

# Final Discussion

with Titia Rixt Hoekstra, Joaquín  
Medina Warmburg, Doreen Mende,  
Andrea Bärnreuther, and the Audience  
chaired by Annemarie Jaeggi



- [G] Which ways of taking a stand can we discover in processes of Bauhaus transfer, translation, and transformation?

Annemarie Jaeggi

We are now coming to the final session. I would also like to invite Andrea Bärnreuther to join us on stage as she developed the conference concept and I would like to ask her about the idea that sparked this conference. However, before I do that, I would first talk to the speakers who chaired the discussions during the various sections of the conference. We have had a long and intensive day today, with many extremely interesting lectures; they have really taken us all over the world and have dealt with cultural exchange, transfer, translation and transformation processes, while also making us aware of the interplay between transmitters and receivers, as well as giving us a range of different answers to the question of this symposium *Taking a Stand?* That issue of looking at what attitude means in this context was perhaps most clearly expressed in the lecture by Simone Hain: Modernism as an attitude. And this is where I would like to take up the discussion. I suggest that we discuss with you once again what this term «attitude» means and what it perhaps does not mean, and also what it could be at all—not an easy subject, I realize. If we still have the time and inclination, I suggest we also discuss the term «homeless». The understanding of Modernism as an «attitude» and the term «homeless» would be two points that we could bring up again here at the end.

modernism as an attitude

«taking a stand» as a concept

homelessness as a concept

Let me start with you, Mr. Medina-Warmburg: what did you take away from this conference *Taking a Stand?* or from the answers to the initial question about what that entails? In the first section, the question of attitude was raised somewhat more explicitly and discussed in greater detail. You certainly also have your own position on this, especially within the nexus of themes you examined, namely Bauhaus and Modernism in processes of transfer, translation, and transformation.

[G]

processes of transfer,  
translation, and transformation

Joaquín Medina Warmburg

What I take away, also generally from our second section, is basically the interplay of projection and appropriation. Above all, the way in which projection of ideas plays out—with an awareness of transmitting a particular message, on the one hand, and expectations on the other. Within the situation of transfer and translation, where there can also perhaps actually be phases of destabilization in the encounter with the unknown Other, these seek to make the many imponderables more concrete and perhaps also to direct them towards a goal. Another central question in this context is

interplay of projection and  
appropriation

functionalism as a concept

construction of a «third world»

dependency and periphery as  
a concept

learning processes

which intellectual or professional tools architects or product designers have at their disposal to handle this situation. In two cases in our section, this could be examined on the basis of terms with manifest political implications, which—and this was particularly interesting for me—were already occupied or defined in advance. One example concerns the term «Functionalism», which has a very specific content within the process of transfer or translation from Germany to Sweden, even if this term can actually be defined in terms of rather different content. The other example refers to the politically conflict-ridden transfer situation in our two examples from Chile. And in contrast to these situations, where terms such as «Functionalism» or «Third World» provide orientation, we have also seen cases in which this—purported—terminological clarity gradually dissolves through the interaction, so that we can perceive a development. For me, Bruno Taut is actually a prime example of this dichotomy: a projection from which a new understanding develops on the basis of direct experience on the ground—here one could also talk about «learning processes», as suggested in the title of Section I. Let me recall once again: Taut arrived in Japan and within a very short time had a clear opinion about what is actually Japanese. This was only possible because he arrived with this opinion largely formed beforehand, because there is already a prior history of projecting onto Japan or, let's say, of clear conceptions about Japan. In fact, however, he developed completely different criteria over the course of the several years he spent in Japan, so that this fixed or preconceived opinion subsequently became relativized as time went by. I find this very interesting and it is certainly very intriguing to examine this movement and the factors influencing it more closely. Of course, this development is only possible in cases where there is time to gather new experiences and then develop a new attitude.

#### Annemarie Jaeggi

«taking a stand» as a concept

That is an important keyword. Taking a stand is very often taken to mean being true to oneself, but adopting a clear attitude can also involve a certain development; an attitude can also be revised or broadened or narrowed, while, especially in a political context, such an attitude can also run into turbulence or it can become entrenched. That would also be a question that I would like to pass on to Ms. Hoekstra. How is being at peace with oneself, so to speak, and being true to oneself manifested? After all that we have heard today, we certainly do not see it in terms of style, an

- [N] How do our own cultural, social, and political beliefs and stances affect our understanding of the Bauhaus, Modernism, and modernity?

external stance, if we want to equate that idea of attitude or taking a stand with a «stance».

Titia Rixt Hoekstra

- [N] OK, I don't know if it answers your question, but what it means to live with yourself and to live in honesty with yourself is, I think, a question that we can ask our subjects as historians, but perhaps it is also something we can ask ourselves as historians, because as historians we are adopting a stance vis-à-vis the subjects that we study. And we bring ourselves into the study of our subjects, so whether you are conscious of it or unconscious of it, you always bring yourself into the subjects that you study. This means that it is not only about the attitude or stance of the subject that you study; the question is also what is your own attitude or stance as a historian, what kind of interest do you have? It is in the tradition of Hans Georg Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics: Our understanding of the past is always connected to our own individual horizon as historians, what Gadamer called the «horizon of experience» of each of us. That is not a limitation, but a necessary condition for successful «understanding» of the past. The point where your own attitude or stance meets with that of the subject of your study is where the interpretation of the past starts.

complexity of taking a stand

Another thing is that for the architects discussed here today I see a tension between, on the one hand, their ideological standpoints, their visions of planning and building for a «new world», and, on the other hand, the force of contingency, the twists of fate that were so decisive for their lives. The architects that we discussed here had dreams of a better world and strong opinions about the sort of architecture they wanted to make, but their lives were decided by wars, regime changes, the need to escape: in other words, by world events that they could not control. I think their productivity as architects was located exactly at the crossroads between intentionality and contingency: at the point of having ambitions and ideas and at the same time trying to accept the world as it is and making the most of it. I think this applies to the career of architects like Hannes Meyer and Bruno Taut. Being a visionary architect does not exclude being a pragmatist too. I think for them in the end it was important to «save» their productivity, so that they could still be active as architects, also when circumstances changed. Of course, the critical question might thus be: What did these architects sacrifice in the name of their productivity? Were they still true to their initial idealism? For historians,

- [A] Can we see in the Bauhaus as a whole—despite its apparent heterogeneity—a uniform stance or even something like the epitome of a social attitude?
- [L] How did widespread ideas about the Bauhaus evolve? How do they relate to historical facts and which stances, interests and mechanisms do they reveal?

value judgments  
complexity of taking a stand

this also entails a question of judgment. Do you value their flexibility to adjust to different political contexts, their continued productivity as architects, or do you measure them against their honesty towards their initial beliefs?

### Annemarie Jaeggi

modernism as an attitude  
bauhaus as a social attitude

- [A] If we describe the Modernist project as being about an attitude, as Simone Hain suggested, then we also associate certain things with it that are perhaps stereotypes in the positive sense of the term, in other words, social concerns or the aspiration to include a social aspect. In your section, Ms. Mende, we heard about marked process of displacement in Palestine due to modern societal changes. In view of this, how would you deal with the question of attitude?

### Doreen Mende

practice of decolonization

modernism complex

bauhaus as a complex of  
material culture, ideas, and  
(geo)-politics

Thank you! I think that the question of attitude—and on this I would agree with the previous speaker, Rixt Hoekstra—should not end with an analytical, architectural-historical discussion, but should lead on to the practice of decolonization, which for me contains a very central question—especially with regard to this «Bauhaus complex», as I would like to call the Bauhaus, in order to express a sense that it is multi-layered. We have seen today, especially in the last panel, to what a pronounced degree the Bauhaus is embedded in political and social contexts or is more or less determined by political and social conditions. And here I would also like to contradict an opinion expressed during my panel. I see Israel and Palestine in the context of geopolitics and in the context of Europe's project of modernity, which also includes the British Mandate area. Unless we become aware of this intertwined past—this «entangled history»—it will ultimately not be possible to understand architectural history either.

bauhaus' history of reception

bauhaus signifying  
democracy and freedom

decolonial approach

value-generating systems

- [L] I would also like to draw attention here once again to the idea in the history of reception that the Bauhaus project was connected with liberation movements, internationalism, with ideas of a «new man» and was linked to an ideal of freedom that is also a Western humanist ideal. This is precisely the issue Maria Stavri-naki addressed at a Bauhaus conference in Berne in the context of the *bauhaus imaginista* exhibition, where she showed how this history of reception has produced a discourse that is concerned with «value-making systems», in other words, systems that create value, both morally and economically.<sup>1</sup> In our panel, we had a few examples of how the Bauhaus is instrumentalized to carry

- [A] Can we see in the Bauhaus as a whole—despite its apparent heterogeneity—a uniform stance or even something like the epitome of a social attitude?
- [B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?
- [N] How do our own cultural, social, and political beliefs and stances affect our understanding of the Bauhaus, Modernism, and modernity?

out «white washing»: not only the «Bauhaus City» in Tel Aviv as a «White City», but also the reception history of Mart Stam that Simone Hain presented to us, which shows how a political project is simply discarded. In view of this, I believe we are already in the midst of a paradigm shift today. I am very happy that it is possible to discuss the Bauhaus complex and this form of practice in a political context, and that at the same time we are reflecting on and engaging with our own practice. I think that one central aspect is that all the panellists in our section also took a stand themselves.

#### Annemarie Jaeggi

Andrea Bärnreuther, you had the idea for this conference, and you worked during a preparatory phase on structuring everything and organizing a call for papers. What was the actual idea, and what responses did you receive to the question you asked?

#### Andrea Bärnreuther

I caught a ball that was thrown to me, that was the first thing. The title of the symposium «Taking a stand? [literal translation of the German title: What does attitude mean here?] debating the Bauhaus and Modernism» reacts to the idea of the Bauhaus or *Neues Bauen* as a «social attitude», a concept that has been particularly prevalent in the context of the anniversary, especially from the political side, because in fact the attitudes of Bauhaus teacher and students and Modernist architects were neither uniform nor immutable. So what I wanted to do was to scrutinize this idea in the symposium and at the same time set the concept of «taking a stand» in motion and first of all ask what is to be understood as «attitude» in our context and how it becomes visible and tangible.

The fundamental question of what attitude means here or what it signifies to take a stand referred both to the historical object, the historical Bauhaus and Modernism, and to the attitude with which we face history and the challenges of the present, because the two cannot be separated from each other. I subsequently circulated the call for papers, as you mentioned, which envisaged enquiring what happened under National Socialism, in emigration and exile and in a divided Germany to the idea of planning and building for a «New World» mooted by Bauhaus architects and Modernist architects. By looking at the National Socialist era in the light of the paradigm of modernization and expanding the perspective to include Modernism in emigration and exile and its partly colonial contexts as well as within the systemic competition between East

bauhaus as a social attitude  
modernism as an attitude

bauhaus centenary  
politics of memory

«taking a stand» as a concept

- [K] There are many facets of Modernism and modernity as well as many ambivalent aspects. What does that mean for our own concepts and visions?
- [L] How did widespread ideas about the Bauhaus evolve? How do they relate to historical facts and which stances, interests and mechanisms do they reveal?
- [N] How do our own cultural, social, and political beliefs and stances affect our understanding of the Bauhaus, Modernism, and modernity?

[K] and West, the intent was to examine the ambivalences of «Modernity» along with tendencies in thinking and acting that continue to have an impact today.

The balls that were thrown to me in response to my call for papers then caused me to move away from the three historical thematic blocks and to develop precisely the three sections that have formed the symposium, each of which highlights one set of questions, but in essence always contains the other two sets of questions as well. In Section I «Planning and Building for a «New World»? Conflict Situations, Fields of Tension, Learning Processes», the central question is how attitudes can be defined and how they are also articulated in architecture and design or in planning processes. To return to the issue of «right-wing spaces»<sup>2</sup>, I believe that in our context one must go beyond the political position model developed by Slavoj Žižek and taken up by Stephan Trüby. I also think it is essential not to see attitude as something immutable and not to view immutability, which can also signify stubbornness or rigidity, as a value in its own right, but instead to set this concept of attitude in motion in order to open it up to learning processes; those are essential and vital, especially in emigration and exile, but of course also in general and especially in today's migration societies. The concept of attitude must also include a self-critical perspective; to cite social theorist Peter Wagner, who defines Modernism in *bauhaus now* (2019) as an attitude «towards the world and one's own being in the world» and locates it «between triumph and doubt», a «sceptical, doubting attitude», and one can add, even self-criticism is an inseparable part of Modernism.<sup>3</sup>

«taking a stand» as a concept  
learning processes  
emigration and exile

self-critique of modernism

- [L] Another central idea that subsequently became the basis for Section III entailed reflecting on our historical location in the Bauhaus anniversary year and to call ourselves into question and determine our position. Anniversaries are always about a politics of remembrance. This means that it is not primarily a matter of developing a picture of the historical object that is as differentiated as possible, but rather about appropriation, the creation of meaning and identification and their use as resources for shaping the future.
- [N] However fundamentally different historiography and the politics of memory may be, they do not exist independently of each other, and attitudes crystallize in the processes of reception and repression they involve, as well as in their «constructions».

bauhaus centenary  
politics of memory

identity formation  
bauhaus historiography

In contrast to the other two sections, Section II is already based on a Bauhaus understanding within which an attitude is crystallized. The significance of understanding the Bauhaus as



- [G] Which ways of taking a stand can we discover in processes of Bauhaus transfer, translation, and transformation?
- [H] What does it mean to understand the Bauhaus as a transnational and transcultural network of relationships?

bauhaus as a transnational  
and transcultural network  
of relationships

bauhaus as a major  
german export

[G] [H] a transnational and transcultural network of relationships in the political sphere, which is always determined by asymmetrical power relations, becomes immediately clear when this understanding, which also underpins the *bauhaus imaginista* exhibition and research project, is contrasted with the idea of the Bauhaus as a German export hit, which has come even more to the fore during the Bauhaus anniversary year. This understanding opens up questions concerning attitude on various levels from different perspectives in the present and in the past, which also always brings the question of value standards into the equation and which above all requires the Bauhaus, in its explorations, to once again become a driving force for transnational and transcultural exchange and transform the historical asymmetry of power relations and conditions.

Looking at our symposium now, we see that the balls that I have picked up and thrown back into the circle have multiplied and taken many new directions in the discussion, especially when addressing case studies. And I am not only very grateful to all participants for this, but I am also really keen to continue this ball game—although then inevitably mainly bilaterally—along the pathway to a publication, which I imagine—in the Bauhaus spirit—as being more like a workshop than a documentation in the sense of conference proceedings.

#### Annemarie Jaeggi

Then I shall now pass the ball to the audience.

#### Ulrich Hartung

Yes, I think what I have after all learned, as someone who admittedly enjoys arguing, is that today, I believe, in the very diverse range of contributions, we have seen not only a very welcome increase in factual information about the Bauhaus in every single contribution—I hope also in mine—but also that this healthy dose of positivism, namely now being able to say one also knows a little more about the phenomenon, is also a value in its own right. I would call for a more relaxed approach, for less fundamental criticism, which has not become more topical or more necessary since 1968; I also call for Modernism to be accorded what is accepted in every Postmodernist coffee-table book, as I have said, namely diversity. In that case it can also be fine to say that the kibbutzim and Zina Dizengoff Square in Tel Aviv, with its truly banalized architecture, existed side by side: so what? After all, there are worse

diversity of modernism

- [C] How can we explore the kinds of stand taken by Bauhaus and Modernist architects and designers and their consistency?
- [K] There are many facets of Modernism and modernity as well as many ambivalent aspects. What does that mean for our own concepts and visions?

things than either of those. For example, banal Wilhelminian-era architecture has always been an abomination, whereas, for good reasons, Modernist architecture comparatively comes out quite well.

Coming back to Richard Paulick for a moment. We can learn a lot from engaging with him in relation to our question of attitude, because someone like him, who—perhaps even out of inner conviction—once turned away from Modernism had such a hard time regaining his attitude towards it later. And that makes it even more interesting not just that he succeeded but also how he did so. I am thinking about history that is not smooth and un-ruffled, but is complicated, entangled, and diverse history: That is what we can see, and we should develop greater awareness of it.

#### Annemarie Jaeggi

I think that has also become clear today; diversity of opinions is important to us. We will certainly hear something from Mr. Oswald now that will also contribute to such diversity of opinions.

#### Philipp Oswald

- [C] I would like to add, with reference to the last panel and also the one now under discussion, that I would find it interesting if this question of attitude were always accompanied by the question of consistency or the internal contradictions of this attitude. I commented critically earlier about Gropius' Bauhaus, but of course similar points could be made regarding Meyer's Bauhaus or Mart Stam. Perhaps that really ought to be done; in this respect I tend to be someone who tries to brush history against the grain, as Walter Benjamin put it. Simone Hain used the term humanism a moment ago, and it has to be said that these architects I greatly admire do of course also have their dark sides, and the kibbutz movement, for all its enthusiasm for this kind of bottom-up, democratic Socialism, was of course also a colonialist project, and that is its dark flipside.
- [K] And, of course, Mart Stam was also in the Soviet Union, in Magnitogorsk, for example, during an era when it was a gulag state, so we have to somehow bear that in mind and ask ourselves what that means. These inconsistencies concern the various different facets of the Bauhaus.

#### Annemarie Jaeggi

I would now like to run through the complex of questions concerning the term «homeless» and nomadism again. Mr. Medina

homelessness as a concept

Warmburg, isn't being nomadic, really being at home nowhere and everywhere, isn't that also part of Modernism and the Bauhaus?

Joaquín Medina Warmburg

historical homelessness

Yes, I'm just thinking of Nerdinger's quote from Walter Benjamin's criticism of the Bauhaus, where he speaks of «living without a trace» and «lodgings» for residential nomads, or of Oskar Schlemmer's dictum: «instead of cathedrals, the machine for living». I think it is actually interesting that this new form of inhabiting the earth around 1922 in the Bauhaus programme or in its ideas on housing—always under the conditions of industrialization—and in contemporary Bauhaus reception or criticism is something that is mirrored in what actually happened in subsequent historical developments, with the emigration of Bauhaus teachers and students, as well as *Neues Bauen* [New Building] architects.

integrating buildings into their respective regions

adapting architecture to local conditions

regionalist modernism

At the same time, however, I also see repeated attempts to counteract this, i.e., especially with regard to Latin America, there are efforts—analogue to Bruno Taut's approach—to locate architecture, to have it put down roots. And I note that architects in Latin America argue that if we really want to remain true to the modern attitude, we have to change our architecture and actually work with the place, with the climatic conditions, with the materials, with the social conditions, and locate our idea of modern architecture in a specific place and bring it back down to earth. There are many examples where the argument is precisely that everything needs to change, also formally in the conception of modern architecture, so that Modernism itself can thus survive.

Annemarie Jaeggi

emigration and exile

And conversely, you could also ask: If I know, in a situation of exile or migration, that I'm only in a place for a few years maybe, or at least only for a certain time, and then I'm going to leave again, so that I don't have any intention of becoming at home there and finding a home, what does that mean for my attitude? That is the other question that one must always factor in: How pronounced is a form of opening up to a place, and is it a real cultural transfer, or to what extent do you perhaps end up sticking persistently to the opinions you brought along with you in those kinds of situation?

Titia Rixt Hoekstra

I think that we had also a bit of discussion about this in our session and that the question of what attitude means in this respect

complexity of taking a stand

homelessness as a concept  
historical homelessness

modern vs. historicizing  
architecture

is really very complex, because the architects had to make a calculation: What should I do in order to be productive and to do what I want to do? How should I define my position? And what I found out, what other speakers told me, is that it is extremely difficult to have a good definition of that complexity, because it really differs from case to case. Ryan Fred Long told me something particularly interesting: We can understand this sort of homelessness not only in a geographical sense but also in a historical sense. If I understand correctly, the point was that the very concept of modern architecture in itself means a sort of orphan state, in the sense that you no longer have your parents or you no longer have the historical traditions and you have to manage without them, so that homelessness is not only about someone who produces architecture and has to face the fact that he does not have a home, but users of architecture are also faced with a kind of homelessness. Here again, we find the complexity of this whole issue and that is a point that I thought was an interesting notion, something like historical homelessness.

#### Annemarie Jaeggi

And for Tel Aviv, one could say that an attempt was made to create a homeland, a sense of feeling at home, so to speak—with the European means that people had brought with them, right down to the materials—but actually by using an ideology of being homeless. What would your view be on that point, Ms. Mende?

#### Doreen Mende

thinking from the perspective  
of diasporic conditions

That is a difficult question! This is a completely new arena. Two thoughts occur to me here: 1) Hannah Arendt, in her analysis of totalitarianism, referred to the 20th century as the century of refugees. I think this should be seen as the condition that forms the point of departure for thinking about all this. That is central to the founding of the State of Israel, the large diaspora communities as well as the large cosmopolitan Jewish diaspora community. 2) And as far as homeless ideology is concerned, when I was addressing Konrad Püschel—who also studied at the Bauhaus under Hannes Meyer, was later in Moscow with him, and was instrumental in planning the city of Hamhung in North Korea in 1954—I noticed that he considered it constitutive for his work as an architect and urban planner to study not only the colonial architecture of Japan in Korea, but also the regional native or indigenous architectural culture. There is a comprehensive essay by Püschel in academic

tension between universalism  
and regionalism

displacement as a concept

thinking from the perspective of  
diasporic conditions

papers from the Bauhaus University in Weimar from 1956/57, and I think that this is very important to take into account as well. This means that we should perhaps speak more of hybrids, without, however, transferring this too markedly into such a contemporary context. Another question that always preoccupied us when we were working on *bauhaus imaginista* concerned the tension that Ryan Fred Long addressed too—the tension between universalism and regionalism, and how these are intertwined and intermesh with one another. And that I think is also something that puts this concept of «displacement» on yet another different plane. In other words, we are all migrants; I think that is something that we also need to bear in mind to some extent when looking at this in a medium-term or long-term constellation. So that here in Berlin, as someone who was born in the GDR, I would even like to bring that factor into the discussion too. But that is not an exception, I would like to make that point clearly—it is not an exception. Of course, we have to differentiate, which means that of course it is also not correct either if I say that we are all migrants, but I think we have to learn to think from the perspective of a diasporic condition, as Hannah Arendt has suggested.

#### Notes

1 Maria Stavrinaki, «The Threads of the Past: Weaving as a Historical Metaphor in the Bauhaus», lecture in the context of the conference *Multiple Modernen*, 15th and 16th November 2019, during the *bauhaus imaginista* exhibition, Paul Klee Zentrum Bern, Switzerland. Published as: «Dry Time—Anni Albers Weaving the Threads of the Past», in: *bauhaus imaginista Journal*, Edition 2: Learning from, <http://www.bauhaus-imaginista.org> (Consulted on May 5, 2020).

2 See the project initiated by Stephan Trüby «Rechte Räume—Bericht einer Europareise», in: *ARCH+* 235, 29.05.2019, <https://www.archplus.net/home/archiv/ausgabe/46,231,1,0.html>. (Consulted on May 12, 2020)

3 Peter Wagner, «Zwischen Triumph und Zweifel. Ist Moderne eine Haltung?», in: *bauhaus now*, *Das offizielle Magazin zum Bauhaus-jubiläum 2019*, (ed.) 100 Jahre bauhaus. Geschäftsstelle Bauhaus Verbund 2019, Issue 1 (2018), pp. 24–30.