

# **GDK Research Database of the Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen (Great German Art Exhibitions)**

On October 20, 2011 the database [www.gdk-research.de](http://www.gdk-research.de) will be activated.

The subject of this database are the Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen (Great German Art Exhibitions) that took place annually from 1937 to 1944 in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art, now Haus der Kunst), which opened in 1937. The database is the first high-performance platform for the exploration of these exhibitions which were decisive to the art policy of National Socialism. Altogether about 11,000 artworks of sculpture, painting and print were shown in the Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen. Only about 10 percent of these were known through illustrations till now. With the database GDK Research by far the largest amount will be available to the public.

For GDK Research the relevant information has been compiled from three institutions: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich; Haus der Kunst, Munich; and Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

- The basis is established by six photo albums at Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in which the Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen of 1938 to 1943 are documented photographically.
- In the historical archives of Haus der Kunst books of account from 1938 to 1944 are preserved and provide exact information about the works sold at the Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen. The buyers were leading members of the National Socialist regime, as well as numerous private individuals.
- Since 1998 approximately 600 of the works purchased by Adolf Hitler belong to the portfolio holdings of Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin.

GDK Research now shows, for the first time, all the exhibition spaces and most of the exhibited works, and enables a systematic research according to criteria such as artist, title, subject and buyer.

The Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen were considered to be the most important exhibitions of German art. These were sales exhibitions, which had been common for the "art city Munich" since the 19th century. The selection of works was made by a jury in which Adolf Hitler's vote was decisive. Although only a minor part of the works admitted to the exhibition openly depicted themes of National Socialist propaganda, they still convey a system of values, which reflects the world view of the National Socialist regime: the idea of a homeland, the relationship between the sexes, the role of the family, workers, farmers and soldiers. A large amount of the works belonged to landscape and genre painting. Small-scale sculptures – mostly of animals and female nudes – had a much greater quantity than the monumental hero sculptures by artists such as Arno Breker and Joseph Thorak.

Economic success and progress of the Grosse Deutsche Kunstaussstellungen were precisely documented. From 1938 to 1944 more than 6,000 pieces were sold, of which a sixth was bought by Adolf Hitler, who purchased paintings and sculptures for a total of nearly seven million reichmarks. All other buyers – prominent members of the party, institutions and private persons – spent far less.

The six albums with the photographic documentation of the exhibition spaces were transferred after the war from the American military government, the Central Collecting Point, to Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte. Up to now these albums, as well as the books of accounts from Haus der Kunst's historical archives, were only available for stationary inquiry. Through the systematic editing and indexing of resources, GDK Research provides a completely new basis for research.

The project was supported by a fund from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and realized in a collaboration of Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte (project management), Deutsches Historisches Museum, and Haus der Kunst.

The activation of the database will be accompanied by the conference "The Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellungen 1937-1944/45", which will take place in Haus der Kunst and Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte.

Opening on Thursday, October 20, 2011 in Haus der Kunst:

6.30 pm

- Okwui Enwezor, Haus der Kunst  
Welcoming address
- Monika Flacke, Deutsches Historisches Museum and  
Wolf Tegethoff, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte  
Words of welcome
- Sabine Brantl, Haus der Kunst  
The Haus der Deutschen Kunst as a Commercial Enterprise
- Stephan Klingen, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte  
Source Material in Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte
- Ralf Peters, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte  
The Image Database and Research Platform "GDK Research"
- Christian Fuhrmeister, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte  
Introduction to the conference

8.00 pm

- Historical film documents from 1933 to 1943 on Haus der Deutschen Kunst and the Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellungen  
Introduction: Sabine Brantl, Haus der Kunst and Iris Lauterbach, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte

Additional information on the conference program at

<http://www.zikg.eu/main/2011/GDK/index.htm>

Images available at [www.hausderkunst.de/presse/info.htm](http://www.hausderkunst.de/presse/info.htm)