

ART OF DISSENT



Grotteske

Themes

- Disorientation
- Life in death and vice versa
- Hopelessness

Before the Viewing

- The art work you're going to look at is called "Grotteske" or grotesque. What does the title suggest to you?
- What do you think of with the expressions, "Death in Life" and "Life in Death"? Which expression better suits Nazi Germany and why?
- List symbols that you might use if you were asked to depict the sense of disorientation and hopelessness that the Nazi oppression brought to the persecuted in the 1930s.

Discussion

- Fick's works all show disorientation because the Nazi regime kept changing the ground rules by which people regulated their lives. There never seemed to be any established ground or firm place to take a stand; there was never a full frame of reference. Is this what is grotesque?
- What does the human form on the right say about mankind?
- How do you interpret the cracks, branches, shapes on the left?
- Although the window suggests escape, how is the rest of the environment about confinement?

Activities

- Imagine that the figure in the painting can talk. What would it say?
- Stand the building upright and put a bottom and top on it.
- Place the name of a Holocaust victim on each brick and alter the picture in such a way that it becomes a memorial.

Extensions

- In Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" someone is buried alive—a sin that leads to the fall of the house. Read Poe's story to draw parallels to the sins of Nazi Germany.
- Fick is neither Surrealist, a Progressive nor a New Objectivity painter—all art movements at the time. How does he differ from these three yet still borrow ideas from them?
- Look up the "Grotesque in Art" to survey the usual way this term has been used throughout art history. Is the grotesque always associated with evil?