

Kunst und Politik

Robert Adrian X/Reinhard Braun/Robert Woelfl

http://www.aec.at/freelance/rax/KUN_POL/

Kunst&Politik is a project for the World Wide Web consisting of about 400 text and image files.

The project is based on a contribution of the same name, parts of which were realised in 1990/91, to that year's programme of the "Steirische Kulturinitiative" on the topic of Kunst/Museum. Taking 1944 as its starting-point, it concentrated primarily on the recovery operations for the collection in the Altaussee salt mines for the projected "Fuehrer Museum" in Linz. The contribution investigated the various transactions relating to four selected works which ultimately led to their becoming a part of the planned "Fuehrer Collection". At the same time, in the context of this never-to-be completed collection, socio-political and economic aspects were outlined, together with aspects of power and of collection as a form of appropriation — mechanisms, that is, to which art has been subjected throughout its history and still is [although this fact is frequently entirely repressed in the contemplation of art]. In a word: forgetting as a constituent part of the writing of history per se.

Kunst&Politik is concerned with the definition of interfaces between politics and art, the description of mechanisms for the politicisation of culture, and positions of art in the formation of normative cultural value-systems; with the tracing of cultural coordinates which marked out a politicised aesthetic. In this context, attention is centred on the various institutions and organisations which served the execution [not only] of the "Linz special mission". Their work was in every case primarily concerned with erecting a theory of culture and art — be it never so eclectic and fragmentary — and which is also reproduced here in its salient features. The "Fuehrer Museum" and the project of "Linz as a cultural capital" — neither of which came to fruition — together form so to speak the backdrop against which these reflexions are developed.

"It is an error to assume that the national revolution is solely of a political and economic nature. It is above all cultural."

[Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur, 1933]

From the start, the politics of culture formed an essential part of the overall political work of the National Socialists, whose ultimate objective was a reformation of [German] culture in its entirety. This reprocessing of the culture, the socio-geographical and socio-political scaffolding of the nation, was directed at securing an access to the individual consciousness, and via this psycho-social level at stabilising the supposedly "new" cultural order. This ideologising of art developed aesthetic identification patterns for all strata of the population, and became a central element of that symbolic order which the National Socialists were seeking to establish. Instrumentalisation was directed not just at art itself, but at the individual required to accept this symbolic order. Thus in the context of aesthetic/architectonic/emblematic forms of representation the central objective is the creation of collective patterns of integration and identification — the assimilation of the individual to the fullest possible extent.

The instrumentalisation of art for the purpose of forming normative aesthetic orders for the conditioning of the subject corresponds to a struggle for the mass consciousness, which can be designated as a mobilisation of desire since the bending of the subject to ideologised

visual/aesthetic norms can be succeeded by his naturalisation to the collective - a collective which is formulated as the "new" cultural order, an absolute order excluding and indeed ultimately eradicating all others. In the ambivalence of idealisation and the imposition of discipline the National-Socialist politics of art forced the collective imagination, the desire of the subject, into an image, a concrete representation through which the comprehensive solidarisation of the body politic became possible — into a symbolic space lying within the normative aesthetic values and negating everything which lay outside of this norm.

The theoretical cultural striving of the Nazis is characterised throughout by the "liquidation" of the alien, the elimination of complexity, the eradication of "polluting" components. The creation of ethnically pure regions, the delivery of the world from Judaism, the creation of an ideal of artistic purity — all of these agenda items formulate the claim to purity, clarity, unambiguity, homogeneity and unity. Ultimately the planned Linz "Fuehrer Museum" too was designed as a space in which the ideals of the National-Socialist concept of culture and art were to be reflected.

"In the new purified world order everything was to be perfect, undesirable thoughts, sounds, images and creatures eliminated, everything superbly organised, efficient and clean, classified and arranged in gleaming new cities — all this to the greater glory of Germanness."

[Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europe*, Munich 1995]