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## “Sotto il segno dell’Aquila”. Sacrari e cimiteri di guerra tedeschi (1911-1945). “Under the sign of the Eagle”. German war memorials and cemeteries (1911-1945)

Wilhelm Kreis (1873-1955) fu un celebre architetto e un noto professore. Pur mantenendosi ambigualmente ai margini dell’attività politica, diresse e condizionò scelte importanti e dominò la scena dell’architettura tedesca per quasi cinque decenni. Kreis prese parte come architetto e maestro ai più importanti eventi nell’architettura e nell’urbanistica che coinvolsero le maggiori città tedesche fino alla caduta del Terzo Reich. Con Bonatz, Behrens, Tessenow, Kreis può essere considerato una delle guide più influenti della cultura architettonica tedesca, profeta della spiritualità tedesca e guardiano dei valori della Germanicità inizialmente rappresentati dal Regime prussiano e poi dal Terzo Reich. Il suo contributo – miscelando forme e temi presi dalla tradizione storica – solo parzialmente lo qualifica come una figura ancora legata ai principali assi ideologici della seconda metà del secolo XIX.

*Wilhelm Kreis (1873-1955) was a prominent architect and prestigious professor. He directed and conditioned choices while being ambiguously on the margins of political activity, he dominated the architectural scene for almost five decades. Kreis took part in and to a certain extent directed, as architect and master, part of major events in architectural and urban planning that involved the biggest German cities up to the fall of the Third Reich. Together with Bonatz, Behrens, Tessenow, Kreis can be considered one of the most influential and unparalleled leaders in German architectural culture - prophet of spirituality and watchman of values from Deutschtum, initially embodied by the Prussian Reich, and subsequently by the Third Reich. His contribution – combining themes and shapes taken from historical tradition – only partially qualifies him as a figure still linked to the*

*ideological cornerstones of the second half of the 19th century.*

**Parole chiave:** sacrari militari tedeschi; cimiteri di guerra; Wilhelm Kreis; castelli funebri; mausolei militari; giorno della rimembranza

**Keywords:** German war memorials; war cemeteries; Wilhelm Kreis; totenburg; military mausoleums; day of remembrance

## PREMISE

In the complex picture of 20th century architecture, an important role was played by sacred and monumental architecture. Providing a bond and a continuity with the ancient tradition of tanatorial cult and celebrations, highlighting some original aspects, resuming investigations in this field, after such architecture has been collectively removed and forgotten, means finding a new equilibrium and awareness of man's finiteness, within a broader and more articulated cultural perspective. When examining shapes and roles of war cemeteries our thought goes to their instrumental use by governments and dictatorships.

In the 20th century, heroic exaltation is summarised in Horace's line: “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori” and goes hand in hand with the progressive detachment from common pietas. The semantic change of “perir pugnando” takes place at a time when architecture turns from a collective, dramatic event into individual sacrifice, from tragic ordinariness to an extreme national identity. This event sanctions the transition in the “management of death” from a religious to a civil level: the bodies and the memory of killed soldiers ‘belong’ to the Nation. No wonder that British poet Wilfred Owen, who died during World War I, polemically quoted this ode, to highlight deception and false-

hood in the sacrifice required by war. Its use and abuse, particularly in relation to regressive ideology, lasted well beyond the brink of World War II<sup>1</sup>: it is clear that the rhetoric of the language is projected into art and architecture as a cultural mediator for masses. This device, created in well defined socio-cultural élites, is widely reverberated through civil society thanks to the repeated use of certain lexical and iconic syntagms. A penetration and persuasion gradually transmitted by passwords, resulting in the creation of aesthetical, philosophical subcultures reinforcing group identities. In this way we can explain the success of the death|war combination in the youth world, more attracted and

fascinated by the logical traps of conservative radicalism and nationalism than adults. It is evident that 'terrible' and therefore sublime events – as explained by Carlo Mazzantini<sup>2</sup> – are only and always implemented in Defence of the Nation for the safety and prosperity of future generations: in brief, Honour, Beauty.

## 1. "EARTH, FIRE, AIR"

1.1 Heroic nihilism: onset and consequences  
This essay examines themes and issues that go way back in time in European experience and memory, but that still impregnate and condition individual perception in relation to collective cultural identity. They refer to the guidelines that supported the heroic cult in

the late, romantic period and its impact as heroischer Nihilismus on active generations between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century.

At the beginning of the 20th century new requests and claims calling for change were intertwined with movements pressing for a 'return to the soil'. The imperative "Zurück auf die Scholle" rather than "Kehrt zur Natur zurück!"<sup>3</sup> advocated by Lebensreformer<sup>4</sup> up to the dawn of World War I, gradually led to Spengler's theory<sup>5</sup>: the syntagm Blut und Boden [Blood and Soil] acquired such a pervasive and effective meaning that it resulted in the well-known Nazi phraseology<sup>6</sup>, and on both sides of the Alps marked a progressive

detachment from the salvific idea of science and human progress.

These associative words recall and postulate the "fight between Blood and Soil resulting in a sort of rooted animality and humanity"<sup>7</sup>. Such vision – that will be diffused and repeated – like a mantra – already in the early 1920s expressed sacralisation (and cult) of death in the military world as a perceptive, intensified, simultaneous experience totally subtracted from individuals.

Marinetti's cry in the Futurist Manifesto stigmatizes, in a single line, the social and genre emancipation process<sup>8</sup> through the exaltation of the "War, the world's only hygiene". These ideas were later echoed in Berlin's artistic-

“Under the sign of the Eagle”

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Fig. 1-Tower of Silence, Mumbai (engraving from: “True Stories of the Reign of Queen Victoria”, Cornelius Brown, 1886).

Fig. 2 - Zoroastrian Tower of Silence in the Iranian province of Yazd, [Wikipedia]. The “Towers of Silence” [Dakhmah], an institution typical of Zoroastrianism, originally consisting of 10m high wooden scaffoldings to support a platform subject to strong winds, where the dead were left to be eaten by vultures. The sacrality of Zoroastrianism prohibited any contamination of

fire and soil with the impurity of the burnt body, it was therefore impossible to use cremation. This custom was maintained among populations of the steppe, according to the ritual of the so-called ‘Funeral of the Sky’ (Himmelbestattung), also called ‘Funeral of the Sun’ (Sonnebestattung.)

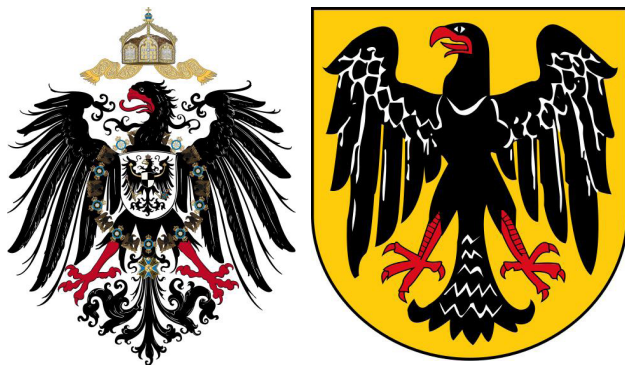
Fig. 3 - Chilpyk, Tower of Silence (Turm der Stille), 1 century A.D.

Fig. 4 - Giovanni Crupi (1849-1925), Heroon at Girgenti (Agrigento), Tomb of Theron (shot: 1900).

literary environments of Herwarth Walden (1879-1941) – organizer of Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon (1913) – who accepted and disseminated in Germany these founding, iconic principles<sup>9</sup>.

1.2 War and death, between aestheticism and vitalism

The complex phenomenon of the political-cultural picture cultivating and managing the national myth of the heroic death, also implies the special reform of its “management” . The collective event is turned into a mass action, aimed at removing any pain or suffering. Military death is abstract, projected into a ‘mythical’ dimension – subject to manipula-



From left to right:

Fig. 5, a, b, c - The German imperial eagle Reichsadler and development of the heraldic symbol: (a) William's Era (1890-1918), (b) Weimar Republic, (c) Third Reich. The predator, looking to its left and not to its right shoulder, (symbol of the Nation) was used to symbolise the Nazi Party.

Fig. 5, d, e, f, g - The Reichsadler from: Wilhelm Kreis, 1911; Ludwig Gies, 1937; Robert Scheibe, 1937; Arno Brecker, 1940.

tion and propaganda – valid for both authoritarian and democratic regimes.

This is testified by the events that in France, Italy and in the rest of Europe supported the creation of Military Memorials and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier<sup>10</sup> since 1920. In Germany the analogue Grabmal des unbekannt- en Soldaten has been located since 1930 in the space inside the Neue Wache (K.F. Schinkel | H. Tessenow), Berlin.

The decorative painting and plastic art follows a precise ideological programme: the atrocities of the battlefield, suffering inside the trenches, tortures in the Feldlazarett must not be evoked. Only young, indomitable men, whose serene faces revealed a «certain



From left to right:  
Fig. 6, a, b, c - (a) Hermannsdenkmal, Detmold. Work by architect Ernst von Bandel (1800-876), completed at the end of the Franco-Prussian war and inaugurated by Emperor William. Hermann was the German prince who in 9 A.D. defeated the

Roman legions led by Varus at Teutoburg forest. His mythical figure apparently inspired in the Nibelungelied the figure of hero Siegfried; (b) Bismarckdenkmal, Hamburg; (c) 'Eisernen Heinrich', Braunschweig, 1915.

final victory» could be portrayed.

### 1.3 Anthropological-cultural recovery and revival

In the course of the “Short Century”<sup>11</sup> the recovery of the neo-pantheistic Land/Nature combination, intended as a primary element of life, is confronted with the Judaic – Christian tradition. The Prussian Statute Preußischen Allgemeinen Landrechts issued in 1794 allowed the incineration of remains for hygienic reasons. This procedure later became widespread because it was economically profitable and the religious rite was rejected by Social Democrats militants and by Freidenkers (freethinkers).



From left to right:

Fig. 7, a, b, c – (a) Eiserne Kreuz, 1914; (b) Langemarck Kreuz, 1934; (c) Mutterkreuz-mit-Ordenskrenz.

The two opposite concepts belong to the diatribe Germany faced in the course of the 19th century between Roman Catholics, Protestants and Agnostics, on the cremation of the dead [Feuerbestattung]<sup>12</sup>. This practice was explicitly forbidden for Roman Catholics by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith<sup>13</sup>.

The burial rite in the cold, wet soil clashes also with the recovery at the end of the 19th century of Indo-Germanic cults, with all their semantic- cultural outcome<sup>14</sup>.

The new century begins in search of Beauty and of the Golden Age: death too requires in its ceremonial the desire to go beyond natural limits, the freedom from the pondus of the

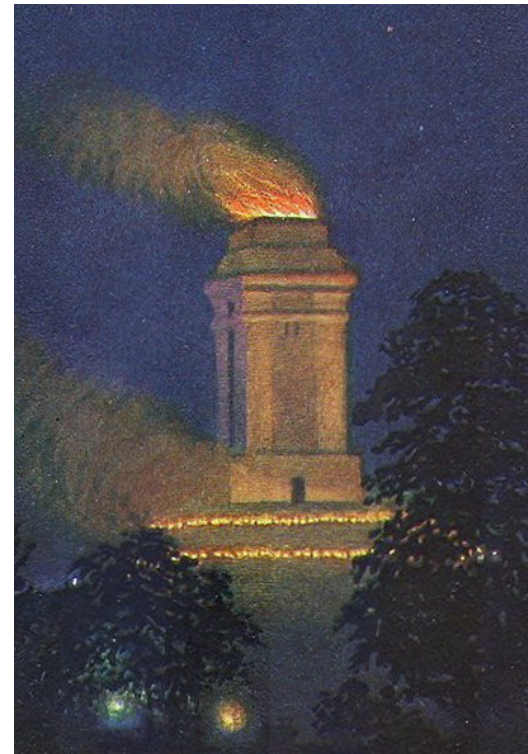
matter, the denial of its disintegration.

#### 1.4 Death and divinization of the Soil: a biographic-cultural mix

In the different political-cultural milieus, the predominating scientist vision of the late 19th century was matched with a growing aspiration to purity, hygienism and de-contamination: similarly biological terminology is transferred to philosophy and architecture as an organic process. Interest in Central Asian Aryan – Sassanid and Persian – traditions of the Turm der Stille or Türme des Schweigens [Towers of Silence]<sup>15</sup> [fig. 1,2] is aroused during William's time characterised by theosophical-esoteric or clearly neo-pagan phenomena.

The activity of the Rosicrucian lodges and the creation of occultist circles – such as the Kosmikerkreis (the Cosmic Circle), around German poet Stefan George (1868-1933) in Munich – or the theoretical development of Chthonismus<sup>16</sup>, contribute in creating a deep bond with the world of the dead and with remote history, through trance procedures and interpretation of dreams. These phenomena are experienced as a disquieting identity and duality with a growing interest and consensus, particularly at the artistic level<sup>17</sup>.

During the same years the dissemination and the success in critique of the Erdmutter-Urmutter cult-myth, with studies being resumed by the Swiss Johann J. Bachofen



From left to right:  
 Fig. 8, a, b,c – Wilhelm Kreis, Bismarckturm, Erfurt. Architectural project: Johann Emil Schaudt; plastic works: Hugo Lederer; (b) Bismarckturm, Erfurt; (b,c) Bismarckturm, Dresden.



(1815-1887)<sup>18</sup> reignited interest in the Classical World and in the Hesiodic myth of Gaia intended as Magna Mater, the goddess who gives life. After a period of oblivion, Ludwig Klages (1872-1956) reviewed the Bachofen study. The writings of the classical scholar influenced the theories of F. Engels, Th. Mann, E. Fromm, R. Maria Rilke, O. Gross, J. Evola and W. Benjamin<sup>19</sup>.

Discussions on the polarities and antinomy of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) were widespread among literary Salon<sup>20</sup>, up to the vulgate of journals and magazines.

Dandyism, scepticism and doctrinarian relativism destroyed traditional metaphysical and religious thought. The popular magazine "Jugend" often used heavy irony for George's circles, while being deeply fascinated and influenced by him.

The esthetizing climate of Münchner Sezession, provides fertile ground for rooting (and proliferation) of exacerbated existential concepts, almost on the verge of exaltation and neurosis.

### 1.5 Esthetizing militarism

Among the fervent admirers of George – poet par excellence of Jahrhundertwende (1896-1910) – there were several young aristocrats and intellectuals. This group included 19-year-old literate Hugo von Hoffmannsthal (1874-1929) – who soon dissociated himself from George and the pathological atmo-

sphere of his circle – and twins Alexander and Berthold Schenk von Stauffenberg, younger brothers of the more celebrated Claus (1907-1944), one of the authors of Adolf Hitler's assassination attempt<sup>21</sup>.

The presence of young Prussian officers in George's circle is highly significant and fraught with consequences: the elitist concepts of the poet and of his companions had a decisive impact on the actions of the 'Geheimes Deutschland' [Secret Germany]<sup>22</sup> and set the basis for the creation of the so-called conservative Revolution<sup>23</sup>. This revolution cherished the birth of the 'Third Reign' [Dritte Reich], of evident totalitarian, aristocratic origin, whose task is to implement – from an expansion point of view – the universalist programme of Friedrich II Hoehenstaufen.

## 2. 'HEROIC CULT AND PIETAS'. ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF MILITARY MAUSOLEUMS

### 2.1 Heroon and modernity: use of models and Nationalist identification

Changes in architectural models and symbols of pan-Germanic ἡρώων [Heroon], some already popular in the mid-19th century – from Walhalla<sup>24</sup> [L. V. Klenze, 1830-'42] to Befreiungshalle<sup>25</sup> [F. v.Gärtner | L. V. Klenze, 1842-'63] – characterised a 20th century generation of military memorials and monuments, dedicated to the heroic cult. In William's time, advantage had been taken of the widespread fervour and optimism, following

the recent national unity and the victory over France (1870), for a systemic national-popular unification through the recovery of national, common values.

For this reason the Sacred-Roman imperial revival acquired a precise ideological connotation. In particular, in the last decades of the 19th century, imposing, celebrative monuments had been dedicated to Germany's ancient and recent military glory.

Among the most significant was Hermannsdenkmal (1838-'75)<sup>26</sup>, at Detmoldt, dedicated to the mythical Hermann completed – after decades of work – thanks to the Kaiser. This highly rhetorical work combines theatrical plasticity and votiv-Tempel architecture; the central structure – with niches all around and covered by a dome – supports the statue of the hero, holding up a sword in sign of victory.

### 2.1 The Colossal statues

Projects and statues are referred to a long season of classical and oriental studies of German Historicism [Fig. 4], having as ideal models the symbols of Germanity, ranging from Ostrogoth King Theoderich (Theodoric), paladin Roland – the above-mentioned Friedrich II – duke Heinrich 'the Lion'. The heroic Pantheon also features other contemporary figures such as: the undisputed Founder of the Second Reich, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815-'98), the object of a lay, popular cult and rhetoric exaltation – on the verge of



From left to right:  
Fig. 9, a, b, c – (a) Ravenna, Mausoleum of Teoderich, 520 A.D.; (b), Wilhelm Kreis, Bismarckturm, Stettin [1906-09]; W. Kreis, Bismarckturm, Jena [1906];

divinization.

The most sensational statue is undoubtedly the Bismark-Denkmal<sup>27</sup> erected in Hamburg in 1901-'06. This colossal statue, at the centre of Alt Helbpark, fully meets the tradition of the Rolandstatue; inside the base there is a circular crypt similar to contemporary historical war memorials like Berlin's Siegestsäule (1865-73) - Johann Heinrich Strack, architect; Friedrich Drake, sculptor - in Berolina Platz<sup>28</sup>.

The heroic cult referred to the late medieval tradition of the so-called 'Roland-figures'<sup>29</sup>: similarly the giant statues dedicated to the Chancellor portray him as a paladin of the nation with the severe, watchful eye of the venerable old man. [Fig. 6a-c].

## 2.2 War propaganda statues

The same line is followed by the statues dedicated to the Duke of Braunschweig. - 'Eiserner Heinrich' - by Arnold Kramer (1915), where the Austrian tradition of the 'Wehrmann in Eisen' (Iron Warrior) is resumed, in other words statues devoted to national war propaganda<sup>30</sup>. This figure highlights the proud, virile attitude of the German Warrior, looking at a high, distant horizon. The didactic meaning is clear and refers to the uncompleted project to expand the German Reich to Slavic lands. [Fig. 10b].

This iconology was resumed and extended - in between the two wars - to World War I Me-

morials, designed by well known and highly appreciated sculptors of the Reich. They had to deliver a message of national propaganda, full of rhetorical and psychological suggestions: George Kolbe, Arno Brecker, Robert Scheibe, spread the esthetizing ideal of the Bereitschaft - readiness (to make sacrifices) - a virtue rewarded with the quies perpetuated in the Isle of the Blessed (Elysium)<sup>31</sup>. [Fig. 11a-c].

## 2.3 Adler, Kranz und Kreuz: Nationalist rhetoric and use

Among the more frequent symbols of the military cemetery cult is the persistent use of the laurel wreath and the eagle - Reichsadler - immediately calling to mind the insignia of imperial Roman power<sup>32</sup>. This emblem, derived from Austrian-Hungarian heraldry was repeatedly modified and redesigned between the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, up to the current era. (The current Reichsadler (1956) used in the Federal Republic of Germany was designed, upon Hitler's request, by Ludwig Gies)<sup>33</sup>.

Its use, uninterrupted since the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire - when transferred from William to Hitler's Reich acquired a state and prophetic value with the introduction of the fylfot cross (Hakernkreutz) inside the laurel wreath held by the eagle's claws [Fig. 5 a-f].

In military cemeteries icons also included the

Teutonic Cross (Deutscher Orden) - black on a white background - characterising the German Army before World War I. The top war decoration - Eisenkreutz - intrinsically testifies the tradition of the Ostkolonization, as a desire for expansion eastward. The same cross was taken as a model by Militär Grabsteine, military cemetery gravestone. The shape, made from stone slabs was simple to make and used inexpensive material, an important detail in case of mass burial. [Fig. 7a-c].

## 2.4 Volkstrauertag vs. Heldengedenktage - the controversial day of remembrance

The Volkstrauertag (People's Mourning Day) was proposed in 1919 by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge [German War Graves Commission] as a commemoration for German soldiers killed in the First World War. [14,a-c; 17 a,b]. In 1926 it was agreed that Reminiscere (Day of Remembrance) was to be observed every year, even if the weakness of the Weimar Government together with the religious and political opposition resulted in uncertain celebrations. [Fig. 10a]. With the authoritarian regime of 1933, Josef Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, fixed 27th February as the Day Commemorating Heroes (Heldengedanktag), with a drastic change in meaning and ceremonial: The flags, no longer at half-mast, were unfurled like during festivities. Celebrations



From left to right:  
Fig. 10, a, b – (a) "Germany honours its 2 million dead soldiers of the World War with great celebrations in the Parliament Plenary Hall in the presence of the President of the Republic Von Hindenburg and of Chancellor Brüning", February 1932; (b) Propaganda poster of the Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party) "Save the East" for 1920 elections. It depicts a Teutonic Knight threatened by a Pole and a socialist.

In the next page, from left to right:  
Fig. 11, a, b, c - "War dead" -(a) George Kolbe, (1934); (b) Robert Scheibe, (c) Arno Brecker.

were directly taken over by the Nazi Party and the Army.

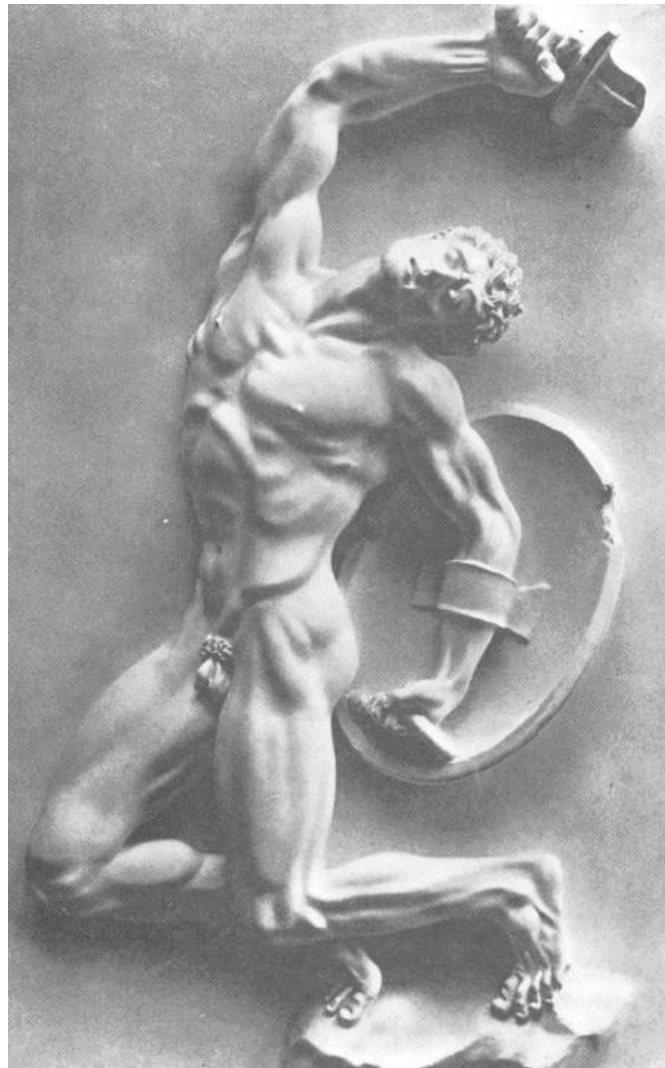
### 2.5 Cenotaphs and Mausoleums

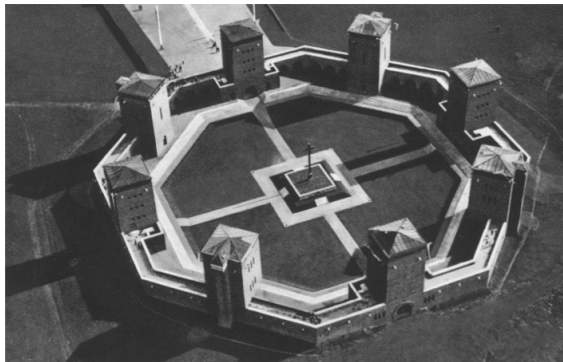
In the years before and after World War I architecture progressively prevails over sculpture as a mediator of nationalist propaganda. The adopted models derive from historical constructions, dating back in time, but sharing the same, impressive, evocative power: the Mausoleum of Theodoric, Ravenna, the Castle of the Mount in Apulia [fig. 12a], the funereal crypt in Braunschweig cathedral. Years of studies and redesigning by German Academies and Polytechnic Schools, provided the basis for architectural solutions

that soon became widespread: an example is given by the Totenbürgen (funerary castles), the most significant military monumental complexes built before and in between the two world wars, to celebrate German nationalism. Among the most famous monuments is the Tannenberg Denkmal, (1924-27)<sup>34</sup>, a monument having an octagonal plan, clearly referring to Frederick, and the Annaberg cenotaph<sup>35</sup> (1931-'33), [fig. 7, a-c], recalling the Iranian Towers of Silence. Both models later converged, in the years of post World War II, upon the concept of the El Alamein war memorial (1959)<sup>36</sup>.

### 3. THE PROTAGONISTS

In this intricate exchange of roles between Kunst und Leben (art and life), in the opposition between Geschichte und Zukunft (history and future), cultural models and topòis clearly emerged and profoundly influenced generations of artists and architects in the years prior to the Great War. Choices and emulation of leading intellectuals see them directly involved, either as actors or victims, also in the subsequent dramatic decades. The ambiguous role of architects, in their proximity to power, is measured in the different level of ideological implication with the National Socialist party, prior and during World War II. Their front-line role is evident



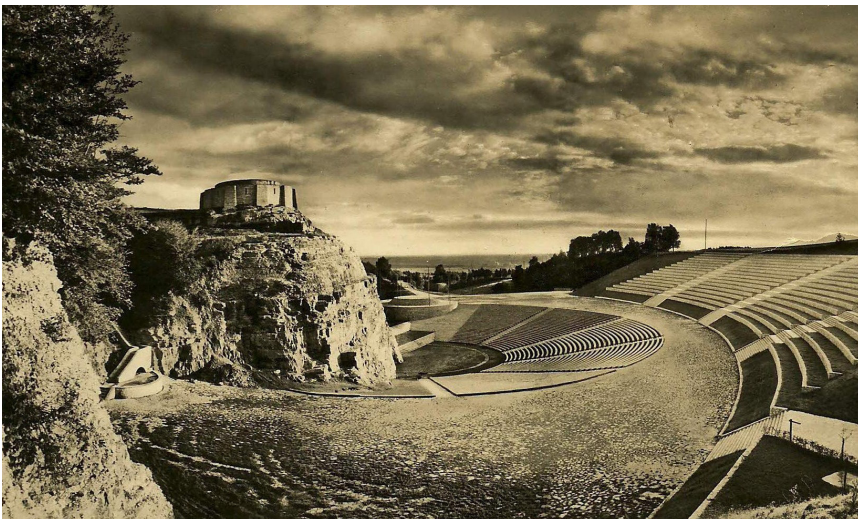


Clockwise:

Fig. 12 a - Castel del Monte- Andria, Apulien (Italy), XIII Century A.D.; (b-e),Tannenberg-Denkmal, Hohenstein-Olsztynek, (1925–1927). The complex, by brothers Walter (1888–1971) and Johannes Krüger (1890–1975), was turned, in 1935, into the Mausoleum of general Paul von Hindenburg.

as they had been delegated with the narration and heroic interpretation of “pro Patria mori”: since the early years of the Regime celebrations and monumentality tend to fade away and deprive war cemeteries of their meaningful testimonies and warning. The Kriegerdenkmal im Hofgarten (München), a war memorial dedicated to soldiers from Munich, is a rare example featuring the soldier on his death-bed, therefore following the Christian tradition based on Medieval funerary plastic art. A collective work by architect Thomas Wechs (1893-1970) together with sculptors Karl Knappe, Eberhard Finsterwalder, Bernhard Bleeker<sup>37</sup>.

For this reason, the progressive removal of



any reference to body decay, resulted in enhancing the hero's immortal physicality and his superhuman nature. All rhetorical expedients are therefore used to eliminate any sadness and pietas when facing death: the Totenkopf, 'indifference' towards death in contrast with the Christian recall of the Memento mori<sup>38</sup>, was commonly reported in the emblems of European Storm Troops<sup>39</sup>.

### 3.1 Wilhelm Kreis, ideas and role

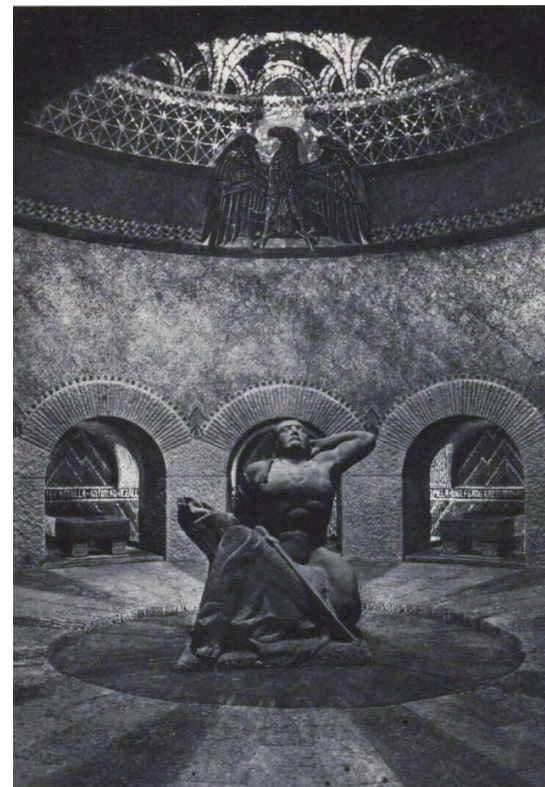
It is not easy to determine, after almost five decades from his death, the role played by Wilhelm Kreis (1873-1955) in German architecture, given the continuous oblivion that characterised his figure<sup>40</sup>. A conservative

though not reactionary, cautious in testing different languages without being eclectic, Kreis was a prominent architect and prestigious professor. An intellectual very close to power who directed and conditioned choices while being ambiguously on the margins of political activity, he dominated the architectural scene for almost five decades. Professor of History of Architecture and of Architectural Design in Dresden and Berlin, the leading German Academies of Architecture, Kreis took part in and to a certain extent directed, as architect and master, part of major events in Architectural and Urban Planning that involved the biggest German cities up to the fall of the Third Reich.

### "Under the sign of the Eagle"

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Fig. 13 a, b – Robert Tischler, Annaberg-Denkmal, (1931-33). The Totenburg of Sankt Annaberg, in Upper Silesia, (today Poland) was built to honour the martyrs of the 1921 German revolution against the Poles (Sturm auf den Annaberg).



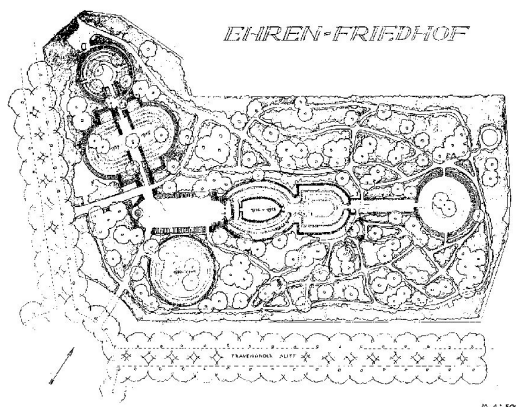
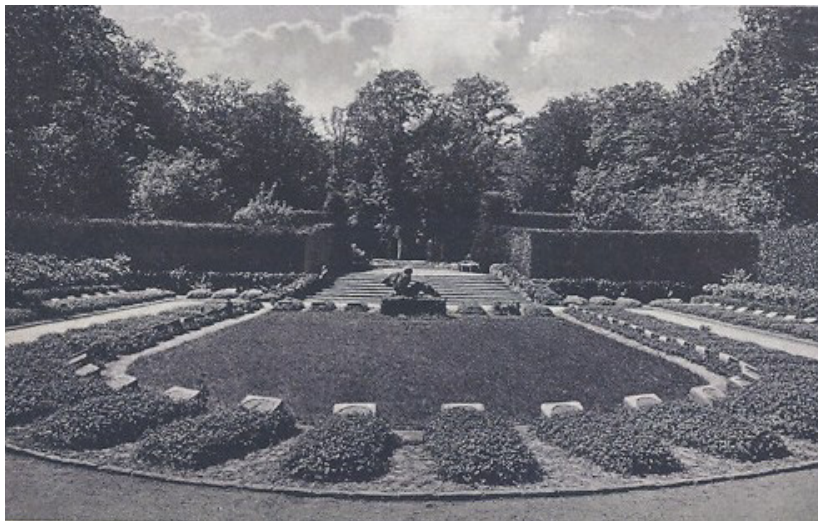


Fig. 14, a, b, c – Heldengrab [Heroes Memorial], Berlin-Dahlem 1915 (Willy Lange, Garteninspektor Landschafts (1864-1941); (b, c) Ehrenfriedhof Lubeck, Ehrenfriedhof (1914-15) designed by Gartenarchitekten Harry Maasz (1880-1946), (c) photo of the central exedra.

Together with celebrated masters Bonatz, Behrens, Tessenow, Kreis can be considered one of the most influential and unparalleled leaders in German architectural culture - prophet of spirituality and watchman of values from Deuschtum, initially embodied by the Prussian Reich, and subsequently by the Third Reich<sup>41</sup>.

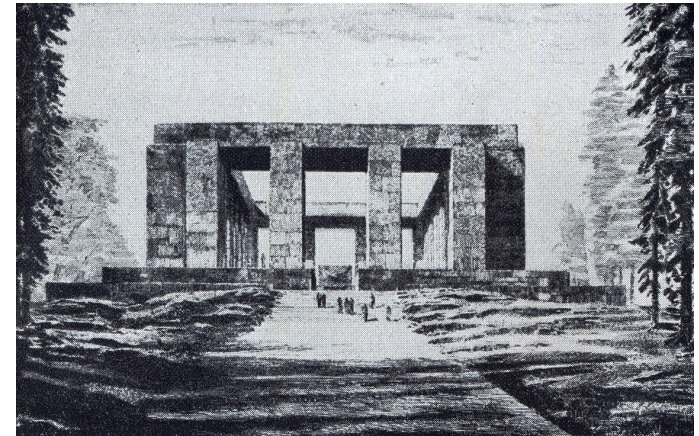
### 3.2 Bismarck's epopee

After exalting the myth of Eiserner Kanzler, with the round-plan Bismarktürmen and Bismarksäulen series, directly planned or inspired by Kreis' models, the national movement was widespread in the Reich with hundreds of constructions. [Fig.8, a-c; 9, a-c].

The works in Eisenach, Stettino, Zobten, Jena, Erfurt, Viersen, Dresden, etc., consolidated a new 'type' of architecture, with a great impact on the facies of celebrative monuments, but referred to the classic tradition of the Greek quadrangular Heroon, [Fig. 4], combined with the Theodoric prototype. The Bismarck towers recall in a simplified form the votive temple as in the colossal Ara [altar]<sup>42</sup>. Kreis trained and fascinated generations of architects, like the Krügers or Tischler, active in Germany since the early 1920s, up to the end of the 20th century. [Fig. 13 a-c]. His contribution - combining themes and shapes taken from historical tradition - only partially qualifies him as a figure still linked



Fig. 15, a, b – Wilhelm Kreis, Ehrenmal, Hattingen; Ehrenmal, Berka (Project).



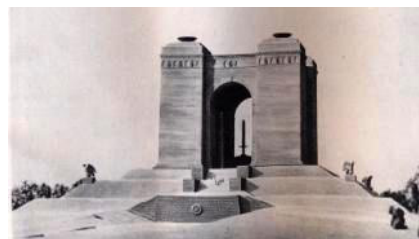
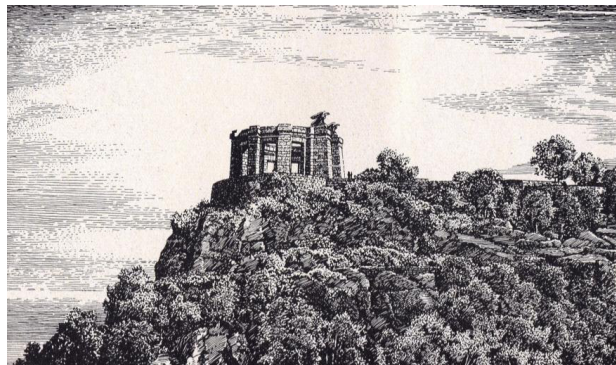
to the ideological cornerstones of the second half of the 19th century.

Kreis was convinced that architecture could interpret and testify the final destiny of the German nation. This accounts for the fact that he is lined up with the more conservative German culture, without, however, adopting a priori a world of classical signs and languages: this is the final horizon of his personal and collective research. The mythogenesis and heroic celebration of the ancient world are entrusted with Germany - as timeless heritage. [Fig. 14,a-c]. His work, up to his death, was devoted to consolidating the heroic, as well as the political and military myth through celebrations, with the construction or simple

project evocation - we refer to the intense designing activity of cenotaphs that should have been built in different sites in Europe, to celebrate the big battles of the Wehrmacht; among those that were only sketched or ideal projects, we find the Reichsehrenmal, Berka (Ukraine), Ehrenmal, Oslo, "der Panzer", in Africa and in Greece, in Warsaw, Kutno, Narvik, Witusgebirge, Drothheim, Grebberg (NL), Macedonia, Saar, Italy, Dnjepr (Rus) - of some of the most impressive, complex, funerary monuments of 20th century European history. [Fig. 1]

“Under the sign of the Eagle”

Andreina Maahsen-Milan



Top, from left to right:  
Fig. 16 a, b, c, d – (a) Wilhelm Kreis, Ehrenmal, Warsaw; (b-c) Ehrenmal, Kutno (Ukraina); (d) Ehrenmal, Macedonia.

Bottom, from left to right:  
Fig. 17, a, b - (a) Ehrenfriedhof Kolmeshöhe Bitburg, (b) Ehrenfriedhof Kriegsgräberstätte Eversberg, Meschede, (D).



## NOTES

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