

Das viel zu spät erwachte Bewußtsein, daß Werke obersten Ranges nur in Ausnahmefällen bewegt werden dürfen, sieht das Bonner Ausstellungsgut ohne Not materiell gefährdet. Mehr noch: Das einzelne Kunstwerk wird durch seinen Transport entwertet. Die gewaltigen Beträge, die als Kaufpreise gezahlt oder als Versicherungssummen genannt werden, ändern daran nichts. Die Aura, die der Aussteller gewinnt, indem er aus mehr oder weniger banalen, meist egoistischen Gründen durchsetzt, daß ein Meisterwerk auf Reisen geht, usurpiert er auf Kosten des Kunstwerks, dessen Unantastbarkeit er zu einer Trophäe für sich selbst umfunktioniert. Die Mäzene in Bonn konnten also ihre Erwerbungen nicht wirksamer entwerten als dadurch, daß sie sie in einer Ausstellung vor dem Publikum Revue passieren lassen.

Aus Schaden wird man klug. Vielleicht so klug, daß Museumsdirektoren als Abwehr unzumutbarer Leihforderungen eine Konvention zum Schutz von höchstrangigem Museumsgut gegen Ausleihe erarbeiten? Es geht ja nicht nur um unsere Gegenwart: „Auch bei der Bewältigung von Zukunftsaufgaben spielt die Kultur eine wichtige Rolle“ (Helmut Kohl, Katalog S. V).

## Tagungen

### AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE AND THE GERMAN CONNECTION

International Conference held April 7—8 1989 at Columbia University, New York City.

New studies undertaken in the past decade on the influence of German architects and architecture in the United States from the mid-19th to the mid-20th Centuries were presented and discussed at a conference, the first devoted to the subject, which was held last April at Columbia University in New York City. Organized by Richard Pommer (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University) and Barry Bergdoll (Columbia University), the symposium was sponsored by the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture with the aid of grants from the DAAD and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the support of the Deutsches Haus of Columbia University. Nine speakers and fifteen respondents participated in the two-day symposium, which was chronologically ordered in four sessions generated by the new research: “The Impact of the Rundbogenstil in the mid-19th Century,” “Chicago and the Birth of an American Architecture at the Turn of the Century,” “Modernism in America before the Exhibition of ‘Modern Architecture’ at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932,” and “The Legacy of the German Emigrés after 1933.”

While the more obvious connections of American architecture with England and France have long been acknowledged, the German filiations have been slighted until recently, despite the impact of German philosophy, music and education in the United States and the waves of German emigration across the Atlantic in this period. English paradigms were transmitted in the common language, and French examples largely by the educational system of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, but German ideas and practices, as the conference made clear, were usually brought over by immigrant architects with little access to the cultural institutions of their new homeland. Since many American clients



looked to England or France for models of cultural prestige well into the 20th Century, the Germans were often obliged to alter their ideas significantly in the New World setting. It was these shifts in meaning and purpose, rather than a simple catalogue of influences, that turned out to be the major focus of the conference.

The issues raised by the importation of "Rundbogenstil" were discussed by two young American scholars who have investigated the topic both Germany and the United States. Kathleen Curran (Brown University) examined the Astor Library in New York City, built in 1849—1853 to the designs of the Schinkelschüler, Alexander Saeltzer, as a major example of that style and a case-study of the transmission of German models. She argued that the facade of the library was basically modelled on Friedrich von Gärtner's Staatsbibliothek in Munich, but owed its Renaissance detailing to James Pennethorne's Museum of Practical Geology in London, which was admired by Saeltzer's clients. Similarly, the library hall was not vaulted in masonry, as German advocates of the Rundbogenstil preferred, but roofed in iron, wood and glass, again on the model of the Museum of Practical Geology. Curran concluded that "the edifice which resulted from this cultural clash was a unique hybrid, and its very uniqueness made it all the more American." Responding to Curran's talk, Sarah Bradford Landau (New York University) situated the iron construction of the hall in the rapid developments in metal construction in the late 1840s and 1850s, to which, in her opinion, the German immigrants arriving after 1848 probably made major contributions.

Michael J. Lewis, a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, focussed on the German immigrant architects in Philadelphia. Most of them had been driven from Germany by the events of 1848, and an important group came from their studies at the Karlsruhe Polytechnical School. They found work for German clients or with an established American architect who brought in commissions while they offered their skills in drawing and engineering: for example, Charles Autenrieth with Samuel Sloan, Edward Collins, a German despite his English name, for John McArthur, and Gustav Runge with Napoleon LeBrun. The Rundbogenstil, which could be presented to American clients as modern and pragmatic rather than German in character, had its greatest success in the mid-1850s. But its theoretical basis was poorly understood, Lewis claimed, and it soon sank to the level of a bare utilitarian style, in Lewis' estimation, which lost out after the Civil War to French grandeur.

Both speakers, as well the respondents, rejected the broadly inclusive stylistic definition of the Rundbogenstil that Henry-Russell Hitchcock used in presenting the concept to the English-speaking public thirty years ago in his canonical volume in the Pelican History of Art Series. In the discussion, Landau went further to claim that at mid-Century "most American buildings with round arches, at least in New York, were not based on the German Rundbogenstil but were English-derived." Winfried Nerdinger (Technische Universität Munich) pointed out that the Rundbogenstil was not conceived as a new style by its chief proponents in Germany, Heinrich Hübsch and von Gärtner. Bergdoll supported Nerdinger's observations that the Rundbogenstil derived from the particular historical consciousness of certain intellectual and professional circles in Germany, and he questioned whether the Germans who adapted it as a mode of practice in a new professional setting were even conscious of its theoretical background. Another



methodological question was raised by Nerdinger, who doubted that it was possible to speak of "German architecture" in the mid-19th Century, when Germany was splintered into many diverse centers.

In Chicago at the turn of century, where Germans were among the largest of the immigrant populations, Austro-German theory, normally ignored by Americans oriented to pragmatic issues, may for once have played a significant role. In the second session, Roula Geraniotis, who wrote a dissertation at University of Illinois in Champaign on American architects in 19th-Century Chicago, discussed the propagation of Semper's ideas by a small group of architects, mostly notably the German emigrant, Frederick Baumann, in Chicago during the 1880's, when theories of the origin of architecture in hanging textiles could be applied to the articulation of the new skyscrapers. But Harry Mallgrave, who has recently edited an English translation of some of Semper's major writings, denied that Semper had any influence either on John Root (who published a translation of Semper's essay *Über Baustile* in 1893) or Louis Sullivan. Respondents from the audience noted, however, that the historical context of the sudden interest in theory among the architects of the Chicago school has yet to be elucidated.

Two opposing views of German influence on the architecture of this period were taken by Paul Kruty and David Van Zanten. Kruty, who recently completed a thesis at Princeton on *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Architecture of Pleasure*, demonstrated with many examples that architects of the Prairie School had ready access to publications of the new architecture in Germany and Austria, and were eager to learn about it. Thus Frank Lloyd Wright and most of his office went to St. Louis in 1904 to see the World Fair, with its exhibits by Möhring and Olbrich. Though Wright's architectural style did not respond to these sources, Kruty claimed, they inspired some of the ornamental and furniture designs in his buildings, notably at Midway Gardens. Van Zanten (Northwestern University) argued against the recent assertion by Brendan Gill, in his biography of Wright, that Unity Temple in Oak Park shows the imprint of Olbrich's design for the Sezession building. Instead Van Zanten saw the Temple as a development from the French Neo-Grec as it was understood by Sullivan and transmitted to Wright. Pommer objected that Wright himself had testified to his debt to Olbrich and Wagner, and that the nearly blank exterior of so public a building had more in common with the Sezession building than with French Beaux-Arts works. More significant than these differences, however, was underlying agreement that this exceptional American building owed much to Continental sources, whether French or German.

In the third session, Rosemarie Haag Bletter, professor and director of the German Studies program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, discussed the impact of German modernist architecture prior to the exhibition of 1932 at the Museum of Modern Art which gave exalted status to the architecture of the "International Style." Surveying the many and varied manifestations of Austro-German modernism in the United States during this period, from Joseph Urban to Friedrich Kiesler, Bletter pointed out that the change from historicizing to modernist architecture was more gradual than claimed by the partisans of the International Style. Indeed one respondent, David Handlin, author of several books on American architecture, asserted



that Americans took a more cosmopolitan view before than after the first World War, which undermined the confident assimilation of Continental culture in the states. As an example he cited the work of Grosvenor Atterbury, who travelled to Germany and England in 1902/1903 to study techniques of building in concrete blocks and artificial stone, and returned to build Forest Hills Gardens, a suburban development in New York City, in traditional forms and modern techniques (which were carefully studied by European architects such as Ernst May in the 1920s). After the war, by contrast, the loss of faith in Europe as the guardian of its own tradition led to a split among American architects between those looking to an ahistorical avant-garde and those seeking to defend a disappearing European past.

In the final session, on the legacy of the German emigrés after 1933, Pommer said that the concept of an international style was not invented by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in an effort to impose a formalist interpretation on the utopian socialist vision of the European proponents of the *Neue Bauen*, but in fact went back in *Deutscher Werkbund* circles to the Wilhelmine period and was sustained both by important advocates and by enemies of the Modern Movement during the Weimar period.

Franz Schulze, author of the recent biography of Mies van der Rohe, spoke on the changing character of Mies's work after arriving in the USA. In Europe Mies talked about structure but only in America did it count in his work "both in practical fact and as symbolic expression." Yet structure never was the primary objective of Mies's architecture, in Schulze's view; rather it became the servant of a new more compact form and especially of larger spaces of clearer span than he had imagined in Europe.

Nerdinger discussed Gropius's changing approach to education at the Bauhaus and at Harvard in terms of the shifting meanings and adaptations of his ideal of a new "unity". From his early Nietzschean vision of culture as the unity of artistic style in the expressions of life, compounded at the war's end by a Spenglerian view of the Faustian-Germanic flowering of the Gothic as a model for the Bauhaus, Gropius moved, under the influence of the teachings of Gertrud Grunow at Weimar, to the idea of the practical harmonization of colors, tones and forms to enable students to design in concord with the world. At Dessau, however, the adaptation of the training to practical work in the service of Gropius's commissions led to an aestheticization and even a fetishization of technology and progress. When Gropius was appointed head of the architecture department at Harvard in 1937 he began to expand his ideal, in order not to seem overly mechanistic, to a totalizing view of a "unity in diversity" so broadly conceived that it lost all meaning, and obscured the more specific references that the ideal of unity held in the earlier phases of his career.

The conference made it clear that the defensively nationalistic stance which dominated earlier histories, when Americans were attempting to establish their uncertain claims to a new culture, has given way to a more confidently cosmopolitan approach. It was demonstrated beyond much doubt that German architects, practices and models left an extensive legacy to American architecture in the 100-year period under consideration. Much of the new work suggests that the architecture derived from German examples tended to seek its rationale in structure, materials and function rather than historicizing



references, in part to compensate for the lack of prestige or comprehension with which German architecture was received in the United States by comparison to French and English examples. But as evidenced by the unresolved debates at the conference, specific meanings generated by theory and practice on the Continent were often obscured or lost in tailoring the Continental approaches for an American audience. In conclusion, therefore, the conferees and audience generally agreed that more detailed and systematic studies of these different historical contexts and functions had still to be undertaken in order to measure the debt of American architecture to Germany.

Richard Pommer and Barry Bergdoll

## Ausstellungen

### LÖTZ: BÖHMISCHES GLAS 1880—1940

Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum, 12. Februar—30. April 1989. — Frankfurt/Main, Museum für Kunstgewerbe, 25. Mai—16. Juli 1989. — Prag, Kunstgewerbemuseum, 10. August—24. September 1989. Katalog: *Lötz: Böhmisches Glas 1880—1940*. Hrsg. HELMUT RICKE, Mitarbeiter: TOMÁŠ VLČEK, ALENA ADLEROVÁ, ERNST PLOIL, JAN MERGL, DUŠA PANENKOVÁ, WOLFGANG HENNIG. München, Prestel 1989. Bd. 1: Werkmonographie. 384 Seiten. Bd. 2: Katalog der Musterschnitte. 596 Seiten. Zusammen über 5500 Abbildungen, davon 282 in Farbe. DM 480,—.

Ein fest gebundener, zweibändiger Ausstellungskatalog mit über 5500 Abbildungen, von sieben Autoren aus vier Ländern verfaßt und vom renommierten Prestel Verlag übernommen: eine gewaltige Anstrengung, so scheint es, für eine Kunstglasfabrik in Südböhmen, deren Produktion vermutlich nicht allzu vielen Lesern der *Kunstchronik* bekannt sein dürfte.

Die Kunst um 1400, das Rudolfinische Prag oder Schinkel, sogar das Biedermeier oder die 20er Jahre verlangen anscheinend nach den heute üblichen Superkatalogen, die der Ausstellungsbesucher im Einkaufswagen mit herumschieben muß. Ist es aber tatsächlich notwendig, den Jugendstilvasen einer vor knapp einem Jahrhundert aktiven Manufaktur so viel Zeit und Geld zu widmen? Weder Gallé noch Tiffany, weder dem Kaiser-Zinn noch der Keramik von Rozenborg ist bisher eine derart ausführliche wissenschaftliche Behandlung zuteil geworden; so ist nur das Buch von Sigrid Barten über den Schmuck von Laliqe dem hier besprochenen Band vergleichbar (und dieses Buch ist kein Ausstellungskatalog, sondern eine aus einer Dissertation erwachsene Arbeit).

Die Antwort lautet: Es ist ungemein verdienstvoll, daß ein Forscherteam, endlich satt des Nachplapperns ewig wiederholter Allgemeinplätze über eine für die Kunst um 1900 wichtige Glasmanufaktur, eine Ausstellung mit 406 Exponaten organisiert hat und zugleich ein grundlegendes Handbuch vorlegt, das für die nächsten Jahrzehnte Gültigkeit haben wird.

Die „K. K. priv. Glas-Fabrik Joh. Lötz Wittwe (Max Ritter von Spaun)“ war fast 100 Jahre, bis 1940, in Klostermühle tätig. Berühmt wurde sie durch ihre irisierenden