

The Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS) Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award made possible my first trip abroad focused solely on dissertation research. My project, “*In den Tagen des Vergessens*’: The Life and Work of Hannah Höch under National Socialism,” focuses on the German modernist artist Hannah Höch (1887–1979) best known for her role in the Berlin-based Dada group, a political circle of artists active around the close of the Great War. Considerable scholarship exists on Höch’s Dada work of the early 1920s, however, little attention is paid to her work and life during the Third Reich, and unlike her male Dada colleagues—George Grosz, John Heartfield, and Raoul Hausmann—Höch did not flee Germany during the installation of National Socialism despite her dangerous reputation as a “cultural Bolshevik.”

My research seeks to answer how Höch’s artworks might illuminate (or complicate) this dark period in German history, and, in particular, the role of the avant-garde artist under Nazi rule. Further, I ask how this examination might reframe historians’ understanding of “inner emigration,” a dubious term used to describe the plight of artists who remained in Germany after 1933. The first aim of my project set out to uncover Höch’s participation in the Reich and to reexamine/unearth her work made in the 1930s and ‘40s. The second aim focused on analysis of the floral motifs dominant in Höch’s work during this period as the method to refute (or corroborate) claims of “inner emigration.” Particular to art was the assumption that floral motifs and landscapes demonstrated artists’ emigration in spirit because such works were seen as nonpolitical. This genre of work safeguarded against Nazi attention and also served as proof of “resistance” in the postwar period.



Between June and August of 2016, I traveled to three key cities in Germany—Mannheim, Hanover, and Berlin—where I visited archives and libraries, met museum directors and curators, and engaged with countless original works of art. This informative summer research trip—only possible with the support of the IRIS Fieldwork Award—proved incredibly productive as concentrated archival research brought to light documentary and visual evidence that has richened my research and shaped my dissertation project in exciting new ways.

My six-week research trip began with a viewing of the exhibition *Hannah Höch: Revolutionary of Art* (Apr. 22–Aug. 14, 2016) mounted by the Kunsthalle Mannheim, the art museum located in Mannheim. Organized by the museum’s director Dr. Inge Herold and the scholar Dr. Karoline Hille, this exhibition was the first comprehensive retrospective of Höch’s works. A meeting with Dr. Herold provided me with key contacts in Germany and the private exhibition tour with Dr. Hille enhanced my understanding of many of Höch’s wartime works.



Hannah Höch: Revolutionary of Art exhibition, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Mannheim

My research led me next to the Sprengel Museum in Hanover that holds one of the most significant collections of modern art in Germany and also houses the Kurt Schwitters Archive.



Hannah Höch, *Die Tragödin*, 1924; (R)
Kurt Schwitters, *Mz. 158 Das Kotsbild*,
1920, permanent collection works
exhibited side-by-side in the Sprengel
Museum, Hanover

Schwitters (1887–1948), a Dadaist and declared ‘degenerate’ artist during the Third Reich, had close ties with Europe’s leading avant-gardists including Höch. Research at the Archive focused on the written correspondences between Schwitters and Höch as a means to more fully construct a narrative of Höch’s activities and artistic production during the mid-1930s until the end of the war—a period of seemingly deliberate concealment by Höch.

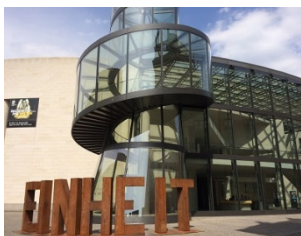
A similar mode of inquiry was conducted at the Hans Arp Archive in Berlin, the city in which the majority of my archival research took place. Like Schwitters, Hans Arp (1886–1966), based in Paris, had ties to Dada and was friends with Höch. Their friendship lasted throughout their lives, and the Archive held an array of useful documentation.

While in Berlin, I took advantage of the city’s vast cultural offerings and scholarly resources. I visited countless exhibitions, the most important of which included: *Berlin—City of Women* (Mar. 17–Aug. 28, 2016) at the Ephraim-Palais; *With New Eyes: Surreal Worlds* (May 14–Sep. 18, 2016), an extensive exhibition of Dada and surrealist works at the Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg; and *The Black Years: Histories of a Collection, 1933–1945* (Nov. 21, 2015–Aug. 21, 2016), which highlighted Nationalgalerie-owned works that were either created between 1933 and 1945 and acquired by the museum during this time or seized by Nazi officials.



Renée Sintenis, *Large Thoroughbred Foal*, 1940,
The Black Years exhibition,
Hamburger Bahnhof-Museum
für Gegenwart, Berlin

Additionally, I utilized the Berlin Art Library, part of the Berlin State Museums, to access secondary source materials generally unavailable in the US. Similarly, research at the German Historical Museum Reference Library centered on research of national



German Historical Museum, Berlin

socialist periodicals difficult to access and usually only available as reproductions. I was able to view entire print runs of journals and physically handle them all. Of particular note was the biweekly *NS-Frauen-Warte*, a party-approved magazine for women first published in 1934 that wove together virulent Nazi propaganda with tips for housewives and articles on gardening.

Research materials at Berlin’s Natural History Museum proved less helpful for my project than the library of the Berlin-Dahlem Botanical Garden. Here, I was granted full access to peruse the library’s valuable collection of landscape and botanical-related rare books and journals where I discovered a plethora of resources linking landscape design and gardening with ‘Blood and Soil’ Nazi rhetoric.

Being able to work in the Hannah Höch-Archive at the Berlinische Galerie was, by far, the most important component of this research trip and is where I devoted most of my time. Curators and archivists kindly assisted me in the Archive where I viewed many of Höch's original works as well as the documentary material housed (and not fully catalogued) in the museum. I unearthed a number of paperback books made in the 1930s with cover illustrations designed by Höch. I was also able to view all of the photographs that Höch took of her own work that included personal inscriptions and notes on the verso of the photos. This photo collection was particularly valuable not only because many of the photographed works are now lost, but it evidenced Höch's continued art production during the Third Reich and shed light on her activities and contacts during this difficult period.

I am incredibly grateful to the Institute for Regional and International Studies for the generous Summer Fieldwork Award that enabled important research, which has fundamentally shaped and positively impacted my dissertation project.