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EMILY A. DICE  
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Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Craig Zabel  
Head of the Department of Art History  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Thesis Supervisor

Brian A. Curran  
Professor of Art History  
Honors Adviser

Charlotte M. Houghton  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Faculty Reader

\* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

## **ABSTRACT**

Adolf Hitler had a lifelong fascination with art and architecture. After rising to power in Germany, he pursued his desires to turn the country into an Aryan cultural center. Strict rules were developed to control the production of art and architecture in Germany under Hitler's command. The Nazi party encouraged styles of neoclassicism and German nationalism while condemning all things modern; yet, despite his criticism of modern architecture, Hitler used many modern elements in the construction of his private home in the Bavarian Alps, the Berghof.

This thesis explores the link between the architectural styles of Hitler's Berghof and International Style architecture—specifically Mies van der Rohe's Tugendhat House. Although several notable differences between the two buildings exist, remarkable similarities come to the forefront after careful study. Few authors have investigated this topic; however the results of this comparison are worthwhile.

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## Preface

Many writers acknowledge Adolf Hitler's passion for architecture. His interest led to building programs that he hoped would transform Germany into a cultural center. Hitler was devoted to classical architecture, which he believed symbolized endurance and strength. At the same time, however, he clung to architectural elements that stressed German nationalism. He and the Nazi party famously despised modern "degenerate" artistic styles, including modern architecture. The prominent German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was central to this modern aesthetic and built most specifically in the International Style of architecture.

A topic that has received little attention is Hitler's use of the modern architectural approach in his own designs. This similarity is most evident when studying his private mountain retreat, the Berghof. Hitler's enormous home was an amalgamation of styles. Despite his expressed distaste for the modern aesthetic, Hitler's plan for the Berghof included many components that coincide with the basic qualities of the International Style architecture. Arguably the best International Style building with which to compare the Berghof is Mies's Tugendhat House located in Brno, Czechoslovakia. In this well-known design, Mies combined simplicity with progressive technological features. When comparing the Villa Tugendhat and Hitler's Berghof, many similarities appear.

The Berghof was essential to Nazi propaganda efforts to portray Hitler as a humble leader who lived a respectable life in the beautiful German landscape. In order to

convince people that he was ruling in the best interest of his constituents, the party officials cultivated images suggesting that Hitler's values aligned with those of common Germans. The Berghof served a crucial role in this endeavor, mainly because Hitler spent so much of his time there. Through the use of art propaganda, the Nazi party strongly encouraged the German people to conform their behavior to accepted Nazi standards.

## Chapter 1

### Hitler and Architecture

Adolf Hitler's interest in architecture first developed during his time in Vienna, Austria, where he pursued a career as an artist. He traveled to Vienna in 1905 following the death of his mother in hopes of gaining admission to the School of Painting at the Academy. Much to his dismay, he was rejected from the Painting Academy twice, shattering his aspirations of becoming a well-known painter. He wrote in his autobiography *Mein Kampf*: "I was so convinced of my success that when the news that I had failed to pass was brought to me, it struck me like a bolt from the blue. Yet the fact was that I had failed."<sup>1</sup> After he was refused admission a second time, Hitler went to see the headmaster of the Academy to ask why he had not been admitted into the program. The headmaster praised Hitler's aptitude for architectural sketches and strongly encouraged him to apply to the School of Architecture, which was also part of the Academy.<sup>2</sup> As he explained in *Mein Kampf*,

...I naturally devoted myself with enthusiasm to the study of architecture. Side by side with music, I considered it queen of the arts. To study it was for me not work but pleasure. I could read or draw into the small hours of the morning without ever getting tired, and I became more and more confident that my dream of a brilliant future would come true, even though I should have to wait long years for its fulfillment. I was firmly convinced that one day I should make a name for myself as an architect.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Official Nazi English Translation (Elite Minds Inc, 2009), 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 36.



Hitler's desire to become a trained architect was never realized because he lacked the prerequisite schooling required to gain entrance to the Academy's architectural program. Consequently, he was never formally educated and architecture became a hobby over which he obsessed.<sup>4</sup>

Hitler's pivotal encounter with the Academy's headmaster changed the course of his interest from painting to architecture—an event that would have a profound impact on the future of Nazi building programs.

### **Nazi Party Architecture**

After taking power as the Führer in Germany in 1934, Hitler aspired to make the country a grand cultural authority through the utilization of art and architecture. Although he was vehement about using neoclassical styles for public institutions, his preference for the architecture of domestic spaces differed drastically.

Hitler preferred Roman and Greek revival styles for public and governmental buildings because he thought they were authoritative and signified power.<sup>5</sup> He believed these ancient styles were unmatched by any other aesthetic approach, making them vastly superior to other techniques.<sup>6</sup> The Imperial architecture of Rome was appealing to Hitler and he strived to build structures with the same architectural might as the Roman historical models. Moreover, he esteemed classicism because he believed the

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<sup>4</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf* 26.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 322.

<sup>6</sup> Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2009) 20.

Greek people were distant ancestors of Germans; therefore, he considered them racially Aryan<sup>7</sup> (this ancestral relationship, however, has not been proven true and is considered specious<sup>8</sup>). Hitler's beliefs regarding the racial connection between the people of Germany and the ancient Greeks further solidified his attitude toward this style. Because he encouraged the use of anything that was inherently German, Hitler could now link his homeland with the authoritative ancient building aesthetic he revered. Moreover, he often connected the traits of classicism with the characteristics of the German state—specifically strength, functionality, and practicality.<sup>9</sup> Neoclassicism had also developed a German pedigree with the many neoclassical buildings and monuments that were built in the early nineteenth century by such architects as Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Leo von Klenze, which helped shape a German cultural image.

Hitler's goal for urban planning was to create buildings that were classicized, oversized, and austere. Monumentality was a key part of his interest in architecture.<sup>10</sup> Albert Speer, Hitler's principal architect for Nazi building projects, provided some of the most important primary sources relating to Hitler's life and his curiosity about architecture in his memoir *Inside the Third Reich*, along with several other publications. Speer stated: "The Romans built arches of triumph to celebrate the big victories won by the Roman Empire, while Hitler built them to celebrate victories he had not yet won."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 188.

<sup>8</sup> Alex Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture: The Impact of Classical Antiquity* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 92.

<sup>9</sup> Lane, *Architecture and Politics* 189.

<sup>10</sup> Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin* 135.

<sup>11</sup> While Albert Speer's accounts of Hitler and the Nazi party are vital to understanding this topic, the attitude and intentions behind his statements are worth considering. In some instances, Speer's testimonials were (presumably) self-serving in nature. Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture* 133-134.

Hitler shared this ideology of victory with the ancient Romans, fueling his obsession with monumental architecture. Moreover, Speer commented that the neoclassical design approach for major party buildings was modified and exaggerated to absurd proportions.<sup>12</sup> In Hitler's eyes, the architecture created during the Third Reich would be the lasting proclamation of his power long into the future, reminding people of his greatness. He was attempting to solidify his place in history and to immortalize himself through architectural plans even before he voiced his desire for world domination.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to admiring the Imperial Roman building style, Hitler was deeply impressed by Rome's effective militarism. With its strong military, the empire was dominant enough to conquer most of the western world and leave a lasting impression on the landscape of every province. Arguably, what Hitler esteemed most of all was the state architecture of Rome and its ability to celebrate military and political achievements.<sup>14</sup> He strongly believed that the Third Reich would last a thousand years or more<sup>15</sup> because of its dominating power; therefore, the public buildings erected would represent not only the German people, but also his success as a great dictator. As Frederic Spotts explains in his book *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, "It was Hitler's intention—and became a ruling passion—to cover Germany with the world's most monumental urban architecture."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 55, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture* 2.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Mitchell, *Hitler's Mountain: The Führer, Obersalzberg and the American Occupation of Berchtesgaden* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* 322.

In order for this monumental architecture to outlive the Reich and to serve as a testament to its greatness, only the best and most durable materials would suffice. The Nazi material philosophy dictated that inherently German resources were used such as marble, granite, travertine, limestone, and other types of hard stones. Concrete, large areas of glass, and steel, on the other hand, were supposed to be avoided. Often times, however, these materials were included in the design but were hidden beneath stone. Spotts adds, “Materials were not only to be hard and therefore durable but also hard and therefore intimidating.”<sup>17</sup>

With regard to building plans, Hitler accepted the “law of ruin value” proposed by Speer. In this theory, Speer argued that party buildings should be constructed without the use of modern materials (such as steel, iron, or reinforced concrete) so that, after the structures had collapsed hundreds or even thousands of years later, they would produce aesthetically pleasing ruins. That way, the remains of the buildings would resemble their Greek and Roman models even after destruction.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* 338.

<sup>18</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 56.

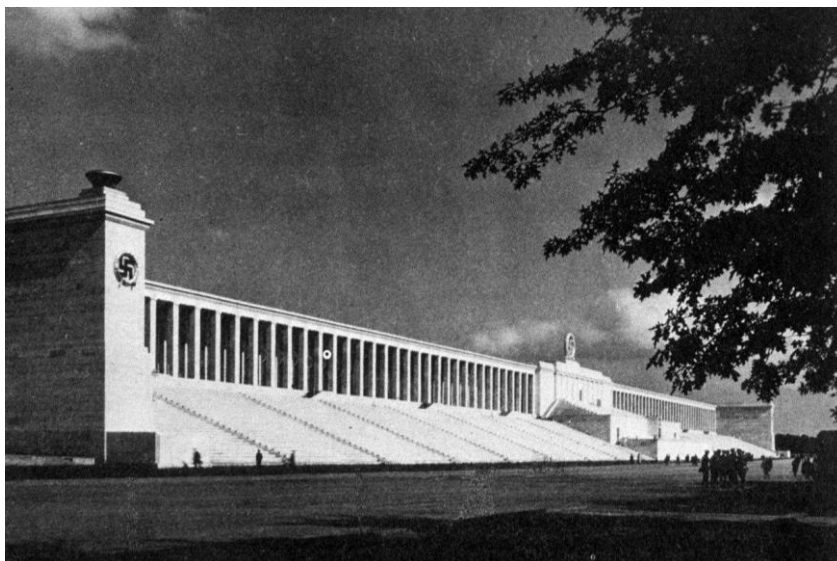


Figure 1-1. Exterior view of the Zeppelinfeld at Nuremberg.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Karl Kolb.

One of the most famous examples of Speer's party building designs is the 1935 Zeppelinfeld Grand stand at the Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, Germany [Figure 1-1]. Speer combined symmetry with durable white travertine stone to create a grandstand that held tens of thousands of people and was a massive and austere work of stripped classicism.<sup>19</sup> Because of its size, the Zeppelinfeld became an important site for Nazi party rallies. The monumental stadium was, according to Speer, a type of "devotional architecture." During party rallies, the events acquired a sublime quality and people worshipped the German state and its leader.<sup>20</sup> A number of Speer's designs were greatly influenced by temple architecture and altars. The Zeppelinfeld,

<sup>19</sup> Albert Speer, *Albert Speer: Architecture, 1932-1942* (Bruxelles: Archives D'architecture Moderne, 1985), 165.

<sup>20</sup> Joachim Fest, *Albert Speer: Conversations with Hitler's Architect*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007), 55.

specifically, drew references from the Pergamum altar,<sup>21</sup> which had been reconstructed in Berlin. These influences enabled Speer to capitalize on two crucial characteristics that emphasized the quasi-religious aspect of his buildings: the forceful endurance of the classical temple-like architecture and the development of spectacles that encouraged the zealous adulation of the Nazi party.

Although the Nazi preference for neoclassical architecture is widely known, the party also accepted building styles that stressed strong German characteristics for domestic and more private buildings. While stripped classicism was, in general, customary for state buildings, Hitler and his associates also emphasized the importance of domestic architecture constructed with German vernacular elements as a way to solidify the greatness of all things German. These structures were recognizable because of their steeply pitched roofs, wooden construction, and half-timbering, which were reminiscent of medieval or old-peasant styles. These features originated in both rural farm houses and old medieval city architecture (like that found at Nuremberg). Nazi officials encouraged the use of these styles with some variation in other types of construction, such as new housing developments, offices of the Labor Front, and Hitler Youth Hostels [Figure 1-2]. These buildings were, in a way, camouflaged into the surrounding area because they blended in with the old peasant style buildings commonly found around Germany.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Speer, *Architecture* 165.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 195.



Figure 1-2. Camp for the Hitler Youth, Exterior View.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

Although they looked similar to barns and other rural structures, these buildings were “adapted for explicitly modern and urban tasks...”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, these German vernacular buildings also showed an emphasis on monumentality. No matter what the structure’s purpose or style, the Nazi building program’s common thread was the creation of large, dominating landmarks.

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<sup>23</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000) 308.

## Chapter 2

### From Haus Wachenfeld to the Berghof: An Architectural Transformation

The medieval German village of Berchtesgaden is tucked into the foothills of the Obersalzberg region in the Bavarian Alps near Salzburg, Austria. Beginning in 1928, Hitler rented a small alpine chalet named Haus Wachenfeld [Figure 2-1] in this area for the price of about one hundred marks a month. The house was located on a plateau about halfway to the summit of the towering Kehlstein Mountain, overlooking the Salzburg and the Untersberg Mountain.<sup>24</sup> The modest Bavarian cottage was built in the German vernacular style with wooden construction and a pitched roof with a wide overhang.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 2-1. Haus Wachenfeld.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Florian M. Beierl, "History of the Eagle's Nest: A complete account of Adolf Hitler's alleged "Mountain Fortress."

<sup>24</sup> J.C. Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg: with Perceptions* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2008) 15.

<sup>25</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 46.



The first floor was constructed of cut stone with the rest of the building built of wood, creating a structure that was in no way pretentious or elaborate. Albert Speer frequently visited Hitler's home in the mountains, and mentions in his memoirs that this home was small and humble, yet pleasant. He states that the interior, with a dining room, living room, and three bedrooms, was furnished in "old-German peasant style and gave the house a comfortable petit-bourgeois look."<sup>26</sup>

At this point in his life, Hitler had acquired great wealth. With the money he earned from the success of his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler bought Haus Wachenfeld in 1929 for an amount of roughly 40,000 gold marks.<sup>27</sup> Over the course of about six years, he organized two renovations to update and to enlarge the home to better meet his needs. In 1935, the third and final renovation of the home was begun, in which it underwent a complete transformation from a small alpine chalet to a massive complex that symbolized his rise to absolute power. Hitler renamed his home the Berghof or "mountain farm" [Figure 2-2]. Although this name suggests a simple farm house with the elements of a vernacular mountain building, by the time the third round of renovations were complete, all modesty was essentially eradicated.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> James Wilson, *Hitler's Alpine Retreat* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2005) 8.

<sup>28</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 23.



Figure 2-2. Berghof Exterior view.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

Hitler himself served as the architect for the building—a project in which he let no detail go unnoticed. Albert Speer states that, “Hitler did not just sketch the plans for the Berghof. He borrowed drawing board, T-square, and other implements from me to draw the ground plan, renderings, and cross sections of his building to scale, refusing help with the matter.”<sup>29</sup> After drawing up his plans, the designs were given to Alois Degano, a respected Munich architect, who was put in charge of the construction of the building. Most of Haus Wachenfeld was preserved, although it was absorbed into the new construction as large additions were built around it to create more living space.<sup>30</sup> J.C. Boone, an author of Third Reich topics, describes parts of the newly constructed Berghof in his book *Hitler at the Obersalzberg: with Perceptions:*

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<sup>29</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 85.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, *Hitler's Alpine Retreat* 76.

...located on the first floor was a hall, a large kitchen, a terrace, and two rooms for the adjutants. On the second floor were fifteen rooms, three for personnel, Hitler's living room, his bedroom, his study, four rooms for his permanent body guard, five rooms for guests and an apartment for the caretaker or Hofmarschall. The third floor had the same number of rooms as the second floor and was used by guests and personnel. Underneath the first floor were the garages, supply rooms, the heating system, and a bowling alley.<sup>31</sup>

Hitler stressed the need for grandeur in all details related to his home. The grand salon itself measured 60ft by 50ft<sup>32</sup> and had a massive marble fireplace. The salon was graced by an immense marble tabletop manufactured from one piece (stretching over 18 feet). Additionally, the room boasted a colossal window that could be lowered down into the basement to provide an enormous open air view of the Untersberg Mountain—a feature for which Hitler held great pride<sup>33</sup> [Figure 2-3].

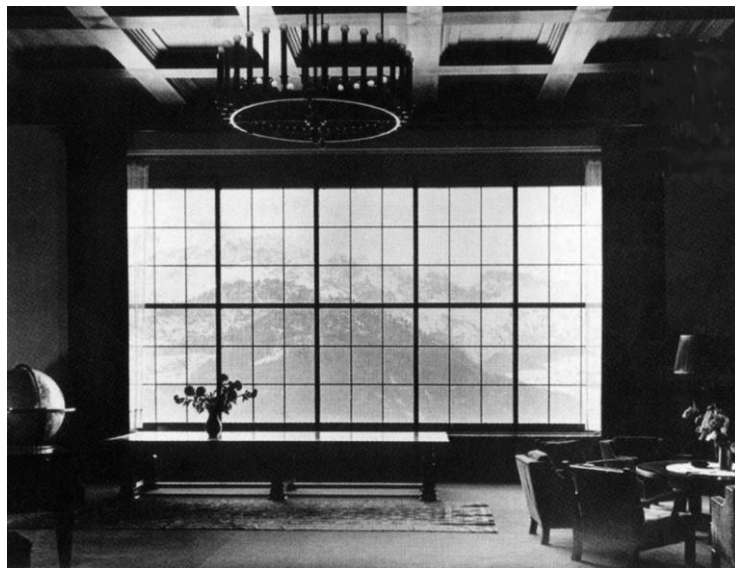


Figure 2-3. Berghof, detail of retractable window.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Clive Irving, "A Hotel Too Far?," in *Conde Nast Traveler*, November 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 24.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell, *Hitler's Mountain* 30.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Hitler and Nazi Germany: A History* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005) 131.

Hitler not only designed the site, but he also decorated and furnished the home with assistance from Gerdy Troost, the wife of his former architect Paul Ludwig Troost who died in 1934. The rooms were elaborately decorated with tapestries, oriental rugs, and innumerable pieces of art.<sup>34</sup> In the grand salon, the dramatic coffered ceiling added richness to the space. Although the salon was furnished sparingly, the furniture was lush, massive, and oversized [Figure 2-4]. For example, the room included a sideboard over ten feet high and eighteen feet long that housed Hitler's phonograph records, a large clock topped with a bronze eagle sculpture, a gigantic china cabinet, and a table measuring over twenty feet long where he would sign papers or study maps.<sup>35</sup>



Figure 2-4. Berghof Interior view, Grand Salon.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* 195.

<sup>35</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 90.

In the dining room, the walls and ceilings were paneled in Larchwood and the chairs were covered in expensive red Moroccan leather.<sup>36</sup> Marble from Carrara, Italy and the Untersberg Mountain was featured in the interior along with rare woods and expensive fabrics.<sup>37</sup> Albert Speer described the dining area as “a mixture of artistic rusticity and urban elegance of a sort which was often characteristic of country houses of the wealthy”<sup>38</sup> [Figure 2-5].

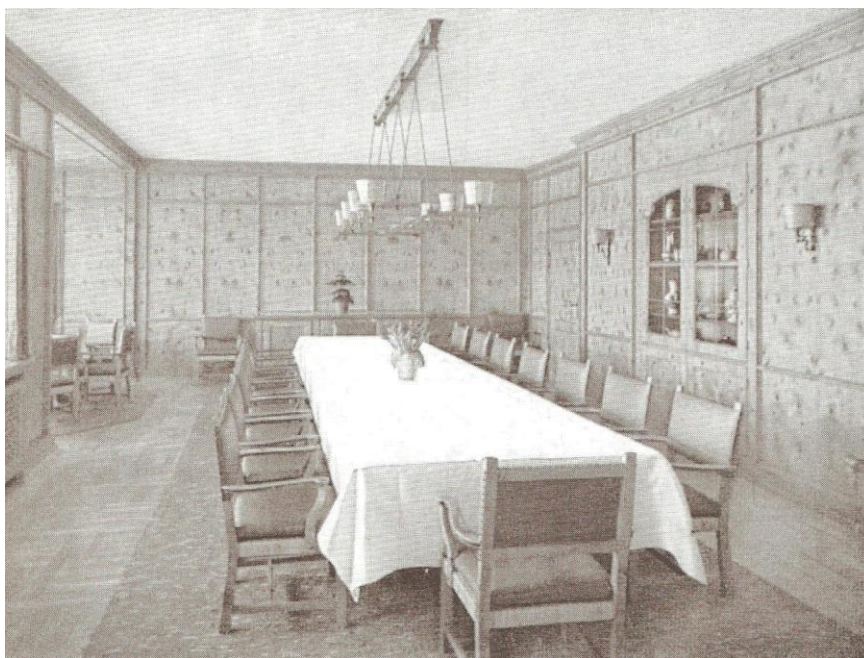


Figure 2-5. Berghof dining room.

Photo source: James Wilson, *Hitler's Alpine Retreat* (Barnsley: 2005).

Hitler carefully attended to each and every detail, even down to the monogrammed china and silver,<sup>39</sup> creating a house that was a true Gesamtkunstwerk: a

<sup>36</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 89.

<sup>37</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 24.

<sup>38</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 88-89.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

“total work of art.” In an architectural context, this German term refers to a construction in which the architect is responsible for overseeing all parts of the design including the structure, interior, furnishings, and the like. In the case of the Berghof, Hitler was an active participant in the totality of design. This was reminiscent of the careful attention to all aspects of interior design in the manner of the English Arts and Crafts Movement promoted in Germany in the twentieth century by the German architect Hermann Muthesius.

Although Hitler’s Berghof was decorated with luxurious furniture and materials, it was in no way inviting. Rather, it was, according to Speer and other guests, disproportionate and uncomfortable.<sup>40</sup> The house had huge rooms that were large enough to accommodate myriad seating areas and individual spaces. Speer writes in his account, “...the company gathered around the huge fireplace—some six or eight persons lined up in a row on the excessively long and uncomfortable sofa, while Hitler...ensconced himself in one of the soft chairs.”<sup>41</sup> Speer also discusses the difficulty in holding conversations due to the poor layout of the furniture, which dispersed the guests throughout the entire room.<sup>42</sup>

Besides the newly constructed living space, a massive garage and terrace were built on the site. Speer mentions that Hitler positioned the garage underneath his massive window. Consequently, when it was windy outside, a strong smell of gasoline would fill the living room area. As Speer writes, “All in all, this was a ground plan that

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<sup>40</sup> Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* 195.

<sup>41</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 90.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 90.

would have been graded D by any professor at an institute of technology. On the other hand, these very clumsinesses gave the Berghof a strongly personal note.”<sup>43</sup>

Many of the high-ranking officers in the Nazi party also had houses in close proximity to the Berghof. To make this possible, Nazi officials forcibly seized a remarkable amount of land on the mountain, including state forests. They bought out centuries-old farms and small churches in the area and razed the structures to erect their own residences and official party buildings. Hitler’s associates constructed paved roads, garage buildings, hotels for the Führer’s guests, and barracks for the growing number of necessary employees. Through this substantial construction phase on the Obersalzberg, the complex eventually included eighty-seven buildings.<sup>44</sup> At the height of the war, the Nazis had the ability to accommodate over 10,000 people in various living quarters on the mountain.<sup>45</sup> They created a place where Hitler had complete control. To produce the massive compound, the Obersalzberg underwent a dramatic transformation. Once a quiet farming community, it had become a tightly controlled, strictly secured property.<sup>46</sup>

As World War II intensified, Hitler’s personal secretary Martin Bormann felt it necessary to set up extra precautions in the event of an air-raid on the Obersalzberg. An elaborate underground bunker system was designed as a shelter that would run beneath the buildings of the Nazi complex.<sup>47</sup> Not surprisingly, the first section to be constructed was directly below the Berghof. The brick and concrete network was never

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<sup>43</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 86.

<sup>44</sup> Mitchell, *Hitler’s Mountain* 34.

<sup>45</sup> Brett Ashley Kaplan, “Masking Nazi Violence in the Beautiful Landscape of the Obersalzberg,” *Comparative Literature* 59, no. 3 (2007): 243.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *Hitler’s Alpine Retreat* 8.

<sup>47</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 31.

fully completed, however. Even so, the underground shelter had 79 rooms with anti-gas protection systems and machine guns, and each of the 29 entrances was equipped with armor-plated doors to protect against exploding bombs. Systems for ventilation, electricity, water, heat, and drainage were also included in order to ensure the safety of those who might use the shelter.<sup>48</sup> At its most complete stage, the underground warren stretched over four miles into the Obersalzberg.<sup>49</sup>

Just like the Berghof, the bunker system for Hitler and his associates was finished with luxurious materials and furnishings. The network was originally planned to be simple—a place for shelter rather than luxury. As the construction progressed, however, polished inlaid floors, wood wainscoting, marble, carpets, air conditioning and heating, as well as beautiful furniture were added to satisfy the desires of Hitler and the others who would use the bunker.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 32.

<sup>49</sup> Mitchell, *Hitler's Mountain* 50.

<sup>50</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 32.



### The Myth of Mountains

It was in the Obersalzberg that Hitler felt most at home—the place where he could escape the pressure of his public life and feel at ease. Although it seems appropriate to assume that Hitler chose the rural location on the Obersalzberg because of its natural beauty and picturesque qualities, an account from Albert Speer suggests otherwise:

Hitler's decision to settle on Obersalzberg seems to point to a love of nature. But I was mistaken about that. He did frequently admire a beautiful view, but as a rule he was more affected by the awesomeness of the abysses than by the harmony of nature.<sup>51</sup>

Standing above the Salzburg Valley, Hitler could see the medieval town of Berchtesgaden. More importantly, he could view his native Austria. This was a sight that provided Hitler not only with nostalgia, but also a sense of victory. He saw his homeland as an extension of Germany because they were both German speaking lands; therefore, he forcibly joined Austria with Nazi Germany during the Anschluss of 1938. From the Obersalzberg, Hitler could look at his triumph, a true testament to his power. The view of his expanded Germany and the famous Untersberg Mountain must have provided Hitler with a sense of conquest—that he could become a ruler over all.

Interestingly, the Untersberg is the topic of several Bavarian myths and legends of which Hitler was surely aware. The most prominent folklore relating to the area tells of the Emperor Charlemagne (an early icon of Germanic imperial unification, having been crowned the First Holy Roman Emperor in 800) who lies asleep surrounded by his servants and knights deep in the heart of the Untersberg Mountain.

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<sup>51</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 47.

Legend has it that Charlemagne sleeps at a massive marble table as his beard slowly grows longer, encircling the table. Once his beard has encircled the table three full times and the crows no longer fly around the mountain, he will emerge from his cavernous throne room inside the mountain to save Germany during its time of need, restoring the glory of the past German Empire.<sup>52</sup>

This myth gained popularity through Richard Wagner's operas, and Hitler was one of his biggest fans; therefore, it seems Hitler would have chosen the Obersalzberg site for his Nazi complex with full knowledge of this legend.<sup>53</sup> Speer points out, "Hitler naturally appropriated this legend to himself: 'You see the Untersberg over there. It is no accident that I have my residence opposite it.'"<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Speer says Hitler's "martial fancies" were constantly aroused during his time spent on the Obersalzberg because of its location opposite the Untersberg Mountain.<sup>55</sup> It seems Hitler stood ready, waiting for Germany's final battle, when the Emperor Charlemagne would surface from the mountain to aid in the fight that would make Germany great once again.

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<sup>52</sup> "Legends of the Fall: Bavarian Myths to Read on Cold Autumn Evenings." *MUNICHfound.com*. N.p., Oct. 2003. Web. 06 Mar. 2013, 1-2.

<sup>53</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 18.

<sup>54</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 86.

<sup>55</sup> Fest, *Conversations with Hitler's Architect* 39.

## Chapter 3

### **The International Style, Mies van der Rohe, and Hitler's Berghof**

Through its propaganda, the Nazi party denounced modern architecture or any styles that were not firmly rooted in “Germanness,” which they negatively branded as “Bolshevik.” For this reason, the main modernist architectural movement at the time, the International Style, received disapproval from Nazi officials.<sup>56</sup> The International Style emerged in Germany in the 1920s as a response to modernity. As new technological advances were developed, many architects were drawn to the challenge of incorporating these advances into their designs, creating radical new construction methods that they believed progressed along with the changing times. Although many of these new ideas were integrated into their work, the architects who came to define the International Style (including the Germans Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius) continued to use key elements from architecture of the past as the foundation of their plans. In Germany, Karl Friedrich Schinkel had mastered a stripped neoclassical approach to building in the early 1800s. The style served to define Prussian architecture, in part, due to the proliferation of Schinkel’s classical designs and those of his students. His work later influenced those architects who were the pioneers of the International Style. As architects like Mies and Gropius continued to develop the modern movement, they strived to design spaces and buildings that

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<sup>56</sup> Elaine S. Hochman, *Architects of Fortune: Mies Van Der Rohe and the Third Reich* (New York: Fromm International Corporation, 1990) 81.

exhibited visual harmony rather than symmetry, forward-looking elements such as large sections of plate glass, and an eye toward simplicity as opposed to added ornament.<sup>57</sup>

The three most common characteristics of the International Style were: space treated as volume, in which walls act as thin enclosures rather than weighted dividers, regularity of design as opposed to axial symmetry, and emphasis on the inherent beauty of materials instead of applied ornament.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the concept of color in designs of the International Style was approached with restraint, and as such the walls were typically made of a smooth, white surface such as stucco.<sup>59</sup> One of the most renowned and respected architects working in the International Style in Germany was Mies van der Rohe, Director of the Bauhaus from 1930-1933. An innovator who pushed the boundaries of architecture and its abilities, he was recognized worldwide as one of Germany's most innovative architects.<sup>60</sup> However, the increasing number of limitations imposed on architects under the Nazi regime made it difficult for him and others to openly design during this time period (especially in a style that was not accepted by the Nazis, like the International Style).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hochman, *Architects of Fortune* 317-318.

<sup>58</sup> Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: Norton, 1966) 20.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

<sup>60</sup> Hochman, *Architects of Fortune* 10.

<sup>61</sup> Claire Zimmerman, *Mies Van Der Rohe, 1886-1969: The Structure of Space* (Germany: Taschen, 2006) 14.



Figure 3-1. Tugendhat House, exterior.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe: *The Tugendhat House* (Springer: 2000).

Despite Hitler's professed distaste of modern architecture, the designs of Mies van der Rohe and other International Style architects may have had more similarities to his own designs than he cared to admit. Mies's Tugendhat House [Figure 3-1] is one of the best examples of this architectural style. Designed and built for Greta and Fritz Tugendhat between 1928 and 1930 in Brno, Czechoslovakia, the Tugendhat House commission, with its very generous budget, permitted Mies full creative license. The clients allowed him to design not only the home, but also its furnishings.<sup>62</sup> As an architect, Mies was known for the way he radically re-defined space in his buildings.<sup>63</sup> He stressed simple, open plan designs that enabled people to experience the house through a natural flow between areas, rather than clearly defined rooms. Because his

<sup>62</sup> Zimmerman, *The Structure of Space* 45.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 12-13.

design was for a domestic rather than public purpose, however, he included a mixture of more private, distinct rooms on the main floor to better serve the function of a living space.<sup>64</sup>

A common element in Mies' designs is a connection between interior and exterior spaces. At the Villa Tugendhat, he used enormous floor to ceiling windows to dramatically open up the interior. Built on the top of a hill, the villa had a commanding panoramic view across a large valley, as well as a view of the huge weeping willow tree that stood outside the dining room area. The mingling of interior and landscape spaces was emphasized because the windows were electrically powered and could be retracted completely into the floor. At the Tugendhat House, Mies succeeds in making a "remarkably generous yet intimate space."<sup>65</sup> This connection to the natural exterior was not only an important element for the Tugendhat family, but would also become a major component to many other buildings designed by Mies.

In most of his architectural designs, little applied ornament is included so the natural beauty of the construction materials is the forefront of attention. His Tugendhat House is no exception. The clean, simple lines and the functionality of the space express beauty so that no extra decoration is needed.<sup>66</sup>

When carefully analyzed, it is somewhat surprising that Hitler would reject the International Style so completely. After all, the modern technique used by Mies van der Rohe was one that required a strict amount of restraint—a "less is more"

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<sup>64</sup> Zimmerman, *The Structure of Space* 45, 47.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 49-50.

<sup>66</sup> Fritz Neumeyer, *Global Architecture: Mies Van Der Rohe: German Pavilion, International Exposition, Barcelona, Spain, 1928-29 (reconstructed 1986), Tugendhat House, Brno, Czecho, 1928-30*, ed. Yukio Futagawa (Tokyo: A.D.A. Edita Tokyo, 1995) 2-3.

approach—that emphasized order and regularity. This seems to have coincided with Hitler’s preference related to exterior architectural design and an open interior floor plan. Moreover, the utilization of new building materials, such as steel beams and reinforced concrete, allowed the size of structures to increase dramatically, which could have accommodated the monumental architecture Hitler desired. When studied closely, striking similarities become evident between Mies’s famous Tugendhat design and that of the Berghof. In the book *Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich*, Elaine S. Hochman references Hitler’s 1933 Culture Day address given at Nuremberg. She writes,

On the one hand, Hitler made brutally clear his personal aversion to modernism, characterizing its manifestations as ‘conscious insanities’ created by ‘debased’ and ‘worthless’ individuals... Yet, at the same time, his assertion that ‘today’s tasks require new methods’ and his demand for a ‘crystal-clear functionalism’ for Nazi architecture appeared to ally his goals with those of modern, technologically oriented architecture...<sup>67</sup>

In Hitler’s eyes, modernism was a blight of architecture that led to the cultural decline of society—a non-sequitur belief.

Curiously, however, modernist elements were sometimes used in Nazi architecture despite Hitler’s public aversion to it. Factories and airports built during the Third Reich were often innovative modern structures. Even the Berghof, Hitler’s most private residence, surprisingly includes characteristics that relate to the International Style. The simple, white wall construction and the lack of ornament on the exterior of the building coincides with standards akin to Mies van der Rohe and can be compared

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<sup>67</sup> Hochman, *Architects of Fortune* 169-170. Hochman references Hitler’s Culture Day address, 1 September 1933, quoted in Teut, *Architektur*, 90-91.

to the Tugendhat House and other International Style buildings. At the same time, however, the home remains grounded in traditional German customs with the inclusion of vernacular features. The Berghof had a pitched gabled roof with exposed wooden roof beams, shutters on many of the windows, and stone rustication along the bottom corners of the structure. These quaint and picturesque characteristics are reminiscent of village architecture and link the Berghof to its nationalist German heritage. While the Villa Tugendhat is a prime example of architecture of volume, the Berghof maintained a feeling of weight due to its monumental size and grounded feeling created by the lower stone rustication. Even though it featured one massive window from which Hitler could view the landscape, the other walls of the Berghof were much more enclosed. They contained several smaller windows as opposed to the dramatic opening of the wall space at the Tugendhat House by the long, plate glass window.

One of the most striking resemblances between Mies' Tugendhat House and the Berghof is, in fact, the massive retractable window. High up in the Obersalzberg, Hitler wanted a link between his house and the breathtaking natural beauty that surrounded him. Hitler delighted in his gigantic window that could be lowered into the basement, and it connected him to the scenic landscape where he chose to build his home. Likewise, the window at the Villa Tugendhat served the same purpose. Mies's technologically advanced windows were constructed roughly five years before Hitler built his alpine retreat on the side of the Kehlstein Mountain. Questions of whether or not Hitler had knowledge of Mies's retractable window (and other modern features) before designing the Berghof remain unanswered. No evidence exists to suggest a definitive answer either way.





Figure 3-2. Tugendhat House, Interior.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Terence Riley, *Mies in Berlin* (New York: Museum of Modern Art: 2001).

Both similarities and differences mark the interiors of the Berghof and the Tugendhat House, as well as the ways in which those inhabiting them experienced space. First and foremost, Mies designed the indoor space for the Tugendhats in such a way that multiple rooms overlapped each other and flowed together, creating a sense of movement [Figure 3-2]. At the Berghof, Hitler's architectural plan created rooms that were distinctly separated from each other; however, the sheer size of the main living area allowed for multiple functionality within a single, open space. These spaces were distinguished from each other through the use of various seating arrangements, furniture placement, and even stairs to different levels. In this way, an open, flowing

effect is achieved in the space that is similar to the spatial experience at the Tugendhat House.

The designs at both the Berghof and the Villa Tugendhat can be considered a Gesamtkunstwerk. Hitler strived to include the best and most extraordinary elements in his architectural design and furnishings. He, along with Gerdy Troost, created a residence that was a total work of art, in which even the china and silverware were carefully considered. Hitler developed a fascinating juxtaposition between materials that evoked a hard, authoritative quality and features that stressed the German characteristics of his architecture. While he used stone and marble to impress, he preferred to use “German oak, a symbol in Teutonic folklore of Germanness.”<sup>68</sup> In the same way, Mies was given full control over the architectural and interior design at his Villa Tugendhat and devised a cohesive work from start to finish. The modern furnishings utilized by Mies contrasted greatly with the oversized, more traditional pieces used to decorate the Berghof, but the style of furnishings is not what is most important to compare. When studied as a whole, each residence reveals the elements of a total work of art in its own way.

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<sup>68</sup> Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* 338.

## Chapter 4

### The Berghof and Nazi Propaganda

Hitler's alpine home in the mountains of Bavaria became a tourist attraction shortly after it was renovated in the mid-1930s.<sup>69</sup> Huge numbers of German citizens and Nazi supporters flocked to the site in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the Führer. At times, Hitler would come out to greet his admirers where they stood waiting at the end of his driveway [Figure 4-1].



Figure 4-1. Members of the public gathered near the Berghof.

Photo source: James Wilson, *Hitler's Alpine Retreat* (Barnsley: 2005).

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<sup>69</sup> Kaplan, "Masking Nazi Violence" 243.

The Nazi party took full advantage of the German people's interest in their leader's life in the mountains and exploited these opportunities for propaganda purposes. Many photos of Hitler greeting his visitors were published in an attempt to convince the masses that he was an amicable leader who loved the German people, children, animals, and his country—a “man-of-the-people”<sup>70</sup> whom they could trust. Albert Speer writes:

I have often wondered whether Hitler felt anything like affection for children. He certainly made an effort when he met them, whether they were the children of acquaintances or unknown to him...On the whole he regarded children as representatives of the next generation and therefore took more pleasure in their appearance (blond, blue-eyed), their stature (strong, healthy), or their intelligence (brisk, aggressive) than in their nature as children.<sup>71</sup>

In Nazi propaganda, Hitler was shown living a life that common German people could only dream of—an idealized existence they longed to obtain. This is part of the reason the propaganda was so effective. It was as if the Nazis were trying to reach out to the people and profess that all Germans could have a similar life if they only followed the Nazi party. The reality of the situation, however, was that Hitler and his followers were committing some of the most violent and horrifying acts in history out of the public's eye.

Hitler expressed opinionated views about war propaganda in *Mein Kampf*. He vividly describes it as a weapon in its own right and argues that it is most frightening in the hands of someone who is adept at using it. Hitler explains that propaganda must always be focused on reaching the masses and is not meant to address higher, more educated people. He wrote that, to be successful in using propaganda, clarity is

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<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, “Masking Nazi Violence” 246.

<sup>71</sup> Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* 93-94.

imperative. He also contended that the issue at hand must be so plainly and forcibly thrust into the minds of the people that they would understand it. As he put it in *Mein Kampf*:

The art of propaganda consists precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal of its feelings, in finding the appropriate psychological form that will arrest the attention and appeal to the hearts of the broad masses.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to presenting Nazi officials as respectable Germans living reserved lives in the beautiful mountains of Bavaria, the Nazi party sponsored images of German family life that all of its citizens were urged to emulate. A prime example of this propaganda is George Sluyterman von Langeweyde's linocut *Family* [Figure 4-2]. The work depicts a diligent man farming the land while his wife (who is dressed in conservative clothing) and his well-behaved young child watch from behind the fence. The inscription at the bottom of the image reads "The family is the smallest but most precious unit of the state."

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<sup>72</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf* 130.



Figure 4-2. Sluyterman von Langeweyde “Family” c. 1930-1940s.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

Values such as hard work, modesty, and productivity were stressed by the Nazi party through this simple image. Furthermore, the caption included suggests that unassuming, “regular” German citizens were treasured by the Nazi government, and thus would be taken care of under Hitler’s rule. What’s more, the notion of family was comprised of more than just parents and children, but extended into the idea of the German people as a collective whole binding together to create a Folkish German state. Within this larger understanding of the German kin, farming family units were seen as the core of the nationalist state. They served as role models, encompassing all of the foundational values that were promoted by the Nazi party.



Figure 4-3. Mathias Padua, “Führer Speaks,” 1939.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

In a similar fashion, the painting *Führer Speaks* by Paul Mathias Padua [Figure 4-3] promotes many of the same ideals. The artist paints a farmer and his family quietly listening to Hitler speaking on the radio beneath a portrait of the Führer tacked to the wall of their modest home. When used as propaganda, this scene emphasizes the Nazi ideal of the communal listening of loyal citizens and the noticeable goodness of a typical Aryan family. Moreover, Hitler’s iconic portrait displayed proudly on the wall evokes a religious parallel to Christ, suggesting that Hitler is the “savior” of the German people.





Figure 4-4. Adolf Wissel, “Farm Family from Kahlenberg” 1939.

Photo from the Department of Art History, Visual Resource Centre Selections. Original source: Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

Adolf Wissel’s painting *Farm Family from Kahlenberg* [Figure 4-4] is yet another example of the ideals promoted by the Nazi party. The artist paints a solemn-looking farmer and his family in an outdoor setting. A return to morals and a simple life lived in nature, which provided sustenance for the people, was stressed during the Nazi regime. Here, Wissel depicts a respectable family with a strong male head of household and a supporting grandmother and mother with her children. Rejecting city life in favor of returning to the countryside and emphasizing sound morals was seen as honorable in the Nazi party’s eyes. This strong anti-urban propensity became known as



the doctrine of “blood and soil” in Nazi propaganda and called for a return to peasantry and strong connection to the fatherland.<sup>73</sup>

What is fascinating about the familial image encouraged by the Nazi party was that it did not coincide with Hitler’s personal life at all. His primary endeavor was his political career in Germany and transforming the country into a dominating world power. Having a family was clearly not his main concern. Hitler was depicted as a reserved bachelor who was married to the state. He willingly sacrificed his personal life in order to do what was best for his country. Hitler was astonishingly successful in gaining the trust and love of the German people because he was perceived as a man of devotion.<sup>74</sup> To the public, he was the perfect role model of patriotism. Contrary to the public impression, however, Hitler had a long time mistress named Eva Braun who accompanied him to the Berghof [Figure 4-5]. Because he did not want the public to know about her, Eva was hidden from view except when they were surrounded by Hitler’s inner-circle of Nazi associates.<sup>75</sup> When she went to the Obersalzberg, Eva traveled with Hitler’s two secretaries in order to conceal her presence.<sup>76</sup> At the Berghof, though, Hitler could let down his guard and allow Eva to be seen in his company. After all, she was the closest thing he had to a family. The couple finally married on April 28, 1945, just two days before their joint suicide in the Berlin Führerbunker at the end of the war.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany* 153, 155.

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell, *Hitler’s Mountain* 1.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 118.



Figure 4-5. Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun with their dogs at the Berghof.

Photo Source: Deutsches Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archive).

Another contradicting aspect of the Nazi party was the hypocritical declaration that party members (and Hitler, especially) lived moderately. Although Third Reich officials promoted a modest existence of living off the land, they by no means accepted this lifestyle themselves. For Hitler and his associates, it was all a façade. While the Führer admittedly enjoyed living in the picturesque mountains above Germany, his lifestyle was full of amenities and plentiful conveniences. This was one of the paradoxes of Hitler's life. Although the German people were persistently informed of his simple tastes, Hitler, in fact, was a man of extravagance.

One of the main ways in which Nazi propaganda images were marketed throughout Germany was through the production of postcards. The Third Reich regime wisely utilized this medium to promote political, patriotic, and military images, including those taken of Hitler at the Berghof. The success of this political campaign

was immeasurable.<sup>78</sup> Hitler's private photographer, Heinrich Hoffman, captured most of the promoted images.<sup>79</sup> Hitler's popularity was the impetus for the manufacture of postcards with images of a more personal nature.<sup>80</sup> Because the Berghof was his most private retreat, Hitler was often photographed at the site. Images of Hitler evoked pride in the German people and they shared their enthusiasm by sending the postcards to their loved ones or giving them as gifts. With vendors on almost every street corner, the postcards sold rapidly and were easy for people to transport due to their small size.<sup>81</sup>

The propaganda images produced from the Berghof estate attempted to encourage the German people to follow in the footsteps of Hitler and his confidants and to live in the scenic countryside behaving as all "good" citizens should. Brett Ashley Kaplan argues in her article "Masking Nazi Violence in the Beautiful Landscape of the Obersalzberg" that images taken at the Berghof "were an important part of the Nazi propaganda machine, because the idealization of the Obersalzberg became a linchpin in the Nazi plan to rationalize the war—that if we only struggle through we would finally all bask in the best of German folk culture."<sup>82</sup>

The image of a scenic getaway nestled in the mountains masked what was actually happening at the Berghof site. The house was the location in which many of the most important decisions regarding the war were discussed and settled. It was here that Hitler arranged the Munich agreement, as well as the 1939 plans to invade

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<sup>78</sup> James Wilson's book *Hitler's Alpine Retreat* is an extraordinary resource of Nazi propaganda postcards, especially those of Hitler taken on the Obersalzberg. Wilson, *Hitler's Alpine Retreat* 14.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Kaplan, "Masking Nazi Violence" 241.

Poland.<sup>83</sup> It is true that Hitler loved the Berghof, which is why he spent so much of his time there (often as many as six months out of the year).<sup>84</sup> In Joachim Fest's book *Albert Speer: Conversations with Hitler's Architect*, Speer explains his realization that Hitler needed the emptiness of the time he spent at the Berghof to defuse the anxiety related to his public life.<sup>85</sup> It was on the top of this mountain that Hitler felt most powerful—at the place he built with money earned from his success, where he felt comfortable making some of the most important political decisions of his career.

Kaplan argues in her article that despite the Berghof's proven link to Nazi politics, Hitler wanted the Obersalzberg area to appear as a "distant, aestheticized realm."<sup>86</sup> Creating a mystical "otherness" surrounding the Berghof and the happenings at the site was crucial in Nazi propaganda in order to shape the opinions of the German people. Kaplan attests "the portrayals of the mountain life of Hitler and those in his inner circles...fed the critical Nazi myth that the unpleasant aspects of war were all necessary components of the larger Nazi dream of postwar expanded Germany replete with idyllic moments such as those captured in Obersalzberg propaganda."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Kaplan, "Masking Nazi Violence" 242.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 243.

<sup>85</sup> Fest, *Conversations with Hitler's Architect* 39.

<sup>86</sup> Kaplan, "Masking Nazi Violence" 246-247.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 261.

## Chapter 5

### The Fate of the Berghof

Toward the end of the war, the Allied forces expressed concerns that Hitler would retreat to the Obersalzberg and make his final stand at the Berghof. With the fortifications continually added to the site, the likelihood of this possibility seemed to increase as time went on; however, this fear was never realized and Hitler lived his last days in the Führerbunker in Berlin.

With detailed plans from the U.S. Air Force, the Berghof and various other sites on the Obersalzberg were bombed by the Royal Air Force on April 25, 1945. Although allied forces had knowledge that Hitler was no longer living there, they decided to bomb the site to prevent it from being a fortress location for Nazi officials. By that time, most of the radar towers had been captured by the Allies, and the Obersalzberg defense precautions had only five minutes warning that the British bombers were in route. Because of this, most of the defense tactics were ineffective, such as the smoke machines, which took thirty minutes to blanket the mountain with a shielding fog.<sup>88</sup> Most of the bombs dropped during the attack landed beyond the Berghof, causing little damage to the residence.<sup>89</sup> A few days after the attack, however, Nazi SS troops filled the house with gasoline and set it on fire<sup>90</sup> [Figure 5-1]. At first, the shell of the building remained intact; however in 1952, on the seven year anniversary of Hitler's

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<sup>88</sup> Mitchell, *Hitler's Mountain* 115.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 116.

<sup>90</sup> Kaplan, "Masking Nazi Violence" 243.

suicide, the Bavarian government destroyed the building to prevent the ruins from becoming a neo-Nazi shrine.”<sup>91</sup>



Figure 5-1. An American soldier views the burning Berghof, May 1945.

Photo source: Arthur Mitchell, *Hitler's Mountain: The Führer, Obersalzberg, and the American Occupation of Berchtesgaden* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007).

Today, several foundation walls are all that remain of Hitler's beloved alpine retreat. The bunkers have since flooded with water and only a handful of buildings are still standing from the Obersalzberg complex.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Kaplan, "Masking Nazi Violence" 243.

<sup>92</sup> Boone, *Hitler at the Obersalzberg* 185.

## Conclusion

From its humble beginnings as the small alpine chalet Haus Wachenfeld to its completed grandeur as the Berghof, Hitler's mountain residence served as his private retreat where he could escape the challenges of life. Because Hitler himself was the architect, his home was a representation of his success, interests, and taste. Furnished with the finest of materials, he precisely decorated his home as a true Gesamtkunstwerk.

Images from the Berghof, along with Nazi commissioned art, served as important propaganda for the Third Reich. By portraying Hitler as a peaceful leader who lived an idyllic life in the mountains, the Nazis provided the German people with hope that they too could live such an existence. Fueled by such imagery, the German people adamantly supported their Führer.

Few authors have acknowledged the resemblance between the design of the Berghof and modern architectural constructions, specifically those built in the International Style. Although Hitler professed his disgust of artistic modernism, accusing it of being "Bolshevik" and "degenerate," he used many modern elements in the design of the Berghof. The Tugendhat House is a superb representation of Mies van der Rohe's progressive designs that utilized many technological advances. Noticeable differences are apparent between the Villa Tugendhat and the Berghof, of course. Even so, when closely compared, the buildings are not overly dissimilar. They share many of the same

important features such as unornamented, white walls, a connection between interior and exterior spaces, multifunctional rooms, and rigorous attention to detail.

Hitler's passionate interest in architecture began at a young age and it had an impact on his artistic preferences all throughout his life. From his love of monumental classicism for public buildings to his obsession with the need for German materials and styles, Hitler appreciated an eclectic mix of aesthetics. When it came time to design his retreat in the Bavarian Alps, he used a fusion of various techniques including German vernacular, modern International Style, and monumental architecture to create a fascinating amalgamation of styles.



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Wilson, James. *Hitler's Alpine Retreat.* Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2005.

Zimmerman, Claire. *Mies Van Der Rohe, 1886-1969: The Structure of Space.* Germany: Taschen, 2006.

# ACADEMIC VITA

## **Emily A. Dice**

5143 Northway Rd  
Cogan Station, PA 17728  
emdice05@gmail.com

### **EDUCATION**

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**The Pennsylvania State University**, University Park, PA

**2007- 2013**

**Bachelor of Arts in Art History, Minor in Architectural History**

**Schreyer Honors College**

### **ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

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**Penn State Class of 1922 Memorial Scholarship**

**Fall 2009 and Spring 2010**

- Awarded for strong academic performance

**Career Development Program for the Schreyer Honors College**

**Fall 2012- Spring 2013**

- Mentor for Freshman and Sophomore students with majors related to Arts and Architecture

**Atlas THON**

**Fall 2008-Spring 2013**

- Helped raise money for the Four Diamonds Fund

**St. Paul's United Methodist Carillon Handbell Choir**

**2012-2013**

### **INTERNSHIPS AND WORK EXPERIENCE**

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**Albert Michaels Conservation Inc.**, University Park, PA

**October- December 2012**

*Intern*

**Penn State All-Sports Museum**, University Park, PA  
**February 2012-May 2013**  
*Student Employee, Trained Mandated Reporter*

**Palmer Museum of Art**, University Park, PA  
**Summer 2012**  
*Intern*

**Department of Plant Pathology**, University Park, PA  
**Summer 2009**  
*Research Assistant*

### **PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION**

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“The Williamsport Painter: Severin Roesen’s Success in a Flourishing Pennsylvania Town”

- Gallery talk discussing Roesen’s painting “Still Life with Grapes,” presented at the Palmer Museum of Art during the Summer of 2012

### **PUBLICATIONS**

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“The Berghof and the Discourse of Domesticity in Hitler’s Architecture”

- Penn State Schreyer Honors College Thesis, 2013