Autobahn
The Autobahn in Nazi Germany

• Landscape and Power theme:
• The autobahn built by the Nazis as a symbol of their power
Nazism

• A variant of Modernity
• Dictatorship, war, mass murder
• Accompanied by an attempt to build a modern social state
  – with modern highways
Nazism

- Neo-Paganist tendencies
  - The sacred forest of German antiquity
- Ecologically conscious
  - Protecting millions of trees as it murders millions of people
Industrial Modernity

• German experience of industry intruding into the countryside
  – despoiling nature, ruining rural scenery
The Reichsautobahn

• An attempt to harmonise Nazi technology with nature and the German landscape
• Represented Nazism as technological triumph
• Autobahn as a national symbol
  – “The landscape’s crown” - Todt
Reichsautobahnen

- Connected to a Nazi concept of promoting individual car ownership
  - drive your Volkswagen on the new autobahnen
  - buy your Volkswagen on the installment plan
• First VW Beetle 1938
VW Werke
AUTOKARTEN
1:300,000
Blatt 123
• First autobahn gas station 1936
The Autobahn

- Aesthetics required it to curve elegantly
- Also cheaper and more efficient to build
- Indigenous German plants to be added to landscaping
  - foreign shrubs not allowed
- Careful landscaping and planting to embed the road into the natural landscape
Saxony 1930s
• Propaganda for 1936 Olympics
Autobahnen

- Would be built in conquered territories
- But no need to curve, respect nature
  - because it wasn’t Germany
Autobahnen

• A national make-work project in the 1930s
• Parts of it built with slave labour
• Breaking ground
1934
Autobahn

• Began before the Nazis – 1929
• Cologne 1920s
• Kaiserlauten
1945
Autobahnen

• Attempts to create, project Nazi power through the creation of landscape
  – Landscape and Power
• Inspired the US interstate system