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An Eye-Opening Exhibition

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"AN EYE-OPENING EXHIBITION"

Mary Lynn Kopetz, Departments of History and Graphic Design
Sherilyn McElroy, Faculty Advisor

A gala modern art exhibition in Munich, Germany opened July 19, 1937, which brought together more than 650 important avant-garde paintings and sculptures. However, this massive exhibition compiled by the National Socialist Party, Entartete Kunst ("Degenerate Art", the name under which the work was categorized) was not intended to introduce the public to the virtues of modern art, but was arranged purposefully to inflame them against the works. Works by modern artists were treated not as evidence of individual creativity but as representative of something undesirable--the monstrous offspring of insanity and ineptitude.

The preconceived notion of the nature of art was like a bandage over the Nazis' eyes. They did not want to see that artistic reality can be something other than a realistic representation of an object in physical space. And what the modern artists were describing on their canvases were expressive, subjective concerns--ones that required an evaluation other than a quick glance. They sought to extract the idea, the inner essence, something beyond a realistic surface appearance. They proposed a new perspective and discerned a new reality.

In my project, a series of educational posters, I employ visual design vocabulary and ideology to reflect this theme--the ability to see and experience in a new way. Visual elements I have selected purposefully encourage the viewer to take a closer look and literally see new things. Sometimes it is necessary to find a new perspective in order to see the bigger picture. The Nazis hoped to convince society of the degeneracy of the innovation of modern art, but I hope ultimately to affirm the artists' discovery of their new reality. And I challenge the viewer to reflectively examine my results at the conference.