

TOURING EXHIBITION  
THOMAS MANN: DEMOCRACY WILL WIN



Thomas Mann, Pacific Palisades/  
AMALFI DRIVE, 1941 TMA\_3026

## TOURING EXHIBITION

# THOMAS MANN: DEMOCRACY WILL WIN

*„Throughout the world it has become precarious to take democracy for granted — even in America... Even America feels today that democracy is not an assured possession, that it has enemies, that it is threatened from within and from without, that it has once more become a problem. America is aware that the time has come for democracy to take stock of itself, for recollection and restatement and conscious consideration, in a word, for its renewal in thought and feeling.“*

Thomas Mann: *The Coming Victory of Democracy*, 1938

## INTRODUCTION

*“The future of democracy thus starts with our defending and renewing it in our own countries, and not with our explaining it to others,”* observed German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in his speech at the opening conference of the Thomas Mann House in California in 2018. This exhibition takes up this call.

The Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades forms the spatial and metaphorical center from where the world-famous exile promoted the renewal of democracy “in thought and feeling” – a form of action that offers numerous lessons for our own time. “It is a terrible spectacle when the irrational becomes popular,” noted Thomas Mann in a speech at the Library of Congress in 1943. The way in which he responded to this challenge continues to be an inspiration today.

The exhibition is divided into two parts. **The first part** presents the evolution of Thomas Mann’s political biography: from monarchist to powerful opponent of National Socialism and committed champion of democracy. What roles do personal background and the zeitgeist play, how important is each individual’s commitment, actions, and sense of responsibility? What contradictions must we overcome within ourselves to become politically active?

The **second part** connects these five topics to ongoing debates on both sides of the Atlantic: Do we have to recalibrate the tools of democracy, as we have understood them since antiquity, the French Enlightenment, and the American Constitution of 1787? Thomas Mann’s life offers numerous points of reference for dealing with our present state of affairs and the future of democracy – while adhering to Mann’s dictum: “Democracy will win!”

## OBJECTIVES OF THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition „Democracy will win“ aims to encourage visitors to engage with the topics of ‚democracy‘ on two levels:

1. The exhibition as a place of debate about the political Thomas Mann does not tell a heroic story and does not offer a final judgement, but rather presents the ambivalences: Mann’s dedication to democracy as well as the problematic aspects of his understanding of democracy. The visitors are encouraged to form their own opinion and at the same time learn about the history of democracy through Thomas Mann’s biography.
2. The exhibition as a place for debate on today’s democracy in Germany and the U.S. examines the „crises“ of democracy discussed in media and society and presents ideas of renewal and strengthening.
3. The exhibition is, at the same time, an attempt to contribute to political education as a key to social participation by linking the biographical-historical exhibition about the author with current socio-political issues in Germany and the U.S.



Thomas Mann, Munich, 1900  
ATELIER ELVIRA / TMA\_5263

## FIRST PART

### STATION 1: PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Thomas Mann was not a born advocate of democracy; he followed circuitous and contradictory paths, until he turned into its most ardent champion. Mann was born in 1875, as the second son of a wealthy and politically influential merchant in the North German port city of Lübeck. The German Empire was only four years old at his birth; Prussian authoritarianism exerted a powerful influence on his childhood and adolescence. As a young man, he was consequently more interested in aesthetics than in politics. This stage of his life culminated in the *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), a book-length essay published towards the close of the First World War, in which he argued for the superiority of German culture.

The life of Mann's older brother Heinrich (1871–1950), who also became a world-renowned novelist, took a strikingly different trajectory. As early as 1904, Heinrich spoke out for democracy and increasingly for socialism as well. Throughout their lives, the two writers were entangled in a brotherly feud that was based on an artistic, and initially also political, rivalry. Their shared experience of exile in America gradually diminished their political differences.



Thomas Mann's striving for public recognition was evident in his 1906 marriage to Katia Pringsheim, who came from an illustrious and wealthy German-Jewish family. Through this marriage, Mann gained access to Munich's elite social circles. The couple raised their six children in a liberal atmosphere.

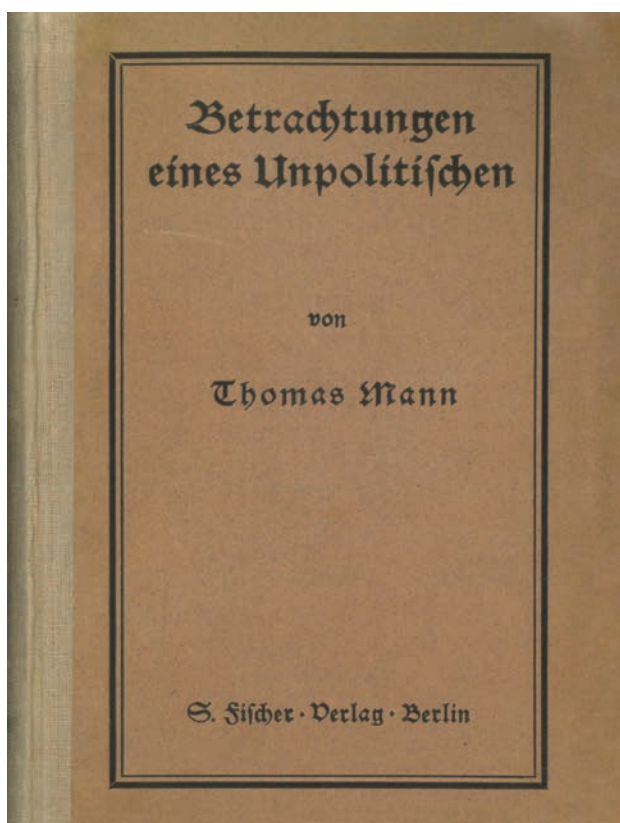
Heinrich and Thomas Mann,  
Munich, around 1900  
PHOTO: HOF-ATELIER ELVIRA / TMA\_0017

## STATION 2: ZEITGEIST

Whether ordinary citizen or Nobel Prize winner: every person is a child of their time. And the signs of the times changed repeatedly in the course of Mann's life. German Empire, First World War, Weimar Republic, National Socialism, Second World War, Federal Republic of Germany: never before has German national and social history been as turbulent as in the first half of the 20th century. Democratic achievements, such as women's suffrage, internationalism, and liberalism, were undermined by national conservatism, warmongering, and anti-Semitism.

Thomas Mann, too, was carried away by nationalist ideology before he recognized the seductiveness of totalitarianism for the Germans and the importance of political reason. In 1914, he had adopted an openly anti-democratic tone that glorified the war, but distanced himself from those views later. Mann's statements also drove the ongoing feud with his brother to new heights. While Heinrich fiercely condemned the German invasion of Belgium, Thomas Mann initially defended Germany's war objectives.

The First World War was followed in 1918 by the November Revolution, the proclamation of the Weimar Republic and, in April/May, the founding of the short-lived Munich Soviet Republic. Thomas Mann's diary entries from these years reflect his conflicting political sentiments, which only found a unified direction when he definitively turned towards democracy in 1922.



Thomas Mann: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man), S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin 1918  
S. FISCHER VERLAG, BERLIN



### STATION 3: COMMITMENT

Thomas Mann's turn to democracy was fueled primarily by two events. One was the assassination of German-Jewish Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau by right-wing radicals in June 1922. The other was his reading of the American poet Walt Whitman, through which he was introduced to the idea that commitment to a common democratic constitution can create a sense of national identity.

In October 1922, Mann delivered a speech entitled, "On the German Republic," in which he declared his support for a basic democratic order and praised Whitman as a role model for his fellow countrymen. More than 400 political interventions of various kinds followed over the course of the next decade.

Mann's political engagement reached its apex shortly after the Reichstag elections in 1930, when he delivered his "German Address – An Appeal to Reason" in Berlin's Beethoven Hall. The speech was interrupted by SA storm troopers and resulted in a slander campaign by the right-wing press. This traumatic experience perhaps helps explain why Mann did not speak out publicly against the Nazis after fleeing into Swiss exile in 1933. It was only at the urging of his eldest children Erika and Klaus that Mann clearly rejected National Socialist Germany in 1936.

In the United States, where Mann had enjoyed widespread fame ever since winning the Nobel Prize in 1929, his political activities were followed with great interest. A brief visit in 1934 proved to be a rousing public success. In 1938 Thomas Mann emigrated to America, although it pained him to be so far away from Germany. In a famous interview with the *New York Times*, however, he showed his fighting spirit: "Where I am there is Germany!"



Thomas Mann during his "Deutsche Ansprache" (An Appeal to Reason) on October 17, 1930 in the Beethoven-Saal in Berlin  
PICTURE ALLIANCE/ IMAGNO/ SCHOSTAL ARCHIV

#### STATION 4: TAKING ACTION

For Thomas Mann, the experience of exile also created an obligation to get involved in politics. The support he received from American citizens and institutions became a useful tool in this endeavor. In 1936, for example, the University of Bonn revoked an honorary doctorate that it had awarded to the famous writer in 1919. In his riposte, Mann pointed out that Harvard University had also awarded him an honorary degree only a year before, and that he thus clearly had the support of the global community. The correspondence was published in the United States as *An Exchange of Letters*, and established Mann as a political authority in the eyes of ordinary Americans when it was excerpted in Reader's Digest. The huge success of Mann's five lecture tours throughout the U.S. between 1938 and 1943 was further proof of his popularity. He explained what was happening in Germany to the American public and also agitated for military action against Hitler. For Mann, this was by no means just a theoretical concern. His sons Klaus and Golo served in the U.S. Army, while his daughter Erika worked as a war correspondent for the BBC. But he did not only address the American public. From October 1940 to November 1945, Thomas Mann also recorded 58 radio speeches for the BBC, which were broadcast from London to Germany and the occupied territories. In these speeches, he exposed false reports spread by the Nazi regime, named war crimes, and called on the German population to revolt.



Mann's fame in the United States was so great that President Roosevelt, whom the German writer revered, received him twice at the White House.

Thomas and Katia Mann arriving in New York, 1938  
EVERETT COLLECTION/ SHUTTERSTOCK

## STATION 5: RESPONSIBILITY

Thomas Mann left no doubt about the Germans' political and moral responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi regime. His most famous statements in this regard were expressed in his lecture, "Germany and the Germans," which he gave at the Library of Congress three weeks after the unconditional surrender of the Wehrmacht on May 8, 1945. National Socialism, he argued, was not imposed on the Germans from the outside, rather its roots were centuries-old. In Germany, these critical words were met with anger and resentment; Mann was treated as an outsider who had experienced the war only "from the loges and parterres abroad." He was also attacked for having taken American citizenship in 1944, and for refusing to move back to Germany after the war.

But Germany was not the only place where Mann encountered hostility. In 1949, he was invited to give lectures to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Goethe's birth both in Frankfurt (in the western half of Germany) and in Weimar (in the east). Although he feared political appropriation by the Soviets, Mann decided to honor both invitations, arguing that: "I know no zones. My visit is to Germany itself, Germany as a whole."

In the United States, however, this itinerary provoked outrage. Times had changed. Roosevelt's "New Deal" social policy was followed by the anti-communist smear campaign of the McCarthy era. Mann's well-known admiration for Roosevelt and the policies of the "New Deal" already made him suspect, but he was now also investigated for his "premature antifascism" and his role as a potential communist. Mann withdrew more and more from making political statements and finally emigrated to Switzerland in 1952, where he died in 1955.

REPRINTED FROM

# PLAIN TALK

DECEMBER, 1949  
25 CENTS

A REPORT FROM WASHINGTON:  
"We're For Government Economy, But . . ."

STANLEY HIGH

\*ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 8/18/83 BY SP1 MCA/ati

## The Moral Eclipse of Thomas Mann

UNTOLD STORY OF  
HIS GERMAN TRIP

AN OPEN LETTER  
TO THOMAS MANN

Eugene Tillinger

Count H. von Einsiedel

Who'll Drop the Next Atom Bomb?

GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

100-388240-X5 (Complete Contents Inside)  
100-19858-65

### The FCC vs. God

CLARE BOOTHE LUCE

The Moral Eclipse of Thomas Mann by Eugene Tillinger  
in Plain Talk 4.3, December 1949  
FBI ARCHIVE





Above: Historical views of  
the Thomas Mann House

TMA\_8111

Thomas Mann with his daughter  
Elisabeth in the garden in front of his study,  
around 1946

TMA\_2412



## SECOND PART

### STATION 1: PERSONAL BACKGROUND

“Democracy” means how a people is ruled. Who is intended when one talks of a “people”? And who can represent that people? Does that only include those with that nationality? Or everyone who lives in the territory of a democratically-ruled country regardless of their nationality? Questions about belonging and representation are at the core of what we understand as democracy. This has never been discussed as intensely as now, in a time of global migration. One thing is certain: The issue cannot be solved easily. Personal background remains a crucial factor.



### FILMS

- Calls for “Deutschland den Deutschen, Ausländer raus!” (“Germany for Germans, out with foreigners!”) during pogroms 1991–1992 and at AfD demonstrations [00:53]
- “Jews will not replace us” chants in Charlottesville, 2017 [00:32]
- Saša Stanišić on his novel *Herkunft* (Where you come from), 2019 [01:42]
- Dr. Viet Thanh Nguyen on the difference between refugees and immigrants in an interview with Jeffrey Brown, 2017 [01:15]
- Rapper Sugar MMFK, on the Arte program Tracks, March 12, 2020 [01:50]

## STATION 2: ZEITGEIST

There are better and worse times for democracy. The adoption of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 were high-water marks of democracy. Both are part of our collective memory. Yet there are also numerous other events that remind us of how fragile hopes for democracy can flounder: In 1956, the democratic revolution in Hungary was squashed; in 1968, the Prague Spring was forcibly brought to an end. Today, there is ample discussion of a crisis in democracies, showing us, once again, that democracy can not be taken

for granted. Democracy is an accomplishment that requires citizens to actively maintain it to allow it to thrive.



### FILMS

- *Selma to Montgomery Marches* with dr. Martin Luther King jr., March 1965 [01:05]
- 50th anniversary of the *Selma to Montgomery Marches* with President Barack Obama, March 7, 2015 [00:50]
- *Monday demonstration* against the GDR Regime, Leipzig, October 9, 1989 [01:00]
- *March For Our Lives* participant Emma González speaking out against US gun laws, Washington D.C., March 24, 2018 [02:02]
- *Fridays For Future*, Hamburg, November 29, 2019 [00:47]
- Unveiling of the AIDS memorial Quilt at the National Mall, Washington d.c., 1987 [01:02]
- Celebrations after the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in all fifty states of America, Washington D.C., 2015 [00:55]
- *Black Lives Matter* demonstration, Berlin, 2020 [00:59]



### STATION 3: COMMITMENT

Democracy thrives with the help of democrats. It can only prosper when the idea of democracy is publicly recognized as well as carried out. This should not only be done by high-ranking government officials. On the



contrary: everyday, practical affirmation by regular people distinguishes democracies from autocratic systems. The right to get involved in democratic practice has to be actively appreciated, demanded, defended, and cherished. It is only when individuals guarantee these rights, which requires moral courage, that a democratic form of government results in a democratic way of life

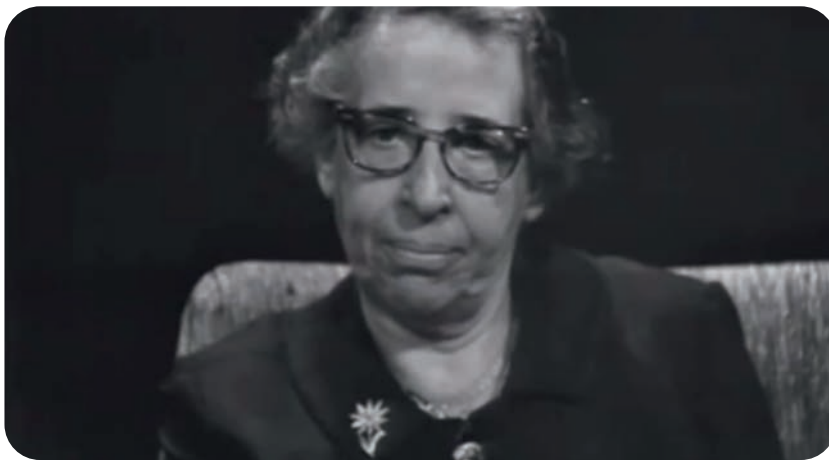
#### FILMS

- *Un violador en tu camino*, Berlin, November 2019 [00:26]
- *I Have A Dream*, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Washington D.C., August 28, 1963 [00:30]
- Black Power Salute by sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the Olympic Games in Mexico City, October 16, 1968 [00:15]
- American football star Colin Kaepernick and teammates protest against racism by kneeling when the US national anthem is played, Santa Clara, California, August 2016 [00:15]
- *Ich bin ein Berliner*, President John F. Kennedy, West Berlin, June 26, 1963 [01:17]
- *America First*, President Donald Trump, Washington D.C., January 24, 2017 [00:30]
- *Wir schaffen das* (We can do this), Chancellor Angela Merkel on the arrival of large numbers of refugees, Berlin, August 31, 2015 [00:25]
- Lesbos, Greece, October 2015 [00:45]
- Pianist Igor Levit's acceptance speech at the awards ceremony for the Opus Klassik prize, Berlin, October 13, 2019 [02:32]



#### STATION 4: TAKING ACTION

Being able to act is a prerequisite for taking action. When democracy depends on everyone actively taking action, the question of how the ability to act is distributed becomes an existential issue: Who can make other people aware of his or her problems, who can make them public, whose activities are effective and have consequences? Sometimes this can be accomplished by a courageous person, singlehandedly, who stands strong for democracy. Usually, though, we are stronger together. Democratic activity is primarily collective.



#### FILMS

- Hannah Arendt as a guest of the West German television program *Zur Person*, hosted by Günter Gaus, October 28, 1964 [02:12]
- Freedom Riders, 1960s [00:58]
- Castor-transport to the temporary storage facility, Gorleben, April 25, 1995 [01:13]
- Hambach Forest, North Rhine-Westphalia, 2018 [01:28]
- Julia Lorraine Hill, who lived in a California Redwood Tree for 14 months from 1997 to 1999 to prevent it from being cut down [01:02]
- Cindy Sheehan and her protests against the Iraq War, 2005 [00:30]
- Refugees arrive at Munich central Station, September 2015 [01:00]

## STATION 5: RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility is a double obligation to remember the past and to do what needs to be done now. In a German context, this means taking responsibility for the Holocaust as the central element of democratic national identity: It is the primary premise for all democratic activities to maintain the stance that contempt for humankind may never again be

tolerated as government policy. Human dignity is paramount and must be respected under all circumstances. This responsibility does not end at borders – human rights must be upheld everywhere and hold true for everyone. Whether democracy can satisfy these imperatives is one of the decisive questions of our time and for the future.



### FILMS

- Reading of the charges against SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, Jerusalem, April 11, 1961 [00:58]
- Chancellor Willy Brandt at the memorial for those killed during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, December 7, 1970 [00:25]
- Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Jerusalem, January 23, 2020 [02:45]
- Ta-Nehisi Coates in conversation with Hari Sreenivasan about the personal responsibilities of black and white Americans for racial inequality, 2015 [00:38]
- Prof. Jürgen Zimmerer on the repercussions of the Herero and Nama genocide, 2019 [00:42]
- António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations at the UN climate summit, New York, September 23, 2019 [01:52]
- Greta Thunberg, climate activist at the UN climate summit, New York, September 23, 2019 [01:40]





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FACT SHEET

REQUIRED EXHIBITION SPACE:

For an oblong room, an area of 915 sq ft. (=85 m<sup>2</sup>) is sufficient.  
A square room should be at least about 1075 sq ft (=100 m<sup>2</sup>).

10 TRAVELCASES:

117,88 ft<sup>3</sup> (=3,338 m<sup>3</sup>); 1.295 lb (=587,40 kg)

STORAGE CAPACITY:

4,92 ft x 6,56 ft (150-200 cm) floor space

SET-UP CONSTRUCTION:

see PDF Dww\_manual\_201123

Six of the seven pop-up walls must be free-standing, as they are printed on both sides. One pop-up wall should stand against a wall.

