

SUMMARY

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‘THEY EVOKE MONSTERS OF DECAY’:
THE POLISH NATIONWIDE EXHIBITION
OF YOUNG ARTISTS: ‘AGAINST WAR –
AGAINST FASCISM’ IN THE LIGHT
OF GERMANY’S INTERNAL CONTROVERSY
OVER EXPRESSIONISM

The article’s point of departure is an exhibition from 1955, popularly known as the ‘Arsenal’, which holds an important place in Polish art historiography. The showing was a forum where discussions reflecting the then current cultural policy of the state’s authorities were intensified and superimposed with individual attitudes of artists towards this cultural policy of the state and with reminiscences of the wartime past. The present analysis focuses mainly on the phenomenon of expressive figuration that has been much discussed in literature dealing with the ‘Arsenal’ and sparked numerous polemics. An aspect rarely examined by scholars dealing with the ‘Arsenal’, namely, a reference to historical, cultural and political conditions that had shaped the reception of expressive figuration in Germany, the ‘homeland of expressionism’ – and a country that at that time had served as an important point of reference for Poland’s identity – allows for viewing the presentation of Polish artists at the ‘Arsenal’ in a broader comparative context of the post-war ‘controversy of images’.