



Aleister Crowley: The Beast in Berlin: Art, Sex, and Magick in the Weimar Republic

Tobias Churton

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A biographical history of Aleister Crowley's activities in Berlin from 1930 to 1932 as Hitler was rising to power

- Examines Crowley's focus on his art, his work as a spy for British Intelligence, his colorful love life and sex magick exploits, and his contacts with magical orders
- Explores Crowley's relationships with Berlin's artists, filmmakers, writers, and performers such as Christopher Isherwood, Jean Ross, and Aldous Huxley
- Recounts the fates of Crowley's friends and colleagues under the Nazis as well as what happened to Crowley's lost art exhibition

Gnostic poet, painter, writer, and magician Aleister Crowley arrived in Berlin on April 18, 1930. As prophet of his syncretic religion "Thelema," he wanted to be among the leaders of art and thought, and Berlin, the liberated future-gazing metropolis, wanted him. There he would live, until his hurried departure on June 22, 1932, as Hitler was rapidly rising to power and the black curtain of intolerance came down upon the city.

Known to his friends affectionately as "The Beast," Crowley saw the closing lights of Berlin's artistic renaissance of the Weimar period when Berlin played host to many of the world's most outstanding artists, writers, filmmakers, performers, composers, architects, philosophers, and scientists, including Albert Einstein, Bertolt Brecht, Ethel Mannin, Otto Dix, Aldous Huxley, Jean Ross, Christopher Isherwood, and many other luminaries of a glittering world soon to be trampled into the mud by the global bloodbath of World War II.

Drawing on previously unpublished letters and diary material by Crowley, Tobias Churton examines Crowley's years in Berlin and his intense focus on his art, his work as a spy for British Intelligence, his colorful love life and sex magick exploits, and his contacts with German Theosophy, Freemasonry, and magical orders. He recounts the fates of Crowley's colleagues under the Nazis as well as what happened to Crowley's lost art exhibition--six crates of paintings left behind in Germany as the Gestapo was closing in. Revealing the real Crowley long hidden from the historical record, Churton presents "the Beast" anew in all his ambiguous and, for some, terrifying glory, at a blazing, seminal moment in the history of the world.

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