

CONTEXTUALIZING AND LOCATING FRIEDRICH'S SEMINAL JOURNEY

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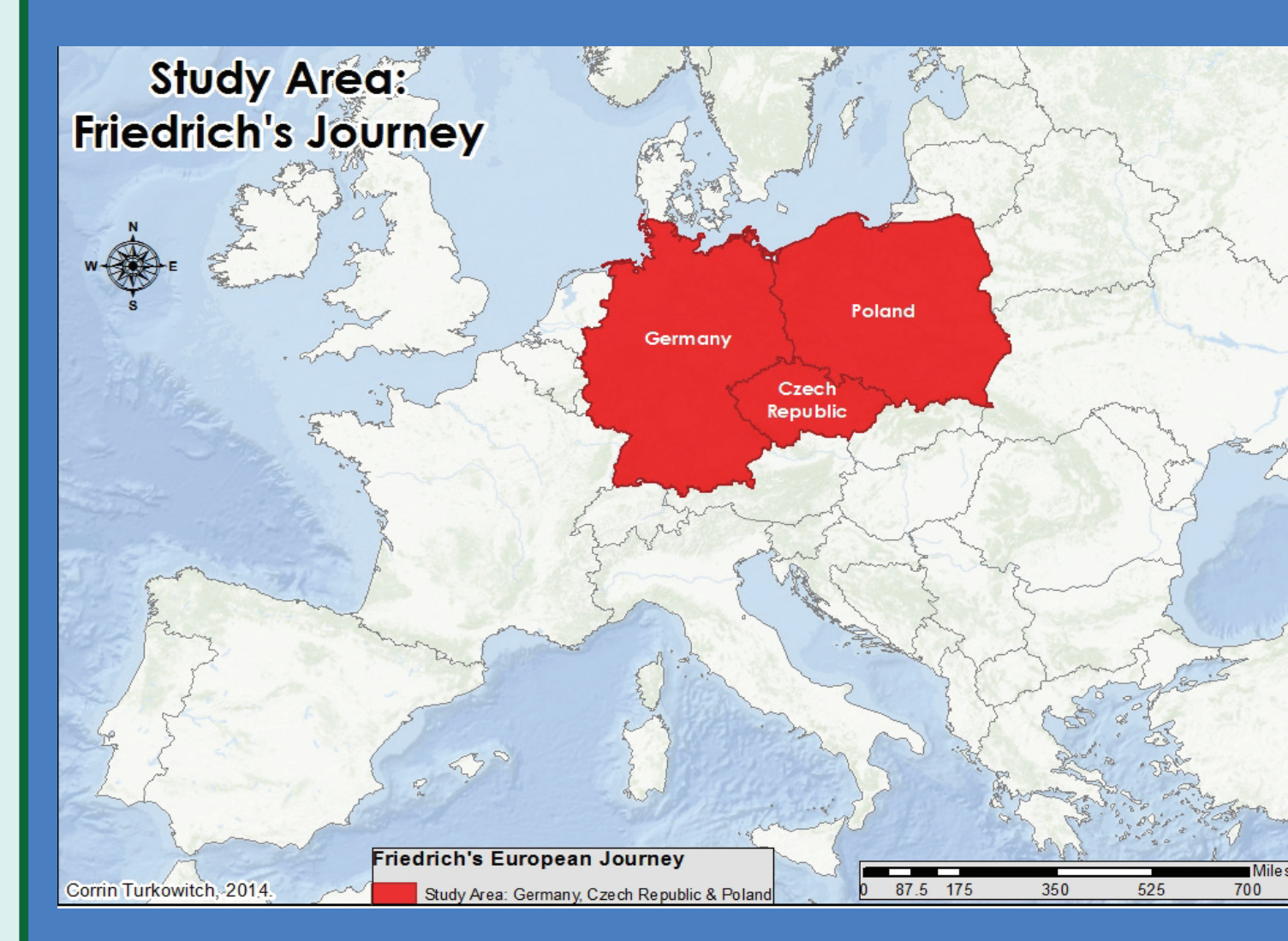
Abstract

Caspar David Friedrich, a German Romantic painter, departed on a journey in 1810 to sketch the landscape of the Riesengebirge Mountains. Located on the border of present-day Germany, Czech Republic and Poland, this journey was extremely influential on Friedrich's artistic output, as it provided him with readily accessible source material in the form of sketched images. Through this preliminary sketches, he was able to construct larger and more elaborate composite paintings. The goal of this project was to not only find the geographic locations of sketches, but to contextualize his sketches within the modern landscape.

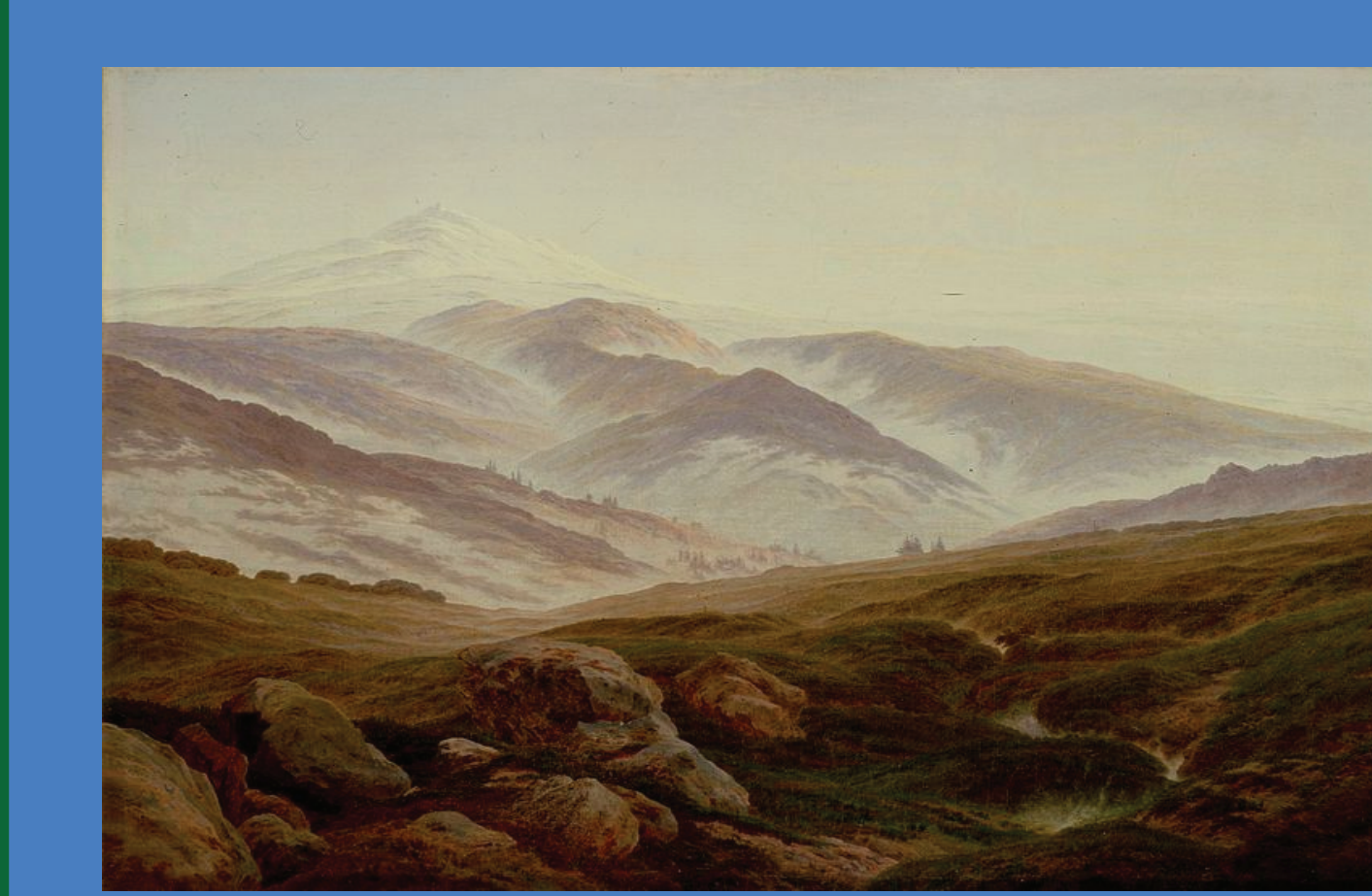
Methods

Emphasis was placed on bridging the disciplines of art history and geography, and due to this interdisciplinary nature of the project, a mixed methods approach was undertaken. The document that structured our work was a translated version of Friedrich's walking tour, originally written by German art historian Günther Grundman. Building upon the itinerary, geospatial analysis was used to find the major summits in the Riesengebirge region, offering locations for his collection of sketches. Further analysis focused upon the human-environmental factors shaping the region now, most notably industry, mining, tourism, and overall human perception.

Study Area



Riesengebirge 'The Giant Mountains'

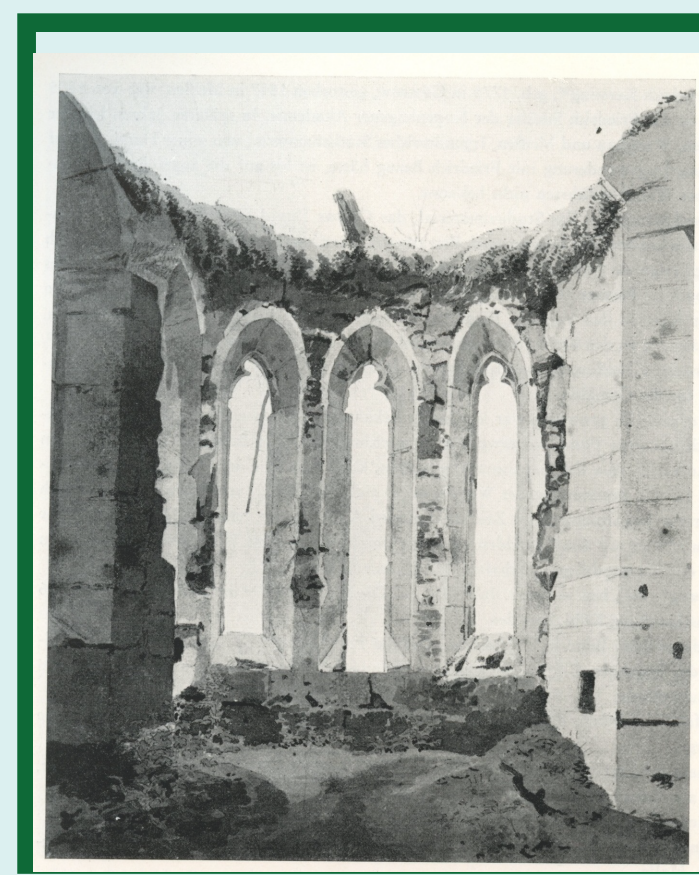


Erinnerungen an das Riesengebirge (Memories of the Giant Mountains), 1835. Caspar David Friedrich. Just one of the many composite landscape paintings based upon sketches that Friedrich finished after his journey through the mountainous region of Riesengebirge.

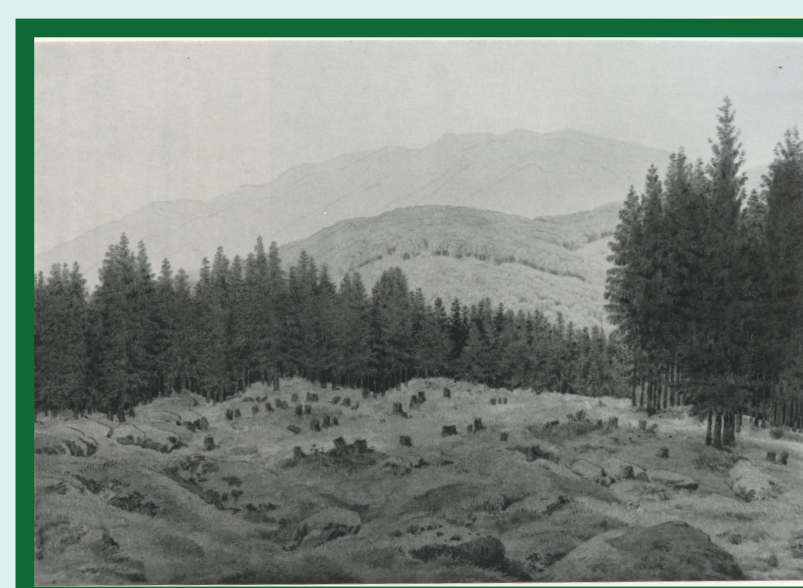
Friedrich's sketching journey in the July of 1810 provides a useful tool for interdisciplinary understanding of the important interactions between humans and the landscape. Friedrich departed on his tour with a fellow artist George Kersting for the Riesengebirge Mountains, situated in the region between Bohemia and Silesia. This tour not only strongly influenced Friedrich as a painter, but it also provides us with a lens for how humans engage with the landscape around them. Friedrich himself said *"to be what I am, I must devote myself to the world around me, become one with the clouds and cliffs. Solitude is essential to my conversation with nature."*

Who was Caspar David Friedrich?

Caspar David Friedrich [1774-1840] was the finest German painter of the Romantic period and is among one of the most famous visual artists of the 19th century. Over the course of his career his most famous paintings are those landscape works utilizing expansive views of the Riesengebirge Mountains. On the walking tour he produced sketches of pastures, mountains and various other scenery. These sketches became the basis for a preponderance of his painterly output through his career and without this walking tour with its accumulated information, one can hardly speculate on what type of painter Friedrich might have become.



Verfallene Kirche [Delapidated Church in Oybin] C.D. Friedrich, 6 July 1810

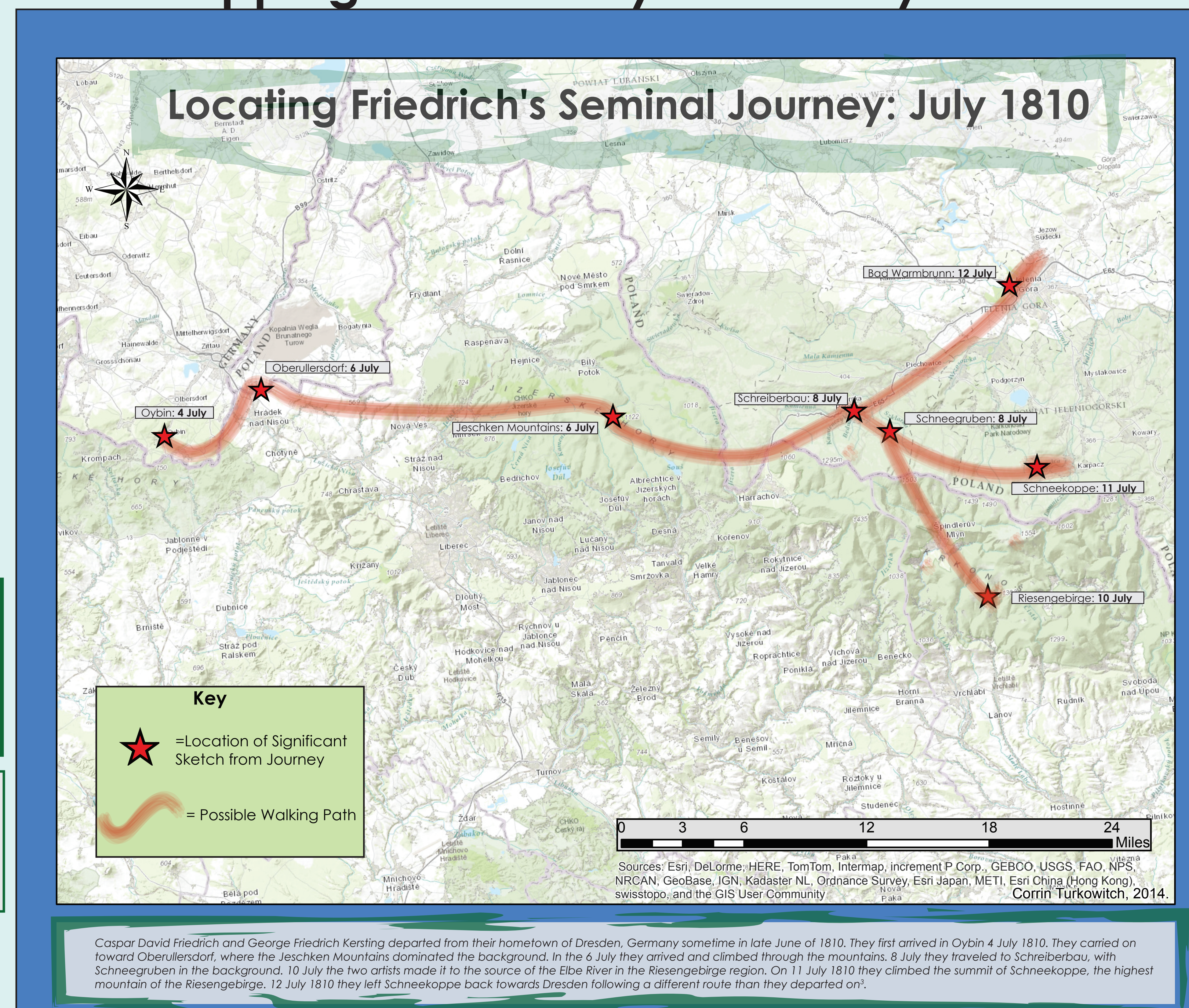


Blick von Schreiberhau zu den Schnee gruben [View from Schreiberhau to Schnee gruben] C.D. Friedrich, 8 July 1810



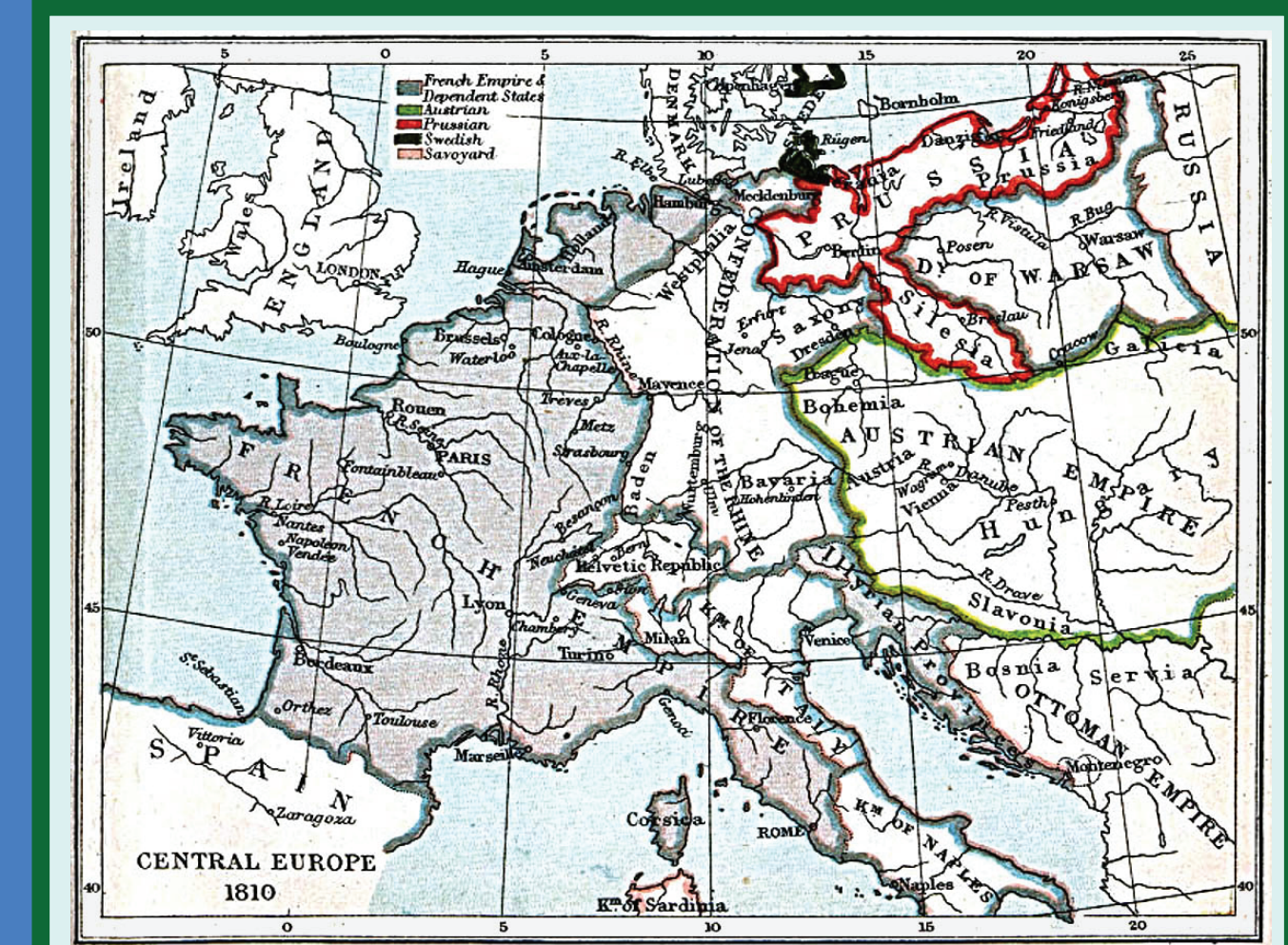
Caspar David Friedrich on His Walking Tour Through the Riesengebirge, 1810. Georg Friedrich Kersting.

Mapping the Journey: Sketch by Sketch



Caspar David Friedrich and George Friedrich Kersting departed from their hometown of Dresden, Germany sometime in late June of 1810. They first arrived in Oybin 4 July 1810. They carried on toward Oberullersdorf, where the Jeschken Mountains dominated the background. In the 6 July they arrived and climbed through the mountains. 8 July they traveled to Schreiberhau, with Schnee gruben in the background. 10 July the two artists made it to the source of the Elbe River in the Riesengebirge region. On 11 July 1810 they climbed the summit of Schneekoppe, the highest mountain of the Riesengebirge. 12 July 1810 they left Schneekoppe back towards Dresden following a different route than they departed on!

Politics & Place Names

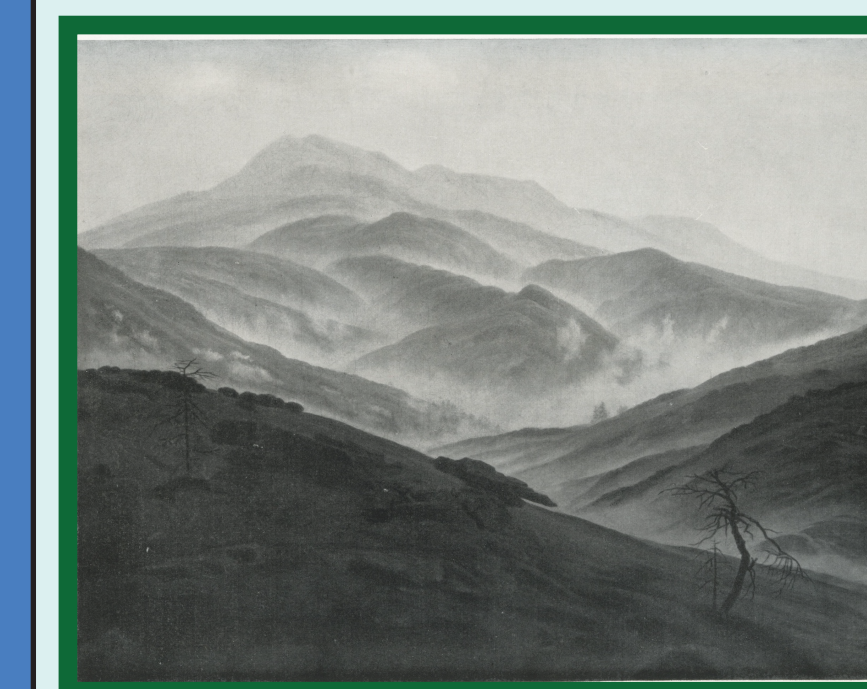


Central Europe in 1810. Map Source: Atlas to Freemans Historical Geography, 1903.

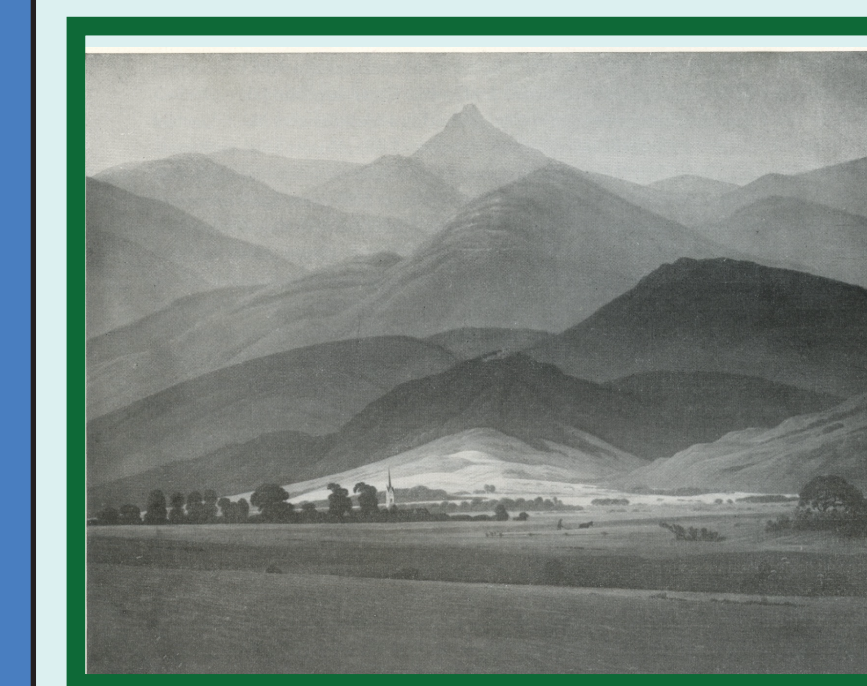
Place is intimately tied to how humans' Perceive and interact with a landscape. One of the ways this is expressed is through place naming - or naming of regions, be it physical regions such as mountains or rivers or political boundaries such as towns and countries. This region in particular has been incorporated into different political entities, resulting in a variety of place names. Friedrich took his journey when the region was under Prussian control and German was the language, thus the place names corresponded. The region known as Silesia currently makes up three nations: Germany, Czech Republic and Poland.

German Czech ; Polish

- *Oberullersdorf - **Kopaczów**
- *Jeschken - **Jizera ; Iser**
- *Schreiberhau - **Szklarska Poręba**
- *Schnee gruben - **Śnieżne Kołty**
- *Schneekoppe - **Śnieżka ; Śnieżka**
- *Riesengebirge - **Krkonoše**



Morgennebel im Riesengebirge [Morning fog in the Giant Mountains] C.D. Friedrich, 10 July 1810



Riesengebirglandschaft [Giant Mountain Landscape] C.D. Friedrich, 11 July 1810

What Would Friedrich See Now?

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Photo: Michal Sváček, MAFRA

Photo: Petr Toman

Tourism is not new to the the region Friedrich visited. In fact, it has been a spot for leisure and recreation for nearly three-hundred years. Activities included traveling to Schneekoppe and frequenting the spas of Warmbrunn². The above two pictures are of Schneekoppe [Sněžka] in the modern time. In 1974 a weather station and chapel were built. Other notable sites are a post office on the summit and a chair lift up.

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Photo: Petr Juračka

Photo: Google Earth

While tourism was already happening in the region, mining was only carried out to a small extent⁴. Above an open pit coal mine, KWB Turów, is pictured. This very mine opened in 1904, and is still in function today. This same area of Silesia was known in the 20th century as the "Black Triangle" for its heavy pollution from extensive mining and industry.

References

Grundmann, Günther. *Das Riesengebirge in der Malerei der Romantik*. Korn, 1931.

Rosenblum, Robert and Boris I. Asvarishch. *The Romantic Vision of Caspar David Friedrich: Paintings and Drawings from the USSR*, ed. Sabine Rewald. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990.

Acknowledgements

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