



**Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Self Portrait of a Soldier**, 1915, oil on canvas, 69cm x 61cm  
*Self Portrait of a Soldier* was painted by Kirchner in 1915 when he was recuperating in Halle on the Saale when he was declared unfit for service in World War I<sup>9</sup>. In 1937, 639 of Kirchner's artwork was confiscated from public collections and destroyed by the Nazi party as 'his carnal, vivid work where nudity and harsh lines were a defining theme which drew the Nazis' anger<sup>10</sup>. After becoming Chancellor of Germany in 1933, Hitler placed *Self Portrait of a Soldier*, along with at least 32 of his other artworks, in The Degenerate Art Exhibition

(Entartete Kunst) of 1937 held in Munich<sup>11</sup>.

The above shows that Kirchner's *Self Portrait of a Soldier* was valued negatively by Hitler as it was declared 'degenerate' (painted outside Hitler's view of the Aryan ideal) and displayed in Hitler's Degenerate Art Exhibition among works by Jews, communists, abstract pioneers, and most of all works by the Expressionists known as Die Brücke (The Bridge) who were condemned as "sick poisonous artists"<sup>12</sup>.

Kirchner's obvious Modernist influences from Primitivism, which can be seen in the mask-like shape of his face and the distortions of his and the nude model's body, along with his vivid and unrealistic use of colours and harsh lines, labelled the portrait as degenerate. The Nazi 'degenerate' term included Modern Art as it was thought to be childish in style. The painting also had propaganda value as it was purposely titled '*Soldat mit Dirne*' meaning "Soldier with Whore" to suggest the avant-garde's mockery of his heroism during World War I, which led to severe depression, causing him to destroy several of his paintings eventually leading to his suicide in 1938.

**Adolf Ziegler: the Four Elements: Fire, Water and Earth and Air**, before 1937, oil on canvas, three panels from left to right: 170.3 x 85.2cm, 171 x 190.8cm and 161.3 x 76.7cm

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/Kirchner\\_SelfPortrait.htm](http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/Kirchner_SelfPortrait.htm)

<sup>10</sup> <http://hyperallergic.com/94427/10-of-the-most-infamous-art-destructions-of-world-war-ii/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/kirchners-self-portrait-as-a-soldier.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/13/degenerate-art-attack-modern-art-nazi-germany-review-neue-galerie>

Ziegler's career success was owed to his association with Hitler and was made Professor at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts after the National Socialist Party gained power.

In 1936 he was made the President of the Chamber of Fine Arts and given the task of confiscating degenerate art from German museums in order to protect German culture. He