

The Architecture of Totalitarianism



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Contents

Introduction

- Totalitarian Architecture
- Timeline of Totalitarian Regimes
- Mediating Power of Built-form
- Spatial Analysis

Architecture of Nazi Germany

- Architecture as a Propaganda Tool
- The Reich Chancellery
- Volkshalle
- Architectural Form
- Sculptures

Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, Beijing

References



Introduction

Totalitarianism derives from the Latin word *totalis* which meant something utter, absolute, thorough, entire, undivided & is politically used for a governance system in which the State possess entire control over the society & aims to spread it to all possible aspects of private & public life .

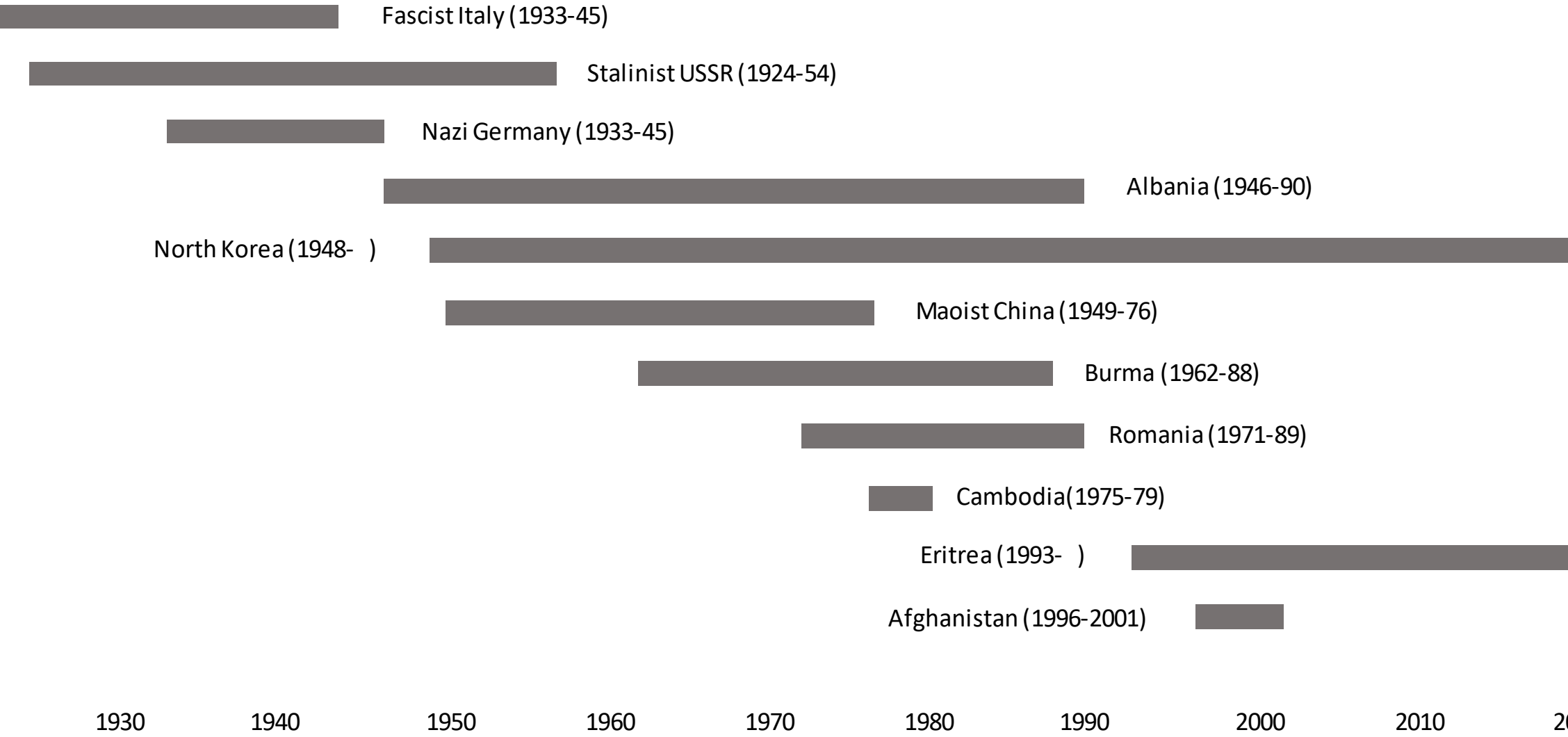
Totalitarian Architecture

Generally it might be defined as architecture created in frames of totalitarian State activity & under its strict control, due to its thorough character of the policy in order to strengthen & spread its ideology. Totalitarian architecture consciously & pragmatically expressed this ideology using some sophisticated forms of evocation.

Totalitarian states have used Architecture as vehicle of state propaganda, using it to emphasize strength, authority, and achievements and grandeur of the state.

Left: Historical photograph of Red Army Theatre in Moscow, Russia. It is designed in the shape of the communist star.

Timeline of Totalitarian Regimes
after World War I



The rise of totalitarian political regimes started with the the establishment of a Fascist government in Italy under Benito Mussolini.

This was followed by the regime of Stalin in USSR and the Third Reich in Germany under Hitler’s Nazi party.

Their was an upsurge in totalitarian regimes following WWII, with totalitarian communist regimes in North Korea and China being established.

North Korea, along with the African state of Eritrea continues to be one of the only two recognized active totalitarian regimes in the world.

Mediating Power of Built-Form

Power is not lodged inertly in built form. Force, coercion, domination, manipulation, seduction and authority are forms of everyday practice which are inevitably mediated by built form.

- **Orientation/disorientation** Built form can orient or disorient and reorient its subjects through the spatial framings of everyday life.
- **Publicity/privacy** Built form segments space in a manner that places certain kinds of people and actions under surveillance while privileging other kinds of people and action as private.
- **Segregation/access** Boundaries and pathways can segregate places by status, gender, race, culture, class and age,
- **Nature/history** Built form inevitably uses metaphor and constructs mythology through a politics of representation. Historically constructed meanings can be 'naturalized' to legitimize authority.

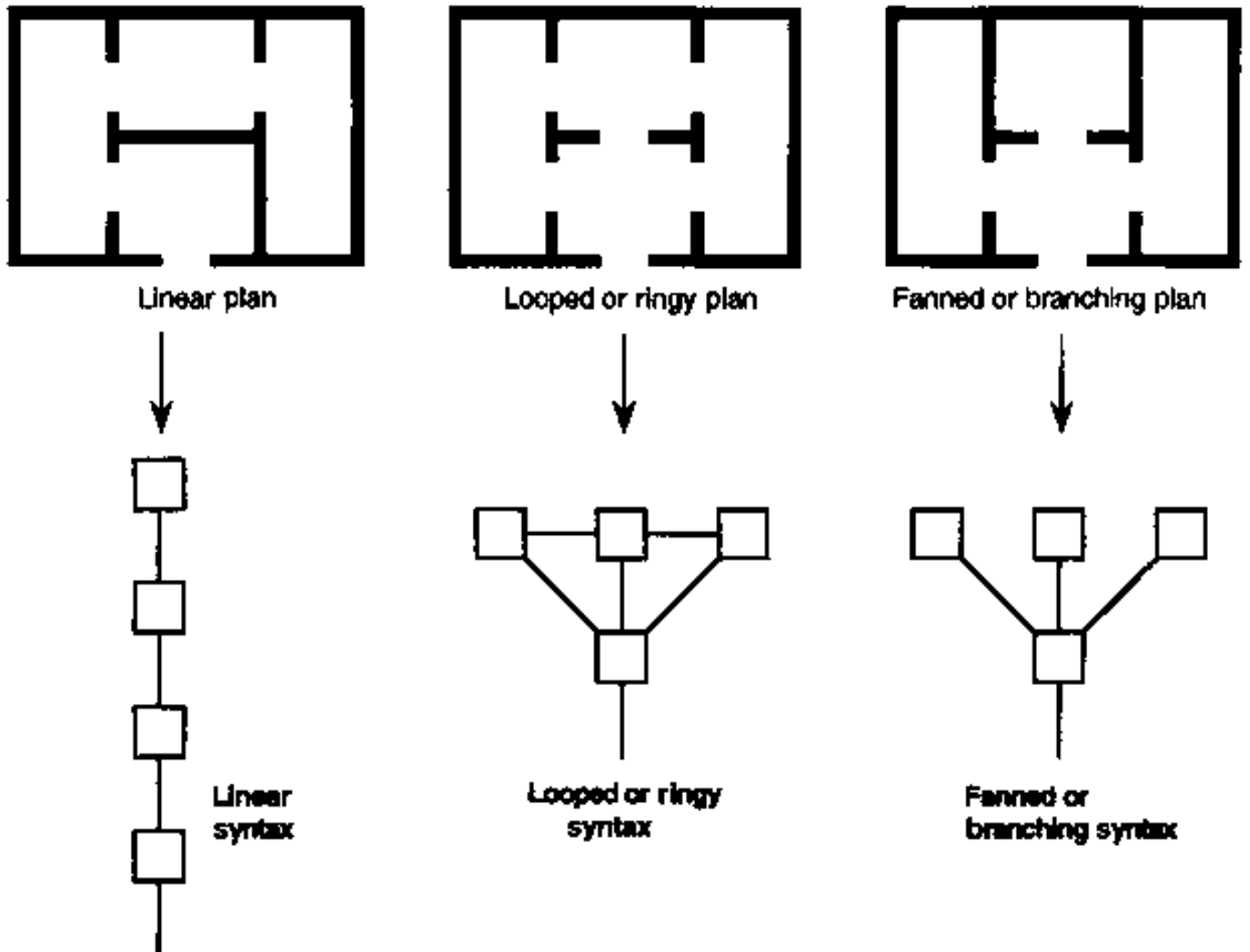


How built-forms mediate access

Top: Roads in Sarasota, Florida, designed to accommodate only vehicular traffic, and exclude pedestrians.

Left: Rue Montorgueil in Paris, accommodating pedestrian and street side activities.

Spatial Analysis



Left: Primary syntactic relations
Based on Hillier and Hanson
(1984)

Hillier and Hanson (1984) propose the ‘genotypes’ of architecture, i.e., the clusters of spatial segments structured in certain formations with syntactic rules of sequence and adjacency. Shops, factories, schools, offices, libraries, houses, suburbs will be reproduced from a limited number of spatial genotypes.

The primary form of spatial analysis proceeds from a technique of mapping buildings into a cellular structure using the external entry points as a base. The building plan is translated into a structural diagram of how life is framed within it. In the figure on the opposite page, three similar plans with different doorways yield three quite different syntactic structures.

The linear structure is a string of spatial segments in sequence, known in architecture as the enfilade. There is no choice of pathway from one segment to another. The ringy or looped structure is the opposite in as much as it connects segments to each other in a network, with multiple choices of pathway. A fan (or branching) structure controls access to a range of spaces from a single segment, like a corridor or hallway. In practice nearly all buildings are structured in combinations of these basic syntactic structures.

Architecture of Nazi Germany

The architecture of Nazi Germany stretches from 1933 to, until its fall in, 1945. Nazi ideology took a pluralist attitude to architecture, and can be characterized by three forms:

- i. a stripped neoclassicism, typified by the designs of Albert Speer;
- ii. a vernacular style that drew inspiration from traditional rural architecture, especially alpine;
- iii. and a utilitarian style followed for major infrastructure projects and industrial or military complexes.

Right: Nuremberg rally grounds. A vast area of parkland in Nuremberg was transformed into the location for the annual Nazi party rallies – massive propaganda exercises where Hitler and other leaders addressed the faithful from the iconic grandstand designed by Albert Speer.





Architecture as a Propaganda Tool

According to Albert Speer, architecture was a crucial part of the Nazi project. Hitler viewed monumental architecture as a way to dazzle and intimidate people.

Hitler developed coherent theories of architecture and urban form which he saw as an expression of the spiritual and psychological condition of the people. This was more than the representation of culture or *Zeitgeist* for him. Architecture stimulated community spirit, inspired patriotism and a faith in the future. But it also inspired a belief in leadership. Hitler understood that power is in the capacity to generate a sense of empowerment in his subjects. He believed in what he called ‘community architecture’ as a product of collective effort, to be used by and embody the spirit of the ‘community’. Buildings and cities not only housed but also ‘represented’ this community/nation/ race.

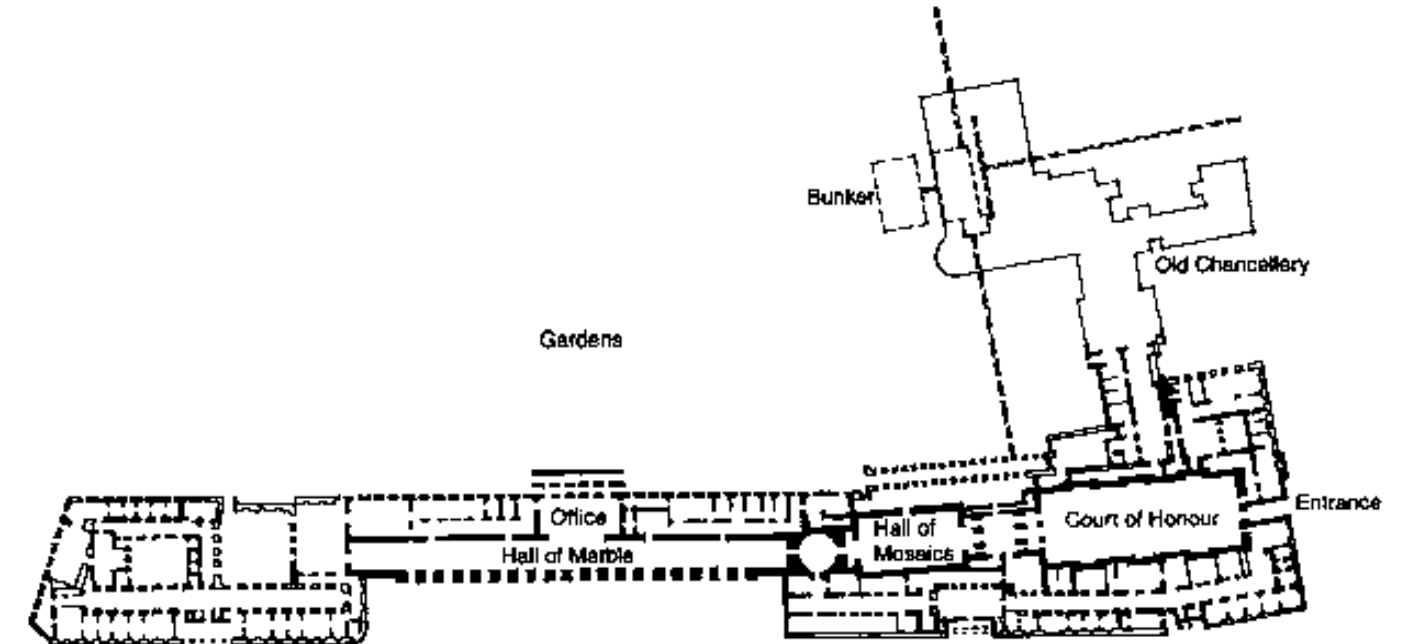
Left: Olympic Stadium, Berlin. Berlin had won the right to stage the 1936 Olympic Games. The centre-piece of the games, the Olympic Stadium was used for its propaganda value, where the Nazis’ hoped that the games would demonstrate Aryan superiority.



The Reich Chancellery

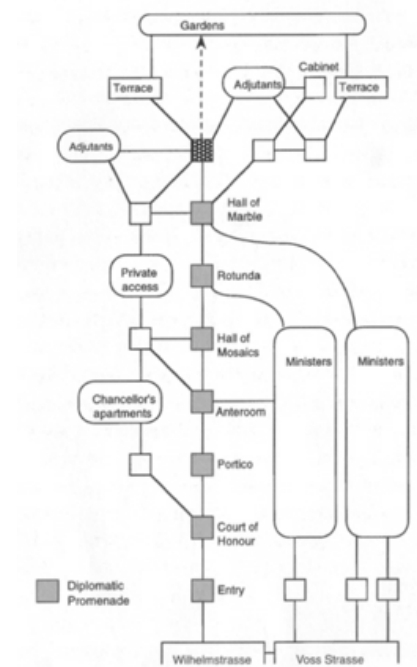
The Reich Chancellery (German: Reichskanzlei) was the traditional name of the office of the Chancellor of Germany. In late January 1938, Adolf Hitler officially assigned his favourite architect Albert Speer to build the

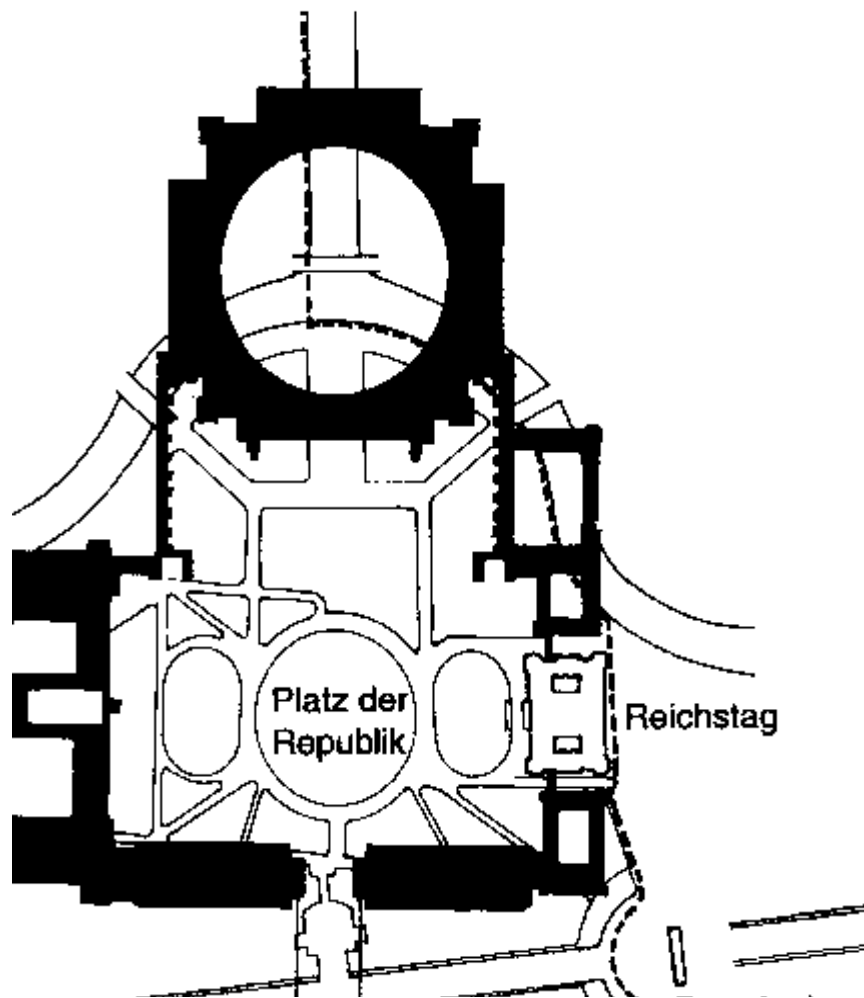
Above: Entrance to the New Reich Chancellery, with two bronze nude male statues besides the entrance. Ionic columns, and the eagle, common symbols in Nazi architecture are also visible.



New Reich Chancellery. Speer designed a 400 metre long building, entered at its end from next door to the old Chancellery in Wilhelmstrasse. The Palace at Versailles (Figure 2.2) was a primary source for the planning with a similar enfilade

From the outside, the chancellery had a stern, authoritarian appearance. Guests would enter the Chancellery through the Court of Honour (Ehrenhof; 60 x 28 m). The building's main entrance was flanked by two nude male bronze statues: representing the "Wehrmacht" and "Partei" ("Armed Forces" and "Party").





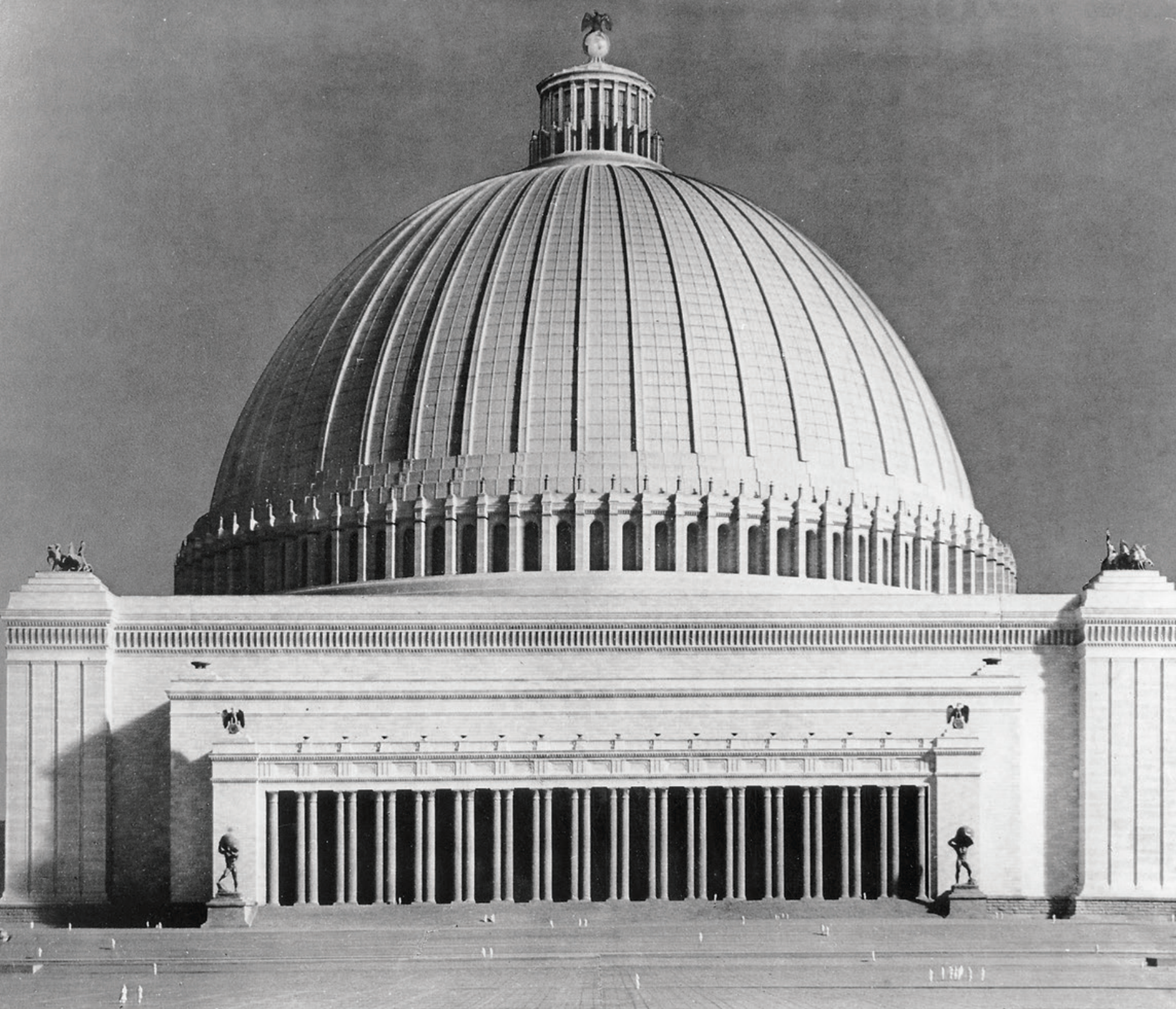
Left: Reichstag district: Speer Plan and east-west border superimposed

When one enters the Reich Chancellery, one should have the feeling that one is visiting the master of the world. One will arrive there along wide avenues containing the Triumphal arch, the Pantheon (the domed hall), the Square of the People—things to take your breath away. Hitler (quoted in Hochmann 1989:260)



Above: The New Reich Chancellery's grand marble gallery in 1939.

The portico led to a marble walled antechamber decorated with flowers, Beyond which a vestibule led to the Roman inspired Hall of Mosaics (37 x 20 m), a windowless but skylit hall, decorated with German symbols of eagles and oak leaves. Swastikas were woven together in the floor mosaic. The rotunda was an entry space to the huge Hall of Marble which, at 146 by 12 m , was designed to dwarf the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

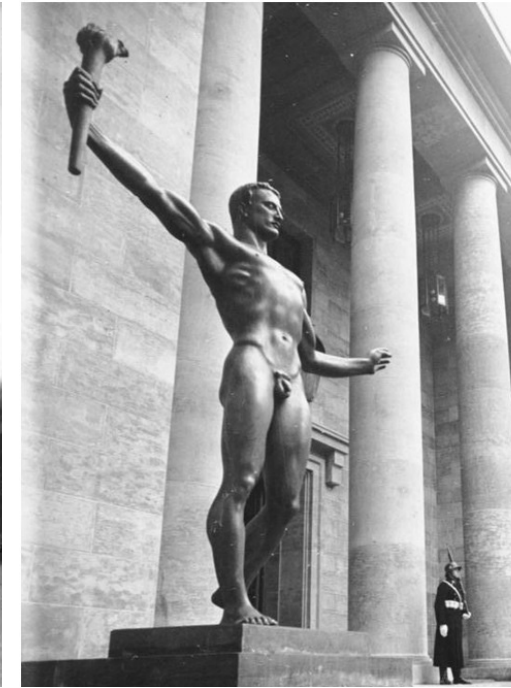


Volkshalle

Volkshalle was a domed monumental building planned by Hitler, which was never constructed. It would have been the largest indoor structure in the world if completed, seven times larger than St. Peter's Basilica.

It was supposed to be as grand and monumental as the Roman Pantheon and Hitler believed that it would acquire holy significance in centuries to come. Speer stated that Hitler believed the holiness of the structure would grow as centuries passed, eventually becoming a shrine to national socialism — in the same way St. Peter's Basilica serves Roman Catholicism.

Left: A model of the proposed Volkshalle in Berlin, that was to be constructed after the victory in the War, but was never constructed after the Nazis lost.



Architectural Form

The Nazi state used monumental grandeur as a way to project its authority through the architectural built-form. The usage of linear forms and long, high colonnades, borrowed from classical Roman architecture was a common feature in Nazi architecture.

Nazi architecture used a sense of rhythm and repetition to evoke feelings of authority and grandeur through architectural form.

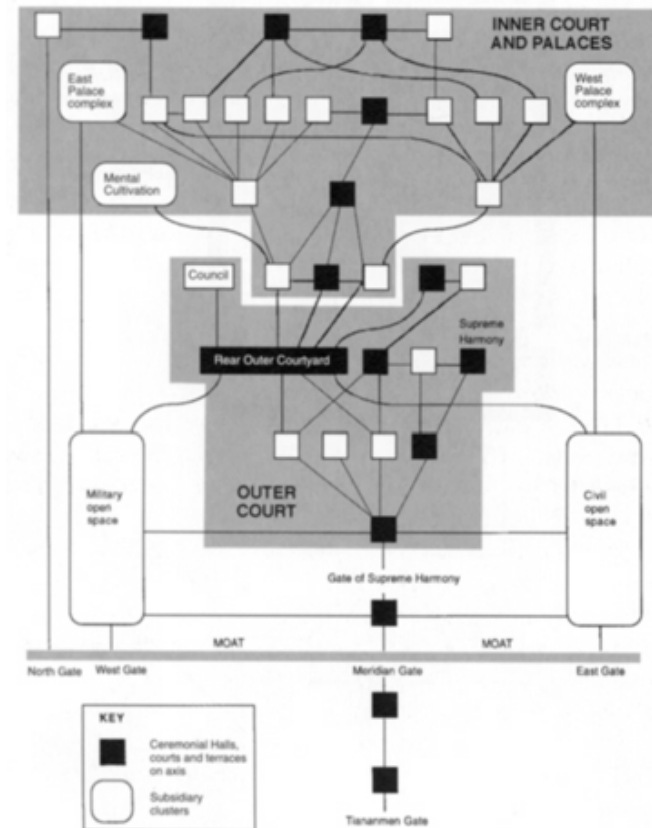
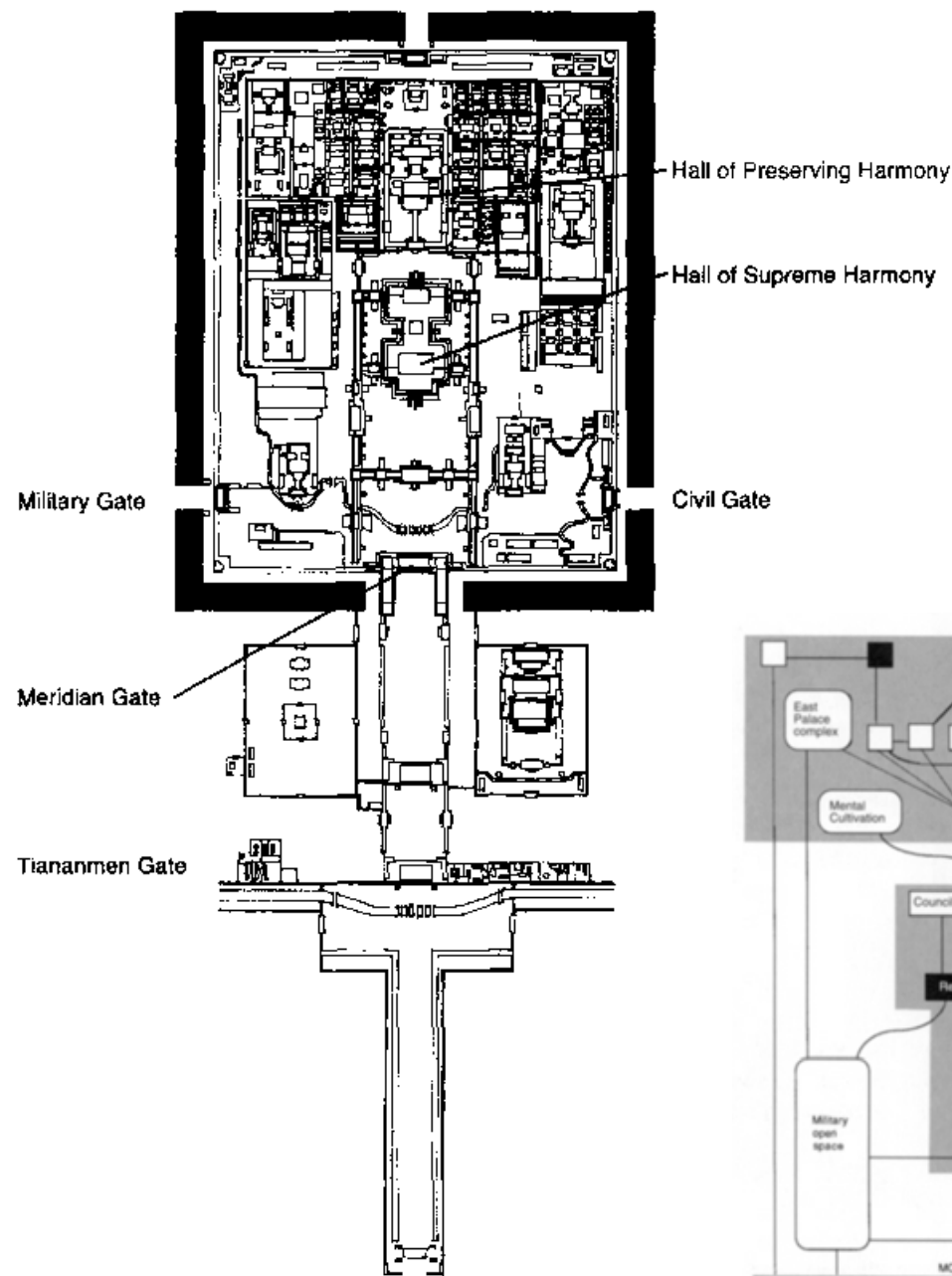
Top Left: Model of the un-constructed Fuhrermuseum

Middle: A nude male bronze sculpture at the Reich Chancellery depicting the Nazi party

Bottom Left: Nude statues of the ideal female and male bodies, installed in the streets of Berlin on the occasion of the 1936 Summer Olympics

Sculptures

Art and sculpture were also used as mediums of propaganda by the Nazi state. Nude male and female sculptures were used to depict the Nazi idea of the ideal Aryan physical form.



Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, Beijing

For much of Chinese imperial history the emperor ruled from within the nested walls of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Named 'forbidden' after its strict exclusion of the Chinese people, this was one of the most enclosed and segmented centres of power in urban history. Imperial Beijing was a city defined by its walls and gates, structured as four successively nested walled cities—the Outer, Inner, Imperial and Forbidden Cities respectively.

The revolution of 1948 brought the construction of Tiananmen Square outside its entrance. This followed the vision of Mao Zedong to make the square the largest and most spectacular in the world, and intended to hold over 500,000 people. Conceived as the antithesis of forbidden space, the square was a representation of the 'people' on its 40 hectare unwalled expanse.

Above: Panoramic view of the wide expanse of present day Tiananmen Square.

Top Left: Ceremonial axis and Forbidden City, Beijing (Qing Period)

Bottom Left: The Forbidden City: spatial analysis (Qing Period)



Architecture of North Korea

In the same way that Nazi architecture manifested the regimes hopes to inculcate reverence for the governing body through menacing structures that encoded an implicit message of racialized superiority, North Korean architecture seeks a similar means of intimidation and manipulation through structural design. One of North Korea's design principles is symmetrically aligned spaces with a central axis, directing your gaze toward an image or statue of the country's three leaders.

Kim Jong-il wrote in his 160-page architectural treatise, which serves as the manual for all future developments in North Korea: "Architectural space must be composed to ensure that the leader's image dominates all the elements of the space, and that all the architectural components throw the leader's image in bold relief... This will help people to look up at the leader's image at all times and inspire them with the pride and consciousness that they are happy in the leader's embrace."

Left: The Two Statues Of The Dear Leaders are seen in the Grand Monument of Mansu Hill, Pyongyang.

In this sense, North Korean architecture places totalitarian ideology at the basis of all of its designs, ensuring that the structures and spaces in which North Koreans inhabit are constantly reinforcing allegiance to the state. With the likeness of the country's rulers at the focal point of every space North Koreans inhabit, the design of their buildings and cities gives way to a feeling of surveillance, further subjugating their people.

North Korean architecture and design also heavily incorporate a specific colour palette of pastel hues into both their interiors and exteriors in an attempt to create a feeling of warmth and prosperity in complete opposition to the rampant poverty and oppression the North Korean people face. Consequently, it can be said that not only does North Korean architecture and design promote allegiance to an oppressive state, they also inherently attempt to create a facade which conceals the oppressive living and working conditions that the people face.

Right: Collage of several interior spaces in Pyongyang, North Korea



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