



# Art and the Second World War

Monica Bohm-Duchen



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Art and the Second World War is the first book in English to provide a comprehensive and detailed international overview of the complex and often disturbing relationship between war and the fine arts during this crucial period of modern history. This generously illustrated volume starts by examining the art produced in reaction to the Spanish Civil War (often viewed as 'the first battle of World War II'), and then looks at painting, sculpture, prints, and drawing in each of the major combatant nations, including Japan and China. Breathtaking in scope, this scholarly yet accessible publication places wartime art within its broader cultural, political, and military contexts while never losing sight of the power and significance of the individual image and the individual artist.

Monica Bohm-Duchen's thought-provoking analysis ranges from iconic paintings such as Picasso's *Guernica* to unfamiliar works by little-known artists. She reinstates war art by major artists as an integral part of their oeuvres and examines neglected topics such as the art produced in the Japanese-American and British internment camps, by victims of the Holocaust, and in response to the dropping of the atom bomb in 1945. In so doing, Bohm-Duchen addresses a host of fundamental issues, including the relationship between art and propaganda and between art and atrocity, and the role of gender, religion, and censorship, both external and internal.

Art and the Second World War offers an unparalleled comparative perspective that will appeal to anyone interested in art history, military history, or political and cultural studies.

## Contents

Introduction; Chapter 1: Civil War in Spain 1936-1939: 'The First Battle of World War II'; Chapter 2: Art in the Democracies: Great Britain; Chapter 3: Art in the Democracies: the Commonwealth; Chapter 4: Art in the Democracies: the USA; Chapter 5: 'France, Once the Haven of Exiles': Victim or Collaborator?; Chapter 6: Art under the Dictators: Russia's Great Patriotic War; Chapter 7: 'Imperfect Totalitarianism': Art and War in Fascist Italy; Chapter 8: Art under the Dictators: Nazi War Art Reassessed; Chapter 9: Art of the Holocaust: Creativity in Extremis; Chapter 10: Bitter Victory: China's War of Resistance against Japan 1937-1945; Chapter 11: Japan's Holy War 1931-1945; Chapter 12: Endgame: Hiroshima and Nagasaki; List of Illustrations; Timeline; Bibliography; Acknowledgements; Index.

## About the Author

Monica Bohm-Duchen is an independent writer, lecturer, and curator. Based in London, she has worked for such leading institutions as the Tate, the National Gallery, and the Royal Academy of Arts. Her many books include *After Auschwitz: Responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art*. She teaches a course on art and war at Birkbeck, University of London, and at New York University in London.

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World War II Art Bunker. Documentation Center Nazi Party Rally Grounds. Memorial Nuremberg Trials. In 1938, when the Wehrmacht marches into Austria and the Sudetenland is annexed from Czechoslovakia in the latter case, with the consent of England, France and Italy an old dream of German nationalism seems fulfilled: to establish a shared realm for all Germans. But although Hitler invokes equal rights and ethnic self-determination at every move, he is really interested in more. The invasion of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, signals the final transition to an unconcealed policy of expansion. Second, during World War II, many artists found themselves in the most difficult conditions (in an occupied country, in internment camps, in death camps) and their works are a testimony to a powerful urge to create. Such creative impulse can be interpreted as the expression of self-preservation, a survival instinct in critical times. ^ Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Art and the Second World War*, Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2013, p. 25. Robin A. Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 241. ^ Josep Renau, quoted by M. Bohm-Duchen, *Art and the Second World War*, Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2013, p. 18. This generously illustrated volume starts by examining the art produced in reaction to the Spanish Civil War (often viewed as the first battle of World War II), and then looks at painting, sculpture, prints, and drawing in each of the major combatant nations, including Japan and China. Breathtaking in scope, this scholarly yet accessible publication places wartime art within its broader cultural, political, and military contexts while never losing sight of the power and significance of the individual image and the individual artist.