

To Give Birth to a Child for the Fuhrer By Arnold Daghani



Overview of the drawing

Pen & ink

1975

Size unknown

Daghani's drawing is dated 11.4.1975, so it was made many years after the Second World War. However, memories of the war, the holocaust, and Hitler's reign, feature frequently throughout Daghani's lifetime of work. Although he had spent years in ghettos and labour

camps during the war and produced artworks around this time, many of these works were lost during his exile and travels.

At the time that this drawing was made, 1975, Daghani was living in Iona, Switzerland, aged 66. He was suffering bad health and was restless and unsettled, and dwelling on past experiences of war. During this period he created constantly, often writing and making simple sketches as he was physically and mentally unable to produce detailed renditions anymore. He recorded responses to current affairs alongside caricatures and satirical illustrations of past events – as seen here with his sketch of Hitler and his ‘children’.

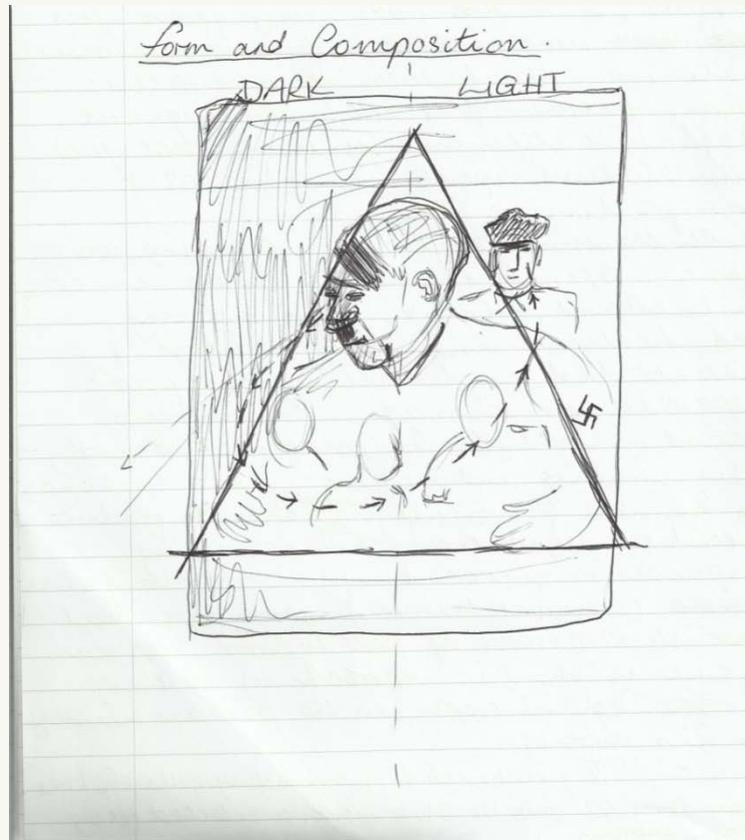
Daghani explains the picture himself when he writes:

“To give birth to a child for the Fuhrer.” Breeding-places set up by the SS, to obtain a selected rising Aryan generation.’

The drawing shows Hitler as the central figure with his arms around three men. He appears to be embracing the future generation of his Aryan offspring and is overlooked by a member of his SS in the background.

Looking closely

Form and Composition



Hitler and the three foreground figures are arranged in a very definite triangle. Hitler is shown as the central figure and disproportionately large in comparison to all of the other figures.

As Hitler's head is the largest, most central point in the drawing, the viewer is drawn towards him. We then follow Hitler's gaze downwards to the left, across the foreground figures from left to right and upwards over Hitler's shoulder to the background figure, who stares directly back at us.

Half of the work is shaded in dark and half kept light, with a large area in the top right left completely untouched. This gives a dramatic effect with the shaded areas creating a sense of movement through the uneven scrawl of the pen-work.

Materials and techniques

Daghani often used materials that were simply close to hand. Often his ideas came quickly, so it was necessary to act on them with equal speed.

Drawing in pen would have matched the urgency to create. His poor health would also have influenced the materials chosen for this work and would have affected his technique.

Daghani's hatred for Hitler and the SS is echoed in his angry mark-making. The line of the work is frenetic and full of energy. Mistakes are scribbled out with messy urgency and the pen seems to have hardly left the paper as the lines flow from one figure to the next.

Figures and faces are loosely represented with definition only given to Hitler; his features are discernible by heavy shading of the moustache, hair, and dark eyes. The swastika on his arm and the recognisable hairstyle are also accentuated with a darker line.

Contents and Ideas

The sketch is mocking the eugenic breeding programme of the Nazi's. Whilst the aim of the SS programme was to enhance the 'superior' biological attributes of the Aryan race through the generations, here we can see Hitler embracing three already grown adults. The three figures are all male, which was the preferred gender as they were seen as potential soldiers and would make Hitler's future army stronger.

Interestingly, Daghani has pictured the men as much smaller and therefore, inferior to Hitler. They appear submissive in his embrace; the posture of the man on the right is typically submissive: tilted head; hunched shoulders; downward gaze. Perhaps this suggests

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Hitler as a father of men who will not challenge or provoke him. It illustrates his desire to breed and then control a race of subservient men who will become his faithful soldiers, like the man in the background. The background soldier, in SS uniform, stares blankly ahead of him and appears devoid of any personality or character.

Furthermore, the positioning of the figures below Hitler, with Hitler's 'embrace' around the soldiers could also be seen as a subversion of the traditional Madonna and Child paintings.

About the Artist

Arnold Daghani was born in Suczawa, Rumania on the 22nd February 1909 and died in Hove, Sussex on the 6th April 1985.

Before the Second World War he spent time travelling, working as a publishing house apprentice, and then as an import/export clerk.

He married in 1940 and in 1942 he and his wife were deported by the Nazis to a labour/extermination camp in the Ukraine. On the 15th July 1943, Daghani and his wife escaped to a ghetto in nearby Bershad; the remaining inmates of the Nazi camp were later killed.

After the war, Daghani moved and by 1958 left Rumania for good, spending two years in Israel before travelling to Italy, Switzerland and the south of France, before finally settling in England in 1977.

Other than a few classes in the 1920s, Daghani had no formal art training. He lived a fragmented life of upheaval and change, which he documented well through his art and writings. He created detailed journals and sketchbooks where writing held equal importance to illustrations. He produced art constantly, from the more mundane images of general life, including still-life drawings and collages, to detailed depictions of present and past events.

There is a satirical edge to some of his work and a dark humour throughout his life. He suffered from chronic depression and occasional suicidal tendencies, yet still had a strong desire to survive – typical of many Holocaust survivors.

Why Is This Work Important?

This drawing is important as it clearly states the facts of what Hitler was trying to achieve: “...obtain a selected rising Aryan generation”.

More subtly, it reminds us of the horrific reality of achieving so called ‘racial purity’: the murder of millions of people, singled out for their religion, race, politics, sexuality, and physical disabilities.

It is also important as it was created in 1975, 30 years after the Second World War ended. This is significant as it shows the long-lasting effects of Hitler’s reign and the need to keep certain facts fresh in the mind of society.

Hitler is shown embracing only his perfect race, which highlights the importance of embracing people for all of their differences and not repeating the same mistakes.

Terms Explained

SS Abbreviation for Schutzstaffel, which is German for Protection Squad. They were part of the Nazi Party and most commonly recognisable by their black uniforms with SS symbols. They were completely obedient to their Fuhrer, Hitler.

Fuhrer German for leader, guide, and father (particularly when referring to Hitler).

Aryan Used as a term for those genetically related to the Nordic races; most commonly, those with fair/blonde hair and blue or green eyes.

Eugenic Genetic; coming from heredity; ancestral.