

Call for Papers
for the International Symposium
"Taking a Stand? Bauhaus and Modernity under National Socialism, in Emigration
or Exile and in Divided Germany"
on 29th/30th November 2019 at Berlinische Galerie
Concept: Andrea Bärnreuther, Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung

100 years after the historic Bauhaus was founded, the optimism and experimental spirit that characterised housing construction and policy in the Weimar Republic were replaced by profit maximisation and neo-liberal urban planning. In view of the ever-increasing problem of "affordable housing", politicians in particular long for the Bauhaus and associate it with a "social attitude" that is viewed as sorely lacking today.

This forms the point of departure for the symposium. It focuses on the Bauhaus and modernity in the field of tension of politics and economy. It asks how the "social attitude" identified with Bauhaus and modernity, and the associated emancipatory impetus, seeking to shape and change society, became operative in the Weimar Republic. And it considers how these were reflected and transformed in the work of Bauhaus and Neues Bauen architects and Bauhaus designers in the context of various political and economic systems and social formations after the National Socialists seized power.

The symposium also asks how our understanding of the Bauhaus and modernity has changed as a result of debates on modernity and postcolonial critique of modernity's claim to universality. What is the significance of the pluralization and decoupling of the concept of modernity from teleological, historical-philosophical models and normative connotations such as democracy, which are linked to the optimistic Western paradigm of progress? What are the implications of a paradigm shift in architectural historiography that corrects the notion of a victorious worldwide transfer of modernity by architects persecuted under National Socialism in view of its repressive, hegemonic and racist elements and that understands globalising modernity as a polycentric process of colonial expansion and self-confident local transformations? And how can processes of learning, un-learning and re-learning that are triggered by the Bauhaus and modernity be made effective for today's challenges?

The symposium is aimed not only at experts in the field, but also at a broader audience, including in particular secondary school pupils, who will prepare their own contribution in advance. In keeping with this objective, the symposium seeks not simply to present the latest research results, but also to transfer these to the public realm. We are looking for papers that place these findings in a broader context and develop questions and perspectives that are of general interest and can stimulate discussion – also about contemporary issues – with all target groups. The public part of the symposium will begin at 6 p.m. on 29th November with an opening lecture by Professor Winfried Nerdinger. This will be followed on 30th November by three two-hour sections, each with three to four individual contributions (maximum 20 minutes each), a 30-50-minute panel and a one-hour final discussion to sum up results.

The focus of the individual contributions and panel discussions on the three sections (National Socialism, Emigration or Exile, Divided Germany) will examine issues pertaining to shaping society and lifestyles, in particular through the prism of urban and settlement planning, public housing and design. The symposium is underpinned by the question of how architects, planners and designers conceptualise their activities - their professional, aesthetic, political and ethical ideas - and the scope and limits of action in the dynamic balance of power between planning and politics. Papers should consider the framing political, economic and social parameters, including specialist discourses and the way architects and planners deal with these preconditions in their basic planning assumptions. This also applies to planning, design and construction processes (including unrealised plans) as well as to the material and aesthetic dimension of buildings and their presentation and reception in various media. The user perspective, i.e. forms of appropriation in changing times, including ways in which these diverge from programmatic educational approaches, is an integral part of this analysis. Last but not least, the issue of the agency of architecture and its socio-critical potential or scope to change society also arises, along with issues of aesthetics and sustainability.

Bauhaus and Modernity under National Socialism

What role is played by Bauhaus and Neues Bauen architects and Bauhaus designers, along with the ideas and concepts they developed, in National Socialism's public housing and general housing policy? What are the effects and consequences of the programmatic change marked by the "Führer decree" of 15.11.1940, which initiated a paradigm shift towards radical reorganisation of the housing system through industrialisation, rationalisation, standardisation and typification, and built a bridge to post-war public housing? What is the appropriate context in which to consider the visions of a planned economy conceived by Robert Ley, head of the German Labour Front (DAF), which were initially linked to this change of course but were ultimately unsuccessful? What differences distinguish the modernisation initiated under National Socialism and simultaneous modernisation processes under Soviet state socialism? How have the modernisation processes of these dictatorships affected post-war Germany and how do experiences and failures of architects in these dictatorships impact their later activities?

Bauhaus and New Building in Emigration or Exile

Which questions and perspectives are opened up by a concept of cultural heritage that understands Bauhaus and modernity as a transnational and transcultural network of relationships? Which ideas replace the notion of the Bauhaus as a German export to the world? What happens when claims of serving progress for the good of humankind collide with European leadership aspirations? What happens to the universalist claim of modern architecture and the emancipatory concept of building when these are linked to manifestations of colonial or political hegemony (such as the State of Israel's Zionist spatial planning and architectural construction) and to segregation of population groups? What does the formal language of the "International Style" mean when the link with a liberal democratic social order has been severed? How does the idea of universalism, which is rooted in universal design principles such as geometry and physiology, modify

or expand through recognition of local cultural practices, their structural representation and adaptation to local climatic conditions, generating a sense of identity? Is it possible in emigration or exile to implement Hannes Meyer's thoughts on "the needs of the people instead of the need for luxury" (*Volksbedarf statt Luxusbedarf*), on functionalism grounded in science directed to "life-oriented design" as an expression of society, and on building as a conscious organisation of life processes, which also encompasses all biological and psychological aspects of use? And if so, what form does it take and which conditions pertain?

Bauhaus and Modernity in Divided Post-War Germany

Which strands in reception of the Bauhaus and Neues Bauen are involved in constructing programmatic counter-images of architecture, urban planning and society within the competition between systems in East and West, and what effects does this have (to this day)? Which aspects of co-evolution - similarities and differences - can be identified in reunited Germany in architecture and planning policy within the opposing systems of the planned and the market economy? In this context, the housing construction company "Neue Heimat", the most powerful player in West German housing policy, can be compared with GDR collective construction combines responsible for building all the housing in a specific district under the aegis of the Ministry of Construction. In which respects do the underlying ideas, ideologies, and organizational designs of buildings and plans in East and West differ? How do they relate to the individual and community, to private and public space, city and country, urbanity and nature, new and old buildings, the emerging and the existing city? A further compelling point in this context is cooperation or competition between former Bauhaus architects, along with their visions for a socialist or democratic society.

Finally, a concluding discussion will summarise the results of the symposium and consider the significance of the historical findings for the present. The aim is to determine aspects that have mobilised utopian energies to shape society and lifestyle or brought these to a standstill, including forms of political intervention and political organisational models.

Researchers and students in the fields of Art and Cultural Studies, Political and Social Sciences and Science of History as well as Art, Architecture and Design History who wish to participate in this symposium are invited to submit by 15th August 2019 at the latest an abstract of their academic contribution (maximum 1,200 characters) and a condensed version (maximum 800 characters) for the workshop on 29th November, which is an integral part of the symposium and is intended to establish connections between scholars and pupils. Please send both together with a short CV in German or English to Andrea Bärnreuther, Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung. You can also contact her in advance should you have any questions or queries or should you need more detailed information or concrete proposals.

The organisers will reimburse travel and accommodation costs of all conference speakers (lump sum payment).

Contact:

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