

Autobahn Construction (1936)

Abstract

Marrying nature and modern technology formed a cornerstone of the Nazi understanding of Germans' relationship with the natural world. Germans were called to celebrate the beauty of Germany's natural landscapes, and prewar policies generally reflected that desire: the beauty of the landscape was not to be destroyed. Construction and development were supposed to work through, rather than against, nature, in order to showcase the landscape. A prominent example of this philosophy remains the German highway system (Reichsautobahn), a stretch of which is portrayed in this painting by Wilhelm Dieininghoff from 1936. Dieininghoff was a Bavarian landscape painter whose works were exhibited in the Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung, and Hitler owned two of his landscape paintings. The Reichsautobahn (RAB) initiative was a massive, nation-wide construction project that represented a major domestic campaign for Hitler. He believed a series of roadways should link the country to aid economic productivity and help Germans experience all the corners of the country. Roadways were designed to give Germans a greater appreciation for the beauty surrounding them. On an economic level, this massive construction project served as job creation scheme to demonstrate Germany's economic recovery under Hitler's leadership.

Source



Source: Wilhelm Dieininghoff, Autobahn construction, 1936. Oil on canvas. Grohmann Museum collection, Milwaukee School of Engineering.

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Recommended Citation: Autobahn Construction (1936), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-4658>> [April 30, 2024].