

Beatrice Martini

Gelände (Part III). In Nürnberg.

III.

The Zeppelinfeld and its grandstand – the Zeppelinhaupttribüne – are the only structures of the Reichsparteitagsgelände project that were completed.

This area came to be called Zeppelinfeld after a Zeppelin airship landed there in 1909. Albert Speer designed the grounds to host mass parades of the Wehrmacht and have a capacity of up to 200,000 people.

The complex opens onto a concrete and brick grandstand built between 1935 and 1937 faced with slabs of shell limestone.

During construction the grandstand was crowned by a giant wooden eagle. Once the tribune was completed, the eagle was replaced with a gilded swastika, later destroyed by US troops in 1945.

The design of the Zeppelinhaupttribüne is inspired by the Βωμός τῆς Περγάμου, a monumental altar built on one of the terraces of the Pergamon acropolis in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) during the first half of the 2nd century BC.

The Pergamon Altar's base is particularly famous. It is decorated with a frieze depicting the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods, known as the Gigantomachy.

The NSDAP held this architecture in high regard. Wilhelm Kreis, another architect associated with the NSDAP, drew inspiration from the Altar for two projects, the Soldatenhalle at the Oberkommando des Heeres in Berlin and a never-realized warriors' monument at the foot of Mount Olympus in Greece.

This architectural form evoked ideas of self-sacrifice and heroic death. The NSDAP also attempted to appropriate the message of the Altar's frieze: the victory of good over evil.

30 years later, Peter Weiss began work on his tripartite novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* with a description of the Gigantomachy frieze. In the text, set in the Pergamon Museum, three young men, all antifascists, discuss their interpretation of the frieze's figures and how the story they tell can be related to their own contemporary political struggles while SS soldiers mingle among the museum's visitors.

Inside the Zeppelinhaupttribüne there is the Goldener Saal, a 335 m² hall paneled in marble and featuring golden ceiling mosaics.

On February 22 and 23, 1986 punk-industrial band Einstürzende Neubauten performed in the Goldener Saal. To this date, these are the first and last concerts ever held in the hall.

The setlist for the first night was: Halber Mensch/ Der Tod ist ein Dandy/ Negativ nein/ Armenia/ Trinklied/ Ich bin's/ Sehnsucht/ Zeichnungen des Patienten O.T./ Spaltung (a.k.a. Armenisch Bitter)/ Keine Schönheit (ohne Gefahr)/ Yü-Gung (fütter mein Ego)/ DNS (Wasserturm)/ Die genaue Zeit/ Letztes Biest (am Himmel)/ Abfacklen!/ Sand [Lee Hazlewood].

Interviewed about the Nürnberg shows by the TV channel ZDF, Einstürzende Neubauten lead singer Blixa Bargeld said: "Whether it is a matter of desecration, or exorcizing any ghost of

Hitler, is a question of perspective and what side you are on, I think. Desecration is for those who consider the room in its original function, and exorcism for those who are rather on my side of things. The nature of what we do is in any case not suitable to that, to somehow acknowledge any superior human being, any leader or any fascist cult".

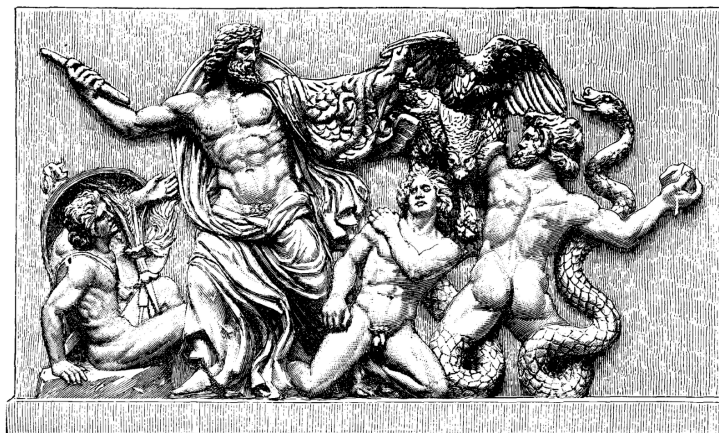
Sources

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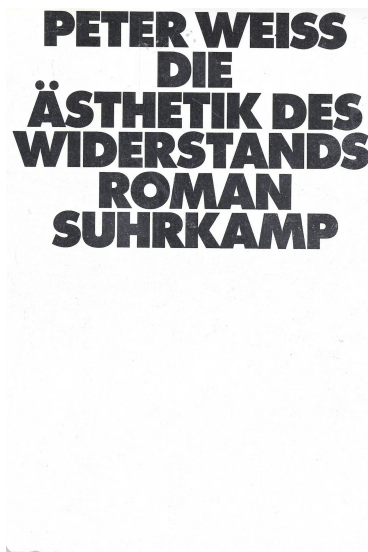
Zeppelinfeld Grandstand, around 1938. Photo credit: Nuremberg Municipal Archives.

Zeus and the Giants, from Pergamon [Drawing]. Project Runeberg. Accessed January 30, 2025 from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bildhuggarkonst,_Zeus_och_giganterna,_fr%C3%A5n_Pergamon,_Nordisk_familjebok.png



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