FASCIST KITSCH: THE “ART” OF THOMAS KINKADE

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St. Michael’s College
34th Annual Northeast Popular Culture Association Conference
St. John Fisher College
Rochester, New York
October 27, 2012
Thomas Kinkade (January 19, 1958 – April 6, 2012)
The Pseudo-Kinkade and the Real Kinkade

Kinkade’s DUI mug shot, June 2010
Some of Kinkade’s Shenanigans
Kinkade's “art”
“Christmas Cottage”
“Cobblestone Bridge”
“A Peaceful Retreat”
“A Perfect Summer Day”
“Almost Heaven”
“Foxglove Cottage”
“A Quiet Evening”
Other examples of fascist kitsch
As you can see from these examples, Adolf Hitler was nowhere near as technically proficient as Thomas Kinkade.

But you can also see some marked similarities. Both artists specialized in slightly surreal, very still, mostly deserted landscapes that feature period buildings in natural surroundings, i.e., worlds that keep out the sturm und drang of modern life.

The essential difference: Kinkade is always more saccharine, cloying, and pretentious.
On Nov. 8, 1969, a TV series called *Rod Serling’s Night Gallery* aired an episode titled “Escape Route.” The show starred Richard Kiel as Joseph Strobe, a Nazi war criminal hiding in some South American city, where he becomes strangely fixated with an idyllic painting of a man fishing in a mountain lake. The painting hangs in a museum, and he spends day after day in there just staring at it and eventually feels himself drawn into the painting.
After he’s recognized as a Nazi by a former camp inmate (played by Sam Jaffe) Kiel runs to the museum, intent on going into the life in the painting for good. Unfortunately, he’s absorbed into the wrong painting—of a man crucified—and will spend eternity in silent, screaming agony.
Reading about Kinkade’s duplicitous life and studying his crummy paintings reminded me of this old *Night Gallery* episode.

In a way, you could say that Thomas Kinkade was a watered-down version of Joseph Strobe, a guilty-minded petty fascist who wanted, above all, to escape his own blighted life and disappear into an idyllic landscape—a landscape of his own devise in Kinkade’s case.

In the process Thomas Kinkade betrayed his talent, bamboozled his patrons, and forfeited his soul. No wonder he died of a drug-alcohol debauch at the age of 54.