

Antiques

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Art Shadowed by War

The Lapedo gallery in Lower Manhattan has assembled 30 pieces of playful furniture with some unsettling back stories for the exhibition "Berlin Deko — German Furniture 1910-1930." The items in this show, on view through Nov. 21, have been arranged to create a kind of off-kilter living room, with jagged black shards painted and mounted on the walls, floors and ceiling.

The wartime fates of the designers of these objects varied widely.

Oskar Kaufmann, the designer of eight rosewood dining chairs trimmed in petals, fled Germany and narrowly survived Nazi massacres in Budapest. Bruno Paul, the designer of two clean-lined mahogany armchairs (\$6,000 for the pair), was forced out of his school administration job by Nazis. Lajos Kozma, the designer of two walnut chairs with bulbous knees (\$11,700 for the pair), survived the war by hiding in Budapest with the Soros family, who became famous for their financial acumen and their philanthropy. Stained-glass windows (\$25,000 each) depicting people playing board games were designed by César Klein, who later appeared on Nazi lists of degenerate artists.

A walnut scone (\$3,800) carved with a bird of paradise has been attributed to Josef Wackerle, who became a favorite sculptor of the Nazis. Fritz August Breuhaus de Groot, who designed Lapedo's walnut chandelier in lightning bolt patterns (\$30,000), accepted Nazi commissions including the interior of a plane for Hermann Goering.

Markus Winter, the gallery's owner, said that only a few of the show's pieces have a clear provenance trail. The Klein windows and the Kaufmann chairs belonged to Leo Lewin, a Silesian textiles magnate, who saved some of his possessions from the Nazis.

Related works by German designers who made compromises with the Nazis or were persecuted in wartime are on view through Jan. 4 in "Berlin Metropolis: 1918-1933" at the Neue Galerie in Manhattan.