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## Review of Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics

Michael F. Russo Etc.

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## LJ Review Cover Sheet and Survey

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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

ISBN: 1-58567-345-5

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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In This Review. Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics. Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics. By Frederic Spotts. 420 pp, Overlook Press, 2003.Â 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