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From Unwanted Heritage towards Difficult Heritage

Revisiting the Legacies of Arno Breker and His Portrait Busts of the Ludwig Couple

Margaret Tali

Abstract

This article discusses Arno Breker's portrait busts (1987) of the German collectors Peter and Irene Ludwig and the debates that surrounded this work during its displays in Germany and Hungary. Focusing on the contingent ways in which difficult pasts are attached to artistic heritage, it articulates how cross-border travels complicate this attachment. The work of Hitler's once-leading artist Breker serves as a case study for analyzing how meanings are on the one hand produced and on the other hand suppressed and willfully ignored in the context of exhibition settings. The analysis of these portrait busts' curatorial contextualisation from the 1980s to the 2020s reveals a shift in curators' attitudes towards Breker's works: from an 'unwanted heritage' that is intentionally neglected to a 'difficult heritage' and the articulation of its difficulties and dissonances. Analysing the biography of these works makes it possible to show the important roles that curatorial problematising has carried in the framing of these works, both in Germany and Hungary.

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Introduction: Difficult heritage and curatorial work

[1] The understanding of heritage has recently seen a shift that urges to rethink how heritage can help to communicate violent and uncomfortable pasts to the public. This important shift in understanding involves on the one hand the need to rearticulate imperial ideologies and visions in relation to the violence they incited, that have often been suppressed, and on the other hand revisit how it could be framed and communicated to the public in a way that would do justice to the experiences of its victims and their descendants. Often such heritage involves dissonant viewpoints and differing understandings, which can sometimes erupt into emotional debates and even grow into memory wars. These changes in public perception add new weight to the critical and conscious curation of such heritage in museums and public spaces, and there is a growing need to find new methods for this purpose that evolve from practice. Recently, this shift in public understanding of heritage has been advanced by the debates over the need to revisit the ways of remembering European colonialism that acquired a new momentum with the Black Lives Matter protests across the US and Europe. Furthermore, the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has brought into new limelight the need to decolonize Russian imperial history and revisit Russian colonial heritage across European and Eastern European museums and public spaces.[1] However, the shift in displaying legacies of historical violence in public space through art has important starting points in the revaluation of the Nazi heritage that started after the Second World War. Yet, as my analysis brings to the fore, its curation has only recently acquired critical perspectives and new layers in Western and Eastern Europe that arise from ethical considerations.[2]

[2] My analysis focuses on a particular work, its trajectory of exhibitions, and the debates that ensued during its exhibiting—and non-exhibiting—in Germany and Hungary: Arno Breker's portrait busts of the collector couple Peter and Irene Ludwig (Fig. 2), while I trace the many resistances through which they have been turned from an unwanted heritage to a difficult heritage. The understanding of heritage as something that encompasses neglected or unconsidered aspects of history that are either too painful or too contested to be integrated into narratives of art history has gained considerable attention recently in the dicourses of heritage and memory studies as well as in art history. Since the 2020s, such difficult historical legacies have slowly become addressed also in museum exhibitions, next to the more common discourses of pride and celebration that are coupled with exhibiting collected artworks. However, as this article shows, finding the means and conceptual tools for sharing such dissonances in exhibition practice has involved many struggles, that have been ongoing for decades also in relation to the Nazi heritage and its once most celebrated artists.

[3] Arno Breker (1900–1991) is known to have been one of Hitler's favourite artists and served as an unofficial 'state sculptor' of the Nazi regime. Realizing many important commissions under the Nazi regime, Breker held a key role in translating the ideals of the 'Third Reich' to a popular audience and

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[1] See also Margaret Tali and Ieva Astahovska, "The Return of Suppressed Memories in Eastern Europe: Locality and Unsilencing Difficult Histories", in: *Memory Studies* 15 (2022), no. 3, 511-522 (editorial to a special issue of the same title); Erica Lehrer and Joanna Wawrzyniak, "Decolonial Museology in East-Central Europe: A Preliminary To-Do List", in: *EuropeNow* (journal), no. 50 (21 February 2023).

[2] See also Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*: *Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, London / New York 2009.

illustrated the superiority of the so-called Aryans. Taking Greek ideals of beauty as his basis, Breker's sculptures perfected the image of the 'Aryan super-race' by giving form to the ideals of National Socialism and by elevating the racist policies of the regime. From 1933 to 1945 he realized many commissions for the Nazi government. He also served in high managerial positions, from 1941 as vice-president of the Reich Chamber for the Visual Arts, and from 1944 as an invited professor at the Prussian Academy of the Arts. At a time when many Jewish authors and artists were persecuted, imprisoned and killed, Breker's work decorated the offices of high-level Nazi officials, who offered him the biggest commissions. Although after the war Breker's role had been investigated during a denazification trial, he was released, based on the main argument that he had protected colleagues.[3] His position remained ambiguous: neglected by most art institutions, he lived in seclusion in Düsseldorf and continued to work on mostly private and occasionally public commissions.[4] On several occasions, the injustice of the trial's results was pointed out, and the ethical reasons for exhibiting his works continued to be questioned by the art world, which held demonstrations and continued to resist Breker in other ways.[5]

[4] In the following I draw on the work of a number of critical art historians, namely Walter Grasskamp, who has problematized the legacies of Breker's work in the German context, Jonathan Petropoulos, who has researched the post-war trials of Arno Breker and other Nazi artists and architects, and Gregory Maertz who has further contextualized the postwar rehabilitation of Nazi artists. Among the most important sources in contextualizing the debates in Germany have been the book *Nazi-Kunst ins Museum?* (1988) edited by Klaus Staeck and the exhibition catalogue *Zur Diskussion gestellt: Der Bildhauer Arno Breker* (2006). The reception of Breker's work in Hungary has not been previously researched. My analysis sheds new light on the importance of contextualization in the display of these highly disputed works, while their biography will serve as an object for theorizing how difficult heritage has gradually become a means for sharing contested knowledge and dissonant perspectives on the past.

[5] The first section traces the history of the busts in the German context, in which the works were until recently never displayed together and where curators have long sought to find an appropriate way for their display. The second section analyses the story of their travel to Hungary in the 1990s, where the work became part of the founding collection for the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, acquiring a newly charged context. Transnational travel, thus, refers to the travel of Breker's statues across the German-Hungarian border, which until the fall of the Soviet Union was also a journey from the capitalist to the socialist world. By tracing how they were unwanted, I explore the ways in

[3] Art historian Gregory Maertz points out that the possibility of helping Jewish colleagues, the so-called degenerate artists and dissidents, was indeed a major trope in the testimonies of collaborating artists. In 1951 the American authorities declared that the programme of Denazification had failed. Gregory Maertz, "The Last Taboo: The Postwar Rehabilitation of Nazi Artists", in: *Art and Artistic Life during the Two World Wars*, eds. Giedrė Jankevičiūtė and Laima Laučkaitė, Vilnius 2012, 387-417: 394.

[4] Among cultural circles, Breker was known to have realized portraits for the economic and political elite, such as Willy Brandt, Konrad Adenauer, Ernst Jünger and Ludwig Erhard. See for instance, Jacques Damase, *Arno Breker: 60 ans de sculpture*, exh. cat., Atelier Calka, Paris 1981.

[5] Claudia Schönfeld, "Breker und Frankreich", in: *Zur Diskussion gestellt: Der Bildhauer Arno Breker*, exh. cat., Kulturforum der Landeshauptstadt Schwerin, ed. Rudolf Conrades, Schwerin 2006, 102-145: 142.

which objects allow us to revive uncomfortable and controversial pasts that, for this reason, are often suppressed and hidden from the public eye. The recovery of this kind of past constitutes an important potential for curatorial work: curators can either activate or obscure these aspects in artworks' histories in their display. Museum theorists Roger I. Simon and Erica Lehrer have conceptualized such curatorial acts as sharing difficult knowledge; both advocate for practices of curating heritage that turns sensitive memories embedded in objects into points of public conversation, by sharing, instead of hiding them away and hence neglecting such past.[6] Such curatorial practices consciously seek to provoke affective reactions in visitors through their exhibition design, conceptual contextualizing and posing questions to the audience as a way of making history speak actively about choices in the present, while aiming to deal ethically with the framing of violence that such historical material may entail. Its starting point is the acknowledgement of the transformative power that such contextualization can have on people's understanding of the past. The particular involuntary act of travelling that involved Breker's work and art collector Peter Ludwig's global vision, that I discuss in this article, refers to a permanent change of a work's physical location as part of a collection. In the light of the growing number of exchanges between public museums and private collectors as well as the increasing return of looted artworks to their communities of origin, this needs to be reconsidered in terms of its implications for curatorial work in transnational contexts.

Breker and debates over Nazi heritage in Germany

[6] By the 1980s, Aachen-based chocolate magnate and collector Peter Ludwig (1925–1996) had become one of the best-known European art collectors, whose movements were carefully observed in the Western art world because the status of his collection either equalled or even exceeded that of most public museums. In addition to European and American art, Ludwig had decided in the late 1970s to expand his collection to include Soviet, Eastern European, and Latin American art, that had been neglected in Western-centric art discourse. As a rare combination of art historian and businessman, Ludwig had seen a gap in European museums and targeted this as a collector by establishing a global network of museums that was intended to bridge this divide.[7] Independent of the collector's hopes and driven by sometimes turbulent political developments, the internationally established Ludwig museums remained relatively poorly connected with each other.

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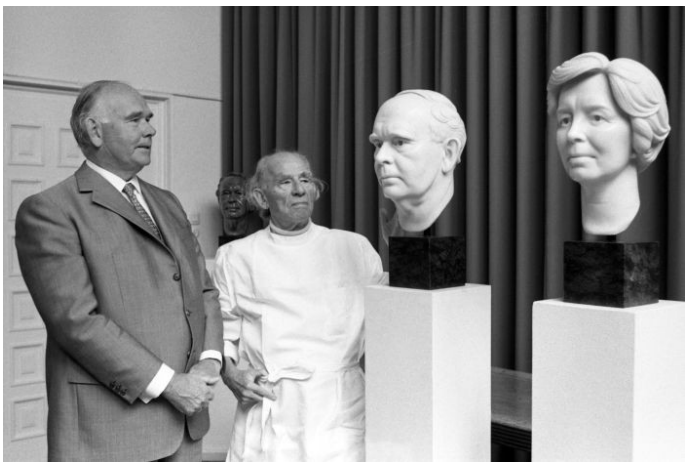
[6] The context of their work is, however, slightly different: while Simon discusses historical photographs, Lehrer is mainly interested in ethnographic objects. Roger I. Simon, "A Shock to Thought: Curatorial Judgment and the Public Exhibition of 'Difficult Knowledge'", in: *Memory Studies* 4 (2011), 432-449; Roger I. Simon, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing. Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*, New York 2014; Erica Lehrer and Cynthia E. Milton, "Introduction: Witnesses to Witnessing", in: *Curating Difficult Knowledge. Violent Pasts in Public Places*, eds. Erica Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton and Monica E. Patterson, New York 2011, 1-19.

[7] The Ludwig collection is displayed in 26 museums internationally. The museums that are based on the couple's collection and bear his name are: Museum Moderner Kunst – Stiftung Ludwig in Vienna (1979), Ludwig Museum in Budapest (1991), Fundación Ludwig de Cuba in Havana (1995), Ludwig Museum for International Art in the National Art Museum of China in Beijing (1996), and The Ludwig Museum at the Russian Museum in St Petersburg (1996). There are five Ludwig museums in Germany: Museum Ludwig in Cologne (1976), Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum (1977) and Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst (1970) in Aachen, Ludwig Galerie Schloss Oberhausen (1983), and Ludwig Galerie Saarlouis (1989).

[7] As a collector Ludwig was well known for his controversial moves; he liked to provoke public dispute with his bold statements. However, the busts of him and his wife that he had commissioned from Breker in 1984 were not publicly exhibited in Germany because the general public's opposition to the sculptures had been so vocal. Thus, the only trace of their realization was a series of black-and-white photographs of the two figures that appeared in several German newspapers. The heated controversy that the busts provoked in West Germany involved the question of how to deal with Nazi-era heritage in local museums and in public space and who should decide about it.

[8] In one of the photographs (Fig. 1) Ludwig judges Breker's portrait bust in marble, for which he had previously posed in the artist's atelier. Standing side by side with the artist, the collector appears visibly pleased: his posture and facial expressions transmit his contentment with the result. Breker's pose, although he was already 87 years old, testifies to his continued vitality and productivity as an artist. The existence of these photographs with the two men posing side by side attests that Ludwig had brought a professional photographer with him to record their meeting in Breker's atelier and to make these photographs available to the media. This act of sharing the photographic reproduction of the work functions similarly to acquiring a new work. In this case, the photograph replaces a rumour with a fact and thus legitimises previously unproved knowledge. Operating very similarly to an exhibited and collected object, the photograph starts to participate in the construction of meaning by offering evidence. The photograph thereby becomes a representative part of the object itself.



1 Peter Ludwig with Arno Breker and his marble busts of the Ludwig couple, 1987 (photo: © Marco J. Bodenstein, Breker-Archive in Nörvenich, Germany)

[9] The news about Ludwig's commission caused considerable debate in Germany. The book *Nazi-Kunst ins Museum?*, edited by Klaus Staeck in 1988, gathered opinion stories, public letters and important contributions on the main thrust of the dispute.[8] As an artist and graphic designer, Klaus Staeck played an active part in the debate. The book's cover image reveals his intention to problematize and visualize continuities. The portrait busts of the Ludwigs appear on either side of Breker's bust of Adolf Hitler with the bunk beds of a concentration camp in the background. The Hitler bust is an existing work from 1937 by Breker in the collection of the Düsseldorf City Museum.

[8] Klaus Staeck, ed., *Nazi-Kunst ins Museum?*, Göttingen 1988.

The slogan "Heim ins Museum, Kameraden!" on the pedestal of Hitler's bust adopts the language of Nazi propaganda. It recalls Hitler's imperialist foreign policy "Heim ins Reich", which aimed at "joining" Austria and the Sudetenland to a "Greater Germany", and later invited the German communities in the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe to "return" to Germany. The association of the busts of the Ludwig couple with a bust of Hitler, all three sculpted by Breker, may be understood as the political and economic alignment of the latter; by their placement on either side of Hitler, the Ludwigs also appear as henchmen.

[10] This image designed by Staeck, which effectively conveys the continuity between Breker's past and present engagements, first appeared on the cover of a special section in the *ZEIT Magazin* (no. 44, 24 October 1986) and was adopted two years later for the anthology. The discussion in the *ZEIT Magazin* framed the dispute over the definition of 'Nazi art', and raised questions about the kind of curation that these artworks required. During these years, thousands of National Socialist artworks confiscated by the Allied forces at the end of the Second World War were returned to German museums. What was to be done with this "nobody's art" as the *ZEIT Magazin* referred to it was unclear.[9] In their anthology *Nazification of Art* (1990), art historians Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will reflected on the debate among museum directors and critics about how to deal with this legacy, noting that several curators and historians were afraid of being accused of implying support either for the works or for the regime that had sponsored them.[10] This notwithstanding, Ludwig's commission was politicized beyond the regular level.

[11] In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Ludwig justified commissioning Breker by paying tribute to the artist, calling him "a great portraitist" ("ein großer Portraitkünstler").[11] The occasion for this interview was a recent exhibition of works by National Socialist artists, in which the curators had decided to show large-scale photographs of Breker's work instead of original works by him, on the grounds that this would create a distancing effect.[12] There were also demonstrations against Breker's private exhibition in West-Berlin in 1981, and in France, where Breker retained a surprisingly large group of supporters throughout his life,[13] he was pressured to remove his works from the Centre Pompidou's exhibition "Paris – Paris, 1937–1957: creations en France".[14] Being in favour of showing Breker's works was thus highly political. Ludwig argued for it by drawing a comparison with the work of composers like Richard Strauss and Carl Orff: both continued to be valued in Germany despite their being favoured under the Nazi regime.[15] With this juxtaposition,

[9] *ZEIT Magazin*, no. 44 of 24 October 1986, 57-67: "Comeback der Nazi-Kunst?".

[10] Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will, "Introduction", in: *The Nazification of Art. Art, Design, Music, Architecture and Film in the Third Reich*, eds. Brandon Taylor and Wilfried van der Will, Hampshire 1990, 5.

[11] "Breker wird zur Seite gedrückt", interview with Peter Ludwig, in: *Der Spiegel*, 1 September 1986, reproduced in: Staeck (1988), 13-15: 13.

[12] Walter Grasskamp, "De-Nazification of Nazi Art: Arno Breker and Albert Speer Today", in: Taylor and van der Will (1990), 231-248: 236.

[13] Schönfeld (2006), 123f.

[14] Schönfeld (2006), 142.

[15] "Ludwig will die Nazi-Kunst nicht ins Museum bringen", in: *Kölner Stadtanzeiger,* 19 September 1986, reproduced in: Staeck (1988), 17-18.

Breker's work is at once positioned at multiple moments in time, which complicates its temporal contextualization.

[12] In answer to Ludwig's position, a public letter titled "Keine Nazi-Kunst in unsere Museen" was composed by Staeck and art historian Stephan von Wiese, which argued against showing Breker's work publicly on ethical grounds. The letter gathered 390 signatures and was signed by intellectuals, cultural managers and artists, including Hans Haacke, Valie Export, Isa Genzken, Dieter Honisch, Elfriede Jelinek, Rudi Fuchs, Anselm Kiefer, Kasper König, Endre Tót and Wolf Vostell. Ludwig positioned himself in favour of displaying Nazi-era art in order to avoid turning it into "a contemporary form of degenerate art" within public art institutions.[16] Although the collector's argumentation was at times contradictory, he was not the only one who supported the public display of so-called Nazi art. Other members of the cultural elite also voiced their support for it. For instance, the director of the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, Hans Albert Peters, argued that 'Nazi art' had problematically come to signify a particular non-art that nobody was interested in or wanted to be associated with.[17]

[13] A year later, another collective public letter appeared, which argued against the grain that this art *needed* to be shown in art museums as a historical and psychological reflection of society.[18] As objects, Breker's works would *testify* to a chapter of lived history, and through them the story of Breker's complicity in the Nazi regime could be unfolded through more nuanced curatorial narratives. The question of *how* to show and tell them, however, had received little attention until then.

[14] Significantly, Breker's work continued to be labeled 'Nazi art' even in reference to his works realized in the 1980s. One of the contributors to the above-mentioned book, Walter Grasskamp, justified this by insisting that Breker's work could not be separated from the political ideology of the Nazi regime, as it was used as part of a propaganda effort to confirm a racist policy that divided the population into superior and worthless groups.[19] Using the example of a sculpture in Breker's garden that the artist once intended to dedicate to Benito Mussolini, Grasskamp provocatively suggests that disregarding contextualization and displaying the remodelled version—which was missing its arms—in a public museum would signify an amputation of historical awareness.[20] This active response and the term 'Nazi art' also signal the prevailing public sentiment in relation to Breker's past involvements.

[15] Jonathan Petropoulos, who has analyzed the Breker trial by the so-called Denazification Board, problematizes its results for a number of reasons. He suggests that as opposed to Munich, Breker's trial was held in the small town of Donauwörth, where he had lived after the war, which arguably

[16] Peter Ludwig / Armin Zweite, "Pro / Contra", in: *PAN,* 26 September 1987, quoted from: Staeck (1988), 45.

[17] Peter Sager and Dirk Reinartz, "Comeback der Nazi-Kunst?", in: *ZEIT Magazin*, no. 44, 24 October 1986, 66.

[18] Stefanie Poley, "Ja: Für Nazi-Kunst im (Kunst-)Museum!", call of 2 June 1987 (Bonn), reproduced in: Staeck (1988), 20.

[19] Grasskamp (1990), 241.

[20] Grasskamp (1990), 242.

made the judges more favourable towards him.[21] Trial by the Denazification court instead of a criminal court meant that Breker's use of French and Italian war prisoners as workforce in his studio was not considered in court. In his aggressive defence, Breker fashioned himself as a humanist, stressing the support and protection he had provided to colleagues, such as publisher Peter Suhrkamp, sculptors Hermann Blumenthal and Willy Schwinghammer, architect Jean Walter, and one of the models of his mentor Aristide Maillol, Dina Vierny.[22] This assistance was considered to be "according to the measure of his power" by the court, suggesting that "[Breker] managed to resist the National Socialist rule of violence".[23] Based on the court decision Breker could officially continue to work, was fined 100 DM and the trial costs of 33,179 DM, which he refused to pay after moving to Düsseldorf.[24] By contrast, Grasskamp recounts, one of the artist's early protégées, Jewish gallery owner Alfred Flechtheim, was forced to flee Germany, while Breker ascended in his career.[25] Breker led a luxurious lifestyle, holding many different studios and being paid lavishly for commissioned work.[26] The public insistence on referring to his work as 'Nazi art' could thus be seen as a carrier of the public judgement of unredeemable injustice.

[16] However, Ludwig's wish to accord Breker a place of honour in German museums was perceived as particularly problematic because of its implicit claim that public museums should meet the demands of collectors.[27] This form of collectors' direct influence on museum politics has always represented a morally questionable matter and was also debated in this case. With the associations that the busts acquired, Ludwig's growing claim for power on the German art scene through his museums and influence on the art market thus joined the widespread sentiment of injustice regarding Breker's courting in post-war Germany.

[17] Although Ludwig repeatedly stated his disinclination to publicly display Breker's busts after commissioning them, exhibiting the sculptures had been part of the original plan for the exhibition "Ludwigs Lust. Die Sammlung Irene and Peter Ludwig" (1993) in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg.[28] "Ludwigs Lust" was the largest exhibition of the Ludwig collection ever shown in a public museum in Germany and was accompanied by the most comprehensive catalogue of the collection ever published. Hans Haacke noted that the curator of the exhibition withdrew these

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[21] Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain. The Art World in Nazi Germany*, London et al. 2000, 242f.

[22] Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*, Chapel Hill / London 1996, 238-239; Michèle C. Cone, *Artists under Vichy. A Case of Prejudice and Persecution*, Princeton 1992, 161.

[23] Petropoulos (2000), 243.

[24] Petropoulos (2000), 241, 244.

[25] Grasskamp (1990), 238.

[26] Petropoulos (2000), 230.

[27] Grasskamp (1990), 237.

[28] "Breker wird zur Seite gedrückt", interview with Peter Ludwig, in: *Der Spiegel*, 1 September 1986, reproduced in: Staeck (1988), 13-15.

busts, fearing that their presentation might divert attention from the rest of the display.[29] The removal of Breker's busts thus served to circumvent criticism from a possible public discussion.

[18] Ludwig's position with respect to the sculptor remains contested. While he posed for the artist in his Düsseldorf studio over the course of several months, his wife Irene never agreed to visit Breker—her bust was sculpted on the basis of a photograph and it is slightly higher than Peter Ludwig's bust.[30] It has remained little known that Ludwig commissioned four different-sized versions of the same portraits cast in bronze, and one version in marble, and that there are five pairs of the Ludwigs' portrait busts altogether. The significance of these artworks for Ludwig is attested by the fact that after the collector's death in 1996, one of the busts was set in front of his crypt in the church of St. Bartholomew in Sankt Aldegund (Rheinland-Pfalz), as the only portrait.[31] Following Irene's death in 2010, her bust was also added to the site.

[19] One of the copies of Peter Ludwig's busts that remained in Germany was exhibited twice. Ludwig's portrait was included in the exhibition "Ein Deutscher Sammler – Ein Deutsches Auto" (1995) held on the occasion of the collector's 70th birthday in the Ludwig Forum in Aachen. Here the bust of Ludwig was placed next to another one realized by Soviet sculptor Lev Kerbel (1917–2003). The curator Wolfgang Becker framed Breker's bust as "a gesture of an extremely conservative attitude", explaining this with both of the two works being "commissioned [from] artists who lived under dictatorial regimes".[32] He also criticized their size, seeing this as a reflection of "typologies of power, which are inappropriate of a collector from the Rhineland (…) [who] appears to extend over and beyond himself".[33] Unlike a decade earlier in the Düsseldorf exhibition, the display of Breker's bust of Ludwig raised little public attention.

[20] In 2006, 15 years after the death of Breker, the Schleswig-Holstein-Haus in Schwerin held a biographical exhibition titled "Put Up for Discussion: The Sculptor Arno Breker" (in German, "Zur Diskussion gestellt: Der Bildhauer Arno Breker"). The exhibition was curated by the museum director Rudolf Conrades, who decided to display a wide variety of Breker's work, including the bust of Peter Ludwig. Attempting to reopen the debate around the artist's work, its display was guided by a provocative question: can the work of an ideologically and morally corrupt artist still be 'enjoyable'? Echoing the previous calls against making Breker taboo, the exhibition instead proposed to deal "intensively" with his work.[34] The exhibition lead to an international scandal, in which the curator was accused of rehabilitating and whitewashing Breker in a publicly funded institution, as well as

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[29] Hans Haacke, "Gondola! Gondola!", in: *Free Exchange,* ed. Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke, Cambridge, UK 1995, 125-144: 137; Andreas Blühm, "Ludwigs Lücken", in: *Kunstchronik* 46 (1993), no. 9, 513-521: 514.

[30] Wolfgang Becker, *Ein deutscher Sammler – ein deutsches Auto: Peter Ludwig und der Volkswagen = A German Collector – a German Car*, exh. cat., ed. Ludwig Forum für International Kunst, Aachen, Aachen 1995, 70.

[31] Sibylle Peine, "Ehrgeiziger Künstler", in: *Aachener Nachrichten*, 17 December 2011, 42.

[32] Becker (1995), 67.

[33] Becker (1995), 72.

[34] Rudolf Conrades, "Warum Breker?", in: *Zur Diskussion gestellt: Der Bildhauer Arno Breker*, exh. cat., Kulturforum der Landeshauptstadt Schwerin, ed. Rudolf Conrades, Schwerin 2006, 4-29: 28.

focusing on aesthetics without discussing ethics.[35] Among the several gestures of protest it received, Klaus Staeck spoke up against the exhibition's mythologizing nature and publicly renounced his plan of holding an exhibition at the Schleswig-Holstein-Haus planned for the following year.

[21] But what exactly did it mean in this context to understand Breker's work as 'enjoyable'? The exhibition was organized biographically following different periods in the artist's life; altogether, it included 70 works. Peter Ludwig's bust was placed in the space dedicated to Breker's last works. It was exhibited in a group of portraits including politicians and artists' busts, as well as Breker's self-portrait from 1990, installed separately from the rest of the group, in a place of honour. While the informative catalogue produced for the exhibition included several critical articles, Conrades' own framing of Breker in the exhibition texts was little informed by them. Instead, his curatorial framing focused on style, technique and remained interested in Breker's artistic inspirations and biography, though it was less interested in the social contextualisation of his works beyond the art world. Aiming to re-open a debate about Breker and Nazi art, the organizers stressed that it was the first biographical show of Breker's work after 64 years, following his last solo exhibition at the Orangerie in Paris in 1942.[36] The framing of the exhibition remained aesthetically bound, without taking a stand nor posing any critical questions. Its focus on the artist's life story continued to present Breker as an artistic genius. Although the curator justified this by offering visitors a chance to form their own opinions, the information about the violence of the Nazi regime that would have made it possible to integrate more complexities into experiencing Breker's work remained scarce. Instead of putting the artist into conversation with works of artists who had fallen victim to the Nazi regime, a solo exhibition produced in close contact with the artist's family who loaned many of the works presented a difficult format in which to integrate criticism.

[22] In 2021, the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin held an exhibition entitled "Die Liste der 'Gottbegnadeten'. Künstler des Nationalsozialismus in der Bundesrepublik" ("'Divinely Gifted'. National Socialism's Favoured Artists in the Federal Republic"), that exhibited works of artists who had been cherished and generously supported by the Nazi regime and continued their careers in West Germany after 1945. It was curated by Wolfgang Brauneis, Ambra Frank and Swantje Greve. The exhibition first introduced the role of artists under National Socialism. Three chapters, "The 'Divinely Gifted' List", "Art Policy under National Socialism", and "Major Projects under National Socialism" highlighted different developments in Nazi Germany's art politics, including persecution of artists based on racial laws and the celebration of other. In this the exhibition took as its basis the 1944 list compiled by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels of 1,041 creative professionals who were considered "indispensable" and described as "divinely gifted". These artists were released from military service and work in armaments factories. Of the 378 visual artists on the list, 114 were presented in the exhibition. Among the featured artists was also Arno Breker. In the section "Exhibitions and Reactions after 1945", the curators included the busts of Peter and Irene Ludwig created by Breker, together with archival photographs, newspaper articles and video footage that this work has generated. Rebuffing reactions to Breker's works in Germany were also shown in the

[35] Holger Liebs, "Zeigt Breker! Aber bitte nicht naiv: Zum Streit um die Schweriner Austellung", in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 14 July 2006, reproduced in: *Das Schweriner Arno-Breker-Projekt. Dokumentation*, ed. Rudolf Conrades, Schwerin 2006, 155.

[36] Conrades (2006), in: *Zur Diskussion gestellt*, 4.

exhibition, including the graphic novel *The Arno Breker Story*, which opposed the artist's rehabilitation, a poster produced for a demonstration against the exhibition of his works in West Berlin, and the short documentary film *Breker or Nothing Learned* (1981) by Detlef Gumm and Hans Georg Ullrich. These and many other exhibited sources made evident the strong resistance that the artist's works continued to receive in post-war West Germany and the fierce and often emotional debates held around them. The curators made these affective responses of the public over decades an equally important part of the public presentation of these works. They problematised the social position of Nazi-supported artists including painters Werner Peiner or Bernhard Bleeker and sculptors Joseph Thorak, Hermann Kaspar and Hans Breker, and highlighted how the majority of them remained active after the Second World War and many continued to receive public commissions. The way the curators decided to show artworks along with the debates they have provoked in order to convey historical complexities must be underlined, as for a long time art historians lacked methods for such nuances.

Reframing the 'Nazi' era in Budapest

[23] While Ludwig's commission brought Breker back to the public eye and prompted widespread debate in Germany, the passage of Breker's busts to Hungary has received hardly any attention beyond Hungary's borders. From the 1970s, Ludwig pursued his plan of establishing new museums to carry his name globally. In the early 1980s, via contacts made during preparations for the Ludwig Museum in Vienna, and via Hungarian art historians and artists he reached Budapest. Ideas for a Ludwig Museum in Budapest evolved in collaboration with the local cultural scene and in preparation for it, two exhibitions from his collection were held in the city: "International Art after 1960" (1983), and "International Art Today from the Ludwig Collection" (1987). In 1989, after lengthy negotiations, the collector reached an agreement with the Hungarian government. The Ludwig Museum was opened in a wing of the Hungarian National Gallery and has been housed in the newly built Palace of Arts since 2005. The portrait busts of Peter and Irene Ludwig came into the Ludwig Museum in Budapest on long-term loan in 1991, as an addition to the earlier founding donation.

[24] Although this work was perceived as 'unwanted' by the Hungarian National Gallery, as its long-time director Loránd Bereczky attested, he accepted it as part of Ludwig's loan to the museum because of the rich constellation of works that the collector offered to complement his earlier donation.[37] Among this collection were outstanding pieces of American pop art by Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns, works by modern Western masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jean Tinguely and Joseph Beuys, which the museum could never have afforded to buy, but also works from the GDR and the Soviet Union. Yet, the museum curators chose to keep Breker's busts hidden, along with many other works perceived to be problematic by the museum staff. The exhibition policy of the Ludwig Museum's founding director Katalin Néray followed the principle of showing the best that the collection brought to Hungary, while Breker's name was never mentioned nor his works reproduced in a museum catalogue, which in effect rendered them non-existent to the Hungarian public. Consequently, the works remained in storage for almost two decades.

[37] Loránd Bereczky, Director of the Hungarian National Gallery, interviewed by Margaret Tali and Krisztina Szipőcs, Budapest, 14 July 2009.

[25] The busts were exhibited in Hungary for the very first time in 2009, as part of the collection display "New Acquisitions, Rarely Seen Works", curated by the Budapest Ludwig Museum director Barnabás Bencsik and head of collections Krisztina Szipőcs (Fig. 2). The exhibition presented an overview of the museum's policy of collecting and a critical insight into the museum's history.[38] As the first presentation of the collection by the new director, it also introduced Bencsik's further plans for the museum as well as his transparent approach to the museum's new acquisitions. The critical insight into the museum's history was offered by openly showing the problematic affinities of its founding collector.

2 Arno Breker, busts of Peter and Irene Ludwig (1987), on view in the exhibition "New Acquisitions, Rarely Seen Works", 2009, in the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest (photo: József Rosta / Ludwig Museum – MoCA)

[26] The exhibition juxtaposed the busts with an installation by the artist duo Little Warsaw, consisting of Bálint Havas and András Gálik, titled *Crew Expendable* (2007), which evoked new associations with the local past. Its visual form comprises two stars that take turns blinking: the red Soviet star and the yellow Star of David. Under them, the sign "Major" pays homage to the work of János Major (1934–2008), a Hungarian graphic and conceptual artist of Jewish origin (see Fig. 3). The images next to it reproduce a series of gravestones provoking associations with Stalinist terror and victims of the Holocaust. As it becomes clear from the many exhibition reviews, the juxtaposition of Major's work with the busts of Breker left a strong impression.

[38] Barnabás Bencsik, "Foreword", in: *New Acquisitions – Rarely Seen Works*, exh. cat., Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Budapest 2009, 3.

3 Arno Breker, busts of Peter and Irene Ludwig (1987), on view next to Little Warsaw's installation *Crew Expendable* (2007) in the exhibition "New Acquisitions, Rarely Seen Works", 2009, in the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest (photo: József Rosta / Ludwig Museum – MoCA)

[27] As far as is known, the portrait bust of Peter Ludwig and that of Irene Ludwig were exhibited together for the very first time in "New Acquisitions, Rarely Seen Works". Putting Breker's original works on display provoked considerable discussion also in Budapest; in fact, they were the most discussed works of the exhibition. The reviews revealed a sense of threat that critics associated with the work. For instance, the busts of the Ludwigs were contextualized with the growing Neo-Nazi movement, which had recently held a march in the centre of Budapest, manifesting its increasing presence as well as a newly tolerant public attitude towards its ideologies. The political context in which the exhibition was mounted preceded Viktor Orbán's authoritarian politics, which have since been reinforced by a series of reforms.

[28] Pursuing a politics of territorial recovery and aggressive conservative nationalism, in 2010 Orbán began to resume the reforms he had begun during his previous period in office from 1998 to 2002. Since then in twelve years, Orbán has restructured the public media and the entire cultural sector to reduce criticism and support conservative cultural expression, revising school curricula, putting increasing pressure on civil society as well as on universities and research institutes. Since 2010, public spaces have seen extensive renaming, in which foreign names have been exchanged for Hungarian ones, and monuments to personalities whose views were not agreeable to the regime have been removed.[39] The advancement of the Fidesz government's controversial memory policy has prompted considerable concern internationally, most notably with the erection of several new monuments.

[29] Two recent monuments in Budapest's Liberty Square shed light on the operation of these distortions. First is a bust of the anti-Semitic political leader Miklós Horthy (1868–1957) com-

[39] Ágnes Erőss, "'In Memory of Victims': Monument and Counter-Monument in Liberty Square, Budapest", in: *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 65 (2016), no. 3, 237-254: 240, DOI: https://doi.org/10.15201/hungeobull.65.3.3.

missioned from Hungarian sculptor Béla Domonkos (1934–2020).[40] As the Regent of Hungary from 1920 to 1944 he is known for his nationalist quest to 'reunite' Hungary.[41] The policy of persecuting Jewish citizens in the Horthy era paved the way to the Hungarian Holocaust. Hungary's rehabilitation of Horthy under Orbán has been widely condemned internationally. The second monument is the memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation that depicts Nazi Germany's entry into Hungary in 1944, commissioned from Péter Párkányi Raab (b. 1967), and unveiled in 2014. This seven meter tall composition represents a battle between two cultures: the serene Archangel Gabriel, a national symbol for Hungary, is threatened from above by an aggressive eagle, a symbol for Germany. Considered as an insult to the memory of the victims and a shift of blame to Germany, this monument has been widely criticised for downplaying Hungary's responsibility for the Holocaust.[42] The systematic erasure of the memory of the Holocaust of the Jewish, Romani and other minority groups remains a heated topic in the Hungarian public sphere under Orbán.

[30] At the same time, the Fidesz government is constructing a grand new museum quarter, called Liget, after its site, a public park, which aims to redefine the Hungarian national canon. It will bring together the collections of the Hungarian National Gallery, the Museum of Ethnography, and the House of Hungarian Music (to be opened in 2023). Initially, the Ludwig Museum collection was also considered, but this plan was eventually dropped. The project has been widely criticized both locally and internationally due to its costs, environmental concerns over the loss of a park in the heart of the city, and its status as a tool for public propaganda.

[31] Critic József Mélyi provocatively drew an analogy between the rise of the Neo-Nazi movement and the exhibition of Breker's busts, pointing out that the public display of the busts would likely inspire these groups in Hungary to search for a local artist figure resembling Breker.[43] A Berlin-based Hungarian journalist, Edit Inotai, wrote an article linking the debate in Hungary to Breker's reception in Germany; however, her essay remained the only connection between the two disputes that evolved around Breker's sculptures in the two countries.[44] The subject did not make any news in Germany, attesting to the lack of transnational discourses and a lack of interest in its creation. But the 2009 exhibition also raised other concerns. Another critic, András Földes, saw the display of the

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[40] The bust was originally made in 1993 for the garden of the Horthy castle in Kenderes. The bust in Budapest was taken from the same mould, and as a second casting it is considered to be a copy. Although its location in Liberty square is accessible as a public space, the premises of the monument in fact belong to the Reform Church, which is supported by the far-right Jobbik party. Interestingly, the artist Béla Domonkos himself has omitted this bust from his website http://www.domonkosbela.hu (accessed 16 March 2021).

[41] Erőss (2016), 237.

[42] According to Ágnes Erőss who has researched the debates around this monument in detail, it was never officially inaugurated nor used in any official ceremony or commemorative event. Erőss also discusses the different gestures and acts of resistance of this bottom-up memory politics that have been carried out by activists, artists and others in front of this controversial memorial. Erőss (2016), 242, 246.

[43] József Melyi, "Mihez kezdjünk a Breker-szobrokkal?" [What To Do with the Breker Sculptures?], in: *tranzit.blog.hu* (21 March 2009), http://tranzitblog.hu/mihez_kezdjunk_a_breker_szobrokkal/ (accessed 1 May 2020).

[44] Edit Inotai, "Hitler kedvenc szobrásza volt. Tárlat nyílt Arno Breker műveiből" [He Was Hitler's Favourite Sculptor. Exhibition of Arno Breker's Works Open], in: *Népszabadság* (26 July 2009), http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-411858-222949 (accessed 1 May 2020).

Breker busts at the Ludwig Museum as a marketing trick adopted by the museum to counter the economic recession in Hungary that had recently hit the museum landscape. Accordingly, he argued that there was no reason to suspect a self-positioning of the museum with regard to the National Socialist regime or Hitler behind the exhibition of the Breker busts.[45]

[32] Through their physical relocation and new comparisons, the Breker busts acquired a new set of associations and relationships in Budapest. As the debate in Hungary proves, the 2009 exhibition found fertile ground in further unpacking the meanings of Breker's busts, and its re-evaluations were especially productive due to the multiple meanings that the work acquired in the Hungarian political context in relation to the lack of critical revision of the post-war past in Hungary. The perceived threat that Breker's work came to embody was connected to the growing presence of conservative nationalism under Orbán's second government.

[33] However, the museum remained silent in these disputes after the opening of the exhibition, and the museum staff did not respond to these criticisms. Thus, it was the political context that made the display of these busts a statement about local continuities of history in the present. Mélyi concluded by writing that:

> *This story is in fact about then and now, about consciousness and our ignorance, about our positions and their usage, about borders and the borderlessness between the private and the public, and above all, about the lack of memory and self-consciousness about it.*[46]

The awareness and ignorance to which Mélyi refers touch upon the connections between institutional memory politics and the long-term neglect of Holocaust history in Hungary, which stood in the service of propagandist history writing in the socialist era and has not yet received adequate critical attention in local memory narratives since then.

[34] In Germany, Peter Ludwig brought Breker's work to the public realm with a deliberate attempt to rehabilitate the artist's position; the widespread resistance to this act was a sign of strong opposition. In Hungary, displaying Breker's work made it possible to examine the local politics of remembrance under Orbán as well as to take a critical stance towards the museum's own past. The questions of private and public memory came together with particular clarity in the public presence of these works, dissolving the boundaries between art and its translocal political and economic legacies.

[35] While very few critical voices in Hungary questioned Ludwig's position in the early phases of the museum's foundation, the display of Breker's busts now foreclosed the possibility of such an uncritical attitude. Bringing the larger-than-life busts of the collector couple into the public spotlight in Budapest meant opening up new questions about archival knowledge and its legacies, the place of local Jewish minority memory in public history, and the trajectory of both between presence and absence in museum practice through tactics of concealment and highlighting. Bencsik's curatorial

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[45] András Földes, "A Ludwig hadüzenetet küld a múzeumoknak" [Ludwig Sends a Declaration of War to Museums], in: *kepgyar.blog.hu* (12 March 2009), http://kepgyar.blog.hu/2009/03/12/a_ludwig_haduzenetet_kuld_a_muzeumoknak (accessed 1 May 2020).

[46] Melyi (2009).

gesture disrupted the celebratory museum discourse based on the founding collector as its main agent.

[36] Although moving objects into new contexts and across state borders often means their depoliticization, they can also acquire new political dimensions through their recontextualisation and new localisation. Based on arguments of a loss of national heritage, the movement of artworks from their place of origin has in most cases been avoided. Unwanted heritage, on the other hand, being part of a past which is destined to be erased or forgotten, can travel freely and without any particular restrictions. For Ludwig, Breker's busts presumably presented a problematic heritage; when they were taken out of the museum storage for a public display in Hungary in 2009, the curators changed their meaning to address ongoing local debates about Hungarians' complicity and the state's responsibility for the Holocaust.

[37] Subsequently, the busts were again exhibited at the Budapest Ludwig Museum as part of a collection display under the title "Ostkunst – Westkunst" (2017–2020), where they were introduced as one of four portraits in order to "'draw' the portrait of the collector couple",[47] alongside Marcel Odenbach's video shot in the empty villa of the Ludwig couple in Aachen, Dmitry Zhilinsky's double-sided painting *Double Portrait: Peter and Irene Ludwig* (1981), and Jiří David's double photographs of Peter Ludwig titled *Hidden Image (Peter Ludwig)* (1995). Breker's busts were set to face the latter photographs by Jiří David, which capture the collector as having two sides — a joyful-diplomatic side and the ruthless side of a businessman. In the catalogue texts, Breker was introduced as an artist who was "gradually rehabilitated" after his conviction for "his Nazi past" and continued a successful career.[48] There were no references in these texts that would explicitly refer to Hungary. The coupling of the works by David and Breker downplays the issues raised in the previous display, instead silently suggesting that Ludwig had both positive as well as darker sides.

[38] The example of Breker's court case and his artwork connects state archives with archives of art with its negotiation of justice. Bencsik's curatorial approach effectively turned the tables, making Ludwig's act of making the unwanted past travel into a conversation point, opening up a space for (self-)criticism and contesting the amnestic memory politics under Orbán. But the meanings associated with the busts resonated in particular because in different ways their showing touched on the processes of injustice across the century. It involved the Soviet-era legacy in which the founding of the Budapest Ludwig Museum was embedded and, by juxtaposing two artists' identities, Breker and Major, it raised questions of complicity and long-repressed memories of the Hungarian Holocaust.

[39] Agency, which is no less important here and is reinforced by the meanings the busts acquired in the Hungarian context, brings us back to travel. Anthropologist James Clifford defines 'travel' as a "more or less voluntary practice of leaving familiar ground in search of difference, wisdom, power, adventure and altered perspective".[49] He notes that the touring of objects has often been a voluntary practice that involves the agency of people who make objects travel. Travel, he further

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[47] Julia Fabényi, "A Portrait of the Art Collector", in: *Westkunst – Ostkunst. The Collection on Display*, exh. cat., Ludwig Museum, Budapest, eds. Kriszta Dékei and Borbála Kálmán, Budapest 2018, 22-24.

[48] Krisztina Üvecz, "Arno Breker", in: *Westkunst – Ostkunst. The Collection on Display*, exh. cat., Ludwig Museum, Budapest, eds. Kriszta Dékei and Borbála Kálmán, Budapest 2018, 26.

suggests, is an activity of the privileged. The privileged agent on whose initiative the particular 'travel' of the busts occurred was collector Ludwig. In the geopolitical context of the end of the Cold War, this travelling was guided by his ability to (re)imagine the world through his possessions. In search of visibility and positive attention to his collection, Ludwig found in Hungary its suitable recipient. The museum's act of interrupting this narrative by making these unwanted works visible after their long-time virtual non-existence in storage, serves as a reminder of the curatorial power in mediating discourses of memory in the museum, regardless of the collector's agency.

[40] In the Hungarian context, the term 'unwanted heritage' also refers to another legacy of the past: relics from the Soviet era. Usually not shown in artistic contexts, this heritage has still remained largely taboo in need of a critical revision. In December 2010, only half a year after taking office, the Orbán government initiated a symbolic cleansing of government offices, auctioning off hundreds of Soviet-era artworks. Under the name "Never Again! For the Third Time" (*Soha többet! Harmadszor*), works from the cabinets and corridors of Hungarian public institutions were brought to the Pintér Gallery and Auction House in Budapest to be sold under the pretext of supporting the victims of the recent Danube floods. The concurrent aim of the auction, however, was to stigmatize the previous political elite as their symbolic 'owners'. Many of the Socialist Realist artworks, among which were numerous portraits and paintings of Lenin and Stalin, were reportedly bought by Western collectors and museums (Figs. 4, 5).[50] The auction proved to be so successful that a series of auctions was later set up, offering new dimensions to the movement of unwanted heritage and thus making the unwanted past travel in the other direction to that of the Ludwigs' busts: from East to West.

4-5 (*Left*) Pintér Gallery and Auction House, Budapest, view of the artworks in the exhibition "Soha többet! Harmadszor" (Never Again! For the Third Time), which were auctioned on December 6, 2010; (*right*) poster of the exhibition depicting the head of Lenin being crushed by an auction hammer (photographs by the author)

[49] James Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, MA / London 1997, 90f.

[50] Gordon Fairclough and Veronika Gulyas, "An Auction for Budapest's Bourgeoisie Puts Lenin on the Communist Block", in: *Wall Street Journal* (9 December 2010), http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704250704576005442795543116 (accessed 8 May 2021).

[41] Whereas under National Socialism the auctions of degenerate art had stigmatized German-Jewish artists and, through this, the entire Jewish community, for Orbán, after regaining power in 2010, it was the possession of Socialist Realist artworks that provided a symbolic target for the campaign against the Social Democrats as his political predecessors. The arrangement of the artworks in the Pintér Gallery served this purpose too. Thus, rather than on the basis of artists, works were clustered according to their motifs or subjects: for instance, the portraits of Lenin were bunched in one corner in the long and dark cellar spaces of the gallery (see Fig. 4), while elsewhere in the gallery, for example, subjects featuring scenes with workers or industrial landscapes were lined up. Although the Pintér gallery was nearly empty when I visited the exhibition with a colleague who took me to visit it, the exhibition lead to a successful international auction. Similarly to Nazi Germany, where in parallel with persecuting the so called Degenerate artists a process of building a New German Art took place that was exemplified by Breker's prominence in the 1930s, in Hungary, too, Orbán has found effective structural ways to support the advancement of Christian conservative expression in the visual arts. He elevated the private fraternity called Magyar Művészeti Akadémia (the Hungarian Art Academy) to the status of a state-funded organization in charge of distributing arts funding and exhibition opportunities for artists.[51] Paradoxically, Orbán's close ties with Putin's regime which have been increasingly criticized during Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, bring to the fore the populist nature of these auctions, which took place despite the fact that Orbán's relations with Russia were then and are now very close.

[42] In the context of the exponential growth of the Western art market, the role of private collectors in museums has rapidly grown through temporary and permanent collection loans. Their increasing power over artworks' transnational and global travel has sometimes increased tensions over how history should be mediated. While in the course of history the physical travel of artworks across borders or across continents was something that governments often tried to prevent with legal measures in order to limit the loss of cultural relics to local audiences, the travel of unwanted heritage is encouraged rather than hindered. Nevertheless, critical curating, which enables to articulate the nuances of complicity and violence associated with difficult heritage can turn such objects into objects of uncomfortable questions and difficult knowledge. Thus, within the new transnational circuits of objects, important debates can be opened up in their new locations as well.

Conclusion

[43] The concept of travel, that shaped the contours of my argument in this article in tracing the roles of curating and photographing difficult heritage in respect to museum collection politics, brought to the fore a growing importance of critical curatorial practices that revaluate history from transcultural and transnational perspectives. While curators have continued to search for tools to open up such difficulties to audiences in ways that allow for nuance and sufficient context, progressive tools may sometimes come from neighbouring disciplines and be advanced through collaboration. The works of many artists that evolve from violent contexts, and the work of Breker in

[51] Edit András, "Hungary in Focus: Conservative Politics and Its Impact on the Arts. A Forum", in: *ArtMargins. Contemporary Art Across the Evolving Global Peripheries* (17 September 2013), http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/interviews-sp-837925570/721-hungary-in-focus-forum (accessed 1 May 2020).

particular, have a potential to offer imporant lessons for the future about complicity and the problematic choices intellectuals have made in times of war.

[44] From once illustrating the 'racial superiority of Aryans', Breker's sculptures could become a prime example for articulating the regime of injustice in Nazi Germany as well as in its wartime colonies that require a transnational decolonial lense. Thus, the story of Breker's busts of the Ludwig couple highlights a long journey of this work in becoming framed and communicated as an object that embodies a violent past in which its creator was complicit and which he helped to advance. But in acknowledging the different layers of history they also problematize Ludwig's agenda as an art collector and the particular power dynamics in which the busts were created.

[45] In a certain sense, Breker's works remained for long 'unwanted' in both contexts, Germany and Hungary. Controversially, however, Breker's identity acquired a new currency during the time his works were kept hidden in the Budapest Ludwig Museum's storage. In the context of Hungary, keeping his artworks locked up contributed to conceal an 'unwanted past' in local history, which was thus silenced and hardly publicly problematized. The particular curatorial techniques that were used to mediate Breker's busts in the Ludwig Museum in Budapest suggest that meanings attached to artworks can also 'travel', but that through context specificity they acquire new temporal and spatial connotations and currency as well. This specificity was brought to the fore in the busts' first exhibition in Budapest through particular juxtapositions, through textual framing as well as through the sensitive approach to the specific political context of their display in Orbán's Hungary. Breker's busts show how the relationship between hidden histories and objects is indeed contingent. As the display of these disputed works suggests, it is not only the meanings related to authors but also to collectors or politicians—as their owners—that remains attached to objects.

[46] In Germany, too, critical curating of Breker's work and the revisiting of his legacy by art historians had to wait for decades, before the appropriate methods for this were found. While the exhibition "Zur Diskussion gestellt: Der Bildhauer Arno Breker", at the Kulturforum Schleswig-Holstein-Haus in Schwerin (2006), proposed to leave the agency of decision-making to the exhibition audience, its narrow focus on form and style failed to provide adequate background information that would allow viewers to form a well-informed opinion about Breker's involvements and his works. It was only their display in the exhibition "'Divinely Gifted'. National Socialism's Favoured Artists in the Federal Republic", in the Deutsches Historisches Museum (2021), which succeeded in problematising this work by introducing Breker's figure among other artists promoted by the Nazi regime and by contextualizing the portrait busts of the Ludwigs within the many discussions they have provoked since their finishing in 1987.

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About the Author

Margaret Tali is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Estonian Academy of Arts, Institute of Art History and Visual Culture. Her research interests include exhibition histories, curating difficult histories, histories of the art museum, and the historiography of art history. She holds a PhD from the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam. She is the author of *Absence and Difficult Knowledge in Contemporary Art Museums* (2018) and co-editor, with Ieva Astahovska, of the *Memory Studies* special issue *Return of Suppressed Memories in Eastern Europe: Locality and Unsilencing Difficult Histories* (2/2022). Together with Astahovska she has initiated the project "Communicating Difficult Pasts" that brings together humanities scholars, curators and artists, and as a part of which she co-curated the exhibition "Difficult Pasts. Connected Worlds" in the Latvian National Museum of Art (2019) and Lithuanian National Gallery of Art (2022).

Reviewers

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