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
Comments for your editor:

Review

Author: Frederic Spotts
Title: Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics
Publisher: The Overlook Press
Release date: January 2003
Number of pages: 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.

Michael F. Russo
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Stefanie Rabatsch (née Isak; born 28 December 1887 – died unknown, after 1973) was an Austrian woman who was allegedly an unrequited love of then-teenage Adolf Hitler, a claim made by Hitler's childhood friend August Kubizek. Her Jewish-sounding maiden name, Isak, has been subject to speculation in this context. However, there is no evidence apart from Kubizek that Hitler ever had such an attachment.