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Review of Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics

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LJ Review Cover Sheet and Survey

Your name: Michael F. Russo
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Title of the book: Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics
Author or editor of the book: Frederic Spotts
This book is recommended for: public & academic libraries
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Review

Author: Frederic Spotts
Title: Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics
Publisher: The Overlook Press
Release date: January 2003
Number of pages: 488
Features: 100 B/W and 4 color illustrations; indexed
Format: Hard cover
Price: $37.50

Unlike biographies of Adolf Hitler which focus on the ideological and humanitarian disaster wrought by his intense anti-Semitism, Spotts’ book posits that the thirteen-year nightmare of the Third Reich was just as much a result of Hitler’s artistic nature. Though other authors have touched on certain aspects of Hitler’s artistic side—Speer (Inside the Third Reich) on Hitler’s obsession with monumental architecture, Fest (Hitler) on the relationship between the dictator’s grandiosity and his love of Wagnerian opera—only Spotts has leapt with both feet into a full exploration of Der Führer as artist.

Spotts argues that it was Hitler’s aesthetic nature that compelled him to destroy society only to re-create it according to the image in his artist’s eye. All the arts felt his deadening influence, and his influence was very, very personal indeed.

While truly seminal art always envisions something new, Hitler’s art—the art of centuries past—envisioned nothing new. Modern art repelled him. Spotts makes the point visually, with numerous photographs and drawings—many by Hitler himself. Hitler used Germany and, later, Europe as his canvas to make a picture his stunted mind could understand. Spotts, with scholarship and true artistry, has exposed this picture in a book that is accessible to the average reader, but that will be of interest to academicians as well.

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A startling reassessment of Hitler's aims and motivations, Frederic Spotts' Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics is an adroitly argued and highly original work that provides a key to fuller understanding of the Third Reich. Spotts convincingly demonstrates that contrary to the traditional view that Hitler had no life outside of politics, Hitler's interest in the arts was as intense as his racism-and that he used the arts to disguise the heinous crimes that were the means to fulfilling his ends. I highly recommend this book if you want to know more about the real Hitler, not just the crazed anti-semite and warmonger, here you find an equally crazed man, but motivated by artistic concerns as a means to truly remake society. ...more. In This Review. Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics. Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics. By Frederic Spotts. 420 pp, Overlook Press, 2003. Hitler considered himself an artist first and a political leader and savior second. He was convinced the arts were important for, and should be used to affect, the people's culture. His talent for grand mise en scenes was of course connected to an admiration of Wagner that, Spotts tells us, was not shared among other Nazi leaders. Hitler's taste for grandiose (and ruinous) architecture, dislike of modern painting, passion for collecting artwork, ignorance of chamber music and indifference to symphonies, friendship with Albert Speer, and bad taste in sculpture, are all documented. alo Book Details. Full Title: Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics. Edition: 1st edition. ISBN-13: 13-978-1585673452. Featuring a new introduction by the author. A startling reassessment of Hitler's aims and motivations, Frederic Spotts' Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics is an adroitly argued and highly original work that provides a key to fuller understanding of the Third Reich. Spotts convincingly demonstrates that contrary to the traditional view that Hitler had no life outside of politics, Hitler's interest in the arts was as intense as his racism-and that he used the arts to disguise the heinous crimes that were the means to fulfilling his ends.