

«times to come will not care for streamlining and machines to live in».
Richard Paulick in Shanghai in Search
of a More Humane Architecture

Eduard Kögel

- [B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?

emigration and exile

thinking from the perspective of diasporic conditions

From 1925 to 1927, Richard Paulick (1903–1979) studied with Hans Poelzig (1869–1936) in Berlin and subsequently worked for Walter Gropius (1883–1969) until 1930. Prior to this, he had realized the Stahlhaus in Dessau in 1926/27 with Georg Mucbe (1895–1987) and in the process met Marcel Breuer (1902–1981), with whom he briefly shared an office. Exiled in Shanghai from 1933, Paulick felt isolated from the discourse on Modernism and in the 1940s attempted to get in touch with erstwhile kindred spirits by mail.¹

Questions Across the Pacific

modern architecture

Paulick first wrote to his former mentor Walter Gropius at Harvard in July 1941, asking what had become of modern architecture: «Besides: though we are wearing collars, shirts and trousers, Shanghai still is the place without any cultural life. [...] Sometimes I think that the modern movement died out entirely, [...] and that the latest development in architecture is W. D. Teague, at least, that's what we know. [...] The purpose of my letter therefore is to find out, whether the movement, which the bauhaus started is still alive.»²

rethinking modern architecture

- Gropius did not reply to this letter, perhaps because of communication problems during the Pacific War, perhaps because he interpreted as an affront the reference to Walter Dorwin Teague (1883–1960), who had built his reputation on exhibition and entertainment architecture—especially the buildings for Ford at the Century of Progress exhibition in Chicago (1933/34) and at the New York World's Fair in 1939/40. Gropius also failed to answer Paulick's letter of 27th August 1945—two weeks before the Japanese army in China capitulated—in which he once again expressed his discomfiture at being cut off from questions of architectural development in Shanghai.³ An article from April 1941, in which Paulick speculated about how the Second World War might have an effect on the development of art and design analogous to that of the First World War reveals how important and urgent the issues were for Paulick: «On the European continent we have been witnessing since 1900 a turning away of taste from historical copies and eclecticism [sic] in arts and decorative crafts. Especially after the first world war when Expressionism and as a reaction Functionalism came into favour, the Americans finally found the culmination in their streamlined house, room, furniture, teacups, cutlery and every other thing existing, besides their cars. [...] And
- [B]

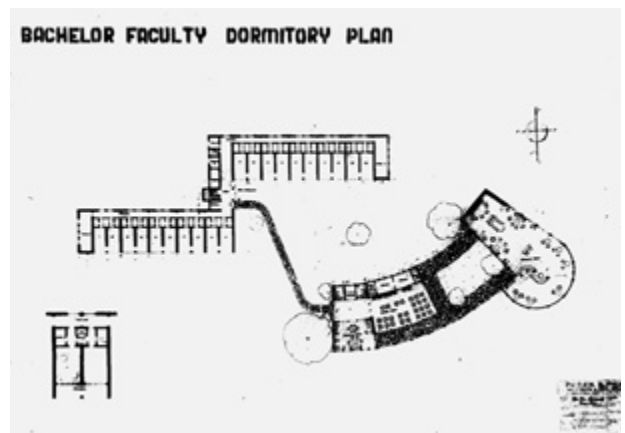
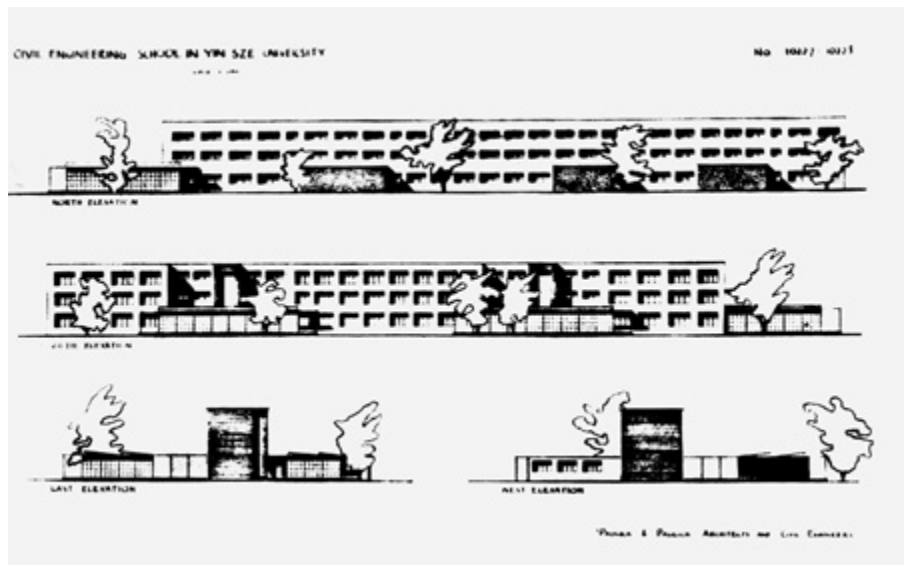
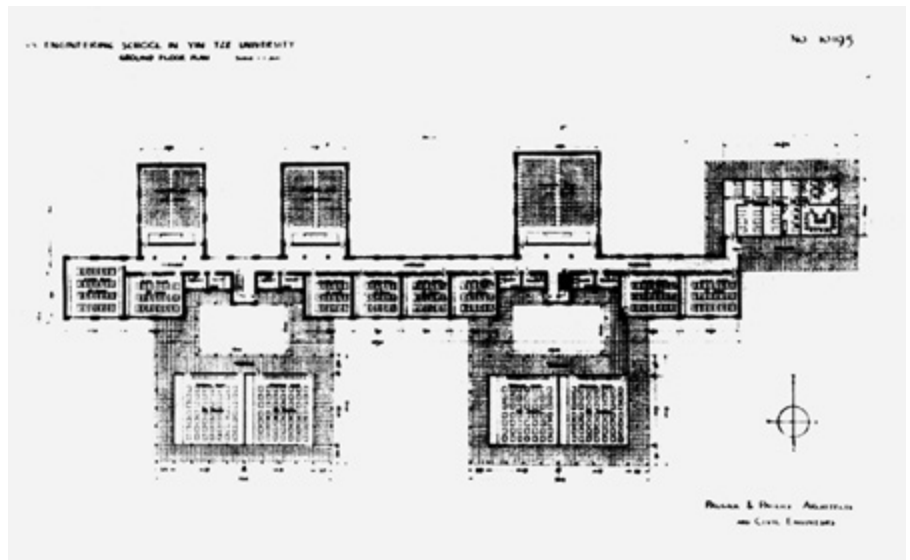


Fig. 1
Layout of the school building of Yin Sze University

Fig. 2
Views of the school building of Yin Sze University

Fig. 3
Layout of the Student residence with community pavilion of Yin Sze University



Fig. 4
Student residence with community pavilion of Yin Sze University

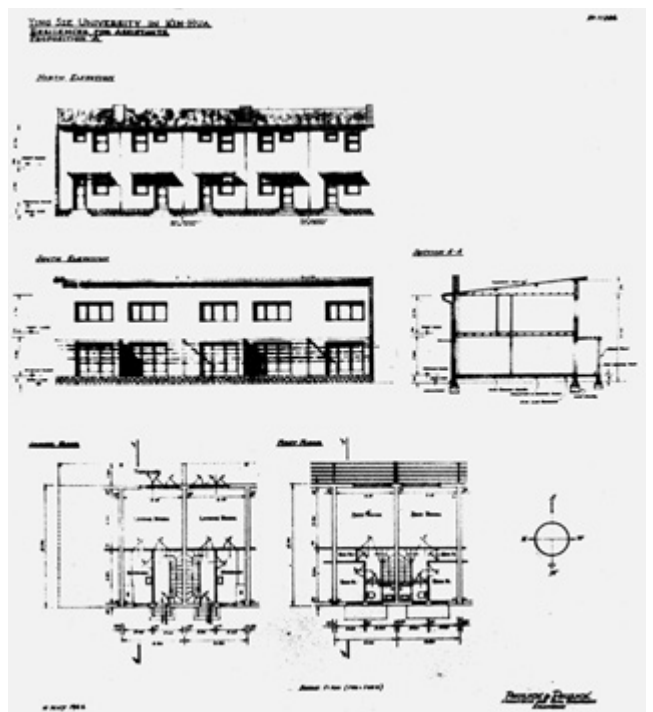


Fig. 5
Terraced houses for the teachers of Yin Sze University

nobody today will imagine that streamlining will last for a thousand years hence. [...] A new movement in arts is appearing. [...] we find a new realism in art, a return to nature and naturalism. [...] But as sure as the last world war lead us to Expressionism as the individual reaction of the human being to force and regimentation, so will this war bring another reaction of the oppressed mind, which in times to come will not care for stream-lining and machines to live in.»⁴

Further developments took Paulick by surprise, for in the autumn of 1943 he was appointed as the second full-time Professor of Interior Design and Urban Planning at St. John's University in Shanghai.⁵ The available archive material does not allow us to reconstruct exactly what he taught until the end of the war in autumn 1945.⁶ However, at the end of 1945, Shanghai's municipal government commissioned him to draw up a plan for the metropolis' future, together with several colleagues from St. John's University.⁷ As a result, teaching at the university was subsequently very strongly influenced by practical problems, which gave students an opportunity to work on new urban planning solutions. In addition to his professorship, Paulick, together with his brother Rudolf (1908–1963), who had trained at the Bauhaus under Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969),⁸ worked for the interior design firm *Modern Homes*, founded in late 1936, and for *Paulick & Paulick, architects and civil engineers*, founded in 1943.

A University in Jinhua

The first opportunity for *Paulick & Paulick* to participate in re-defining architecture came in April/May 1946 when the firm was awarded a contract for a civil engineering school at Yin Sze University⁹ in the city of Jinhua in Zhejiang province, about 300 kilometres south-west of Shanghai. Unfortunately, neither a site plan nor a description of this project has survived in Paulick's estate, only a dozen plans with floor layouts, elevations and perspective views of a library, accommodation for teachers and students and a central teaching building with classrooms.

The teaching building consists of a three-storey cuboid main volume with classrooms, extended to the north by three single-storey lecture pavilions and an administrative pavilion, and on the south side by two single-storey pavilions, each containing two teaching spaces and connected to the main building by a flat

neues bauen [new building]
connecting architecture and
nature/environment

roof. Garden courtyards that mediate between the interior and exterior with open walkways are set between the pavilions on the south side and the main building. The idea here was obviously to create communicative spaces for informal exchanges. In the main part of the building, sixteen smaller classrooms were accommodated on each of the three floors. On the north-facing side, an access corridor runs along the entire length of the building and is echoed in the façade by windows arranged in a uniform grid. In contrast, the single-storey pavilions are shown with rubble masonry. The eastern and western end walls of the main building and the stairwells on the south side seem to be envisaged with exposed brickwork, while the pavilions that project to the south appear completely transparent beneath the roof on two sides and deploy rubble masonry on the other two sides. The objective-rational design approach, pared-down to the materials' expressivity, moves away from the decorative Art Deco solutions then fashionable in Shanghai ^{Figs. 1,2}. The same applies to the residential buildings for students and teachers. Single-storey shared pavilions are set across from three-storey student residences, while narrow terraced houses, with gangway access on one side and narrow garden plots on the other, are reminiscent of Bruno Taut's 1920s housing estates. It is fair to assume that Paulick formulated an architectural approach based on his own thoughts here, characterized by function and material and taking *Neues Bauen* in Germany as a starting point to interweave architecture and nature. The haptic quality of the chosen materials and rigorous architectural form are combined in places with informally designed open spaces that connect nature with architecture in an abstract vein ^{Figs. 3-5}.

A University in Shanghai

The contract to build a new campus for the Hua Tung University in Shanghai also prompted Walter Gropius to engage with China, together with TAC—The Architects Collaborative—and with Chinese-born architect I.M. Pei as an associate.¹⁰ At TAC, Norman C. Fletcher (1917–2007) was responsible for the project.¹¹ In a letter to Paulick dated April 1948, Gropius only mentioned the project in passing, although it was also to include St. John's University, which Paulick certainly did not yet know ^{Fig. 6,12}

The project ideas were strongly influenced by I.M. Pei, who attempted, through the urban planning angle, to transpose

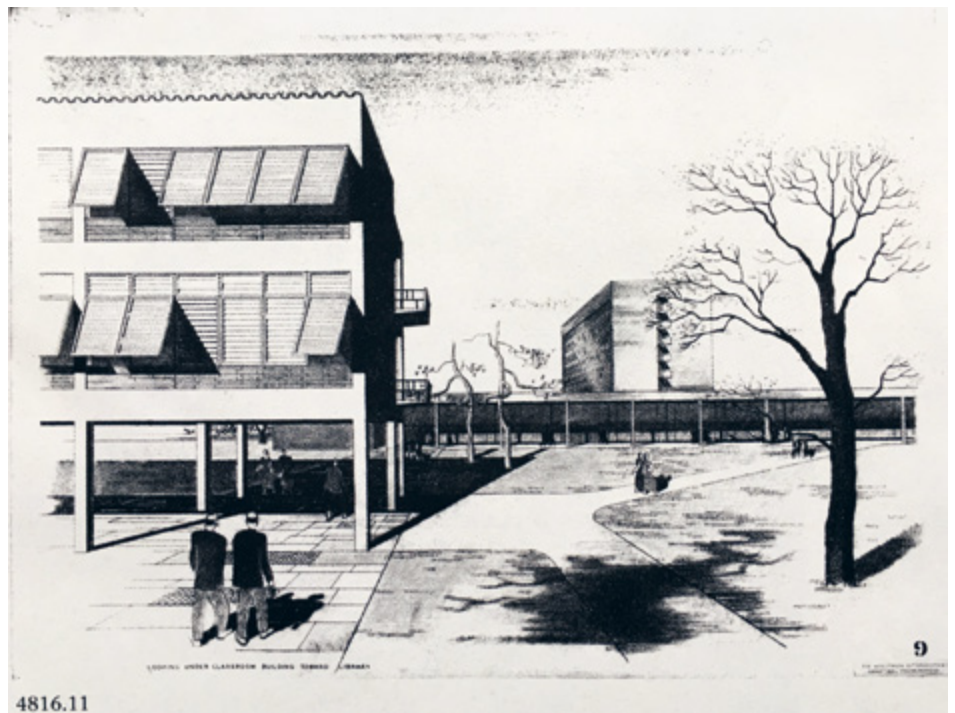
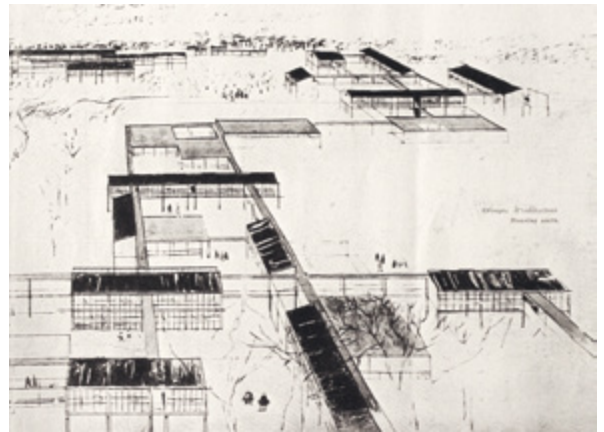


Fig. 6
Sketch by I.M. Pei for Hua Tung
University campus

Fig. 7
Norman Fletcher's drawing shows
school buildings and the library

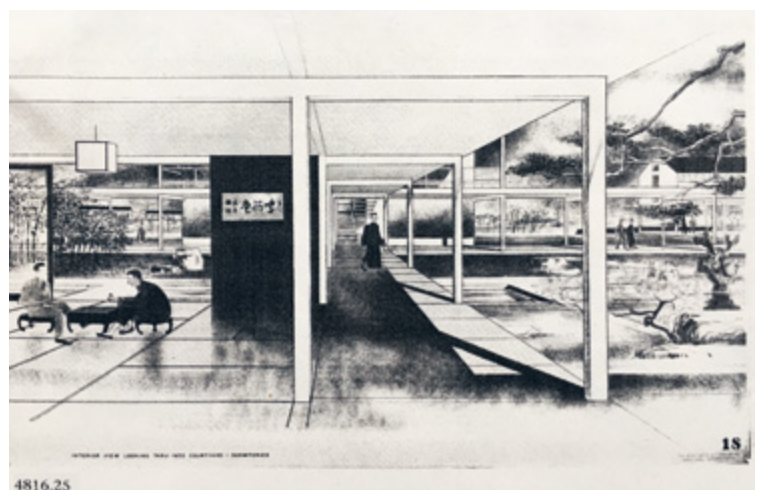


Fig. 8
Ground floor with courtyards for
residential buildings by I.M. Pei

- [B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?
- [C] How can we explore the kinds of stand taken by Bauhaus and Modernist architects and designers and their consistency?

relationship to history
reinterpretation of tradition

traditional Chinese garden concepts into a campus and to ensure the architecture chimed with modular construction methods drawn from traditional timber construction. As the archives do not contain an urban development plan for Paulick's university plans, the two designs can only be compared in architectural terms. Many aspects reveal that TAC creatively translated themes from Chinese tradition into hybrid spatial structures. As Pei explained in an interview, he admired Mies van der Rohe's aesthetics far more than those of Gropius.¹⁵ His sketches of the entire complex show a skeleton construction method in the pavilions, which are connected by covered walkways. Using vocabulary developed by Mies, Pei picks up on the structural configuration of Chinese wooden architecture. While the floor layouts, for example for the teaching buildings, resemble those drawn up by Paulick, the facades are very different. The teaching buildings Fletcher worked on have an open-plan ground floor to encourage users to pass time informally under the built volumes, while the facades have highly nuanced designs to respond to the climatic conditions. The strips of windows on the main facades are fitted with wooden shutters that could be set in an open position for ventilation purposes. This simple technique was not found in any of the buildings in which Gropius was involved up until that point, nor does it come from the Chinese tradition Figs. 7, 8.

identity formation
relationship to traditions and cultures

- [B] [C] I.M. Pei's role in the design for Hua Tung University cannot be overestimated. In an interview more than 50 years later, he explained: «Tradition, culture and life itself are of crucial importance for architecture. If life has an Eastern character, you shouldn't impose Western style on it!»¹⁴ Gropius had a contradictory attitude towards history or rather towards traditions and cultures. On the one hand, he lauded himself and TAC for adapting to local conditions, later using the project as a reference demonstrating his approach to foreign cultures when trying to obtain commissions in Baghdad.¹⁵ On the other hand, in 1949, in the context of the new buildings TAC designed on the Harvard campus, he wrote with reference to history and culture: «There is no need to emulate the «atmosphere» of this or that period. *New buildings must be invented, not copied*».¹⁶ Certainly, if he had been asked about the Hua Tung Campus for Shanghai, Gropius would not have spoken of an «atmospheric imitation», although that is exactly what can be seen here. In the same article, Gropius also stated «the student needs the real building, not buildings in disguise. So long as we do not ask him to go about in period clothes, it seems

[B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?

absurd to build college buildings in pseudo-period design.»¹⁷ It is astonishing point to note in this context how the students are depicted in the perspective drawings for the Hua Tung Project; they are often drawn in traditional Chinese dress and thus actually contradict Gropius' statement, in terms of both fashion and architecture.

Replies Across the Pacific Ocean

In a letter from New York on 2nd November 1948, Bauhaus alumnus Xanti Schawinsky refers to a standstill in architectural development in the USA: «Architecture is at a standstill [...] no courage, no ideas.»¹⁸ In his response Paulick wrote: «When the wars ended in 1945, I practically knew nothing of what had become of modern architecture [...] around 1940 I wrote a letter to Gropius, asking him whether that was so. Probably he never got the letter. Fortunately! — [...] That modern architecture was very much alive, I found out only after V-J Day [Victory over Japan Day], when we slowly got into contact again with the outer world. It actually was like a new inspiration to me, and I tried hard to get back into contemporary life again, through books and magazines. [...] Every month I go through 40–50 magazines, which I get from all over the world.»¹⁹ He believed he could see progress in contemporary architecture, especially in the more recent buildings by Marcel Breuer.²⁰ «You say that architecture is at a standstill. I was forced to look at the development from a much further distance, both in space and time, and I believe there is a progress, a very considerable progress even. The human element receives much more stress, and I believe that matters. If I look back at Toerten and compare it [...] to Breuer's recent residences, it looks to me like all the way from the Stone Ages to the Renaissance, when human individuality was first recognized».²¹

The individuality Paulick cites in Marcel Breuer's architecture could be seen as relating to its transparency and to transitions between interior and exterior, the use of free-style fieldstone for the plinth areas, as well as to his entire sensitive and differentiated choice of materials, which on the one hand creates a connection to craftsmanship and on the other hand to local availability—while last but not least enabling an informal living space set between organic nature and formally strict conceptions of architecture. Paulick was probably familiar at this time in particular with Breuer's

modern architecture

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rethinking modern architecture

Geller House, which was presented in detail in 1947 with excellent photographs by Ezra Stoller (1915–2004), for example in the US magazine *Progressive Architecture*.²² At a symposium in February 1948 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York entitled «What is Happening to Modern Architecture?», Breuer had explained his idea of architecture: «I don't feel too much impulse to set ‹human› (in the best sense of the word) against ‹formal›. [...] just as Sullivan did not eat his functionalism as hot as he cooked it, Le Corbusier did not build his machine for living! [...] ‹Human› (seems to me more than just a pleasant forgiving of imperfection and an easy-goingness as to precision of thinking, as to the quality of planning, as to consequences of materials, details and construction.»²³ Fig. 9

A New Architecture?

neues bauen [new building]
connecting architecture and
nature/environment

relationship to traditions and cultures

faith in progress

There is much to suggest that Paulick saw his own intentions reflected in the publications on Breuer's work in the USA. For him, as for Breuer, strict functionality stood in contrast to a differentiated materials-related architecture that was intended to provide a rather informal framework for a freely unfolding lifestyle. Paulick's designs for the campus in Jinhua are formally clearly oriented towards the ideas of *Neues Bauen* from Germany, but they establish a much stronger connection between architecture and the environment. The closed and modular courtyard-house architecture of traditional China remained alien to him and he would probably have been amazed to see Gropius' or better Pei's design for Hua Tung University. Paulick's focus was not on atmospheric, modular adaptation to the host country's traditions. His attitude at the time was clearly influenced by the idea of progress, as manifested in the masonry buildings in Jinhua, which were new by Chinese standards, with large windows opening to the surroundings that were intended to position the user in a direct relationship with nature.

Paulick's professorial colleague Huang Zuoshen (also: Henry Huang) (1915–1975), who founded the architecture department at St. John's University in 1942 and had been the first Chinese student to study with Gropius at Harvard, also defined the architecture of the future around 1947. «The modern architects [...] express their ideas by means of industrialized materials in fine and elegant forms of metals and glass, and the nature of organic materials, such as the strength and the mass of the stone, of timber

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and brick, the interplay of buildings and landscape, such as white surfaces against the background of foliage.»²⁴ An aesthetics of materials in the context of nature seems to have been the common denominator among colleagues at St. John's University. However, Paulick was sceptical about abstraction as an end in itself, as he wrote in September 1949 to Fritz Levedag²⁵, also formerly at the Bauhaus: «[...] with Picasso, there is an unmistakable desire to keep pace with the political events, with the time in which he lives. In his work, I have the impression that the return to the figurative is being prepared once again. With the others, I have the impression that Existentialism has been discovered and made the basis of abstract art. That must inevitably end in artistic sterility, at best in the purely decorative».²⁶ In this letter he also makes clear that he is influenced by political motives and wants to put his creative powers at the service of a new social order. After the war, Paulick's goal took shape as a desire to rethink architecture through the prism of its integration into nature and its socio-political impact. The new realism in art, the return to nature and naturalism, were ideas that in 1941 had become linked to the rejection of «stream-lining» and «machines to live in».

[B]

rethinking modern architecture
connecting architecture and nature/
environment
social impact of architecture

socialist realism

After his return from exile in April 1950, Paulick was again confronted with stylistic debates, this time in East Berlin in the ideological crossfire of Socialist Realism. In September 1950, he published an article in the weekly newspaper *Sonntag*, which was published by the GDR's *Kulturbund* [Cultural Association]. In it, he criticized the turn away from nature and stated that he expected new impetus to come from societal discourse. «The cities of the past closed man off from nature [...]. They created an artificial environment that could not replace man's most natural and primitive joy in life—being one with nature. [...] we must express new social contents through our architectural design, through new architectonic concepts. The stylistic development over the last fifty years, which many have seen as a revolution in art, was anything but revolutionary in its ideology».²⁷ After heated arguments, this challenge of finding a revolutionary new conception culminated, for Paulick too, in national design as demanded by ideology, which was to shape the GDR's architecture in the first half of the Fifties.²⁸

[C]

planning and building in the gdr
doctrine of «national tradition»
«socialist in content and national in form»



Fig. 9
Geller House in Lawrence by Marcel
Breuer, 1944/45. Photograph: Ezra Stoller

- Notes
- 1 On Paulick's emigration in Shanghai, cf. Eduard Kögel, *Zwei Poelzigsschüler in der Emigration: Rudolf Hamburger und Richard Paulick zwischen Shanghai und Ost-Berlin (1930–1955)*. Dissertation, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 2007, <https://e-pub.uni-weimar.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/docId/929> (Consulted on April 16, 2020); id., «*The Glamourboy of Hongkew*, Richard Paulick in Shanghai—Emigration und Politik», pp. 45–64, in: *Bauhaus-Tradition und DDR-Moderne. Der Architekt Richard Paulick*, (eds.) Wolfgang Thöner and Peter Müller, Munich, Berlin 2006, p. 29.
 - 2 Letter from Richard Paulick to Walter Gropius, July 6, 1941, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, Walter Gropius' estate. <http://open-archiv.bauhaus.de/eMuseum-Plus> (Consulted April 22, 2020).
 - 3 Letter from Richard Paulick to Walter Gropius, August 27, 1945, *ibid.*
 - 4 Richard Paulick, «Interior Decoration in Shanghai», in: *The China Journal*, Vol. XXXIV, Nr. 4, April 1941, pp. 185–187.
 - 5 Letter of thanks from Q.L. Young to Richard Paulick, September 1, 1949, Richard Paulick's estate, private archive of Natascha Paulick. The first full-time professor and founder of the Faculty of Architecture was Henry Huang, an architect trained at the Architectural Association in London and with Gropius at Harvard. See also Hou Li, «Moderne Design- und Stadtplanerausbildung an der St. John's Universität (1942–1952)», in: *BAUHAUS SHANGHAI STALINALLEE HA-NEU. Der Lebensweg des Architekten Richard Paulick*, (ed.) Thomas Flierl, Berlin 2020.
 - 6 The estate of Richard Paulick is in the collection of the Architekturarchiv der TU München and in the private archive of Natascha Paulick.
 - 7 See on this point Eduard Kögel, «Die Planung für Groß-Shanghai (1945–1949)», in: *BAUHAUS SHANGHAI STALINALLEE HA-NEU* 2020 (as Note 5).
 - 8 Rudolf Paulick received his diploma in 1932, cf. Bauhaus-Archiv (ed.), *Mehr als der blosse Zweck. Mies van der Rohe at the Bauhaus 1930–1933*, Berlin 2001, unpag.
 - 9 Sometimes referred to on the plans as Jin Tze University.
 - 10 For a detailed presentation of the planning and I.M. Pei's role : Eduard Kögel, «Walter Gropius und die Chinesische Architektur» / «Modern Vernacular—Walter Gropius and Chinese Architecture», <http://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/343/walter-gropius-und-die-chinesische-architektur/de?0bbf55ceffc3073699d40c945ada9faf=4eki40rkhrnh54i6uuf8e3v6e0> (Consulted March 24, 2020). [English: <http://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org/articles/343/modern-vernacular> (Consulted May 5, 2020).]
 - 11 John C. Harkness, *The Walter Gropius Archive. Volume 4: 1945–1969, The Work of The Architects Collaborative*, New York, London 1991, pp. 1–16.
 - 12 Letter from Walter Gropius to Richard Paulick, April 6, 1948, estate of Walter Gropius (as Note 2).
 - 13 Ulf Meyer, «I.M. Pei, Interview», in: *Beijing Shanghai Shenzhen, Städte des 21. Jahrhunderts*, (eds.) Kai Vöckler and Dirk Luckow, Frankfurt, New York 2000, p. 127.
 - 14 *Ibid.*
 - 15 Letter from Walter Gropius to Ellen and Nizzar Jawdat, September 9, 1954, Walter Gropius' Estate (as Note 2). See also Regina Göckede, *Spätkoloniale Moderne: Le Corbusier, Ernst May, Frank Lloyd Wright. The Architects Collaborative und die Globalisierung der Moderne*, Basel 2016, p. 392.
 - 16 Walter Gropius, «Not Gothic But Modern for Our Colleges», in: *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 1949, <https://www.nytimes.com/1949/10/23/archives/not-gothic-but-modern-for-our-colleges-a-noted-architect-says-we.html>, reprinted in: Walter Gropius, *Scope of Total Architecture*, New York 1962, p. (66–70) 68. German version cf.: Walter Gropius, «Die Baukunst ist keine angewandte Archäologie», in: Walter Gropius, *Architektur. Wege zu einer optischen Kultur*, Frankfurt, Hamburg 1956, pp. (61–64) 63.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 67 (English version), p. 62 (German version).
 - 18 Letter from Xanti Schawinsky to Richard Paulick, November 2, 1948, estate of Richard Paulick, private archive of Natascha Paulick.
 - 19 Letter from Richard Paulick to Xanti Schawinsky, November 15, 1948 (as Note 18).
 - 20 Paulick knew Breuer from the Bauhaus in Dessau, where he was able to realize the Stahlhaus together with Georg Muche in 1926/27. Wolfgang Thöner, «Zwischen Tradition und Moderne—Richard Paulick, das Bauhaus und die Architektur der Moderne», in: *Bauhaus-Tradition und DDR-Moderne* 2006 (as Note 1), p. (23–44) 29.
 - 21 *Ibid.*
 - 22 Marcel Breuer, «Geller House, Lawrence, Long Island», in: *Progressive Architecture* 2/1947, <https://breuer.syr.edu/xtf/view?docId=mets/11216.mets.xml;query=&brand=breuer> (Consulted on March 30, 2020).
 - 23 Marcel Breuer, «What is Happening to Modern Architecture?», in: Peter Blake, *Marcel Breuer: Architect and Designer*, New York 1949, p. 122.
 - 24 Tongji University (ed.), *Commemorative Accounts of Huang Zuoshen*, Shanghai 2012, p. 14. In the early 1950s, Henry Huang realized a Modernism-inspired school with a student residence, which bears a marked resemblance to the student residence for Jinhua designed by Paulick, in terms of its materials and connection to the environment.
 - 25 Fritz Levedag studied at the Bauhaus and worked in Gropius' office in Dessau and Berlin in the late 1920s at the same time as Paulick.
 - 26 Letter from Richard Paulick to Fritz Levedag, September 1, 1949, Richard Paulick's estate (as Note 5).
 - 27 Richard Paulig [sic, Paulick], «Die Architektur der Stadtzentren», in: *Sonntag*, Vol. 5, September 17, 1950.
 - 28 Cf. Eduard Kögel, «Das Hochhaus an der Weberwiese als Leitbau der Stalinallee. Hermann Henselmann, Richard Paulick, Hanns Hopp», in: *BAUHAUS SHANGHAI STALINALLEE HA-NEU* 2020 (as Note 5).