

Manfred Griehl. *Luftwaffe X-Planes, German Experimental Aircraft of World War II.* London: Greenhill Books/Lionel Leventhal, 2004. 80 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-85367-577-5.



Reviewed by Mike Pavelec

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Manfred Griehl has been busy writing and adding to the historiography of the Luftwaffe for some time now. With over 35 titles to his credit--in both German and English--he is one of the most prolific Luftwaffe writers in the field. Unfortunately, the majority of these works are short picture books without any bibliographic references or source citations.

Griehl's latest offering, *Luftwaffe X-Planes*, continues this unfortunate trend. Although the title promises exciting new research and analysis, Griehl is content to offer another picture book. The nine-page text analysis of the World War II German aircraft testing centers is a short laundry list of places and dates. Griehl mentions briefly the most famous aircraft tested at each site, but fails to put the German experimental aircraft testing program into the greater context of the Luftwaffe or the war. The book would have been much more informative if the author would have expanded on the role of the *Erprobungsstelle* (*E-Stelle*, or Evaluation Sites) within the greater context of the Luftwaffe's air war as a whole. Further, there are neither footnotes nor citations to guide

the serious researcher in the quest to expand on the limited information that Griehl does provide.

On the plus side, fifty-five pages are devoted to rare photos (with captions, but without source citations) of Luftwaffe experimental and prototype aircraft that were tested at the various evaluation sites. There are some interesting and new photos in this section, but without citations, they are simply eye candy.

The appendices are also disappointing. First and foremost, the Appendix 1 title in the index does not match the appendix in the back of the book. Appendix 1 is an interesting list of all the Luftwaffe planes and where they were tested as prototypes--their first flights at the various testing centers. But, the appendix is very confusing for the reader because there is no key. It is not immediately obvious exactly what information is being presented; the Appendix 1 title was left in German! Appendix 2 is a list of the evaluation units--not to be confused with the evaluation sites--the Luftwaffe formed to test specific aircraft and their weapons systems. Unfortunately, the appendices feel as if they were cut-and-pasted from another

source and appear out of place; Appendix 1 is especially difficult to decipher.

Without an index and with no bibliographic information, this book feels incomplete. There is barely enough information for the book to be considered whole, and it is not scholarly by a wide margin. I cannot recommend this book for anyone who is looking for more than an interesting picture book on some of the Luftwaffe's experimental aircraft.

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