Realism outlined in the previous chapter, *genre*, as it pertained to both painting and to film also suffered from a lack of self-determination in that it was delimited from the outside—by a public of enthusiasts. Indeed, when it comes to film genres, the formulaic repetitiveness of such an industry product should be seen as an answer to a profit-seeking business model looking to recoup its financial investments through the guarantee of an interested audience. It is for this reason that film also exhibited a level of intertextuality not yet seen in literature. After all, film had a built-in consumer audience likely already familiar with its oft-repeated plotlines and devices.[6] The ways in which the Neorealist painters pushed back against generic definitions of traditional painting categories in their canvases—from the still life to the landscape to the portrait—resulted in works that displayed a subversive referentiality similar to that of pastiche, which has long been a common cinematic mode.

When it comes to assessing references to Golden Age painting, it is necessary to examine those "eternal" truths embedded in the oft-repeated narratives of national myth. The Netherlands had its own origin stories rooted in ancient fictions that had been rewoven into an allegory for a modern audience. One common thread that persisted was the importance placed on the values of openness and cooperation. Most notable of these was the Batavian myth of the Germanic tribe that lived along the Dutch Rhine and rose up against the Roman Empire. Seventeenth-century writers such as Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) had compared the Revolt of the Batavi to the alliance of the Seven United Provinces of the Dutch Republic to defeat the oppressive rule of the Spanish Habsburgs.[7] With the success of the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), Dutch identity became defined in the public imagination by its open acceptance of foreign cultures, its tendency to resist centralization, and its early status as a rare bastion for religious tolerance.[8]

Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing up to the end of World War II, the period of the so-called Golden Age (1581–1672) was the main source of Dutch patriotism, pride, and self-definition.[9] Culturally speaking—as Huizinga had explained in a 1924 lecture—the spirit of the Golden Age had its roots in the Duchy of Burgundy, a kingdom that fostered the development of a successful, self-governing burgher class living in a zone of decentralized, but politically affiliated fiefs.[10] A new, emergent culture guided

by an ethic of mutual cooperation blossomed with the birth of the Dutch Republic and the joining of the Seven Provinces in unison to defeat the Catholic Spanish Habsburgs. The budding nation's collective approach and resistance to foreign hereditary monarchal authority was also foundational to the nation's concept of consociationalism, referring to democratic power sharing along different ethnic, religious, or regional lines. This system has more recently come to be known as the "Polder Model," a specifically Dutch brand of consensus-based political decision-making, whose name took from the practice of surrounding reclaimed land with dikes and pumping stations, the maintenance of which requires unanimous cooperation across community members. In fact, the concept of the polder became an important metaphor for the formation of The Netherlands as both a geographic and a political entity.

Indeed, paintings produced in the Duchy of Burgundy and during the Golden Age visualized a spirit deeply tied to the founding of the Dutch Republic and its roots in the burgher mentality of the late medieval (Burgundian) period. The state-held Rijksmuseum first opened in 1800, while the Royal collection at the Mauritshuis was made public in 1822; canonical group portraits, still lifes, and landscapes came on view at the turn of the nineteenth century.[11] Within these spaces, images by Jan van Eyck, Hieronymus Bosch, Jacob Ruisdael, Pieter Claesz, Frans Hals, and Rembrandt van Rijn shaped the national consciousness. Yet, despite the existence of such accessible and abundant resources, Dutch art historians were latecomers to foundational studies on these artists, and, likewise, to the ideological interpretations of race and ethnicity in national schools of art that colored the scholarship published in Belgium, France, and Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. Dutch scholars did not begin to catch up to their peers until the late 1920s and early '30s. In my estimation, it is not coincidental that around that time many Neorealist painters were in the midst of experimenting with reviving motifs, techniques, and popular genres of their revered native Old Masters.

In reality, the rise of Neorealism coincided with a new nationalistic turn in Dutch art discourse.[12] Until the 1930s, national claims over the heritage of Jan and Hubert van Eyck, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Rogier van der Weyden, Rembrandt, and others mostly took place among Belgian, French, and German—but not Dutch—art historians. Those who made claims to these artists did so on the basis of very different national borders which existed at the time. At the turn of the century, Flemings Georges Hulin de Loo and Leo van Puyvelde, as well as Walloon Henri Pirenne, began to promote an interpretation of Early Netherlandish art that connected strongly to ideas of Belgian nationalism.[13] Paintings such as Jan and Hubert van Eyck's *Het Lams God* (Ghent Altarpiece), 1432, for example, became connected to Belgian national identity-building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to differentiate the relatively new nation from The Netherlands after the two went their separate ways in 1830, but also in response to the Walloon and Flemish movements.[14] Still, Dutch curators and cultural critics typically refrained from making counterclaims on the Old Masters working under the Duchy of Burgundy.

Flanders was the first to take ownership of the cultural heritage embodied in Early Netherlandish painting with the seminal 1902 exhibition *Les Primitifs flamands et l'art ancien* held in Bruges. Belgian art critic Paul Wytsman organized the above-mentioned show in 1900 after having been inspired by a number of recent European exhibitions that made nationalistic claims.[15] The project was by all measures a successful one, and brought renewed attention to the work of Hans Memling, Gerard David, and Jan van Eyck, while allotting an especially prominent placement in its installation to the Adam and Eve panels

from the Ghent.[16] The Bruges show was later framed as an important exhibition that helped historicize the visual culture at the core of Flemish national identity.[17]

Perhaps due to its success, the Bruges show also became a site for disagreement about the particular national lens through which to identify the artists on display. University of Ghent professor Georges Hulin de Loo—who was involved in organizing and securing loans in London and Vienna—had first made his reputation by writing a polemical pamphlet mocking his contemporary French scholars' neglect of their own heritage.[18] He stated that the lacuna of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century "native" painters in French museums was due to the fact that many of the great masters of that period had already been commandeered by the German, Spanish, Italian, and especially Flemish institutions.[19] French art historians viewed the pamphlet as an affront to their patrimonial inheritance; its publication ultimately led the Louvre to stage an exhibition in 1904 titled *Les Primitifs français* (The French Primitives) in an effort to reassert the French identity of the artists that had been classified as "Flemish" Old Masters. Curator Henri Bouchot made the case that the Master of Flémalle (Robert Campin) may have even been from Paris and should also be credited with influencing the style of Northern artists, including the Limbourg brothers and Jan van Eyck. The similarities in their style, Bouchot claimed, came from the fact that these artists worked for the same Burgundian princes.[20] By the 1910s some German art historians began to participate in this dispute, often using language that emphasized ethnicity.[21] In 1916 German Max Friedländer discussed theories on the racial derivation of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden.[22] He claimed that the Germanic essence of these two artists proved the superiority of "Early Netherlandish" painting, a term that he coined to extricate them from the pro-Belgian designation "Flemish Primitives."

By contrast, in The Netherlands, there were no such writings on these fifteenth-century painters that made claims to their inherently "Dutch" characteristics. And whereas Hulin de Loo lambasted his French peers, he did not even mention Dutch scholarship, likely because the field of art history was still relatively underdeveloped in The Netherlands. Few Dutch publications even reported on the Bruges exhibition—with one rare exception: a special winter 1903 number of the art journal *Elsevier's Maandschrift* titled *De Vlaamsche Primitieven* (The Flemish Primitives), the very same issue that Dick Ket later immortalized in his 1932 painting *Stilleven met Piëta* (Still Life with Pietà; Figure 2.2). In this canvas, Ket depicts the journal open to a black-and-white illustration of a circa 1520 painting by Gerard David shown in the exhibition. Notable for its intertextual references, the composition brings into visual dialogue the transhistorical gamut of Ket's influences, from French-Ukrainian Art Deco poster designer Cassandre to the fifteenth-century painter David, an artist who hailed from the village of Oudewater in the center of the present-day Netherlands. Despite his origins and the dispute among early twentieth-century international art historians, Dutch scholars did not try to claim him as one of their own. What, then, can be made of this specific periodical and its citation as the central subject of this composition, and how can we determine its generic classification?

Like many of his paintings, Ket's *Still Life with Pietà* is a study in slight textural gradations that differentiate substances, from fabric, to enamel, to paper. In this work, Ket layered pages from a then thirty-year-old issue of the art journal *Elsevier's geïllustreerd maandschrift* that he opened to a lamentation scene by Gerard David. He then placed the publication on a tattered art deco poster advertising Droste coffee; on top of the open page he layered another unidentified journal with a library finding code printed on its

Figure 2.2 Dick Ket, *Stilleven met Piëta* (Still Life with Pietà), 1932, oil on canvas, 57 × 46.5 cm.
Source: Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (photo: Stedelijk Museum).

cover. Stained and yellowed with age, the poster stands against the creamy white pages of the journal and the bright white scrap of drawing paper likely ripped from his sketch-pad. The reflective surface of the glossy basin, with a shallow pool of water—containing a medicine for Ket's heart condition—strikes a contrast with the pile of matte papers and rumpled tablecloth. Ket found a way to approximate the same delicacy with which David had treated the crisp white linen veil of the Virgin, complete with an iron crease and cavernous folds that suggest the stiffness of the fabric. This emphasis on materiality, when combined with the very personal reference to the artist's daily medicinal regime, provides another direct path to the subject of the Pietà, its implied suffering, and Ket's cognizance of his own mortality. If the zakelijk quality of sublimated brushwork and pristine surfaces in Neorealist paintings such as Dick Ket's *Pietà* patently harked back to Early Netherlandish art religious painting and portraiture, his direct reference to Gerard David in the titular Pietà confounds the definition of this work as existing within any specific sort of either/or genre category. Is it a religious subject or a still life as the title suggests, or a new concept for a self-portrait of Ket himself?

One potential response to this open question could be derived from the artist's use of indexical markers. His insistence on providing evidence of wear opens another channel through which to understand the removal of human presence in the painting—which when considered as references to valuation—subvert the Early Netherlandish tradition. In the *Still Life with Pietà*, the dog-eared corners of the journal form a shadow against the

flat white pages beneath, onto which Ket has inscribed subtle indentations that indicate physical manipulation. The yellowed, rumpled edges of the Cassandre poster give way to worn corners that have flaked away from age and repeated handling. The red-pigmented water stains sprinkled throughout the papers spread across the table bely the low status of these objects, as they are treated as a table covering. The Gerard reproduction—in its quotation of the oil-on-panel original—adds another layer to its status as a luxury object once removed. In his study of textures, Ket gave the same respect to these lowly objects as did Jan van Eyck in the latter's treatment of finely brocaded fabrics. A jagged edge of the white paper and ripped corner on the poster's edge distinguishes itself from crisp machine-cut quality of the open page. His handling of these details could be compared to the way that Jan van Eyck depicted each individual thread on the carpet in his *Madonna met kanunnik Joris van der Paele* (Madonna Adored by the Canonicus van der Paele), 1436, or the fold lines pressed into the freshly pressed veil worn by Mary in Gerard David's *Pietà*, circa 1520, both of which were illustrated in the special Elsevier's issue. Van Eyck's attention to the flaws in the carpet—the fine threads that break loose from its edge—helps reiterate the fastidious technique used to craft this handmade, imported product looped together with innumerable knots, while also reminding the viewer that it is, in its essence, a worldly object. By comparison, Ket's complete emphasis on the mundane and denial of any direct allusion to luxury, overturns this order. Everything about Ket's system of visual references is indirect. Human presence has been thrice removed, and merely suggested through the machine-printed papers that make up the composition, and the nondescript bottle, basin, and tablecloth. The van Eyckian detail and verisimilitude, however, remain.

That he painted *Still Life with Pietà* in 1932—on the 500th anniversary of the Ghent Altarpiece—is also likely a function of Ket's close attention to the Dutch press, which covered celebrations of this famous polyptych closely.[23] Pulling a thirty-year old issue of *Elsevier maandschrift* from the shelf for inspiration, Ket examined the once-again-relevant subject matter immortalized on its pages with care and chose to pay homage to the Early Netherlandish Old Masters through his exacting technique.

Despite the limited coverage in The Netherlands, the importance of the 1902 Bruges show was not lost on one notable Dutch scholar—Johan Huizinga—who attended the exhibition. He described it as "an experience of the highest significance" and claimed that it led him to become a historian of the medieval period.[24] The Early Netherlandish visual culture with which he came into contact at the exhibition later became the basis for his theories on the Renaissance as a final stage of decadence, rather than a renewal, and culminated in his book *Autumn of the Middle Ages* (published in 1919).[25] Notwithstanding the nationalistic undertones of the exhibition that had inspired his scholarly direction, Huizinga avoided seeking a racial or ethnic foundation for Early Netherlandish painting in his own work. He refused to label an artist like Jan van Eyck with a national identity, claiming that the twentieth-century borders and conceptualizations of what it meant to be French, Belgian, or Dutch had little relevance to the time in which the artist lived.[26] For Huizinga, the Early Netherlandish style expressed the calm, focused attention, and a mood of interiority described in the Burgundian court chronicles, particularly those pages that recounted a period of political turmoil.[27]

While the Belgians and French battled over ownership of the "Flemish primitives," German scholars laid the groundwork for studies of the Dutch Golden Age, even trying to claim the Dutch Old Masters for their own national history.[28] Julius Langbehn, for example, had emphasized Rembrandt's Germanic roots as an artist of Nether-Deutsch

origin.[29] By the turn of the twentieth-century Dutch interpretations of seventeenth-century artists had been heavily influenced by German art historians such as Berlin curator Wilhelm von Bode, who wrote the seminal text, *Studies in the History of Dutch Painting* (Studien zur Geschichte der holländischen Malerei) (1883).[30] He also co-published the eight-volume series on Rembrandt (1897–1906) with Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, a distinguished Dutch scholar who, like von Bode, also received his doctorate at the University of Leipzig.[31]

The belated nationalistic tone in Dutch scholarship on the Old Masters in the 1930s was due in part to the fact that the discipline of art history arrived late to The Netherlands, which did not award doctorates in the subject until 1901; prior to this, Dutch scholars had to study in Germany. Wilhelm Martin—whose review of *Les Primitifs flamands* for *Elsevier's geïllustreerd maandschrift* appears within the composition of Dick Ket's *Pietà*—was the recipient of the first Dutch art history PhD at the University of Leiden for his dissertation on Gerrit Dou.[32] On the very opening page pictured on Ket's canvas, Martin stated that choosing any other venue than Bruges would have been unimaginable.[33] In the *Elsevier's* review, published very early in his career, Martin made no effort to assert the Dutch heritage of the paintings on display.

Three decades later, in 1935, Martin finally remarked upon the lack of native scholarship on the Dutch Old Masters.[34] Like Henri Bouchot before him, he spoke of how the "characteristics of the Dutch race" had been seeded long before the seventeenth century and could be seen as far back as circa 1415 with the Limbourg Brothers' *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry). Rather than trying to claim these artists solely for The Netherlands, however, Martin described them as originating from the same root that has since developed into two distinct branches: Flemish and Dutch, excluding any mention of a French or German origin.[35] On rare occasions, Dutch curators made overtly nationalistic overtures to certain and illustrious Old Masters, such as a 1936 show at the Boijmans van Beuningen that claimed as "Northern Netherlandish Primitives" Hieronymus Bosch, Jan Gossaert, and Jan van Eyck—specifying the sovereign state of The Netherlands as distinct from Flanders.[36]

It was around that time—a period of rising economic and social instability—that an essentializing tone began to enter Dutch art scholarship. In my view, it is not merely circumstantial that this development coincided with the stock market crash in 1929 and became more clearly defined throughout the 1930s as totalitarian regimes in Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union instituted xenophobic cultural policies as well as ethnic cleansing and suppression of religious minorities.[37] A younger generation of Dutch intellectuals began to question the wisdom of pillarization, a system originally intended to deliver a certain amount of institutional autonomy to groups of varying ideologies; these dissidents viewed the practice as a threat to the formation of a common Dutch identity.[38] Although the resulting reform movement did not ultimately overturn pillarization, such efforts partly explain a novel politicization of art criticism at that time, one that read the re-emergence of modern Dutch figurative painting against the traditions established by the artists' native Old Masters.[39]

Beginning in the late 1920s a number of critics observed the art historical references at work in the Neorealists' compositions, style of brushwork, and choice of motifs. For example, when reviewing the 1929 Neue Sachlichkeit exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* contributor Maria Viola compared the pictures of the "German brothers" on display to modern Dutch figurative paintings in the concurrent Onafhankelijken (Independents) show in the next room, and which included two canvases by

Pyke Koch. She also likened the Germans' paintings to the Netherlandish Old Masters, claiming that they had appropriated the zakelijk quality of Dutch painting in their impeccable treatment of surface detail. Her observations of a reality that lies beneath the visible world—although reminiscent of Franz Roh—also evinced a specifically Dutch identification in its "*perception* of visible reality" (italics mine). The stylistic characteristics of both groups, Viola claimed, was "inherent to the Dutchman" in the way that it recalled the "old Dutch school."[40]

In 1931 the German-born Dutch photomontagist Paul Citroen published his seminal book *Palet*, which brought together artists practicing a variety of different styles, including the work of non-objective painters Theo van Doesburg, Bart van der Leck, and Piet Mondrian; Neorealists Hynckes, Koch, Willink, Schuhmacher, and Charley Toorop; and the work of Citroen himself, among others. Based on a German book of the same theme titled *Die neue Malerei* (The New Painting) by F.M. Huebner from 1921, *Palet* was the first text in The Netherlands on "new Dutch painting" published during the period and provided modern artists with a venue to discuss their own artistic production, and do so in their own words. Both Ype Koopmans and Claartje Wesselink have remarked upon the contributors' "chauvinistic" assessment of trends in Dutch modernist painting, and the artists' sometimes-loaded language.[41] In one example Harmen Meurs associated the highly finished and deliberate techniques exhibited by modernist artists as an "essentially Dutch racial characteristic" that dated back to the artistic ancestors of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth centuries.[42]

In his essay contribution to *Palet*, Carel Willink eschewed such prejudicial pro-Dutch statements, and instead pointedly commented on the recent "patriotic flair" seen in Old Master influences on modern art, which their makers had "anxiously" preserved in the desire to live up to their predecessors. He wrote, "After all, in painting more than in any of the other arts, ancestral Glory weighs on its heirs."[43] He wrote with humility about the difficulty of living up to the Rembrandts, the Steens, the Hals, and the Vermeers in the halls of the Rijksmuseum and the fact that it had become nearly taboo to even admit foreign influences over one's work, saying "after all—and everyone knows this too—it is strictly forbidden in this community to be 'influenced by foreigners'."[44] For the cosmopolitan Willink it was becoming fraught to balance his admiration for the native Old Masters, as well as for German, French, and Italian painting; he clearly did not appreciate the new pressures to signal his cultural allegiances.

When it came to the interwar years, I would argue that the variety of genres synonymous with the Dutch Golden Age became a blueprint against which many Neorealist painters communicated their distance from that era. Honing their own personal repertoires of subjects brimming with topical or art historical references, the manner in which these artists mined their surrounding media ecosystem occasionally resulted in something approaching pastiche. Such is the case of Carel Willink whose visual citations, or "allegorical impulses," are really commentaries on the dominant culture.[45] As an imitation twice removed from its original source, pastiche can signal an elitist impulse toward demonstrating one's accumulation of cultural capital—a trait that Willink in particular had long tried to cultivate.[46] Over the course of his career he produced numerous twentieth-century capriccios that fused together a collage of distinct architectural references, bringing into the same pictorial space the Prussian Baroque Palace of Potsdam, the Grand Trianon at the Palace of Versailles, and early Christian polychromy, for example.

During the Golden Age the cityscape—as well as poetry—became an important genre for expressing civic pride. Select views of modern buildings and canals highlighted the

economic success of rapidly expanding metropolises such as Amsterdam.[47] Painters of seventeenth-century city views also sometimes placed known buildings in fictionalized or fanciful locations, but did so for the purpose of reflecting the prosperity and good governance of a municipality. One such example is Jan van der Heyden's *Een Amsterdams uitzicht op de gracht met de kerk van Veer* (An Amsterdam Canal View with the Church of Veere; Figure 2.3), circa 1670, featuring invented windows and gables as well as a distinctive steeple from a town in the province of Zeeland.[48] In this painting, van der Heyden reused the Church of Veere many times over in various paintings to achieve an emphatic visual contrast with the then modern quality of the rowhouses lining the canals of Amsterdam. Willink, by contrast, alters the existing cityscape to bring about a chilling psychological effect. If van der Heyden constructed an idyllic and impossibly pleasant version of reality, Willink's embellishments produced a version of reality that was preternaturally isolated and tonally grim.

Willink's painting *Stadsgezicht* (Cityscape; Figure 2.4) from 1934 was typical of his work in this genre. Despite its ambiguous title, this painting depicts a specific set of homes in the museum district in Amsterdam that can be deduced to an actual pair of street addresses at 11 and 13 Vondelstraat from Tesselschadstraat. With his removal of the surrounding row houses, Willink isolated the pair of buildings in the foreground.[49] These alterations made for a desolate city square; the two remaining homes with Mansard roofs and polychrome brick courses (*speklagen*) cast long shadows on the cobblestone streets.[50] In its combination of markedly Dutch-Flemish-style architecture and the stormy sky, Willink carried out a Northern European equivalent of Giorgio de Chirico's lonely piazzas.[51] And just like de Chirico, Willink particularized the lighting to his personal locale, which in his case was diffuse, humid, and gray in a sky thick with clouds, typical to Amsterdam due to its close proximity to the sea. Three-quarters of the canvas

Figure 2.3 Jan van der Heyden, *Een Amsterdams uitzicht op de gracht met de kerk van Veer* (An Amsterdam Canal View with the Church of Veer), c. 1670, oil on canvas, 32.5 x 39 cm.

Source: Collection Kaufman Americana Foundation. (Photo: Public Domain.)

Figure 2.4 Carel Willink, *Stadsgezicht* (Cityscape), 1934, oil on canvas, 75 × 100 cm.

Source: Collection van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven (photo: Peter Cox). Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

space features the sky, which once again emphasizes the flat character of the land, while also giving space to depict the area's volatile, quickly changing weather.[52] Another comparison could also be made to Edward Hopper's *House by the Railroad*, 1925, which places greater emphasis onto the dominating physical presence of the home. Like Willink, Hopper played with the opened and shut possibilities of the windows, hinting at, but never fully committing to the idea of its desertion by the inhabitants.

This emphasis on human absence in *Cityscape, House with Two Holly Trees*, and *The Yellow House* (Figure 1.5), all completed in 1934, stood in stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of city life seen in paintings like *De Grote of St. Bavokerk in Haarlem* (The Grote or St. Bavokerk in Haarlem; Figure 2.5), circa 1666, by Gerrit Berkheyde. As Jan van der Heyden had done in his canvas *Een Amsterdams uitzicht op de gracht met de kerk van Veer*, Berckheyde pictured a prosperous and ascendant Netherlands in the years just preceding the Rampjaar (Disaster Year) of 1672, an event that led to political and economic stagnation.[53] Much like the two Baroque-era paintings had just preceded a systemic financial catastrophe, Willink's trio of desolate city scenes coincided precisely with a more modern one: the nadir of the global Great Depression as it was being experienced in The Netherlands between 1933 and 1936, just ten years after the country had recovered from a recession caused by the impact of World War I on its international trade partners. As evidenced by Willink's removal of figures found in earlier sketches of his generically titled painting *Cityscape*, the fact that Willink denied human presence, while also underscoring the obviously man-made nature of the urban environment, suggests that he was reversing the order of paintings such as *The Grote or St. Bavokerk*.[54] The little nature left in Willink's work includes heavily pruned, skeletal trees that have lost their leaves, and the manicured garden just visible beyond the stone wall. In what could be a portent of the obliteration caused by war and rapid modernization, man has in this case overworked his built environment to such a degree that he has eliminated the centrality of his own presence within it.

Figure 2.5 Gerrit Berckheyde, *De Grote of St. Bavokerk in Haarlem* (The Grote of St. Bavokerk in Haarlem), c. 1666, oil on panel, 61.5 × 84.5 cm.

Source: Private collection, New York (photo: public domain).

Underlying the pessimistic character of Willink's cityscapes was the philosophical perspective that the artist had cultivated since his days as a student in Berlin, where he first encountered Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* at university in 1919. Willink appreciated Spengler's naturalizing theory of history that describes culture as organic: arriving at a point of maturity with a fully realized style and worldview, followed by a period of deterioration. Only after the war did Willink in his 1950 essay *Schilderkunst in een kritiek stadium* (Painting at a Critical Stage) explicitly put into words his visual interpretation of Spengler's pessimistic theories to discuss the postwar reconstruction of Europe from an aesthetic perspective. In this text he gave an art historical account that detailed the newfound importance attributed to man in Renaissance humanism, its further elaboration in the Baroque, all leading to the revolutionary tendencies of Courbet in the nineteenth century. Relying upon an extended metaphor of a house, Willink wrote of how modernism was tearing down its very structure, leaving behind "a façade of glittering stones." Amid this demolition, the human figure became something architectonic, a phenomenon particularly evident in the work of Paul Cézanne that Willink identifies in the former's famous series *The Cardplayers*, writing:

> Cézanne is equivalent to a wooden idol. Strong, spectrum-related colors also inevitably lead to a transcendent world, where great anger, but also great loveliness, stand under bell jars. His figures, more than his landscapes and still lifes, lack "naturalness." Cézanne lived in the vague realization that "the" world would never be "in" the world.[55]

In the analysis excerpted previously, Willink identified the atomized treatment of the human figure as evoking a certain byproduct of modernity. He sees the individual's desire for recognition and self-fulfillment as resulting in his or her alienation from—rather than integration within—the larger social framework; a kind of hyper-individualism among Western European artists who painted for themselves alone, and not some greater

universal cause.[56] Steeped in his own interpretation of Spengler's text, Willink already by the mid-1930s began articulating in visual terms his own theory of the imminent decline of European civilization that had started with World War I, using the city of Amsterdam to personify the growing economic and political tensions of the time. In his version of the city, the darkened and sometimes opaque windows of the townhomes reflect only their surroundings, which often include spindly, leafless trees caught in the dead of winter. Occasionally the only sign of life is the detritus created by human production and creativity, such as the two crumpled balls of paper in the foreground of *The Yellow House*. 1934 marked a shift in Willink's work, which never totally abandoned human presence, but merely experimented with its removal or replacement by some kind of metonymic substitution. By the next year, he reintroduced the figures once again, but in the form of marble statuary—stand-ins for the human or inanimate beings who exist as part of the stately domestic environment or town square. All these interventions of the mid-1930s—in their insistence on objecthood and absence—visualized the slow, creeping strangulation of the average Dutch citizen's autonomy, as economic stagnation was turning into political polarization.

Willink was not unique in his tendency to ironically disrupt the meaning of traditional genres by inserting his own bleak view of the surrounding socio-political context. Raoul Hynckes used the still life genre in a comparable way; a vehicle for his similarly troubled view of the period. Hynckes expressed his gloomy outlook in a quote from just after World War II: "In thirty years we have twice had war, which means that we have turned Europe and not only Europe into a land of death and destruction. A homicide training ground. A graveyard."[57] His still lifes from the interwar years, but especially from 1933 on—just as Hitler was coming into power in Germany—began to signify an intensifying note of doom or trepidation. It was then that critics noted a shift in his style. Most reviewers emphasized a marked improvement in the quality of Hynckes's technique as well as the artist's debt to earlier painting traditions and motifs; their interpretations of these new characteristics varied, however, and sometimes broke along political lines.

Writing in 1933 for *De Telegraaf* on the occasion of a Raoul Hynckes exhibition at the Carel van Lier gallery, the right-wing (and later pro-German) art critic Kasper Niehaus explained the way that Hynckes's still lifes began to demonstrate a new sensibility toward texture in his depiction of "the hardness of the skull, the softness of a hare's fur, the fluffy feeling of feathers, the dryness of branches and leaves." He also observed certain similarities to the Old Masters in Hynckes's work, comparing the artist's oeuvre to "those countries where the Gothic reached a peculiar perfection: Germany and Spain. His paintings sometimes have something of the gruesome and troubling nature of a Grünewald. At other times they are cold and full of majesty, mournful and solemn, like an old Spaniard."[58]

The left-wing critic (and later resistance member) Paul F. Sanders, writing a review of the same van Lier show for *Het Volk* (The People), argued that the paintings on display were about the present, and although they clearly referenced the still life tradition, their titles were a repudiation of the past. Sanders noted that Hynckes gave only the name of the object depicted: " 'Skull,' 'Broken Jar,' 'Key,' etc.," and avoided entirely the word "Still Life." He thus interrupted the genre through both a visual and a nominal approach, while also evacuating his images of humanist content attributable to the Baroque tradition. The reviewer also asserted the dark and pessimistic quality of Hynckes's paintings, stating that they: "suggest a world of decay and transience . . . one that can be hidden and concealed, but which is there."[59] As the decade wore on and pushed into the next,

critics became more explicit in their observations of the Golden Age tendencies evident in his work and that of the other Neorealists, as well as the distance that the artists were taking from the much-revered seventeenth century.[60]

To this effect, Raoul Hynckes's *Stilleven met koperen ketel* (Still Life with Copper Kettle; Figure 2.6), from 1938 offers a twist on the monochrome still life, a subgenre popularized in the 1630s and '40s by Pieter Claesz and William Claesz Heda, known for its muted color palette and its emphasis on texture. Artists working in this genre often depicted partially eaten meals laid out in such a way that the viewer imagines himself at the table, such as *Haring met glas bier en een broodje* (Herring with Glass of Beer and a Roll; Figure 2.7), 1636, by Pieter Claesz, which is also an example of an *ontbijtje* (referring to breakfast or snack). The reduced range of tones averts attention to the textural distinctions in the painting, such as fish scales and reflective glass rather than the expense of the materials. Simon Schama has compared the pared-down simplicity of these Baroque examples to the "contemplative manner of the humanist scholar rather than the cramming sensuousness of the man of fashion, the *pronker*."[61] The play of light and sensuality of the monochrome also allowed artists like Pieter Claesz to celebrate the importance of commodities such as beer and herring in his compositions.[62]

Indeed, the many subgenres of the still life reflected the purchasing power of The Netherlands' flourishing burgher class during the Golden Age. The burghers' savvy in commercial endeavors were an important facet of Dutch cultural identity as it related to

Figure 2.6 Raoul Hynckes, *Stilleven met koperen ketel* (Still Life with Copper Kettle), 1938, oil on canvas, 84.9 × 96.5 cm.

Source: Collection van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven (photo: Peter Cox).

Figure 2.7 Pieter Claesz, *Haring met glas bier en een broodje* (Herring with Glass of Beer and a Roll), 1636, oil on panel, 49 × 36 cm.

Source: Collection Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (photo: Studio Tromp).

the nation's dominance over the Spanish, British, and Portuguese in global trade and its acquisition of commodities vital to the local economy. Dairy, fish, and imported grain were the primary staples, and their successful procurement had a direct impact on the nation's prosperity during the Dutch Golden Age. Those three industries enriched The Netherlands through the massive exports of the former and trade of the latter across the world, paving the way for Dutch financial independence from the Spanish during the Eighty Years' War.[63]

In Hynckes's painting, a dull copper kettle in need of polishing sits on a ledge next to a dusty bottle of red wine, a knife, a piece of rope, and a head of garlic. Nearby, a set of rusted keys hang on a nail that juts out from a wooden post, A smoked fish emerges from the darkened background with barely a glimmer, its silver skin reduced to the cold metallic hue of the tarnished kettle and keys. This arrangement could be read as a modern take on the seventeenth-century monochrome *ontbijtje* mentioned above or Willem Claesz Heda's more elaborate monochrome table spreads such as *Stilleven met vergulde bokaal* (Still Life with Gilt Cup; Figure 2.8), 1635. In this scene, Hynckes emphasized material impoverishment in the oxidized copper kettle and the repurposed brick used for the makeshift shelf, notably locating the still life in an outdoor setting that exposes it to the elements, rather than in a domestic bourgeois interior. The tarnish on Hynckes's copper kettle is the antithesis of the heavily polished metal vessels in the Heda. In the latter, materials glint and glisten, revealing the textures of the metalwork, while reflecting the light that shines through the paned window that provides illumination to the room.

In the case of the Heda, the white wine sitting in the roemer as well as the red wine poured into the conical glass were signifiers of Dutch trading prowess. Much like the lemons (from the Mediterranean), spices (from Indonesia), and grain (from the Baltics) also depicted in the painting, the Dutch had imported these wines from France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, and Spain.[64] Its trade even turned out to be an important political tool for the Dutch, who ceased shipments from French vinyards during disputes.[65] In his painting, however, Hynckes did not pour the spirit into a refined drinking vessel for the purpose

Figure 2.8 Willem Claesz Heda, *Stilleven met vergulde bokaal* (Still Life with Gilt Cup), 1635, oil on panel, 87.8 × 112.6 cm.

Source: Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (photo: Rijksmuseum).

of drawing attention to its material qualities. He explicitly reveals the *Brane Cantenac* label, a traditionally highly ranked Bordeaux whose brand had become diluted by the 1930s.[66] Covered in a light dust as if it has just been taken from a cellar, this label signals the diminished value of such varieties in the postwar Netherlands, when large numbers of the wine-drinking demographic (military-aged men) in warring European countries had perished, thus causing *Brane Cantenac* to oversaturate the market.[67]

The fish hanging above is likely a depiction of, or reference to the herring: a national symbol of the once lucrative fishing industry in The Netherlands, commonly depicted in Golden Age still lifes. It was also played up in the patriotic rhetoric of that era. The profit reaped by the herring yield was cited as one of the reasons why the Dutch were able to defeat the Habsburgs. Prince Maurits of Orange described it as "the little stone in the slingshot with which the Dutch David brought down the Spanish Goliath."[68] At the time that Hynckes was painting this work, however, the major Dutch industries were still in a period of economic recovery, despite being past the throes of the Great Depression. The domestic herring market had contracted substantially, undergoing the worst years in its long history between 1931 and 1935 due to low yields in the North Sea. Exports to Germany had also closed entirely.[69] In Hynckes's painting the fish is relegated to the shadows, a shriveled remnant of lost prosperity. Moreover, the fact that Hynckes painted a smoked—rather than fresh herring—also suggests this shortage in that it references the preservation process used to keep fish that are not readily available.[70]

Potential symbols of transience and one's limited time on earth were also littered throughout Dutch lifes—snuffed candles, decaying food, overturned hourglasses, fragile glass objects, and broken instrument strings as seen in Pieter Claesz's *Stilleven vanitas met viool en glazen bol* (Still Life Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball; Figure 2.9), circa 1628. Such messages embedded in secular objects served a culture that regarded the use of religious images, particularly figurative narratives, with suspicion. Vanitas, or vanity,

Figure 2.9 Pieter Claesz, *Stilleven vanitas met viool en glazen bol* (Still Life Vanitas with Violin and Glass Ball), c. 1628, oil on panel, 36 × 59 cm.

Source: Collection Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Germany (photo: public domain).

in the Calvinist context refers to the moral vice associated with waste, idleness, and avarice. In as far as he treated the quintessential memento mori symbol—the human skull—Claesz often placed it alongside precious collectibles to make a moralizing point through contrast of vice and virtue. When Hynckes adopted the skull into his repertoire, however, he often depicted it as just one discarded thing amid others, positing a like-for-like comparison that downgraded the status of this mortal symbol, whose power lies in the recognition of bodily remains as evidence of humanity.

Hynckes's use of this cranial motif most explicitly came into confrontation with the vanitas tradition once World War II was underway. In his work *Ex-Est* from 1940 (Figure 2.10), Hynckes placed a skull in a concrete trench drain. A downward-sloping pipe on the wall is aimed to allow water runoff to fill the space in the case of a flood. The placement of the skull in this underground space topped with a metal grate turns the war trench into a mundane facet of everyday infrastructure. An abandoned, empty sardine tin sits in the drain before the skull, like provisions for a soldier on the battlefield. It is a play on the memento mori, a reminder of the not-so-distant Great War—the skull alludes to the remains of the forgotten war-dead. Originally from Belgium, Hynckes had served in World War I and was stationed in Liège; when the city was invaded by the Germans he fled to the neutral Netherlands. The title, *Ex-Est*, Latin for "It's over" is an explicit nod to the German Occupation, which began on May 10, 1940, only a few months before he painted this canvas. Hynckes thus combined his own traumatic memories with his present fears—offering a caustic, and in many ways intensified take on the sober vanitas motif.

Hynckes, like Willink, distinguished himself from the Dutch Baroque tradition in the way that he took a critical—even cynical—distance from symbols traditionally used for moral edification. Such emblems most certainly included the vanitas and memento mori. These motifs, Simon Schama has argued, proposed a value system oppositional to the strong mercantile economy of the Golden Age by foregrounding the inherent contradiction

Figure 2.10 Raoul Hynckes, *Ex-Est* (It's Over), 1940, oil on canvas, 61.2 × 77.7 cm.
Source: Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (photo: Stedelijk Museum).

between stringent Dutch Calvinist tenets and the amassment of wealth.[71] Echoing the contradictions inherent to a very different context, Hynckes's barren still lifes, and Willink's abandoned vistas, recount a clear-eyed view of the artists' present-day realities.

What Willink and Hynckes do offer is the allegorical impulse of pastiche, of the kind that upends tradition. The Neorealists' impure versions of Old Master genres were food for commentary on the relative impoverishment, and comparatively secular reality of the interwar Netherlands. Likewise, Dick Ket's exquisite handling of modest, low-value materials, rendered with the same painstaking attention to detail as van Eyck or Gerard David, accomplishes a comparable gesture on the level of technique. The former's compositions brought to the forefront the fact of Ket's physical separation from the original Old Master paintings, both as a result of his illness as well as their relative scarcity in Dutch museums.[72] Such a distancing effect can be compared to Bertolt Brecht's adaptation of the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky's *priem ostranenie* (or making strange), in which an audience becomes conscious of historical conditions that—due to their naturalization—went previously unseen. Likewise for Hynckes and Ket, even a passive understanding of the cultural weight ascribed to the Golden Age genres retreaded in their paintings could trigger the self-reflexive messaging embedded within them.

Not all revivals of past genres were cynical or even allegorical, however. Historical citations could also reference an artist's chronological distance from the Golden Age past, particularly when it came to cultural advancements and technological innovations. Thus, marked distinctions in moral codes and political standpoints separating the seventeenth from the twentieth centuries also found manifold expressions through class

identification. For an artist such as Charley Toorop—whose understanding of the ideal class organization was informed by Marxist precepts—a return to traditional genres could prove fruitful in pinpointing a modernist iteration of class values. Ironically for her, the group portrait tradition performed dual purposes that were sometimes ideologically or commercially at odds.

While Toorop may have initially taken up the genre partly at the prodding of collector and Old Master specialist Jacques Goudstikker, her renderings also owe to her left-leaning political beliefs and her view of modern Dutch citizenry as being embodied in the working class—as opposed to the mercantile bourgeoisie that figured prominently in Golden Age painting.[73] To this end, Toorop merged the early egalitarian format of the militia group portrait with devices from Soviet photomontage and experimental film. An outlier among the Neorealists in her social utopian outlook—as well as her gender—Toorop depicted, with realist candor, the features of ordinary people in her paintings. Carefully lining up each figure in group formations to prioritize an implicit commitment to class solidarity, she consistently respected her subjects' identities as individuals unified by their dedication to creating a shared collective space in which social and political bonds can take form. From 1927 to 1950, the artist completed some fifteen portraits of three or more figures using this overlapping technique.[74] Among this selection of paintings, five should be considered precursors to the group portrait proper, due to the anonymity of the sitters—often workers or farmers. In essence, these examples still demonstrate Toorop's earnest engagement in the aesthetic and structural inquiries of the genre.[75] Only two canvases fulfill the strictest categorical definition of the group portrait—*Maaltijd der vrienden* (The Meal among Friends), 1932–1933, and *Bremmersgroep*, 1936–1938—in their representation of self-selective fellowships of artists formed by mutual interests rather than hereditary bonds of the family.[76] The relevance of the group portrait tradition to Toorop's oeuvre cannot be over-emphasized, because these two paintings happen to be the most celebrated works of her career.

Toorop developed her work in this genre in dialogue with the tradition that began with Dirk Jacobsz and Dirk Barendsz, specifically; her figures demonstrate the same constrained mode of social interaction and address the viewer with an unnatural intensity that demands attentiveness.[77] That she co-opted a style that predated the narrative mode of Hals and Rembrandt is telling, for she avoided associations with the burgher identity of later group portraiture, a type that was tied to mercantile capitalism in the public imagination.[78] In turn, Toorop modernized Jacobsz's meticulous realism by creating a more jarring overlap of figures—a pictorial strategy specifically inspired by photomontage, which she had ample opportunities to encounter. Not by chance, her updates to this venerated genre began in the late 1920s, when she started to mingle with the cinéclub the Filmliga and the *Genootschap Nederland Nieuw-Rusland* (Dutch New-Russia Society).

It was at this time that Toorop's paintings of figural groups began to exhibit the kind of layering reminiscent of Jacobsz, while also playing with the irregular scale and jarring overlaps of photomontages used to advertise avant-garde films. Even though Socialist Realism was by the early 1930s becoming the dominant style in the Soviet Union, Charley Toorop remained attuned to the more dynamic and anti-organic effects of photomontage. Her immersion in numerous modernist art circles did not endear her to the celebratory didacticism or visual literalism of painters such as Isaak Brodsky.

In what could be considered the first in Toorop's pre-group portraits, her 1927 painting *Volkhuis* (People's House; Figure 2.11) allowed her to work through some of her ideas about the genre by updating the mode of address that had originated in the early

Figure 2.11 Charley Toorop, *Volkshuis, Amsterdam Zeedijk* (People's House), 1927, oil on canvas, 120.5 × 100.5 cm.

Source: Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (photo: Rik Klein Gotink). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

Dutch Republic. For this early painting Toorop situated a group of seven figures inside of a worker's meeting house, indicated by the painted lettering on the window. These organizations became popular in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as spaces for industrial, clerical, and domestic laborers to socialize and organize politically.[79] Toorop focused on the very types who frequented this kind of establishment, bringing together young and old, men and women; some are dressed in a way to help identify their occupation. Without citing any specific examples, Kröller-Müller Museum Director A. M. Hammacher had suggested as early as 1952 that *People's House* derived from cinema.[80] I would argue that the influence of film on this and other group portraits by Toorop is not direct, and could be said to be carrying out the same phenomenon that her Dutch contemporaries observed in photomontage. It is my contention that her approach to this new medium likely shares a theoretical basis with the ideas expressed in an article by her colleague, the De Stijl typographer César Domela-Nieuwenhuis. Published in 1931, his essay historicizes the development of photomontage as an entity that bridged, or existed between, photography and film due to the former's seemingly incongruent insistence on unifying disparity.[81] The minimal textual dialogue and nonverbal expressions of silent film, when combined with the prevalence of photography in print

culture, had in the interwar periods, according to Domela-Nieuwenhuis, turned mechanically reproduced images into an international language.[82]

In fact, Toorop's *People's House*, largely preceded the practice of photomontage in The Netherlands, which graphic artists Domela-Nieuwenhuis, Paul Schuitema, and Piet Zwart took up in earnest in the early 1930s. For example, Schuitema's photomontage *Volkeren der Sovjetunie* (People of the Soviet Union) reproduced in the *Dutch New-Russia Society* journal or Zwart's series of book covers on national film schools, including *Russische Filmkunst* (Russian Film Art) in 1931 similarly combined faces of varying sizes gazing in different directions in a determined fashion (Figure 2.12). It is entirely possible that Toorop came about this aesthetic independently, perhaps drawn to the compositional possibilities of a photomontage-like approach that placed her work between the various media categories of film, photography, and painting.

I would argue that Toorop's paintings in this "genre" reorient the collective sociality of Dirk Jacobsz's *Kloveniersdoelen* in a way that reflects the specific conditions of the interwar Netherlands. The social interaction in paintings such as *People's House* is denaturalized, yet endowed with a sense of personal agency; expressions range from the determined gaze of the middle-aged female figure at the center of the composition to the more contemplative mode of the young man in the foreground, forging a shared psychological portrait oriented toward both internal and external coordination. Like *Kloveniersdoelen*, this image of includes individualized psychological states that share a communal space (in the form or the worker's club) and extend outward toward the beholder. However, Toorop's painting inverts the compositional arrangement of Jacobsz's triptych. The guardsmen in *Kloveniersdoelen* address the onlooker with the sole exception of the figure at the bottom left of the central panel. In Toorop's *People's House,* only the gray-haired woman at the top left in directly engages the viewer. This detail produces a subtle hierarchy, prioritizing the role of women in the spread of solidaristic ideology, which such a community space could help facilitate.

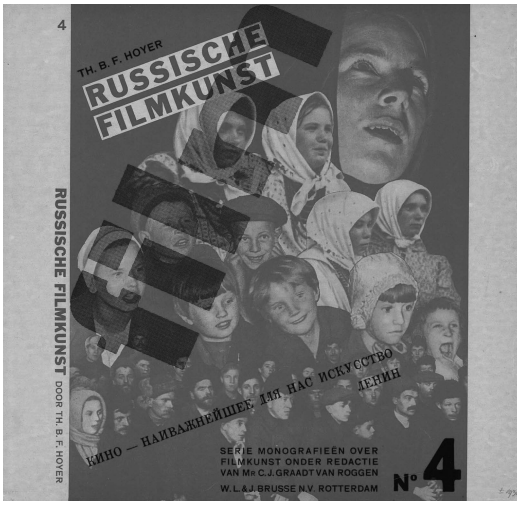

Figure 2.12 Piet Zwart, Cover for *Russische Filmkunst* (Russian Film Art).

Source: Reproduced on book by Th. B.F. Hoyer, 1931 (photo: Bubb Kuyper Auctions). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

Toorop's painting also achieved a different kind of introspection; she did not break down the dualism between subject and object like Jacobsz, whose painting allowed for a conversant relationship between the two.[83] Her figures trained their gaze in different directions. At the bottom left a middle-aged man closes his eyes and tilts his head down, as if lost in his own thoughts; a similarly-aged woman appears at the center staring intensely, while a young man at the bottom looks on with a pensive expression. Totally eschewing the unified arrangement of Hals's compositions, she coordinated her portrait group in a way that respected the individualism of each person. Every figure is depicted as unique with respect to his or her own distinct interests that relate to their age or profession, from the mustachioed bourgeois in the hat and glasses at the top right to the elder worker in the cap below him. When considered as a group, the figures' unification in this shared space visualizes a discussion, and hopefully an ultimate realization of a more egalitarian and class-conscious future.

She distinguished her method from Jacobsz by making discreet references to the instantaneity of both photography and celluloid, mediums known for their ability to capture momentary expressions rather than the ruminative kind explored in painting. Toorop's incongruous composition in the previous case modernized the way in which Renaissance and Baroque-era group portraits had traditionally taken into consideration the beholder's share. Because they appear within such proximity to the picture plane, the figures visualize an intensified form of psychological interiority, an effect that Toorop used repeatedly in paintings such as *People's House; Volkslogement* (People's Lodging), 1928; *Aan de toog* (At the Counter), 1933; and most famously in *Maaltijd der vrienden* (The Meal among Friends), 1932–1933.

At the same time, Toorop often allowed a port of entry for the outsider (or viewer). At the top left corner of *People's House* is a window with painted lettering, a place for psychological reprieve and reminder of the exterior world. To an extent, this practice places her work in dialogue with a different type of international large-scale Depression-era group compositions that celebrated labor, such as Otto Griebel's *Die Internationale* (The International), 1930; Tarsila do Amaral's *Operários* (Factory Workers), 1933; and Antonio Berni's *Manifestación* (Protest), 1934. Toorop's treatment of space and scale, by contrast, distinguishes her work from these examples. The seemingly indiscriminate enlargement of certain figures in her compositions subvert traditional notions of hierarchy by leveling the difference in size between parent and child like in *The Meal among Friends* (Figure 3.8). In all her group portraits the figures are disunified—some stare down the viewer, while others appear aloof and disengaged. In actuality, the people in these pictures are affiliated in a manner that resembled the fragmentation of the twentieth-century media system, one that bridged great physical distances to forge audiences made up of members from disparate locations. Spanning geographical divides through print culture and the cinema, such "imagined communities" could be formed with a rapid-fire, and sometimes-overwhelming pace of distribution.[84] In certain ways, Toorop's group portraiture offers a counterpart to the anti-humanist compositions of Willink and Hynckes by visually reifying a cacophony of crowded, overlapping voices, each distinguished by the distinctiveness of their faces in this portrait. Still, the unity enjoyed by the group—as Riegl described in reference to the Jacobsz triptych—only comes to pass in the mind of the beholder.[85]

Of the two large-scale works that most pointedly align with the Northern Renaissance/Baroque tradition, Toorop's most famous work, titled *The Meal among Friends* detailed in the following chapter, depicts several personalities from her artistic and familial circle gathered around a table. In 1933 critic Jos de Gruyter wrote that the painting moved beyond the country's venerable group portrait tradition, exclaiming that "an Old

Dutch regent piece was considerably more elegant and distinguished in its composition, but with all this *The Meal among Friends* possesses qualities that one cannot find in Hals or van der Helst" due to its "fierce vitality" but also its "deep, spiritual sensibility." De Gruyter also noted the way that the canvas combined "a strong, psychological sense of reality with a monumental concept of form," bringing together "fragments" of individuals who form a "cohesive and jovial" whole.[86] Indeed, the figures' faces, marked by varying proportions and separated by an ill-defined set of spatial relationships, nevertheless construct the *idea* of a coordinated gathering among comrades and associates.

A distinct aesthetic shift occurs in her other verifiable group portrait, the canvas *Portretgroep van H. P. Bremmer en zijn vrouw met kunstenaars uit hun tijd* (Group Portrait of H. P. Bremmer and his Wife with the Artists of Their Time), 1936–1938, popularly known in Dutch as the *Bremmersgroep* (Figure 2.13). For this composition Toorop placed the figures in a constrained, amphitheater-like arrangement, while retaining the flattened spatial quality and disproportionality of her earlier paintings. She rendered the famous critic Hendricus (Henk) Pieter Bremmer and his wife on the bottom left and right in three-quarter view. Bremmer was a champion of Toorop, an art dealer, an important critic, a teacher of art appreciation classes, and the founder of the journal *Beeldende Kunst* (Fine Art; 1913–1940) in addition to being described as the Dutch Roger Fry.[87] Situated in the space between Bremmer and his wife at bottom center of the canvas, Toorop placed Bart van der Leck in a frontal position, looking directly out at the viewer; the

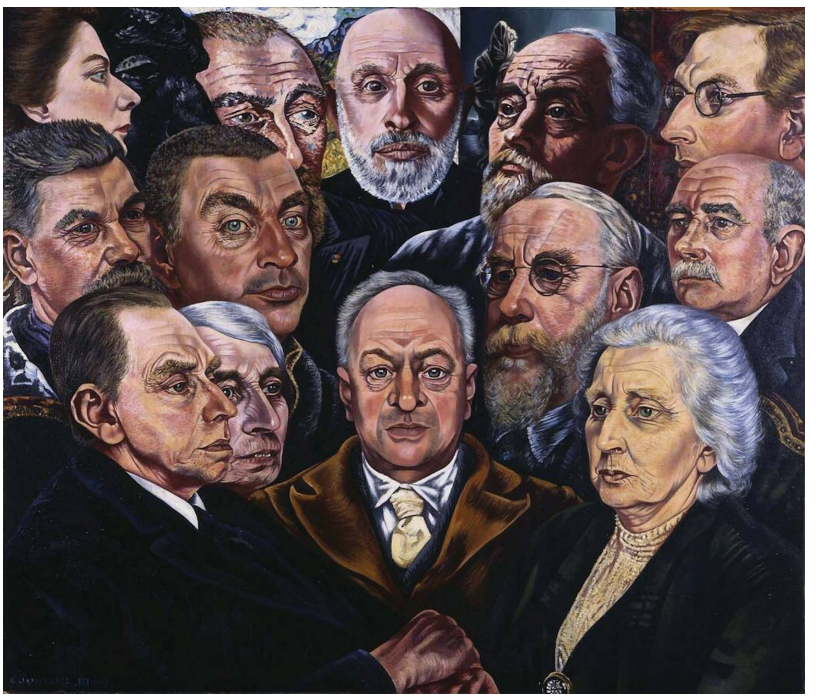

Figure 2.13 Charley Toorop, *Portretgroep van H. P. Bremmer en zijn vrouw met kunstenaars uit hun tijd* (Group Portrait of H. P. Bremmer and His Wife with the Artists of Their Time), 1936–1938, oil on canvas, 131 × 150.8 cm.

Source: Collection Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (photo: Tom Haartsen). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

artist Joseph Mendes da Costa appears above him. Toorop included her self-portrait in profile in the top left corner above Johan C. Altorf, followed by a sculpture-bust head of her father Jan Toorop by Rädecker, and then the face of Jan Sluijters. She also referenced Vincent van Gogh, Carel Willink, and Floris Verster metonymically by painting their canvases in the background. The other figures (clockwise after da Costa include): Lambertus Zijl, Rudolf Bremmer, and Hermanus A. van Daalhoff, and the inner group (clockwise) Tjitske G. M. van Hettinga Tromp, John Rädecker, and Dirk Nijland.[88]

In a certain way, the artist community that Toorop visualized, spanning past and present, forges an identity on the basis of association, initiating a dialogue between her work in this genre and the practices of the early avant-garde. Many group portraits of and by Impressionist painters, for example, had to consistently negotiate the imperative to assert an individualist mode of expression while also respecting the artist's place within the larger group identity needed to flourish in exile from official salons.[89] Toorop raises the question of what it meant to return to group portraiture well after the Trojan horse of modernist individualism had broached the gates. Much like the Impressionists, she attempted to represent the artists in her paintings as class-conscious laborers who preferred solidarity over bourgeois hierarchies.[90] What distinguished Toorop, however, was her earnest attempt to create a synthetic asynthesis. She repeatedly disrupted traditional rank order as represented by placement and size, while also refusing to respect any time and space referents that might unify the composition.

In *Bremmersgroep*, for example, Toorop maintained the egalitarian character of the group portrait genre, giving workers—artists—a position at the center of the composition, and assigning them a hierarchical designation of arguably equal weight to that of the patron and patroness at the bottom right and left. In 1939 Jan Slagter writing for *Elsevier's geïllustreerd maandschrift* noted that while the painting's composition was unnaturalistic compared to the more polished examples by Rembrandt and Hals, Toorop had in this work expanded beyond the egalitarian arrangement in her *The Meal among Friends* when she arrived at this comparatively closed composition that prioritized the artists. He claimed that the *Bremmersgroep* expressed a harmonious but not necessarily unprejudiced "union of personalities," brought together by their shared spiritual relationship. At the same time he noted that the composition undermines the conventional hierarchy in the way that it placed De Stijl painter Bart van der Leck and sculptor Joseph Mendes da Costa as the central figures of the composition, rather than Bremmer.[91]

Jos de Gruyter, however, perceived a specific modernist and intermedial influence: "there is no mutual connection between the heads, each of which makes up its own world and which is placed above or behind the others in a manner *almost like photomontage*" (italics mine). He also interpreted the reappearance of the Jan Toorop bronze bust in her group portraits as asserting his role as the patriarch in relationship to Charley and the younger generation of artists.[92] Perhaps unintentionally, de Gruyter's analysis recalled another way that photomontage was used to convey messages relating to authority and the transfer of power. Toorop's inclusion of her father's portrait bust in this work—which she had also done in her *The Meal among Friends*—resembles the way that Gustav Klutsis included the deceased Vladimir Lenin in his photomontages of the early 1930s (Figure 2.14). In *Bremmersgroep*, Toorop inserted her own self-portrait in profile at the top left, layering her likeness over that of a bust depicting her father; the arrangement is similar to a strategy used in many photomontages of Stalin, in which the leader's face is placed in close proximity to a portrait of Lenin, semiotically assigning the former a role as co-author of the Revolution alongside his Communist forebear.[93] The fact that Jan

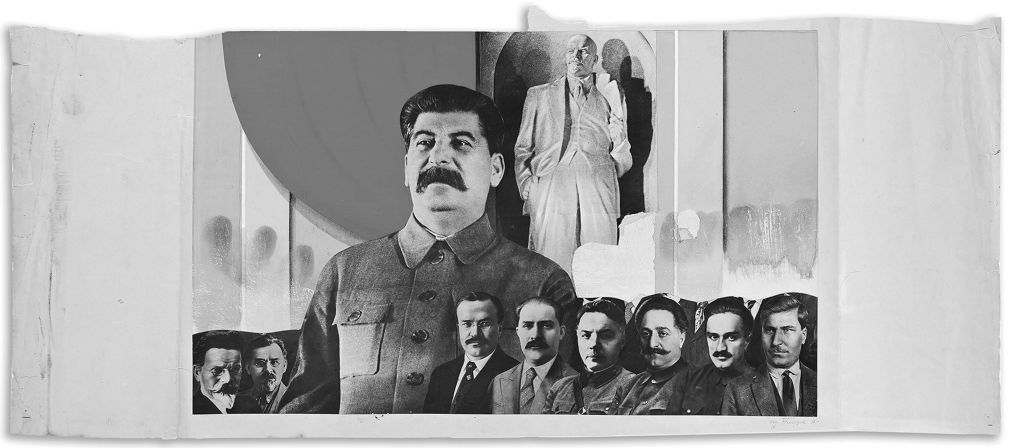

Figure 2.14 Gustav Klutsis, *Politburo*, 1935, photocollage maquette with mixed media, 34.25 × 55.25 cm.

Source: Private collection (photo: Courtesy of Swann Auction Galleries). © 2023 Estate of Gustav Klutsis/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Toorop, until his death in 1928 saw in Benito Mussolini a "symbol of order" capable of synthesizing the contemplative and the mystical—and in fact sought to model his own persona after Il Duce—adds another dimension to this power shift.[94] In passing the torch from father to daughter, Charley symbolically wrests authority from both the patriarch (Jan) and the patriarchal system that he embraced.

It would not be an exaggeration to declare *Bremmersgroep* the culmination of Toorop's accomplishments in this genre, and one that she used to work through her own political ideals concerning the individual's relationship to the collective. Certainly, the referential current that runs through her group portraiture—in harkening back to the Dutch Old Masters—is conversant with her fellow painters demonstrating a Neorealist tendency. I would venture to say that any social commentary apparent in these artists' paintings demonstrates how their visual citations behave as a pastiche that is more about culture than an embodiment of it.

While many Neue Sachlichkeit artists—most notably Otto Dix—were also reworking their native motifs and techniques in the 1930s and '40s, the paintings of the Dutch Neorealists reflected a cultural milieu of anti-nationalist nationalism long present in The Netherlands, a country that had by the 1930s taken on the role of pawn on the larger European gameboard. Ironically, once Dutch art criticism began to show a chauvinistic streak in reaction to the polarization and populism of Nazi Germany, the Neorealists began to gain recognition for their revivalist, Return to Order style and the "essential" Dutch spirit of their work. This tonal shift had the effect of obscuring the sardonic, fatalistic—and in the case of Toorop—Marxist undertones of their Old Master revivals. Lost was any visual commentary on the ongoing European socio-political conflicts as well as the impact of modern media (photomontage and film).

It is not a coincidence that the rise of Neorealism arrived at a moment when the once powerful Golden Age myth was failing to assert itself. By upending these popular and quintessentially Dutch genres, the Neorealists' work also revealed the capitalist

formulation by which these genres first came into prominence in the thriving Dutch Republic. In many ways, their paintings—except for the more idealistic Charley Toorop—subverted the national mythology, underscoring The Netherlands' vulnerability at a crucial moment in history. Their paintings stand as a reminder that The Netherlands' neutrality during World War I and attempts to remain out of the fray were for naught.

Notes

1 Johan Huizinga, *Nederland's Geestesmerk* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1934–1935), 16.
2 See ibid., 16–17.
3 *House with Two Holly Trees* is also known by the more site-specific title *Huisje op de Overtoom* (House on the Overtoom).
4 Hernan Vera, "On Dutch Windows," *Qualitative Sociology* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1989), 216.
5 Ibid., 225.
6 Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999), 25–26.
7 The Batavian myth was used to quell disputes and rivalries among the provinces by characterizing them as autonomous, yet unified. Jonathan Israel claims that it was commonly used after the Dutch Revolt because it was a way for Holland to maintain its de facto leadership role and avoid resentment, by claiming that the power was shared evenly among the seven provinces. See Jonathan Israel, "The Uses of Myth and History in the Ideological Politics of the Dutch Golden Age," in *Narratives of Low Countries History and Culture: Reframing the Past*, edited by Jane Fenoulhet and Lesley Gilbert (London: UCL Press, 2016), 11.
8 While a form of "ethnic nationalism" did exist in The Netherlands in the early twentieth century, it remained a fringe phenomenon. See Rob van Ginkel, *Op zoek naar eigenheid: Denkbeelden en discussies over cultuur en identiteit in Nederland* (Den Haag: Sdu, 1999), 154–156; Josip Kešić and Jan Willem Duyvendak, "Anti-Nationalist Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (2016), 581–597.
9 By the nineteenth century, The Netherlands' role in the history of Early Modern Europe had supplanted the ancient Batavian Legend as the predominant narrative and would remain so until 1945, when the myth of World War II would replace it. See Douwe Fokkema and Frans Grijzenhout, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective: Accounting for the Past: 1650–2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 43.
10 See Johan Huizinga, "How Holland Became a Nation," in *Lectures on Holland, Delivered in the University of Leyden During the First Netherlands Week for American Students, July 7–12, 1924* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1924), 268–270.
11 The Rijksmuseum—originally called the National Art Gallery—first opened in Huis Ten Bosch in The Hague, which held over 200 paintings and objects. The collection entered the current building, designed by Pierre Cuypers, in 1885.
12 Between the world wars, The Netherlands had a rather conservative artistic milieu, particularly in comparison to Paris and Berlin. Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg had long been based abroad by that point, although they still exhibited in The Netherlands. This would soon change. James Kennedy credits German-born Helene Kröller-Müller's collection with helping to improve conditions for modernist and even avant-garde artists in The Netherlands. See James Kennedy, *A Concise History of The Netherlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 346. Gregor Langfeld has argued that Dutch critics' negative view of German movements such as *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* during the 1920s and '30s helped to delay the acceptance of avant-garde art in The Netherlands in comparison to other countries. These critics also demonstrated a preference for figurative artists such as Neue Sachlichkeit. See also Gregor Langfeld, "German Art in The Netherlands Before and After World War I," in *Avant-Garde and Criticism*, edited by Jan de Vries (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 157–175.
13 Leo van Puyvelde was known as an outspoken flamingant (a proponent of an autonomous state for Flanders) as well as an art historian, publishing *Le movement flamand et la guerre* in 1918. In 1927 Puyvelde was appointed chief curator at the Royal Museums of Fine Art of Belgium in Brussels where he frequently held exhibitions on the Flemish Primitives. In his second volume of *Histoire de Belgique*, Henri Pirenne claimed that modern culture began in the Low Countries at the turn of the fifteenth century. According to Pirenne, it was Belgian culture and

its synthesis of Walloon and Flemish traditions that transcended class and language to form a new modern identity. See Leo van Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, vol. 2 (Brussels: H. Lamertin, 1908), 459–466, 469, 478. See also Wessel Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, edited by Bernhard Ridderbos, Henk Th. van Veen and Anne van Buren (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 83.

14 Nearly a century after its panels had been separated and dispersed to several different countries, the Ghent Altarpiece was finally reunited as part of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in 1920, just preceding the publication of Max Friedländer's book on the work *Der Genter Altar der Brüder van Eyck* (The Ghent Altarpiece of the van Eyck Brothers) and the adoption of Flemish as the official language of Flanders, both of which took place in 1921. See Lisa Deam, "Flemish Versus Netherlandish: A Discourse of Nationalism," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 1–7.

15 The exhibition was originally planned for Brussels, because museums did not want to lend van Eycks and Memlings for fear of damage. It later was moved to Bruges where the collections were located. See Dominique Thiébaut, Philippe Lorentz and François-René Martin, *Primitifs français: Découvertes et redécouvertes: Musée du Louvre du 27 février au 17 mai 2004*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2004), 25. The show was then taken over by Baron Henri Kervyn de Lettenhove, son of a statesman and historian and himself a patriot, artist, and writer who also took a nationalistic tone. In his closing speech Lettenhove said, "Rarely have the glories of the past shed a more vivid light, and the legitimate pride we have all taken in this has made us more proud of our awareness of being Flemish, more proud of our name of Belgians." See Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *The Northern Renaissance* (New York: Phaidon, 2004), 418.

16 Its success surpassed all expectations, welcoming 35,000 visitors and being granted a three-week extension. See Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," 275.

17 The exhibition was held to commemorate the 600-year anniversary of the Battle of Kortrijk (July 11, 1302) when the citizens of Bruges and Ghent defeated the invading French army. This victory was used as a symbol of Flemish nationalism in Belgium and signaled defiance against the use of French as the official language in Belgium at the time (hence the French title for the exhibition). See Carol Symes, "Harvest of Death: Johan Huizinga's Critique of Medievalism," in *Rereading Huizinga: Autumn of the Middle Ages, a Century Late*r (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 229–244.

18 See Bernhard Ridderbos, "From Waagen to Friedländer," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, edited by Bernhard Ridderbos, Henk Th. van Veen and Anne van Buren (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 237.

19 Georges Hulin de Loo, *De l'identité de certains maîtres anonymes (extrait du Catalogue Critique de l'Exposition de Bruges 1902)* (Ghent: A. Siffer, Libraire-Éditeur, 1902), 47.

20 Henri Bouchot, *Exposition des primitifs français au Palais due Louvre (Pavillon de Marsan) et à la Bibliothèque nationale*, exh. cat. (Paris: Palais du Louvre et Bibliothèque nationale, 1904), xxiii, 8, 13. In his pamphlet Georges Hulin de Loo claimed that the Master of Flémalle was the Tournai artist Jacques Daret. See Hulin de Loo, *De l'identité de certains maîtres anonymes*, 28–31.

21 Although Heinrich Wölfflin was originally from Switzerland, he moved to Germany where he was considered one of the country's most preeminent art historians. In his book *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Principles of Art History), 1915, he referred to Rembrandt as a "Holländische" (Dutch) painter. Franz Roh wrote his dissertation (under Wölfflin) on "Holländische Malerei" (Dutch Painting), published in 1921.

22 See Max Friedländer, *Van Eyck bis Bruegel: Studien zur Geschichte der niederländischen Malerei* (Berlin: J. Bard, 1916).

23 Celebrations covering the 500th anniversary celebrations of the Ghent Altarpiece were well covered in the Dutch press. See "De Aanbidding van het lam: Vijfhonderd jaar geleden voltooid," *De Tijd* (March 17, 1932), 8; "Van Eyck-Herdenking," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (April 5, 1932), 10.

24 Symes, "Harvest of Death," 230.

25 Wessel Krul, "In the Mirror of van Eyck: Johan Huizinga's Autumn of the Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1997), 360, 392.

26 Ibid., 369.

27 Ibid., 364.

28 Many German art historians wrote on Dutch subjects, including Franz Roh whose book *Holländische Malerei: 200 Nachbildungen mit Geschichtlicher Einführung und Erläuterungen* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1921) began as his dissertation. The scholarship produced in The Netherlands during the first three decades of the twentieth century did not consist of the same kind of treatises. Most of the literature and exhibitions produced in The Netherlands on the Dutch Old Masters during these years served a commemorative purpose that honored milestone birthdays.

29 In 1890 German art historian and philosopher Julius Langbehn described Rembrandt as the "most German of all German artists." See Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt Als Erzieher* (Leipzig: Hirschfeld, 1890).

30 Wilhelm von Bode also published *Die Meister der holländischen und vlämischen Malerschulen* (The Masters of the Dutch and Flemish Painting Schools) (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1917).

31 Most of de Groot's work was published in German. He wrote catalogue raisonnés for Jan Steen, Gabriel Metsu, Gerard Dou, Pieter de Hooch, Carel Fabritius, Vermeer, Aelbert Cuyp, Frans Hals, and Jacob van Ruysdael, as well as biographies of Dutch painters in the artist dictionary the *Kunst-Lexikon* (edited by Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker).

32 R. E. O. Ekkart, "Martin, Wilhelm (1876–1954)," in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland* (2013).

33 Martin's review, aptly titled "The Flemish Primitives," made no note of inherent nationalistic qualities in the artists' work, and while acknowledging the birthplace of painters such as Dirk Bouts in Haarlem, he prioritized Flanders as the place where Bouts had reached artistic maturity. Martin does, however, make a reference to The Netherlands in the very last line of the essay, where he states that the exhibition should encourage interest in "middeleuwsche Nederlandsche Schilderkunst" (Medieval Netherlandish painting). Wilhelm Martin, "De Vlaamsche Primitieven op de Tentoonstelling te Brugge," *Elsevier's geïllustreerd maandschrift* (Winter 1903), 18, 40.

34 In the forward of his 1935 book *De Hollandsche schilderkunst in de 17e eeuw: Frans Hals en zijn tijd* (Dutch Painting in the 17th Century: Frans Hals and His Time), Martin credited the book's publisher with addressing the need to produce books on Golden Age painting written by Dutch scholars, something which had not been done since Johan van Vloten's 1874 book *Nederlands Schilderkunst van de 14e tot de 18e eeuw, voor het Nederlandsche volk geschetst* (Dutch Painting from the 14th to the 18th Century Written for the Dutch People). Wilhelm Martin, "Voorbericht," in *De Hollandsche schilderkunst in de 17e eeuw: Frans Hals en zijn tijd* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1935), vii.

35 Ibid., 27.

36 See Dirk Hannema, *Jeroen Bosch: Noord-Nederlandsche primitieven, 10 July–15 October 1936*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans van Beuningen and Waeberge, Hoogewerff and Richards, 1936).

37 Nazi Germany instituted eugenics laws beginning in 1933, controlling marriage and sterilization. Fascist Italy instituted race laws beginning in 1938, primarily targeted at the Jewish population. In the Soviet Union Stalin ordered The Great Purge (1937–1938), a massive operation of ethnic cleansing (of Poles, Germans, Latvians, Estonians, Finns, Chinese, and other ethnic minorities). Franco's Spain also carried out sterilization and castration of sexual minorities in the 1940s on behalf of the Catholic Church.

38 Fokkema and Grijzenhout, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective*, 61–62.

39 By 1929 even Knuttel began to acknowledge the importance of the Dutch Old Masters and the conceptual ideas that modernists could draw from them. In an article titled "Comparison Between Old and Modern Art" published at the time of the Stedelijk Neue Sachlichkeit show, Knuttel wrote an account of walking through the halls of the Rijksmuseum with the Austrian artist Victor Tischler. The two men stood in front of paintings noting how modernists such as Paul Cézanne and the Fauves owed to the influence of the "Great Masters," including Bosch, Hals, Vermeer, and especially Rembrandt. Gerhardus Knuttel, "Vergelijking tussen Oude en Moderne Kunst," *Maandblad voor beeldende kunsten* 6 (1929), 186–193.

40 Maria Viola, "Nieuwe Zakelijkheid in het Stedelijk Museum: Tentoonstelling van de Onafhankelijken en Duitsche kunstbroeders," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (May 26, 1929), 9.

41 Ype Koopmans, *Magie en Zakelijkheid: Realistische schilderkunst in Nederland 1925–1945*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders Uitgeverij, 1999), 39. Wesselink notes that Meurs was not a nationalist and would later even become involved in the

anti-fascist exhibition "Kultuur 34." Claartje Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer: Gescheidenis en Herinnering* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 38–39.

42 Harmen Meurs, "Harmen Meurs," in *Palet: Een boek gewijd aan de hedendaagse Nederlandsche schilderkunst*, edited by Paul Citroen (Amsterdam: De Spieghel, 1931), 73.

43 Willink capitalized the word "Glorie" in his essay. Carel Willink, "Entre-mets," in *Palet: Een boek gewijd aan de hedendaagse Nederlandsche schilderkunst*, edited by Paul Citroen (Amsterdam: De Spieghel, 1931), 140–141.

44 Ibid., 141.

45 Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 27.

46 Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 2–3.

47 Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Worthy to Behold: The Dutch City and Its Image in the Seventeenth Century," in *Dutch Cityscapes of the Golden Age* (The Hague, Washington and Zwolle: Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, and National Gallery of Art, Waanders Publishers, 2009), 17–19.

48 See Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Cat. no. 25," in *Dutch Cityscapes of the Golden Age* (The Hague, Washington and Zwolle: Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, and National Gallery of Art, Waanders Publishers, 2009), 130.

49 The specific buildings and their locations were identified in Ype Koopmans, *In de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 192.

50 *Speklagen* or *spekhuis* ("bacon band" or "bacon house") refers to a home designed with horizontally oriented polychrome brickwork. The name derives from the color and design found in bacon, with red meat and lines of white fat.

51 Both Hans Grundig and Franz Radziwill had works on view in 1929 at the Stedelijk Museum Neue Sachlichkeit show. Radziwill also sold Dutch city and townscapes at the Aaron Vecht Gallery in Amsterdam, where Willink exhibited. See Andrea Firmenich and Rainer W. Schulze, *Franz Radziwill 1895 bis 1983: Monographie und Werkverzeichnis* (Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 1995), cat. no. 354, 6.

52 Willink's depictions of the sky were based on the views from his Amsterdam home in the 1930s. Over the course of that decade he amassed a large collection of photographs capturing the clouds in his view of the Rijksmuseum from his studio and apartment at 15 Ruysdael Quay. An exhibition at Amsterdam's Foam Museum in 2015 titled "Shifting Skies: Willink's Skies Above the Rijksmuseum" displayed these photographs to the public for the first time.

53 The Rampjaar refers to the year when France invaded The Netherlands with the support of England, Münster and Cologne, nearly overtaking it. See ibid., 28.

54 An earlier sketch is reproduced in Koopmans, *In de schaduw van morgen*, 192.

55 Carel Willink, *Schilderkunst in een kritiek stadium* (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1950), 14.

56 Ibid., 26.

57 See Koopmans, *In de Schaduw van morgen*, 128; J. H. van der Hoop, *Raoul Hynckes* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1940), 39.

58 Niehaus also suggested the influence of German artist Franz Radziwill, who also exhibited in Amsterdam at the van Lier gallery. Kasper Niehaus, "Raoul Hynckes: Een eminent stillevenschilder. Zijn nieuw werken in de Kunstzaal Van Lier te Amsterdam," *De Telegraaf* (September 27, 1933), 9.

59 Paul F. Sanders, "Vier Tentoonstelling van schilderen: Knap werk van Hynckes: Bij eerlijke kunst gaat kwaliteit boven richting," *Het Volk* (September 29, 1933), 14.

60 In 1938 Jan Engelman wrote that they painted with "Job's patience, as some old Dutchmen have done, 'fijnschilders' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" and that "they are by a strange contradiction the primitives of the era." Jan Engelman, "Letteren en Kunsten: De Nieuwe Realisten," *De Waag* (February 19, 1938), 163–164. In 1941 Jos de Gruyter wrote "the small group of neo-realists landed here—Hynckes, Koch, Willink—in a modern spirit links up with the seventeenth-century Dutch painter's school and thus opens wider perspectives for the future." Jos de Gruyter, "Hedendaagsche Nederlandsche Schilderkunst: Centraal Museum te Utrecht," *Het Vaderland* avondblad (January 8, 1941), B2.

61 The "pronk" (or still life of display) refers to a subgenre that emphasizes ostentatious and often imported wares. Simon Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 161.

62 Julie Berger Hochstrasser, "Domestic Commodities," in *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 34–35.
63 Julie Berger Hochstrasser, "Feasting the Eye: Painting and Reality in the Seventeenth-Century 'Bancketje,'" in *Still-Life Paintings from The Netherlands 1550–1720*, edited by Alan Chong, Wouter Kloek and Celeste Brusati, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Rijksmuseum, Cleveland Museum of Art, and Waanders Publishers, 1999), 73–74.
64 Ibid., 61, 72, 89, 96.
65 The Dutch suspended trade of French wines and other products in 1671, just prior to the Franco-Dutch War (1672–1678). Ibid., 92. The Dutch also largely avoided Spanish varieties as a result of the Eighty Years' War. See ibid., 90.
66 Château Brane Cantenac was ranked deuxième cru in the 1855 Bordeaux Wine Classification. The vineyard had a tumultuous history of ownership during the interwar years. Owned by Robert von Mendelssohn (nephew of the composer) at the beginning of the twentieth century, the vineyard was confiscated by the French government because it was in enemy hands and auctioned off. In 1938 glovemaker Martial Michel had to sell it due to financial difficulties. See Clive Coates, *The Wines of Bordeaux* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 154. Despite the instability suffered by the vineyard after World War II, Brane Cantenac still enjoyed a strong reputation in The Netherlands. See "De Wijnkenner," *Limburger koerier: Provinciaal dagblad* (July 6, 1927), 4; "Wijnfeesten in Bordeaux," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 14, 1934), 8.
67 In addition to the decrease in demand among countries devastated by the war, the French wine market was also affected by attempts at prohibition in Scandinavia and (briefly) in Belgium. Germany also promoted a "drink German wine" campaign during the interwar years to support its own production and not that of its wartime enemy. Rod Philips, *French Wine: A History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 211–212.
68 While this quote may overstate the importance of herring to the Dutch Revolt as Hochstrasser implies, the fact that this statement was made suggests the mythic importance of the industry. See Hochstrasser, "Domestic Commodities," 36.
69 S. T. Bindoff, G. R. Crone and F. W. Morgan, *The Netherlands* (London: Great Britain Naval Intelligence Division, 1944), 345.
70 The van Abbe Museum website identifies the fish as a mackerel. The limited detail in the painting makes any definitive identification inconclusive. In any case, if the fish is indeed a mackerel, its replacement of the herring in this case would still support the idea that the latter had become less available in the 1930s.
71 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 214.
72 See Ottevanger, *Dick Ket: Over zijn leven*, 26.
73 See Merel van Tilburg, "De Toorop Dynastie," *De Witte Raaf*, no. 203 (January–February 2020).
74 *People's House*, 1927; *People's Lodging*, 1928; *The Three Rädecker Children*, 1928; *Self-Portrait with Three Children*, 1929; *Man, Woman, and Child*, 1930; *Five Zeeland Farmers*, 1930; *Female Figures*, 1932; *The Meal among Friends*, 1932–1933; *At the Counter*, 1933; *Portrait with the Three Jelgersma Children*, 1935; *Portrait with Mrs. N. F. van Gelder-Schrijver and Her Two Children*, 1935; *Bremmersgroep*, 1936–1938; *John Rädecker with His Wife and Children*, 1938; *The Three de Wolff Peereboom Children*, 1938; and *Three Generations*, 1950 (which features her father in the form of his bronze portrait bust).
75 Her paintings of working-class types include *People's House*, 1927; *People's Lodging*, 1928; *Five Zeeland Farmers*, 1930; *Female Figures*, 1932; and *At the Counter*, 1933. I am distinguishing these paintings of worker types from those that appear to be of the "genre" tradition, due to the unified sense of action and emphasis on setting. See Nico Brederoo's catalogue raisonné *Charley Toorop: Leven en Werken* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1982), 251–263.
76 This definition of group portrait takes from Bridget Alsdorf, *Fellow Men: Fantin-Latour and the Problem of the Group in Nineteenth-Century French Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 219.
77 Marja Bosma has also argued that Toorop's group portraits borrow more from the sixteenth-century tradition than the seventeenth, citing Barendsz as an example. See Marja Bosma, "Vooral Geen Principes! Surtout pas de principes," in *Charley Toorop*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2010), 55.

78 Archery and crossbow guilds from Habsburg-era rule (when Jacobsz was painting) formed their "corporate" identities through shared notions of civic and spiritual duty. Burgundian dukes gave them charters to show their loyalty. Emphasis was on brotherhood but also on shared goals of piety and charity. Since the fifteenth century these guilds were often made up of the most powerful people in urban society including aldermen and were a good way to social climb. See Laura Crombie, *Archery and Crossbow Guilds in Medieval Flanders 1300–1500* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 3, 56, 61, 72–73.
79 The first volkshuis in Amsterdam was *Ons Huis*, located in the Jordaan neighborhood.
80 A. M. Hammacher, *Charley Toorop* (Rotterdam: Brusse, 1952), 28.
81 César Domela-Nieuwenhuis, "Fotomontage," *Reclame* 10, no. 5 (May 1931), 213.
82 Ibid., 211.
83 For more on the introspection in Jacobsz's work, see Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, translated by Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 105.
84 Imagined Community comes from the 1983 book by Benedict Anderson of the same name, which theorizes that the rise of print culture in the early modern era gave way to a kind of nationalism, or socially constructed community.
85 Ibid., 104.
86 Jos de Gruyter, "Werk van Leden van den N.S.B.: Kunsthandel Nieuwenhuizen Segaar," *Het Vaderland* (September 7, 1933), C1. N.S.B. in this title refers to *Nieuwe Schilders en Beeldhouwerskring* (New Painters and Sculptors Circle).
87 Bremmer taught an art appreciation course attended by Helene Kröller-Müller. He helped her assemble the collection for her museum, which includes many canvases by Charley Toorop. See Hildelies Balk and Lynne Richards, "A Finger in Every Pie: H. P. Bremmer and His Influence on the Dutch Art World in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 32, nos. 2–3 (2006), 182–217.
88 Bremmer himself wrote in 1934 that if one of Toorop's group portraits had been hung between two of Frans Hals's most famous canvases, the Old Master's paintings would be vastly inferior to the sense of strength that she brought to her work. See H. P. Bremmer, *Beeldende Kunst* 20, no. 8 (1934). Even though Toorop was borrowing from a tradition that pre-dated him, Hals's name is often cited in comparisons of her work to the group portrait tradition.
89 See Alsdorf, *Fellow Men*, 204.
90 Ibid., 205.
91 Jan Slagter, "Charley Toorop," *Elseviers geïllustreerd maandschrift* 49, no. 97 (1939), 206–208.
92 Jos de Gruyter, "Nieuwe werken door Charley Toorop: Kunsthandel Nieuwenhuizen Segaar," *Het Vaderland* (February 5, 1939), C1.
93 Margarita Tupitsyn, "The Restructuring of a Photographer," in *The Soviet Photograph 1924–1937* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 165.
94 Jan Toorop admired Mussolini for his potential to restore order in all spheres: Political, social, economic, but above all spiritual and religious life. Wouter Lutkie claimed that Toorop's interest in Mussolini was of a religious rather than a political nature; Toorop emphasized the leader's mystical qualities above all else. See Wouter Lutkie, *Van Toorop naar Mussolini* (Oisterwijk: Uitgeverij Oisterwijk, 1928), 90, 92, 104.

3 A Paragone between Film and Painting—or—Film as a New Visual Model

In a 1928 portrait titled *Melitta in het wit/Zittende vrouw in landschap* (Melitta in White/Seated Woman in a Landscape; Figure 3.1), Wim Schuhmacher depicted his wife seated in an ill-defined but well-illuminated outdoor scene, surrounded by sparse vegetation. Typical of Schuhmacher's modernist sfumato, a gauzy haze envelops the scene as if he has placed a scrim before the viewer, producing the effect of an intense, meandering light that emanates from various sources, including the highlights on the ground below, the plant-like forms—and especially, the edges of the sitter's simple white dress. His early background working closely with architecture, furniture, and stage design schemes led him to compose the figures in his paintings much like actors and props on the set of a theatrical production or a film; his simplified subjects played the main character.[1] This painting, in particular, emphasizes the incongruent juxtaposition of the developed, human-like figure and the ambiguous and unstable space that she inhabits.

At the time that Schuhmacher made this work, he had most certainly seen Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mat* (Mother), 1926 (Mezhrabpom-Rus), a motion picture that he would later claim to have watched over seventy times in the course of his life.[2] In 1928 he was a member of The Netherlands New-Russia Society, a pro-Soviet group that held screenings of the film.[3] He also had connections with the Nederlandsche Filmliga, a national ciné-club with chapters across The Netherlands, and which had come into being in response to the censorship of Pudovkin's *Mother* by Dutch authorities.[4] Based on a novel by Maxim Gorky, the scenario tells the story of a worker's mother, Pelageya Nilovna Vlasova (Figure 3.2), who is drawn into the conflicts surrounding a revolutionary strike in tsarist Russia when her son, a trade union activist, is sentenced to work in a labor camp.

Many in the Dutch artistic community revered *Mother* as a masterpiece for its dramatic and effective editing, which was fluid in contrast to Sergei Eisenstein's jarring montage effects. In his own writing, Pudovkin was concerned with finding a way to best use the plasticity of the film medium, meaning "he must know how to discover and how to select, from the limitless mass of material provided by life and its observation, those forms and movements that shall most clearly and vividly express in imagery the whole content of his idea."[5] Although Pudovkin articulated these thoughts in 1929, one year after Schuhmacher painted this portrait, writers for the *Filmliga* journal already proclaimed the director "the greatest cleaner of the image plane," saying that "for him it is only important to show the most essential in the image and only including that which is actually acting."[6] Like Pudovkin, in *Melitta in White*, Schuhmacher began to remove all unnecessary or superfluous elements that did not directly contribute to the reading of his work, while sparing those aspects that he could use symbolically or metaphorically.

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Figure 3.1 Wim Schuhmacher, *Melitta in het wit/Zittende vrouw in landschap* (Melitta in White/Seated Woman in a Landscape), 1928, oil on canvas, 101.2 × 77.8.

Source: ING Collection (photo: Frans Hemelrijk, Co-Press Studio, Amsterdam). Permission of Wilma Schuhmacher and Jan van Geest.

Figure 3.2 Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mat* (Mother), 1926, Mezhrabpom-Rus.

Numerous sequences in the film emphasize the protagonist's humanity using close-up shots of the actress's face, as well as vantage points shot from above looking down at her. In these examples, Pudovkin preferred perspectives that capture the character's vulnerability. Schuhmacher's glowing landscape, which seems to be lit as if from beneath its surface, also shares visual correspondences with Pudovkin's use of overexposed lighting in the outdoor scenes in *Mother*. Its indeterminacy can also be attributed to Pudovkin's emphasis on the montage effect produced by editing together scenes of an ice floe down a river and a marching mass of revolutionaries at the film's climax. Melitta, like the protagonist Vlasova, is the temporal anchor of an environment that appears to be in continuous flux, as solid as the stone lying at her side. Perhaps for Schuhmacher, the use of this movie as source material, as I have suggested, was a way to produce a painted equivalent of what was by then a tradition in Soviet literature and film: the heralding of everyday people through the politicization of their social position. In the case of Pudovkin's film, such characterizations included familial roles like the titular mother.[7]

Melitta in White is but one example of a Neorealist painting that transposes the new aesthetics wrought by film technology onto the two-dimensional "screen" of a canvas, one front-lit entirely by embodied, painterly means. While it has been established that many artists working in the Neorealist tendency adopted and adapted numerous tropes of the traditional Dutch genres for the purpose of making social commentary on the 1930s, some scholars have over the years intermittently acknowledged the artists' equal indebtedness to cinema. What was it about film and its technologies that interested these painters? I argue that this relatively new and intensely image-based medium offered novel technical effects as well as a highly immersive mode of absorbing a visual text—which when approximated in painted form—reproduced a distinctly modern analogue for reality. More specifically, these painters used the alienating effects of the close-up, point-of-view shots, extended takes, montage, and the experience of film-watching itself to intensify their allusions to everyday life in the 1930s, one profoundly altered by new media, rapid modernization, and the impending war. These artists self-consciously evoked the Dutch realist tradition, but through a different kind of visual scrutiny: not so much the insistent accumulation of minutiae, but rather the equitable rendering of all things great and small in piercing detail, resembling the blank clarity of a dispassionate, mechanical recording of the world. In fact, several of the Neorealists, including Schuhmacher, Koch, and Toorop, may have even been closely involved in the running of the Filmliga, an organization that held progressive and politicized views on film aesthetics, while also screening German, French, and Soviet productions. During this period, the influence of film can be seen in the work of all three of these painters, as well as that of Willink, Ket, and Hynckes, and was fast becoming one of the defining characteristics of their work, sometimes recognized by the critics of their time.

One corollary to the technical illusionism endemic to film dates to the Early Netherlandish tradition and is one embedded in the history of representation in Holland and Flanders. The use of technological tools as analogs for visual truth has held true across accounts of the history of painting in the Low Countries since Svetlana Alpers's revolutionary 1983 study first centered on the focused observation and attentiveness to nature apparent in the Dutch tradition.[8] Such historical concepts of vision had evolved across the centuries, ranging from the metaphysical manifestations of God's truth in the early modern paintings of Jan van Eyck to the scientific visualizations of reality inspired by the tools of the Age of Discovery embodied in the Baroque era paintings of Johannes Vermeer.[9] Using optical (or conceptual) tools to aid the naked eye was thus a natural

for these new "realist" painters. The very moment that they embarked on this painting style—the transitional period from silent to sound film—follows the century that had given rise to the motion picture, one in which, as Jonathan Crary observed, audiences had been primed by a reconceptualization of the viewer as inhabiting a position that was subjective, but also removed from the stability of a synthetic Kantian apperception.[10] In this regard, the Neorealists' paintings certainly demonstrate a new kind of interiority, one enabled by an embodied mode of viewing and mediated by the film apparatus (encompassing the screen, the cinema, and the entirety of the production process). Their paintings thus pose an important question: what does it mean to evoke an expression of truth when inspired by a device that inherently undermines definitional absolutes?

This chapter examines the endpoint of this "Dutch" mode of viewing articulated by Alpers and others, once its technologically mediated trajectory had reached the early twentieth century. In this regard, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that for the Neorealist painters working in the interwar Netherlands, film had become a twentieth-century model for vision in the same way that the Dutch-invented telescope and the microscope were viewed as literal and metaphorical models for world-seeing and truth-telling during the Golden Age. There was, in fact, a precedent for this perspective among Dutch cultural critics. In one early example dating to 1910, the mechanical engineer Isaäc Pieter de Vooys specifically characterized film as the modern inheritor of the camera obscura in the way that "electric light projects a rapid succession of photographic statues into a *simulation* of life" (italics mine).[11] His emphasis on the ability of film to replicate and effectively animate a highly naturalistic, yet artificial facsimile of reality expressed just how cinema was perceived as a modern version of this ancient optical device.

An examination into the archival and visual evidence suggests that film technology performed a similar function in many Neorealist paintings, enacting a "simulation of life" that spoke in specific terms to the socio-political context in which these artists lived and worked. It was likely the machine-made quality of the moving picture that most intrigued these painters, due the ability of this relatively new medium to capture an image of the world through an "objective" mechanical intervention and keep it at a social remove. This affectless character—which the Neorealists appropriated from film—is what made their paintings distinctly of their time. When approximated in pigment-on-canvas, such a filmic mode of rendering sought to uncover a particular truth derived from the inventions of mankind rather than that of God's design. As such, the Neorealists' artistic production observed a shift that had taken place in the modern era, pivoting away from a humanist view of the world wherein man is the measure of all things, to one in which industrial automation and Taylorism had sapped the self of both potential and autonomy. When considering what I view as the intent among Neorealist painters to express the *effects* of modernization, there was perhaps no better model for accomplishing that goal than film. The use of cinema as an aesthetic metaphor also extended to articulating the political tensions affecting Europe, from the economic effects of the Great Depression to the curtailment of freedoms in Western European totalitarian regimes. These were crises inextricable from the perils of the machine age: the former linked to industrial overproduction (and speculation) and the latter to the arms races of the early twentieth century.

Due to the ability of the motion picture—particularly during the silent era—to intensify the experience of seeing, the cinema provided modern painters with a uniquely twentieth-century model for visualizing the rapidly changing and increasingly mechanized world in which they lived. As opposed to the sense of mastery and control implicit in Albertian perspective, the lack of self-awareness in the darkened space of the movie

house, combined with the inherent illusionism of cinema, can to a certain degree render the viewer a passive recipient in the flow of images. The mechanical nature of film induced a new kind of psychological estrangement because it could process the appearance of life and movement through the eye of a cold, "objective" machine. From a technical standpoint, the medium also had the capacity to magnify certain aspects of reality using close-ups, darkened theaters, and heightened illumination. The painters in question attempted to emulate all of these effects in their canvases, expressing a range of experiences that embodied a "reality" altered by a host of political, cultural, and technological factors. It is not happenstance that the emergence of this tendency within Neorealist painting developed alongside certain materialist discourses voiced in prominent Dutch venues. For example, by 1927 artist and editor Lazsló Moholy-Nagy assembled international critics into an important debate in the pages of the Dutch art *journal i10 Internationale Revue* on faktura, arguing in favor of the superiority of mechanically produced or reproduced works of art over those created through traditional means of manipulation. Constructivist theorist Ernst Kállai initiated the discussion by declaring that the mobility of film—rather than the static nature of photography—made the former medium the true competitive adversary to painting due to its facility for expressively visualizing the kinetic tension of the modern world.[12] In his response, Moholy-Nagy cited Franz Roh, who warned that the persistent attempt of Neue Sachlichkeit artists to mimic mechanically reproducible media (photography and film) was doomed to be defeated by the relentless objectivity of the machine.[13]

Painting, of course, cannot truly recreate the deeply sensorial or psychologically absorptive qualities of film due to its static material limitations. For this reason, I argue that many Neorealist painters carried out a *paragone* between painting and film: a competition with roots in the Italian Renaissance that asserted the superiority of one art form over the other. This visual debate that many Neorealists brought forth in their work allowed them to at times reify, and in other cases elide, the boundaries that separate the two media in their work. While this constant back-and-forth between the canvas and the screen acted to dispel film's inherent illusionism, I claim that it also inspired the artists to record their experience of the world as mediated by this new artificial version of reality.

Those artists who were affiliated with the Nederlandsche Filmliga (Wim Schuhmacher, Pyke Koch, and Charley Toorop) at times usurped the immersive capabilities of cinematic illusionism in their paintings, while also bringing it into competition with the artifice of oil or tempera. Their resulting canvases allowed the viewing audience to see the world in a new and sometimes disturbing way. Mixing the traditional techniques of easel painting with painted approximations of cinema's visual effects, these artists made visible the contrived nature of both art forms.

The currency of film as a source of both entertainment and artistic inspiration for modern painters working in the late 1920s cannot be fully understood without examining the culture that was developing around cinema houses across Europe. The widespread popularity of movie theaters in urban spaces as well as the rise of cinéclubs meant that film's influence on visual culture was pervasive and ranged from commercial fare to more experimental work. For painters such as Pyke Koch, who held popular culture in low regard, the vast reach of the medium manifested itself as an ambivalent love-hate relationship with Hollywood film, one that inspired a desire for competition with this celebrated commercial product.[14]

By the late 1920s and early '30s, cinemas had become ubiquitous across Europe, and the global industry consistently sought out more profitable ways of enhancing audience

experience and engaging the visual and aural senses. The unstable economic circumstances of that era, however, seemed to maintain a paradoxical relationship to visual culture of the cinema. Ornate Art Deco designs of movie houses such as the Tuschinski Theater in Amsterdam defied the austerity of the Great Depression. These lavishly decorated cinemas—accessible to all classes—began to appear in major cities across Europe.[15] Just as the Great Depression was making its way across the Atlantic, reaching its height in The Netherlands between 1933 and 1936, movie theaters offered a cheap, escapist diversion for the public.[16] Hollywood film, in particular, resonated with European audiences, who produced enormous box-office returns to the American film industry in the 1930s. This was especially true in The Netherlands, a country that had not developed a substantial industry of its own and which relied heavily on imported films.[17]

Coinciding with the rapid proliferation of movie theaters across the world was the concern that this new technology threatened to compromise public taste. Johan Huizinga warned as early as 1918 in his book of essays titled *Mensch en menigte in Amerika* (Man and the Crowd in America) that the cinema was dangerous because of its "extraordinarily democratic" ability to reach so many viewers, while also manipulating the senses. According to Huizinga, this emerging medium offered something substantively impoverished in comparison to literature, due to the former's heavy reliance on visual modalities, rather than textured descriptive language to create a scene.[18] Filmgoing was also regarded with suspicion among conservatives in The Netherlands who viewed the pastime as threatening to the social fabric because of its morally questionable content. In conservative areas such as Utrecht, the movie theater was often the subject of suspicion among local *bioscoopcommissies* (cinema commissions), whose efforts had the effect of shrinking the already small audience interested in watching avant-garde films. Regulatory bodies sought to establish a relationship between the movie theater and criminality, paying particularly close attention to cinema's effects on women and children—even pushing the Dutch film industry toward self-censorship.[19] The Christian Historical Union and Anti-Revolutionary Party (a Protestant Christian democratic political party) wanted to forbid children from watching films, fearing that the youth would seek out a "morele ontroering" (moral emotion) in movie houses rather than in the Church.[20]

Some voices in The Netherlands grew concerned over the threat that "lowbrow" American film posed to local culture, due to a perceived lack of artistic quality as well as the imperialistic nature of the industry on both economic and a cultural fronts. This response led members of the Amsterdam artistic community to establish the Nederlandsche Filmliga (The Dutch Film League), a national club whose stated objective was to promote the non-commercialized art form of "pure film."[21] Like nearly everyone in Europe in the 1920s and '30s, the Neorealist painters addressed in this book frequented popular films at their local movie houses. The Filmliga offered to them a more systematic way to participate in film culture during the interwar years; it held regularly scheduled programming wherein members could study, discuss, and analyze film. Charley Toorop was a co-founder, and the only signatory of the Filmliga manifesto who was a painter.[22] Literary figures Henrik Scholte and Menno ter Braak co-headed the club, while film industry workers such as Ed Pelster (sound engineer) and Joris Ivens (director) made up the founding body, the composition of which testified to the intellectual rigor and multidisciplinary reach of the club. Organizers often exhibited far-left political leanings, but the Filmliga did not have any party affiliation. Rather, the objective was to include films of artistic quality from all over the world and then discuss them in the pages of the club's eponymous journal, where films from France, Germany, and the Soviet Union

were disproportionately represented due to their robust industries.[23] Another important part of the Filmliga's mission was to educate the public on experimental film and cultivate a taste for more artistically challenging works as opposed to frothy and sentimental American fare. For this reason, its leadership also encouraged critics to publish in the popular press—targeting venues that could reach a broader public.[24]

In its first order of business, the Filmliga promoted an active form of viewership, aiming to ward off the negative, morally corruptive effects of commercial film and the *bioscoop* (or cinema). Its organizers screened films in austere movie houses—first at the Centraal Theater and then at the Uitkijk in Amsterdam—rather than the decadent theaters that typified the period. Eschewing the box office entirely, the Filmliga organized itself like a dues-paying club whose subscribing members actively participated in discussions about a film after its screening. Many of the in-depth questions raised during its scheduled meetings often appeared in the accompanying Filmliga journal. The engagement-oriented programming that the club encouraged proposed a marked departure from the more anonymous film-going experience of commercial theaters, where audiences attended as passive, transient consumers of a cinema product.[25]

The reach of the Filmliga was formidable, outmatching any other national cinéclub in Europe and leaving discernible influence on Dutch cultural life in the late 1920s and early '30s. With chapters across The Netherlands, the Filmliga also aimed to establish networks with sister organizations in other major cities, such as Berlin, Paris, London, Brussels, and New York.[26] As noted above, many of its members published texts on film aesthetics and theory as well as reviews in the club's official organ.[27] While the documentary evidence linking Pyke Koch and Wim Schuhmacher to the Filmliga is not definitive, their membership and involvement in the organization of the club has long been suspected. Pyke Koch has been tentatively identified as a founding member of the Utrecht chapter, one of the nation's largest, while Wim Schuhmacher may have been a member of the Amsterdam branch.[28] In any case, Schuhmacher was certainly aware of the Filmliga's existence; organizers occasionally sent him requests for help with design-related issues for the journal and Uitkijk movie theater or asked his wife Melitta—who was born in Riga and spoke Russian—to translate the writings of Soviet filmmakers.[29]

Upholding the high regard for pure art film may have been the stated goal of the Filmliga, as it was set forth in the club's "manifesto" published on the back page of every one of its journal issues, but Filmliga's project was made all the more urgent by certain revolutionary changes happening within the international film industry. It is not a coincidence that the club was founded in 1927, on the brink of the transition to sound film, which had elicited a crisis among artists and intellectuals longing to preserve film's essential, medium-specific qualities. Some of Filmliga's critics engaged in debates over whether or not to embrace sound film.[30] Others felt compelled to exclusively promote non-narrative experimental cinema such as the "Absolute films" of Walter Ruttmann, whose rhythmic sequences suggested a moving-image counterpart to music.[31] The organization even invited Pudovkin as well as French avant-garde director René Clair to speak at the club about the rapidly changing medium and offer solutions to prevent film's descent into "kitsch" and "vulgar taste."

Of all the rich debates that arose in the pages of the Filmliga journal during this time, the qualities inherent to film elicited the most prolific discourse. Dutchman and documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens contributed an article about the optical distortion caused by the rapid succession of frames projected onto the movie screen and its simulation of movement.[32] In the following issue, Austrian critic Fritz Rosenfeld discussed film's unique

ability to captivate viewer interest through the tempo of short and long takes.[33] Critics often arrived at film's distinct qualities by comparing it with other art forms. Constant van Wessem, for example, contrasted the ability of cinema to visualize narration against the slow, descriptive build-up of a novel. He implied that the written word tended to be figurative (even metaphorical), while film was explicit in the way that it told stories using recordings of events, settings, and performances captured in real time. Recognizing that both mediums were beginning to demonstrate a similar "modern sensibility," van Wessem argued that even written narratives were increasingly oriented around surveillance-like descriptions of inanimate objects as well as physical spaces.[34] He went on to quote the contemporary Swiss writer Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz, who described the way that film allowed him to view the world with both a *stoffelijke* (material) and an *onstoffelijke* (immaterial) eye. He described how the new medium trained a camera lens on material items containing symbolic or allegorical meaning—and in the process—objectified them. A similar concretizing tendency, it would appear, was also taking place in the domain of canvas painting—particularly among the Dutch Neorealists who to varying degrees were privy to the debates surrounding film and its effects. In fact, the artists' intense focus on the material conditions of objects, the human figure, and their surroundings was a trait common to Magic Realism more broadly. It is my contention that these very debates laid out in the journal may have inspired Neorealists with connections to the Filmliga to launch into a paragone that sought to locate distinctions that separated painting from film, while also particularizing the strengths and weaknesses of either medium.

Koch first brought his refined technique into competition with the intangible nature of film in his 1929 painting *Portret Asta Nielsen* (Portrait of Asta Nielsen; Figure 3.3). In this canvas Koch depicted one of the most famous silent film actresses of the 1920s, who is often credited as the first international movie star. His image of the actress was inspired by a recent viewing of Bruno Rahn's *Dirnentragödie* (Tragedy of the Street), 1927. Locating two stills of Asta, one from Rahn's film and the other from George Wilhelm Pabst's *Die freudlose Gasse* (The Joyless Street; Figure 3.4), 1925, he joined elements of their compositions together to form this portrait.[35] At that time he had also been experimenting with the revival of Renaissance-era painting processes, influenced by Max Doerner's manual *Materials of the Artist*. This is the reason for Asta's greenish appearance: he was attempting to create her portrait using a *verdaccio* underpainting technique, but realized in the midst of composing it that he preferred the result and so decided to leave it.[36] Carel Blotkamp has compared this aesthetic choice to the jarring skin tones and the unnaturalistic palettes that verists such as Otto Dix had inherited from Expressionism.[37] In my view, Koch goes beyond mere Grünewaldian skin tones in his subversion of the genre. Portraiture had traditionally placed the sitter at a distance using a threshold space such as a ledge or window, a convention that had been perfected during the Renaissance. Koch did not include this intermediary space, and instead placed Nielsen's head and upper body at a close distance to the picture plane, producing the effect of extricating her from the urban backdrop. As Asta's profound presence overwhelms the painting, the project of disentangling the convoluted arrangement of buildings in the background falls to the wayside.

In this painting, Koch demonstrated an interested in the interplay between time and space—or more pointedly: expressions of ambiguous spatial dynamics that bear a striking resemblance to the sets of Expressionist filmmakers Robert Wiene and Fritz Lang. The subject in this portrait has an uncertain relationship to her surrounding environment; the lines delineating sidewalks and buildings form oblique, sometimes conflicting

Figure 3.3 Pyke Koch, *Portret Asta Nielsen* (Portrait of Asta Nielsen), 1929, oil on canvas, 96 × 80 cm.

Source: © Centraal Museum Utrecht. © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Ernst Moritz. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

angles that call to mind the disorienting angles of the painted set in Wiene's 1920 film *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari), 1920. The hallucinatory painted lines of Wiene's expressionist set, when combined with actual light and shadow, and the use of the iris shot blurred the distinction between concrete objects and artificially rendered flourishes. Likewise, in his portrait of Asta Nielsen, Koch reduced a windowed structure on the right-hand side of the canvas to a detached narrow slab; totally removed from any enclosed four-wall structure, the resulting configuration resembles a façade in a film or theater set. Precise locations of light sources remain ambiguous—they are multiple and are largely located outside of the frame—or what would be "off camera." Projecting forth at an extreme angle, the buildings center Nielsen in the foreground. Such a compositional device draws further attention to the spatial disjunction between the subject (Nielsen) and the background by emphasizing the implied motion in the city streets versus the stillness of the figure.

Koch does not necessarily make a case for the superiority of painting in this portrait; in many ways he proposed a meta-version of the paragone debate, highlighting the unique capabilities—and disadvantages—of oil and pigment. By leaving the verdaccio base intact, while exaggerating its acrid green tone, Koch used this age-old technique to

Figure 3.4 Photographic still from *Die freudlose Gasse* (The Joyless Street), Georg Wilhelm Pabst, 1925, Verlag Ross.

Photo: Werner Mohr.

reflexively distinguish the portrait's method of creation from a filmic modality. Painting, after all, was still able to provide the chromatic detail that film could not yet achieve. In some areas of the canvas Koch exploited his superlative technical skill, while in others he allowed the volumes and lighting to fall flat. The rose pinning together Asta's clothing comes into clear focus and makes these distinctions apparent. Subtle folds and ripples on the petals' edge make the flower the only object in the painting to suggest naturalistic volume via deep recesses and shadows. Invoking this floral detail as a repoussoir, Koch also recalls the trompe l'oeil tradition from the Baroque era, which often featured still lifes illuminated by a single light source. The kind of targeted focus induced by this trope in Koch's portrait isolated the rose and placed its static temporal markers in stark contrast to the diffuse illumination wafting through the city backdrop.

By negotiating the terrain separating a filmic (or time-based) mode from both the photographic punctum and easel painting's contemplative aura, Koch proposed a multi-directional paragone that engaged material questions in equal measure to that of the experiential. His juxtaposition of the rose repoussoir against the roving cinematic background, for example, brings into conversation the difference between the slow appreciation of painterly techniques and the prospect of watching time unfold as a rhythmic combination of static and moving shots. Koch set out to achieve an unachievable task, one that he continued to explore in the film-inspired paintings that followed this one. He sought to capture a still image inspired by the ephemeral flux of moving celluloid, using the traditional and static medium of paint on canvas. If Koch wished to base his portrait on a specific image of the actress as she appeared in these two features, he was limited by access to a projector and reel, and thwarted by Nielsen's brief, almost

apparitional appearance on screen—in constant movement. This limitation points to what could be considered an advantage to film over painting: the challenge of reproducing the time-dependent effects of cinema in any other medium.

It is perhaps for this reason that Koch turned to the two film stills of Asta Nielsen—and as a result—introduced another distinct medium into the equation. Photography, because of its proximity to film, best exemplifies the impossibility of translating the essential nature of cinema into another art form. While film is narrative and reconstructs an event in the present as a constantly unfurling representation of time, the photograph, by contrast, is a document that can only refer to a moment recorded in the past.[38] It is important to note that in realizing this "portrait," Koch relied upon a particular type of photograph—the film still—often a portrait produced on set that served as a kind of publicity tool for a motion picture. As an industry convention, such images are not derived from an actual frame produced at the time of the recording process. In that sense, the still does not imply a referential or metonymic relationship to the film as a whole. Rather, these photographs exist as a promotional device used to sell a motion picture through either an important star vehicle or as a single-frame summation of the movie's storyline. By combining two such examples together for his picture of Asta Nielsen and recreating them in pigment on canvas, while also taking other liberties with the color palette and composition, Koch's portrait distinguishes itself from the film still genre in several ways. Both the painted portrait and the still can be seen as approximating its source material, albeit to different ends, however, the plastic nature of oil on canvas affords a level of flexibility in its style and purpose.[39] In bringing together details from two distinct stills—used to promote two different movies—for his image of Asta, and then entirely decontextualizing her against a backdrop of his choosing, Koch levied the kind of freedom available to the painter, liberated as he was from the marketing imperatives of the larger cinematic apparatus. The end product championed the prerogatives of painting as a practice unbeholden to the commercial directives that guided the film industry.

One of the most important distinctions separating film from painting is the capacity of the former to convey movement as an essential characteristic of the medium. I would argue that an inverted approach can also reproduce this same quality in pigment on canvas. By paradoxically heightening the markers of stillness instead of the rhythmic cadence that was so tied to the production and reception of film, painting can effectively perform a pantomime of the cinema through—and not in spite of—the denial of motion. Such an effect was achieved in Neorealist painting in a variety of ways—often articulated as attempt to restrict, control, or overcome the subject. For example, critic S.P. Abas observed in Raoul Hynckes's still lifes a contradictory expression of motion fixed in place, such as the artist's 1932 painting *Sneeuw* (Snow; Figure 3.5) a muted representation of a dead duck leaning against a white jug, both precariously placed on a spatially ambiguous ledge overlooking a hushed snowy landscape. In his description, Abas attributed to the canvas a "filmisch" (film-like) power, due to its ability to tame what appear to be opposing planes, forcing them into a logical and congruent relationship that successfully encapsulates the notion of naturalistic space.[40]

To a certain extent, the idea of a cinematic life force underlying these paintings seems counterintuitive, particularly when considering the indirect order of influence exerted by the medium. This was the case for Hynckes after he had moved away from Cubist planarity, beginning with his mature period in the mid-1930s, when he found new ways to grapple with this aforementioned contradiction. In his painting, *Twee Schedels* (Two Skulls; Figure 3.6) from 1937, Hynckes placed two craniums in what looks like a

Figure 3.5 Raoul Hynckes, *Sneeuw* (Snow), 1932, oil on canvas, 67 × 61.5 cm.
Source: Collection Arnhem Museum, Arnhem (photo: Peter Cox).

Figure 3.6 Raoul Hynckes, *Stilleven met twee schedels* (Still Life with Two Skulls), 1937, oil on canvas, 90 × 109 cm.
Source: Arnhem Museum (photo: Peter Cox).

rudimentary columbarium. The darkened scene, with its stark and singular light source, takes place against an ambiguous, dusky outdoor background, an homage to the drama of Baroque-period staging. Instead of surrounding the skulls with traditional vanitas motifs that emphasize the transient nature of life—such as possessions associated with idle leisure activities and luxury, or the still-smoking candles and partially consumed meals that mark the passage of time—Hynckes depicted ruins, detritus, and evidence of decay. The setting could easily be a bombed-out garden. Items of little or no value, such as chipped cement, corroded tools, and a dismantled grille, appear alongside three human skulls, cast aside. In total, they all represent objects that continue to exist well beyond their usefulness; indexical traces left behind on these badly worn materials, such as rust on metal and pockmarks on bricks, reference their distant relationship to human presence, like discarded junk left and forgotten in a trash heap. It is an image that emphasizes the *mori* in memento mori, representing total and unrelenting death, with no signs of the human pleasures once enjoyed. In this visual parallel between the skulls and bare branches, only a handful of dead leaves have been left dangling.

I would argue that what Hynckes attempted to depict in *Two Skulls* is the *effect* of film itself. His paintings evoke a heightened stillness—that all-important feature of Weimar-era film that exists when one becomes consciously aware that he or she is watching a static object captured in a time-based medium, despite the illogic of recording an immobile state on rolling film. Filmmaker G. W. Pabst frequently made use of this frisson when filming long takes of inanimate objects or props that he chose for their symbolic or tactile qualities, such as a lit cigarette or a cactus.[41] He used the same slow-motion technique whether filming a falling suitcase, or the trembling face of Greta Garbo; in both cases, Pabst forged a direct pathway to the inner life animating his central subject. Combining pace with form, he shortened the distance that separated the expressive potential of an object from that of a human figure.[42] This unstylized, realist attention to "thingness," a hallmark of Neue Sachlichkeit filmmaking, also proffered an important material critique of capitalism at a time when Germany was just recovering from the extreme inflation that preceded the Dawes plan. Walter Benjamin noted this phenomenon in his commentary on the photographs of Albert Renger-Patzsch—stating that the latter had simply reproduced the commodity fetish in his approach to framing consumer products. By aestheticizing the rational nature of Taylorized industrial production, Benjamin argued, Renger-Patzsch had inadvertently obscured the truth of the human labor that went into it.[43] Likewise, by 1934 when the Great Depression was well underway in The Netherlands, Hynckes's trained attention to the things on display in his impoverished vanitas *Still Life with Two Skulls*, deploying a film-like, twentieth-century lens to carry out a Baroque subversion. In the course of taking this novel approach, he excised the human element traditionally implied in the memento mori.

While Hynckes often operated on a symbolic register in his references to time standing still, Pyke Koch occasionally applied a similarly static, cinematic effect with such severity that nearly every aspect of his composition implied the urgency of motion. In another of Koch's paintings featuring Asta Nielsen, the 1931 canvas *The Shooting Gallery* (Figure 1.8), a rather unconventionally attractive figure places her hand on her left hip, splaying her fingers like parted spokes on a motionless wheel. Her frozen expression combined with the airless quality of the surroundings produce an eerie sense of stasis, one reinforced by the ironic carnivalesque background. Once again, the extreme stillness of this image shows how Koch's painting is unlike film, while the intense absence of any visible atmospheric conditions also implicates cinema's uncanny relationship to

the lived world. The resulting composition stands as a reminder that while film may appear to exist as an index of reality recorded on celluloid, it is actually a highly edited version of the human experience. That the subject stands in front of a game with multiple moving parts designed to be in constant motion only reinforces the dissonance between the painted subject and Koch's rendering of any implied action. Assuming the position of beholder, the viewer takes the perspective of a carnival participant that has just paid to shoot those very moving targets; his or her eye is met by the aggressive counter-gaze of the gallery attendant. Koch's tight facture—a characteristic for which he was well known—helps to underscore this stock-still representation of suspended animation. It is an effect that captures in painting two overlapping modes of the film-watching experience: a viewer's thoroughly conscious, intellectual appreciation of the filmed material, and his or her unconscious, or passive absorption into the narrative.

Central to the above question is the distinction that Koch and the other Neorealists draw between the more active, attentive kind of viewing in a museum or gallery context and the experience of "spectatorship" specific to the cinema, or film theater. Beginning in the twentieth century, the act of artistic contemplation took on a new, self-reflexive character with the advent of the movie house. Although the invention of photography had inspired a degree of self-conscious reflection, it was not until the moving picture became widespread that the concept of the *spectator* came into being, replacing the beholder as the dominant experiential position. While the former refers to a viewing subject witnessing a visual effect, the latter contains in its meaning the idea of the slow, focused aesthetic contemplation of a static art object. As Michael Fried has argued, the experience of beholding is defined by a certain power dynamic levied by an object's ability to enthrall the onlooker and "hold him there as if spellbound and unable to move."[44] A spectator, by contrast, is often watching an action take place, leading the distracted viewer—according to Walter Benjamin—to absorb the work of art rather than be absorbed by it.[45] Due to the shift in this dynamic, the state of paralysis must be transferred to the spectator when observing a time based medium. To that end, the intense and self-conscious gaze of the carnival worker in Koch's *Shooting Gallery*, straddles these two modes of viewing. Similarly, the artist's director-like placement of the figure at such a close, almost claustrophobic proximity to the picture plane—standing perfectly still while fixing her gaze—suggests an individual at a threshold. Unlike the encounter described as "I see you seeing me," long ago identified in the focal crossfire of the mirrored reflection and the staring eyes of the Spanish court in Diego Velàzquez's *Las Meninas*, the Asta Nielsen–esque figure in *The Shooting Gallery* mediates across film and painting, as a spectator beheld.[46] She exists simultaneously, in my opinion, as a painted subject frozen in space to be contemplated by a beholder and a viewing subject fully engaged in the demanding new attention economy of the silver screen era.

As one of the most self-reflexive mediums, cinema introduced a variety of new ways to both raise consciousness about its own processes and to incorporate the filmgoer into the viewing experience. Both of these qualities can be seen in Koch's *Poésie de minuit* (Poetry of Midnight; Figure 3.7), 1931, the most obviously filmic work in the artist's entire oeuvre. It is painted in the manner of a point-of-view (POV) shot, meaning one presented through the "eyes" of a particular character, whose perspective is determined by the camera angle. When looking at this painting, the beholder takes the position of the figure looking down at his feet and with a hint of his (or her) suit, tie, and fedora included in the frame. Cobblestones line a canal with a green-tinged tree stump taking up the right-hand side of the canvas. Downward-angled vantage points were relatively

Figure 3.7 Pyke Koch, *Poésie de minuit* (Poetry of Midnight), 1931, oil on canvas, 100.5 × 100 cm.
Source: Museum Arnhem (photo: Marc Pluim Fotografie). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

common in early twentieth-century photography, particularly among those in the Neue Sehen (New Vision) movement. These examples, however, tended to capture visionary angles taken from the upper stories of large buildings, rather than aimed at such a mundane subject as the photographer's feet. *Poésie de minuit* also bears a close relationship to film in its depiction of a crime narrative trope, which connects the work to the mystery movie genre. The observer becomes a detective examining a clue left by the artist—a series of overlapping twigs lying on the cobblestones, which form his initials PK. This signatory detail, a trademark of his, was a throwback to Old Master devices used to break the spell of trompe l'oeil illusionism.[47] More importantly, it allowed Koch to insert himself into the illusion twice over: through the disguised signature and the POV shot.

In what concerns the debate between painting and cinema, the fruits of Filmliga's efforts are perhaps most pronounced in the film-inspired work by Charley Toorop. Her work suggests a more ideologically driven paragone indebted to her far-left politics, which aligned with Soviet film theory, and was geared toward promoting a higher level of class consciousness in its viewership.[48] While scholars such as Nico Brederoo and Jaap Bremmer have compared Toorop's paintings like *Muzikanten en dansende boeren* (Musicians and Dancing Farmers), 1927, to movie stills, I would argue that the filmic nature of her work is better exemplified in her group portraiture, such as her most celebrated work, the 1932–1933 painting *Maaltijd der vrienden* (The Meal among Friends;

Figure 3.8 Charley Toorop, *De Maaltijd der vrienden* (The Meal among Friends), 1932–1933, oil on canvas, 200 × 129.5 cm.

Source: Collection Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (photo: Studio Tromp). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

Figure 3.8).[49] In this canvas, fourteen guests sit at the table, all from Toorop's close circle of artist friends (including Gerrit Rietveld, poet Adriaan Roland Holst, sculptor John Rädecker, and painters Wim Oepts, and Pyke Koch, among others) as well as members of her immediate family (her sons Edgar and John Fernhout, their wives, and her father the renowned symbolist painter Jan, who appears in the top left corner in the form of a bronze sculpture). The claustrophobic composition leaves little room for anything other than the figures' faces, which appear in varying proportions.

In her painting, Toorop reaffirmed the traditionally Dutch egalitarian relationship between viewer and viewed, further complicating it with her allusion to film, specifically the point-of-view shot and references to the editing process. She enforced the more active viewing position favored by Soviet filmmakers, who warned against the dangers of complacency and passive film-watching. While Soviet films had been screened in Dutch theaters as early as 1926, beginning with Sergei Eisenstein's *Potemkin* (1925), Toorop may have become aware of the principles guiding the aesthetic choices made by Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Dziga Vertov and others by reading the explanatory Dutch summaries of their theory and practice published in the pages of the *Filmliga* journal.[50] Dutch filmmaker Mannus Franken, for example, wrote in 1928 about Eisenstein's ability to heighten emotional tension by dissecting his footage and then editing it together in a sometimes jarring manner.[51] Similarly, the figures in *The Meal among Friends*, appear to be of varying sizes and are positioned at a range of distances from the picture plane (or camera lens). The resulting effect resembles both photo and film

montage in the way that it brings together indexical recordings produced at different times and places, while layering them together in the same pictorial space.

Charley Toorop depicted her own image in the center far right of the canvas, with her face half hidden by that of her daughter-in-law, photographer Eva Besnyö. In a 1995 essay, Carel Blotkamp observed that Toorop had added herself late in the painting process, evidenced by photographs that show the canvas in an earlier state (Figure 3.9). He also noted that a painter's palette once stood in the place now inhabited by the platter of wine and fish in the foreground, implying that she was present and standing before the group. The original intent, Blotkamp claimed, was to depict a subjective point of view from the perspective that the artist took while she sat at the table and gazed at her friends and family members.[52] In the final version, the arrangement of the figures in the composition remains unaltered from the original; the artist added her face on the right-hand side of the canvas, in effect transferring the beholder's position away from herself and onto the viewing audience. In this way Toorop carried out a more inclusive composition that incorporated the onlooker and made a self-conscious point about who is doing the looking. Angling the food and drink toward the picture plane, she offers the meal to the beholder and makes this open invitation clear.

The resulting effect allows the viewer to enter the painting in a way that is similar to the filmgoer's psychological penetration of a movie scene: through the camera's perspective, in which the audience member becomes a central character. Blotkamp described *The Meal among Friends* and its POV-inspired vantage point in as an example of an *Ik-schilderij* (I-painting), the oil-on-canvas version of an *Ik-film* (I-film), a movie characterized by subjective shots, which critic Hans van Meerten and director Joris Ivens wrote about in the Filmliga journal.[53] In his essay, van Meerten emphasized the way in which the camera lens acts as the eye of the character, producing a "union between spectator

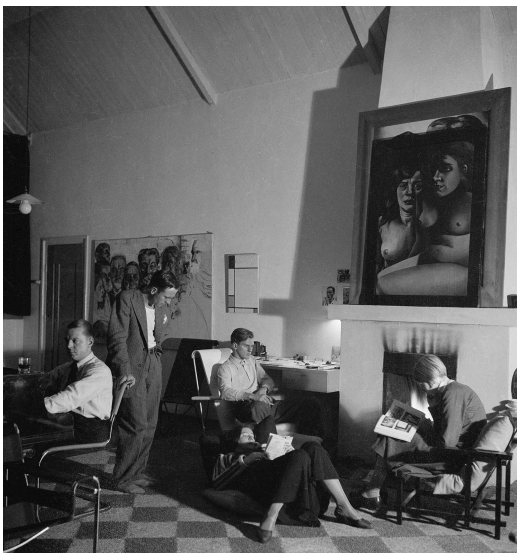

Figure 3.9 Eva Besnyö, Photograph of Charley Toorop's Studio in De Vlerken with Eduard Mesens, Charley Toorop, Pyke Koch, and Annetje and John Fernhout, Bergen, 1932.

Photo: MAI Beeldbank. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

and performer."[54] Although van Meerten viewed the early application of the Ik-film as primarily objective, he also saw its potential in creating more subjective films by taking into consideration both the scenic structure (referring to what is captured on film) as well as the placement of the lens.[55]

It is also possible that Toorop was influenced by the films—and possibly even the words—of Dziga Vertov, who came to visit Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and The Hague in late 1931, not long before Toorop began painting *The Meal among Friends*. While there is no evidence that she attended any of these events, she most certainly would have been aware of them, since they were well covered in the journals of the Filmliga and The Netherlands New-Russia Society (where she was a member) as well as the left-wing press.[56] At around that time she likely would have been invited to screen one of Vertov's most famous experimental films, *Man with the Movie Camera*, a documentary on the people, way of life, and modern machinery of the Soviet Union, edited in a rhythmic rather than narrative way.[57] In the film, Vertov reflexively referenced the filmmaking process by intermittently showing the camera, director, and editing room. He also applied techniques such as eyeline matching to suggest visual continuity, as in a view of a mannequin looking into the camera followed by a landscape, the subject of her gaze. In another sequence he included a POV shot that gave the audience the perspective of a drunken bar patron walking through the streets in a disoriented daze in front of the Odessa worker's club. In total, these virtuosic film effects demonstrate Vertov's concept of the Kino-Eye, a cinematic corollary to the flesh-and-blood oculus. Capable of perceiving the world in a manner superior to human vision, the Kino-Eye could also reveal the underlying communist structure of the world by freeing all subjects—human and man-made objects—from the illusionistic tradition of artmaking.[58]

Toorop's efforts to replicate these processes in her painted compositions perform a similar kind of liberation. In *The Meal among Friends*, nearly all the figures stare intensely at the viewer (or beholder), who has taken on the perspective of the cameraperson. She carries out the effect of an eyeline match between the subjects represented in the painting (except for the three figures on the left) and again with the person standing before the canvas. The use of this common technique could help establish a psychological or social relationship between characters, and in the Soviet case, foster a shared consciousness. While undermining the establishment of a clear hierarchy, Toorop and the rest of the group also invite the viewer to the table, visually "recruiting" them into this social space. At the same time, the artist also released every one of these fourteen figures from an Albertian understanding of space, presenting all of them at relative distances from the picture plane, and of varying sizes. By conceptualizing each figure as a discrete individual—and reflexively including her self-portrait—Toorop realized the new kind of subjectivity theorized by Vertov, one that emancipated each subject from the traditional pictorial—and by extension social—structure and recreated a new one.

Of course, not every painter labeled "Neorealist" had direct involvement with the Filmliga. The fact that the cinema was a ubiquitous forum for disseminating mass entertainment may have also led other figurative painters such as Raoul Hynckes, mentioned above, and his contemporary Carel Willink to adopt its techniques and tropes. In fact, considering the regularity with which Willink frequented the cinema, it would be rather unlikely that its particular mode of vision did not seep into his work. Willink regularly attended Ufa films while a student in Berlin—as many as three times a day—and produced film criticism for German newspapers.[59] Of the few studies that have acknowledged Willink's adoption of film aesthetics, the 1992 exhibition "Onbekende Willink

1920–30" (Unknown Willink 1920–30) held at Utrecht's Centraal Museum situated his attraction to film within the larger scope of modernism. The catalogue claimed that Willink was using film to agitate against the *burgerlijkheid* (middle-class mentality), and that it counted as one among the many youthful experiments that marked his time in Berlin.[60]

It is entirely possible that Willink was drawn to using cinema as a source because he appreciated the medium's vanguard character—peripheral to definitions of fine art—due to its ephemerality and broad reach. There was, however, another important aspect of the filmic that Willink exploited to prodigious effect in his work: the capacity of the camera lens to objectify the human form. In the same way that film could animate the inanimate, its processes could also produce the opposite effect, as witnessed in Carel Willink's *Portret van mevrouw M. Blijstra–Van der Meulen* (Portrait of a Lady; Figure 3.10) from 1928. For this painting based on a photograph of his first wife Mies van der Meulen, Willink depicted Mies as a fashionable young woman seated on an ambiguous brick-cornered ledge, in a location of the artist's own invention. In the background, just behind her, the horizon extends into an expanse of mountains preceded by a dark body of water;

Figure 3.10 Carel Willink, *Portret van Miesje, Mies met pothoed* (Portrait of Miesje, Mies met pothoed), also known as Portrait of a Lady, 1928, oil on canvas, 134 × 85.5 cm.

Source: Fries Museum, Leeuwarden | Loan of the municipality of Leeuwarden. Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

a craggy outcropping with a winding path is visible to her right. Willink drew together several visual correspondences that primarily relate to his treatment of texture. Mies's glossy black leather gloves bear a similar sheen to the dewy skin of her chin, nose, and forehead. Smoothed of any lines or imperfections, her skin has the surface integrity of industrial polished chrome.

Willink's contemporary critics also noted the correspondence between his work and film. In a 1929 review of Willink's work for a group show, S.P. Abas compared *Portrait of a Lady* to a "film-beeld" (film image). In his remarks Abas commented on the way that the painting paradoxically captured the sensation of motion and stillness simultaneously, praising the intensity of the female figure and the way that Willink was able to make nature look artificial at the same time as bringing life to dead matter.[61] In Abas's appraisal, the image was filmic by virtue of its artificiality, its appearance having derived from the consumer-oriented aesthetic language of mass media.

Abas also emphasized the inertness of the figure in *Portrait of a Lady*. The issue of Willink's painterly ability to give "life" to dead matter, in Abas's words, really concerns the energy emanating from his female subject. The critic was referring to the attention to detail that Willink had paid to her clothing, and the textural likeness that compared a made-up face to leather gloves is now something that is "more fashion than nature."[62] These surface qualities received so much care that they became the very subject of the painting. At the same time Abas was also arguing that Willink's surface treatment—in its intensity—brought to life forms that for all intents and purposes appeared dead, or insensate. He suggested that Willink's purpose in painting this portrait was to put into visual terms the "loss of innocence" that typified the time. The figure, he wrote, had been rendered in a manner so artificial that she emanated a new kind of intense lifeform. This remark, equal parts slight and praise, was aimed at the figure's sleek surface-oriented appearance, but also documents Abas's observations of the ways in which Willink depicted the strange psychological effects of film.

For Abas, the cinematic influence on this painting was also more than just pure visual resemblance; it also corresponded with the ability of film to play upon visual memory through the virtually haptic qualities embodied in the close-up. Abas remarked upon the fine details that had made such a profound impression on him that he was able to recite them without the aid of a reproduction. He described the iridescent sheen of the figure's black glove to the "false flesh" hue of the silk stocking.[63] The fact that the painting contained so many examples of seemingly unnecessary minutiae (such as the crumpled paper, the open book, and the texture on the figure's lace hem and fox wrap) is what made the image seem "Baroque" (in Abas's words) upon first inspection. In actuality, the critic argued, the selection of items was quite well considered rather than superfluous. He noted that the minimal use of color in the painting gave it a sober appearance; this was not about excess—rather each object was to be considered on its own as a subject of aesthetic contemplation.[64]

The filmic quality inherent to Willink's work thus lies in its heightened, self-conscious artificiality, a feature common to Magic Realism, and one that was recognized by some critics writing during early career. His work embodies the same kind of *Dingschärfe*, or "Thingness," that was of concern for Franz Roh. Mass media—more specifically reproducible technologies such as photography and film—also play an important role in Roh's conceptualization of "thingness" due to their machine-like quality and their perceived "objectivity" when compared to easel painting. Roh himself was an experimental photographer and would, by the late 1920s, shift his focus as an art historian onto the

medium. This transition culminated with his involvement in the landmark 1929 exhibition *Film und Foto* (Film and Photo), a show that redefined the currency of such mechanically reproducible media within the context of the modern age, and for which Roh wrote the catalogue *Foto-Auge* (Photo-Eye). Many of the ideas expressed in that 1929 text were foreshadowed four years earlier in his book *Nach-Expressionismus*, wherein Roh argued that photography had forever altered ways of seeing in the nineteenth century by injecting a machinic aspect into this "new spirit."[65] His writing echoed the views of László Moholy-Nagy who characterized the era following World War I as one in which human perception was being rapidly transformed by the arrival of new technologies, such as film and the electric sign.[66] For these men, innovations in mass media not only provided a new kind of sensory or optical experience—they seeded the revolution of perception itself.

Roh saw an even more promising potential for cinema, which he described as the most influential of all art forms. In qualifying its impact he wrote "here too, a newly awakened sense of the power of expression lies before nature itself, which, as we now feel, man can so seldom surpass in terms of design and realization."[67] While he did not elaborate on this point about cinema in his book, Roh's observations of the photomontage work by German-born Dutchman Paul Citroen can help elucidate what the former saw in the dramatic possibilities inherent to film—more specifically its ability to use life as a primary material. In his analysis of Citroen's photomontage *Metropolis* from 1923, Roh described the way that the photomontagist had altered photographs of real buildings to carry out a full-scale "interpenetration" of the "imaginary" with "the prosaic." For *Metropolis* Citroen reproduced an internegative print of photographs depicting skyscrapers and steel-clad infrastructure excised from newspapers and postcards and then collaged together. He relied heavily upon the documentary, or referential quality of the resulting print, for which he effectively carried out a full-scale edited version of reality.[68] Although Roh did not make explicit statements about the interconnection between new media and modernist painting, by his own description, Magic Realism shared with photomontage a reliance upon objects culled from the everyday world to compose its meaning. In my reading of Roh, these intermedial connections remain fluid, although implicit. Indeed, it would not be a leap to assert that the filmmaking process—by culling imagery from the real world and editing them together behind the scenes—performs a similar sort of interpenetration that Roh described in *Metropolis*.

By enabling a dialectic between competing textures in his painting practice vaguely analogous to Citroen's use of the documentary photograph, Willink used his superior technical skill to reflexively draw attention to a carefully cultivated aesthetic of superficiality. Critics from the period at times related the artificiality of Willink's style to the characteristics found in American (Hollywood) cinema. Such comparisons speak to the influence of films imported from the United States at that time and the traces that it was leaving on the European industries. More than that, any air of "Americanness" when describing such a surface-oriented style also carried with it the baggage of the Hollywood film as an entire package, surrounded by the opulent Art Deco designs of the modern movie theater and its overt signaling of wealth through both real and imitation luxury materials. At a time when capitalism was slogging through the public humiliation of the global Great Depression, such gratuitous displays of profligate expenditure existed in blatant denial of the current economic realities.

Indeed, the physical—and by extension psychological—experience of filmgoing became an increasingly prominent theme in Neorealist painting throughout the 1930s and was yet another way for artists to depict a version of reality intensified by the extraordinary

socio-political goings-on. Cinema had by that point become a popular cultural phenomenon across the world; elaborately decorated movie palaces were erected in cities from Los Angeles to London to Kiev. Its dominance was even reflected in the programming and publications by the Filmliga. Having originally taken a purist position for film, eschewing the glitz of more popular movie houses such as the Tuschinski Theater in Amsterdam in favor of the pared down, Calvinist white walls of the Uitkijk, the Filmliga by the early 1930s began to concede to the popular influence of Hollywood.[69] The journal increasingly included content oriented toward film star personalities and featured advertisements for newly constructed theaters such as The West End in The Hague. Its articles began to cover the entirety of the filmgoing experience, including the construction of new and increasingly modern movie theaters outfitted with sound equipment.[70] Contributor and architect Albert Boeken argued in 1932 that the most important feature of cinema was the all-consuming reality that it visualized onscreen and its ability to temporarily suspend from the viewer's consciousness the world in which the film was being exhibited. All the decorative features on the walls and ceiling of the theater, such as expensive Art Deco detailing, Boeken argued, disappear from sight and mind once the film begins. The bright white light of the film projecting against the screen encompasses reality for the audience and consumes attention spans, all while obscuring the rest in darkness.[71]

What Boeken described in the above passage conveys the same procedures that film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry later identified in his cinematic interpretation of the *dispositif*.[72] Derived from Michel Foucault's original use of the term referring to a series of practices or institutions that shape the social world (sometimes translated as dispositive, device, or apparatus)—Baudry extended the notion of the dispositif to the movie screen. He theorized a self-contained world that bound together an audience on the basis of sight, sound, and movement, all while concealing the methods that brought such an illusion into being. Tracing this phenomenon back to Plato's allegory of the cave, Baudry considered the psychological effects of the imperceptible, illusionistic experience of becoming transfixed by shadows derived from unknown sources. The French film scholar viewed the spectator's attraction to these images as pointing to a base desire essential to the human condition.[73] For Baudry, the passive experience of sitting in a dark movie theater with rapt attention was an "artificial regression"; his words recalled some of the same fears of the cinema that writers expressed in the late 1920s.[74] Projection was at the center of this experience. As a machine that emits light from an invisible source at the back of the room, the projector animates still images into fleeting motion, capturing the illusion of a narrative action. This pairing of light and movement has the ability to immobilize patrons; as the action takes place on screen, the viewer only has to sit still.

Dick Ket made a similar observation about the paralyzing effects of the dispositif when describing a snow-blanketed landscape from his window, which he compared to being confronted with a blank white film screen in the moments before a movie begins. On bedrest during the 1930s due to his terminal illness, Ket—relying solely on his memories of watching silent films in the cinema the decade prior—wrote to his fiancée Nel Schilt in 1939, "In the darkness of the room, the opening looked like a screen of a film . . . Quiet and still!"[75] Ket's analogy aptly describes the visceral experience of its reflective whiteness, the vivid power of which no other available technology could achieve with such intensity. When the projector's light passes through the celluloid and illuminates the screen on the opposing wall, the source of that light can seem as if it is emanating from the rectangular white square. This illusory white glow was a feature of many of Ket's still lifes, such as *Stilleven met rode lap* (Still Life with Red Cloth), 1931

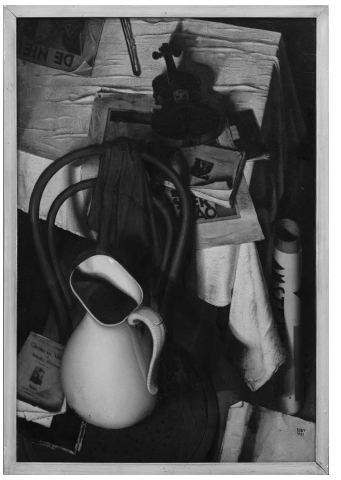

Figure 3.11 Dick Ket, *Stilleven met rode lap* (Still Life with Red Cloth), 1931, oil on canvas, 90 × 60 cm.

Source: Museum Arnhem (photo: Peter Cox).

(Figure 3.11). Depicted from a bird's eye perspective, Ket's still life gathers several sundry items—the Droste poster, several magazines, and a violin and bow—on the corner edge of a dining room table. Just as Schuhmacher had done in his painting of *Melitta in White*, both of Ket's painting allowed certain objects such as a porcelain pitcher and a wrinkled tablecloth to gleam with such magnitude that it seems to radiate light from beneath the painting's surface. These crisp white areas appear overexposed in comparison to the finer, subtler details of the yellowed paper pamphlets and posters, and to a certain extent overtake the entirety of the composition, even the titular red cloth. It is an effect that can be seen when a black-and-white film is watched in its entirety, wherein the highest highlights of each individual frame appear to lose their finer textural nuances because of the rapid movement of the reel. The intensity of the two white details mentioned previously also allude to the presence of what is not directly represented in the image: a stark light source coming from the back of the room. This painting captures the experience of confronting a screen, which in reality does not simply absorb the white light projected onto the viewing surface, but rather casts a luminous glare onto the viewing audience.

A similar emphasis on intense, reflective light underscores the stillness that Pyke Koch achieved in some of his paintings, such as *The Shooting Gallery*. In this work, Koch's Asta Nielsen–inspired figure stands in utter stillness before a carnival backdrop. A powerful light source hits her face, reducing the color palette in only that area of the painting to tones of gray, black, and white, while the background remains fully saturated. The resulting effect is distinct from the traditional tonal modeling of chiaroscuro. Her facial features appear disproportionate in relationship to the rest of her body, a reference to the distortion that can result from prop lighting as well as the sometimes-disorienting discontinuity of scale in a film sequence that edits together close-ups and larger-frame shots. Therefore, although this depiction appears to frame Nielsen at mid- or waist-range, by

placing the actor at a medium distance from the camera, the figure's anatomical distortions recreate the idea of movement between sequences. In Koch's rendering, she is a summation of the actress's movements captured from different angles or distances from the camera, spliced together during the editing process. The result is, of course, alienating; Koch's intentional exaggeration of his female subject's eyes, nose, and mouth transcend easy recognition of the figure's humanity, giving her an appearance that is totemic and objectified.

The Shooting Gallery astutely addresses the kind of self-reflexivity unique to the experience of sitting in a cinema. A close comparison could possibly be found in its predecessor—the traditional stage theater. Famous prototypes such as the Bayreuth Festival Theater in Germany had the effect of eliminating the audience's physical and spatial awareness, and in the process, undercutting any sense of embodied subjectivity.[76] Likewise, due to its darkened surroundings, the movie house introduces a power imbalance between the viewer and the content projected on the screen. The primary difference between these two venues lies in the level of illumination that a film can project onto its audience. A white screen absorbs but also reflects into the darkened space, making the viewer aware of his or her presence in the room.[77] The Asta Nielsen–inspired carnival worker in *The Shooting Gallery* likewise reveals a degree of self-consciousness about her position as both subject and object. She could also be read as a viewer onto whom light has been "reflected," passively absorbing the flicker of the reel and the beam of light cast from the screen.

The obscured architectural surroundings of the cinema offered the viewer a specific kind of psychological interaction with the onscreen moving image that was difficult to replicate when contemplating a painting. By the 1940s, however, many Neorealists found a way to achieve a similar effect by adopting the darkened space of the cinema when exhibiting their work in public venues. When Pyke Koch showed the 1940 portrait of his wife Heddy de Geer for the first time at the Love of Art (Kunstliefde) society in Utrecht (Figure 3.12), he requested that the walls of the gallery be painted black. He intended this method of display to both prevent the reflection of light from the surface of the canvas, but also to enhance the drama of the painting.[78] The darkened surroundings allowed his rendering of Heddy's bright white skin to arise dramatically from obscurity; an illusion compounded by the dark tone of her dress, as well as that of the green hedges and the gray sky behind her. As an exhibition strategy, the spot-lit subject placed in a pitch-black space effectively animated the human figure, harnessing the intense light source to bring Heddy to life.

Koch was not alone in his experimentations with this movie house–inspired mode of display. Exhibitions of Hynckes's work in The Netherlands took a similarly cinematic approach to that of the Heddy portrait, often using pitch-black walls and dramatic lighting that intensified the darkness of his painting. The result was a heightened tension between the incredible stillness of his subjects, impeccably captured by the artist's licked-surface technique and an underlying sense of life roiling underneath. Such a delicate balance abetted a certain filmic quality in his work that did not go unnoticed by the critics. In a review from 1946 for *Het Parool* with the film-inspired title "Stories from the Cutting Room," for example, J. M. Prange covered a Hynckes exhibition held at the van Wisselingh gallery in Amsterdam, a venue that the author compared to watching a film, due to Hynckes's dark-as-night backgrounds lighting his subjects with what appear to be spotlights in the foreground. The show featured seventeen mostly vanitas-themed paintings that the critic described as "negations of life projected on canvas," such as the

Figure 3.12 Pyke Koch, *Portret van H.M. de Geer* (Portrait of H.M. de Geer), 1940, oil and tempera on panel, 230.5 × 130 cm.

Source: © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Adriaan van Dam. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

skull imagery in the abovementioned work *Two Skulls*, as well as *Sleutels van de Anachoreet* (Keys of the Anchorite), 1942–1943, or game in *Herfst* (Autumn) from 1942. He described the entire exhibition as a cinematic experience, held in a room with darkened décor and dramatic lighting, all of which bring the artist's slight deviations from reality into focus. Prange remarked that materials appear to transform before the viewer's eyes, like a scene from Jean Cocteau's film *La Belle et la Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) from 1946 (Les Films André Paulvé), wherein "sponges look to be painted like stone and stone like sponges."[79] By that time, the affinity that the critic noted may have manifested as a reciprocal relationship that informed painting through film and vice versa. Perhaps it is not a coincidence, therefore, that the Magic Realist tendency arose at the same moment as Cocteau's visionary filmmaking. Practitioners in both painting and cinema were experimenting with an unexpected disruption in the viewer's expectations, by trading one texture for another. Like his subversion of traditional time references in his vanitas paintings of the 1930s, Hynckes continued to undermine viewer expectations well into the 1940s.

One last look at the words of Franz Roh in his catalogue *Foto-Auge* can perhaps underscore the immense new role that film was about to take in the repertoire of modern artists. In that 1929 text Roh declared the cinema "the most important utilization of photography," describing it as a medium that had raised questions so important that they could not even be answered in the space of his book, and which formally "enter an entirely new dimension."[80] Likewise, as a style used to represent scenes that were implausible yet not impossible, Neorealism—and by extension Magic Realism—presented the same kind of highly naturalistic, yet also fictionalized version of reality that could only recently be replicated in the simulacrum induced by the filmmaking processes.

Perhaps because he lived in a world where the mainstream status of cinema had become taken for granted, Roh could not even begin to identify the more specific applications of the apparatus and its influence on the work of modernist painters. The following decade, however, proved a fertile period for the Neorealists' experiments with film-inspired aesthetic strategies. As a virtually unrivaled popular entertainment medium, cinema wielded a new authorial and mechanized lens through which to conceive of the world, its camera eye was a model for twentieth-century vision capable of optically reifying the technologically advanced and politically polarized character of the interbellum years. In their experience as spectators, rather than beholders, the Neorealists were inspired to capture the psychological effects that corresponded with this popular mode of viewership. Creating a paragone that brought painting in conversation with film, these artists selectively emphasized the most spellbinding aspects of the moving image, visually approximating the novel, engrossing experience of silver screen. Largely avoiding direct allusions to diversion, or even propaganda so often found in film, they used filmic techniques to reflect upon the crises both ongoing and developing in the European political landscape. Such examples include a materialist preoccupation with surface and luxury in the context of the Great Depression, as detailed in the paintings by Carel Willink described above. However, they also bear witness to a conscious—but also unconscious—interface with political ideology as it was being disseminated via mass media outlets, a phenomenon that I will explore in the following chapter.

Notes

1 Jan van Geest, *Wim Schuhmacher: Meester van het Grijs* (Arnhem: Jan Brand Boeken, 1991), 10–12.
2 Ibid., 283.
3 Wim Schuhmacher first screened Pudovkin's *Mother* as a member of the *Genootschap Nederland Nieuw-Rusland* (Dutch New-Russia Society). See ibid., 23. It was a club dedicated to educating the Dutch public about the successes of Soviet society and developing bonds among like-minded people across cultures. See the first issue of *Nederland-Nieuwe Rusland*, no. 1 (December 1928), 1–2.
4 The artist society De Kring seeded the idea for the club upon holding a screening of Pudovkin's film on May 13, 1927. The screening was in response to the censorship of Soviet films by Dutch mayors and the film theater guild (the Bioscoopbond), who felt that showing the films would be akin to promoting Communism. Charley Toorop biographer Nicolas Brederoo claims that Menno ter Braak and Henrik Scholte founded Filmliga in response to this local censorship. See Nico Brederoo, *Charley Toorop: Leven en Werken* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1982), 71. See also Céline Linssen, "'Unaniem rot stop—hedenavond vergaderen' De geschiedenis achter de schermen van de Nederlandsche Filmliga," in *Het Gaat Om de Film! Een nieuwe geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Filmliga, 1927–1933* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bas Lubberhuizen/Filmmuseum, 1999), 16–35.

5 Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting: The Cinema Writings of V. I. Pudovkin*, translated by Ivor Montagu (London: Vision, 1954), 27. This book was first published in Russian in 1929.
6 See M.H.K. Franken, "Russische Filmregisseurs," *Filmliga* 1, no. 11 (May 1928), 4.
7 Pudovkin's *Mother* was quickly canonized in the Soviet Union, where it was seen as an unimpeachable example of ideological soundness. Its moral lessons were particularly important considering the importance placed on film as an educational tool (three out of five Russians were illiterate at the time). Amy Sargeant, *Vsevolod Pudovkin: Classic Films of the Soviet Avant-Garde* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 71.
8 Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
9 Robert Huerta, *Giants of Delft: Johannes Vermeer and the Natural Philosophers: The Parallel Search for Knowledge During the Age of Discovery* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), 30.
10 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).
11 Isaäc Pieter de Vooys, "De Kinematograaf in de literatuur," *De Beweging: Algemeen maandschrift voor letteren, kunst, wetenschap en staatkunde* 6, no. 1 (1910), 9.
12 Ernst Kállai, "Painting and Photography," *i10 Internationale Revue* 1, no. 4 (April 1927), 157.
13 Ibid. Moholy-Nagy's response, written in German, follows Kállai's article and is untitled.
14 While Koch also enjoyed Hollywood productions, he preferred experimental art films, especially the movies of Federico Fellini and in particular his 1954 film *La Strada*. See Carel Blotkamp, "Der Fetisch des Malers Pyke Koch," in *Asta Nielsen* (Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2009), 269.
15 The Tuschinski Theater was the most prominent cinema in Amsterdam. Described as a "monument to cinema history" in The Netherlands, the theater also published its own cinema magazine, *Tuschinski Nieuws*. See Hans Schoots, "De Geest Maakt Levend, Het Amerikanisme Doodt: De Nederlandsche Filmliga tussen hoge en lage cultuur," in *Het Gaat Om de Film! Een nieuwe geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Filmliga 1927–1933*, edited by Céline Linssen, Hans Schoots and Tom Gunning (Amsterdam: B. Lubberhuizen, 1999), 163–165.
16 Jan L. van Zanden, *The Economic History of The Netherlands 1914–1995: A Small Open Economy in the "Long" Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 106.
17 Only one Dutch film was made between 1930 and 1934. Many European countries (Britain, France, Germany, and Italy) had seen a decline in their box office numbers since the onset of World War I. The rapid rise in film quality coupled with the United States' financial ability to invest in its film industry, meant that the lagging European industry had to keep up, sometimes with aid from the government. The Dutch industry had struggled from the beginning. See Clara Pafort-Overduin, "Distribution and Exhibition in The Netherlands, 1934–1936," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Phillippe Meers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 126.
18 This is my translation from the Dutch original. Huizinga uses the phrase "buitengewoon democratisch" to describe cinema. *Buitengewoon* translates to exceptionally or extraordinarily, but can also refer to an overabundance, as in exceedingly or excessively. See Johan Huizinga, *Mensch en menigte in Amerika: Vier essays over modern beschavingsgeschiedenis* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1918), 105.
19 Ansje van Beusekom, *Kunst en Amusement: Reacties op de film als een nieuw medium in Nederland, 1895–1940* (Haarlem: Arcadia, 2001), 99–100.
20 Ibid., 100.
21 See "Manifest Filmliga Amsterdam," *Filmliga* 1, no. 1 (1927), 1; Hans Schoots, "De Geest Maakt Levend, Het Amerikanisme Doodt," in in *Het Gaat Om de Film! Een nieuwe geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Filmliga 1927–1933*, edited by Céline Linssen, Hans Schoots and Tom Gunning (Amsterdam: B. Lubberhuizen, 1999), 149–214.
22 Two documents from what remain of the Filmliga files support the idea that Toorop was involved in the running of the organization. A letter from Toorop to Henrik Scholte dated September 14, 1927, asks when the matinee and "writer evenings" would be held for the movie *Crainquebille* (1922). In another letter from Toorop to Menno ter Braak dated September 20,

1927, she made a request to enroll Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Rimathé of Amstel 69 in Amsterdam. See Archief 52C, Filmliga Archivalia 1927–1933, Eye Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

23 Filmliga tended to screen experimental films from all countries active in the industry, but films from the Soviet Union, France, and Germany were particularly well represented.

24 "De Telegraaf en de Liga," *Filmliga* 1, no. 5 (January 1928), 2.

25 Tom Gunning, "Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Filmliga, 1927–1931," in *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919–1945*, edited by Malte Hagener (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 73–74.

26 The Filmliga sought connections with the Volksbühne and Filmclub in Berlin, the Cinéclub de France in Paris, the Film Society in London, the Film Arts Guild in New York, and the Club du Cinéma in Brussels, as well as other clubs (in Geneva, Rome, and Vienna), which were in the process of forming. See Menno ter Braak, "Buitenlandsche Betrekkingen," *Filmliga* 1, no. 2 (1927), 12. The Filmliga wanted to foster connections with the film club "Film Arts Guild," for which the Viennese architect Fr. Kiesler built an avant-garde movie theater in Greenwich Village. See "Avantgarde-Theater te New York," *Filmliga* 1, no. 12 (August 1928), 14.

27 Céline Linssen, " 'Unaniem rot stop—hedenavond vergaderen' De geschiedenis achter de schermen van de Nederlandsche Filmliga," in *Het Gaat Om de Film! Een nieuwe geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Filmliga 1927–1933*, edited by Céline Linssen, Hans Schoots and Tom Gunning (Amsterdam: B. Lubberhuizen, 1999), 47–48.

28 There are also no specific references to Pyke Koch anywhere in the Filmliga archives. This is not surprising considering that these files do not contain member lists. His membership to the club has been ascertained through previous interviews with the artists by biographers. See Carel Blotkamp, "Pyke Koch," in *Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten: In de verzameling van het Gemeentemuseum Arnhem*, edited by Jan Brand and Kees Boos, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992), 88. For more on Schuhmacher's possible membership in the Amsterdam Filmliga chapter, see Ida Boelema, "Een verscherpte blik. Film en fotografie in de tijd van het neorealisme," in *In de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, edited by Ype Koopmans and Mieke Rijnders, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 30.

29 Melitta Schuhmacher translated an article by Vsevolod Pudovkin on the work of Joris Ivens for the May 1930 issue of the Filmliga journal. See Vsevolod Pudovkin, "Joris Ivens," *Filmliga* 3, no. 8 (May 1930), 102–104. In a letter from Schuhmacher to the Filmliga dated October 13, 1928, the painter declined a request to design a magazine cover for the journal, claiming that his time was too limited. See Archief 52, Filmliga Archivalia 1927–1933, Eye Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. For discussion of Schuhmacher's help with suggesting color advice for the Uitkijk Theater see van der Geest, *Wim Schuhmacher*, 164.

30 See G. A. van Klinkenberg and D. A. M. Binnendijk, "Onze houding naar aanleiding van 'De sprekende film'," *Filmliga* 1, no. 6 (1927–1928), 12–13. G. A. van Klinkenberg warned against overthinking the issue and taking too dictatorial a stance against sound, while D. A. M. Binnendijk was a bit more circumspect on the issue.

31 Absolute film was an avant-garde approach to filmmaking that sought to reduce the practice to abstract, rhythmic compositions, like the moving-image counterpart to music. Joris Ivens explained the phenomenon in the Filmliga journal by breaking down Abel Gance's films into a written formula of meters of film, which rendered explicit his pacing into precise mathematical terms. See Joris Ivens, "Film Techniek," *Filmliga* 1, no. 1 (1927), 6–7. For criticism of Walter Ruttmann's Absolute Films see Henrik Scholte, "Walter Ruttmann," *Filmliga* 1, no. 4, 3–4.

32 Joris Ivens, "Filmtechniek II: Aantekening bij de twee afbeeldingen van filmstrooken," *Filmliga* 1, no. 3 (1927–1928), 8.

33 Fritz Rosenfeld, "Tempo," *Filmliga* 1, no. 4 (December 1927), 4–5.

34 See Constant van Wessem, "Film en Literatuur," *Filmliga* 4, no. 2 (December 1931), 21–22.

35 Carel Blotkamp, *Pyke Koch* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1972), 62.

36 Ibid., 62–64.

37 Ibid., 63.

38 See Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," *October* 34 (Fall 1985), 81–90.

39 David Campany, *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 2008), 144.

40 S. P. Abas, "Raoul Hynckes' Werk, een 20e-eeuwsche vorm van stilleven," *Elseviers geillustreerd maandschrift* 45, no. 90 (July–December 1935), 156.
41 See Béla Balázs, *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and the Spirit of Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 46.
42 See Sara Hall, "Inflation and Devaluation. Gender, Space, and Economics in G. W. Pabst's The Joyless Street," in *Weimar Cinema: An Essential Guide to Classical Films of the Era*, edited by Noah Isenberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 139–140.
43 Carl Gelderloos, "Simply Reproducing Reality—Brecht, Benjamin, and Renger-Patzsch on Photography," *German Studies Review* 37, no. 3 (October 2014), 554.
44 Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 92.
45 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, 1935," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 40.
46 Leo Steinberg, "Velázquez' 'Las Meninas'," *October* 19 (Winter 1981), 54.
47 The prospect of losing oneself to the painted illusion has long been a concern of Dutch painters and patrons. Victor Stoichita has noted that this is the reason why self-reflexive pictorial devices, such as strategically placed signatures, became particularly popular during the Baroque period. They helped to extricate the audience from the trance of illusionism, allowing for discourse to begin and for the viewer to enter into conversation with on the painting. See Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Metapainting* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015), 229–290.
48 Charley Toorop, like Wim Schuhmacher was also a member of the Dutch New-Russia Society. Toorop's participation in a 1932 exhibition in Moscow was promoted in the *Nederland-Nieuwe Rusland* journal, as were cross-promotional announcements for screenings of Soviet filmmakers at the Filmliga. In a memo from the *Centrale Inlichtingsdienst* (Central Intelligence Service) of the Dutch New-Russia Society from June 1928 Toorop and Schuhmacher are listed among the "undersigned" who were being asked to make an urgent appeal and arouse interest among friends and acquaintances and to recruit a great number of members and donors. See 2.09.22 16634, Nationaal Archief, The Hague. See also *Nederland-Nieuwe Rusland*, no. 6 (November–December 1931), 40; *Nederland-Nieuwe Rusland*, no. 6 (June 1932), 82.
49 Jaap Bremer, *Charley Toorop: Werken in de verzameling van het Kröller-Muller Museum* (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1995), 20; Brederoo, *Charley Toorop*, 75.
50 For a list of programs showing Soviet films in The Netherlands, visit https://cinemacontext.nl.
51 See Franken, "Russische Filmregisseurs," 3–5.
52 Carel Blotkamp, "Verborgen achter de maaltijd der vrienden," *Jong Holland* 11, no. 1 (1995), 42–45.
53 Ibid., 45–47.
54 Hans van Meerten, "Ik-Film," *Filmliga* 1, no. 5 (January 1928), 7.
55 Van Meerten, "Ik-Film," 10.
56 See "De man met de filmcamera: Dziga Wertof, leider van een Russische filmschool, bezoekt ons land," *Voorwaarts: Sociaal-democratisch dagblad* (December 8, 1931), 9.
57 The Corso Theater in Amsterdam held a screening of Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) on December 10, 1931, that was open to members of Filmliga and the Netherlands New-Russia Society. See "Dziga Wertoff in Holland," *Nederland-Nieuwe Rusland*, no. 6 (November–December 1931), 40.
58 Dziga Vertov, "The Council of Three" (1923) and "The Essence of the Kino-Eye," (1925) in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, translated by Kevin O'Brien, edited by Annette Michelson (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), 17–18, 50.
59 See Jouke Mulder, *Willink's Waarheid* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Fontein bv, Baarn, 1983), 30.
60 Marja Bosma and Marc Tilro, *Onbekende Willink 1920–30*, exh. cat. (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1992), 19.
61 S. P. Abas, "Schilderkunstkroniek," *De Indische Courant* (December 28, 1929), 5.
62 Ibid., 5.
63 Ibid., 5.
64 Ibid., 5.

65 Franz Roh, "Eigenausdruck der Natur," in *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der neuesten europäischen Malerei* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1925), 42.
66 László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*, translated by Janet Seligman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 39–43.
67 Roh, "Eigenausdruck der Natur," 48.
68 Ibid., 45.
69 "Theater 'De Uitkijk'," *Filmliga* 2, no. 9–10 (October 1929), 107–108. For more on the Filmliga's early position against the Tuschinski theater, see "Goliath en David: De Heer Tuschinski en wij," *Filmliga* 1, no. 4 (December 1927), 1–2.
70 The entire May 1932 issue of *Filmliga* was dedicated to sound technology, with articles covering its history, its merits, its techniques, and Russian and Dutch sound films. See also "A. B.: Atmospheric Theatre," *Filmliga* 4, no. 6 (April 1932), 103, which discusses the new "revue-décor" being popularized in theaters to create an all-encompassing environment.
71 See Ir. A. Boeken, "Klankfilmtheaters 1 'Flamman' te Stockholm, architect Uno Ahrén," *Filmliga* 4, no. 3 (January 1932), 39–41.
72 *Dispositif* sometimes translates to apparatus in English. The original French term *dispositif* also suggests the idea of an "arrangement" or *disposition*. See Frank Kessler, "The Cinema of Attractions as Dispositif," in *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, edited by Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2006), 60.
73 In Plato's allegory, the philosopher described a group of prisoners who were chained inside of a cave since childhood, only able to see a wall onto which shadows created by a burning fire flickered. They had thus become so accustomed to the conditions of the cave that the illusory shadows became their only known reality. Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema, 1975," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 7th ed., edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 177.
74 Baudry, "The Apparatus," 184. In the late 1920s Michel Dard spoke of the "amoebic" film public inhabiting movie theaters. See Michel Dard, "Valeur humaine du cinema," *Paris: Le rouge et le noir*, no. 10 (1928).
75 Letter from Dick Ket to Nel Schilt dated January 26, 1939, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 68C8, 1940, Fol. 1004–1077, Map 9. His letter to Nel is also reproduced in Johan Mekkink and Jos de Gruyter, *Dick Ket: 1902–1940* (Arnhem: Gemeentemuseum, 1968), 36. He writes of this effect in another letter to Gerri van der Zee. See letter from Dick Ket to Geri van der Zee dated January 29, 1940, RKD, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 3, inv. Nr. 48.
76 See Noam Elcott, "Dark Theaters," in *Artificial Darkness: An Obscure History of Modern Art and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 47–75.
77 Gerald Mast wrote about this paradox of filmgoing in which the viewer, steeped in darkness focuses on a single lit square on the wall before them, yet also becomes illuminated. "Projection, 1977," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 7th ed., edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 303.
78 See Mieke Rijnders, "Pyke Koch," in *In de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, edited by Ype Koopmans and Mieke Rijnders, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 252.
79 J. M. Prange, "Raoul Hynckes: Verhalen uit de snijkamer," *Het Parool* (December 20, 1946), 5.
80 Franz Roh, "Mechanism and Expression," in *Foto-Auge: 76 Fotos der Zeit*, edited by Franz Roh and Franz Tschichold (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1929), 18.

4 The Self-Portrait and the Politics of Ambiguity

"Our country makes a strange impression," the *Telegraaf* art critic Carel Scharten observed in his review of the 1938 Venice Biennale when addressing the Holland pavilion (Figure 4.1).[1] The latter featured thirteen Dutch artists, including five canvases by Pyke Koch and six by Charley Toorop.[2] Another "leading" (although unnamed) representative of the Italian press described it as the "most talked about" pavilion of the year.[3] Discussion swirled around the artists' frightening dream-like visions and imagery derived from the nation's idiosyncratic traditions. Among the examples were the Bosch-inspired canvases of the Dutch countryside by Quirijn van Tiel and Hendrik Wiegersma's estranged, modernist updates to Northern Baroque genre painting such as *De Drinker* (The Drinker) from 1929.[4]

Two of the paintings on display by Pyke Koch happen to be the only extant self-portraits in the artist's entire oeuvre. Completed in 1936 and 1937, respectively, these works in oil-on-panel exemplify a genre in crisis not unlike the instability witnessed in Raoul Hynckes's still lifes or Carel Willink's cityscapes. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Koch's self-portraits sow doubt about the artist's position relative to the institutions that defined him—a phenomenon that extends to other Neorealist painters who represented a similarly destabilized relationship between viewing and viewed subjects. In many potent ways, I argue that film contributed to the corruption of the self-portrait, due to the medium's ability to disrupt notions of subjecthood in ways that reflect an unresolved identity. This uncertainty, present in Koch's paintings, can even be extrapolated to the 1930s Dutch art milieu at large and its failure to fill an ambassadorial role on behalf of The Netherlands—an impasse perhaps best crystallized at the 1938 Venice Biennale.

A look into the composition of the Holland pavilion from that year can perhaps illustrate the distance that The Netherlands had taken from their European neighbors and the latter's use of culture to wage a proxy war on the international stage. Despite a handful of canvases with references to the Old Masters, the Dutch exhibit stood apart from the others because it did not offer a coherent display of national or *völkisch* identity. This lack of a unifying historical narrative became more evident when compared to the blood-and-soil imagery of Germany, the frontier themes chosen to represent the United States, the references to Aztec civilization on the part of Mexico, the nods to Classicism selected by the French, and the expressions of *Italianità* vaunted by the host nation.[5] Nationalism had underscored the Venice Biennale since its creation, but ethnic, racial, and cultural markers of a homogenous "people" were particularly notable in 1938, the first year of the *Gran Premi* awards.[6] This new prize was conceived to reward artists who best represented the official art of their country in both a foreign nation and in Italy. It

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Figure 4.1 Holland Pavilion, *Venice Biennial*, 1938, Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee. *Photo*: ASAC.

was awarded for painting that year to the Spanish artist Ignacio Zuloaga and the Italian Felice Casorati.[7] The introduction of this prize coincided with the effort to frame the Biennale as an important form of cultural exchange for the Rome-Berlin Axis, raising the stakes for the international exhibition as a nation-building apparatus.[8]

International critics held a variety of opinions on how to read the chauvinist undertones at the Biennale, which walked a tightrope between encouraging each nation to cultivate its own tradition-laden identity and forging an international bond through the arts. Frenchman Maurice Lemonnier remarked upon the dogmatic strain in the German pavilion that displayed "images evoking the most chaste virtues of a lost Germany" (Figure 4.2). The Dutch correspondent in Venice for *Algemeen Handelsblad* saw the show as a much-desired distraction from the political turmoil in Europe "as if there were not a cloud in the European sky."[9] Others disagreed on whether it was a portent of a harmonious Europe. British critic Rosamund Frost, for example, in a review for *The Art News* wrote that the Biennale had at least temporarily fulfilled this promise, praising the lack of "bombast" and "exaggerated nationalism" in the pavilions. Her title also revealed a certain hesitancy about this claim in the way that she placed quotation marks around the word "Peaceful" when referring to Europe.[10] The Italian reviewer Giuseppe Marchiori writing for *Emporium* sensed a level fragmentation in the Biennale as a whole. He claimed that the exhibition did not achieve its potential of visualizing the New Order of Europe on the verge of overcoming its "polemical tendencies.[11]

Given the staid conservatism of the exhibition, abstraction—with the notable exception of Futurist *aeropittura* (aeropainting)—was rare that particular year and was completely absent from the Holland pavilion. In contrast to the Dutch showing in the decade prior, which included non-objective compositions by Piet Mondrian, the organizers' selected only figurative art for the 1938 iteration, reflecting the relative conservatism of

Figure 4.2 German Pavilion, Venice Biennial, 1938, Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee. *Photo*: ASAC.

the institutional collections in The Netherlands.[12] Nonetheless, critics noted a strange quality in many of the Dutch artworks that stood in contrast to the politics, the didacticism, and the mundane naturalism seen in pavilions of the other countries.

Fittingly, Pyke Koch's contributions to the Biennale lacked any references to Dutch culture. Among his paintings on view were *Rustende Schoorsteensveger* (Reclining Chimney Sweep), 1936; *Polka Mazurka*, 1938; *Florentijnse tuin* (Florentine Garden), 1938; and the two self-portraits from 1936 and 1937. The artist had begun to cultivate such themes relating to Latinate and upper-class identity over the course of the 1930s, but more discernibly between December of 1937 and November of 1939 when he sojourned at the Ruspoli Villa in Fiesole, Tuscany, with his family.[13] By comparison, Charley Toorop's treatment of provincial mercantile culture in *Kaasmarkt van Alkmaar* (Cheese Market in Alkmaar), 1932–1933, was the only image in the pavilion that could be perceived as alluding to Dutch national pride. The focus of its cropped subject, however, honored agricultural labor above all else, more specifically the back-breaking work of carrying large stacks of Gouda wheels to sell in the open-air stalls of Alkmaar in North Holland.

By my estimation, the sum of the paintings and their context within the 1938 Holland pavilion suggests an understated—and likely unintentional—subversion of the Venice Biennale's newfound purpose as an agent for nation-building through the art exhibition. According to the critics, the Holland pavilion celebrated expressions of individual artistic personalities instead of promoting a unified national voice. Koch's self-portraits certainly played their part in upending the formation of any clear national narrative. The ambiguity of his paintings blended into that of the heterodox group of artists on display that year who formed part of a larger garbled statement on Dutch cultural identity. In fact, any attempt to decipher with certainty the messages embedded within Koch's two

self-portraits—much like interpretations of the pavilion overall—would necessarily result in an appraisal that was irresolvable and open to dispute.

The two paintings on display in Venice that year—completed in 1936 and 1937 respectively (Figures 4.3 and 4.4)—feature an equally tight framing relative to the painted portrait tradition, as well as a compressed (or ambiguous) relationship between figure and background. They capture the visual intensity of the close-up, echoing the words of Dutch critics writing for the *Filmliga* journal, who often identified the short range shot as a device that could eliminate inconsequential details and elevate only what is crucial to the story. Henrik Scholte, for example, said as much in his review of the 1923 short film *Fait-Divers*. He commended Claude-Autant Lara's use of the close-up in the way that the director "hammered together the prominent details with the omission of the non-essential intermediate motifs, it is a wonderful example of what film can be: intensified, fateful reality."[14]

The resemblance of these two paintings to the close-up format opens the door to reading the artist's suggestive facial expressions with the help of very little outside context—note the minimal blue background and extremely tight cropping. Koch's 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band*, in particular, raises the question of how a self-representation can be ambiguous and also contain a political charge. To the end of responding to this query, Louis Althusser's concept of the Ideological State Apparatus may help to provide an answer. His theories offer a framework that will show how Koch's self-portraits inadvertently reveal the process of becoming an ideological subject—referring to the recognition of one's own identification with a larger body.

In explicating the Marxist theory of ideological formation in his 1971 book, Althusser refers to an individual being interpellated—or called upon—to recognize his or her identification within a larger institution (Church, family, or political party for example).[15] It is, according to Althusser, via interpellation of the lowercase-s subject by the capital-S subject, that ideology continuously reproduces itself.[16] During this process, Althusser

Figure 4.3 Pyke Koch, *Zelfportret* (Self-Portrait), 1936, oil on canvas, 32 × 29 cm.

Source: Museum MORE, Gorssel (photo: Joop van Putten). © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Adriaan van Dam. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

Figure 4.4 Pyke Koch, *Zelfportret met zwarte band* (Self-Portrait with Black Band), 1937, oil and tempera on panel, 34.5 × 32.5 cm.

Source: © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Ernst Moritz. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

explains, an individual experiences a moment of "ideological recognition" and is essentially recruited into a greater communal identity. In this way the Ideological State Apparatus can sustain the organization of society through the reciprocal relationship of the base to the superstructure as Marx had theorized.[17] Operating in subtle and sometimes unseen ways such as reinforcement of public rituals and beliefs, he argued, the Ideological State Apparatus can succeed through persuasive coercion rather than violent state repression.[18]

Ideology, as conceptualized by Althusser, thus exists as an externalized environment that eludes conscious awareness and, as a result, produces the ideal circumstances for encouraging willful compliance. There is of course an inherent difficulty in directly bearing witness to this phenomenon as Althusser outlines in the following quotation. He states, "while admitting that these ideologies do not correspond to reality, and accordingly, constitute an illusion, we also admit that they make allusions to reality, and that we need only 'interpret' them to discover the reality of this world beneath the surface of their imaginary representation of it (ideology = illusion/allusion)."[19] It is my contention that this interpretive practice described by Althusser may be just the key to understanding Koch's enigmatic painting.

In the decades after he painted *Self-Portrait with Black Band*, Koch long maintained that the work does not contain explicitly political content.[20] While his assertion may be *technically* true, it is still conceivable, I would argue, that this 1937 painting revealed the sometimes competing ideological milieus in which Koch had found himself. Questions remain about the things left unsaid in the panel that open it up to interpretation. The ambiguity of this painting is what feeds the undeniable specter that it may, in fact,

harbor evidence—or even a suggestion—of the artist's affiliation with right-wing ideas. Indeed, any overt statement applied to *Self-Portrait with Black Band*—political or otherwise—does not withstand scrutiny for long. I would maintain that his 1937 self-portrait may represent a moment when Koch recognized himself—or rather identified with—a number of highly visible celebrity personas that infiltrated Dutch mass media at the time of its making. Impossible to articulate with any precise definition, the identity put forward in this work can best be described as a reified compilation of several compelling larger-than-life personalities (or characters) who possessed magnetic qualities attractive to Koch. More to the point, I view his references as channeling the iconography of the martyr and the strong man, archetypes specific to institutions such as the Church or the Fascist Party. That these two types come into confrontation with one another only further clouds the clarity of their respective ideological missions.

One factor contributing to this confusion is the number of competing Ideological State Apparatuses at play, each with a distinct relationship to the nation-state. This is where the question of cinema and its global manner of dissemination becomes a particularly thorny issue. If we view mass media as but one example of an Ideological State Apparatus—as Althusser did—then the role that interwar cinema played in forming a Dutch notion of national consciousness is complicated by the fact that this was a global medium that served several interests, of which Holland was only one. While the international character of cinema was quite well established by the 1920s, the European film industry had begun to consolidate into more clearly defined language publics with the introduction of sound in the 1930s. By the time that Koch completed these paintings in the mid-late 1930s, only a handful of countries with large linguistic constituencies dominated the film industry, eviscerating what had been the status quo, primarily: international cultural exchange facilitated by interchangeable title cards.[21] European cinema was further transformed in the 1930s by the explosive growth of movie theaters and the rise of fan magazines, which resulted in the formation of a transnational community that was psychologically bound by the experience of film-watching. Although cinema publics in the 1930s began to develop along "national" lines, distributions in small countries such as The Netherlands became dominated by a passive, yet capitalistic form of cultural imperialism that heavily favored the imports of more robust industries.[22]

It becomes necessary, then, to establish the specific nature of Koch's citations, while also determining the international sources from which they were derived. Before Koch began work on these 1936 and 1937 self-portraits—the only surviving examples of the genre in his entire oeuvre—he completed a no-longer-extant version in 1935 (Figure 4.5). All three had a nearly identical format—the artist placed himself before a serene blue background, his head cropped at the neck. Koch did not typically discuss his source material, but it has been suggested that he based his compositions for these paintings on Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc), 1928 (Figure 4.6), a film that preceded the transition to sound and may be described as the quintessential example of international modernist cinema.[23] Critical readings from the time that Koch was first exhibiting these paintings completely ignored the filmic and feminized aspects of his self-portraits, focusing entirely on the strength and masculinity of the images. Perhaps a sign of the polarized times, these early interpretations properly demonstrate the singular road often enforced by the Ideological State Apparatus, which tends to obscure alternative routes to understanding a text or image.

In fact, it was not until 1972 that any suggestion of Koch's indebtedness to film in these self-portraits surfaced, when Carel Blotkamp first remarked upon the visual similarities shared by the aforementioned trio of paintings and stills from Dreyer's film.

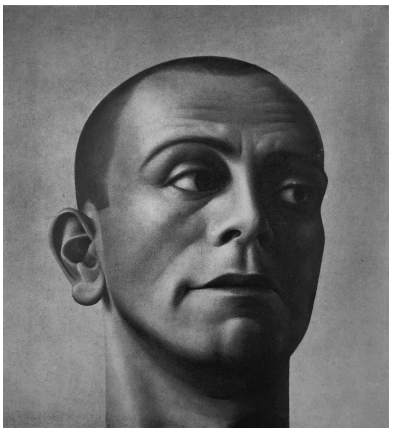

Figure 4.5 Pyke Koch, *Zelfportret* (Self-Portrait), 1935, dimensions unknown, destroyed.
Source: © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

Figure 4.6 Maria Falconetti in Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc), 1928, Société Générale des Films.

Ida Boelema made a similar observation in 2012, but both of these comparisons have focused entirely on the physical resemblance between *Self-Portrait with Black Band* and *Jeanne d'Arc*, making sure to hedge the relationship between the two as mere conjecture.[24] These brief, unelaborated observations of similitude do not address the ways that Koch—if we are to take these speculations to their conclusion—embedded the actress Maria Falconetti's magnetic presence into his own self-image, blurring the distinction between painting and performance, while crossing gender lines. His first, 1935 version most closely resembles the actress's resigned expression. In a black-and-white photograph of this no-longer-extant self-portrait, the resemblance to Falconetti's portrayal of Joan is striking. The artist's half-lidded eyes and arched eyebrows, his slack cheeks and downturned mouth, provide a near mirror image of the performer acting in the scene just preceding Joan's execution.

Frequently cited by early film theorists in the late 1920s and 1930s, Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was one of the most controversial films released in The Netherlands

in 1929.[25] Koch would have had the opportunity to see the film between 1929 and 1933 either as part of a general audience or as a member of the Filmliga, where it was also regularly featured in the programming alongside other "classics" such as *Entr'acte* (René Clair, 1924), *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), and *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), among others. Appearing in the pages of the *Filmliga* journal where it was sometimes accompanied by stills, this heavily reviewed film was most certainly discussed at the club's meetings.[26] It had apparently conjured very strong feelings among members at the Filmliga, who were divided about how to react to it. Club co-founder Menno ter Braak described the film as beautiful but dangerous, writing that there "was a devil running around in the slant angles." He was hesitant to use the term "pure cinema" when describing it, because of the way that these words made use of the audience's affective response, which he found to be troublingly manipulative.[27] In 1935 the film may have been on Koch's mind for any number of reasons. One very likely answer is that a German remake directed by Gustav Ucicky came out in Dutch theaters under the title *Das Mädchen Johanna* (Joan the Maid) in July, inspiring the Dutch press to make frequent comparisons to Dreyer's 1928 film.[28]

Completed under the guidance of the German film industry recently consolidated under Joseph Goebbels, Ucicky's version of this famous story was a blatant example of Nazi-era propaganda. Under Goebbels, the cultural apparatus frequently used the referential legibility of famous historical figures such as Joan of Arc to convey grand symbolic ideas about the nation. Contemporary critics compared the historical situation in fifteenth-century France to that of 1930s Germany. The medieval heroine was even characterized at the time of its release as the first representation of a woman who embodied the values and being of the Führer.[29] Publicity materials featuring the actress Angela Salloker, who played the starring role in *Joan the Maid*, struck a contrast with the more famous 1928 Carl Dreyer version by doing away with the emphasis on Joan's vulnerability. Indeed, a comparison could certainly be made to Salloker's sanguine, unperturbed characterization of the historical figure and the facial expression and uprightness to which Koch ultimately arrived in his 1937 portrait. In my reading of the visual evidence, it would be inaccurate to say that Koch had suppressed his memory of the famed Falconetti performance. Although he may not have conceived of his self-portraits as an ensemble, if we are to consider the steps that led him to his 1937, and final version, it is Falconetti I would argue, and not Solloker, who shines through as the connective thread that binds these works together. Indeed, Koch's references to Falconetti's performance never completely disappeared. They are present in the open, ambiguous background, the metonymic clues referencing her martyrdom, as I shall discuss next, and the overt close-up cropping of Koch's head.

What was it, then, that would have led Koch to become so attached to Dreyer's film, years after its original release? By the late 1930s *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was a relic of the silent era. Could his imitation of Falconetti's likeness have simply aligned with his emotional response to this widely shown and celebrated film? The production itself—true of many films prior to the introduction of sound—was genuinely international; it was made by a Danish director of Swedish ethnicity, and produced by the French company Société Générale des Films. Media scholar Charles O'Brien identified it with the term "international modernist cinema" due to the way that Dreyer broke with historical genres, communicating with an audience that transcended national boundaries, and did so via close-ups that emphasized sensorial experiences such as the appearance of perspiration on human skin.[30] In any case, it is a movie that cannot really be said to

adopt a political orientation, despite its vague connection to the recent use of Jeanne d'Arc's image in connection with French nationalism.[31] In fact, the relationship between Carl Dreyer's motion picture and the nationalist rhetoric surrounding the heroine is so tenuous that it renders any political reading of the film incoherent. The question therefore remains of how this famed motion picture—if its use as a source for Koch is to be taken for granted—served the artist at this crucial moment when he was developing a right-wing perspective. After all, he began this series just one year after joining Verdinaso. While the overtly propagandistic, pro-German film *Joan the Maid* likely also had a part in the double reinvention of his self-portrait, I propose that Koch's retention of certain aspects of Falconetti's performance signals an ambivalence. However oblique he was in his approach, Koch more likely drew upon her image for its alternative valence; Joan as a believer called by a very different authority—the Church—and its long iconographic history.

In this series of self-portraits—but most pointedly in the 1937 version—Koch appears to fuse his own subjecthood with that of Falconetti, capturing a dramatic point of inflection in the narrative when the artist apprehends his own identification with the actress. Indeed, the empathetic response that *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* inspires in the viewer is key to understanding what Koch must have experienced when watching the film. By employing long takes with close-ups of the actress's face, the director Carl Dreyer beckons the filmgoer to form a human connection with the title character, who is being judged by a jury of men, rather than God, the ultimate arbiter. Incredulous that she had been called upon by the Almighty to dress as a man to fight the English during the Hundred Years' War, the tribunal charged with judging Joan alleges that she had in fact been sent by the devil. Going forward, the arguments debating her guilt and Joan's reactions to the charges comprise the bulk of the film. To bring the emotional weight of this experience to the fore, Dreyer insisted on humanizing the title character and worked with the lead actress to this effect. Falconetti, for her part, portrayed Joan with such intensity that she appears at times possessed by an otherworldly presence. Rather than the demon that the tribunal believed had directed her actions, Falconetti's performance suggests that the true source of such conviction-led actions derived from her emotions. If Koch based his own appearance in his self-portraits on the image of Falconetti-as-Joan—as I believe he did—he seems to have developed a rather sensitive reading of the actress's nuanced facial movements, which were the only means to express complex emotions in the days of silent film.

It is therefore conceivable that Pyke Koch's pair of self-portraits on display at the 1938 Biennale reproduce for the viewing audience the process of becoming an ideological subject in a manner that revealed his right-wing values, albeit in indistinct ways. It is likely not irrelevant that Koch embarked on this series of self-portraits the year after he registered in the Dutch Fascist Party. He was by that time a member of a minority far-right political movement that saw itself as pushing against the tide of modern excesses, specifically the threat of American-style capitalism and Soviet Communism, both of which threatened to encroach—in Koch's eyes—on Western Europe.[32] In my estimation, by performing Maria Falconetti-as-Joan through his shorn head and intense expression, Koch unconsciously staged a stand-off between her performance and the spectral presence of Benito Mussolini, to whom he also gestured within the self-portrait.

In 1937 Koch would have had many opportunities to view Fascist documentaries centering the strong man role of Mussolini in Italy's recent military campaigns. In early February the Italian consulate in The Netherlands had hosted a screening of films at

several Dutch theaters. Their program included short films followed by a longer feature detailing the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia, with great attention to its "civilizing" mission.[33] Mussolini's indisputable embodiment of machismo in this (and other) documentaries, when identified as another potential source for Pyke Koch, establishes an inherent dissonance with the Falconetti imagery. As the recently minted head of a growing empire set on forging psychological connections to Rome's storied past, Mussolini could not be more unambiguous or unambivalent in his expression in relation to the raw, vulnerable Joan. When compared against Koch's 1937 self-portrait, a cinematic dialogue appears to emerge between the likenesses of Mussolini and the artist; one that cannot reproduce the shot-reverse-shot repartee of filmic discourse per se, but which collapses a filmic syntax into a single pictorial space. In this instance we begin to see, I would suggest, a suturing of the spectator into the film's diegesis through subjective shots that include him or her as a participant within the narrative, forgetting the role of the camera in the storytelling process. This approach offered Koch a way to rewrite the more feminine, deeply empathic scenes in the film as imbued with strength and political conviction.

Could it be possible that each iteration of the three self-portraits—culminating in his 1937 painting—shows a moment in the artist's progression rightward toward Fascist ideology? Having purportedly destroyed the original 1935 version because he saw it as too "weak," Koch corrected his image in the 1936 oil on panel.[34] For his second attempt he introduced a shorn head and an emotionally restrained rather than exhausted and forlorn expression; his once downturned mouth has straightened into a rigid line. One final detail—his commission of a wrought-iron frame for this 1936 version—derived from his admiration for the craft techniques of metalworkers, with whom he felt a special kinship.[35] Its curling flames, veering on the sculptural, provide yet another ambiguous detail with a number of potential sources, from the custom frame designs of Giacomo Balla to the fire used to burn Joan of Arc alive, but it also happens to resonate with Il Duce's metaphorical references to ironworking and forging the will of the proletariat.[36]

His 1937 picture had almost entirely lost its appearance of vulnerability and truly took liberty with its original cinematic source. Instead of tilting his head, Koch positioned it upright. Rather than allowing emotion to dictate the contours of his brow or the turn of his mouth, he instead rendered his expression as tightly controlled. His addition of the black head band could also be read as a reversal of the humiliating false crown that Joan was forced to wear in the film during the heroine's time in prison (Figure 4.7)—a

Figure 4.7 Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc wearing the "false crown." Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc), 1928, Société Générale des Films.

reference to Christ's martyrdom. This is how she appears in the film still that accompanied the Filmliga journal's coverage of Dreyer's masterpiece—an image that Koch could have easily used as a memory aid.[37] In his self-portrait, however, Koch avoids Falconetti's expression of vulnerability; he appears to wear the bandana out of his own volition, as evidence of his newfound secular faith. The concept of principled conviction, after all, was at the heart of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. When asked to choose between her beliefs and her life, Joan ultimately opts for death. In what was perhaps an ode to the totalitarian death cults emerging in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany—Koch captures a specific moment in the film: the lull of calm and resignation just after the heroine renounces the false admission of being possessed by the devil and accepts to be burned at the stake.

Koch's 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band* remains without question the most controversial painting of his career, although not necessarily because of its androgynous content. In fact, when it was first exhibited, all his contemporary critics overlooked these qualities and instead commented upon the virility embodied in the work.[38] In the years just after Koch completed this self-portrait, the consensus among Dutch critics was that the painting projected an air of strength and determination. One correspondent covering the 1938 Biennale appreciated the work's "masculine power," while another writing at the time of its acquisition at the Utrecht Centraal Museum lauded its "heroic spirit."[39] The answer as to why reviewers in the late 1930s did not perceive the ambiguity or unstable gender codes embedded in the self-portrait can only be deduced from its context. The late 1930s were years of intense political polarization, which had a trickle-down effect on the culture. This fact, combined with a general lack of vocabulary for articulating gender non-conformity (or performativity) at the time, may have led to a flattened perception of the painting's more subtle valences.

A political reading of Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band*, however convincing, cannot be confirmed with certitude, and any reference to this effect has a way of evading concrete identifications, iconographic or otherwise. However, despite the artist's own attempts to distance himself from his problematic ties to fascism in postwar accounts of his 1937 self-portrait, this famous painting has long been characterized as the visual personification of his fascist political ideology or, more pointedly, the contemporary rhetoric regarding the "New Man," who emanated heroic ideals of a strident, forward-moving society. What remains missing from these accounts are the unanswerable questions pertaining to the particularities of this gendered representation, as mentioned earlier, as well as other emblematic and contextual ambiguities inherent to the painting.

Koch had always maintained that his 1937 self-portrait was not politically oriented; he stated that he merely added the black headband to enhance the sense of contrast within the composition. While this sort of dissemblance was typical for Koch, nearly all critical readings of this painting have contradicted this assertion since its inception. His good friend the poet Jan Engelman described the panel as a fascist emblem in his 1941 monograph on the artist, for which—as Claartje Wesselink has more recently proved—Koch had submitted his approval of the first draft and neglected to dispute this reading in his notes.[40] Carel Blotkamp has also compared the addition of the headband to images of athletes made by the classical Greeks and more recently by Arno Breker (Figure 4.8). The bandana's color, Koch later admitted, was likely a reference to the paramilitary wing of the Fascist Party, colloquially known as the "black shirts," whose uniforms the artist claimed to have admired for their elite appearance.[41] While Koch had made this comment in the context of a 1976 interview—at a time when he had to justify his attraction to fascism for reputational reasons—I would argue that there also remains a kernel of

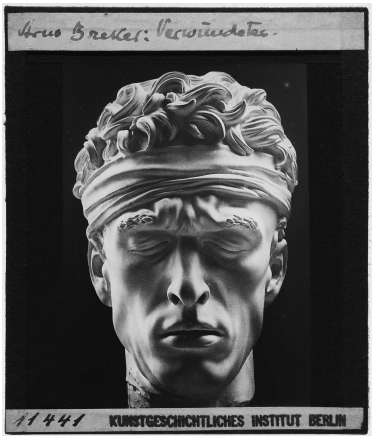

Figure 4.8 Arno Breker, *Kopf des Verwundeten* (Head of a Wounded Warrior), 1940, plaster model for later bronze, 39.7 × 30.2 cm.

Photo: Mediateque, Art History Institute, Humboldt Universität, Berlin. © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

homoerotic truth to his opinion on men in uniform that aligns with long-held speculations about his sexual orientation.[42] Furthermore, in an intensive study of the painting conducted for the Centraal Museum in 1980, Annemiek Ouwekerk and Louis van Tilborgh argued that the symbolism appears not to be specific to Mussolini, but rather represents a combination of popular political references from the period.[43] While these scholars were correct to view this painting—and series—as the end product of an amalgam of influences that referenced the late 1930s political context, they also overlooked the role of popular culture, and more specifically film, in activating this potent mix of symbols.

Yet there remains an even a stranger question that pertains to how this combination of influences operates as an ensemble. While the line connecting Ucicky's propaganda film *Joan the Maid* to Mussolini can be drawn with relative ease, what does the dominating personality of Il Duce have to do with Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc, in a film that does not contain explicit political content? I would argue that viewed through lens of Althusser's theories, Mussolini can easily take the place of a capital-S subject, as a figurehead in relationship to the lowercase-s subject Koch, leading the artist to recognize his identity as a Party member through the process of interpellation. The case of Falconetti, however, cannot be so easily reconciled. One answer may be that when watching the actress's performance, Koch was hailed by Joan of Arc to recognize his identity as a martyr, which in Koch's case likely referred to his perceived treatment as a political outsider in within the larger Dutch society.

The martyr explanation, however, can only provide part of the answer, for despite the association of Joan of Arc with righteous defiance, it does not take into consideration the certain power embedded in the public persona of Maria Falconetti the film star. When a performance becomes as well known as Falconetti's portrayal of Joan of Arc, it becomes difficult or impossible to separate the actress from the role that made her a star. The visual dimension of this phenomenon was especially true of silent film, which

elevated the expressive potential of the face to a nearly divine status. As Richard Dyer has argued, if a performer was too successful in inhabiting a celebrated character, then the public may go on to see her as a representation of the very values that she brought to life on-screen.[44] It is Falconetti, after all, who activates the sensorial experience that gives weight to the martyr through her emotional performance, an effect that was missing from the Salloker portrayal. In this way, Koch's self-portraits seem to manifest vastly different archetypes of power that were emerging in force during that decade. Concluding in the 1937 version with the black band, Koch brought together into his self-portraits two different "cults of personality" developing nearly in tandem during the 1930s: the celebrity and the politician.

I would venture that Koch more likely represented himself as neither Mussolini nor Falconetti, but a composite of the two, documenting in this image the process of becoming an ideological subject. This moment of interpellation—in which Koch was constituted as a member of a group with a shared identification and structured roles—ultimately awakened his political consciousness and led him to write for Fascist periodicals beginning in 1937, first under a pseudonym Elsseneur for *Hier Dinaso!* and then his real name for *De Waag*.[45] I would imagine that for Koch, what connected Falconetti and Mussolini above anything else was the magnetism of their personas. Such a charismatic quality could inspire a strong guttural reaction in the viewer through a variety of ways, from the actress's raw, emotional performance to the politician's evocation of strongman values. It is a work that also speaks to the inability to represent ideology, because of the necessity that it goes unseen, creating a total environment in which the subject lives and breathes. In any case, the uncertainty of the subject of this painting—party to a multitude of competing interpellators—suggests the instability of Koch's persona.

The fact that Koch destroyed his 1935 self-portrait—the most Falconetti-esque, and thus feminine of the three—due to its perceived weakness, thus likely underscores his aesthetic (and fascist) commitment to restoring a strong, patriarchal culture to a future Europe. Within the history of this trio of self-portraits lies a paradox, however, that continues to bring into question the virility of his 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band*. If we take for granted that this series was originally inspired by the image of a female saint tried for heresy in part because she wore men's clothes, then underlying this trilogy is an uncertain or unstable masculinity, just one example of the *dubbelzinnigheid* (ambiguity/double meaning) common to Pyke Koch's paintings. By sentencing the 1935 self-image to *damnatio memoriae*, Koch essentially left behind a diptych of the same subject with no clear sequence. The slightly more feminizing 1936 painting, surrounded by flames, leaves its fate open-ended. Is this frame destroying its own contents, or is Koch allowing for a modicum of "femininity" to persist within his likeness?

To further account for the ways in which Koch's paintings destabilize the genre of self-portraiture, the distance that he takes from its history should also be taken into consideration. Koch's self-portraits were to an extent also in dialogue with certain Renaissance-era notions of self-fashioning that helped to birth the genre during that very period. It was at that time that artists began experimenting with performativity as a way of embodying a given ideal, such as the sixteenth-century Italian diplomat Baldassare Castiglione's description of the consummate courtier who perfectly articulated the quality of *sprezzatura*, or nonchalance. This highly valued trait took the place of ornate luxury fabrics in sixteenth-century portraits and self-portraits alike, relying upon understated yet elegant clothing combined with a confidence to express its mark of cultivation.[46] Indeed, the performative takes on an entirely different dimension when one

considers that in the moments when Koch looked at these paintings, he assembled his various roles as actor, director, and audience member together into a single space. His facial expressions first mimic and then reject the influence of Maria Falconetti, without ever completely abandoning her.

More than anything else, it is the space that Koch occupies that provides a location for uninterrupted potential; avoiding participation in the artist's goal of self-fashioning, the setting leaves this question entirely open-ended. It is plausible that Koch was invoking the tradition of Northern Renaissance artists such as Hans Memling, Hans Holbein, and Lucas Cranach, who often used blue backgrounds in their portraiture to distinct ends. While Memling often located his subjects in natural settings, Holbein and Cranach sometimes placed their figures before non-descript blue interiors, at times even removing all cartouches, inscriptions, and shadows, as Koch has done.[47] What distinguishes Koch from these Old Masters is the severity of his cropping he cuts off his self-portraits at the neck, leaving only a floating head to do the work of self-fashioning through his expressions and limited accessories. Translating the spartan background of Carl Dreyer's minimalist set into a static mode of interpretation associated with painting, Koch renders permanent the same kind of cinematic phenomenon later recognized by Gilles Deleuze. In his articulation of something that can only exist in cinema due to the existence of the editing process, Deleuze theorized the *éspace quelconque*, or "any space whatever," to describe a coherent, yet liminal zone that is not explicitly connected to any one moment in time or geographical location.[48] Likewise, the cryptic settings in Koch's self-portraits refuse to identify a distinctive temporal or geographical references—wresting the figure away from any knowable quantities that could otherwise help crystalize his self-definition. Much like the Deleuzian concept as it pertains to filmmaking, a comparable denial of a concrete site when depicted in painting can be a useful visual analogue to the experience of psychological distance, alienation, or a general disconnection from objective reality.

Indeed, the ambiguity of Koch's self-portraits comes into full relief when compared against select self-portraits in the Italian and German pavilions at the 1938 Biennale. Among the diverse examples of the different nations represented at the Biennale, a pattern emerges in which the self-portrait genre is occasionally used toward culturally deterministic ends. Each self-portrait in its own way contributed to the overarching nationalist narrative present in every country's display. In room 35 of the Italian pavilion, for example, Aldo Capri's self-portrait depicts a rather sophisticated form of self-fashioning of the artist's identity as a gentleman-painter. As if embodying the sprezzatura of the Renaissance courtier, Capri outfits himself with a sports coat, a button-down shirt, and a vest rather than an artist's smock. Surrounded by an easel, sculpture, and framed painting, he cups his hands in a way that is less indicative of his career as a painter than as a self-conscious painted subject.[49] Likewise, among the few self-portraits exhibited in the German pavilion, former Neue Sachlichkeit painter Georg Siebert exhibited a self-portrait that also featured his son (*Selbstporträt mit Klaus*), 1932 (Figure 4.9), and turned the tradition of the self-reflexive painting into a wholesome, hygienic picture, with figures who seem to belong to the bucolic town in the background. Rife with imagery easily politicized as a blood-and-soil evocation, Siebert fused his identity as an artist with that of his role as a father. Emphasizing the kinship bond with his son, he visually linked the two figures to their rural surroundings.

The Holland pavilion, by contrast, did not have a comparably intelligible use for the self-portrait since its narrative thread neglected to cohere as a unified message. Figuring in its checklist were self-portraits by Quirijn van Tiel, Joep Nicolas, Herman Kruyder,

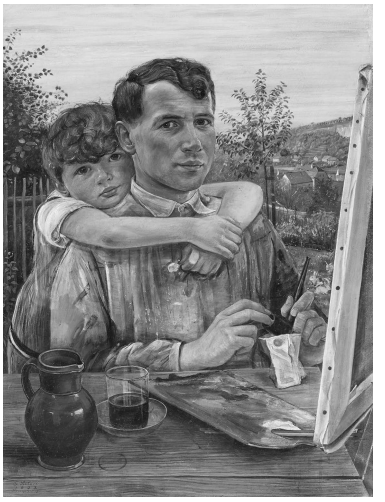

Figure 4.9 Georg Siebert, *Selbstporträt mit Klaus* (Self-Portrait with Klaus), 1932, oil on canvas, 83 × 63.5 cm.

Source: Private collection. © Foto: VAN HAM Kunstauktionen | Saša Fuis Photographie. Permission of Simone Plaudis.

Hendrik Wiegersma, and Charley Toorop. Koch's panels from 1936 and '37 were, however, the only two examples in the genre to draw the attention of critics. Most of these paintings depicted the artist at work, but with none of the same class pretentions as the Capri self-portrait. Both Quirijn van Tiel and Joep Nicolas depicted themselves with paintbrushes in hand, the former standing before a desolate landscape, and the latter in front of a canvas on an easel, surrounded by a makeshift still life.[50] The late Herman Kruyder's 1933 self-portrait on display also featured a prominent paintbrush projecting outward from the artist's grasp. Charley Toorop exhibited a rather standard self-reflexive image in her *Zelfportret met palet* (Self-Portrait with Palette), 1932–1933. In this work Toorop appears in three-quarter profile with a view from the waist. She holds a palette in her hand, while the reach of her other arm is cut off by the edge of the frame; the compositional arrangement suggests that she is working on a canvas just out of view.

Indeed, the role that the self-portrait played in constructing the image of a national identity—or imago—once placed in a fully realized pavilion, effectively made use of its power in the messaging that it transmitted to viewers and in the interpretations that it elicited from journalists. Alongside these self-portraits were van Tiel's distorted figures shown in desolate landscapes, Wiegersma's twentieth-century takes on seventeenth-century scenes of revelry, Herman Kruyder's naïve images of farmland, and finally Kees Maks's various paintings, which included: clowns, cowboys, a Boston cityscape, and a portrait of the artist and his model. For their part, Dutch critics disavowed what they viewed as nationalistic overtures at the Biennale, while admiring their home country's refusal to take part in it. A writer for *Algemeen Handelsblad* praised the Holland pavilion for showing how it revealed the national tendency to "go our own way."[51] Another correspondent writing for *De Tijd* complained about the mediocre work produced by artists from other countries working in a heavily state-controlled system—singling out Germany and Italy in particular.[52]

German National Socialist journalist Wilhelm Rüdiger, by contrast, denigrated The Netherlands' contributions as frivolous formalism, writing:

> In the pavilions of the individual nations, a unified and strong inner direction can often be felt; one can perhaps really read from it a national kind of art and its ideas. If this "direction" does not assert itself from the beginning, it can betray itself as a "tendency," as a purely subjective demonstration of taste by the relevant exhibition commissioner and his circle, such as [the example of] the Holland Pavilion.[53]

Of all the self-portraits that the critics remarked upon at the 1938 Holland pavilion, Koch's paintings were unparalleled in their ambiguity. This does not mean that the kind of interpellation exemplified in his pair of self-portraits amounted to an isolated phenomenon. Charley Toorop—who frequently worked in the genre of self-portraiture—played with similarly film-inspired evocations in her paintings, the best examples of which did not appear in the Venice fair in 1938 or any other year. One such painting by Toorop dating to 1934—a work titled *Zelfportret tegen palet* (Self-Portrait in Front of a Palette; Figure 4.10), now in the Kröller-Müller collection—appears to be in dialogue with, yet distinct from the two aforementioned works by Koch. While similar in subject matter to her *Self-Portrait with Palette*, 1932–1933 described previously, this 1934 version is

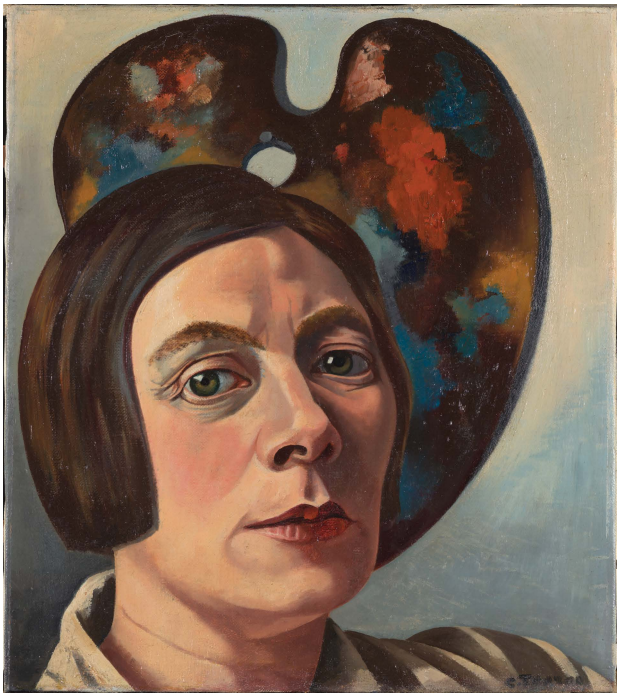

Figure 4.10 Charley Toorop, *Zelfportret tegen palet* (Self-Portrait in Front of a Palette), 1934, oil on canvas, 45.6 × 40.3 cm.

Source: © Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands (photo: Rik Klein Gotink). © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

different in the way that it depicts the artist cropped at the neck: one shoulder is barely visible, and a painter's palette rises behind her, framing her head like a slightly off-kilter aureole. Her self-reflexive interest in the labor of art-making in this work harkens back to an earlier Dutch tradition seen in Judith Leyster's 1633 self-portrait depicting the artist before a canvas with paintbrush in hand, or Rembrandt van Rijn's famous self-portrait from 1665–1669, which shows the artist in his studio standing before two understated, yet perfectly executed circles in the background—a humble reference to his natural artistic genius. Dissimilar from Koch's paintings in its conclusions, Toorop's 1934 canvas definitively triangulates the relationship between filmgoing, self-portraiture, and the Old Masters. What she does share with him, however, is an awareness of her own subjecthood, and an interest in destabilizing it.

In this painting, Toorop continues to partake in the ongoing paragone between film and painting, referring to the Dutch tradition—this time evoking a specific subcategory of the Dutch self-portrait, depicting the artist at work. Her modernist update to this essentially reflexive subgenre also calls upon emerging tropes in Soviet cinema that emphasize the dignity and material conditions of the human subject in ways that confirm the commitment that she had made to her socialist ideals. The influence of filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov, for example, occasionally appear in her preferred type of juxtaposition, which layered workers over the machines of their trade and bound them together to heroize both labor and laborer. In films such as *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (Man with a Movie Camera), 1929, Vertov superimposed images of workers and their instruments through multiple exposures. He also employed the Kuleschov method, in which he edited together sequences to produce a syntactic relationship in the mind of the viewer. If indeed Toorop is referencing Vertov in her 1934 self-portrait, it is impossible to know which of these methods she was citing, due to the plasticity of the painting medium.

Like Koch's entrée into Fascism, Toorop's political orientation is also crucial to reading this work. Since 1928 Charley Toorop had been a member of the Netherlands New-Russia Society, an organization like many others set up across Europe with the goal of fostering in the Dutch people an understanding of the Soviet Union.[54] The organization's eponymous magazine did not discuss the larger political apparatus, but instead placed particular emphasis on Soviet cultural offerings, such as: painting, theater, architecture, folk art, and of course film. Its pages tended to cover the more well-known Soviet avant-garde directors like Dziga Vertov, whose films the society also screened during its meetings.[55] Despite the mostly positive coverage of Stalin's Five-Year Plan in the Dutch Socialist press, Toorop was beginning to grow wary of the Russian leader by the mid-1930s.[56] In any case, her aesthetic did not draw from the Socialist Realist examples that dominated Soviet aesthetics at the time.[57] She was attracted to the innovative editing style from the montage era, as well as subject matter celebrating working-class realities and women in the workforce.

In my view, Toorop combined the tropes of Dutch meta-painting with a composition inspired by Soviet agitprop film, which aimed to reformulate reality in an overtly ideological way, rather than presenting it objectively.[58] Numerous Russian avant-garde directors relied heavily on the juxtaposition of mid- and close-up shots representing worker types, often edited together in sequence with or transposed over the fruits of their labor or workers' tools, such as a scene of laborers and a factory wheel in Sergei Eisenstein's *Stachka* (Strike), 1925, and a weaver with an industrial loom in Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (Figure 4.11).[59] Eisenstein emphasized collective action in the face of exploitation, while Vertov's film focused on the direct relationships between

Figure 4.11 Dziga Vertov, weaver in *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (Man with a Movie Camera), 1929, Vseukrainske Foto Kino Upravlinnia.

workers and the products or services that they brought into being, including seamstresses sewing clothes, barbers shaving their customers' faces, and even editors cutting film. The most recurrent of these images is a self-reflexive one: Vertov himself appears in the act of recording the action with his film camera (Figure 4.12), followed by a shot of what he is recording. Some sequences captured only his own lens (Figure 4.13), while in others he interspliced shots of himself filming with footage of other laborers or machines in motion. The constant refrain throughout the film is that Vertov was continuously aware of his position as filmmaker, and reminded the viewer of that awareness while also making a visual comparison to other kinds of work, both manual and mechanical. Toorop creates a similar effect in her self-portrait by placing her face before her painting palette. Layering the likeness of the artist-as-laborer over an implement that was central to her work, Toorop effectively makes the statement that she, too, was a worker. Rather than capturing a scene of the artist in her studio, sharing the same diegetic space as her painting utensils like she had done previously in *Self-portrait with Palette* in 1932–1933 (now at the Kunstmuseum in The Hague), the palette in the 1934 painting hovers over her head in an undefined temporal zone, occupying a visual plane that exists in an imaginary rather than a naturalistic location. In this later version, the artist-as-artisan and her tool are bound together in such a way that suggest the montage of two images with distinct temporal and spatial locations, which she then translated into paint on canvas.

Toorop's 1934 self-portrait exhibits a form of interpellation similar to that witnessed in Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band*, but in this case the painting expresses a relationship between space and time that is both ambiguous and dualistic. Suture theory, a Lacanian concept imported into film studies by French critic Jean-Pierre Oudart, can perhaps provide an appropriate schema for elucidating the more explicitly dialogic character of Toorop's *Self-Portrait in Front of a Palette*. Suture refers to a stitching together of frames into a shot-reverse-shot sequence to create the illusion of a complete syntactical unit. This unit often includes a primary actor and either a secondary performer engaged in dialogue or an object that the character is in the course of observing. The introduction of a subjective shot into such a back-and-forth exchange between one filmed subject and the object of its gaze can include the viewer in a participatory way. However, there also might exist a controlling perspective that provides an objective view by observing the scene from the outside.[60]

Figure 4.12 Dziga Vertov, Vertov in *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (Man with a Movie Camera), 1929, Vseukrainske Foto Kino Upravlinnia.

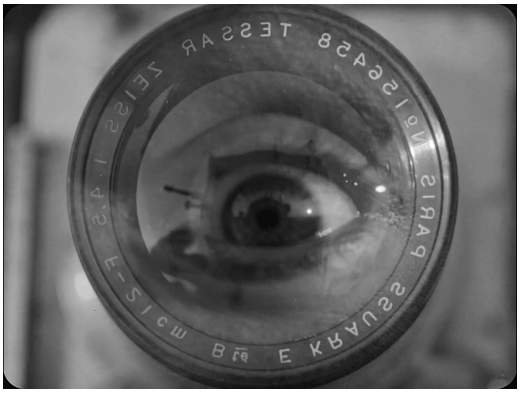

Figure 4.13 Dziga Vertov, Vertov in *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* (Man with a Movie Camera), 1929, Vseukrainske Foto Kino Upravlinnia.

Sometimes used to define the way a viewing subject becomes immersed into the film-watching experience, suture can more precisely explain how that ideology is naturalized.[61] Within this system of shot-reverse-shot signification, the spectator temporarily takes the place of a subject embedded within the film's discourse. This effect is accomplished by introducing shots taken from the vantage point of one character engaged in a dialogue. It is only when the actor takes the subject position once occupied by the observer in this back and forth that the viewer reverts to a conscious state and becomes aware that they are, in fact, merely beholding and not actually participating in this illusory conversation. In repeating this process again and again, as suture theory suggests, the cinema can seamlessly embed the viewer within its ideology.

While suture refers to the constant erasure of the viewer's awareness of the cinematic frame when witnessing a film roll in real time, easel painting is of course static; its frame

is literal, and it asserts itself in Toorop's 1934 self-portrait despite the relatively cinematic cropping of the canvas. Because the artist was working within a single pictorial space, her self-portrait cannot be said to be suturing in precisely the manner of an edited film.[62] Implied in the artist's intense mode of address, when combined with the undefined space that her palette inhabits, is a moment of recognition wherein Toorop acknowledges her own subjecthood as existing in a dialectical relationship to the object of her gaze. Like in Renaissance-era conceptualizations of the self-portrait genre, wherein the painter exists as an autochthonous entity due to his or her status as both viewing and viewed subject, Toorop rendered herself as both the sitter and the spectator watching the screen on which the palette appears.[63] Likewise, in replicating the moment in a motion picture when the camera denies its own existence while the audience continuously "rediscovers" the framing with each edit, Toorop (or any viewer) standing in front of this canvas takes the place of said camera. In this way, the juxtaposition of her likeness with a material reference to her physical labor—the palette—Toorop visualizes a revelatory moment in her own class consciousness.

Yet another layer to this reading of Toorop's 1934 self-portrait issues from the artist's use of physiognomy as a material byproduct of her unalienated labor. Her veristic self-portrait owes a debt to the tradition of Soviet typage and its reliance on physical typecasting to enhance cinematic realism.[64] It could even be compared to a moment in Eisenstein's film *Staroye I novovye* (The Old and the New, also known as The General Line), 1929 (Figure 4.14), a film about the transformation of agrarian politics under the first Five-Year Plan.[65] The director hired a farmer—rather than a professional actress—by the name of Marfa Lapkina to play in the film and based his casting decision on her ability to milk a cow. As a result, the scenes featuring Lapkina carrying out this task bear a direct relationship to reality in the sense that they feature the real facial expressions and physical movements that she would make in her everyday work. Toorop in her self-portrait conveys a similarly serious expression in her eyes; she does not disguise her crow's feet or the creases on her neck, but instead includes these details as evidence of her life experience and work ethic. She represents herself as both an artist and a laborer; her brow furrowed in an intense expression of deep concentration, traces a direct line to the mental acuity implied in her steady gaze.

Figure 4.14 Sergei Eisenstein, *Staroye I novovye* (The Old and the New/The General Line), 1929, Sovkino.

In sum, the physiognomy detailed in Figure 4.14, when combined with the artist's painting implement and wizened expression, put into visual terms the experience of becoming—in Toorop's specific case—a politically conscious comrade. As Daniel Dayan has noted in his Althusserian interpretation of suture, when a viewer becomes a subject, the codes that create the conditions of said position are necessarily undetectable, for one cannot see the signifiers that indicate his or her own presence. In much the same way, an interpellated subject—according to Althusser—is blind to the ideology inherent to the institutions that surround it. Citing Jean-Pierre Oudart, Dayan claimed that classical painting—like cinema—had always been about discourse, given that the two mediums are made up of ideological, yet imperceptible codes.[66] While the object on canvas, or on screen, signifies the presence of a beholder, the ideology ingrained in an image derived from any specific medium can only be truly visible if the viewer refuses the identification that it imposes upon him or her.[67] I would argue that at an unconscious level, Toorop in her self-portrait—and Koch in his—attempted to arrest such a moment of recognition, but did so on a fixed surface, and in a way that was open to the potential for auratic contemplation.

Both Koch and Toorop dealt with interpellation in their self-portraits in ways that can be attributed to the clarity of their political formation at this time. The same cannot be said of all the painters demonstrating a Neorealist tendency, particularly Dick Ket, who was difficult to define politically and who also drew from the filmic universe to conjure his deeply personal self-portraits. An examination of his work in this genre, for which he had become well known, may demonstrate the limits of an Althusserian reading while also revealing other ways that film can destabilize the genre of self-portraiture.

Among the most elusive of the Dutch painters working in the Neorealist idiom, Dick Ket's personal correspondence provides some insight into his interests as well as the visual and textual sources to which he was exposed in the interwar years. Among other things, filmgoing appears to have had a lingering impact on him during his youth, which he characterized as a formative aesthetic experience. In a letter to his good friend Agnes van de Moer, Ket reminisced about watching the Fritz Lang epic double feature *Die Nibelungen* (The Nibelungs) in the years shortly following its release when he still traveled to other cities to attend the cinema. Based on the Germanic legend of the warrior prince Siegfried, the double feature includes part one, *Siegfrieds Tod* (Siegfried's Death), in which the titular protagonist engages in a series of adventures leading up to meeting his bride and ends with his demise. The second film, titled *Kriemhilds Rache* (Kriemhild's Revenge), details the retaliation of the hero's wife. In his letter, Ket complimented the way that the director had so successfully "concentrated" the spectacle of the film into pure visuality accompanied by orchestral sound.[68] If this this formative aesthetic experience did penetrate his paintings—and more specifically his self-portraits—it did not bear the same politicized valences as Toorop and Koch. Averse to nationalist rhetoric, Ket often rejected Party-line demagoguery, particularly in the late 1930s and early '40s. In a letter to van der Moer from early 1939, for example, he expressed dismay about Joseph Goebbel's anti-Jewish campaign, while also openly criticizing the Social Democratic Workers Party for expressly devoting themselves to the concerns of the rich.[69]

During the very years that he was writing this correspondence, Ket completed a rather unusual work resembling the cinematic close-up in his triptych *Triptiek Zelfportretten* (Three Small Self-Portraits), 1937–1940 (Figure 4.15). The painting features three panels, each with a subtitle: *The Eater, The Worker*, and *The Medicine Drinker*. The subject itself perfectly captured the artist's reality while restricted to his parents' home in

Figure 4.15 Dick Ket, *Triptiek zelfportretten* (Three Small Self-Portraits), 1937–1940, oil on canvas, 36.7 × 85 cm.

Source: Collection Cultural Heritage Agency on loan at the Arnhem Museum (photo: Peter Cox).

the small village of Bennekom in the years before he succumbed to his heart condition. This sequence of images can be read in direct relationship to the physical and emotional well-being of the artist as he was suffering from a terminal illness, and depicted as a twentieth-century adaptation of Baroque-era portraiture, produced in an altarpiece format.

Ket's appreciation for the Old Masters is well documented, and there is no doubt that his Baroque era forebears would have had an influence on his choice of subject matter. Even the widely reproduced *Portrait of Charles I in Three Positions*, 1635–1636 (in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle), by Anthony van Dyck may have provided some conceptual fodder for the composition. When considering a likely source for Ket's facial expressions, the face-pulling, comical tronies of Flemish Baroque painter Adriaen Brouwer come to mind. Indeed, Brouwer's tendency to engage in sometimes vulgar self-mockery served an important purpose beyond humor. A now outmoded Dutch word, the tronie (meaning facial expression) refers to generalized, sometimes even caricatured studies of often lower-class figures, with traits sometimes so exaggerated that they could be reduced to a type. Occasionally using the self as a model, some artists known for their work in this genre—such as Brouwer, Rembrandt, and Joos van Craesbeeck—produced images based on their own likeness that were not really self-portraits according to the strict definition of the term. Rather, Baroque painters used this type as a way of studying their subject and to tap into his or her underlying, essential character.[70] For Ket this kind of analysis could bring to life the qualities or personae that he wished to examine within himself: a serious artist, an invalid, and a bored individual in isolation. Inspired by the morality plays of the Dutch drama society the *rederijkers,* such paintings served as a way for an artist to take control of his self-image through satire while keeping with the humanist tradition of acknowledging the importance of folly in everyday life. Playing upon the viewer's sense of empathy, artists working in this manner engaged intensely with low subjects derived from the real world.[71] Such a subgenre was well suited to Ket's self-depiction of frailty in the last three years of his life. Performance into a reflective

surface was of course a necessary part of this exploration, although perhaps not to the degree of self-reflexivity that can be seen in Ket's panels, which literally include a mirror within the frame. Even more importantly, the way that Ket compressed time and space in these three panels shares more with the Weimar-era close-up than with any seventeenth-century predecessor.

There are a few subtle ways in which Ket's *Three Small Self-Portraits* belies its filmic source, although they are not always obvious. The unusual format—a triptych separated into three distinct panels—alludes to the passage of time through its rapid-fire sequential arrangement. Often reserved for liturgical spaces, this popular altarpiece format typically featured an important devotional subject at the center, flanked by donors or secondary saints in the outer panels. In this case, however, the tripartite division of the triptych evokes the frames of a film strip trained on the same subject, edited together in such a way as to bridge the temporal gaps suggested by the moving props and the artist's changing expressions.

In this triptych Ket took on different roles through his hyperbolic facial expressions, similar to the type that could be seen in The Nibelungs and many other Weimar silent films. Due to the lack of sound, silent actors relied upon unnaturalistic facial contortions to express emotional tonality, which could not always be made obvious in the intertitles. Ket's droll expressions, feigning amusement, intense concentration, and disgust borrow from the overdetermined expressivity of silent film, the only kind of cinema to which the artist had been exposed in his brief lifetime. The seriousness of his face in the center-most panel is perhaps the most filmlike in its characterization. Pressed near to the picture plane, Ket's likeness resembles the many extended shots of its lead actors—especially Margarete Schön as Kriemhild (Figure 4.16) and Hans Adalbert Schlettow as Hagen (Figure 4.17)—who relied upon long, intense stares into the camera and minimal lip movements. To be clear, Ket's *Three Small Self-Portraits* is certainly more indebted to the tronie tradition than silent-era cinema and the almost-pantomimic acting methods that had become associated with the latter. However, the claustrophobic intensity of his compositions combined with the dialogic arrangement of these three panels also reveal that the artist did not exist in a vacuum unaware of the media environment that surrounded him. His certain knowledge of this early cinema performance style, when combined with the seventeenth-century prototype provided a novel, modern lens for self-exploration.

Figure 4.16 Kriemhild from Fritz Lang's *Die Nibelungen: Kriemhilds Rache* (The Nibelungs: Kriemhild's Revenge), 1924, Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft GmbH.

Figure 4.17 Hagen from Fritz Lang's *Die Nibelungen: Siegfrieds Tod* (The Nibelungs: Siegfried's Death), 1924, Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft GmbH.

The major difference separating Ket's triptych from Toorop's *Self-Portrait in Front of a Palette* and Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band* is in the way that the former does not result in the image of an actualized political persona. Ket is acting with such self-conscious awareness that his painting overcodes, and refuses to naturalize its subject, and in the process undermines the serious intensity of the center-most self-portrait by virtue of the exaggerated expressions in the side panels. Because Ket also directly engages in a sort of nonverbal dialogue with himself while playing different characters into a mirror—indicated by the curved frame that appears within the edge of each panel—he makes clear that the subject of this trio of panels is framed around the self-conscious act of looking. In this way, Ket takes a point of view that embodies the *énoncé* (or utterance), a concept that refers to the direct articulation of the narrative as conveyed to the audience through dialogue or director's selection of specific film shots.[72]

While Ket's triptych undoubtedly draws from the seventeenth-century tradition, self-reflexively "breaking the fourth wall" in a way not dissimilar from Adriaen Brouwer, he also elicits a decidedly twentieth-century, and deeply psychological, representation of space. Such cinema-derived effects can be seen in the self-consciousness with which he captured his own image as well as the unstable distinction that Ket makes between fore, middle, and background in each self-portrait, which seem as if they belong to the same muddled plane. While Ket had long included oddly tilted angles for the still life vignettes in his self-portraits, they are in this example, compressed with the human subject to the extreme. Details that frequently populated his paintings, such as the checkerboard pattern of the tablecloth, recede and expand in relative scale to Ket himself. The representation of space that he achieved is distinct from the Old Master tradition, in that it denied the through-way narrative build-up of what Carel van Mander described as the *doorsien*—a visual device that allowed the eye to move seamlessly from the foreground to the far reaches of the recessed, illusionistic space.[73] Such a device had a twofold purpose, one that allowed for a particular narrative to unfold, while also carrying out the Renaissance-era spatial ideal.[74] Ket's three-part composition accomplishes neither of those goals. He instead produced a disorienting, compressed image of space that bears a closer relationship to the cinematic close-up—a twentieth-century expression of perspectival recession that played with extreme depths of field.

What Ket's anomalous triptych does provide, is a glimpse into the artist's isolated practice, which during the 1930s was overwhelmed by self-portraiture because he lacked access to a studio or models. By comparison with the aforementioned self-portraits by Koch and Toorop, Ket gave way to a form of cinema-inspired mimicry that drew upon his observations of melodramatic silent-film acting. Whereas Koch and Toorop represented the recognition of a political identity into their self-portraits, Ket never sought out a specific ideology as a solution to the existential geopolitical threats that surrounded him, even though his letters revealed a growing anxiety in response to Hitler's military interventions. In his unusual, three-part self-portrait, Ket instead focused on his personal experience of boredom, loneliness, and physical infirmity, and more importantly the artist's growing awareness of his limited time on earth, which ended shortly after he completed this triptych.

By contrast, Pyke Koch's 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band* could be said to absorb the painted subject into a signifying discourse that also encloses the viewer. It is a painting that attempts to capture, however insufficiently, the experience of self-conscious recognition from without. In combining his likeness with that of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc, he gave new meaning to the open blue field behind his face—in what I would argue constitutes an unrepresentable zone or ideological atmosphere from which the image originated. This phantom representation of the artist conjured in *Self-portrait with Black Band* is not a depiction of the man as he existed in the real world. Koch has captured this experience from the point of view of an exterior shot, often characterized as the hidden, controlling gaze that exists outside of the diegesis, and therefore remains invisible. He thus makes a subtle comparison between the immersion that takes place when watching film and the interpellation of an individual within a larger ideological body, community, and belief system. His painting centers the awareness of the viewing subject and his or her placement just beyond the frame—recreating the experience of ideological penetration—in a way that Ket's triptych and its self-reflexive mode of address simply does not.

This experience of identification extends beyond the artist, even finding common cause with a beholding audience—in this case at the 1938 Venice Biennale. A correspondent covering the show for the left-wing newspaper *De Tijd*—unimpressed by Grand Premi prize winner Ignacio Zuloaga's overweening religious fervor, applauded the Holland pavilion for its striking independence and assembly of distinct personalities, but above all its absence of chauvinism. This same author concluded the review with an anecdote about the pavilion's opening day, in which one of the two carabinieri guarding over the doorway stood with his nose almost pressing against Koch's self-portrait and declared it a *capolavoro* (a masterpiece).[75] This moment of recognition, brought into being by Koch's ambiguous, yet politicizing portrait spoke to Mussolini's own forces, whose self-identification with fascist ideology was key to suppressing the opposition.

The afterlife of these self-portraits speaks more broadly to the unique interpretive position of figurative painting and its potential to become charged when placed in a polarized context. In the two years that followed the 1938 Venice Biennale, while the Greater Germanic Reich was expanding its territorial reach and implementing an increasingly severe set of cultural policies, any double entendres underlying the artists' veiled politicized references would necessarily be stamped out by firmer and more declarative interpretations. The Nazi-instituted Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer (Dutch Chamber of Culture) took full advantage of the many layers embedded in Koch's 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band*—attempting to flatten its ambiguity in fitting with the tone of the Dutch-German exchange exhibitions planned for Westfalia. While the regime also attempted to use

Toorop's *Portrait in Front of a Palette* toward this purpose, Charley—for reasons that can only be speculated—managed to escape that fate entirely.

Notes

1 Carel Scharten, "Italië en Nederland op de Biennale," *De Telegraaf* (July 28, 1938), 1.
2 Koch and Toorop were not better represented than other artists in the Dutch Pavilion. Hildo Krop had the fewest with three works (sculptures), and John Rädecker had the most with thirteen (sculptures and drawings).
3 "Nederland op de Biennale," *De Tijd* (July 7, 1938), 3; "Nederland op de Biennale," *Arnhemsche Courant* (July 6, 1938), 3; "Nederland op de Biennale," *Haagsche Courant* (July 6, 1938), 3.
4 Scharten, "Italië en Nederland op de Biennale," 1; "Nederlandsche Kunst te Venetië," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 10, 1938), 9–10.
5 For information on traditional national thematic choices during the Fascist years 1920–1942, see Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl, 1895–1968* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 101–103.
6 In their newly constructed Neoclassical pavilion, the Germans exhibited Arno Breker's athletes, paintings of farmer types, and even two Olympic medals from the 1936 games designed by Karl Roth. The Italian organizers, in addition to the representations of Il Duce, cultivated a range of expressions of *Italianità*—or Italian essence—over the span of nine pavilions of differing regional styles with the goal of producing outward appearance of artistic autonomy. See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 23–25. The French pavilion was organized by commissioners Jean Cassou, a left-wing critic collaborating with the government after the fall of the Popular Front, and Louis Hautecoeur, an official French state art historian and curator at the Musée du Luxembourg known for his chauvinist tastes that included Catholic and mythological subjects as well as the bathers painted in the spirit of (and in some cases by) Renoir. Jan Andreas May remarked on how the French pavilion in 1938 was very conservative and was designed to reflect the values of the Musée du Luxembourg. See Jan Andreas May, "Im Übergang: Internationalität vs. Bündnistreue," in *La Biennale di Venezia: Kontinuität und Wandel in der venezianischen Ausstellungspolitik 1895–1948* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2014), 181.
7 See Enzo di Martino, *The History of the Venice Biennale 1895–2005* (Venice: Papiro Arte, 2005), 34.
8 See Nancy Jachec, "Anti-Communism at Home, Europeanism Abroad: Italian Cultural Policy at the Venice Biennale, 1948–1958," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 2 (May 2005), 193–217, 198; Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 125, 140. Germany and Italy had entered into a pact in 1936, forming Mussolini's response to the banishment of Italy from the League of Nations for having invaded Ethiopia.
9 "De 'Biennale' Te Venetië," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 6, 1938), 9.
10 Rosamund Frost, "Internationalists in Venice: The Art of a 'Peaceful' Europe in a Great Biennial Show," *The Art News* (September 17, 1938), 7–9, 20–21. While the critics did not reference the 1937 Paris Exposition directly, its bombastic reputation may have certainly influenced their reading of the 1938 Biennale.
11 See Giuseppe Marchiori, "La ventunesima biennale veneziana," *Emporium* (June 1938), 296.
12 De Stijl artists were not well represented in Dutch museums and were consistently omitted from major international expositions with very few exceptions. Piet Mondrian showed two abstract compositions from 1914 and 1921 at the 1928 Biennale but did not show again until after the war (beginning in 1948). No other De Stijl artists appeared at the Biennale until after World War II.
13 See "Pyke Koch (1901–1991). Biographical Sketch," in *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1995), 199. Although the Polka Mazurka originated in Poland, by the nineteenth century it had become a Pan-European dance and music style popular among the upper classes. Among the countries where it was popularized were Russia, the Czech Republic, and France, as well as Italy, where Koch likely would have been introduced to it.

14 Henrik Scholte, "Onze vierde matinée," *Filmliga* 1, no. 5 (January 1928), 4.
15 See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014), 75.
16 Ibid., 189–190.
17 Ibid., 53–56.
18 Ibid., 201.
19 Ibid., 181.
20 Koch declared in a 1980 interview with Annemiek Ouwekerk and Louis van Tilborgh that he had added the black band to his 1937 self-portrait solely for compositional reasons. See Annemiek Ouwekerk and van Louis van Tilborgh, *Een Schilderij Centraal: Zelfportret met zwarte band van Pyke Koch* (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1980), 4. Mieke Rijnders sees this as a revisionist explanation that Koch told in light of the negative postwar view of fascism. See Mieke Rijnders, " 'De Voorstelling waarin ik leefde' De Politieke Wereld van Pyke Koch," in *De Wereld van Pyke Koch*, edited by Marja Bosma, Roman Koot and Mieke Rijnders, exh. cat. (Zwolle and Utrecht: WBOOKS and Centraal Museum, 2017), 65.
21 Filmfabriek Hollandia (Film Factory Holland) was the only film production company in The Netherlands, and it closed in 1923. Although national film schools/language publics of a comparable size such as Sweden and Czechoslovakia managed to produce robust industries, The Netherlands did not manage to do so. Clara Pafort-Overduin, "Distribution and Exhibition in The Netherlands, 1934–1936," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, and Phillippe Meers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 125–126.
22 From 1934 to 1936, out of the top twenty most-screened films in The Netherlands, only seven were Dutch. Ibid., 135.
23 I use the French title when referring to this film, since this was the title under which the film was screened in The Netherlands.
24 Carel Blotkamp, *Pyke Koch* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1972), 90; See also Carel Blotkamp, *Pyke Koch*, exh. cat. (Paris: Institut Néerlandais, 1982), cat. no. 15; Ida Boelema, "Een verscherpte blik. Film en fotografie in de tijd van het neorealisme," in *In de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, edited by Ype Koopmans and Mieke Rijnders, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 40; For movie theater schedule see "Bioscopen," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (October 9, 1935), 4.
25 See Rudolf Arnheim, "The Making of a Film," selections adapted from *Film*, 1933, republished in *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 40–41; Béla Balázs, "Visually Performed Dialogues," from "Spirit of Film (1930)," republished in *Early Film Theory: Visible Man and the Spirit of Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 102. *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was rejected by the Dutch national censors (bioscoopcommissie) in October of 1929 due to its controversial depiction of a Catholic cleric. It was feared that the film would instigate hostility against the Catholic Church. This decision was reversed, and the film opened at the Uitkijk on November 7, 1929. See "De film 'Jeanne d'Arc' gered: Een herkeuringskommissie voorkomt blamage," *Het Volk* (November 5, 1929), 1. The film was screened nineteen times between 1929 and 1933; it played in Koch's hometown of Utrecht at the Vreeburg Bioscoop on the day of its Netherlands debut (November 8, 1929).
26 The first reference to *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in the *Filmliga* journal mentions its Paris premiere in the November 1928 issue (2de Jaargang, no. 2). The magazine would continue to use the French title *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* when referring to the film. The Amsterdam opening was announced as being scheduled for November 7, 1929, in the October 1929 (Volume 2, nos. 9/10) issue. It was declared a "great success" in the November 1929 issue (Volume 3, no. 1) and was showing for the fourth straight week at the Uitkijk Theater in Amsterdam. This same issue featured many articles on *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, including one still from the film and a headshot of Falconetti, accompanied by a story on the director Carl Dreyer titled "The Power of the Cineast." From the time of the film's Netherlands debut in November 1929 until the end of the *Filmliga* journal's run in 1932, the magazine would feature several references to the film (see the November 1929, December 1929, February 1930, December 1931, April 1932, and June 1932 issues).
27 Menno ter Braak, "Een meening over Jeanne d'Arc," *Filmliga* 3, no. 2 (December 1929), 29–30. Ter Braak had also addressed *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in the prior issue, praising

its psychological power. See Menno ter Braak, "Jeanne d'Arc, Heien, Jardin du Luxembourg," *Filmliga* 3, no. 1 (November 1929), 5–7. Another of the journal's critics, J. C. van Schagen, had different concerns about the film; he lamented the interruption of the title cards that broke a seamless stream of close-ups and the undermined the film's cinematic illusion. J. C. van Schagen, "Enkele Leeken-Vragen," *Filmliga* 3, no. 1 (November 1929), 13–14.

28 *Das Mädchen Johanna* played at Scala in Utrecht on October 3, 1935. For press this film see coverage on "Filmnieuws: Das Mädchen Johanna: De groote Ufa-film, waaraan de Staatsprijs voorbijging," *Het Vaderland* (May 8, 1935), 2.

29 See the March 1935 issue of *Filmwelt*, cited in Jo Fox, *Filming Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000), 24.

30 See Charles O'Brien, "Rethinking National Cinema: Dreyer's 'La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc' and the Academic Aesthetic," *Cinema Journal* 35, no. 4 (Summer 1996), 19–24. O'Brien also compares the film to the "alternative pictorial tradition" of Northern Europe as described by Svetlana Alpers and contrasts *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc* against Marco de Gastyne's 1929 *La merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, which features a quasi-Impressionistic dream sequence that could be compared to the style of Abel Gance or Jean Epstein.

31 The historical figure of Joan of Arc had become a potent national symbol in 1920s France adopted by both the left and the right for her ability to signify strength as well as resistance. See Robert Gildea, "Joan of Arc Between Right and Left," in *Nationhood and Nationalism in France: From Boulangism to the Great War, 1889–1918*, edited by Robert Tombs (New York: Routledge, 1991), 63–73.

32 For a description of Koch's ideology and views on Communism see this catalogue essay by his son: P. F. C. Koch, "Pyke Koch: An Anarchic Counter-Revolutionary," in *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1995), 8–15.

33 The program also included a short travelogue set in the Dolomites with impressive shots of skiers. "De zege van Italië: In zeven maanden een keizerrijk," *Volk en Vaderland* (February 12, 1937), 5; "Italiaansche films in Luxor. De veldtocht in Oost-Afrika," *De Rotterdamsche Courant* (February 1, 1937), 6.1.

34 Blotkamp, *Pyke Koch* (1972), 90.

35 Koch viewed metalworkers as playing an important role in a corporatist societal model. He felt an affinity for blacksmiths and their identity as artisans, which he related to his own dedication to meticulous craft techniques. (Interview with grandson Andreas Koch, April 30, 2018). He commissioned this frame from a Utrecht blacksmith. See *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, 213.

36 Whether or not Koch was aware of it, in Mussolini's aesthetic interpretation of politics, iron, and, more importantly, ironworking, served as a metaphor for the shaping and forging of the masses. Il Duce viewed the proletariat as malleable, yet strong of will, requiring effort and persuasion to manipulate. Comparing his work to that of his father, a blacksmith "who bent the red-hot iron on the anvil," Mussolini stated, "and now I have the much harsher and harder job to bend the souls." See Simonetti Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 22; Alfredo Rocco, *Scritti e discorsi: La formazione dello stato fascista (1925–1934)*, vol. III (Milan: Giuffré, 1938), 38.

37 See "De Macht van de Cineaste. Falconetti. Carl Dreyer," *Filmliga* 3, no. 1 (November 1929), 9.

38 It was only after the war that the Kunstliefde Society suggest that they saw it as referencing Mussolini. See Claartje Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer: Gescheidenis en Herinnering* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 138; Ouwekerk and van Tilborgh, *Een Schilderij Centraal*, 19.

39 "Italië en Nederland op de Biennale," *De Telegraaf* (July 28, 1938), 1; "Het zelfportret van Pijke Koch: Uitdrukking van de autoritaire geest des tijds. Geschenk aan Centraal Museum," *Utrechts volksblad* (September 7, 1938), 5; "De verrijking van ons Stedelijk Kunstbezit," *Utrechste Nieuwsblad*, no. 107 (September 5, 1938), 9.

40 Jan Engelman, *Pyke Koch* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1941), 33; Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 147–149.

41 Koch mentions this in an interview from April 23, 1976, cited in Hans Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting: Een onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930–1945* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978), 79.

42 See Louis van Tilborgh, "Freudian Motifs in the Oeuvre of Pyke Koch," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 15, no. 2 (1985), 131–150.
43 Ouwekerk and van Tilborgh, *Een Schilderij Centraal*, 19.
44 See Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute/Bloomsbury, 2019), 20–22.
45 Elsseneur (pseudonym for Pyke Koch), "Gees ten Daad: De uitgeweken Duitsche schrijver Thomas Mann," *Hier Dinaso!* (March 13, 1937), 4; Pyke Koch, "Over de kunst," *De Waag* (January 8, 1940), 368.
46 Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 15.
47 Another potential source is *Portrait of a Young Man* by the Meister des Hausbuchs (Master of the House Book/Umkreis Circle), circa 1490, inventory number 467 from the collection at the Kunstmuseum Basel. Koch had a photograph of this portrait in his archives, although it is not clear when he obtained it. The background of the painting is red, but this is not visible in the black-and-white photograph. See RKD, Archief Pyke Koc- en Heddy Koch-de Geer, Toegang NL-HaRKD-0899, Inv. Nr. 190.
48 See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: Time Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8, 15–16.
49 Other self-portraits in the Italian pavilions include Oscar Gallo in concourse room 4, Felicita Lustig in concourse room 5, Angelo Prudenziato in concourse room 6, Carlo Alberto Petrucci in room 25, Alberto Ziveri in room 27, and Pietro Marussig in his retrospective.
50 Quirijn van Tiel also exhibited a second self-portrait (a double portrait of the artist and his wife from 1935), which also depicted him with paintbrush in hand standing before an easel. See Daarinde Myers, *Quirijn van Tiel, 1900–1967: Leven en werk*, exh. cat. (Blaricum: Kunsthandel Studio 2000, 2019), 108–109.
51 "Nederlandsche Kunst te Venetië," 10.
52 "De 21ste Biennale: Kunst en Politiek," *De Tijd* (June 10, 1938), 3.
53 Wilhelm Rüdiger, "XXI. Biennale, Venedig 1938," *Die Kunst* 77, no. 11 (August 1938), 328.
54 See Chapter 3 for more on Charley Toorop and the Dutch New-Russia Society.
55 The Corso Theater in Amsterdam held a screening of Dziga Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) on December 10, 1931. By 1932, with the introduction of the first sound films in the Soviet Union, the magazine also began to publish articles on films that were beginning to transition into the Socialist Realist genre of the decade, such as Nikolai Ekk's film *Road to Life*, 1931.
56 In 1936 Toorop, Menno ter Braak, John Rädecker, and Edy du Perron and his wife signed a declaration against the Soviet Union protesting the arrest of Zenzl Mühsam. Nico Brederoo claims that the Soviet Union–Germany non-aggression pact was the final blow to her view of Stalin. See Nico Brederoo, *Charley Toorop: Leven en Werken* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1982), 139.
57 At the turn of 1930, many center-left newspapers (such as *Het Volk* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*) and even the far-left press (including *Het Vaderland*) in The Netherlands were beginning to hear negative reports about Stalin's Five-Year Plan and the human rights abuses that it wrought upon the nation's farmers. Coverage quickly became more positive once Stalin began to crack down on reports coming out of the Soviet Union. Right-wing publications in The Netherlands such as *De Telegraaf* continued to be critical. See "Laatste wanhoopspoging van Stalin," *Het volk* (March 21, 1930), 1; "Verzacht Stalin zijn Boerenpolitiek," *Het Vaderland* (March 7, 1930), 1; "Dictatuur en Geweten. Rusland," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (November 25, 1930), 5; "Russische Reisschetsen," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (December 5, 1931), 5; "Stalins Groote Rede," *Het Vaderland* (January 14, 1933), 1; "Stalin's Jongste Rede," *De Telegraaf* (January 28, 1933), 2.
58 Marsha Kinder and Beverle Houston, *Close-Up: A Critical Perspective on Film* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 20–23.
59 Eisenstein's *Strike* played in at least five different locations in The Netherlands, including the Centraal Theater in Amsterdam in the year 1928 as part of the Filmliga's programming; Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* played in at least eight locations in 1931 and 1932 in The Netherlands, including the Uitkijk and Corso for the Filmliga in Amsterdam. Data on cinema programming in The Netherlands dating back to 1896 can be found at https://cinemacontext.nl. Nico Brederoo compared Toorop's *Farmers*, 1930 to Eisenstein's *Strike*. See Brederoo, *Charley Toorop*, 138.

60 Kaja Silverman has written about the spectator, who in the act of spectating, takes the place of the Absent One. While the Absent One or Other takes on the appearance of having discursive power, they have actually been "symbolically castrated." The suturing process covers up this lack. See Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 204.
61 Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classic Cinema," *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 1974), 26. Dayan was the first to write about suture in film in relationship to ideological coercion, which Kaja Silverman would later build upon. He based his argument on Althusser's *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*.
62 While suture has not to my knowledge ever been applied to discussions of painting, Sabine Kriebel identified something similar taking place in her work on John Heartfield, who through the medium of photomontage produced a "cognitive disjunction," or suture that is in dialogue with film, while still distinct from it. Sabine Kriebel, *Revolutionary Beauty: The Radical Photomontages of John Heartfield* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 13.
63 Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9.
64 Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov theorized the principles of typage in 1929 in "Art of the Cinema." He wrote, "Because film needs real material and not a pretense of reality—owing to this, it is not theater actors but 'types' who should act in film—that is people who, in themselves, as they were born, constitute some kind of interest for cinematic treatment." Lev Kuleshov, "Art of the Cinema (1929)," in *Kuleschov in Film: Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 63–64.
65 *The Old and the New* (The General Line) appeared at least nine different locations in The Netherlands in 1930, 1931, and 1933, including the Uitkijk and the Royal in Amsterdam. It showed at The Royal in Amsterdam on June 1, 1930. See "De Generale Linie. Zoo gaat het niet langer. Het kunstwerk van Eisenstein draait in Royal," *De Tribune* (May 31, 1930), 3.
66 Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classic Cinema," 26.
67 Ibid., 27.
68 RKD, letter from Dick Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer dated December 3, 1939, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, Inv. Nr. 4, letter 165.
69 See letter from Dick Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer dated February 4, 1939, RKD, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, inv. Nr. 4, letter 127, pg. 2 and letter from Ket to Agnes de Maas van de Moer dated February 11, 1940, RKD, Dick Ket Collectie, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0348, box 1, inv. Nr. 4, letter 177, 5.
70 Katrien Lichtert, *Between Rubens and Rembrandt. Adriaen Brouwer Master of Emotions*, edited by Katrien Lichtert, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp and Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 70.
71 Jan Blanc, "Mauvais Genres: Adriaen Brouwer et la parodie artistique au 17e siècle," in *Les Genres Picturaux: Genèse, metamorphoses et transpositions*, edited by Frédéric Elsig, Laurent Darlbellay and Imola Kiss (Geneva: MetisPresses, 2010), 88–91.
72 Enunciation (or *énoncé*) is a term that originated with semiotician Emile Benveniste in 1971 meaning utterance.
73 Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 18.
74 Ibid., 46.
75 Roman Correspondent, "De 21ste Biennale: Picturale Topografie," *De Tijd* (June 13, 1938), 3.

5 Neorealism under the Occupation

At his Purification Trial before the Special Court of Justice in 1948 in The Hague, the former propaganda ministry leader Tobie Goedewaagen reportedly said,

> We just wanted to lead. . . . I have always laughed at the fear that the Germans would force our artists to make National Socialist art. In the first place I have never seen National Socialist art, and in the second place I have never seen an artist who allows himself to be forced.[1]

Goedewaagen's words should doubtless be taken with a large grain of salt, and in fact the culture to which his obfuscations refer began in earnest eleven years prior on July 19, 1937, when the National Socialist Party of Germany inaugurated the exhibition of "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art) at the Archeological Institute in Munich. This infamous event was the culmination of a state-sponsored propaganda campaign that officially began in 1933, when the Nazis had come to power, attacking modern art as politically subversive and biologically impure.[2] Abstract art and Expressionism were the prime targets, although Neue Sachlichkeit and other modernist-inflected figurative idioms were also impugned. A day after the opening of the Degenerate Art show, Hitler presided over the "Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung" (First Great German Art Exhibition) in the newly built Haus der Kunst, designed by architect Paul Ludwig Troost in a stark neo-Doric style. The Führer claimed that if a work of art were to be sufficiently German, it had to be clearly and easily understood. He deemed there to be only one acceptable style: academic neoclassicism, which, he asserted, linked the Germans by race and cultural tradition to their Aryan ancestors in ancient Greece.[3] When it came to the use of the visual arts as an instrument of totalitarianism, Germany—unlike Fascist Italy—sought to proscribe specific subject matter and dictate styles. Those artists and museum curators deemed subversive were stripped of their positions and persecuted. Some fled the country, as the art they produced and supported was vilified and even destroyed; others went into internal exile, while yet others, mainly Jewish artists, were murdered.

Only a few short years separated the run of the Munich Degenerate Art show in 1937 and the German Occupation in 1940. Yet this brief window of time exposes the rather conflicted critical reception of the Neorealist painters within their own country at a time when the cultural sphere was disunified in its reaction to the severity of German art policy. There is no shortage of examples demonstrating the ambivalent attitudes towards these artists held by many Dutch critics—both partisan and not—a fact that remained true even among their own ranks. This interpretive discord was further complicated by the reactions of museum directors and curators to the extreme measures being taken in

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Germany. Nevertheless, the long view of this historical moment reveals that the tendency of critics to define Neorealism from the outside—a practice that began in the 1920s—and continued under the Occupation. This time, however, there was a clear political stake involved.

When Nazi Germany began to expand into new territories with its illegal occupation of several European nations, beginning with the annexation of Austria in 1938 and the takeover of Poland in 1939, it tailored its cultural policies and bureaucratic infrastructure to each country, ranging from outright repression of creative freedom and persecution of artists to relative tolerance and coercive accommodation.[4] The treatment of The Netherlands—which Germany considered a favored Aryan "brother-nation"—was more lenient, while also uniquely orienting its objectives for the country toward eventual assimilation. Reich Commissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart oversaw the imposition of Nazi anti-modernist cultural policies soon after the German invasion of The Netherlands in May 1940 and the empowerment of the Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (Dutch National Socialist Party), or NSB. In the beginning of the Occupation, the Nazi authorities shrewdly sought out works of art to collect and exhibit that bridged the divide between what they termed the "resolute" aesthetics of modernist realism and the gravitas of the Dutch Old Masters. Unlike De Stijl, which was rejected wholesale, Neorealism, with its figurative idiom and obvious allusions to the Dutch Golden Age, proved adaptable and useful to the regime. This remained true even as some Neorealist painters refused to collaborate and even though their uncanny imagery was anything but Nazi Party line.

In fact, a rather distinct air of despair or resignation can be seen in numerous Neorealist paintings from this period. Carel Willink's work took an especially dark turn in the same year that the Nazis opened the Degenerate Art show. It was around that time that he embarked on a series of biblically inspired self-portraits, beginning with *De Prediker* (The Preacher) of 1937 (Figure 5.1), which he followed with the allegorically titled *Zelfportret als Sint Johannes de Doper* (Self-Portrait as Saint John the Baptist), 1937, as well as *De Kluizenaar* (The Hermit) and *Job*, 1938. Deliberately anachronistic and redolent of Andrea Mantegna's *Saint Sebastian*, 1457–1459 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), *The Preacher* depicts the artist in a theatrical pose while wearing a loincloth.[5] Instead of arrows, the image suggests violence through the billowing smoke rising in the background from the burning steeples of a church. Analyses of Willink's sketches have identified the monument as St. Sulpice in Paris.[6] Many of the other buildings, however, bear no relation to Paris, nor does the large body of water in the distance. Rather than placing the apocalyptic scene in a specific location, the artist included the church to symbolize the entirety of European civilization.

When considering the reverence for the athletic male nude in German National Socialist artistic practice at that time—exemplified by Arno Breker's muscular Teutonic Übermenschen—Willink's modest torso offers a kind of middle way. While not representing himself as deformed, Willink's body in this painting exists between the hygienic ideal championed in Germany and a degenerate "counter-type."[7] I would argue that Willink's self-conceptualization was but one way that this work can be read as clandestinely and ever subtly reacting against the civic religion of fascism and its attendant aesthetics. As George Mosse had repeatedly argued in his attempts to define fascism in the years following the war, one of the preeminent contributions of this new twentieth-century movement was the way in which it secularized the concept of the "sacred."[8] According to this new political religion, beauty "whether that of the human body or of the political liturgy," represented the reification of truth.[9] If we are to take Mosse's use of the term for granted,

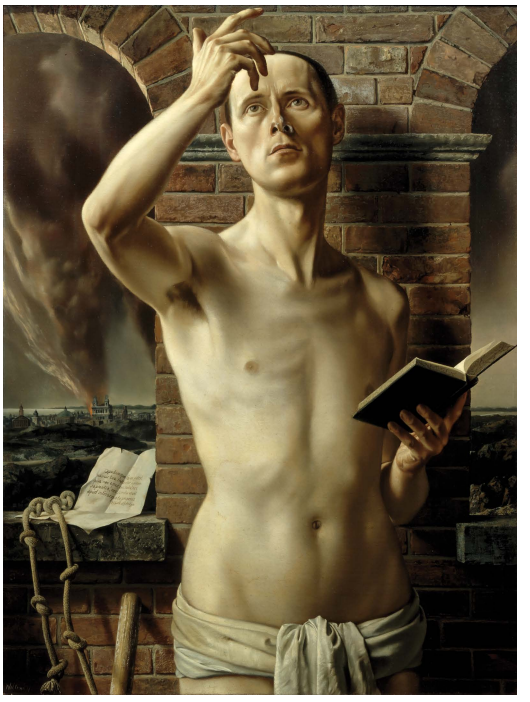

Figure 5.1 Carel Willink, *De Prediker* (The Preacher), 1937, oil on canvas, 100 × 75 cm.

Source: © Centraal Museum Utrecht/Ernst Moritz. Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

then Willink's self-portrait shows us—in light of such philosophical certainty—an iteration of Realism that was at odds with fascist idealization. The biblical undertones of the series to which *The Preacher* belongs only mildly hint at the secularity of the artist's references. He does not frame his likeness as a transcendent representative of the masses, but rather as one lone figure in an unidentifiable and cosmopolitan European city. In light of this interpretation, his appropriation of Christian regalia and ritual should be considered for their ironic tonality in reference to the source material.

Some of the most telling details in the painting appear in the middle ground, demarcated by a ledge on which rests a flagellation whip and a folded piece of paper (the iconic Renaissance cartellino). The latter bears a Latin verse from Ecclesiastes 9:10 inscribed by hand: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom." When positioned as a message conveyed by the titular preacher, this text helps underscore the urgency of using one's time on earth to the fullest; it is both a suggestion to live in the moment, but also a reminder of the fleeting nature of life, and the fast approach of death. Styling himself as a premodern saint, Willink mimicked the gestures, emaciated body and attributes (such as the book) of a spiritual guide. Ominous in mood and ambiguous in meaning, Willink's insistent references to Christian tropes in *The Preacher* remains open to interpretation. One possible reading of his martyr identity, if I may suggest, is an allusion to the status of the artist at a moment when freedoms were

being curtailed in neighboring Germany. Having spent several years in Berlin during his early twenties studying under Hans Baluschek and then briefly joining the Novembergruppe, Willink remained in contact with several friends from his youth. He frequently wrote to the artist Hebert Behrens-Hangeler, for example, who remained in the city and kept him abreast of the increasingly hostile conditions in Germany, in addition to the news that Willink read in the Dutch press.[10]

Having always maintained his distance from far-right politics, Carel Willink's anti-nationalist sentiments were antithetical to Nazism. Already in 1931, he expressed his disdain for "völkisch art" in the service of propaganda, describing it as the "servile lie of Art and the People."[11] Although he remained critical of the parliamentary system, Willink was not officially affiliated with any political party and gravitated toward left-wing leanings, even producing illustrations for poetry in Dutch Resistance journals published during the German Occupation.[12] Yet, despite its doomsday message, *The Preacher* was purchased in 1942 by the puppet ministry Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten (Department of Public Information and the Arts), or DVK, an organization that had been established in The Netherlands under the Nazi Occupation to serve as the Dutch equivalent of the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda) in Germany.[13]

To disentangle Willink, and any other conscientious objectors from the concept of *Völkismus* (or volkism), it is first necessary to unpack the historical underpinnings that framed the 1930s iteration of this movement. Originating in the nineteenth century, the nearly untranslatable term "volkism" provided the means to identify a people with specific German cultural and linguistic traits and distinguish them from other Europeans.[14] As it developed into a full-fledged nationalist movement by the turn of the twentieth century, völkischness became part of the slew of nation-building initiatives to foster shared notions of identity by using culture as a tool. It was a concept that could consolidate the superiority of local culture and language through the celebration of "uniquely German" attributes such as Norse mythology, Heimat poetry, traditional Bavarian craft, as well as Thing dramas. Although Hitler himself disregarded the volkist ideologues working under Alfred Rosenberg as "teutomaniacs," this did not prevent the movement's ideology from becoming an organizing feature of the Reich's aesthetic policy.[15] Ultimately, the faction promoting it as an effective tool and bulwark against bolshevism won out in the end.[16]

Indeed, volkism is one way to distinguish German National Socialism from other fascisms, because of its emphasis on everyday people and their place within the larger fabric of the Gleichschaltung, or total coordination of the Nazi apparatus.[17] In fact, this expansive, macro-level relationship could be visualized through a variety of different organic models of social organization. One recurrent theme was a bio-political idea of geographical rootedness, suggesting a "tribal" or "integral" relationship to one's birthplace that influenced certain town planning ideas such as völkisch communes.[18] As *Blut en Boden* (blood and soil) evolved from a worldview into a set of policies, artists sometimes visualized the idea of an inherent connection to the land through photographic typologies. Produced in various parts of the Greater Reich from The Netherlands to Austria, such series—often published as books—juxtaposed idealized Aryan types against the landscapes of origin, forging a distinctly ethno-geographical relationship between the two.

In this context, the human face became an important symbol for the individual to self-assimilate within the body of a community, or rather to see oneself looking back from the crowd and easily visualize his or her place within it. Gerhard Richter put this

idea into words when elaborating upon his interpretation of the epilogue to Walter Benjamin's Work of Art essay, a phenomenon that he described as "confronting the masses with their own face."[19] According to Benjamin, through the process of seeing oneself everywhere, the affiliation of the individual to the mass is continuously reinscribed. Observing another person with similar ethnic traits reflected in a blood-and-soil photograph, the viewer becomes a subject awakened to a new racial consciousness, one in which his or her identity becomes inextricable from a larger organic community.

If the above-described phenomenon—perhaps most palpably embodied in Heimat photography—is an active agent in the formation of the völkisch Weltanschauung, then how can Willink's self-portrait be read in light of the artist's self-proclaimed rejection of volkism? Is there any relevance to the self-portrait produced during this time, influenced as it might be by the visual and verbal rhetoric of the individual and his or her relationship to völkisch prototypes? And if that is the case, should Willink's *Preacher*, or his other religiously themed self-portraits for that matter, be viewed as existing in dialogue with this relatively new tradition? Certainly, the cosmopolitan nature of this image—and its literal visual combination of references to different European cities—was anathema to volkism. By that time, the perceived rootlessness of the cosmopolitan subject—tethered to both the polis and the cosmos simultaneously—had become a familiar bugbear in Hitler's rhetoric, one that served as a thinly coded reference to the perceived threat of a growing Jewish influence.[20] Although Willink was not likely painting with Heimat photography in mind, I would venture to categorize *The Preacher* as an anti-völkisch representation. First and foremost, it was a self-portrait of an individual alienated from the cityscape in the distance, and secondly it was an atomized image of a man with no place and no community, with little concern for the popular mass.

In the years from 1940 to 1942, as the Dutch nation was being absorbed into the Greater Germanic Reich, the occupation forces in The Netherlands began to use *The Preacher* and other key Neorealist paintings as part of a consensus building campaign in the arts. In the two short years that preceded the ultimate downfall of the Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer (Dutch Chamber of Culture)—resulting from Germany's shift to the losing side of the war—the DVK began to cultivate an aesthetic that would best serve the regime, one that was politically conscious, nativist, and modern-looking. Unfortunately for the Neorealists, their critical fortunes and livelihood depended on the cultural bureaucracy developed by the Nazis for its Aryan neighbors in The Netherlands. While Goebbels allowed the occupied subjects a margin of creative freedom, the DVK avoided a virulent anti-modernist campaign to limit resistance and did not fully censor the art press. It is important to note that Neorealism was not universally accepted by the NSB, save for a number of prominent Party members. Some admirers of the style were career arts administrators and critics; during the Occupation they continued to work in the same capacity under the rubric of a "healthy" Dutch art.

How was it then that this idiom—seemingly contradictory in its messaging to the aims of the Greater Germanic Reich—came to be used as a form of Aryan propaganda? There is no clear line of inquiry that can definitively answer this question, but the collecting habits of certain powerful members within the Dutch cultural sphere indicate a desire to participate in international trends, while also keeping an eye on homegrown tendencies as they were happening. Critics on both the right and left sides of the political aisle contributed readings of the Neorealists' paintings that were sometimes politically expedient. I would propose that the early placement of Neorealist paintings in prominent museum collections also did a lot of work to position their critical reception across the decade.

Part of the appeal of Neorealism to Dutch collectors and National Socialist cultural operatives lay in the ability of this aesthetic tendency to straddle both the past and the present. By the early 1930s, some of the most progressive museums in The Netherlands recognized Neorealism as an idiom that embodied the spirit of the modern age. At that time Dutch critics and curators made little distinction between objective and non-objective artists in avant-garde art journals such as *i10 Internationale Revue* and in exhibition societies like Architectuur, Schilderkunst, Beeldhouwkunst, ASB (Architecture, Painting Sculpture). Both figurative and abstract modes were seen as exemplary in their use of objective form to convey subjective feelings.[21] Just preceding that decade, the Boymans Museum (since renamed the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum) in Rotterdam became the first Dutch institution to purchase a non-objective Piet Mondrian painting, securing *Compositie Nr. II* (Composition No. II with Yellow and Blue) in 1929, the same year that it was painted.[22] Boijmans's relatively young director Dirk Hannema had also steered the museum toward collecting Neorealist painting to solidify its reputation as a vanguard institution. It was the result of his efforts that the museum bought Pyke Koch's 1931 *The Shooting Gallery* (Figure 1.8) in the year of its completion, a painting that had received broad critical praise at a meeting of the local art society the Rotterdamsche Kring (Rotterdam Circle) held that autumn.[23] At a sum of 1500 guilders, Boijmans purchased the canvas for six times the cost of the Mondrian work, a clear indication of the director's interest.[24] More than that, Hannema articulated his high regard for the modernity of *The Shooting Gallery* in his extensive write-up for the museum's annual report, stating: "It is a work that is of our own day, and for that reason will already be of lasting value."[25] It was not until Hannema became a cultural operative for the NSB under the German Occupation that his appreciation for the artist truly came to the fore. As I will demonstrate in the chapter that follows, Hannema reiterated his esteem for Koch's work using similar terms that framed the artist's style and subject matter as reflecting an ethic that was of the present.

With the rise of Nazism in nearby Germany, Dutch curators and critics began to re-evaluate the status of modernist painting in The Netherlands. Some began to criticize their neighbor's new cultural policies, while other, more prominent, voices in the papers of record rationalized the new extreme measures taken in Germany. The Degenerate Art exhibition received widespread coverage in the Dutch press, with a range of perspectives that depended on the respective politics of the critic or media outlet. Utrecht poet Jan Engelman, who was also a close friend of Koch's, reacted with shock and dismay at the crude sensationalism of the show and its simplistic representation of the German spirit.[26] Although Koch did not address the Degenerate Art exhibition directly in his writing, he had opined while writing under the pseudonym Elsseneur for the Fascist Dietsche publication *Hier Dinaso!* that artists should avoid undermining the authority of the leader, and that censorship of violence or immoral subject matter in the name of the state would be ill served.[27]

At the same time, there did exist examples of protest among prominent Dutch exhibition societies, who rejected the premise of the Degenerate Art exhibition on principle and foresaw a dangerous precedent that could be repeated in their own country. Several artists who were deeply involved in artist associations made the boldest public pronouncements against the exhibition. In August of that year, several Amsterdam-based art societies, including De Onafhankelijken (The Independents), De Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring (The Dutch Art Circle), De Nederlandsche Kring van Beeldhouwers (The Dutch Circle of Sculptors), Arti et Amicitiae, and De Ploeg (The Gang) signed a joint protest letter addressed to The Netherlands Federation of Visual Artists Association. Charley Toorop was among the undersigned, figuring alongside a number of her far-left

artist compatriots, many of whom were involved in an exhibition the year prior that protested the Olympic Games in Berlin.[28] Three months later the Bond van Kunstenaars ter Verdediging van de Kultuur (Federation of Artists for Cultural Rights) held an evening to discuss the social ramifications of publicizing such a binary between "healthy" and "unhealthy" art and addressed the difficulty of parsing the differences between them, as well as the dangerous racial ideology that lay underneath.[29]

Despite these pockets of resistance, some of the more dominant critical voices were setting the stage for Germany to impose its hegemonic control over the cultural sector. *De Telegraaf* art critic Kasper Niehaus praised "Entartete Kunst," writing that the Dutch could learn a lesson from the "barbaric and frightening" works on display at the Munich exhibition.[30] Prior to the German invasion in 1940, however, the use of the word "ontaarde" as a touchstone for cultural policy was unheard of in The Netherlands. The concept of "degeneration" (or *ontaarding* in Dutch) originated in German-language texts, most notably the writing of Budapest-born Jewish physician and social critic Max Nordau, whose book *Degeneration* (Entartung) was translated into Dutch as early as 1893, only one year after its original publication.[31] Nordau's theories would have a limited reach in the art world of the early twentieth-century Netherlands. Prior to Hitler's rise in 1933, his influential concept of "ontaarding" also appeared in Dutch art criticism but reflected the Hungarian physician's emphasis on psychological and social decline and was absent the antisemitic racial ideology espoused by such Nazi ideologues as Paul Schultze-Naumburg and Alfred Rosenberg.[32]

In the same year that the German art policy had taken a hard shift rightward and Willink began his series of religiously themed, contemporary allegories, some writers—particularly those who were members of right-wing parties in The Netherlands—started to re-evaluate the work of the Neorealists in a negative light. Fellow artist and editor of the NSB newspaper *Arbeidsfront* Maarten Meuldijk was the most outspoken among them. In September of 1937, two months after "Entartete Kunst" opened in Munich, Meuldijk wrote an article for the NSB newspaper *Volk en Vaderland* in which he declared the superiority of "healthy realism," and singled out "Nieuw Realisme" by contrast as the "fruit of international fornication with all of the germs of old sicknesses in its sick flesh." Adopting the Nazi rhetoric of degeneracy, Meuldijk's voice more than any other established the counter-position against both degenerate art and Neorealism more specifically. His words formed the playbook that some in NSB circles would use throughout the 1940s.[33]

In the pages of *Volk en Vaderland*, Meuldijk laid out an ongoing polemic regarding the various points raised by the Munich show and the concept of "ontaarde kunst" as it had been addressed by other Dutch critics. In an article from September of 1937, Meuldijk warned against the danger of being led down an "alley of mindless naturalism." Wary that the public in the Greater Reich was not equipped to uphold an appropriate level of critical interpretation, he feared that the adherents of the Neoclassical style favored in the First Great German Art Exhibition would engage in a kind of rote copying that would turn National Socialism into a "laughable phenomenon."[34] This did not mean, however, that Meuldijk did not recognize that Hitler had identified a very real problem in the neighboring Degenerate Art show. In fact, in another article he diagnosed degeneration as an international pathology that had infected not only artists, but also art writers, dealers, and collectors. He mocked other Dutch critics of the Degenerate Art exhibition by name—Jos de Gruyter, Albert Plaesschaert, Paul Sanders, and even

Kasper Niehaus—comparing them to "quack" doctors who had come together to form an irreputable medical journal.[35]

Indeed, as the Occupation approached, the subjectivity inherent to the Neorealist idiom proved itself to be a problem for critics and curators alike. In one prominent example, the public powers that be, not knowing what to do with their work and how to frame it, avoided showing Neorealist paintings altogether. Just as World War II began in 1939, the Rijksmuseum put some of its most important holdings, including Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*, in storage to protect them in case of Nazi pillaging or bombardment. To fill its halls and distract the public in a period of heightened tension, the Rijksmuseum held an exhibition of contemporary art titled *Our Art of Today* (Onze Kunst van Heden). Notably absent were works by the more popular contemporary artists working in The Netherlands, including the Neorealists as well as abstract artists. It has been suggested that their paintings were not selected for inclusion because of their subjective nature, which could be interpreted in political, multivalent, ways.[36] Instead, less ambiguous, more naturalistic examples were shown by lesser known artists such as Willy Boers, Arnout Colnot, Johan Dijkstra, Hildo Krop, and artist-critic Kasper Niehaus. It should also be noted that the Neorealists were not the only artists selected for exclusion. The paintings of Jan Sluijters were also notably missing from the exhibition.

The numerous oversights listed above inspired harsh criticism by the left-wing newspaper *De Groene*, which took issue with the exhibition's omission of thirty-eight painters and sculptors, included among them Hynckes, Ket, Koch, Schuhmacher, Toorop, and Willink.[37] *De Groene* even organized a protest exhibition with the hope of finding a venue near the Rijksmuseum.[38] While the intended show never did come to fruition, *De Groene*'s attempted actions were considered controversial within a community that was hesitant to rock the boat. In fact, the very issue that the editorial staff had raised prompted objections by some artists, including De Onafhankelijken, who wrote a missive in the press condemning *De Groene*'s complaint as an affront to the Dutch spirit of unity and solidarity.[39] Other critics began to frame the Neorealists' work as insurgent against the traditionalist, play-it-safe museum administration. Some even questioned whether a small four-person show held at the Carel van Lier gallery in December of 1939, which exhibited the work of Toorop, Hynckes, Schuhmacher, and Willink, was organized as a form of dissent for the purpose of speaking out against the oversights in *Onze Kunst van Heden*.[40]

Many of the newspapers covering the above-mentioned van Lier show viewed it as a politicized "manifestatie" (demonstration) due to its timing in conjunction with the Rijksmuseum show. There were tonal readings of specific works that the gallerist Carel van Lier selected for display, allowing for commentary that went well beyond an internecine dispute between a small gallery and a major museum. Jan Engelman in *De Tijd*, for example, recognized a fatalistic undercurrent that ran through the work of all four painters on exhibition, implying, while not outrightly stating that there may have been certain political connotations in the works chosen. His precise vocabulary noted the aggression of Toorop, the melancholy of Hynckes, the pessimism of Willink, and the disunity of Schuhmacher. Alongside Hynckes's *Copper Kettle* (Figure 2.6), Schumacher's diffusely painted *Resting Woman*, 1939, and a self-portrait of Charley Toorop wearing a mourning veil, van Lier displayed Willink's canvases *Landschap met vechten* (Landscape with Fighters), 1937 (Figure 5.2) and his more recent painting *Simeon de Pilaarheilige* (Simeon the Pillar Saint) from 1939.

Figure 5.2 Carel Willink, *Landschap met vechten* (Landscape with Fighters), 1937, oil on canvas, 85 × 145 cm.

Source: Museum MORE, Kasteel Ruurlo. Carel Willink © Mrs. Sylvia Willink, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2023.

As the criticism of the "protest" exhibition at the van Lier gallery suggests, if there was ever any kind of consensus about how the Neorealist idiom deployed the traits of Early Netherlandish or Baroque Old Master painting, it was in the artists' evocation of a delicately observed psychological interiority, carried out in an exacting, and sometimes harsh technique. Maria Viola, writing for *Algemeen Handelsblad*, for example, described Charley Toorop's "fierce and heartfelt" treatment of the sitter in her painting *Boer uit Westkapelle* (Farmer from Westkapelle), 1939–1940. According to Viola, Toorop allowed stiffness and plasticity to comingle, forging the "uncompromising" character of this peasant figure.[41] Both Engelman and Viola noted the critical nature of the Neorealists' paintings, taking care to remark upon the strong showing of several of Willink's paintings at his solo retrospective at the Boijmans van Beuningen only two months before.

The Boijmans exhibition, in the wide coverage that it enjoyed in the Dutch press, truly demonstrated the conflicted character of Willink's reception. Writing for the right-wing organ *Het Nationale Dagblad*, the National Socialist critic Nico de Haas described Willink as a "troubled figure" who nevertheless demonstrated a great mastery of the various traditional Dutch genres. His description of Willink as "a dogged painter of fate, who perfected his technique in iron discipline," summarily demonstrates the way in which the right wing interpreted thematically pessimistic paintings such as *The Pillar Saint*. Indeed, as De Haas pointed out, Willink's clear mastery of single-point perspective in this and in other religiously themed paintings outshined the emptiness that infiltrated his oeuvre. The critic even attempted to identify a more widespread modernist tendency, claiming that if one were to exclusively focus on technique, they could speak of Willink in the same breath as Koch and Hynckes, or even Ket and Schuhmacher.[42] One word

frequently used in assembling these artists on the basis of their licked surfaces and painterly precision was the term "stofuitdrukking," an all-encompassing word that describes the illusionistic depiction of materiality, one often used when characterizing the style of the Dutch and Flemish Old Masters.

Of all of examples at either the Boijmans retrospective or the van Lier gallery, Willink's 1937 painting *Landscape with Fighters* was perhaps the canvas that most blatantly referenced the tense political circumstances in which the Dutch people had found themselves. The painting depicts an unnamed rocky mountain landscape—likely located in the Alps—that opens into a lush valley extending into the distance. The immense mountains in the background and the Ruisdael-like leafy trees that frame the landscape on either side dwarf the two titular "fighters" in the foreground. A brown-haired gentleman whose face is obscured by a shadow wrings the neck of a young blond boy who is trying to pry away at his grip; his open mouth and upturned eyes suggest that he is struggling to avoid strangulation. Both figures wear black knee-length leather military jackboots, or *Marschstiefel*, synonymous with the SS officer uniform, a detail that places this scene abruptly in the contemporary.

Despite the somewhat obvious undertones of *Landscape with Fighters*, de Haas, writing in 1939, was determined to avoid making the same direct references to the overarching political context in greater Europe that reviewers had noted the year prior. For example, of the writers directly addressing the canvas in their reviews from 1938, some alluded to the idea that the composition may be allegorical due to the way that Willink clearly pointed to the political unrest in Western Europe, specifically the rise of totalitarianism in Italy, Germany, and Spain. One critic for *De Standaard* was impressed with how Willink captured a landscape that was somehow "Arcadian," but which also "cannot make him forget reality" and went on to explain, "Because even there, the peace is still interrupted by two people who fly at each other's throats."[43] Kasper Niehaus from *De Telegraaf* focused on Willink's treatment of space in the painting, describing the work's "stereoscopic clarity" in the way that "the creatures and things, mountains and trees sometimes seem more plastic to him than nature itself.[44] This illusion of depth observed by Niehaus, forged by the perceptible separation of the foreground from the background, underscored a tension between the two planes that was at once contingent and irreconcilable. Indeed, by introducing such disunifying effects into his paintings and combining them with the two human figures at battle with one another, Willink put into visual terms the political turmoil that had graced newspaper headlines since the Treaty of Versailles had been unilaterally broken by Hitler's move into the demilitarized Rhineland. In this canvas Willink trained his gaze on the precarious relationship between the figure and his or her environment, rendering this dynamic as a broader allegory that could pertain to all of Europe. When it came time for de Haas to give his assessment of this provocative painting, however, the author perceived it as a different sort of allegory. Viewing the work through his narrow National Socialist lens, de Haas stated that "nowhere is the contrast between the eternity of creation and the finite life of man more apparent in his work than in this atmospheric canvas."[45] With this minor interpretive sleight of hand, de Haas had transformed this unsettling power dynamic into a hymn to the nature versus historicism dialectic, one that contributed to a larger repudiation of Enlightenment rationality.

In what concerns the main thrust of these critiques, it is clear that initial inroads were being made into reinterpreting the Neorealists' exacting techniques as something "essentially Netherlandish." These reviewers were making the case that the Neorealists' work

could serve a larger purpose for the national Dutch community by moving beyond the individualistic stylistic experiments that had been the domain of the avant-garde. Because of their deployment of a historically-bound verisimilitude, the Neorealists had avoided falling into one of the many "isms" of the early twentieth century; they instead worked in a manner that was plausibly oppositional to such degenerate currents. In fact, some of the most influential interpretations were initiated by one of the artists themselves. Pyke Koch, for example, took it upon himself to force an alignment between himself and the artists in his circle with whom he felt an affinity, primarily through the articles that he contributed to partisan newspapers.

In fact, it was Koch's far-right politics that truly complicated—or even compromised—the discourse in the press on Neorealism in the later 1930s. Despite his stated ambivalence regarding state-sponsored art and censorship, he acted in an unofficial capacity as an authority on Dutch National Socialist aesthetic policy by proposing his own ideas for the style that would best represent the Party; he became a member in 1941, when Verdinaso merged with the NSB.[46] In January of 1940, just a few months prior to the German invasion, he wrote an article titled "About Art" in the right-wing publication *De Waag*, where he spoke favorably about the healthy economic and cultural future that National Socialism would bring and pronounced that art should conform to the National Socialist vision. Certain artists expressed the Netherlandish soul in its essence; paintings by "Hynckes, Willink, and Charley Toorop," he continued "could only have been made by a Northern Dutch hand." He heaped praise on Hynckes and Willink because their art was "undemocratic" and "anti-parliamentarian" in spirit. Koch even cited an unnamed "Jewish critic" in *Het Volk* (The People), since identified as Paul Sanders, who argued that Willink's work "is of the kind that would likely be popular with our eastern neighbors" (referring to Germany).[47]

Toorop and Willink would each in their own way go to great lengths to separate themselves from the far-right politics that had appealed to Koch; Toorop remained an avowed Communist sympathizer, while in 1941, Willink began to work on illustrations for resistance literature. And while it was Koch who first attempted to consistently group himself, Willink, and Hynckes as exemplars of the "Neorealists or Magic Realists from this country" in his writing and radio lectures during the Occupation, it was also around that same time that Willink began to disassociate himself from those terms.[48] Although Toorop and Willink each achieved different results in their self-distancing from Nazi ideology, Koch's writing had nonetheless cast a pall over any association that the artists had with one another, implicit or otherwise.

It should be noted that although Koch's right-wing radicalization made him an outlier within his artistic circle and Dutch society at large, The Netherlands under Occupation did conform to the totalitarian dictates of its bellicose neighbors. This susceptibility can be attributed, in part, to the weakness of The Netherlands' foreign policy. With the German invasion on May 10, 1940 that sent Queen Wilhelmina to England, the Germans found a sympathetic figure in Dirck Jan de Geer, Pyke Koch's father-in-law and Prime Minister of The Netherlands. De Geer, also exiled in London, had become convinced of the impossibility of overcoming the takeover and hatched a plan to reach a peace agreement with Germany.[49] Although de Geer's submissive stance was not unique among politicians in The Netherlands or in other occupied territories, his level of compliance was less measured than the decrees of former Dutch Prime Minister Hendrik Colijn and Danish King Christian X, for example.[50] The Queen even accused de Geer of treason, and forced his ouster while he was still in exile in September of 1940. While Wilhelmina's

refusal to comply on principle exemplified the majority of Dutch popular opinion during wartime, for those who lived under the Occupation, resistance tended to manifest itself as passive coexistence, and especially non-violent defiance rather than public acts of rebellion.[51] The Communist-organized February Strike of 1941 was followed by crackdowns on dissents and intensified persecution of the Jewish population; as a result, resistance activities went underground.[52] By that time, The Netherlands had become a hospitable venue for the occupiers wherein the Germans could easily institute their policy of *Gleichschaltung*, or "enforced conformity" onto its Dutch subjects.[53]

In any case, far-right German political ideology did not find much of a receptive audience within the general Dutch population and there was very little popular support for the idea of a Greater Germanic Reich.[54] Even the head of the NSB, Anton Mussert, did not wish to realize Hitler's pan-Germanic plan. The Dutchman's primary goal as Party leader had been to reunite Flanders and The Netherlands into the Dutch ethno-state of Dietsland, or the "Greater Netherlands," an idea that Hitler openly repudiated.[55] Mussert hoped that the Dietse population would be granted autonomy within the "League of Germanic Peoples" and that he himself would be allowed to rule over the territory.[56] However, despite the fact that Mussert had worked with the Germans to help set up a puppet government in The Netherlands, the moment that the Queen and Prime Minister went into exile in Britain, Hitler did not offer him an appointment in the Greater Reich. The Führer instead named Austrian Seyss-Inquart the Reichskommissariat Niederlande (The Reich Commissar of The Netherlands). Seyss-Inquart made sure that Mussert and the NSB leadership were shut out of key roles in the civilian government. As a minor consolation Mussert was allowed a *haagespraak* ("hedge speech" or small assembly) on June 22, 1940, to celebrate the German takeover. Once he walked away from the podium, the Germans stripped any significant political power from the NSB and restricted their involvement to ministerial and local administrative positions.[57]

It was around this time that Koch composed his no-longer-extant painting *Marschgezang* (March Song), 1940 (Figure 5.3), in tempera on wood. The now destroyed work depicted a shirtless, forward-striding figure wearing a black headband and carrying

Figure 5.3 Pyke Koch, *Marschgezang* (March Song), 1940, tempera on panel, dimensions unknown, destroyed.

Source: © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

a black flag, with his mouth wide open as if he is singing. It is likely that Koch adapted this figure from imagery of youths who participated in pro-nationalist marches then being carried out in towns throughout The Netherlands. This was a type commonly represented on popular posters or in paraphernalia such as the cover of the National Socialist song book titled *Zoo Zingt de NSB* (Figure 5.4), featuring a singing figure holding a flag that bears a striking resemblance to Koch's *March Song*.[58] Koch's rendering of the flag and headband in black were his own additions—a likely reference to the Italian black shirts. He reworked the same bandana motif from his 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band* (Figure 4.4), though here he used it in a more explicitly militant context. In the distance, a row of flags appears in a marching line, with brooms perched at the top. An earlier iconographic analysis by Annemiek Ouwekerk and Louis van Tilborgh concluded that this detail most likely alludes to the title of the official organ for the General Dutch Fascist League, edited by Koch's friend the artist Erich Wichman titled *De Bezem* (The Broom; 1927–1935). The broom in this instance symbolized the promise of Fascist parties in The Netherlands and elsewhere to tidy up society.[59]

Jan Engelman had included a reproduction of this now-destroyed panel in the favorable monograph that he penned on Koch, published in 1941, one year after the Occupation began. In the text Engelman stated that the painting exemplified the artist's politics: "in his latest work, his *March Song*, Koch leaves no doubt his confession that he wants to be a National Socialist revolutionary."[60] Engelman was a staunch critic of Germany beginning in the 1930s, and his statement about Koch should not be read as a form of propaganda but rather an honest reckoning over his good friend's politics, with which he disagreed.[61] The painting now survives only in photographic reproduction illustrated in Engelman's book and remains the most concrete evidence of the artist's flirtation with National Socialism as an alternative to his attraction to Mussolini's authoritarianism.

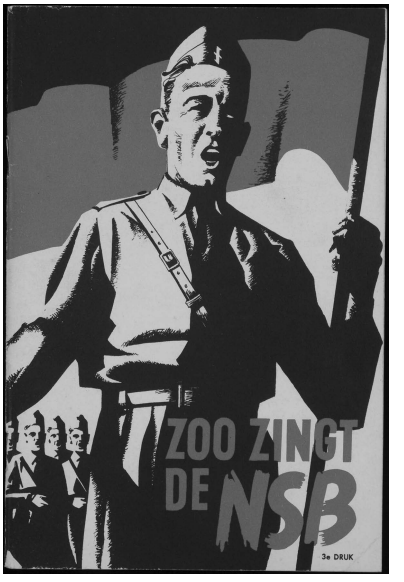

Figure 5.4 Cover of *Zoo Zingt de NSB: 20 marsch- en strijdliederen. Gelooft in datgene wat ge zing ten ge zult overwinnen!* Third edition, Utrecht, 1940.

Koch destroyed the painting either during or just following the summer of 1940, for reasons that remain unclear. The timing of this iconoclastic act, several months before he officially disavowed the Party, has led scholars to speculate about his growing ambivalence about "the New Order" under Nazism.[62]

In November of that year, Reich Commissar Seyss-Inquart established the propaganda organization the DVK, usurping all authority from the Ministerie van Onderwijs, Kunsten Wetenschappen (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science), or OKW, which like the Académie des Beaux-Arts in France, was the administrative body responsible for assembling the national collection, establishing quality standards for the visual arts held in museums, financing exhibitions, and setting regulations for the management of museums.[63] Under the auspices of the DVK Seyss-Inquart implemented a Dutch-controlled version of Joseph Goebbel's Reichkulturkammer: the Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer, or NKK, a top-down bureaucratic "Dutch Chamber of Culture" with the intention of recreating the medieval guild system. Any artist hoping to work in the occupied Netherlands was expected to register with the NKK; the organization barred Jews from joining, and potential members (as well as all Dutch civil servants) would eventually be expected complete an *Ariërverklaring*, or declaration of Aryan descent.[64] While they were not required to be Party members, inscription with the Dutch National Socialist Party (the NSB) was expected for any person working for the Kultuurkamer.[65]

Although Seyss-Inquart headed the cultural sector in The Netherlands, he allowed members of the NSB to run the organization on his behalf. By leaving the Dutch in charge of cultural policy in The Netherlands, he helped forge a compromise between the wishes of the German overlords and the diverse tastes of prominent figures in the Dutch art world who would eventually become a part of the administration. Seyss-Inquart felt it necessary to grant the Aryan "brother" nations a degree of freedom in how to implement their cultural policy, rather than imposing a Germanic identity too forcefully—a tack he believed could easily backfire. A more subtle, yet coercive approach, Seyss-Inquart argued, would be to allow Germany's occupied subjects to reach their own conclusions about the Reich's superiority and thus join its ranks willingly. To lead this middle-way administrative body, the Commissar first appointed Tobie Goedewaagen, professor of post-Kantian philosophy at the University of Utrecht, the first leader of the NKK, followed by the artist Ed Gerdes. Both men acquired a taste for Neorealism, though for tellingly different reasons.

Although aesthetic policies in The Netherlands were more relaxed than they were in Germany, the emerging presence of the Kultuurkamer made for a system that was quite restrictive in comparison to occupied France and Denmark. In the latter two countries—which had no such equivalent organization—practitioners of "degenerate" art forms such as abstraction and expressionism were permitted to exhibit. Dutch modernist painters did not endure orchestrated witch hunts like their colleagues in nearby Germany, nor did they witness the implementation of censorious measures such as the firing of curators and the purging of modern art institutions.[66] While Dutch artists who refused to adhere to the registration requests of the Kultuurkamer were largely left alone, their silence was implicitly enforced by blocking any ability to show their work in public venues.

To a limited degree, modern art did find a place under the Occupation; the regime welcomed both the clean lines of the Neorealists as well as the Expressionist-inflected manner of artists such as Jan Sluijters, whose fluid painterly style has been compared to Rembrandt.[67] Abstract art was an exception to this relative aesthetic openness. Kultuurkamer leadership largely ignored non-objective movements; the few mentions of

De Stijl in Dutch National Socialist publications were negative in tone, echoing the German position on the movement, which characterized it as subject to foreign "Jewish" influence.[68] The surviving De Stijl painters still working in The Netherlands during the Occupation (Bart van der Leck and the Hungarian Vilmos Huszár) did not face the kind of persecution experienced by German abstractionists and did not need to go into hiding. However, they could no longer exhibit their work publicly and survived financially by producing graphic design work for private patrons.[69] Other avant-gardists such as members of The Hague group participated in underground resistance activities, for example holding clandestine exhibitions or producing prints for illegal publications such as *De Vrije Kunstenaar* (The Free Artist).[70] In any case, the amount of oversight given to the DVK and the Kultuurkamer, which more closely resembled the German system than any other occupied territory, ensured the invisibility of "degenerate" artistic practice during the Occupation.

The occupying forces were also not interested in promoting the careers of individual artist-celebrities based on their popularity or renown for a particular style.[71] Such an emphasis on the individual was a threat to the collectivist goals of the Nazi regime and would have conflicted with their desire to obliterate the value of individualism due to its perceived status as a threat to group or mass identity. That the voice and corresponding agency of the artist would get lost in the process was precisely the point. Nor was there an agenda to establish an official style in The Netherlands, although certain rules had to be followed; Communist or Jewish religious themes were forbidden, and the content had to be easily understood by the public.[72]

Otherwise, there was little consensus about aesthetics among other members of the Occupation administration. Several NSB figures with prominent platforms supported Neorealism, while others were steadfast in rejecting it. Maarten Meuldijk again criticized the style in his 1940 anthology *Ontaarde Kunst* (Degenerate Art).[73] His fifty-nine page propaganda text was published by the NSB publisher De Amsterdamsche Keurkamer. Meuldijk found it problematic that an unhygienic style like Neorealism had been given such a deceitfully clean-sounding name, due to its perverse reference to "realism" and the proud Dutch seventeenth-century tradition.[74] He placed several artists under this label, including Koch, Willink, Hynckes, Schuhmacher, and Charley Toorop's son Edgar Fernhout.[75] Meuldijk seemed to take issue with the unorthodox treatment of depth that he saw in Koch's paintings. Perspective, Meuldijk stated, should be perceived through a "central projection," referring to the Renaissance one-point construction.[76] Implied in his critique is that the Neorealists' deviation from this universal, logical point of view was an affront to reality and truthfulness; he correctly perceived that it represented a relative and invented reality. According to Meuldijk, the Neorealists expressed an individual experience of the world so specific to the mind of the creator that it failed to resonate with the common man.[77]

That Neorealism was viewed favorably by certain prominent members of the Party, complicates its historical record with regard to National Socialism. Ed Gerdes and Dirk Hannema promoted the political currency of the style in ways that were never true of Neue Sachlichkeit in nearby Germany. In that country as early as the 1930s Nazi officials, such as Reich Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick, accused Neue Sachlichkeit artwork of being "un-German" in the way that it professed a cold, hard, and often critical vision of reality.[78] For a brief moment after the Nazis rose to power in 1933, however, Goebbels did not seek to dictate what styles artists could or could not adopt; he himself initially championed Expressionism. Moreover, even as the regime

centralized its power, certain local Gauleiters were open to more conservative iterations of the style.[79]

Some saw promise in the work of Alexander Kanoldt and Georg Schrimpf, whose subdued manner by 1933 had been dubbed "Neue deutsche Romantik" (New German Romanticism), and was seen as opposed to the critical realism of Otto Dix or George Grosz, both of whom exited the German art world in that year.[80] The tide officially shifted when Hitler condemned all forms of modernism in his 1935 Nuremberg rally speech.[81] In response, the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei leadership found reasons to target even right-wing Neue Sachlichkeit artists and opportunists such as Franz Radziwill in 1934 and '35, encouraging informants—including his students—to send evidence of the artist's "degeneracy."[82] Over the next two years Alexander Kanoldt left his position as director at the Hochschule der bildende Künste in Berlin and Georg Schrimpf was forced to leave his post as teacher at the same school; their work was banned from exhibition and labeled as degenerate.[83]

By comparison, even the more experimental abstractionists in The Netherlands did not experience the same kind of systematic persecution suffered by their counterparts in Germany. This more lenient position can be attributed to Seyss-Inquart's approach to encourage willful self-Nazification. Another reason for the more tolerant cultural policies in The Netherlands at the onset of the Occupation may have been due to the fact that many high-level officials in the DVK were artists themselves (Gerdes) or had long-standing friendships in the small Dutch art world (Goedewaagen). Pyke Koch played a critical role in cultivating the taste for Neorealism within NSB circles, even as he proved to be a divisive figure for both resistors and supporters of the Occupation. Albert Kuyle, one of the most prominent representatives of Nieuwe Zakelijkheid literature, targeted him specifically.[84] His article for the right-wing publication *De Weg* in November of 1940 featured a satirical cartoon of Koch in his studio that also depicted within it the artist's 1931 painting *Nocturne* (Nocturnal), a nighttime scene of a public urinal (Figure 5.5). In his text Kuyle characterized the artist's work as exhibiting a "Jewish pathos," marked by unhealthy subject-matter such as street-walkers, carnivals—or even a *pissoir*. The author reiterated the danger of Koch's subversive brand of realism, writing that it was important to call into question the "weak mindedness" of his paintings. For him, the art reflected the problem with the man himself; he claimed that Koch cultivated a faux-aristocratic personality that was deceitful in its projected air of respectability. Too many people had become blinded by Koch's impeccable attention to detail, Kuyle argued, and thus hailed him as a descendant of the Old Master tradition, rather than recognizing the artist's true role—beneath appearances—as a "cultural anarchist."[85]

Nonetheless, I would argue that the Neorealists rose to prominence in the Kultuurkamer due to their early promotion by a few high-level cultural administrators, the most important among them being Koch, as well as fellow artist and future Kultuurkamer head Ed Gerdes, and Boijmans Museum director Dirk Hannema.[86] In 1941 Hannema accepted the position of Official Delegate of the Museum Industry and began serving as a member of the Nederlandsche Kultuurraad (Dutch Culture Council) advisory committee, whose express goal was to make scientific and cultural life amenable to National Socialist ideology.[87] Recognizing Hannema as an asset, Seyss-Inquart subsequently promoted him to supervise all Dutch museums in 1943. By that point the director had established himself as a rising star in the museum world. He was credited with transforming the Boijmans Museum from a relatively unknown regional museum to one of the most prominent institutions in The Netherlands. The collection that he amassed during his tenure

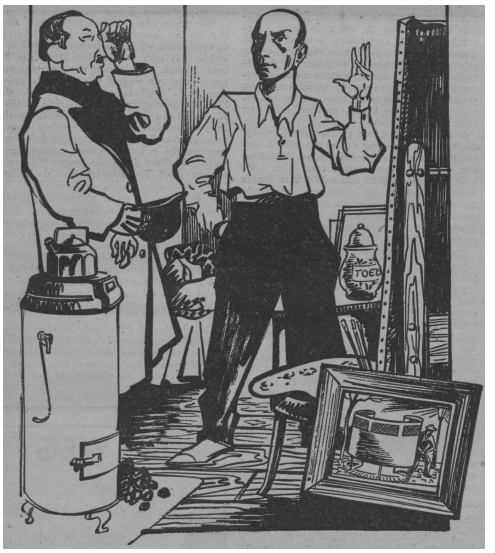

Figure 5.5 Cartoon by René Smeets in "'Wat kunnen wij doen voor de kunst' vroeg Pijke Koch," *De Weg* (November 30, 1940): 8.

Source: Permission of Jos Smeets.

boasted paintings by Koch and Mondrian as well as Old Master works by Hieronymus Bosch and Jacob van Ruisdael, all housed in a groundbreaking experimental building by Adrianus van der Steur.[88] It became a museum that embodied Hannema's interest in both upholding the Dutch spirit, while also expressing a modernized version of it—a vision that he eventually bought to his work for the Kultuurkamer, where the director helped to legitimize the merits of Neorealism as a style in service of the regime.

While many officials in the NSB exhibited a preference for *völkisch* themes that recalled more traditional notions of Dutch life and history, several Party members involved in the running of the Kultuurkamer thought that promoting works with a modernist bent be a better approach for state exhibitions.[89] Well-known artists whose work appeared to be "of the moment" but also exuded the potential to fit the aesthetic protocols of Nazism, could also bring prestige to the NSB, and reflect well on the image of Dutch culture in Germany. Beyond that, supporting popular cultural figures at home could encourage other artists to voluntarily adhere to the organization, while also appealing to a young Dutch audience that might need encouragement to adopt Nazi ideology. It was Goedewaagen and Gerdes who had the most direct hand in laying the groundwork for the Occupation-era aesthetic policy because of their positions at the Kultuurkamer.[90] Both served in turn as chamber leader; the latter co-organized the DVK's earliest exhibitions with the help of Koch. Gerdes had by that time developed an affection for Neorealist painting, which influenced the way that he oriented the aesthetic direction of the Kultuurkamer.[91] By contrast, Goedewaagen's interest in the style likely stemmed from his social connections in Utrecht, where he had been surrounded by literary figures and visual artists.[92] Although Goedewaagen's personal preferences tended to favor conservative models (Rembrandt was his ideal), he heeded the aesthetic advice of Koch and Gerdes whose

more up-to-date tastes might appeal to younger artists and build favorable consensus about the regime.[93] As art historian Ype Koopmans has argued, Goedewaagen likely appreciated the Neorealists' embodiment of the Nietzschean, zakelijk (objective, impersonal, businesslike) age that the former observed among the youth of the day.[94]

In addition to cultivating a modern aesthetic, it was of paramount importance to organizers at the DVK that the art representing the regime be grounded in Dutch art history and provide a strong visual connection between the great cultural practices of Germany and its long-lost "brother-nation" of The Netherlands. The link to historic styles also held important communicative potential for the DVK in that it assured the Dutch populace that their beloved native traditions were respected. Of all the historic exemplars, Rembrandt became the flashpoint among different segments of the National Socialist Party in Germany and in The Netherlands more broadly. While some Party members viewed the Golden Age artist as an important cultural figure for the *Niederdeutchland* (the northwestern corner of Germany) when considering the larger history of the *Germaanse Volk* (Germanic peoples), others including spokesmen for the SS newspaper, *Storm*, criticized him as a "painter of Jews."[95] Goedewaagen in particular sought to celebrate the work and life of this venerated master, who he saw as embodying in his paintings the "summary of all Dutch wishes, dreams, and actions," laying the groundwork for what would culminate in a week-long national festival dedicated to the artist in 1944.[96]

Even Seyss-Inquart himself—who stood at the very top of the hierarchy in the occupied Netherlands—had a stake in the future of Neorealist painting in the Greater Germanic Reich. In November of 1940, the Reich Commissar, accompanied by Professors Wehofisch and G. A. Snijder of the Dutch Culture Circle, visited Hynckes' studio, as well as those of Dutch figurative painters Anthonie Pieter Schotel, Han Hulsbergen, and Ed Gerdes to purchase their works. They also entered talks with Gerdes about his idea to establish a museum of modern art that would house similar paintings; the idea was to assemble a number of important visual examples for another project: an affiliated academy for training young talent. Although these plans never came to fruition, the existence of such a broad-reaching agenda reveals the potential that Gerdes and Seyss-Inquart saw in these studio visits.[97] Like Goedewaagen, the Reich Commissar may have believed that seventeenth-century Dutch master works represented the pinnacle of artistic achievement in painting, yet he was still receptive to realist styles that mimicked the techniques, motifs, and tenor of the early Northern Renaissance and the Golden Age.[98] Hence the Magic Realism of the Neorealists, with their blatant citation of these masters, could pass muster; their paintings most certainly would have had a place in this never-realized museum.

Under scrutiny, the actions and inactions of individual Neorealist painters reveal just how the interpretation of their work became—except for Toorop—subject to increasingly conservative readings over the course of the Occupation years. To be certain, most Neorealists maintained an antipathy toward National Socialism. Willink, for example, became involved in resistance activities. In the most extreme of cases, the openly anti-Nazi, Communist sympathizer Charley Toorop (whose daughter-in-law was Jewish) went into internal exile, supporting herself with the help of private patrons. The clear counterexample is, of course, Pyke Koch, who, primed by his pro-Italian Fascist sympathies, proactively collaborated with the DVK until 1941. As the next chapter will demonstrate, Koch's personal and political networks were instrumental in initially securing Neorealism a berth in the press, in government-sponsored exhibitions, and in what was to become the National Collection. As a result of his proselytizing, a select number of

Neorealist paintings took a prominent place in the Dutch-German exchange exhibitions, wherein Koch initially played an organizing role.

The policies of the Reichskulturkammer in Germany were closely replicated in the DVK and the Dutch Chamber of Culture (Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer). While the non-objective abstraction of the De Stijl group was simply ignored, sidelined, and in some cases demonized, Neorealism was a different case; its style and imagery occasionally lent itself to the needs of the Nazi Party. Consequently, the regime co-opted the work of Schuhmacher, Ket, and Willink without their consent, while Hynckes, to a certain extent willingly complied. Only Charley Toorop's work did not appear in any DVK shows, despite the attempts of her friend, Koch, to include her—a testament to the complicated legacy of Neorealism. Ironically, it was only under the duress of foreign rule that the group identity of these artists came to the fore. Their enigmatic style had been a bellwether for the stresses and strains placed on traditional, anti-nationalistic Dutch identity during the 1930s. Under the Occupation, that ambiguity served both dissenters and collaborators, complicating the Neorealist legacy in the decades after World War II.

Neorealism became fully instrumentalized by the organization when the centralized structure that steered the critical reception of Willink's *The Preacher* reframed the Neorealist aesthetic as one that signaled an acceptance of a Pan-Germanic identity. For Ed Gerdes and the DVK, these "magic" realist images evinced a proud and ongoing artistic tradition of Netherlandish art; for the Germans, the style adequately promoted the absorption of the Dutch people and their venerable culture into Greater Germany. The specific edge of modernity and bedrock of Old Master tradition served the propaganda aims of the cultural bureaucrats, who saw a need to retain an identifiable Dutch character in modern art for the purpose of signalling a degree of independence from German prototypes. Yet commonalities of art history, if not language, lent themselves to the imposition of a Pan-Germanic identity in The Netherlands and the expectation that the Dutch would willingly adopt a new identity as citizens of what was to be dubbed "Westland." In theory, such a practice should have worked especially well in The Netherlands, a country that prided itself on its agreeableness.

Neorealist painting thus presented a paradox for Occupation-era art policy. The artists' unique pastiche of Early Netherlandish, Northern Renaissance, and Dutch Baroque motifs and subject matter made it ripe for co-option, even as its Magic Realist indebtedness to film tropes exuded a palpable sense of estrangement. On the one hand, the mood of their images, from the enigmatic to the outwardly pessimistic, even disturbing, qualities were at odds with Nazi propaganda. On the other, the contemporaneity of their pictures—which resided precisely in these psychological effects—offered evidence of a "modernity" that could appeal to the younger generation and offer a middle ground between naturalism, which the National Socialists preferred, and abstraction, which they would not tolerate.

The pervasive ambiguity of the Neorealist paintings selected for display in the DVK's exhibitions or for government purchase had allowed for slippages of intent and interpretation. In that sense their work revealed the Dutch propaganda ministry's looser interpretation of this directive in comparison to its implementation in Germany. The more ambiguous examples of this style continued to coexist precariously alongside academic and naturalistic works of art until the second half of 1942 when Germany began to precipitously lose the war to the Allies. Compensating for the external chaos that surrounded the Axis powers, the cultural climate in turn became more repressive, matching the civilian regime's accelerated persecution of the Jewish population.

Notes

1 Tobie Goedewaagen, trial for Tobie Goedewaagen, December 1, 1948. NIOD DOC I 548 map c, page III-3, cited in Benien van Berkel, *Dr. Tobie Goedewaagen 1895–1980: Een leven lang nationaal-socialist* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2013), 270.

2 Modernist articulations of individual experience as in Italy for example, were sometimes tolerated as long as they could be subsumed under a nativist *völkisch* aesthetic of some sort. Fascist Italy did not have a strict aesthetic policy. Mussolini encouraged competition among factions (Futurists, Novecento, Strapaese), all offering different expressions of Italianità, referring to an essential Italian spirit. See Marla Stone, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Emily Braun, *Mario Sironi and Italian Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

3 Olaf Peters, "From Nordau to Hitler," in *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Modern Germany, 1937*, edited by Olaf Peters, Ronald Lauder, Renée Price, Bernhard Fulda and Steven Lindberg, exh. cat. (New York: Neue Galerie, 2014), 22, 27.

4 Germany took a hard line in Poland, allowing for the confiscation of all public and private property in an effort to abolish Polish culture and Germanize the territory. The Germans also carried out the destruction of avant-garde works of art such as the Constructivist paintings of Władysław Strzemiński and sculptor Katarzyna Kobro. See Jonathan Petropoulos, "The Assault on Polish Culture," in *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 101. In France, Hitler allowed Vichy to manage the cultural policy in the occupied zone. Vichy (with the blessing of the Germans) tolerated the exhibition of "degenerate" artists such as Braque, Picasso, and Derain in spaces such as the Salon d'Automne as long as they did not show Jewish artists (such as Modigliani, Soutine, and Chagall). Michèle Cone, "Tricolor Painting in Vichy France, 1940–44," *The Art Bulletin* 74, no. 2 (June 1992), 199. The exhibition of avant-garde art was also permitted in occupied Denmark, including "Bellevue: 13 Artists in a Tent" from May 17 to June 15, 1941, by the experimental group Helhesten, which served as a laboratory for Cobra and Situationist International. See Kerry Greaves, "Spring Is Here: 13 Artists in a Tent," in *The Danish Avant-Garde and World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 136–169.

5 See Cornelis van Haarlem, *St. Sebastian*, 1592, Dickinson Gallery, London, and Gerrit van Honthorst, *Saint Sebastian*, 1623, National Gallery, London.

6 See Ype Koopmans, *In de schaduw van morgen: Neorealisme in Nederland*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 204.

7 See George Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 41–43.

8 See Roger Griffin, introduction to *The Fascist Revolution*, by George Mosse, xxiv, xxxiv, and Mosse, "Fascist Aesthetics and Society: Some Considerations," in *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, edited by George Mosse (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 39.

9 Ibid., 40.

10 Willink maintained a friendship with the German artist Herbert Behrens-Hangeler for much of his life. The two exchanged correspondence for years.

11 Carel Willink, "Ter omlijsting. Bij de schilders in dit boek," in *Balans: Algemeen jaarboek der Nederlandsche kunsten* (Maastricht: Leiter-Nypels, 1930), 28.

12 Willink's contributed prints to clandestine books of poetry made in his characteristic Neorealist style that featured foreboding skies and classicized statuary and temples. His imagery was based on subject matter inspired by the poems that they illustrated in the following books: Edy du Perron, *Een Grote Stilte*, Orpheus, no. 11 (The Hague: A. A. Stols, 1941); Martinus Nijhoff, *De Vogel* (The Hague, A. A. Stols, 1941); Wolfgang Cordan (pseudonym for Henrich Wolfgang Horn), *Orion Lieder* (Amsterdam: Akademische Verlagsanstalt Pantheon, 1941); Wolfgang Cordan, *Brod und Wein* (Amsterdam: Akademische Verlagsanstalt Pantheon, 1941); Ed Hoornik, *Tweespalt: Gedichten* (The Hague: A. A. Stols, 1943). Both books published for Akademische Verlagsanstalt Pantheon were in German.

13 Ed Gerdes purchased *The Preacher* in 1942 from the Carel van Lier Gallery in Amsterdam. Fransje Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst: De Geschiedenis van de collectieve 20ste Eeuwse Kunst van het Ministerie van OCW 1932–1992* (Amsterdam and Leiden: Instituut Collectie Nederland in samenwerking met Primavera Pers, 2007), 130–131.

14 See Uwe Puscher, *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich. Sprache. Rasse. Religion* (Bonn: VG Bild-Kunst, 2001), 29 as cited in Teresa Retzer, "The Resurgence of Blood and Soil: Symbols and Artefacts of Völkische Siedlungen and Neo-Nazi Villages in Germany," *Shift Journal*, no. 11 (2019).
15 Petropoulos, "The Establishment of the National Socialist Cultural Bureaucracy, 1933–1936," in *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 23.
16 Hildegard Brenner, "Art in the Political Power Struggle of 1933 and 1934," in *Republic to Reich: The Making of the Nazi Revolution, Ten Essays*, edited by Hajo Holborn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 424.
17 Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, 10, 27.
18 See Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 176, 328–329.
19 Gerhard Richter, "Face-Off," *Monatshefte* 90, no. 4 (Winter 1998), 417, 425.
20 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 85–86.
21 The artist society ASB (1926 to 1930) exhibited "Realists" such as Toorop and Willink alongside De Stijl painters and architects like Piet Mondrian and Gerrit Rietveld. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of ASB.
22 The museum had purchased a non-abstract Mondrian watercolor *Chrysanthemum in a Glass* in 1924. Mondrian's non-objective painting *Composition with Color Fields*, 1928, had also entered the collection the year it was completed, but as a donation from A. P. van Hoey Smith. According to Carel Blotkamp, only the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague rivaled Boijmans's reputation as an institution supportive to modernists at the time. The Stedelijk was not that well known for modern art at the time. Carel Blotkamp, "Hannema, Mondrian, Koch," in *Collecting for the Public: Works That Made a Difference* (London: Paul Holberton, 2016), 86. While many in the NSB exhibited a preference for völkisch subject matter, several Party members involved in the running of the Kultuurkamer, including Ed Gerdes, artist Arnout Colnot, and Boijmans Museum director Hannema saw the benefit of getting well-known artists to participate in state exhibitions, and saw an important place for modern painting. Blotkamp, "Hannema, Mondrian, Koch," 88.
23 The critic for the newspaper *Voorwaarts* praised Koch's *Shooting Gallery* as exhibiting the strongest natural talent in comparison to the other exhibiting artists (Willink and Kor Postma) because of "the power of his brush, his strong line (and) his oppressively gloomy mood." See "Drie jongere schilders. Gemeenschappelijke tentoonstelling in den Rotterdamschen Kring. Een sterk plastisch en natuurlijk talent," *Voorwaarts: Sociaal-democratisch dagblad* (October 28, 1931), 10. Pieter Koomen for *Algemeen Handelsblad* agreed, noting the "penetrating attention" that Koch's *Shooting Gallery* demanded, and citing this painting as the reason why Koch should be seen as "undoubtedly one of the most important" of the young Dutch painters. See Pieter Koomen, "Kunst te Rotterdam. Rotterdamsche Kring: Pijke Koch, Kor Postma, A. C. Willink," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (November 5, 1931), 9.
24 Carel Blotkamp suspects that Hannema may have raised the funds with the help of his circle of friends. J. G. van Gelder, a young curator at the Boymans, like many critics who saw the exhibition, heaped praise on the work. Blotkamp, "Hannema, Mondrian, Koch," 89.
25 Ibid., 91.
26 Jan Engelman, "De kunst onder het politieke juk," *Kroniek van hedendaagsche Kunst en Kultuur* 2, no. 10 (October 1937), 298–305.
27 Elsseneur (pseudonym for Pyke Koch), "De uitgeweken Duitsche schrijver Thomas Mann," *Hier Dinaso!* (March 13, 1937), 4.
28 "De 'Ontaarde' Kunst: Protest van Nederlandsche Kunstenaars," *Het Vaderland* (August 31, 1937), 4. See also *De Olympiade Onder Dictatuur*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Gebouw de Geelvnick, 1936).
29 See "Paul F. Sanders en Anton van Duikerken over 'Ontaarde kunst': Bewust vergissing en angst der Nazi-Machthebbers," *Het Volksdagblad: Dagblad voor Nederland* (October 8, 1937), 6.
30 Kasper Niehaus, "Duitsche en 'Ontaarde' kunst: Twee tentoonstellingen te München," *De Telegraaf* (August 3, 1937), 7. Expressionism and Cubism were two movements also practiced in The Netherlands by Dutch Expressionist painters Jan Sluijters, Johan Dijkstra, and Jan Wiegers and Cubists Leo Gestel and early Piet Mondrian.

31 The Dutch version *Ontaarding* was translated by F. M. Jaeger (pseudonym for Maurits Smit) and published by Zutphen in 1893. Inspired by Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso's theory of social Darwinism, Nordau identified weaknesses in western culture, such as the eccentricities of Oscar Wilde, ultimately laying the groundwork for the Nazi campaign against degenerate art in the 1930s. See Peters, "From Nordau to Hitler," 18.
32 His work inspired the famous Dutch writer and psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden to write about the evidence of acute psychological decay and perversion in the paintings of Piet Mondrian and Jan Sluijters in 1909. See Frederik van Eeden, "Gezondheid en verval inkunst naar aanleiding van de tentoonstelling Spoor-Mondriaan-Sluijters," *Op de hoogte: Maandschrift voor de huiskamer* VI (1909), 79–85. Paul Schultze-Naumburg's *Kunst und Rasse (Art and Race)*, 1928, and Alfred Rosenberg's *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts (Myth of the Twentieth Century)*, 1933, are two influential texts from this period that had an impact on National Socialist cultural policy.
33 Maarten Meuldijk, "Ontaarde Kunst: Gezond realisme is onze wensch," *Volk en Vaderland* (September 17, 1937), 6.
34 Ibid.
35 Maarten Meuldijk, "Ontaarde Kunst. Kwakzalverij in de kunstcritiek," *Volk en Vaderland* (August 20, 1937), 6.
36 He also cited their absence from an overview of modern art in the journal Kroniek van Kunst en Kultuur in 1940. See Ype Koopmans, *Magie en Zakelijkheid: Realistische schilderkunst in Nederland 1925–1945*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders Uitgeverij, 1999), 32.
37 See "Onze Kunst van Heden," *De Groene Amsterdammer* 63 (November 25, 1939), 3.
38 See "Protestexpositie tegen 'Onze Kunst van Heden'," *De Telegraaf* (November 6, 1939), 4, and "Onze Kunst van Heden: Een protest tegen een protest," *De Tijd* (November 14, 1939), 2.
39 "Een protest tegen een protest: Over de weigering van schilders om aan de tentoonstelling. Kunst van Heden' deel te nemen," *Het Volksblad* (November 29, 1939), 4.
40 "Manifestatie of toeval?," *Zaans volksblad: Sociaal-democratisch dagblad* (December 11, 1939), 8.
41 It is likely that Viola was referring to a painting now titled *Oude boer Walcheren* at the Kröller-Müller Museum, which fits this description. The catalogue raisonné does not list this exhibition under either this painting or her *Zelfportret met bruine hoed*, 1938 at the Stedelijk Museum, which was illustrated in the Viola article. Maria Viola, "Willinks, Hynckes, Charley, Toorop, Schuhmacher. Tentoonstelling bij van Lier," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (December 12, 1939), 3de blad, 9.
42 Nico de Haas, "A. C. Willink's Werk in het Museum-Boymans, te Rotterdam," *Het Nationale Dagblad* (October 28, 1939), 7.
43 L. K., "Schilderijen van A. C. Willink," *De Standaard* (October 24, 1938), 10.
44 Kaspar Niehaus, "Klassiek door de natuur. A. C. Willink, een talentvol schilder," *De Telegraaf* (October 22, 1939), 9.
45 Nico de Haas, "A. C. Willink's Werk in het Museum-Boymans, te Rotterdam," 7.
46 See Chapter 6.
47 Koch also includes the figurative artist Ch. Roelofsz in this list. See Pyke Koch, "Over de Kunst," *De Waag* (January 8, 1940), 368. Koch was likely referring to Paul Sanders's article "Elf nieuwe schilderijen van A. C. Willink," *Het Volk*, avondblad (October 22, 1938), 6. Claartje Wesselink made this identification in *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer: Geschiedenis en Herinnering* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 139. In the *Het Volk* article Sanders does not actually specify "Eastern" neighbors, but he certainly implied it, writing, "I believe that Willink has more kindred spirits than people suspect. They probably have to be sought across the border moreso than in our own country."
48 In a letter dated 1942 from Pyke Koch to Carel Willink, Koch formally asked Willink if he could include the latter alongside himself and Hynckes as examples of the "Neorealists or Magic Realists from this country." Koch was referencing an article that he had written, and which was intended to be read as a speech for the radio. See letter from Koch to Willink dated 1942, Carel Willink Archives. It is unknown whether or not Willink replied.
49 Jeroen Dewulf, "The Netherlands Under German Occupation," in *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature During the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 48.

50 That summer the preceding Prime Minister Hendrik Colijn of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, still living in The Netherlands, published a pamphlet titled "On the Border of Two Worlds" that laid out the inevitability of the German takeover and called for acceptance of the new government. See Hendrik Colijn, *Op de grens van twee werelden* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1940). On April 9, 1940, the Danish government issued a statement encouraging the people not to engage in resistance activities and to cooperate with the German authorities (see Kerry Greaves, "Helhesten and the War," in *The Danish Avant-Garde and World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 71). During the Occupation de Geer laid out his ideas in his highly controversial pamphlet titled "Synthesis in the War" that instructed the public to find common cause with the Germans such as religious beliefs and traditions. See Dirck Jan de Geer, *De synthese in den oorlog* (Rotterdam: Uitgave van Sijn & Zonen, 1942).
51 Passive resistance activities included helping to hide Jewish *onderduikers* (people in hiding), publishing resistance material, and cutting communication lines for the Germans.
52 Jeroen Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature During the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 67.
53 All political parties except for the NSB became illegal the following year.
54 One notable exception was Kultuurkamer leader Tobie Goedewaagen.
55 Hitler even demanded a prohibition on propaganda promoting Dietsland, Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance*, 46–47.
56 Jennifer Foray, *Visions of Empire in the Nazi-Occupied Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 97.
57 James Kennedy, *A Concise History of The Netherlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 372. The fact that Goedewaagen supported the Greater Germanic Reich was a source of conflict between the two men, which eventually led Mussert to remove him from the NSB in 1943. See van Berkel, *Dr. Tobie Goedewaagen (1895–1980)*, 310–318.
58 It is not confirmed that Pyke Koch owned this songbook, and it does not appear in the archives, but because of his affiliation with Verdinaso there is a strong possibility that he may have seen it.
59 van Tilborgh and Ouwekerk first made this iconographic reading. See Annemiek Ouwekerk and Louis van Tilborgh, *Een schilderij centraal*: *Zelfportret met zwarte band van Pyke Koch* (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1980), 14.
60 Engelman, *Pyke Koch* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1941), 19. As Wesselink has argued more recently, the fact that Koch viewed earlier drafts of the manuscript and did not demand that Engelman excise this reading from his draft, suggests that the artist agreed with this assessment at the time of its painting. Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 148. While the monograph was published in 1941, the draft that Koch had access to also dates to 1941. It is accessible at the Letterkundig Museum, E 03171 D1.
61 Although Engelman had previously admired anti-democratic politics and Mussolini's rule, by 1934 he denounced the "Caesar-delusion" that he witnessed arising in Hitler's Germany in an article that he wrote for the Catholic journal *De Gemeenschap*. See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 148 and Jan Engelman, "In Duitsland," *De Gemeenschap* 10 (1934), 484.
62 While Koch made revisions to *March Song* in the summer of 1940, he claimed that he destroyed the painting due to its inferior quality. Wesselink has suggested that there may have been political reasons for doing so. See Undated letter from Koch to Jan Engelman, Letterkundig Museum, E.3171 B.2, and Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 145. The 1995 Pyke Koch exhibition catalogue claims that Koch wrote a letter (of no specific date) in 1941 to his friend J. C. (Ocky) van Boetzelaer indicating that he was no longer enthusiastic about the New Order, in reference to the "idea that I had been pursuing." Despite my attempts to track down this letter, its whereabouts are unknown. The letter is not in the Pyke Koch archive, and Carel Blotkamp said to me that he does not have a copy of it. See Carel Blotkamp, "Het onzichtbare oeuvre," in *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans van Beuningen, 1995), 16–17.
63 From the time of its founding in 1918, the Dutch system embraced aesthetic diversity; its public museums hosted exhibitions of modern artists working in non-objective (De Stijl), Expressionist, and figurative styles. The OKW (Departement van Onderwijs, Kunsten en Wetenschappen) would be renamed the Department of Education, Science and Culture Protection (Departement

van Opvoeding, Wetenschap en Kultuurbescherming, or OWK) under the Occupation and would thereafter only oversee scientific publications and textbooks.

64 All civil servants had to fill out an Ariërverklaring in the occupied Netherlands. Because the four-part registration procedure was not finished by the war's end, many artists did not fill out their Ariërverklaring and none of the artists registering for Kultuurkamer officially completed the process. See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 65; Dick Last and Rolf Wolfswinkel, *Anne Frank and After: Dutch Holocaust Literature in Historical Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 36.

65 Membership to the NKK was supposed to be compulsory once the organization was going to be fully operational.

66 Peters, "From Nordau to Hitler," 28.

67 Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 25–26.

68 Two of Piet Mondrian's paintings appeared in the 1937 Munich Degenerate Art show. See Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, "Crazy at Any Price," in *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Modern Germany, 1937*, edited by Olaf Peters, Ronald Lauder, Renée Price, Bernhard Fulda and Steven Lindberg, exh. cat. (New York: Neue Galerie, 2014), 43. For criticism of De Stijl in the Dutch National Socialist press, see Marius van Lokhorst, "Nederlandsche Kunst te Karlsruhe," *De Schouw* (September 15, 1942), 422–423.

69 Bart van der Leck produced book plates for Bremmer student Madeleine de Vlam and the art dealer Nieuwenhuizen Segaar, for example. For details on Bart van der Leck's graphic design work during the war, see Cees Hilhorst, "Bart van der Leck de gerijpte jaren 1918–1958," in *Bart van der Leck*, edited by Toos van Kooten (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1994), 151.

70 Hans Mulder and Wesselink claim that the artists' resistance movement began in spirit following the May 1940 German invasion, but that clandestine activities such as "cultural evening" salons, exhibitions, and publishing really started to take off across The Netherlands in 1943. See Hans Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting: Een onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930–1945* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978), 271–272; Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 77. The more prominent resistance figures included modernist sculptor Gerrit van der Veen, who petitioned Seyss-Inquart for the right not to join the Kultuurkamer, and constructivist painter and illustrator Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman; both men were ultimately arrested and executed by the Gestapo in 1944 and 1945 because of their involvement in the resistance. Mulder, *Kunst in Crisis en Bezetting*, 275, 283.

71 Ibid., 229.

72 Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 30.

73 Meuldijk was one of the artists represented in the 1941 Cologne show "Niederländische Kunst in Köln." The anthology also included his 1937 article "Ontaarde Kunst: Gezond realisme is onze wensch," *Volk en Vaderland*.

74 Maarten Meuldijk, *Ontaarde Kunst: Een aantal opstellen over beeldende kunst* (Amsterdam: De Amsterdamsche Keurkamer, 1940), 55. Meuldijk had originally published these essays in the NSB magazine *Volk en Vaderland*. See also Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 146; Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst*, 115.

75 Edgar Fernhout (1912–1974) was the son of Charley Toorop and the Dutch philosopher Henk Fernhout. He began painting professionally in 1932, turning to abstracted landscapes after the war.

76 Meuldijk, *Ontaarde Kunst* (1940), 30. When Meuldijk mentioned Charley Toorop by name, he seems to suggest that her earlier, more spiritual work should not be deemed degenerate, but implies that this does not hold true for the paintings from her mature period. See Ibid., 54. Meuldijk had first published this text in a 1937 article for *Volk en Vaderland* largely aimed against Jan Engelman. See Maarten Meuldijk, "Ontaarde Kunst. Criticus Jan Engelman op de barricade," *Volk en Vaderland* (August 27, 1937), 6.

77 Ibid., 32–33.

78 Olaf Peters, "New Objectivity and 'Totalitarianism': The Reception of Weimar's Modernity in the Third Reich and the German Democratic Republic," in *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919–1933*, edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2015), 78.

79 This led to the hiring members of the less cynical "right wing" for faculty positions, including Alexander Kanoldt, Franz Radziwill, Georg Schrimpf, and Theo Champion. Ibid., 78–80.

Radziwill was supported by the powerful Gauleiter Karl Röver in northwestern Germany. See James A. van Dyke, *Franz Radziwill and the Contradictions of German Art History, 1919–1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 129–130.

80 The name *Neue deutsche Romantiek* derived from a 1933 exhibition in Hannover exhibition under that title. Ibid., 70–71. The use of this term (New German Romanticism) may have been a way for the Nazi regime to legitimate Neue Sachlichkeit by drawing comparisons to Caspar David Friedrich and other German nineteenth-century painters. See Olaf Peters, "Eine demokratische Kunst? Aspekte der Neuen Sachlichkeit set 1930," in *Zeitnah Weltfern. Bilder der Neuen Sachlichkeit*, edited by Anke Brakhage and Beate Reese, exh. cat. (Würzburg: Städtische Galerie, 1998), 24. Otto Dix was dismissed from his post at the Dresden Academy, while George Grosz fled to the United States. Max Beckman was forced to leave Germany and came to Amsterdam in 1937, where he stayed until 1947, when he moved to the United States.

81 Van Dyke, *Franz Radziwill and the Contradictions of German Art History, 1919–1945*, 72–73.

82 Ibid., 50, 122.

83 David Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism: The Art of the Great Disorder 1918–1924* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1999), 186, note 211; Steve Plumb, *Neue Sachlichkeit 1918–33: Unity and Diversity of an Art Movement* (Amsterdam and New York: Brill, 2006), 146.

84 See Chapter 1 for more on the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* literature movement.

85 Kuyle claimed that Koch was not equipped to meet the new public need for art that had arrived with the event of the German invasion on May 10, 1940. See Albert Kuyle, " 'Wat kunnen wij doen voor de kunst' vroeg Pijke Koch," *De Weg* (November 30, 1940), 8.

86 The artist Arnout Colnot was also a strong supporter of Koch's work.

87 He also made some of the museum's most important acquisitions of modernist works as well as Old Master works, such as Hieronymus Bosch's *The Pedlar*, c. 1500.

88 Dirk Hannema, *Het Museum Boymans te Rotterdam: Een beknopte beschrijving van het nieuwe gebouw, ter gelegenheid van de opening op 6 juli 1935*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Het Museum, 1935).

89 Wesselink sees the exhibition "Hulpwerk Beeldende Kunst van de Nederlandsche Volksdienst" (Aid Work Visual Arts of the Dutch Public Service), as a turning point. It was held from August 1 to September 1, 1942, at the Rijksmuseum and then from December 15, 1942, to January 15, 1943, at the van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven. The Volksdienst was a social welfare organization modeled after the Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare) in Germany. It organized the exhibition in an effort to fight against kitsch by promoting a true völkisch style for the people. Colnot and Gerdes were against the title of the exhibition, which translates to "Auxiliary Fine Arts from the Dutch People's Service," because of the connotation of being "auxiliary" or dependent/needing help. Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 80. A quote by Karel van Mander also preceded the catalogue.

90 Goedewaagen would claim after the war that he was suspicious of "so-called National Socialist art" and the idea of politicizing art in that way. Fransje Kuyvenhoven argues that Gerdes shared this opinion, which came across in their purchases for the DVK. See Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst*, 133 and NIOD, DOC I548, Map G, Procesverbaal. However, when Goedewaagen was still head of the Kultuurkamer he praised The Netherlands' rich völkisch traditions. See Tobie Goedewaagen, "Rede van Prof. Dr. T. Goedewaagen, "Ter gelegenheid van de plechtige opening der Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer," *De Schouw* 1, no. 10 (June 1, 1942), 217.

91 See Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst*, 117; Marina de Vries, "Schuldige Stillevens," in *Geaarde Kunst: Door de Staat Gekocht '40–'45*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders uitgevers, 2015), 52.

92 Koopmans, *Magie en Zakelijkheid*, 32.

93 Like many in the regime, Goedewaagen was particularly enamored with Rembrandt, whose painterly manner represented for him an evident struggle that he equated to the Dutch spirit. He also kept an open mind about modern art and was particularly fond of Jan Sluijters. See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 28–29.

94 In a book that the philosopher published on Friedrich Nietzsche in 1933, Goedewaagen described the nineteenth-century German as a precursor to these qualities, stating that he had witnessed young people with "the same cons and the same pros; they are averse to transcendent, unhinged religious speculation; they have a romantic artistic aesthetic and sentimentality.

They are looking for a new style, that is zakelijk and vital, they are looking for the action and the game, the sport—everything like Nietzsche." Tobie Goedewaagen, *Nietzsche* (The Hague: Kruseman, 1933), 111. See also Koopmans, *Magie en Zakelijkheid*, 15.

95 An important text on Rembrandt for the National Socialists was the German-language book *Rembrandt als Erzieher* by Julius Langbehn from 1890. It depicted Rembrandt as the ideal "Volkstümlichkeit"—anti-modern, antirational, anti-classical, anti-French, and anti-cosmopolitan (Jewish). See also Lieske Tibbe, "Was Vincent fout in de oorlog?," in *Desipientia, zin en waan 20* (Nijmegen: Organisatie van Studenten Kunstgeschiedenis, 2003), 46.

96 See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 28–29. Although Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*, 1642, was normally on permanent view at the Rijkmuseum in Amsterdam, it went into a secret storage bunker along with many other works of art from the Rijkmuseum and Stedelijk Museum during the German Occupation. See Gregor Langfeld, Hein Aalders and Margreeth Soeting, *The Stedelijk Museum and the Second World War*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bas Lubberhuizen, 2015).

97 See Mulder, *Kunst in Crisis en Bezetting*, 227–228; "De Rijkscommissaris Bij Nederlandsche Kunstschilders," *Twentsch Dagblad* (December 9, 1940), 2de blad, 1.

98 Parts of a speech given by Seyss-Inquart after he visited the studios of these Dutch painters were reproduced in "De Rijkscommissaris bij Nederlandsche kunstschilders: Een rede over verplichting en roeping tegen het kunstleven," *Het Nationale Dagblad* (December 9, 1940), 7. He claimed that the Dutch Old Masters represent the pinnacle of the development of painting, like the Greeks' contribution to sculpture and the Viennese to music.

6 Representing "Westland" and the Greater Germanic Imagination

Even before the German Occupation of The Netherlands was underway, the Third Reich found ways to use the cultural sphere as a space to narrate the harmonious relations that the country had long maintained with her Dutch neighbors. In fact, when the German invasion began on May 10, 1940, the Stedelijk Museum was in the midst of hosting a large-scale exhibition of German paintings called "West-Duitsche Kunst 'Der Deutsche Westen'" (West German Art) from April 20 to May 19.[1] It was to be the first exhibition organized with the express goal of contributing to the process of cross-cultural understanding between the two nations.[2]

Planning for the show began in 1939 as a collaboration between the Deutsch-Niederländische Gesellschaft, or DNG (The German-Dutch Association) and the Kölnischer Kunstverein (Cologne Art Association), a progressive German art society. The event that resulted from this partnership intended to mark the 100th anniversary of the DNG.[3] While the involvement of Stedelijk Museum Director David Roëll in the organization of this exhibition may seem surprising given his dedication to supporting persecuted "degenerate" artists, its ultimate realization evinces the importance that had been placed on avoiding controversy at all costs in The Netherlands.[4] Indeed, the Stedelijk show was likely held due to pressure from the Dutch government, for which the status of The Netherlands as a neutral country meant that it could not refuse hosting exhibitions by any of its neighbors, including Germany.[5]

The final execution of the show elicited mixed reviews from critics on opposing ideological poles. While left-leaning Jan Engelman viewed the exhibition as a "crude" way of enforcing a highly naturalistic and didactic style, pro-German Kaspar Niehaus praised the remarkable talent on view. He saw the collection of works on display as helping to bridge the cultural divide through the universal language of art, even comparing the German paintings to the kind of mountain landscape by "our own (Carel) Willink."[6] In any case, "West-Duitsche Kunst" had set the stage for what would develop into a series of exchange exhibitions between the two countries whose stated goal was to inspire the younger generation of artists. The foreword to the catalogue spoke of promoting the knowledge shared between the two brother civilizations and announced the organizations' intentions to soon exhibit works by living Dutch painters in Germany.[7]

This 1940 exhibition is a precursor to what was yet to come over the next two years following the German invasion in May. During that short window of time, the painter Pyke Koch played a direct role in influencing the tastes of German-appointed Dutch officials. He is largely responsible, I argue, for prompting these cultural leaders to adopt Neorealism as a style that could properly represent The Netherlands in its new form as the western branch of the Greater Germanic Reich. His perspective on the cultural utility

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of this modernist figurative idiom—while not in complete alignment with his superiors—had the effect of running roughshod over the subtle differences that distinguished the style and subject matter of Koch, Carel Willink, Raoul Hynckes, Dick Ket, and Wim Schuhmacher. In certain ways, Koch's involvement in the regime's new cultural policy initiatives had the effect of curbing even his own artistic autonomy.

What was this new policy environment that shifted artistic practices and allegiances? From 1940 to 1942, under the auspices of Reich Commissar for The Netherlands Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the newly installed Dutch civilian government set up the propaganda ministry, the Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten (Department of Public Information and the Arts), or DVK. This chapter shall examine the ways in which a number of paintings by Koch, Willink, and Hynckes—artists soon to be labeled the "core Magic Realists"—came to be used by the DVK in their propaganda exhibitions and publications as something representative of a strong, hygienic youth culture shared by the Dutch and Germans alike. Works by Ket and Schuhmacher were also co-opted to a lesser extent, while the paintings of Charley Toorop were not. While many of the objects selected—and often featured quite prominently—by the DVK featured strange, idiosyncratic, and sometimes cinematic imagery critical of Dutch culture, any such subtleties were overshadowed by the organization's curatorial strategies. The historical circumstances laid out in this chapter will elucidate the impossibility of retaining nuance in figurative painting once it has been politicized. In my estimation, this narrative also brings to light the brief and problematic reframing of the Magic Realist tendency in the occupied Netherlands.

Beginning in early 1941, Pyke Koch briefly worked for the DVK and left an indelible mark on the propaganda department's larger aesthetic vision. As an official consultant to fellow artist and guild leader Ed Gerdes in the nascent Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer (Dutch Chamber of Culture), he had his eye on promoting Neorealism—which he called Magic Realism—the very aesthetic tendency that had led gallerists, critics, and curators to take notice of him. Koch's agenda fit well with that of Gerdes, who sought to collect and exhibit works of art that were typically Dutch rather than German.[8] While this prerogative may have led the guild leader to preference traditional Dutch genres, Gerdes's collection record occasionally included more idiosyncratic examples. I contend that Pyke Koch's assignment to select artists for various exchange exhibitions with western Germany played a contributing role in steering Gerdes's tastes. Led by his own aesthetic proclivities, Koch cast a spotlight onto other Neorealist painters who he opted to include in these exhibitions (Willink, Hynckes, Schuhmacher, and Ket), all of whom had little say over the inclusion of their artwork. Their reactions, ranging from amiable compliance (Hynckes) to polite stonewalling (Willink), exemplify the coercive power of the regime's top-down and heavily centralized way of making decisions.

In early 1941 Koch assisted Gerdes with setting up the Rijkscollectie (The Royal Collection, or National Collection under the Occupation) and was tasked with compiling a list of artists whose work would be sought for purchase. These new acquisitions were to be housed in state museums such as the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Mauritshuis in The Hague, expanding upon the institutions' pre-existing collections.[9] Both men took a trip together to Berlin to take a meeting with Joseph Goebbels in January of that year; on this multi-day tour of Germany, Koch and Gerdes were educated in the great sites of German culture and history.[10] Not long after this excursion, however, Koch began to have differences with Gerdes. Following a dispute between the two men over the lack of financial resources needed to realize his vision for the National Collection, Koch took his distance from the Kultuurkamer, ultimately leaving the organization and the Party altogether in

April of that year.[11] In postwar accounts Koch attempted to massage the bad optics of this sordid period in his life, citing his early defense of National Socialism as more of a reaction against Communism, which he perceived as the real existential threat.[12]

Before their falling out, Koch was instructed by Gerdes to help put together an exhibition in Munich in the early months of 1941.[13] It was to be co-organized by the DVK and the newly formed Nederlandsch-Duitsche Kultuurgemeenschap (Dutch-German Cultural Association), or NDK. Seyss-Inquart had established the NDK on February 15, 1941, for the purpose of planning cultural exchange events between Germany and The Netherlands. Ultimately moved to Cologne under the title "Nederlandische Kunst in Köln" (Dutch Art in Cologne), the show—like the West-Duitsche exhibition the year prior—opened on April 20, Hitler's birthday.[14] While neither Gerdes nor Koch cited the reason for the move from Munich to Cologne in their correspondence, the newfound location in Westphalia—close to the Dutch/German border—would have been a logical choice for an exhibition series with an aim of priming the Dutch public for absorption into West Germany, a region that was going to take the name of "Westland" in the Greater Germanic Reich.[15]

In an undated letter, likely from late 1940 or early 1941, Koch wrote that he was honored that Gerdes had asked him to help with the exhibition for the express purpose of emphasizing Neorealist painting. His words indicated that Gerdes already had his eye on Hynckes's work. It was Koch who lobbied to bring in paintings by Willink but noted that they were not forthcoming, and suggested that it might be necessary to force the issue by purchasing his work. These kinds of acquisitions, he said, could form the beginnings of the proposed National Collection.[16] For his part, Gerdes asserted in his correspondence to Koch that he aimed to exhibit "avant-garde" works of art, such as Hynckes's *De IJzeren Hand* (The Iron Hand), 1935 (Figure 6.1), now in the Nagelhout Collection in Holten—revealing just how pliable the term "avant-garde" had become.[17] In the painting, an armored gauntlet fitted for a Baroque-era knight rests atop a loop rapier with an elaborately designed hilt made of sweeping, interwoven wrought metal. The stiff metal glove sits motionless, a result of the metal plates of the fingers being locked into position, recalling in its mechanical simulacrum of a hand the uncanny tailor dummies that populated the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. In the end, *Iron Hand* was not included in the

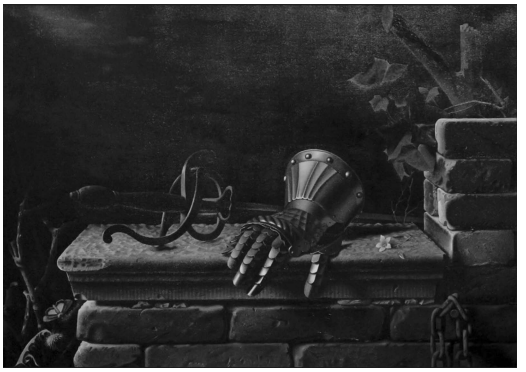

Figure 6.1 Raoul Hynckes, *IJzeren Hand* (Iron Hand), 1935, oil on canvas, 62 × 86 cm.
Source: Nagelhout Collection.

Cologne show, since the art dealer Carel van Lier reported that the work was in a private collection. The guild leader's interest in the work, however, points to the style and subject matter that he had envisioned for the exchange exhibitions.[18]

Correspondence between Gerdes and Koch demonstrates the limited margin of freedom that Seyss-Inquart extended to Dutch organizers when planning their exhibitions for tour in Germany. As of 1941, the only public outlet for Dutch artwork of modernist inflection—given the exclusion of abstraction—existed in the exhibitions organized under the auspices of the DVK in both The Netherlands and Germany. Koch and Hynckes were the only two Neorealists included in the Cologne show because of their will to collaborate; the DVK had not yet found the workarounds that they would later use to exhibit the work of uncooperative artists—especially Willink. Their paintings figured alongside the expressionist-tinged paintings of Jan Sluijters as well as examples of more conservative artists such as Gerdes and Amsterdam Academy professor G. V. A. Röling.[19] Everything on display was figurative, non-abstract, and featured traditional genres to promote stereotypical and nationalistic ideas about The Netherlands, including: Dutch landscapes with ice skaters, still lifes of tulips, and portraits of young blonde women. Many paintings were chosen for their emphasis on "Germanic" cultural traits and Aryan ethnic types, to make the Nazi authorities and the public perceive Dutch culture as "healthy" in contrast to other occupied subjects—notably peoples of Slavic ethnicity in Poland.[20] The exhibition served as a testing ground for a series of exchange exhibitions that would be held across Westphalia. It mixed the agitated lines and bold colors of Sluijters and Johan Dijkstra alongside images of völkisch types by Wilm Wouters who was known for his paintings of young girls in traditional Volendam dress or Jan Heyse's serene images of mothers and their children. Even with their subversive twists, Koch's *Zelfportret met zwarte band* (Self-Portrait with Black Band), 1937 (Figure 4.4), and Hynckes's *Stilleven met gebroken kruik* (Still Life with Broken Pitcher), 1933 (Figure 6.2), blended in with the works on display, detracting from the artists' distinctive approaches to figuration.[21]

Given the absence of abstract art from the Cologne show, the Neorealist examples and the Expressionist style of Jan Sluijters provided modernist alternatives to the deeply conservative naturalism of the other works of art on view. Illustrated in the opening pages of the catalogue, Hynckes's painting was the only image pictured that struck a pessimistic tone. If the broken clay vessel was not enough, it also featured a dead bird, bare branches, two cinderblock bricks, and a pair of metal pincers. Yet, compared to the contemporary objects (the thermos, pick, rugged boots, and backpack) in Ed Gerdes's *Stilleven met Bergbeklimmer* (Mountain Climber Still Life; Figure 6.3) the things in Hynckes's painting emphasize a debt to a historic still life tradition rather than its departure from it, mitigating the nonconformity of the image.

It was Koch who also selected for inclusion his own *Self-Portrait with Black Band* loaned from the Centraal Museum collection. Although Koch did not document his reasons for including this self-portrait, he likely chose the work for its imperious presence and modern sensibility. This reading was one that the panel had enjoyed in the Dutch press upon its acquisition in 1938, when it was described it as "a small painting of remarkable monumentality and fascinating power" and as an "expression of the authoritarian spirit of our time."[22] By choosing this work, Koch established a protocol that he would use for the exchange shows: displaying paintings borrowed from museum collections for the purpose of advertising the sale exhibitions.[23] Despite its ambiguity and the unacknowledged gender-nonconforming references to Carl Dreyer's film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band* fit well with the other physical types

Figure 6.2 Raoul Hynckes, *Stilleven met gebroken kruik/De Tang* (Still Life with Broken Pitcher/ The Tongs), 1933, oil on canvas, 85 × 60 cm.

Source: Private collection (photo: Pridhams Auctions).

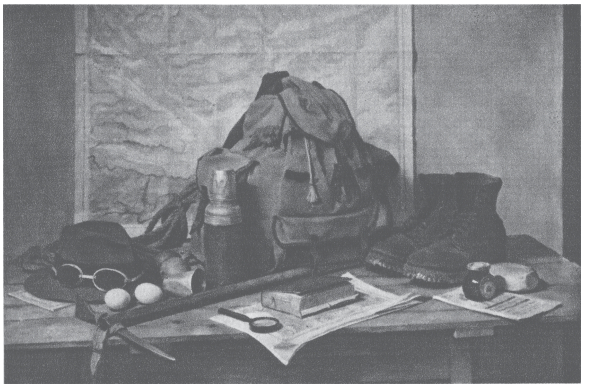

Figure 6.3 Ed Gerdes, *Stilleven met Bergklimmer* (Climbing Still Life), c. 1941.

Source: Reproduced in the exhibition catalogue for "Niederländische Kunst in Köln" (Dutch Art in Cologne), 1941. Permission of Julia Dorothee Gerdes.

depicted in the exhibition of hygienic, youthful Dutch people. Some of these examples include Han Hulsbergen's painting *Anneke* and G. V. A. Röling's portrait of his wife (Figure 6.4). The latter depicts a young, blonde Dutch woman seated against an idyllic landscape, with horses grazing in the marshland behind her—a painting that could be made to fit the blond-haired, blue-eyed preferences of Nazi blood-and-soil typologies,

Figure 6.4 G.V.A. Röling, *Portrait de ma femme* (Portrait of My Wife), 1932, oil on canvas, 150 × 100 cm.

Source: Stedelijk Museum (photo: Stedelijk Museum). Permission of Marte Röling.

despite the lack of any such intentionality by the painter.[24] In the context of this exhibition, Koch's self-portrait forcefully communicated its socio-political message of the "new man," enhanced by the völkisch imagery that now surrounded it. Encircled by much more convention-abiding works of art, the Neorealists' paintings lost some of their critical edge.

A few months after the run of "Dutch Art in Cologne," a show of neighboring Western German artists titled "Westfaalsch-nederrijnsche Kunst van den Hedendaagschen Tijd" (Westphalian-Nether-Rhinish Art of Today) took place at the Rijksmuseum, from August to September of 1941. The works in the exhibition included regional landscapes by Alfred Rasenberger, Aryan youths by Paul Waldow, and peasants by Alfred Kitzig.[25] Organized by the Hagen Museum Director Dr. Gerhard Brüns in consultation with Ed Gerdes and members of the Dutch-German Cultural Association (H.C. van Maasdijk and Dr. Franz Wehofisch), the show was intended to be the first installment in a series of never-realized exhibitions—the other half of the intended cultural exchange. One of its goals was to draw aesthetic equivalences between the German works on display and the Dutch Old Masters on view at the Rijksmuseum. Goedewaagen opened the show with a speech signaling his hope that the exhibition would help to revive the spirit of Rembrandt in his very "own house," obsequiously describing the Old Master as the "most Germanic painter who ever lived."[26] His recasting of the great Golden Age painter as "German" became an important tool to help visualize the two nations' shared legacy of culture and blood. Due to the strict geographic scope of artists to be included in the show and Nazi cultural policy within Germany, the Rijksmuseum exhibition did not feature the same Magic Realist or Expressionist tendencies as "Dutch Art in Cologne." Nevertheless, Seyss-Inquart acknowledged in his introduction for the Rijkmuseum catalogue that the original Cologne show had provided the model that the Dutch exhibitions in western Germany would adopt going forward. He noted that its success had already led to the next show in Hagen that opened that July.[27]

While the "Westphalian-Nether-Rhinish Art of Today" at the Rijksmuseum did not inspire Dutch cultural operatives to embark on an expanded series of like exhibitions, "Dutch Art in Cologne" had, by contrast, established a prototype that its organizers hoped would lead to a successful run of shows. It is not a coincidence that Cologne was where the DVK—with Koch's steering—positioned the figurative imagery and crisp, finished surfaces of Neorealism as the healthy alternative to modernist experimentalism. In his written contribution to the introduction of the Cologne exhibition catalogue, the artist Jan van Anrooy explained how the sharp and technically masterful realism of Koch, Hynckes, and Gerdes had defeated the "individualism" of Expressionism, and Pointillism. He also held the more painterly style of Jan Sluijters in high esteem because it eschewed the "fire" and "flicker" of Expressionism, while harnessing the same "blossoming force" that typified seventeenth-century painting.[28] The Dutch art critic Jos de Gruyter had a slightly more nuanced take in his review of the Cologne show for the formerly left-wing newspaper *Het Vaderland* (The Fatherland), which had transformed itself into a pro-German organ following the Occupation.[29] De Gruyter was known for his love of expressionist-style painting with sensitive, socially conscious subject matter, as well as his extraordinarily diplomatic takes on matters concerning the Dutch art world.[30] He specifically mentioned Neorealism as one of the styles, alongside the "free colorists" (such as van Anrooy) and the "tonalists" (like Anthonie Pieter Schotel) that were well suited to such a cultural exchange between The Netherlands and Germany, because of their obvious aesthetic debt to the Dutch tradition.[31]

One major contributing factor to such a reframing of Neorealism, I would argue, is its exhibition in Germany and the significant restrictions that had been placed on art criticism in the Reich. By this time across the Dutch border, critics were still allotted a degree of free expression when articulating nuances and idiosyncrasies in their reviews that their German counterparts could not. For example, De Gruyter's assessment did not paper over the distinct pessimism in the Neorealists' work; when writing about Koch's and Hynckes's contributions, he was careful to recognize the complex—and not at all nationalistic—character of the latter's canvas *Broken Pitcher*, describing the still life as a visualization of "the collapse of our culture." He also made note of several absences, notably the Neorealists Willink and Toorop as well as the Social Realist Hendrik Chabot. His inclusion of the latter two left-wing artists was not only typical of the critic's own personal aesthetic and political inclinations, but was also exemplary of the relative berth of opinion given to critics early in the Occupation, even in a right-wing, pro-German publication such as *Het Vaderland*. De Gruyter praised the "sober, sincere sense of reality" in the "new style of the present," which went beyond "mere folk art." He also stressed the importance of reinforcing the bond with the past, even establishing a firm connection between the exhibition's aesthetic goals and the choice of Cologne as the site for the exhibition. He noted that Cologne, like Bruges, was a city that kept one foot in the past without being archaic or museum-like, and that it beautifully brought together the best of northern tradition, as symbolized by its famed cathedral, and the dynamism of the modern world.[32] His critique made the case for Neorealism as a style that visualized the continuity between past and present, given its embrace of Old Master techniques and motifs combined with a modernist aesthetic.

By contrast, the German press simply reiterated the text of the catalogue in its coverage of the exhibition—which had the effect of completely concealing any subversive qualities. The newspaper *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* (German Newspaper in The Netherlands)—established in 1940 and targeted toward German soldiers and

administrators living in the occupied Netherlands—described the exhibition with language directly derived from van Anrooy's phrasing in the introduction. Journalist F.M. Huebner wrote that Gerdes, during his presentation on opening night, preferred those works that demonstrated an exceptionally heightened "fidelity to the object" rather than the "individualistic conceptions," of Expressionist, subjective artists who employed a more painterly brushstroke.[33] Benno Branscheid, writing for the newspaper the *Westfälische Tageszeitung* (Westphalian Daily Newspaper) in Germany, used nearly identical wording in his description—even in his selection of the "keen-eyed" painters Pyke Koch, Raoul Hynckes, and Ed Gerdes, whose "pronounced realism" stood in contrast to the more Expressionist work of artists such as Jan Sluijters.[34] That both newspapers used such similar vocabulary and emphasized the same aspects of the exhibition is a direct result of Joseph Goebbels's 1936 ban on art criticism, which replaced the genre with objective "Berichten" or reports.[35] As a result, any German exhibition coverage could not legally express the subjective opinions of the author. Art writing thus took on a formulaic character in newspapers published within Germany or distributed to Germans throughout the Greater Reich. Any questionable tone or subject matter—or more importantly any sense of individualism—visible in the paintings described was routinely denied by the German reviewers, who instead drew attention to the artists' "loyalty" or devotion to the subject depicted.

Following the ideas seeded in the plan for the original Cologne show, Gerdes trudged on without Koch's help and organized the exhibition series "Niederländische Kunst der Gegenwart" (Dutch Art of Today) that traveled to Hagen, Osnabrück, and Oldenburg in 1941. The following year a second installment of the exhibition series was kicked off at the Pulchri Studio in The Hague, which then traveled to Freiburg, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, back to Hagen, and finally Gelsenkirchen in March of 1943.[36] All of the cities were in western Germany, proximate to the Dutch border, with the express aim of fostering a unified identity among the population that lived in that area. One possible model for this series of exchange exhibitions was the show "Ausstellung Französischer Kunst der Gegenwart" (French Art of the Present) held in Berlin at the Preußische Akademie der Künste and featuring works by Matisse, Vlaminck, Braque, and Léger and curated by Robert Rey, Inspector General of the Fine Arts. Held in 1937—three years before the German Wehrmacht invasion—this exhibition was supposed to initiate a reciprocal cultural exchange project with the Reich, but the German sculpture show destined for the Jeu de Paume was never realized. The show included paintings such as Henri Matisse's *Branch of Lilacs*, 1914 (Metropolitan Museum, New York), surrounded by more academic works that helped to draw out the more conservative stylistic notes and subject matter. Furthermore, the exhibition included only French-born, non-Jewish artists in an effort to Aryanize its roster, placing birthplaces alongside names as a way of legitimizing the artists' rootedness in their home country.[37] While they may share a similar title, the Dutch-German exchange shows were distinct in their cultural goals from "French Art of the Present" and every other exhibition that Nazi Germany organized abroad. For one thing, the DVK exhibitions were the only such series to my knowledge uniquely centered around the cultivation of a shared Westphalian/Nether-Rhinish identity, with the intent to strengthen the cultural bonds between the two notionally brother nations.[38]

Although Koch no longer had an organizing role in the exhibition series, Gerdes went on to plan the shows without him, replicating many of the curatorial choices that the two men had made for the original Cologne show.[39] For the DVK exhibitions in The Netherlands, Gerdes included several of the same works exhibited in Cologne, with the addition

of more Neorealist paintings and drawings, including those by Willink, Schuhmacher, and Ket.[40] This checklist stayed the same in Stuttgart (October–November) and the second Hagen show held from December 1942 to February 1943, though with the addition of Willink's *De Prediker* (The Preacher), 1937 (Figure 5.1).[41]

It is also important to note that unlike the majority of the works on display, those by the Neorealists were among the few that were not for sale and often included examples that the DVK had just bought for its own permanent collection.[42] Willink's *The Preacher* was among them; it was one of the costliest works that the organization ultimately purchased, having acquired it from the Carel van Lier gallery in 1942.[43] Ironically, the content of the painting—as ambiguous as it is—is antithetical to conveying the kind of pro-German propaganda message demanded by the regime. Willink's martyrial garb and posture speak to the role of the artist as a worker in the realm of ideas, to spread wisdom—and warning—to the public. In the context of the DVK collection and the exchange exhibitions, however, the painting's open-ended character, and its likely critique of the very policies that co-opted it, became lost. Ed Gerdes, who in 1942 was the sole figure responsible for building the national collection and organizing the exhibitions, likely saw something else in the painting. While no record of his opinion exists in the archives, it is very likely that he viewed it as a showpiece that would draw people through the doors due to its virtuosic composition and digestible iconographic references. After all, growing visitor numbers in the exchange exhibitions, which peaked with the Karlsruhe show, demonstrated the wisdom of such a strategy.[44]

This tendency to ignore or simply overlook the strange, cryptic, and unsettling imagery in Carel Willink's paintings extended to the appearance of his work in the 1941 exhibitions. *The White House* and *Bad Tidings*, in particular, focus on desolate urban landscapes and the human figure's place within it, by then a recurrent motif in the artist's repertoire.[45] Lost within the context of the Dutch-German exhibitions was the inherent tension that suffused these works. The human figures in *Bad Tidings*, for example, remain suspended in action, thwarting the communication of an urgent message that can never be delivered. On the left side of the canvas, a woman appears to be moving at a running pace. Her dress lifts in the back as she lunges forward with a closed envelope in one hand, clearly reaching out to a recipient walking by on the sidewalk to the far right, who at this point in the narrative, seems unaware of her presence. Willink's characteristically gloomy sky sets the tone of the scene, like a portent of the bad news yet to come. In its heightened drama and conscious attention to a suggested, yet frozen action, the composition also has a filmic quality that had not gone unnoticed by his contemporary critics in the 1930s.[46] In fact, the very modernist characteristics that art reviewers consistently noted in Willink's paintings throughout the prior decade had by the time of the exchange shows been completely ignored or strategically deflected by the exhibition's organizers as well as the Party-line critics.[47]

By including *Bad Tidings* and several of his other canvases, the DVK circumvented the will of Willink and others like him, using his paintings to forge a cultural bond between The Netherlands and the greater German Reich. The first Hagen exhibition also included the artist's 1936 painting *Arcadian Landscape*, featuring a classical statue of a Greek goddess against a view of Islands in the Mediterranean. Gerdes had specifically requested to borrow these two canvases from the Stedelijk Museum, which had purchased them in the 1930s. Although Willink did not want his paintings to leave the country during the Occupation and the Stedelijk director David Röell tried to honor his wishes, the DVK managed to obtain them, likely by exerting pressure on the municipal council.[48] Due to

his influence over Gerdes's tastes as well as the aesthetic vision for the DVK, Koch's tendency to categorize himself, Willink, and Hynckes as "the essential Neorealists or Magic Realists" inspired the organization to seek out paintings by these three artists for their exhibitions and the National Collection, even after Koch's departure.[49]

Whether or not these artists approved the exhibition of their paintings in this context held little sway, particularly because anyone whose artwork was kept in municipal collections could not prevent its physical and ideological appropriation by the DVK. To give but one revealing example, Gerhardus Knuttel, director of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague (since renamed the Kunstmuseum) was reluctant to provide loans for the German exhibitions, claiming that it was inappropriate to engage in such cultural exchange with an occupying power, particularly one with whom the exiled official government was at war. Moreover, Knuttel disagreed with the concept that art should be a government matter. He did not wish to loan works of art by artists who did not grant him permission to do so, stating that it would be a violation of the author's intellectual property. Speaking specifically of Dick Ket, who had died in 1940, Knuttel wanted to "act in the spirit" of the artist by not cooperating with the authorities. In his rebuttal, the Head of the Department of General Propaganda D. J. Croo disagreed on the principles, claiming that if a work of art was in a public collection such as the Gemeentemuseum, and paid for by public or government funds, then it "belongs to the Dutch people." In the end, only the Department could decide whether any artist would be exhibited or not.[50]

While it may be true that the DVK had the authority to behave with virtual impunity when it came to co-opting works of art that were either held in public collections or available for purchase in a gallery, Pyke Koch's influence in shaping the newfound department reached its limit when it came to Charley Toorop. Of the artists that Koch had singled out in his personal correspondence and in his public statements, and who Jos de Gruyter mentioned in his criticism, Toorop was the only one who never appeared in the exchange exhibitions. This was not for a lack of trying on the part of the organization, at least at the time that Koch was still working with the DVK. As preparations for the first exchange exhibition in Hagen were being made, the BBK guild sent letters to artists directly soliciting artworks that could be included in the show—among the recipients was Toorop.[51] While there is no evidence that she responded to their invitations directly, the artist most certainly would have refused to cooperate. At that time Toorop was unequivocal about her feelings toward the Kultuurkamer, writing in a letter in April of 1942 that she would under no circumstances join the organization and would even risk prison if necessary.[52] Her inclusion on the list was—despite her wishes—likely at the behest of Koch, who had a long-standing relationship with the artist.[53] Indeed, after Koch had left his post at the Kultuurkamer in June of 1941, the organization seemed to have lost interest in acquiring her art. When the acting Head of the Department of General Propaganda at the DVK D. J. du Croo solicited the Kröller-Müller Museum (then called the Dutch Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller) for paintings from its collection to include in the Hagen show, he was offered Toorop's *Zelfportret tegen palet* (Self-Portrait in Front of a Palette) from 1934 (Figure 4.10) but did not accept.[54] Her painting, along with two nudes by Sluijters and seven of the nine sculptures by John Rädecker were among those that the DVK declined, accepting instead six works by various other artists as well as Willink's *The White House*.[55] In my view, it was likely Toorop's Communist sympathies and the focus on her identity as a female painter in this self-portrait that made her less appealing to Gerdes, who was tasked with seeking out artists whose work represented National Socialist values.[56] Despite Gerdes's own differences with this imperative and his desire

to realize a National Collection that would best reflect a vision of Dutch cultural pride inflected with a pan-Germanic National Socialist ethos, Toorop's far-left politics were likely an insurmountable obstacle for her inclusion.[57]

Beginning with the July 1941 Hagen exhibition and continuing on to Osnabrück in October of that year, a handful of other idiosyncratic works also appeared: Johan Ponsioen's *Scarecrow*, 1942, which featured an empty suit behind barbed wire, and Hynckes's *The Sponge of Bitterness*, an allegory of moral decay that updates Christian iconography by replacing the *Arma Christi* (instruments of the Passion)—such as the ladder, sponge, and spear—with modern versions of those same implements.[58] In the heavily censored, pro-German press, Neorealist paintings received praise for the way that they "combined excellent technique with an exciting and new vision."[59] The Hagen exhibition—which Koch had helped to plan—foregrounded the stylistic tendencies that both he and Gerdes hoped to promote by including all of the major Neorealist painters, with the exception of Toorop. While Ket's portrait of his father and Schuhmacher's Mediterranean landscapes tended to blend into the more conservative fare, the selection of works by Koch, Willink, and Hynckes counted among the same paintings reproduced in Nazi propaganda material in 1942, and which separated them from the rest.[60] The prominence given to these three artists within the aforementioned exhibitions and on the covers of Nazi trade magazines owes to Koch's early influence at the DVK, which continued to resonate even after he left the organization. Beginning with Koch's early championing of their work, the consistent grouping of these three artists led to their recognition as the core Neorealists. I would go so far as to say that they had become a powerful marketing tool for the regime because they plausibly retained the integrity of Old Master themes and techniques, while also updating those very characteristics for a modern audience.[61] This approach better served the Reich's foreign policy when it came to the role of culture. Seyss-Inquart felt it necessary to grant the Aryan "brother" nations a degree of freedom in how to implement their cultural policy, rather than imposing a Germanic identity too forcefully—a tack, he perceived, that could easily backfire.

For his part, Hynckes cultivated a relationship with German patrons through local intermediaries. In 1941 Goedewaagen and Gerdes toured the studios of both Jan Sluijters and Hynckes because both painters had received the most favorable votes from the public in a poll taken at a recent exhibition.[62] Hynckes obliged these studio visits with the idea of selling his work directly to Nazi officials; his motivations were likely not ideological in nature—he was not affiliated with a party and remained largely apolitical—but were probably opportunistic.[63] The artist later claimed that he was merely worried about simply following the law during the Occupation. Cultural historian Claartje Wesselink has rightly remarked that although this line of reasoning was quite typical for Dutch artists of the period, and may have held an element of truth, Hynckes was especially enthusiastic about selling to German patrons.[64]

To his credit, Willink had resisted the Germans and wanted to have that history reflected in the record. He consistently turned down requests to loan his works to the DVK and rebuffed Gerdes's offer to become an "elite painter" for a new guild in the German Netherlands (the Kultuurkamer), where he could potentially earn up to 12,000 guilders per year.[65] The DVK's leadership, however, always found ways around Willink's refusals to cooperate.[66] In October of 1941 Gerdes requested two of his "best" paintings to be included in the Oldenburg show, to which the artist replied that he had none available.[67] By the time that the exhibition was making its way to Freiburg, the organization successfully loaned the artist's *Pillar Saint*, 1939, from the Gemeentemuseum in The

Hague. Despite his futile attempts to resist this co-option, Koch's lingering influence had led Willink's images, and Neorealism in general, to take on a pivotal role in the regime's cultural plan to recruit young artists with the introduction of a new propaganda publication.

At the same time that the exchange exhibitions were moving around western Germany, Pyke Koch's 1937 painting *Self-Portrait with Black Band* graced the cover of the inaugural January 15, 1942, issue of the aptly titled magazine *De Schouw* (Figure 6.5), the Kultuurkamer's official propaganda organ edited by Tobie Goedewaagen. Taking its name from an archaic Dutch term referring to a show or exhibition, *De Schouw* was a trade magazine for working artists, that is, for artists who wanted to work in the occupied Netherlands and who would perforce have to join the Kultuurkamer.[68] That the editors chose an artist's self-portrait, and specifically Koch's image of militant devotion and steely resolve—at least according to their interpretation—was a brilliant move as it implied the artist's compliant self-Nazification. The Kultuurkamer leadership sought ways to encourage artists to willingly adhere as members. For this reason they used *De Schouw* to promote völkisch values, to hold the Dutch tradition in high regard, to draw strong connections to the German tradition, and finally to show that modern, young painters were working in a way that upheld these ideals. Only two months after the publication of the first issue, the Kultuurkamer began to send registration documents to the home addresses of every known artist working in The Netherlands and reached out to exhibiting societies for member lists.

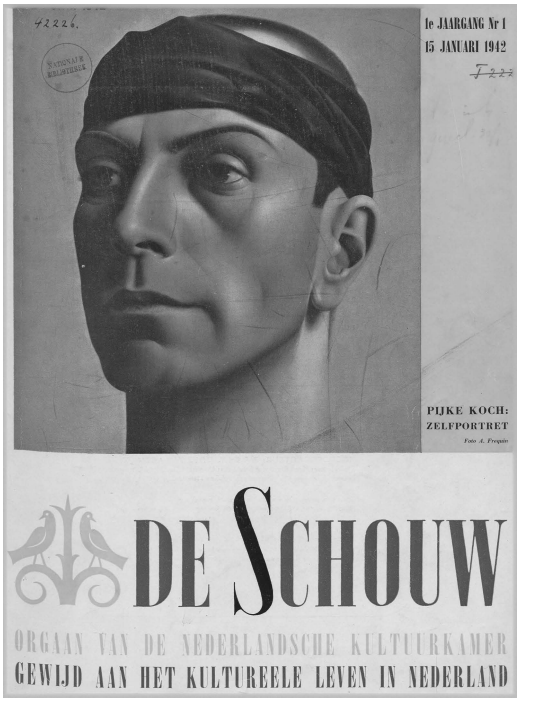

Figure 6.5 Cover of the inaugural issue of *De Schouw,* January 15, 1941.
Source: © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/c/o Pictoright, Amsterdam.

The magazine—like the Kultuurkamer itself—had to manage contradictions: instruct artists on hygienic Germanic aesthetics, while also inspiring enthusiasm for the new regime. Created in part as a solution to rogue reporting on the Kultuurkamer and its organization by newspapers such as *Het Nationale Dagblad*, *De Schouw* helped to combat dissent.[69] Another—and perhaps more important objective—was to announce to the Dutch art community that membership was now required and the *vrijbuiterij* (free-for-all) had come to an end.[70] As the NSB Secretary General S.M.S. de Ranitz outlined in the first issue, a well-functioning trade union and the cultural interests of the *volksgemeenschap* (Dutch people) depended on their adherence.[71] By providing discounted subscriptions and engaging renowned publisher Elsevier, known for its high-quality ink and paper, the magazine also looked for ways to appeal to the aesthetic sensibilities of the artists that they wished to attract and offered the promise of publishing their work.[72]

Despite the prominent place given to his self-portrait on the front cover, 1940–1942 had been a tumultuous—and politically precarious—period for Koch. As noted earlier, in a letter addressed to the NSB headquarters dated April 28, 1941, Koch had broken all formal ties with the NSB, even though he would continue to correspond with the office of the Reich Commissar.[73] He had automatically become a member the year before, when Verdinaso, the Dutch Fascist Party to which he had belonged since 1934, merged with the NSB.[74] With the notable exception of his design work on a series of postage stamps with völkisch motifs for the civilian government in 1943, Koch removed himself from politics. It is unclear if he remained infatuated with the principles of Verdinaso, but certainly the Fascist Party's fixation on social hierarchy had appealed to him from the beginning. Viewing himself as a potential member of the future political elite, Koch believed in a society structured according to corporate groups with common interests, one that "affirms the irremediable, fruitful and beneficent inequality of men," as Mussolini put it.[75] In this utopia, Koch would take his place at the top of the hierarchy among the monied classes, an honor afforded to him through his marriage into an aristocratic Dutch family.[76] For this reason he was drawn to the type of anti-democratic, corporatist organization offered by Italian Fascism, rather than Nazism, for the latter promoted an ideology and policies driven by race, while continuing to persecute avant-garde artists and the intellectual elite.[77] Koch's departure from the NSB, however, should not be read as an indication that the artist found the Party's anti-Semitic rhetoric distasteful. On the contrary, the artist had previously had a high-level of involvement in Verdinaso, which—unlike the Italian Fascist Party—had been an avowedly anti-Jewish organization since its inception. Indeed, Koch's published remarks about conspiracy theories in Nazi and Fascist publications provide indisputable documentation of his anti-Semitism.[78] In one notable example from January of 1941, Koch made an implicit jab against the DVK's use of the word "guild" instead of "union," for the latter had taken on connotations of internationally oriented Marxist worker's associations, the kind that Koch believed to be manipulated by Jews.[79]

With the reproduction of Koch's image on the first cover, Neorealism had become enshrined as the most representative—although not the exclusive—style of the Dutch territory in the Greater Reich, one that merged The Netherlands' proud artistic traditions with its mechanically disciplined, sleek and modern future. Even if Koch had left the NSB and the cultural ministry by the time his self-portrait appeared on the magazine, the Kultuurkamer already began to use Neorealism to its advantage: it featured paintings by Koch, Ket, Willink, and Hynckes on a total of four covers of *De Schouw* over the course

of its brief run (1942–1945), including three in its first year.[80] The emphasis on modernist artists was particularly strong in the first few issues, which reproduced works by painter Jan Sluijters and sculptor Rädecker. By March of 1942 the journal began to foreground artists demonstrating a particular Dutch "essence" representative of the völkisch ideal in the Greater Germanic Reich: Old Masters Johannes Vermeer and Rembrandt van Rijn, the celebrated nineteenth-century painter Vincent van Gogh (a "degenerate" artist within Germany), and Dutch academic painters G. V. A. Röling and Han Hulsbergen. On rare occasions the magazine even included non-Dutch artists such as Germans Albrecht Dürer and Arno Breker, as well as the French sculptor Aristide Maillol, who was greatly admired by the Germans as an exemplar of *Volkskunst* (Popular Art).[81]

In the opening pages of the first issue, in an introduction titled "Rebirth," editor Tobie Goedewaagen described the defining character of the Dutch national spirit as a "calm self-consciousness." The Dutch man "lived aloof from the world in a civilized enjoyment of himself." But, Goedewaagen continued, this bearing of self-assurance changed for better or worse in the year 1940 with the German invasion. His tone was fatalistic, yet optimistic; he attempted to cultivate in the magazine's readership the desire to "arise from the vitality of youth" so as not to disappear into the irrelevance of the past, signaling that Dutch culture had to adapt if it was to endure the inevitable assimilation into the Greater Germanic Reich. War, he suggested, was a cleansing mechanism that would facilitate a cultural reawakening in The Netherlands, forcing the Dutch people to define their national spirit—as Brueghel had done in the years just preceding the Eighty Years' War (also known as the Dutch War of Independence; 1568–1648)—by painting a world that was in the process of falling apart and then reconstructing itself.[82] "Rebirth," he wrote,

> is the break with the past and the opening of a new perspective, healing from disease through the life force. . . . Behind us lies the disease of a dilapidated humanistic culture: a pale remembrance of former greatness, the age-old phenomenon of culture. . . . In front of us lies the still unexplored land of a young Dutch culture, rejuvenated by the test of a world revolution, which will ravage and purify the body, soul and spirit."[83]

He described a world at a crossroads, in which the Dutch people had only two choices—"the left," which would lead to isolation and a return to a dying past, or the (National Socialist) "right," which represented rebirth alongside fellow members of Germanic blood in their fight against "chaos and Asiatism."[84]

The language used in this introduction strikes an odd balance between defeatist and determined; Goedewaagen's words seem to reframe the Dutch traditions of non-interventionism and consensus building as outdatedly naïve and weak. Goedewaagen was not so subtly calling upon artists to visualize his idea for a new "forward-looking" Dutch spirit made in the image of the ideology shared with their German brothers. Koch's 1937 *Self-Portrait with Black Band* on the cover obviously embodied the heroic, unflinching features of this "new man" and the ideals of a strident, forward-moving society, one that could sweep away the old, decrepit aspects of culture that kept the Dutch tied to the past. It did not matter that Koch in his black headband had not been inspired by Nazi imagery but by Mussolini's Fascism (allied with Hitler since 1936) or that its composition and Koch's posture borrowed heavily from the 1928 film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. In this context it represented a subject of the New Order with a "forward-looking" gaze, an artist dedicated to a new and regimented society, and an exemplary style that was smooth, unsentimental, and cold as ice.

This disregard for the inherent ambiguity in Koch's 1937 self-portrait soon extended to the work that he made during the Occupation. In the above-mentioned inaugural issue, *De Schouw* established the goals and objectives of the organization, first in the introduction by Tobie Goedewaagen and then in S. M. S. de Ranitz's statement outlining the structure of the Kultuurkamer. Official Delegate of the Museum Industry Dirk Hannema also produced an article titled "A New Creation by Pyke Koch," which introduced the artist's 1941 monochrome charcoal and pencil drawing titled *Het Wachten* (Figure 0.1). The five anonymous women depicted in this urban scene stand before a metal grille and next to a lamppost, their faces partially obscured by hat brims and shadows. Later interpretations placed the women at a bus stop in Utrecht, "waiting" for public transportation while standing before the *Gerechtshof* (Court of Justice) in Utrecht, an amalgam of real people and figures derived from the artist's imagination.[85]

Originally intended as a preparatory sketch for a painting that was never realized, the DVK bought the drawing in June of 1941 for 5000 guilders, the largest recorded sum paid for any work of art in the collection.[86] As Hannema wrote in *De Schouw*: "Pyke Koch is one of our contemporary painters, who is the most strongly rooted in the time period. This time strives for connectedness and strength in addition to the harsh reality, which combines romance with heroism." In this quotation, Hannema made the case for Koch as the face of the Kultuurkamer and mentioned him as part of a trio that included Raoul Hynckes and Carel Willink. He proclaimed these core Magic Realists as masters of the figure, still life, and landscape respectively, whose "art most clearly reveals the aversion to the unboundedness of the various 'isms' of the era."[87]

What had Hannema meant when he wrote that Koch was "rooted in the time period" and in what role did contemporaneity play for The Netherlands under the Germanic Reich? One answer may be that Hannema was captivated by the attitude of the female figures, frozen as they are in an airless and ill-defined urban location, wearing up-to-date fashions that exude their knowledge of modern sartorial trends. Koch himself described this new cartoon study as very "experimental" for him both "artistically and technically."[88] But the question remains: what can be made of Koch's innovations, or rather those novel aspects upon which he never elaborated precisely?

I would argue that Koch's treatment of time and space lie at the crux of untangling the "newness" that was perceived in this drawing. There is something about its composition that seems to play with, manipulate, or even deny the passage of time. Indeed, considering his attention to the spatial integrity of each figure, this composition in certain ways recalls the static monumentality of a classical Greek frieze, but one with a 1940s sensibility. Each of the women commands a strong, individuated presence as communicated by the demeanor and glances of their respective visages.[89] The weight of the composition is evenly balanced across the picture plane, but each figure seems to exist as physically isolated from the rest, even if the second woman from the left and the second from the right may be exchanging a silent form of communication through their guarded, non-verbal exchange and inkling of a knowing smile. The nature of their interaction is deliberately ambiguous and precisely choreographed, through the tilt of their heads and the angles of their hats. Smoothed of physical irregularities or other distracting details, the women of *The Wait* present an immaculate, almost streamlined surface-level appearance, more like consumer products than flesh-and-blood human beings.

What was it about this composition that centered ambiguity to such a degree? I would argue that cinema—which had always served as a crucial aesthetic source for Koch since he embarked on a painting career in the late 1920s—is key to reading the codes, character

types, and figural arrangement that produce the stifling atmosphere in this drawing. One affective note palpable in *The Wait* is unease; his imagery is at furthest remove from the proud peasants of völkisch painting. It projects instead the air of enigma, even intrigue, given the shadows, glances, and eerie nighttime lighting. The frigid mood and pronounced spacing between the figures resemble the distancing effects that can be achieved in film through the construction of a cinematic tableau, and which remind the audience of the medium's constructed artificiality. One genre in particular—film noir—which had not yet at that time been given a name, and which some critics argue was still in its nascent stage, may be a potential source. This was a handful of years before the term would be put to wider use, when French critics in cinéclubs began write about the tendency's emergence in American crime films in the 1940s. Recognizing several of its key characteristics, including moral ambiguity, the criminal underworld, and fatalism, these critics codified what they saw as a pessimistic counterbalance to the more common narrative of American pluck and optimism.[90]

Koch was not the only figurative painter to draw from these cynical sources at the height of World War II. The filmic cast that Koch has brought to this painting bears a strong resemblance to a better-known modernist—an American working at the same time—Edward Hopper, who by 1941 had arrived independently at a similarly stylized urban cool. Like Koch, Hopper's paintings reflected cinema's ability to condense social codes and narrative formulas into something easily digestible.[91] Perhaps most importantly, the figures—or rather characters—in Hopper's paintings, like in those of Koch, existed in what Deborah Lyons has described as a "strangely quasi-narrative status. They conduct silent commerce, are bewildered travelers, or are embroiled in dysfunctional relationships in which an oddly cold sexual tension simmers under the surface."[92] Indeed Hopper's famed 1942 painting *Nighthawks* (at The Art institute of Chicago) fits this description. The compositions depicts four presumed strangers sitting in silence in a late-night café; it is a vignette of the paradoxical social isolation that exist in a large, metropolitan environment, one that is characteristic of the noiresque rumination on psychological detachment.

We see a similar treatment in Koch's 1941 drawing: the two women set off from the rest of the group notably face one other, but it is impossible to tell whether or not they are making eye contact. Their glances and body language seem to respond to an overarching sense of paranoia or distrust typical of a period of heightened surveillance. Koch's figures appear aloof and alienated—especially given the sociability stereotypically attributed to women. The ensemble seems at odds with the harmonious body politic that was supposed to be acting as a unified whole. He made further references to cinema in his preferred type of "hard-boiled" women—marked by their broad shoulders, jaunty hats and chiseled features, as well as their location in an eerily lit street, marked by the metal bars and stark shadows. Increasingly visible in films of the late 1930s were schemer or seductress types, such as *Dark Victory* starring Bette Davis (1939), whose presence likely arose in response to the large-scale entry of women into the workforce.[93] By 1941 such a prototype existed in direct contradiction to cultural imperatives of the Greater Germanic Reich, a time when Dutch film houses were censored from showing anything but films made by the Axis powers or German-occupied territories. For example, in that very year the local film press aggressively promoted the 1937 Norwegian film *Laila* (George Schnéevoigt) about a young woman who joins a band of Sámi herders who rescue her from a pack of wolves as a baby. Perfectly fitting the Aryan völkisch prototype, Laila could not have been further from the hard-boiled women that suited Koch's taste.[94]

While the heavy shadows, estranged sociality, and modern-woman types described above can be seen in films dating back to the 1920s and early '30s by Fritz Lang and others, by the turn of the next decade these traits were hardening into tropes. One example is the Humphrey Bogart vehicle *King of the Underworld*, released in both the United States and in The Netherlands in 1939—a film that Koch would have had several opportunities to see.[95] Despite its description in the Dutch press as a "typical gangster film" with wise guy archetypes named Butch, Slick, and Mugsy, the movie actually featured Kay Francis in the starring role, although Bogart took top billing due to the cachet of his famous persona.[96] A number of scenes in the film share film noir tropes that appear in Koch's drawing, such as a wide frame suggestive of surveillance, an emphasis on cast shadows, the prison-like metal bars, and the prominence given to the street lamp. These are characteristic that feature in the opening credits of Seiler's film as well as a pivotal early scene in which the camera views Francis's character, Dr. Carole Nelson through the vantage point of police officers watching her through a window from across a city street, while they are monitoring a gangster hideout where her husband is working. Like any number of film references that appear in Pyke Koch's oeuvre—such as the artist's debt to Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jean d'Arc*—my attribution of this source to *The Wait* remains speculative, yet the generic resonances apparent in Koch's drawing weigh heavily on the visual evidence. And much like the oeuvre of Edward Hopper, this movie also speaks to Koch's ongoing preoccupation with modern representations of women, as seen in his drawing for *The Wait*. *King of the Underworld* exemplifies the gender-subversive character of this emerging genre in the way that the female protagonist—a doctor by the name of Carole Nelson (played by Francis)—saved the day by foiling an entire gang of mobsters, leading to the death of the leader and arrest of his crew and preventing the assassination of her boyfriend. Coerced by the mob into performing medical care for them, Nelson escaped by temporarily blinding the men with chemically tainted eye drops and then steering them into police custody. Emphasizing the emasculation of this predicament, the last words uttered by mob boss Joe Gurney (Humphrey Bogart) were "don't tell anyone I was tripped up by a dame."

While the question of gender broached in the above example is important to determine whether or not a subversive valence can be read into Koch's *The Wait*, a more pointed interrogation of genre, might in fact be instructive, given its function in the drawing. Proto-noir, inspired by hard-boiled crime fiction as well as both German Expressionist and Hollywood gangster films, is an idiom known for testing the parameters of genre creation in and of itself, and was often defined by its consistent engagement with the themes of aberrance and vice. Considering its origin in detective novels, noir—as a general rule—evinced a generalized lack of faith in both bureaucratic and capitalist systems that had been borne of the uncertainty over the self-made individual and his or her place within modern American society.[97] Opposed to the idea that a rational world was the arbiter of truth capable of providing a degree of psychological safety, the dark themes explored in the detective and gangster storylines from this era revealed a state of affairs that had been forever interrupted by the very real possibility of violence and death recently made evident during World War II.[98] When translated into cinematic form, this new hard-boiled moral code oriented itself toward the desire for—or acquisition of—money and sex at any cost, a zero-sum trope that expressed American-style capitalist values.[99] One example of this trope is embodied in the duplicitous nature of the femme fatale, who uses her beguiling charm to coerce men into doing their bidding. In *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941)—often cited as the first true noir film—the

antagonist Brigid O'Shaughnessy played by Mary Astor used a damsel-in-distress story to manipulate several of the story's main characters. She murders one of the protagonists while framing another, all for the purpose of keeping proceeds from the titular falcon statuette for herself. Through the subtle sleight of hand, transitioning from a brightly lit female subject to the stark, key lighting of a single source, the director Huston used the naturalistic techniques at his disposal to note the distinction between Brigid's public air of innocence and the depravity of her true character.[100] A similar kind of high-contrast play of light against shadow defines the female characters in Koch's composition for *The Wait*, undermining any surety about how to read the moral character of these women. What then, does it mean for an artist like Koch to adopt the tropes and traits of such an ambivalent genre when producing work within a context with such clearly defined political stakes? A more pointed excavation of film noir and its nihilistic treatment of time might be illuminating in this regard.

Much like Magic Realist painting, attempts to define film noir as a genre, phenomenon, or style have often led to unsatisfactory results with dueling, sometimes nebulous categorizations that critics are often at pains to distinguish from dystopian science fiction or horror, for example.[101] When it comes to scholarly treatments of temporality within the genre, however, certain film philosophers have necessarily focused on what noir refuses to say. Some have even attempted to locate a theoretical framework that best defines the fatalistic turn in film noir and adequately describes an externally determined state of transformation, often decided by irrational forces.[102] For the purposes of studying the Koch drawing, Padraic Killeen's recent study might provide the most useful model for this particular moment in film noir. He has theorized that expressions of time were often used in such a way to express an ontological or moral lapse, in which one falls from the grace of rectitude into a liminal zone of relative depravity, a phenomenon that he calls "the dark interval."[103] Expanding upon Gilles Deleuze's notion of the "interval" as an indeterminate length of time that marks an essential transformation, Killeen's "dark" iteration of this concept distinguishes the idea of becoming embedded in the ethical imperatives of decision-making as a free-will exercise from the kind of potentiality embedded within a subject's passivity.[104] In other words, the dark interval represents an intense and overdetermined transformation of the individual, one decided by fate rather than steered from the position of ethical judgment. At stake here is the moral ambiguity at the heart of a nihilistic, difficult-to-define genre, undergirding both the relativity and fallibility of human perceptions and their framings of the legal or political institutions designed to keep society safe. When rendered as a work on paper such as *The Wait*, this noir trope speaks to a moment that was personal for Koch, but which also framed a more generalized societal feeling of disempowerment or lack of absolute faith in the powers that be, describing an experience specific to the Occupation years.

In so far as Koch can express the passage of time in his drawing, he does so by articulating a physical, and by extension social distance that separates the female figures. The concept of "waiting" as the title implies, imbues every aspect of the figural arrangement: their placement at a bus stop, the nonverbal quasi-communication in their glances, the overdetermined stasis of their bodies; their seemingly affectless expressions refuse to perform any kind of narrative function. I would argue that the image appears to represent a temporality that exists outside of time, one that could be interpreted in either of two ways: either in the Deleuzian sense described above and elaborated upon by Killeen, or of the historical, Hitlerian kind as I will describe below. In any case, the ambiguity undergirding this argument lies in the alternate definition of dubbelzinnig: as a double

meaning, which in this case depends just as much on the good faith as on the bad faith interpretation of the beholder. This multivalence is, of course, a function of both the ambiguity and plausible deniability inherent to Koch's drawing and his oeuvre more broadly, particularly during this time period.

Indeed, for a propaganda minister working within the context of the Greater Germanic Reich, the rendering of time via such an aggressively rigid figural arrangement may have had an additional register. The cold demeanor of the figures and their substantial social distance could perhaps be read as communicating a more politicized notion of time—one that George Mosse had later expounded upon in his *General Theory of Fascism*. In assessing the National Socialist conception of history, Mosse described the eternal nature of the Germanic race as being like "the trunk of a tree" in the way that it had endured the thousand years that it had taken to reach its apotheosis under Hitler. This ideal was distinct from the Italian Fascist New Man, who could simultaneously exist in a zone outside of both space and time, while always remaining cognizant of the historical past. Constantly striding forward, he never crystallized in the manner of his German counterpart.[105] Christopher Clark went even further in his appraisal of German millenarianism, arguing that the Führer had in fact disciplined time by bending it to his will, assigning new meaning to important historical dates, and thus reinscribing them like a palimpsest.[106] While the French Revolution had ushered in a *régime d'historicité* that allowed for the "continual reiteration of the new," Hitler repudiated the Enlightenment view of history, instead asserting the persistence of the Germanic race within a state impervious to change.[107]

If we are to take the ideas of Mosse and Clark at face value, it could be argued that Koch's composition in *The Wait* rejects this "eternal" vision of time in certain crucial ways. Given his insistence on the modern clothing and character of these women—the Italian Fascist iteration of time as a politicized construct might seem a better fit, yet there still remains the question of the women's ambivalent social interaction. Pushing the subversive interpretation to the extreme, it is possible to say that Koch was interrupting totalitarian notions of temporality by exploiting the difficult-to-define generic qualities inherent to his potential sources. Indeed, Koch's adoption of these noir qualities opens up more questions than it can answer. Still, what can be made of his use of this American art form if we are to take this source as a given. The fact that Koch detested the capitalist ideology of the United States yet still partook in its cultural products was one of the many paradoxes of this artist—and his style in general—that Hans Mulder described as *dubbelzinnig*.[108]

If indeed the hard-boiled influences evident in this work were sourced from, or at the very least inspired by film noir, then they would certainly be incompatible with the policies of the Kultuurkamer at large. While war and propaganda often eliminate ambiguity, Koch's treatment of human motivation in his drawing really cannot be said to do the same. Rather than evoking eternity, I would argue that Koch's composition displays a kind of inertia. Typical of the "passive" noir hero who simply persists as fate acts upon him or her, the women in his composition do not appear to engage in decisive action of any kind. They are notable for their reluctance, as figures who are trapped by social circumstances larger than themselves. What may be at work here is the burgeoning role of fatalism—an acknowledgment of the lack of control over one's future, no matter how well one plays by the rules.[109] For the organization, as for the Neorealists, the characteristics that made American cinema so appealing were also what rendered it problematic. For this reason, the cultural operatives returned to the same project that Menno ter Braak began fifteen years prior with the Filmliga—to rescue film from Hollywood

decadence and cultural imperialism. In the third issue of *De Schouw*, right-wing critic Peter Verberne made the case for seeing film as an art form, arguing that the medium was the logical conclusion of mankind's desire to consistently seek out more realistic ways of depicting reality. It was a phenomenon that he traced back to the camera obscura of the ancient Greeks, which returned in the verisimilitude of the van Eyck brothers, and finally reinvented itself with a new purpose in photography. He denounced the fact that film had become a low-brow cheap thrill that required little of its viewing audience—and which the innovation of sound technology has helped to undermine.[110]

What was it about *The Wait* that led Goedewaagen to feature the drawing so prominently in the magazine and provoked Gerdes to pay such an inflated price for what was essentially a preparatory sketch? It was likely those very cinematic qualities, I would argue, that gave *The Wait* its modern character. The import of the medium was also not lost on the cultural policy makers in power. By the time the drawing had entered the national collection, film had come to represent for the Kultuurkamer's leadership an important propaganda tool, but one that also entailed a liability due to the medium's undeniable power to penetrate its audience psychologically. In September of 1942 the Kultuurkamer introduced the guild journal *Film en Kultuur*, which was supposed to be the first of many that focused on a specific field in the fine and applied arts.[111] *Film en Kultuur* lamented the commerciality and lack of artistic sensibility in Hollywood movies, which by that point were utterly censored in The Netherlands. Some of this criticism featured coded (as well as blatant) anti-Semitic rhetoric, including Goedewaagen's opening statements in the first issues, where he expressed the desire to disentangle filmmaking from Jewish control—referring to both capital and a certain "mentality."[112] Contributors to the journal, such as G. H. Snitger emphasized film's ability to reach the masses due to the modern nature of the technology, claiming that it was unrivaled in its influence on a moral, cultural, and political level. Despite the fears of many of his contemporaries that film was becoming a wax museum version of reality with new technologies such as 3-D stereoscopy and Smell-O-Vision, Snitger argued that color film could be harnessed to the benefit of the regime. He implied that cinema could be a force for cultural and moral unity, but that it needed to be under the control of völkisch filmmakers.[113]

Koch continued drafting *The Wait* after he left the NSB in April of 1941 and quit working for the DVK. He sold it in its unfinished state in June of that year, after which his relationship with the Kultuurkamer continued to disintegrate. In a letter to his good friend, the poet Jany Holst dated September 12, 1941, Koch claimed that he had no relationship with the German occupier or with Tobie Goedewaagen and that he had become a persona non grata in NSB circles and a "man without a party."[114] As a skeptic of democracy longing for the leadership of an authoritarian who was preferably an intellectual and a member of the cultural elite, Koch had styled himself as an aristocrat whose cultural outlook had been honed by reading Oswald Spengler and Friedrich Nietzsche. His far-right views, particularly those that he articulated in National Socialist publications from 1937 to 1940, place him on the political fringe. In any case, there was really very little room left for him in what he viewed as a Party overrun by petty bourgeois concerns. *The Wait* captured this sense of immobility and paranoia that resulted from Koch's fall from favor. Through the visual inspiration that he drew from film, Koch found an aesthetic language to communicate his alienation from the NSB. The ambiguous title *The Wait*—while directly referencing a bus stop, may also refer to the tense period of transition in which Koch produced the drawing, and which would bring a new, but still undefined order to the Dutch experience. To return to the issue of film noir and

its potential resonance in this drawing—there exists a question embedded within the genre that addresses the violation of an implicit social contract—of certain promises that had been made and reinforced by visual culture.[115] It seems important that Koch selected in this case—as the visual evidence would suggest—an idiom that deals abstrusely with the theme of zero-sum individuality and specious motivation. More than that, I would argue that noir offered Koch an aesthetic language for expressing the kind of "ethical complexity" with which the artist was grappling at that time. It remains unclear whether his ambivalence was directed toward totalitarianism in general, or any specific kind of authoritarian system, the distinction of which did not ultimately matter in a fate-driven world.[116] In that sense, Koch's drawing for *The Wait* was certainly of its time, but perhaps not in the way that Hannema had meant in his introductory text.

One small detail—a fasces symbol embedded in the metal grill to the right of the far-left figure—opens up more questions than it answers.[117] Claartje Wesselink has interpreted the appearance of this bundle of sticks as a reference to judicial power by virtue of its placement within the grate of what has been identified as the Court of Justice in Utrecht.[118] Her reading, however, does not consider the ambiguous relationship between this potent symbol and the uncanny figural composition in the foreground. In his arrangement Koch brought focus onto the reality of day-to-day life in an authoritarian state: the constant threat of surveillance, the palpable fear for one's livelihood, and the risk being cast out of civil society for a politically incorrect opinion. This—albeit hidden—emblem in Koch's drawing reveals yet another important feature of Magic Realism, which often courted an aesthetic that embodied—and even contained—an adversarial relationship between external pressure and internal free will, as seen in the common motifs of enclosure and psychological dissonance between the individual figure and his or her surroundings. Koch's cryptic messaging in *The Wait* also attests to this dynamic by signaling his dissent in a subtle, almost-camouflaged manner.

Over the course of 1942, the tenor of the Dutch-German exchange shows and the pages of *De Schouw* underwent an evolution. Beginning in that year, Gerdes began to curate exhibitions and Goedewaagen published articles that reframed the Neorealists work as part of a tradition-laden, anti–avant-garde heritage; this tonal shift matched a turn in the overarching cultural policy. Raids and deportations of the Jewish population began in early 1942 as well as the implementation of the six-pointed identifying star.[119] Meanwhile, police continued to surveil the non-Jewish population in an effort to suppress all public political speech.[120] In the September 15, 1942, issue of *De Schouw*, which featured Willink's *Pillar Saint* on its cover, Marius van Lokhorst asks in an article whether or not all of the "isms" that had infected Western Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had—with the exception of Piet Mondrian—bypassed The Netherlands entirely. He proclaimed Neorealism as a counter-example to the "degenerate" and "Jewish" styles of Dada and Surrealism, citing the style's matter-of-fact character that, according to him, avoided addressing interior mental or emotional states. Once again Lokhorst named the then identified core trio of artists, this time using the designation "Neorealist"—Koch, Hynckes, and Willink—among those who "stood under the influence of this new zakelijkheid (reality/truth)," and for the first time also lumped guild leader and soon-to-be Kultuurkamer head Ed Gerdes under the label.[121] Of the images that accompanied this article was a rather innocuous work by Ed Gerdes titled *The Cook*, which featured alongside Pyke Koch's *Portrait of Pieter Rudolf Mies*, 1931 and Raoul Hynckes's *Still Life with Herring*, 1941, two paintings that counted among the more conservative examples found in the artists'

respective oeuvres. It was becoming clear by that point that the DVK sought to tame Neorealism in the public sphere.

From 1941 to early 1942, the Neorealists' brooding and uncanny work—now either reframed in the Dutch-German exchange exhibitions, repurposed in the illustrations of *De Schouw*, or excised entirely in the case of Charley Toorop—came to embody the concept of inner-emigration, a term used to describe writers who remained in Germany after 1933, but who clandestinely resisted Nazi rule. Those enigmatic characteristics of the Neorealists' style and content that had long been observed in their paintings and drawings had only disappeared in their Occupation-era reinterpretation, to return again in postwar retrospectives.[122] Even Pyke Koch, the most unambiguously right-wing figure working in this strange, modernist tendency, maintained his commitment to ambiguity at the height of the Occupation. What happened to this kind of modernist figuration when subjected to politicization during a particularly polarized moment in history is a question that can surely be applied much more expansively, and with specificity to each cultural context; the fate of the Neorealists provides one small glimpse.

Embedded within this query is the somewhat international label of Magic Realism, which has since become so broadly applied as to lose any precise definition. For the historical reasons laid out in this chapter, in the postwar Netherlands, the term would take on a meaning that unfortunately contained the aroma of fascism. During the Occupation, however, a time when dissent had become dangerous, the paintings and drawings co-opted, celebrated, and marketed by the DVK had become a microcosm for a more common Dutch experience. Many of the surviving Neorealists entered a psychological, moral, and artistic form of exile, one that resonated with the typical Dutch citizen's disassociation from his or her environment under the Occupation.

Notes

1 "'Der Deutsche Westen' Schilderijententoonstelling in het Stedelijk Museum," *De Tijd* (April 22, 1940), 6.
2 An article from *Het Vaderland* indicates that during planning meetings there was an agreement that the goal of the show was not to exhibit as many West German artists as possible, but rather to display the essence of West German Art and note the similarities with the Dutch tradition. See "Tentoonstelling 'Der Deutsche Westen' Heden Opening," *Het Vaderland* (April 20, 1940), 1.
3 Kasper Niehaus, "West-Duitsche kunst in Stedelijk Museum: Een belangrijk expositie," *De Telegraaf* (April 25, 1940), 7.
4 Director David Roëll and Curator Willem Sandberg purchased and commissioned works by persecuted immigrant artists. They were also by that time preparing for the inevitability of war. In 1938 they constructed a bunker to store and protect the museum's art.
5 See Margreeth Soeting, "The Museum in Wartime," in *The Stedelijk Museum and the Second World War*, edited by Gregor Langfeld, Hein Aalders and Margreeth Soeting, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bas Lubberhuizen, 2015), 50.
6 Jan Engelman, "De Kunst onder het politieke juk," *Kroniek van Hedendaagsche Kunst en Kultuur* 2, no. 10 (October 1937), 298–305; Niehaus, "West-Duitsche kunst in Stedelijk Museum," 7.
7 *West-Duitsche Kunst/"Der Deutsche Westen,"* exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1940), 3–4.
8 Marina de Vries, "Het Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten en Zijn Collectie," in *Geaarde Kunst: Door de Staat Gekocht '40–'45*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders uitgevers, 2015), 22.
9 Ed Gerdes was leader of the guild for Bouwkunst, Beeldende Kunsten en Kunstambacht (Architecture, Visual Arts, and Crafts) or BBK. Koch wrote about these tasks in letters to his friend

the poet Jan Engelman, asking him for advice on who to include in the list. Engelman was not keen on helping him. See letter from Koch to Engelman dated January 1941, Letterkundig Museum, E,3171 B.2, and Claartje Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer: Geschiedenis en Herinnering* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 139.

10 This meeting happened to coincide with a delegation of Dutch youth being greeted by the leader of Hitler Youth Helmuth Möckel on a three-day tour of the capital. Both of these events appear to be part of the civilian government's larger cultural exchange efforts. "Niederländische Künstler bei Dr. Goebbels: Führerabordnung der niederländischen Jugend in der Reichshauptstadt," *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* (January 22, 1941), 1, 4; see also Jan Brand and Kees Boos (eds.), *Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten: In de verzameling van het Gemeentemuseum Arnhem* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992), 34. The Vichy government would participate in a similar tour in October and November of 1941 that brought thirteen artists to Berlin, which included among others Fauvists Maurice de Vlaminck, André Derain, and Kees van Dongen. See Barbara McClosky, *Artists of World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 25.

11 While Koch claimed that he parted ways with Verdinaso because it had been absorbed by the NSB, he may have also left because of disputes with Gerdes over insufficient funds for building the collection and because he went to visit Koch's dealer Carel van Lier without him. (Letter from Koch to Gerdes, c. January 28, 1941, Inv. No. 3402, Toegang 102, NIOD; see also Brand and Boos, *Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten*, 35). Koch also recollected his interaction with Goebbels with disgust, making the specious claim that he only did so to experience the Reich Commissar's "snakelike" personality firsthand. Pyke Koch said this in an interview with Hans Mulder on April 23, 1976; however, Mulder was skeptical for the reason that Koch gave for the visit, citing his writing for the journal *De Waag*. See Hans Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting: Een onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930–1945* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978), 228.

12 Mieke Rijnders, "De voorstelling Waarin ik Leefde," in *De Wereld van Pyke Koch*, edited by Marja Bosma, Roman Koot and Mieke Rijnders (Zwolle and Utrecht: WBOOKS and Centraal Museum, 2017), 42–83.

13 Ibid., 62, 82. See also an undated letter from Pyke Koch to Ed Gerdes in NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3402, which mentions the plan for a show in Munich.

14 Further ideas to bring the show to Munich did not ultimately come to fruition. Gerdes informed Koch that the exhibition that began in Cologne was not traveling to Munich as originally planned, but would instead go to Hagen. He also mentioned an exhibition of Dutch art that was to take place in autumn of 1941 that was never realized. See a letter from Gerdes to Koch dated June 11, 1941, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3402.

15 There may have been other reasons for the move, however. Cologne also had strong diplomatic ties to The Netherlands since the seventeenth century and was the site of an important branch of the DNG. The exhibition was held at the Kölnischen Kunstverein, a museum named after an eponymous historical society.

16 Undated letter from Koch to Gerdes c. January 28, 1941, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3402.

17 See letter from Gerdes to Koch dated January 31, 1941, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3402.

18 Ibid.

19 The Cologne show also featured the work of Maarten Meuldijk, an artist and one of Neorealism's harshest critics. Meuldijk's work would not, however, be included in the exchange exhibitions that followed.

20 Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 55.

21 An alternate title for *The Broken Pitcher* is *The Tongs*.

22 See "De verrijking van ons Stedelijk Kunstbezit," *Utrechste Nieuwsblad*, no. 107 (September 5, 1938), 9; "Het zelfportret van Pijke Koch: Uitdrukking van de autoritaire geest des tijds. Geschenk aan Centraal Museum," *Utrechts Volksblad* (September 7, 1938), 5.

23 Part of their interest was financial. The leadership considered the sale of eighteen out of the ninety-six works of art on display to be a success for the organization, bringing a positive flow of money into its coffers. See the report by the Head of the Department of General Propaganda and "the Exhibitions Office" D. J. du Croo from June 23, 1941, explaining the rationale for the exhibition in Hagen, "Rapport: Uitwisselingstentoonstelling van Nederlandsche Beeldende Kunst te Hagen (Westfalen)," NIOD, Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 2196 and "Staat van verkochte

schilderijen op tentoonstellingen gehouden door het Departement van Volksvoorlichting en kunsten," NIOD, Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3569.

24 Röling's *Portrait de ma femme* was certainly loaned by the Stedelijk Museum, which acquired the painting directly from the artist in 1934. The whereabouts of Han Hulsbergen's *Anneke* are unknown. Hulsbergen's family denies that he painted the work on the grounds of connoisseurship issues and the fact that he never would have allowed the painting to be exhibited by the Germans. However, depending on the owner of the work (sometimes public collections), the exhibitors did not need to—and often did not—ask permission of the artists before showing their work.

25 Seyss-Inquart and Heinrich Vetter, the Oberbürgermeister (mayor) of Hagen wrote introductory statements in the exhibition catalogue. Seyss-Inquart emphasized the cultural kinship between the two nations, while Vetter wrote about the tireless inner strength and work ethic of the people of Sauerland (a mountain range in North Rhine-Westfalia). See the exhibition catalogue *Westfaalsch-nederrijnsche Kunst van den hedendaagschen tijd: Schilderkunst, grafische kunst, beeldhouwkunst*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1941). This exhibition was held from August 2 to September 14, 1941. This appears to be the only exhibition of German artists held in The Netherlands as part of the Dutch-German exchange shows in Westphalia.

26 "Rijkscommissaris opent tentoonstelling in het Rijksmuseum: Uitgelezen gezelschap in de versierde Wagenhof," *Het Volk* (August 4, 1941), 1.

27 See Seyss-Inquart, Introduction to *Westfaalsch-nederrijnsche Kunst van den hedendaagschen tijd*, 1. Claartje Wesselink has more recently described the Cologne event as having established the "artistic face of the New Order." See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer,* 25.

28 See "Zur Einführung," in *Niederländische Kunst in Köln*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Gemäldeausstellung in Kölnischen Kunstverein, 1941), 9–10.

29 *Het Vaderland* was punished after the conclusion of World War II for its pro-German stance and was forced to change its title to *De Nieuwe Courant* until 1951. See Jan van de Plasse and Wim Verbei, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse dagblad en opiniepers* (Amsterdam: Cramwinckel, 2005), 58.

30 In 1937 de Gruyter wrote a review of the dual exhibitions' "Degenerate Art" and the concurrent "Great German Art" held in Munich. In the article he refused to take a position that was either totally approving or disapproving of either show. See Jos de Gruyter, " 'Gezonde' en 'Ontaarde' Kunst," *Het Vaderland* avondblad (September 9, 1937), C1.

31 He even likened the exhibition to a revival of the sort of artistic exchange between the two cultures that Albrecht Dürer had helped carry out in during his visit to Antwerp in 1520–1521. See Jos de Gruyter, "Nederlandsche Schilderkunst te Keulen: Een blik op de stad en haar geschiedenis. Rijnlandsch-Nederlandsche betrekkingen," *Het Vaderland* avondblad (April 22, 1941), B1.

32 Ibid., B1.

33 F. M. Huebner, "Niederländische Malkunst in Köln," *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* (April 5, 1941), 2.

34 "Niederländische Kunst in Köln," *Westfälische Tageszeitung* 90, no. 108 (April 20, 1941), 3.

35 Goebbels banned art criticism on November 26, 1936, with his "Decree Concerning Art Criticism," which stated that journalists could only describe their subjects and could not impose their own subjective criticism when writing about art. Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), 52–53.

36 The first Hagen exhibition took place at the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum from July to September 1941. The Osnäbruck exhibition took place at the Ausstellungsraum im Schloß during October 5–26, 1941. The Oldenburg exhibition took place at the Augusteum zu Oldenburg from November 16 until December 7, 1941. The second installment of the series took place in The Hague under the title "Nederlandsche Kunst van Heden" at the Pulchri Studio between April 25 and May 10, 1942. The Freiburg exhibition took place at the Freiburger Kunstverein during June 6–21, 1942. The Karlsruhe exhibition was held at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe from July 18 to August 2, 1942. The Stuttgart exhibition took place at an unknown location in from October to November of 1942. The second Hagen exhibition once again took place at the Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum from December 13, 1942, until February 15, 1943. A full list of the exhibitions with a total accounting of the works purchased at the shows can be found in NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3569. Neorealist paintings appeared at all these

exhibitions with the exception of the Pulchri Studio show in The Hague and possibly the Gelsenkirchen show, for which an extant checklist could not be found. A letter sent from the Reich Commissariat addressed to Koch on April 11, 1942, asked the artist to send any of his paintings for the Pulchri Studio exhibition. Koch responded that unfortunately he had been traveling and had received the letter too late to oblige the invitation. See letter from Der Reichskommissar für die besetzen Niederländischen Gebiete, dated April 11, 1942, and undated letter from Pyke Koch to "Weledelzeergeleerde Heer" (Honorable Doctor). Both can be found in RKD, Archief Pyke Koch en Heddy Koch-de Geer, Toegang NL-HaRKD-0899, Inv. Nr. 109.

37 Michèle Cone claimed that the exhibitions were part of a propaganda program intended to benefit both countries—including the campaign for *rayonnement culturel* (cultural radiance) in France: Prime Minister Léon Blum's campaign highlighting the spiritual enlightenment and anti-totalitarian character of the Popular Front, as well as France's artistic superiority. She stated that the German sculpture exhibition planned for the Orangerie in Paris was likely not realized due to the negative optics of legitimizing Nazi aesthetics. Cone has argued that the presence of these French modern artists alongside more conventional painters allowed the German cultural authorities to show what was foreign, and not German by comparison. See Michèle Cone, "French Art of the Present in Hitler's Berlin," *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 3 (September 1998), 555–567.

38 Several shows existed under this title "Kunst der Gegenwart," including Wallonian art in Dusseldorf, Spanish art in Berlin, and German art in Zagreb, all of which took place in 1942: "Wallonische Kunst der Gegenwart," Städtischen Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, February 8–March 8, 1942; "Spanischer Kunst der Gegenwart," Preußischen Akademie der Künste, Berlin, March–April 1942; "Deutsche Plastik der Gegenwart," Zagreb: Kroatian Academy, April–May 1942. Like *Französischer Kunst der Gegenwart*, the Dutch-German exchange shows also included the hometown of the artist in the catalogue, but unlike the French exhibition, they allowed foreign artists such as the Brussels-born Raoul Hynckes to appear in the show. An artist's hometown was based on his or her address.

39 The exhibitions were well received in Germany. The Dutch newspaper *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* also suggested that many people from the art world in Westphalia who attended the show in Hagen appreciated the Dutch artists on display. See "Nederlandsche Kunst in Hagen," *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 24, 1941), 5.

40 The July–September 1941 show in Hagen featured Hynckes's *Broken Jug De Spons der bitterheid* (The Sponge of Bitterness), 1934; Ket's chalk on paper *Portret van mijn vader* (Portrait of My Father), 1936; Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band*, 1937; Schuhmacher's *Toledo*, 1934, *Port of Palma*, 1933, and *San Gimignano*, 1931; and Willink's *Arkadisch landschap* (Arcadian Landscape), 1936, *Het Witte Huis* (The White House), 1931, and *Jobstijding* (Bad Tidings), 1932. This line-up also appeared in the October show in Osnabrück that year and in Oldenburg in November–December, although the latter exhibition was missing Koch's self-portrait and Hynckes's *Broken Jug*. The June 1942 show in Freiburg and the Karlsruhe exhibition from July to August featured Koch's *Portret Peter Mees* (Portrait of a Child) and Hynckes's *Sponge of Bitterness* and *Stilleven met haring* (Still Life with Herring), 1941; the Ket drawing was no longer included. Schumacher was represented only by *Stilleven met vogel* (Still Life with Bird), 1934, and Willink by his *Pilaarheilige* (Pillar Saint), 1939, borrowed from the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague.

41 No catalogue of list of works for the Gelsenkirchen show could be located and may not have been produced. The archives also do not include a list for the works on display in Gelsenkirchen. Although a catalogue could not be found for the Stuttgart show, there is an exhibition list in the archives as well as another document with sale prices that mentions Gelsenkirchen. NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3569.

42 The DVK purchased works of art for its permanent collection with the idea that they would decorate government buildings, following in the tradition of the OKW ministry. The works of art purchased by the DVK are now housed in public collections across The Netherlands. See Fransje Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst: De Geschiedenis van de collectieve 20ste Eeuwse Kunst van het Ministerie van OCW 1932–1992* (Amsterdam and Leiden: Instituut Collectie Nederland in samenwerking met Primavera Pers, 2007), 17–23.

43 Some of their works were in fact purchased by the DVK for some of the largest sums that the organization paid for artwork, including Hynckes's *Still Life with Red Herring* for

1800 guilders, Willink's *The Preacher* for 2500, and Koch's *The Wait* for 5000. Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 125; Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst*, 139. The patron or owner (sometimes the dealer or the artist) of the work negotiated prices with Ed Gerdes.

44 The exchange shows boasted high visitor counts and growing sales figures. The Karlsruhe show greeted over 1200 visitors on the first Sunday alone. Although the press did not cite any paintings or artists included in the Karlsruhe exhibition by name, Dutch newspapers attributed the show's "moral and financial success" to the Old Master quality of the paintings on display. DVK representative Marius van Lokhorst opened the Karlsruhe show by praising the glorious history of Dutch painting, qualities that he would reiterate in an article that he wrote on the Neorealists for the Kultuurkamer publication *De Schouw* in September of that year. See "Hedendaagsche Nederlandsche schilderkunst: Tentoonstelling te Karlsruhe geopend," *Het Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 27, 1942), 2; "Uitwisseling van kunsten," *Haarlemsche Courant* (August 28, 1942), 2; Marius van Lokhorst, "Nederlandsche Kunst te Karlsruhe," *De Schouw* (September 15, 1942), 422–423. The Cologne show brought in 8300 guilders. Sales generally trended upward, peaking at the second Hagen exhibition in December 1942, which sold ninety-six of its 407 exhibited work for 20,903 guilders. "Staat van verkochte schilderijen op tentoonstellingen gehouden door het Departement van Volksvoorlichting en kunsten," NIOD, Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3569.

45 The earliest example of this motif appears in an untitled 1928 painting in Utrecht's Centraal Museum collection.

46 Critic Cornelis Veth wrote about how *Bad Tidings* achieved a film-like quality in its lack of synthesis. Cornelis Veth, "Moderne Schilders in Den Haag," *De Telegraaf* (December 30, 1932), 5. *Bad Tidings* is also known by the alternative title *The Letter*.

47 *The Preacher*, *Bad Tidings*, and *The White House* were among the works shown at a large Willink retrospective at the Boijmans Museum in October 1939. A critic from the *Algemeen Handelsblad* commented upon the way that Willink created a sense of disconnect between the human figures and the surrounding landscapes, which the critic argued likely drew from the artist's fantasy or imagination. See Pieter Koomen, "Overzicht van A. C. Willinks werk in het museum Boymans," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (October 20, 1939), 11.

48 See letter from David Röell to the Alderman for Art Affairs, dated June 12, 1941, Stedelijk Museum Archives, SMA-541.

49 Dirk Hannema's support of Willink also helped to raise the artist's profile in the DVK. Hannema had recently held a large retrospective of the artist's work in 1939, which was covered positively in the right-wing press. See "A. C. Willink's Werk in Het Museum-Boymans, te Rotterdam," *Het Nationale Dagblad* (October 28, 1939), 7.

50 See Rapport: Onderhoud met Dr. Knuttel, Directeur van het Gemeente-Museum te's Gravenhage, dated June 11, 1941, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3569.

51 "Uitnodigingen voor de tentoonstelling te Hagen (Westfalen)," undated, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 2196.

52 She also praised her good friends Hendrik Chabot, John Rädecker, Bart van der Leck, and Gerrit Rietveld for refusing to capitulate, perhaps not knowing that the organization could always find ways to show work if they desired. Letter from Charley Toorop to the Rademacher-Schorer family, Bergen, April 5, 1942, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 135B 142, Fol. 30. Translated into English by Jisca Bijsma in Bremer, Jaap, Kees Vollemans and Ruth Koenig, *De Vriendschap Henk Chabot en Charley Toorop, 23 October 1999–16 January 2000*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Chabot Museum, 1999), 11.

53 Toorop was not on the list for the Cologne exhibition.

54 See letter from Head of the Department of General Propaganda and "the Exhibitions Office" D. J. du Croo to the Director of the Kröller-Müller Museum dated June 13, 1941, HA360455 v1.0; letter from W. Auping Jr. to D. J. du Croo dated June 14, 1941, Kröller-Müller Archives, HA360454 v1.0; letter from D. J. du Croo to W. Auping Jr. dated June 21, 1941, Kröller-Müller Museum Archives, HA360451 v1.0.

55 The other accepted works include Dirk Nijland's painting *Construction of the Second Schevening Fishing Harbor*; L. Zijl's sculptures *Hunter, Elephant, Deer*, and *Farmer*; and John Rädecker's sculptures *Mask* and *Dog*.

56 Works by female artists did appear in the DVK exhibitions, although rarely. One example is Isabella van Beek-Stroeve, whose painting *Circus Horse* toured to Hagen, Osnabrück, and Oldenburg.
57 See Marina de Vries, "Het Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten en Zijn Collectie," in *Geaarde Kunst: Door de Staat Gekocht '40–'45*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders uitgevers, 2015), 22.
58 In 1935 Kaspar Niehaus wrote about the Christian references in Hynckes's *The Sponge of Bitterness*. See Kaspar Niehaus, "Stillevens van een diepere betekenis," *De Telegraaf* (September 30, 1935). A more recent analysis in the 2012 catalogue *In de Schaduw van Morgen* suggests that the form of the sponge and its placement next to the skull, resembles a hardened, stone-like human brain—making a darker statement about cultural bankruptcy in interwar Europe. See Ype Koopmans, *In de schaduw van morgen. Neorealisme in Nederland*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Wezep: Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem and Uitgeverij de Kunst, 2012), 107. In his writing after the war, Hynckes would reflect on humanity's "impotence and the bankruptcy of our humanitarian feelings." See undated manuscript in RKD, Archief Raoul Hynckes, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0197, box 6.
59 See "Nederlandsche Kunst te Osnabrück," *De Telegraaf* (October 9, 1941), 3.
60 There is a discrepancy over which Schuhmacher *Port of Palma (Corsica)* landscape appeared in the exchange exhibitions. While the van der Geest book identifies a 1929 painting titled *Ships on the Beach of Palma de Mallorca* in the Stedelijk Museum collection, the NIOD files indicate that the DVK borrowed the work from Eindhoven's van Abbemuseum. See request for van Abbe paintings, dated June 20, 1941, in NIOD, DVK files, Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 2196. The Hagen exhibition also showed a landscape by Schuhmacher titled *San Gimignano*. It is uncertain which of the four paintings with that title was shown in the exchange exhibitions. This line-up remained unchanged for the Osnabrück and Oldenburg shows, but by the Freiburg show Koch's self-portrait had been replaced by his *Portrait of a Child* (alt. title: *Portrait of Pieter Rudolf van Mees*), c. 1931. Schuhmacher's landscapes had been replaced with *Still Life with Bird*, 1934, and Ket was removed entirely.
61 See Lokhorst, "Nederlandsche Kunst te Karlsruhe," 422–423.
62 See "Dr. Goedewaagen in Amsterdam en het Gooi: Bezoeken aan bekende kunstschilders," *Het Nationale Dagblad* (March 4, 1941), 3.
63 Hans Mulder has pointed out that Hynckes consistently held cynical views about the political situation and had a propensity for opportunism. He cited the artist's own words as quoted in Hynckes's 1973 memoires: "Painters have always lived off rich people and those who have imagined that democracy would change this situation have been radically mistaken." See Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting*, 80; Raoul Hynckes, *De Vrienden van Middernacht* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, 1973), 66.
64 Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 70.
65 See Jouke Mulder, *Willinks Waarheid* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Fontein bv Baarn, 1983), 59. Gerdes was likely referring to the income that a painter like Willink or Koch could earn by selling their work to the DVK.
66 In 1941 Gerdes had requested Willink to send him a photo of his 1940 painting *Terras met Hercules* to be reproduced in a treatise on Dutch painting by the art historian C. H. de Boer. Little did he know that Willink had already sent a letter to de Boer refusing to do so in July. Ed Gerdes tried many other ways to work around this with no luck. When De *Schouw* wanted to reproduce the painting, most outlets refused to give the magazine a photo, however, they were able to obtain a copy. A letter from November 15, 1941, indicates that the journalist J. W. Peschar from the DVK had somehow obtained it. See the letter from Gerdes to Willink dated September 20, 1941, the letter from Willink to C. H. de Boer dated July 15, 1941, and the letter from *De Schouw* to Peschar dated November 15, 1941, all found in NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3410. In July of 1942 the DVK purchased *The Preacher* for 2500 guilders from the Carel van Lier Gallery, where it was being held on a commission basis. Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst*, 128–129. The art dealer Alois Miedl also paid a visit to Willink; he wanted to buy a work on behalf of Goering and offered him 12,000 guilders, but the artist claimed that he was sold out. See Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting*, 80.
67 See letter from the BBK to Willink dated October 16, 1941, Carel Willink archives and letter from Willink to the BBK dated October 23, 1941, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3410.

68 A form was sent to the artists' homes, and they then decided whether to fill them out. Those not registered were subject to fines. Only a minority openly protested and were involved in the organized resistance. By April 1, 1942, nearly everyone in the cultural sector was a member of the Kultuurkamer. The artists' clubs Onafhankelijken, De Brug, Sint Lucas, and Arti et Amicitiae helped them to find 10,000 adherents. See F. W. Boterman, *Duitse Daders* (Amsterdam: Singel Uitgeverij, 2016), 255–256. However, the Kultuurkamer would not have time to finalize the memberships before the end of the war, and therefore nobody (not even Koch) can technically be said to have been an official member.
69 Ibid.
70 See S. M. S. de Ranitz, "Oude en Nieuwe Organisatievorm," *De Schouw* (January 15, 1942), 3.
71 Ibid., 3.
72 Financial constraints prevented the Kultuurkamer from providing its members with free subscriptions or from creating the high-quality publication that they had wished. See April 1, 1942, notes on a Kultuurkamer meeting, Toegang 104, Inv. Nr. 24, NIOD for discussion of publication with Elsevier. See notes for the 10th General Kultuurkamer meeting, February 11, 1942, Toegang 104, Inv. Nr. 5 and notes on the meeting from March 11, 1942, and April 22, 1942, Toegang 104, Inv. Nr. 24, NIOD for discussion of whether subscriptions should be discounted or made mandatory.
73 In fact, Koch initiated his separation from the DVK as early as April 9, 1941, when he sent a letter to the Reich Commissariat requesting to be replaced at the Cologne exhibition. See RKD letter from the Reich Commissar to Koch dated April 16, 1941, Archief Pyke Koch en Heddy Koch-de Geer, Toegang NL-HaRKD-0899, Inv. Nr. 109, which references Koch's letter of April 9 and grants his request for a replacement. In a letter to his wife Heddy from December 4, 1942, Koch indicated that he continued to try to contact the Reich Commissariat well after this falling out. He expressed annoyance that he had met not with the Reich Commissar himself but with a lower-level bureaucrat, Seyss-Inquart's assistant Fritz Schmidt, and that he was merely being passed off "to a lesser god." See RKD, letter from Pyke Koch to Heddy Koch de Geer, December 4, 1942, Archief Pyke Koch en Heddy Koch-de Geer, Toegang NL-HaRKD-0899, Inv. Nr. 51.
74 As a member of Verdinaso (the Dutch Fascist Party), Koch later claimed that he had become a de facto member of the NSB (Dutch National Socialist Party) on November 9, 1940, when the two parties merged in the few short months following Germany's invasion in May. A letter on NSB letterhead verifies that Koch officially left the Party on April 28, 1941. See letter from Pyke Koch to the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland headquarters, Utrecht, April 28, 1941, NIOD, DOC I926B Map Pyke F. C. Koch.
75 Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, "The Doctrine of Fascism," in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Rome: Istituto Giovanni Treccani, 1932).
76 Koch's wife Hedwig (Heddy) de Geer used the honorific of Jonkvrouw, which like Jonkheer (used by her father the former Prime Minister of The Netherlands) designated members of nobility who did not actually have a title such as Duke, Marquis, and Count. See also Rijnders, "'De Voorstelling waarin ik leefde' De Politieke Wereld van Pyke Koch," 51.
77 Koch was also averse to the National Socialists' use of the term "völkisch," which he associated with the proletariat. Eddy de Jongh, "Een kunstenaar in troebel vaarwater," *Openbaar Kunstbezit Kunstschrift* 54, no. 1 (February–March 2010), 38–43. His view of cultural policy was also closer to that of the Italians, who continued to support the avant-garde. In the same essay that he praised the Italian section of the Biennale and the "influence of Marinetti," Koch proposed a Dutch counterpart to Italy's future that included Willink, Hynckes, and Charley Toorop. Pyke Koch, "Over de Kunst," *De Waag* (January 8, 1940), 368.
78 See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 139.
79 Pyke Koch, "Notities over Kunst, Kunstenaar en Samenleving," *De Waag* (January 30, 1941), 70.
80 Aside from Pyke Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band* on the cover of the first issue, a still life by Dick Ket appeared on the March 2, 1942, cover; Willink's *Pillar Saint* on the September 15, 1942, cover; and a Hynckes's still life was reproduced on the September 15, 1944, cover. Many (although certainly not all) of the modern Dutch examples came from Dutch state museums including the Stedelijk, Museum Boijmans, and the van Abbe in Eindhoven.

81 The German Art magazine *Die Kunst* praised Maillol's work in 1937 for its "Greekness." See Michèle Cone, *Artists Under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 165.
82 Goedewaagen only mentions "Brueghel," but it can be assumed that he was referring to the Pieter Brueghel the Elder.
83 Tobie Goedewaagen, "Wedergeboorte. Een inleidend word door Prof. Dr. T. Goedewaagen Prof. Dr. T. Goedewaagen," *De Schouw* (January 1, 1942), 1.
84 By "Asiatism," Goedewaagen was likely referring to conspiracy theories that spoke of a Jewish-Bolshevik cultural domination. "Asia" could be used as a catch-all term to mean "the left," which links together Communism and Jewish influence, two enemies of the National Socialists. Ibid., 1–2.
85 The 1995 Boijmans exhibition catalogue claims that the background is based on the Gerechtshof (Court of Justice) in Utrecht. From left to right the figure includes an unnamed woman drawn from memory, one derived from his imagination, Dr. Victorine Hefting, another imagined figure, and Koch's wife, somewhat altered. These identifications are based on a statement made to the Centraal Museum by Pyke Koch on September 28, 1982. The audio guide for the 2017 exhibition "De Wereld van Pyke Koch" identified the location as a bus stop. The theory that these women are waiting for a bus has been disputed, however, due to the elegant nature of their dress, which does not type them as working class. It is possible that Koch claimed that they were waiting for the bus so that the drawing would better fit into the preference for the type of labor-oriented subject matter favored by the Germans. This information comes from a conversation with curator Marja Bosma on September 9, 2021.
86 Koch was not able to complete the drawing because of a lack of funds. See letter from Koch to Gerdes, June 15, 1941, NIOD Toegang 102, Inv. Nr. 3402.
87 Dirk Hannema, "Een nieuwe schepping van Pijke Koch," *De Schouw*, no. 1 (January 15, 1942), 4.
88 See letter from Koch to Gerdes, June 15, 1941, NIOD 102, Inv. Nr. 3402.
89 At a certain point Koch also reworked the woman to the left of the streetlamp; he cut a piece of paper and glued it over her face to alter the original version.
90 The French critic Nino Frank is often credited as the first to coin the term film noir in 1946 when observing the sudden arrival of American crime films with a strikingly dark mood. However, Charles O'Brien has since noted the frequent use of this term among French critics beginning in the late 1930s. See Nino Frank, "Un nouveau genre policier: L'aventure criminelle," *L'Écran français* 61 (August 28, 1946), 14; Charles O'Brien, "Film Noir in France: Before the Liberation," *IRIS* 21 (Spring 1996), 7.
91 Gail Levin, "Edward Hopper: The Influence of Theater and Film," *Arts Magazine* 50, no. 2 (October 1980), 123–127; Erika Doss, "Hopper's Cool: Modernism and Emotional Restraint," *American Art* 29, no. 3 (2015), 2–27.
92 Debora Lyons and Adam D. Weinberg, *Edward Hopper and the American Imagination*, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995), xii.
93 *Dark Victory* was also released in The Netherlands in 1939 under the title *Levensdans* and was well covered in the Dutch press.
94 Many of the Dutch advertisements for *Laila* in 1941 emphasized the purity of the female lead.
95 *King of the Underworld* played in eight locations in The Netherlands from September of 1939 to July of 1940. It appeared at the Roxy in Amsterdam, the Flora and Seinpost Theater in The Hague, the Olympia, Harmonie, Ooster Theater, and Victoria in Rotterdam, and Luxor in Leiden. See https://cinemacontext.nl.
96 See "Nieuwe Detective-Films," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (July 15, 1939), 11; Scott O'Brien, "Bogart and the Baron," in *Kay Francis: I Can't Wait to Be Forgotten: Her Life on Film* (Boalsburg, PA: BearManor Media, 2006), unpaginated.
97 Homer B. Pettey, "Hard-Boiled Tradition and Early Film Noir," in *Film Noir*, edited by Homer B. Pettey and R. Barton Palmer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 61.
98 Robert Pippin, *Fatalism in American Film Noir: Some Cinematic Philosophy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 5–7.
99 Pettey, "Hard-boiled Tradition and Early Film Noir," in *Film Noir*, edited by Homer B. Pettey and R. Barton Palmer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 60, 77.

100 For a similar analyses of this use of film noir lighting, see Patrick Keating, "Film Noir and the Limits of Classicism," in *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 244–264.
101 See James Naremore, "American Film Noir: The History of an Idea," *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (Winter 1995–1996), 12.
102 To explain this phenomenon, Fabio Fighi has employed Theodor Adorno's Negative Dialectic and its rejection of the identificatory process. See Fabio Fighi, *Critical Theory and Film: Rethinking Ideology Through Film Noir* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 37, 50.
103 Padraic Killeen, *The Dark Interval: Film Noir, Iconography, and Affect* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 8.
104 See ibid., 6; Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 65.
105 George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 28–29.
106 Christopher Clark, "Time of the Nazis: Past and Present in the Third Reich," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Sonderheft, Obsession der Gegenwart: Zeit im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 25 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, GmbH & Co., 2015), 157, 184.
107 Ibid., 184–185.
108 Mulder, *Kunst in crisis en bezetting*, 79. The fact that Koch may have been drawing from American, gangster-type coded films is also important when considering the dominance of Hollywood cinema internationally at this time. The year 1939 was especially important in American film; both *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind* premiered that year. During the 1930s film magazines such as *Nieuw Weekblad Voor de Cinematografie* demonstrated a sharp increase in articles and advertisements for gangster films as well as movies with strong female leads, such as Barbara Stanwick.
109 See Pippin, *Fatalism in American Film Noir*, 11–12 for a discussion of these tropes.
110 Peter Verberne, "De Film," *De Schouw* 1, no. 3 (February 16, 1942), 65–67.
111 The title *Film en Kultuur* is a nod to the Kultuurfilm (or Kulturfilm in German), a propaganda genre first developed in Germany during World War I by Ufa, which had a specific department for them. Some of the pages of *Film en Kultuur* explicitly tout the importance of German Kulturfilms as an "opvoedingsmiddel" (an educational tool).
112 Goedewaagen argued that a new, essentially Dutch form of filmmaking that was no longer beholden to foreign (Jewish) influence would allow for better working conditions and collaboration for the fledgling Dutch film industry. Film guild leader Jan Teunissen also made this point in the inaugural issue of the magazine. See Tobie Goedewaagen and Jan Teunissen, "De Versnelde Film," *Film en Kultuur* 1, no. 1 (September 1942), 2–3.
113 G. H. Snitger, "De invloedsfeer van de film," *Film en Kultuur* 1, no. 8 (May 1943), 12. The author Reinier J. Meijer, cited a critic from the early sound era who had warned of the "dark future" that awaited film and film audiences from an artistic perspective, mentioned the possibility of a film experience with "colors, stereoscopic (images) and smells." See Reinier J. Meijer, "De Stereoscopische Film op Komst," *Film en Kultuur* 2, no. 8 (May 1944), 1–2.
114 RKD, letter from Pyke Koch to A. Roland Holst, September 12, 1941, Collectie Brieven Handschriften etc., Toegang NL-HaRKD.0006, Inv. Nr. 59.
115 Vicki Callahan, "The Cinema of Uncertainty and the Opacity of Information from Louis Feuillade's Crime Serials to Film Noir," in *Film Noir*, edited by Homer B. Pettey and R. Barton Palmer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 34.
116 James Naremore used the phrase "ethical complexity" to distinguish the depiction of reality in film noir from the Surrealists' flouting of moral norms, given their interest in the genre. See Naremore, "American Film Noir," 23.
117 The presence of the *fasces*, a bundle of wooden rods that originated as a Roman symbol of jurisdiction, is a reference to the National Fascist Party of Italy. The fasces can still be seen on flags, seals, and insignias throughout the western world as a symbol of power.
118 Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 145.
119 The six-pointed star became required in May 1942. Deportations began in July of 1942 leaving from Westerbork and Vught and lasted until September of 1944.

120 Amsterdam Constable Sybren Tulp collaborated with the Reichskommissariat after the German invasion, commanding his officers to monitor the streets for people who distributed leaflets, painted slogans, or discussed politics in public. See Guus Meershoek, "Policing Amsterdam during the German Occupation," in *Social Control in Europe: 1800–2000*, vol. 2, edited by Eric Johnson and Pieter Spierenburg (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 338.

121 Lokhorst, "Nederlandsche Kunst te Karlsruhe," 422–423.

122 Olaf Peters made a similar observation about the career of Rudolf Schlichter, who began painting "boring" imagery after 1933 that reconceptualized Neue Sachlichkeit as a "religious national" form of realism. See Olaf Peters, *Neue Sachlichkeit und Nationalsozialismus: Affirmation und Kritik 1931–1947* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1998), 46–47.

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Conclusion

Beginning at the midpoint of 1942, after the Axis powers had lost several key battles and the tides of war began to turn, a course change in the Dutch cultural policy was underway. The aesthetic preferred by the DVK became more reactionary, conservative, and grounded in historical references, becoming a style that could definitively visualize The Netherlands' shared history with the dominant culture of the Greater Germanic Reich. This was also the year that Dirk Hannema, the Official Delegate of the Museum Industry—who had long harbored transhistorical tastes—began to pivot away from modernism and toward the Old Masters. Contributing an article for *Die Pause*—a German-language Occupation-era magazine on The Netherlands during "changing times." Hannema wrote:

> First of all, it is the Dutch artists who discovered realism. Their art is living and true like that of no other people. In great times there was a strong bond between the artist on the one hand, and his people and soil on the other.[1]

In a bid to enable the cultural expansion of the Greater Reich, Hannema—in both his rhetoric and acquisition goals—attempted to reclaim as Dutch, artists from the "Southern Netherlands" (Flanders), such as Gerard David, Pieter Paul Rubens, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, to name a few.[2] Within this changing climate and intensified focus on tracing artistic lineages in museum institutions both at home and abroad, the Neorealists' work came to be re-evaluated and reinterpreted by figures in the cultural sector, Hannema among them. In an unfortunate turn of events, the inherent ambiguity of the Neorealists' paintings had become a problem for the regime.

Personnel changes at the DVK effectively relegated the careers of the Neorealists to the background as the war pushed on into 1943. The NSB ousted Tobie Goedewaagen following a dispute with Party leader Anton Mussert, while Ed Gerdes began to compete with German patrons in his purchases for the National Collection; buyers tended to favor paintings of local subject matter, especially landscapes and still lifes.[3] Hannema—who had previously lavished praise on *The Wait* in the first issue of *De Schouw*, and who may have even encouraged Gerdes to purchase the work for the DVK—wrote an essay in July of that year for the literary magazine *Groot Nederland*. Using ambivalent terms, he described in this text Neorealism and more specifically the work of Koch, Willink, and Hynckes.[4] He viewed these three artists as expressing a poetic discontent and claimed that the value of their work lies in its "technical and stylistic" merits. Hannema felt differently, however, about the content of the paintings. He became hesitant when describing the ability of Neorealism to serve the needs of the time period—which required images of hope, life, and optimism, rather than a pessimistic obsession with death and decline.

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Although he didn't mention National Socialism specifically in the essay, Hannema appeared to have changed his position, and no longer advocated for a role for Neorealism as the best way to represent the regime.[5] In this context, the moral and aesthetic ambiguities embedded in *The Wait* (Figure 0.1), which owe to the technical and narrative tropes of cinema, challenged this increasingly doctrinaire schema. Hannema was not alone in his assessment; in 1944 Jan Voskuil, a writer and head of the Folk Culture Department at the Meertens Institute, described Koch's *The Wait* as controversial and hard to digest, stating in an essay for *De Schouw* that the drawing produced "an almost horrifying monumental tension," although it did also exude a discipline and an "ijzeren" (iron-like) technique that commanded respect.[6]

Indeed, the subject matter that the Neorealist painters explored in their work from 1942 until the end of the Occupation also became increasingly morose and shrouded in mystery, reflecting the slow creep of German cultural hegemony at the expense of an already weakened Dutch national identity. Mirroring his own abstention from cultural life, Carel Willink removed the human figure entirely from his landscapes, producing in its stead images of antique sculpture in a state of ruin as in *Landschap met omgevallen beeld* (Landscape with Fallen Statue), 1942, or isolation such as *Beeld op balustrade* (Sculpture on a Balustrade), 1943. Raoul Hynckes continued to paint the vanitas-laden imagery for which he had become well known, but this time rendered in a stage-like manner, such as *De Sleutels van de Anachoreet* (The Key of the Anchorite), 1942–1943, while also producing subdued, saleable canvases referencing the hunt such as *Herfst* (Autumn), 1942, and *Rugzak* (Backpack), 1942. Wim Schuhmacher's more personal work began to more closely resemble that of Hynckes in subject matter, particularly in his emphasis on mortality and decay as seen in *Stilleven met schedels en vogelskelet* (Still Life with Skulls and Bird Skeleton), 1942, or the solemn introspection of his own likeness. Most of his paintings from this period, however, were conventional portraits of his patrons that allowed Schuhmacher to support himself during the Occupation. For his part, Pyke Koch did not entirely retreat from völkisch subject matter—another indication that he had not made a swift about-face in his personal political ideology, which remained a very visible, if tacit force behind his artistic production. In addition to the sober still lifes that helped him stay afloat financially, Koch returned to a theme that he had taken up during his sojourn in Italy: the romanticized working-class figure of the chimney sweep, this time placed against the Utrecht skyline. He also completed a commissioned series of zodiac signs, the type of occult symbol popular among German ethno-nationalists, due to their connection to ancient Teutonic cultures and magical pre-enlightenment thought.[7]

Toorop was once again the exception to the rule, producing imagery that more directly confronted the wartime situation in her chosen subject matter. Not unlike the others, Toorop relied on the income from her paintings of still lifes and nature scenes, but she also produced larger-scale canvases that expressed the horror of the Occupation era, or which made subtle references to the Soviets. She completed two years apart a pair of paintings sometimes identified as pendants, inspired by a visit to Rotterdam following the May 14, 1940, aerial bombardment of the city. The first canvas from 1941 featured a jarring juxtaposition of a clown sitting in front of rubble, a work that she herself described as an image of the "rattled bourgeois."[8] In 1943, in front of the same site she placed another figure, the *Arbeidersvrouw* (Working-Class Woman, now at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam), based on the likeness of her housecleaner Johanna "Jansje" Punt, this time symbolizing the fate of the "proletariat."[9] She more often composed modest subjects such as *Twee petroleumkannen met courant* (Two Petroleum Cans with Newspaper), 1943, a canvas interpreted to contain a veiled political message, due to

her inclusion of the newspaper headline about the Soviet Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee, or COB.[10] In any case, at the time that she produced these latter two canvases, Toorop was living in conditions of extreme duress that most certainly had an influence over her work. Her personal correspondence from this period references her experience of hiding behind walls at the sound of heavy shooting and bullets passing through windows, all while waiting to be evacuated from Bergen.[11]

This shift in subject matter was not only influenced by the situation on the ground during the war as well as financial considerations, but was also due to the new popular culture landscape of the Occupation.[12] While cinema had previously served an important role in inspiring the Neorealists' oeuvre prior to the invasion, by July of 1940 the civilian government made it illegal to screen anything other than German films, while also censoring all criticism.[13] The movie theater, which was supposed to be a zone free of politics and geared towards leisure and a sense of security, was now a site for thinly disguised propaganda. German films borrowed from popular Hollywood genres, such as light-hearted comedies and musicals that lulled the audience into complacency.[14] One prominent example was *Die goldene Stadt* (The Golden City), 1942, directed by Veit Harlan, a melodrama about a country girl who realizes her dream of running away to Prague to join her lover. It was the most successful film of the Occupation era, credited with helping to raise slumping ticket sales in 1943 and '45.[15] Rich Agfacolor and light eroticism overshadowed the latent blood-and-soil ideology intended to promote respect for the fatherland.[16] Even magazines used to celebrate movie stars had lost the ability to provide the public with a psychological diversion. For example, the most popular Dutch entertainment publication of the day, *Cinema en Theater*, which Anne Frank used to decorate her secret annex room, transformed itself from an outlet that had once been openly critical of the Nazi takeover into a mouthpiece for völkisch propaganda.[17]

The Dutch liberation from the Germans on May 5, 1945, signified freedom for artists and movie houses, but it also brought about accountability for those found to have abetted the Germans during the Occupation. Pyke Koch was among those who had to answer for his participation by standing trial before the Council of Honor in The Hague. Although he had removed his name from the NSB registration rolls in 1941, Koch still maintained some ties to the Party, and in 1943 he carried out one final, fateful act due to—as he would argue—the dearth of economic opportunities at the time. He adapted his astrological paintings into a series of postage stamps, repeating his design of Capricorn, while also producing others that referenced Norse legends, such as Yggdrasill the tree of life, Níðhöggr the serpent that gnaws at its roots, and the two swans that drink from the Well of Urd, among others.[18] Koch's designs for the civilian government led to his conviction as a "fout" (wrong) artist at his purification trial in 1947; as punishment the Council banned Koch from publicly exhibiting his work from November 1950 to November of 1951.[19] History, however, is never so black and white. Koch's legacy is also the story of how during times of polarization, extremist politics can penetrate the mentalities of friends and neighbors in mundane ways. Despite the official ban on exhibiting his work, Koch still managed to show his paintings during that year at the Maastricht home of his good friend and most important collector Taecke J. Botke. A doctor that Koch befriended during his student days in Utrecht, Botke was active in the resistance and was interned at a concentration camp during the War. The authorities tolerated Botke's flouting of this ban because he had earned the label of "goed" (good).[20] Hynckes was the only other Neorealist to stand before the tribunal at the Council of Honor. Although he was never formally charged with a crime at his trial in 1946, Hynckes used the defense that he had only agreed to sell to the Germans out of the fear of disobeying the law.[21] His good friend

Wim Schuhmacher, however, testified against him, a fact over which Hynckes remained bitter for decades.[22] These trials, while not the only factor, helped cast an ever-lengthening shadow over their style and the label used to describe it.

Even before these trials the term "Magic Realism" itself became politicized in The Netherlands as a result of Koch's insistence on its use during the Occupation, and his desire to include both Hynckes and Willink under the label; a practice also taken up by right-wing critic Kasper Niehaus.[23] Prior to the Occupation, critics occasionally used "Magic Realism" alongside "Neorealism" to describe their work, including the first monograph on Willink from 1940, published by Elsevier as part of a series that included biographies on Koch, Hynckes, and Schuhmacher.[24] Koch even asked Willink for permission to use the label in reference to the "core Magic Realists" (Koch, Willink, and Hynckes) when describing their shared style in public talks, indicating that Hynckes had agreed.[25] It is unknown whether or not Willink responded to the query; nevertheless, it was not a term that the artist applied to his own work.

Due in part to the continued use of the label Magic Realism and the tendency of critics and curators to discuss the "core" members as a trio, Willink's attempts to resist the Germans during the Occupation had become unjustly obscured over the years. During the war Willink produced illustrations for clandestine magazines, but he also assisted Jewish friends Jacques and Frieda Tas, as well as other families who had been sent to concentration camps, by keeping their valuables safe in the side room of his Ruysdaelkade apartment.[26] Despite his commitment to resistance, Willink's work continued to be politicized for better or for worse and in sometimes unjust ways. In the immediate postwar years, for example, resistance figure Wolfgang Cordan, writing for *Vrij Nederland,* described the painter's work as being in tune with postwar Existentialism, stating that the artist had traded out Fascism for the atom bomb, as an issue that he sometimes explored in his paintings.[27] Critic Gerrit Kouwenaar writing for the pro-Communist *De Waarheid* connected the artist to the sobriety of German painting from the period, which stood in opposition to Expressionism; he described Willink as a "danger" who projected "hopeless intellectualism" in his paintings, and wrote him off as a bourgeois capitalist.[28]

Following the war, critics and curators applied the terms Neorealism and Magic Realism with varying degrees of consistency to describe Koch, Willink, Hynckes, Toorop, Schuhmacher, and Ket, often changing the dividing lines used to group them in exhibitions—and especially retrospectives. In 1946 H. van der Steen writing for the newspaper *Kern* noted how difficult it was to give a proper definition for Neorealism, because of the nuancing that is required for each artist.[29] By the 1960s critics began to note how these artists—while in actuality a reactionary group inspired by modern film—had become unfairly sidelined for the political connotations later attached to figuration due to its purchase under Hitler and the Soviet Union.[30] For the far left, the cold objectivity of Willink's work came to be scrutinized as overly commercial, even kitsch; one critic described him as having a *koelkast* (refrigerator) technique that was "bloodless" and "without heart."[31] In the artist's own assessment of his style, Willink claimed that "within kitsch existed something magical," something that he saw reflected in the films of the time, such as *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961).[32] While the press sometimes still used the term "Neorealism," it became an overarching category to describe a tendency exemplified by the works of Koch, Willink, and Hynckes as well as Dick Ket, Wim Schuhmacher, Charley Toorop, and sometimes the younger artists Johan Mekkink and Eddy Fernhout.[33]

The journalistic consensus in the immediate postwar years was that CoBrA, a group of abstractionists hailing from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam, had swept to the

side any pretense that modernist figuration could adequately signify freedom.[34] When tasked with choosing artists to represent The Netherlands at the 1950 Venice Biennale, Jan Engelman caused quite a stir with critics and policy makers by selecting the "highly controversial" Pyke Koch. The inclusion of the latter was seen as bringing into question Engelman's picks of Willink and Hynckes, as well as Jan Sluijters and Hendrik Wiegersma, as the best representatives for the country at that time.[35] Despite the increasing share dedicated to abstraction at the Biennale, by Charley Toorop continued to represent the country at the Dutch pavilion at the Biennale alongside CoBrA artists Karel Appel and Corneille in 1954. While the ascendence of the latter two artists may in part be due to larger international trends that favored abstraction, many scholars have also suspected the negative political association attached to figuration.[36] After all, the DVK also collected paintings by Karel Appel—even giving him subsidies—with the hope of fostering the next generation of Dutch artists who would in turn form their own national painting school. Contrary to the wishes of the DVK, however, such a group was never realized. Ironically, the movement with which Appel ultimately became involved in the postwar years was international in its makeup and called Paris its home.[37]

By the 1960s and '70s the term "Magic Realism" became used with more frequency, and often in reference to the "essential" trio of Koch, Willink, and Hynckes; the former two were paired together in articles and exhibitions because of their fastidious style and strong emphasis on cultural pessimism.[38] The work of the two "*stijlgenoten*" (style mates) became so closely identified during those years that Willink was on rare occasion mistaken for a fascist in media outlets, a source of confusion that he was quick to correct.[39] Even more troubling, the art press sometimes referenced the German origins of the term Magic Realism when discussing these three artists, demonstrating how the stain of political and historical connotations of the war had consolidated around the term as the decades passed.[40]

When critics occasionally described Dick Ket and Wim Schuhmacher as "Magic Realists," they often did so with reservations or certain qualifications. For example, when writing about Dick Ket on the occasion of a 1968 retrospective at the Museum Arnhem, Jos de Gruyter argued that although Ket's name was often included among the "Magic Realists," he really "had a character of his own" and existed "outside of the group" due to the more spiritual nature of his work.[41] Schuhmacher, like Ket, had comparatively fewer solo and group exhibitions than the other Neorealists prior to the Occupation and continued to enjoy a modest level of success after the war. In 1974, on the occasion of Schuhmacher's only major postwar retrospective, critic Hans Redeker distinguished the painter from the other Neorealists on both stylistic and temperamental grounds, writing that "there is every reason to separate him from terms such as Surrealist and Magic Realist, a small group that has included him since the 1930s, after this concept was brought into our country from Germany in the 1920s." He described Schuhmacher as a lone figure with a righteously "indignant" character, who had little social interaction with the other artists and did not fit so neatly into the category.[42]

The label of Magic Realism continued to be re-examined in the following decades. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s in The Netherlands, like in other countries—most notably Germany—as a new generation of critics and art historians came of age, they brought a renewed interest in the term and how to define it.[43] During these years Magic Realism was politicized in The Netherlands and Belgium, referring almost exclusively to Koch, Willink, and Hynckes, whereas Neorealism referred to a broader tendency, or more specifically works of art that represented the present day. The exhibition "Magisch Realisme in Nederland: Raoul Hynckes, Pyke Koch, Carel Willink" (Magic Realism in

The Netherlands: Raoul Hynckes, Pyke Koch, Carel Willink), held in late 1971 at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, helped to not only further entrench the stylistic rapprochement between these three, but also reopened the public debate over terminology.[44] The artists themselves even participated in the discussion, clearly showing evidence that they wanted to distance themselves from the label; Koch stated in an interview: "Magic Realism has spoiled (*verkletst*). Does it actually exist? The word is getting so boring to me, there has been enough talk and writing about it."[45] Willink said: "We did oppose that label a bit, but that did not help. Later we allowed it to be applied to us, but there was never a real group with a program."[46]

It was also around this time that cultural historians and the press began to examine the Occupation years with a more critical eye, sometimes attributing culpability to those cultural workers who collaborated. Many artists began to receive direct questions about their level of complicity, provoking some to participate in public disavowals that relitigated the past. In some cases they disassociated themselves from any damaging connection to National Socialist propaganda. Willink lamented how he, Koch, and Hynckes had been uniformly painted as fascists, arguing that he was—and had always been—politically unaffiliated.[47] He also expressed regret for not having been "angry enough with the Germans," explaining "I avoid difficult things and try to be as safe as possible."[48] For his part, Hynckes flatly denied that he gave Arthur Seyss-Inquart permission to exhibit his work, whereas Koch emphasized that his attraction to Italian Fascism was primarily based on an aesthetic sensibility, stressing the "aristocratic" character of the black shirts in comparison to the "plebian" Nazis.[49] Perhaps due to the pressures brought by this political association, by the 1970s the three "core" Neorealists had to varying degrees taken sides or distanced themselves from one another and the Magic Realist label.[50]

During these revisionist years, art historian Hans Mulder cast the most damning aspersions onto Magic Realism. He drew a direct line between the style and the politics that had co-opted it, writing, "Magic Realism was not so far removed from National Socialism" in the way that it imbued itself with the "magic" of fear and threat, much like the "mysticism of the Nazis, in which fear and heroism were closely linked."[51] By the end of his life in 1983, Willink refuted the label in his memoires using stronger language than ever before, stating "do not let me be recorded as a Magic Realist."[52] When he did employ the term, he used it in such a way that suggested his wariness of the political associations that had become attached to the style during the Occupation; he applied it when speaking of Koch and Hynckes, and specifically in reference to their collaboration with the Germans.[53]

Charley Toorop, due to her consistent and principled position against collaboration as well as the conviction of her subject matter, became—with very few exceptions—totally disaffiliated from the label of "Magic Realism" in the postwar years. Her distinction from the others likely had to do with the fact that she and Wim Schuhmacher were the only Neorealist painters who—in an uncommon act of rebellion—refused to submit any of the forms necessary to register for the Kultuurkamer. While Willink's resistance work was never really recognized in the postwar years and Schuhmacher's oeuvre never achieved the same level of critical recognition as the others, Toorop's radical left-wing positioning and her more direct interrogation of wartime themes during the Occupation helped to solidify her legacy in the decades after the war. When reviewing an exhibition held in September of 1945, for example, one critic upheld Toorop's *Working-Class Woman* as a symbol of resistance, describing her as a "life-sized woman with a militant face, standing against the ruins of a city; she is the symbol of invincibility through a

sober sense of reality" and a "a woman who knows how to hold her own in a time of war and revolution."[54] It also helped that in the decade following the war, the Stichting Kunstenaarsverzet (Artist Resistance Foundation) awarded Toorop a resistance prize in 1953.[55] Perhaps because she had more definitively placed herself on the right side of history in her paintings and rhetoric, Toorop has taken a more prominent place than other Neorealist painters in international venues, such as a major solo retrospective at the Musée d'art moderne in Paris in 2010.[56]

Nearly 100 years after Koch, Willink, Hynckes, Ket, Schuhmacher, and Toorop rose to prominence, the changing historical lens used to scrutinize their work demonstrates how difficult it can be to accurately assess the ways in which politically incorrect ideologies intersect with aesthetics. This problem is especially acute in the case of Pyke Koch, whose legacy has remained a matter of contention over the past three decades. One year after Koch's death in 1991, the scholar John Steen confirmed for the first time that the artist had for a brief period been a member of the Nazi Party.[57] Rather than inspiring further investigation into Koch's political history, however, this discovery was immediately followed by solo exhibitions that have downplayed his sympathies, such as the 1995 retrospective at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen and a smaller 2004 show at the Frisia Museum titled "Frescoes and Fellini."[58] The most recent solo exhibition, "De Wereld van Pyke Koch," held at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht in 2017, shed new light onto Koch's 1930s political actions including his writing for the Dutch-Fascist magazine *Hier Dinaso!* The show provoked mixed opinions, however, due to its treatment of this "dark period" in Koch's life. Critics such as Koen Kleijn found it to be too rationalizing, while Koch's family—despite their involvement in the show—were not entirely pleased, stating that his "heirs do not agree with the heavy emphasis on the war in this exhibition," declaring that "One of our goals is to bring more nuance to the imagery surrounding Pyke Koch."[59]

Revisionist scholarship on these painters remains to be done—especially when it comes to the work of Koch. While the artist's personal archives first became open to the public at the RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History) in 2018—in at least one instance—select personal correspondence cited in previous scholarship has been purged from the holdings, such as an undated letter from 1941 to J.C. (Ocky) van Boetzelaer referencing his newfound ambivalence regarding the far-right ideology that he had formerly pursued.[60] This fact, combined with the paltry number of Koch's letters that have survived from the Occupation period, means that the evolution of Koch's political beliefs over the course of his life will remain—at least in part—as enigmatic as his paintings. There exist, however, breaks in the ramparts. Susana Puente Matos, who is currently writing her dissertation on Koch at the University of Amsterdam, recently shed light on an uninventorized letter written by the artist to a friend Tamara Rimes in 1980. In it, Koch wrote about the feeling of pessimism that he had harbored "since the annihilation of the only strong 'nation-state' on this continent in 1945."[61] Koch's annotated collection of newspapers saved during the Occupation years and after also provide clues about his distaste for collective guilt as well as his penchant for conspiratorial thinking and blood-and-soil ideology.[62]

As an inherently ambiguous, often intentionally oblique aesthetic tendency, the figuration practiced by Koch and addressed more broadly in this book exists between borders that separate latent cultural criticism from anodyne representation, often padded with a layer of plausible deniability. Of course, the long and exalted history of "realism" in The Netherlands and the prominent place given to Early Netherlandish and Dutch Baroque

Old Master works in important encyclopedic collections ascribes a distinct meaning to this updated version of a historic tradition. It is a style that lent itself to debate about passive, versus active, interpellation of politics into cultural production, especially when it comes to questions about agency. Adding to this complexity is the Dutch custom of anti-nationalism and consensus-building, an ethic that does not necessarily value taking heroic stands that place individual voices on a podium; this fact particularly resonates in the work of Carel Willink, an artist not known for his outspokenness.

Within The Netherlands Neorealism takes a prominent place in the Dutch modernist canon alongside De Stijl and CoBrA. Outside the country, however, Koch, Willink, Hynckes, Ket, Schuhmacher, and to a lesser extent Charley Toorop remain little known due to historical circumstances, including the rapid rise of postwar abstraction and the limited space given to Dutch art in international venues. The legacy of Koch and the other Neorealist painters discussed in this book exposes the difficulty of assessing the relationship between an individual artist's politics and his or her artwork, particularly when considering a loosely defined and decentralized artistic mode such as "Magic Realism." Their case demonstrates how cinema offered new methods to visualize the experience of modernization. Ubiquitous and globally popular in the first half of the twentieth century and beyond, the influence of this popular form of entertainment on figurative artists remains a vastly under-researched area.

More than any medium that had come before it, the simulatory quality of film—composed in real time—could capture the physical movements and focused attention of the lived experience with a subjective fidelity to reality that was not achievable in any other art form. As the Neorealists consumed, analyzed, and reflected upon cinema during this fruitful period in the medium's history, they discovered how to precisely emphasize that subjectivity—and recreate their own conditions of psychological paralysis, ambivalence, or even cautious idealism—all within the static medium of painting. In any case, the complicated history of the Dutch Magic Realists—or Neorealists—may help to provide a framework for the study of figurative painting as something other than anti-modernism, one that more closely reveals the changing technological landscape of the modern world, precisely because of its resemblance to it.

Notes

1 Dirk Hannema, "Die Niederländer in der Europäischen Malerei," *Die Pause* 7, no. 10 (October 1942), 13–22.

2 Hannema made this case in *Die Pause* (The Break). See ibid., 13–22. The following year he hatched a plan to establish a "Nationaal Museumfonds" (National Museum Fund) to acquire Flemish paintings from private and public collections. In a letter to the Secretary General of the Finance Department, he listed several specific paintings from the Louvre, such as a landscape by Rubens from 1638; *Rinaldo and Armida* by Anthony van Dyke, 1629; and an unspecified landscape by Jan Bruegel, among others. See letter from Dirk Hannema to the Secretary General of the Department of Finance in The Hague, first page dated May 21, second page dated June 17, 1943, Rotterdam Stadsarchief, GAR BNR 181, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 653. These objectives are consistent with the type of work that Hannema did for Seyss-Inquart, which included his co-authorship of a commissioned book that emphasized the similarities between German and Dutch painters titled *Die Niederlande im Umbruch der Zeiten. Alte und neue Beziehungen zum Reich* (Uitgave: Würzburg, 1941). See Claartje Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer: Geschiedenis en Herinnering* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2014), 52.

3 Many of these purchases took place through artist societies such as Arti et Amicitiae, which had come under the control of the DVK. See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 108. Gerdes also began to conduct fewer studio visits as traveling became more difficult, and

thus began to purchase an increasing number of works at exhibition. See Fransje Kuyhoeven, *De Staat Koopt Kunst: De Geschiedenis van de collectieve 20ste Eeuwse Kunst van het Ministerie van OCW 1932–1992* (Amsterdam and Leiden: Instituut Collectie Nederland in samenwerking met Primavera Pers, 2007), 142.

4 Fransje Kuyhoeven noted that Hannema played an important role in influencing Gerdes's purchases and that the former had seen *The Wait* in Koch's home early on in an unfinished state. See ibid., 141–142. *Groot Nederland* had been transformed into a national socialist literary magazine. See Dirk Hannema, "Onlust in Moderne Kunst," *Groot Nederland* (July 15, 1943), 10–15.

5 Hannema, "Onlust in Moderne Kunst," 11, 15; Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 147.

6 Jan Voskuil, "Hedendaagsche Kunst: Een tentoonstelling samengesteld uit aankopen van het Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten," *De Schouw* (September 15, 1944), 493. The Meertens Institute is a research institute for the study of Dutch language and culture and is part of the (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen) Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

7 Bram Kempers describes the chimney sweep theme as a synthesis between high art (Mantegna's compositions) and folk or street culture and was very likely a reference to the song "Fear No More" in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, a copy of which Koch was known to carry with him. See Bram Kempers, "Masquerades and Metaphors: Pyke Koch's Enigmatic Realism," in *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1995), 78. Hannema commissioned Koch to paint the zodiac signs for the ceiling at the Boijmans Museum; while the project was never ultimately realized, Koch did produce several panels: Sagittarius, Leo, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Libra. See Mieke Rijnders, "De voorstelling Waarin ik Leefde," in *De Wereld van Pyke Koch*, edited by Marja Bosma, Roman Koot and Mieke Rijnders (Zwolle and Utrecht: WBOOKS and Centraal Museum, 2017), 42–83.

8 The figure was inspired by the story of an actual clown from Rotterdam who had lost everything in the blitz and who had moved to Bergen, where Toorop was staying during the war. Undated letter from Charley Toorop to Jan van Gelder, RKD, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0353; Marja Bosma, "Van gemeenschapsideaal naar individualisme: De kunstenaarsfamilie Toorop/Fernhout (1885–1975)," *Jaarboek van het Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie*, no. 61 (2007), 132.

9 Undated letter from Charley Toorop to Jan van Gelder, RKD, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0353.

10 Nico Brederoo has interpreted this detail as a veiled political message, in which Toorop was communicating her hope that the Russians would help to bring an end to the war, even though Toorop never mentioned these sentiments in her own correspondence. See Brederoo, *Charley Toorop: Leven en Werken* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1982), 154. It is more likely that she had more immediate, material concerns on her mind that a more centrally planned society such as the Soviet Union might meet these types of basic needs. In a letter from December 8, 1942, in which Toorop describes the painting, she expresses concern that she will run out of heating oil. See letter from Charley Toorop to Jan van Gelder, RKD, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0353, December 8, 1942.

11 See letter from Charley Toorop to Jan van Gelder, RKD, Toegang NL-HaRKD.0353, December 8, 1942.

12 Most artists exhibited in art societies such as Arti et Amicitiae, then controlled by the DVK. Carel Willink Wim Schuhmacher and Dick Ket were once members of Arti et Amicitiae; Willink left in 1929, Schuhmacher in 1937, and Ket died in 1940.

13 Ingo Schiweck, "Dutch-German Film Relations Under German Pressure and Nazi Occupation, 1933–45," in *Cinema and the Swastika: The International Expansion of Third Reich Cinema*, edited by Roel Vande Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 210. To a greater degree than in Germany, film criticism was allowed to exist following the 1940 invasion of The Netherlands, but could only be published in select papers.

14 Mary Elizabeth O'Brien has done a close analysis of the types of genres that the Third Reich adopted and adapted to their propaganda needs. See Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, *Nazi Cinema as Enchantment: The Politics of Entertainment in the Third Reich* (Rochester, NY: Woodbridge, 2006). A similar type of American-inspired filmmaking appeared in Italy in the form of "white telephone" movies.

15 Schiweck, "Dutch-German Film Relations Under German Pressure and Nazi Occupation, 1933–45," 215. The clandestine press called for boycotts of German films. Aside from some members of the resistance, including a group in Utrecht who set fire to the Rembrandt Theater in 1943, most Dutch people ignored the call for boycotts of *Die goldene Stadt*. See Henk van Gelder and Jacques Klöters, "De Bioscoop: Romantiek of Propaganda," in *Door de nacht klinkt een lied: Amusement in Nederland 1940–1945* (Amsterdam: Thomas Rap, 1985), 130–131, 134.

16 Schiweck, "Dutch-German Film Relations Under German Pressure and Nazi Occupation, 1933–45," 215.

17 Under the censorship laws, the coverage had naturally become focused on German films and theater productions and would also occasionally include articles educating the public on Kultuurfilms as well as völkisch subject matter, such as traditional ethnic dance from Hungary and Germany. In this context, the writing itself had totally ceased to express a political opinion openly. Ibid., 214.

18 Other designs include Saxon Horses, Tiara Tree, and a Horse and Rider. Eddy de Jongh has noted that Koch's designs for the postage stamps were notably distinct from the rest of his oeuvre because they were not at all enigmatic. It was more typical of Koch to reference his politics in oblique ways. See Eddy de Jongh, "Een kunstenaar in troebel vaarwater," *Openbaar Kunstbezit Kunstschrift* 54, no. 1 (February–March 2010), 38–43.

19 Rijnders, " 'De Voorstelling waarin ik leefde' De Politieke Wereld van Pyke Koch," 79–80.

20 Botke owned about twenty works by Koch and was the reason why the artist had a retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum in 1955–1956; he was also good friends with Stedelijk director Willem Sandberg who was also a member of the resistance. See Ype Koopmans, *Magie en Zakelijkheid: Realistische schilderkunst in Nederland 1925–1945*, exh. cat. (Arnhem and Zwolle: Museum Arnhem and Waanders Uitgeverij, 1999), 14; Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 281. After the war Botke wrote a book about his experiences in a camp. See Taecke Botke, *Het Revier: Concentratiekamp mémoires* (Baarn: Erven Thomas Rap, 1978).

21 See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 70.

22 Betty van Garrel and William Rothuizen, "Magisch Realisten Willink, Hynckes en Koch: Langs de afgrond van de kitsch," *Haagse Post*, no. 40 (September 27, 1972).

23 Throughout the Occupation the label was increasingly used to link together the styles of Willink, Koch, Hynckes and other Neorealists. In a prominent example from 1942, right-wing critic Kasper Niehaus published the book *Levende Nederlandsche Kunst* with Bigot en van Rossum, a large volume in which he discusses the recent history of Dutch art from van Gogh to the "Magic Realists," that included Hynckes, Koch, Schuhmacher, and Willink. At the time that he was writing his memoires, Willink may also have been opposed his inclusion in this "trio" in more recent exhibitions such a "Magisch Realisme in Nederland: Raoul Hynckes, Pyke Koch, Carel Willink" held at the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in 1971.

24 Critics such as S. P. Abas and others occasionally used the term "Magisch Realisme" to describe his work prior to the war. See S. P. Abas, "Schilderkunstkroniek," *De Indische Courant* (December 28, 1929), 17; V. D., "A. C. Willink: De modern Alme Tadema. Huinck & Scherjon," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (October 4, 1934), 9. See also Pierre H. Dubois, *A. C. Willink* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1940), 10, 12, 17–18. Dubois used the term "Magic Realism" interchangeably with Neorealism in this book and often in the same sentence, but explains his view of the very subtle distinction between them on pages 17 and 18, writing: "Magic Realism expresses something more accurate in the relationship between reality and its representation in a work of art than Neorealism." Throughout the book he implies that Willink's style exists somewhere between this close fidelity to reality and something more experimental and literary (Neorealism).

25 Koch was referring to a script for a radio lecture in which he had recently referred to himself, Willink, and Hynckes as the "Neorealists or Réalistes magiques of this country." Letter from Koch to Willink dated 1942, Carel Willink Archives. While Koch continued to use the terms Magic Realist and Neorealist to refer to this trio of artists, right-wing critics—most notably Kasper Niehaus—began to more frequently use the former in their writing, perhaps because of its association with Franz Roh and Germany.

26 See also Jouke Mulder, *Willinks Waarheid* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Fontein bv Baarn, 1983), 59. Louis Tas, who was the son of Jacques and Frieda published the book *Dagboek uit een*

kamp (Memoires of a Camp) in 1946 through A.A.M. Stols under the pseudonym Loden Vogel and gave a copy to Carel and Wilma.

27 Wolfgang Cordan, "Het Weerzien van een Meester," *Vrij Nederland* (October 26, 1945). See also Ed Hoornik, "Gesprek met den Schilder A. C. Willink," *Vrij Nederland* (December 22, 1945).

28 Gerrit Kouwenaar, "Willink Onder Valse Vlag," *De Waarheid* (November 2, 1946). See also H. van der Steen, "Omstreden Schilder: Het Werk van A. C. Willink," *Kern* (November 17, 1946). *Vrij Nederland* published a response to Kouwenaar in an article titled "Communistische Inquisitie," which likened his take on Willink to the inquisition and to Goebbels.

29 van der Steen, "Omstreden Schilder."

30 A critic covering the 1960 show at the Museum Arnhem wrote about how "the Third Reich took possession of this kind of art, which seemed traditional or anti-modern." See J. M. Prange, "De Bange Jaren '30," *Het Parool* (October 8, 1960), 19.

31 Ed Wingen, "Expositie in het Stedelijk Museum: Loutering in nieuw werk van Carel Willink," *De Telegraaf* (October 10, 1961), 11. Jan Engelman emphasized that a shift had happened in the reception of Willink's work during the war when liking abstraction became a new form of "resistance." Jan Engelman, "In Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam: De Terugkeer van A. C. Willink," *De Tjid—Maasbode* (September 30, 1961), 4. Willink stated in a 1969 interview that he was irritated by the fact that the left had characterized him as a "capitalist" and emphasized the kitschiness of his work. See Dick A. van Ruler, "Carel Willink: 't Leven is absurd en iets griezeligs," *Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad* (February 8, 1969).

32 In this interview Willink stated how *Last Year in Marienbad* reflected his own aesthetic sensibility, saying "The same atmosphere is in my paintings, with people who don't know each other." Henk Suèr, "Kitsch-Amsterdam van A. C. Willink," *De Tijd—Maasbode* (March 4, 1965), 8.

33 The most important postwar exhibition featuring these artists used the label Neorealism: "The Anxious Thirties. Neorealism in the Netherlands," October 1–December 4, 1960, at the Museum Arnhem.

34 See Jan Engelman, "Revolutie en Experiment: Nooit veroudert de behoefte van de artistieke jeugd om opstand te plegen," *De Tijd* (November 15, 1949), 3. Koch and Willink were often compared against postwar abstractionists such as Appel and Corneille. C.A.S., "Indrukwekkende Manifestatie van Magisch-Realisten in N. 9 Willink en Koch nog 'bij de tijd' Cultuur-pessimisme," *NOD* (March 13, 1965).

35 See "Eén-mans jury: Nederlandsche inzending voor de Biennale," *Het Parool* (May 19, 1950), 5; Daniël Rovers, "Avondland; Carel Willink in Ruurlo," *De Witte Raaf*, no. 189 (September–October 2017).

36 Ibid.

37 Karel's teacher applied for the subsidies, not Karel himself. See Jouke Mulder, *Kunst in Crisis en Bezetting een onderzoek naar de houding van Nederlandse kunstenaars in de periode 1930–1945* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 1978), 236.

38 A small exhibition in March of 1965 in the Neudeflat No. 9 in Utrecht brought together the work of Koch and Willink more specifically, and under the label of "Magic Realism."

39 The program for the VPRO (Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep) broadcasting company falsely identified Carel Willink as the painter of Koch's *Self-Portrait with Black Band*, describing him as having "fascist sympathies," which led Willink to issue a public statement. The company's correction was then printed in newspapers circulating in Utrecht, Harlem, and Zeeland vindicating the artist. See "Carel Willink in Markant," *Vrije Geluiden VPRO*, no. 18 (May 5–12, 1973); "Willink tot VPRO: 'Ik was niet fascistisch," *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* (May 4, 1973); "Willink eist rectificatie van VPRO," *Haarlems Dagblad*," (May 4, 1973); "Willink eist rectificatie van VPRO," *Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant* (May 5, 1973).

40 See Ed Wingen, "Het "magisch realisme" en de Jaren dertig," *De Telegraaf* (March 19, 1977), T5; J. J., "Voor Keur Kunst: De Bange Jaren Dertig," *Kunst Beeld: Tijdschrift voor beeldende kunst* (March 1977), 15.

41 De Gruyter wrote that the other Magic Realists did not focus on timeless themes in the same way as Ket, preferring instead subjects that related to the current day, and which were often critical. Jos de Gruyter, "Dick Ket: Een magisch-realist?," in *Dick Ket* (Oosterbaan: AO, Reeks Boekje, 1968), 1, 7.

42 Redeker explained that the criticism from the 1930s didn't know quite what to do with him. Redeker saw Schuhmacher's style as more simplified, based in abstract means, and "tonalist" than Hynckes and Willink. See Hans Redeker, "Wim Schuhmacher, rebels mens en sublieme kunstenaar," *NRC Handelsblad* (December 6, 1974), CS2. In his review of the same retrospective Bertus Schmidt wrote that Schuhmacher was "neither a Surrealist, nor a Magic Realist." Bertus Schmidt, "Schuhmacher: Schilder van het zilverige licht . . .," *Het Vrije Volk* (December 16, 1974), 9. Ed Wingen was more tempered; he emphasized how Schuhmacher's "Magic Realism," while still very zakelijk, was more dreamlike, poetic, lonely, and not as harsh as the work of Willink and Hynckes. See Ed Wingen, "Wim Schuhmacher (80) en de Ivoren Toren," *De Telegraaf* (December 24, 1974), 23.
43 See R. de Cnodder, "In Museum te Antwerpen: Nederlands magisch realisme," *Het Volk*, Antwerp Edition (September 21, 1971), which identifies the renewed interest in Magic Realism since the 1960s.
44 Jean Buyck, *Magisch Realisme in Nederland: Raoul Hynckes, Pyke Koch, Carel Willink, September 18–November 14, 1971*, exh. cat. (Antwerp: Royal Museum of Fine Arts, 1971).
45 Garrel and Rothuizen, "Magisch Realisten Willink, Hynckes en Koch."
46 Ibid.
47 Willink specifically named resistance writer J. B. Charles (the pen name of Willem Nagel). Willink claimed that Nagel had created a kind of litmus test for fascists usually targeted at the writer's political foes: if you liked the king, the national anthem, or the work of Pyke Koch, then you were a fascist. Ibid.
48 "Carel Willink: De magie van de angst," *De Televizier*, no. 18 (May 5, 1973).
49 Rijnders, " 'De Voorstelling waarin ik leefde' De Politieke Wereld van Pyke Koch," 86.
50 Willink stated that "it had always been a lukewarm affair among us," and said that their friendship ended abruptly after Hynckes had criticized him to the Dutch journalist Bibeb in 1968. Hynckes spoke very fondly of Koch, saying that he was "nice," while Koch noted that the two men saw very little of one another. See Garrel and Rothuizen, "Magisch Realisten Willink, Hynckes en Koch." Hynckes also wrote in his memoires around this time that of all the (four or so) Magic Realists, Pyke Koch was the only one with whom he was still on good terms. See Raoul Hynckes, *Vrienden van Middernacht* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Arbeiderspers, 1973), 39. These memoires also reproduce a letter from Koch to Hynckes.
51 Mulder, *Kunst in Crisis en Bezetting*, 80.
52 Willink also said: "Magic has something of a mystery. Miracle work. And that doesn't play on my canvases. I consider myself first a fantastical realist. My art is more imaginary than realism." See Jouke Mulder, *Willinks Waarheid* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Fontein bv. Baarn, 1983), 8.
53 He said, "the Magic Realist painter Raoul Hynckes had sold paintings through the intermediary of Gerdes to the Reich Commissar Seyss-Inquart" and "Magic Realist Pyke Koch found nothing bad about what the Germans thought." See ibid., 59.
54 Maud van Loon, "Kunst in Vrijheid," *De Waarheid* (September 22, 1945), 3.
55 See "Verzetsprijzen 1953: Charley Toorop en Maurits Uyldert," *De Tijd* (January 26, 1953), 3. She even defended those artists deemed collaborators after the war, stating that she was very much "against all of these fakers who under the pretext of being 'politically correct' think that this suddenly gives them the right to have a voice in art." Gérard Audinet, "Alterportrait," in *Charley Toorop*, edited by Marja Bosma, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and Paris Musées, 2010), 104.
56 "Charley Toorop, February 19–May 9, 2010," Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Catalogue noted in the previous footnote. This exhibition was an adapted version of the retrospective "Vooral geen principes!," organized in 2008 by Marja Bosma at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen. When the Neorealists' work did appear in exhibitions abroad, it was often in the context of shows dedicated to "realisms" ("Les Réalismes: 1919–1939," Pompidou, 1980) or one of several movements such as De Stijl encompassing Dutch modernism ("La Beauté exacte: De van Gogh à Mondrian, Art, Pays-Bas, XXème siècle," Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1994). A smaller version of "Magie en Zakelijkheid" (Museum Arnhem, 1999) appeared at the Institut Néerlandais in 2000 under the title "Magie et Realisme," a small, no-longer-extant venue dedicated to the promotion of Dutch culture in France.

57 See John Steen, *Magisch Realisten en tijdgenoten: In de verzameling van het Gemeentemuseum Arnhem*, edited by Jan Brand and Kees Boos, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1992), 24. See also Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 290.

58 Koch's son P. F. C. Koch contributed an essay to the catalogue for the major 1995 retrospective Pyke Koch at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, describing his father as "Eurocentrist," "étatist," and hostile to the legacy of the French Revolution, avoiding the word "Fascism." See P. F. C. Koch, "Pyke Koch: An Anarchist Counter-Revolutionary," in *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1995), 10. Reviews of the show also minimized his politics, focusing more closely on Koch's latent homosexuality as a source of controversy. Flora Stiemer, "Pyke Koch in Analyse," *Algemeen Handelsblad* (February 27, 1995), 1, 21. A 2004 exhibition titled "Frescoes and Fellini"—despite its emphasis on Italy—also glossed over Koch's politics. See Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kultuurkamer*, 294–295; Emily Ansenk, Belia van der Giessen, and Odilia Stokvis van Boetzelaer, *Fresco's en Fellini: Pyke Koch geïnspireerd door Italië*, exh. cat. (Spanbroek: Frisia Museum, 2004).

59 Koen Kleijn writing for the progressive newspaper *De Groene Amsterdammer* described the constant contextualization as a bit too "elegant" in the way that it framed Koch as just one person out of "everyone" who was seeking out some kind of "ideological foundation" at the time. Kleijn explained that Koch very intentionally chose to align himself with Verdinaso when he was in his right mind in the 1930s, an organization with very clearly stated antisemitic views, and that his association with this ideology should not be construed as accidental. Koen Kleijn, "Kunst en Cultuur Beeldende Kunst: Pyke Koch, nog steeds omstreden. Rijzig als een marmeren pilaar," *De Groene Amsterdammer*, no. 49 (December 6, 2017). See also "Pyke Koch: A Sphinx in the Art of the 20th Century: An Interview with Andreas Koch, Co-Founder of the Pyke Koch Foundation," *World Art Foundations* (November 17, 2017). It should also be noted that Andreas Koch also collaborated on the introduction to the catalogue and added his voice to the didactic material for the exhibition.

60 For this citation see Carel Blotkamp, "Het onzichtbare oeuvre," in *Pyke Koch: Schilderijen en Tekeningen*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, 1995), 16–17.

61 This uninventorized letter is at the RKD, Archief Pyke Koch en Heddy Koch–de Geer, Toegang NL-HaRKD-0899. Susana Puente Matos cited this letter in a talk, "When the Forest Grows Dark: Uncovering Fascism in Art History," at the Albright Institute for Global Affairs 15th Anniversary MaddyTalks at Wellesley College on January 18, 2024.

62 In one example, next to an article from March 13, 1941, covering a speech by the Reich Commissar on the Dutch past and future, Koch wrote the words: "The Dutch do not have their own soil any more than the Austrians do." See "De Redevanden Rijkscommissaris," *De Telegraaf* (March 13, 1941), 2. This not-so-hidden message provides some insight into Koch's likely allyship with Anton Mussert and his lost hope in the promise of the Dietsland. In a later example from this file from 1961, Koch wrote: "The collective guilt of the German people is a delusion. Even the Jews did not know what was being killed in the camps." Clipping labeled 1961 *De Telegraaf* with the title "Lord Moyne tegen getuige Brand: Wat moet ik met een miljoen Joden doen." Other clippings saved throughout the years included stories with underlined passages covering Jewish immigration to Israel and South Africa and the collaboration between the Americans and the Russians during World War II. All the newspaper clippings are found in RKD, Archief Pyke Koch en Heddy Koch-de Geer, Toegang NL-HaRKD-0899, Inv. Nr. 193. I would again like to thank Susana Puente Matos for pointing me to this collection of annotated newspapers.

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Carel Willink Archive, Ruysdaelkade 15, Amsterdam
Eye Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam
IISG Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (International Institute of Social History), Amsterdam
Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library), The Hague
Kröller-Müller Museum Archives, Otterlo
Literatuurmuseum/Letterkundig Museum (Literature Museum), The Hague
Nationaal Archief (National Archives), The Hague
NIOD Instituut voor Oorlogs-, holocaust- en genocidestudies (Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies), Amsterdam
Pyke Koch Archive (consulted via email with Mieke Rijnders)
Rijksprentkabinet (Royal Print Cabinet), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
RKD Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (The Netherlands Institute for Art History), The Hague
Rotterdam Stadsarchief (Rotterdam City Archives), Rotterdam
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