

# Panel Discussion III

with Simone Hain, Philipp Oswalt,  
Ronny Schüler, and the Audience  
chaired by Doreen Mende



- [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?

### Doreen Mende

This panel's title is «Historiography and politics of memory, processes of reception and repression» but it could also have been called «The Bauhaus—Geopolitics in the context of <marginal counter-history>», to pick up on this concept of Kenneth Frampton from Ryan Fred Long's lecture. This panel is thus dedicated to the Bauhaus as a Modernist project par excellence: This is a Modernism shaped by violence, wars, and rationalization, which confronts us with a conflictual and ambivalent Modernism as a kind of «Modernism complex». In the words of art historian Maria Stavrinaki, Modernism utilises the «privilege of purity, of whiteness» in a world contaminated by war and genocide.<sup>1</sup> «Material misery», as Walter Benjamin called the situation in Germany after the First World War and the Spartacus Uprising in January 1919, was to be transformed into spiritual or moral wealth, with a universal model for a new society.

In our discussion I would like to talk about the ambivalences of this Modernism complex, which also still characterize our present and which, as ghostly matter, continue to unsettle us—perhaps to the chagrin of those who want to see the Bauhaus as a dominant mono-culture, and to the delight of those who, like the conference organizers and participants, propose that this «marginal counter-history» be connected with a declaration of independence, which was discussed in the last panel in the context of the problem of dependencies. I would also like to use this discussion to introduce a politics of difference into current situations.

Philipp Oswalt has contributed an enormously important discourse on how a political economy implants marketing strategies into the Bauhaus and how a lifestyle is declared on the basis of a marketing strategy discourse, a process that in the case of Palestine and Israel, as a politically highly explosive context, can also be described as «whitening». It is a conflict-laden and important discourse that affords scope to discuss the proxy politics of European Modernism, also in terms of ideological appropriation and expropriation by means of political-economic strategies, as happened in the branding of a «White City» in Tel Aviv. It seems to me as if «the Bauhaus» in Tel Aviv had realized all the traits of European modernist imperatives, as if we were dealing here with European (geo)politics that uses architecture as a means: architecture as a «mass medium» (Beatriz Colomina),<sup>2</sup> to implant or project «purity»—the White City—, unity, the new and future-oriented. An imperative of European Modernism par excellence. Must we also

bauhaus and geopolitics  
marginal counter-history

modernism complex

idea of a new «society»  
claim to universal validity

designing a politics of difference

bauhaus as a marketing strategy

bauhaus brand  
«bauhaus» white city

modernist imperatives

architecture as a mass medium

[K]

- [M] What are the criteria for being included in history or excluded from it, and for historical relevance? What kinds of stand do they reveal, and which blind spots and cognitive shortcomings do they generate?

imperialism  
colonialism

read «the Bauhaus» as a project of Modernism in the context of imperialism, as Samia Henni suggests when she writes «Architecture, for me, is intertwined with articulations of imperialism and colonialism. In the last 50 years, the making of the history and theory of architecture, has not paid enough attention to these articulations. Is this because the peak coincided with the tensions of the Cold War and the self-registration on one of the sides of the Iron Curtain?»<sup>3</sup>

social -utopian aspirations  
labour movement

Ronny Schüler illuminated another facet of the Bauhaus: It is both helpful and essential to recall the Bauhaus' social-utopian concerns and its connection to the 1920s labour movement, as Marion von Osten has repeatedly emphasized in her own research in the context of *bauhaus imaginista*.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the Bauhaus in the post-war context also seems to me to be part of the Cold War scenario. What kind of architecture-mediated geopolitical connections existed between Tel Aviv and Moscow? How could the tension between founding a state and internationalism be represented here?

bauhaus and geopolitics

tension between state/nation-building  
and internationalism

- [M] And finally, within which Bauhaus narrative could Mart Stam's practice be categorized? Or does the figure of Mart Stam precisely resist such categorization?

bauhaus historiography

First, however, I should like to give the audience the floor. Do you have any questions, comments, remarks, urgent issues that you would like to raise immediately with one or all three contributors?

#### Ulrich Hartung

bauhaus reception in the federal  
republic of germany

I would like to make a comment on Philipp Oswalt's paper or, to be more precise, raise a threefold problem I have with it. First, in my opinion, it reveals a problem that perhaps characterizes all those years of Bauhaus reception in the Federal Republic of Germany. Essentially, you can start the question in the same way as the little girl on YouTube who screams «What is your problem?» and then slams the door. What is the problem? I do not see the problem. We have a city here that has in fact experienced the best thing that could have happened to it in the form of its white Modernism, namely uniform yet differentiated architecture. It is wonderful that over and above this there was also a variant of Modernism in the kibbutzim but—and this is my second point—Philipp Oswalt does not interpret it in the way we should—to my mind—interpret it, namely in terms of Modernism's diversity. Why can't we concede that Modernism could also have the kind of diversity that

diversity of modernism

[H] What does it mean to understand the Bauhaus as a transnational and transcultural network of relationships?

value judgments

Postmodernism—in its superficiality could refer to anything at all, including Nazi architecture—has claimed? For some time now, I have had the impression that there is no-one given the benefit of the doubt when dealing with the Bauhaus and Modernism. That means in our case that what could also be described as diversity is always interpreted as something negative with reference to Modernism. That ignores the question of whether there is not also a positive trait in diversity that you cannot or do not want to recognize, because you are not in a position to judge that these individual buildings in Tel Aviv make no contribution whatsoever to helping advance the culture of residential architecture, because you were only in Tel Aviv as a tourist. You would have to live there for longer. And thirdly, this paper is also irresponsible, because in a context in which extraordinary sensitivity would be appropriate, you have revived two of the worst anti-Semitic clichés, namely the entrepreneurial spirit, clever marketing and so on, and the typical cliché of non-creativity. That is extremely politically thoughtless.

#### Ronny Schüler

In this context, I would like to refer to Alexandra Klei's text *Wie das Bauhaus nach Tel Aviv kam: Re-Konstruktion einer Idee in Text, Bild und Architektur*, published in August 2019, which traces out very precisely the steps and methods deployed in actually constructing this myth. I think that any suspicion of anti-Semitism can be completely ruled out here. What is interesting is in fact the counter-perspective. I find it entirely justified to ask what is wrong with celebrating a brand here? What about if we ask the people who live there? When I talk to my friends in Tel Aviv about the Bauhaus hype, they say: «Don't take it away from us!» So it does have an identity-defining function, but at the same time they are now realizing that branding also plays a part in a gentrification process, which, from a German perspective, is so infinitely much worse than what we are complaining about here. And even people who benefit from German support, for example colleagues in the Liebling-Haus, which has been restored and was inaugurated in the Bauhaus anniversary year as «White City Center», a German-Israeli centre for architecture and cultural heritage manage-

bauhaus brand  
«bauhaus» white city

identity formation  
gentrification

[H] ment, complain about a kind of colonisation or appropriation—if, for example, coverage in the German press gives the impression that it actually belongs to us or that the Jews didn't really take care of it so that we now have to pump German taxpayers' money into it. That means there is also unease within academic circles

- [J] The Bauhaus embraces different versions and ways of taking a stand. Which version or stance could help us tackle present and future challenges?
- [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?

in Israel, who of course also realize that there were relatively few Bauhaus graduates when the White City was built and who also know that bourgeois urban development has nothing to do with the Bauhaus' central ideals. But they also noticeably feel the kind of uneasiness that comes from this kind of appropriation from the outside. For these reasons alone, I would certainly not be inclined towards the kind of emphatic assertions Philipp Oswalt makes; on the other hand, I would ask: How do the people on the ground feel about it?

#### Philipp Oswalt

I'd say this critical discourse already has a history that goes back about twenty years; let me just mention Sharon Rotbard here, an important Jewish Israeli scholar, who set the concept of the «White City» in opposition to that of a «Black City», the city of the Arabs who were driven out of their villages and settlements. Other Jewish Israeli researchers have worked on this too, and I clearly refer to them in my text. I only spotted Alexandra Klei's book last week ago and have not managed to read it yet.

Anyway, I find it completely absurd to call my critical reflection anti-Semitic, I have Jewish roots myself and have tried to present both the positive effects and the problematic sides of the situation. Critical reflection must always be possible in scholarship, it is part of the core business of academic study. What I wanted to show was that when I looked at the Bauhaus and at Tel Aviv as a Bauhaus city, it became relatively clear to me how much a dominant image of the Bauhaus—and we are talking here about a state of affairs that was 80, 90 or 100 years ago—is shaped by reception stories or narratives and becomes detached from historical facts. And I find it extremely important for myself to understand the mechanisms behind this. I want to try to understand how this kind of image comes into being, and why it arises. Of course, every kind of historiography is driven by interests, including my own; I don't want to deny that I am not impartial either but simply try to make that explicit, and one might once ask again: Why be so pedantic? If we understand Modernism not merely as a historical phenomenon, but also in the light of its significance for the present, then I cannot envision it as falling into such a pleasingly broad category. Instead, for me it is always about a debate too, about questions such as which Modernism we mean or which Modernism we want. And which Modernism might perhaps also stimulate us today? Then I try to work out what I find somehow acceptable,

«white city» vs. «black city»

[L]

[J]

- [O] What is the significance and relevance of the Bauhaus and Modernism today—a historical phenomenon or a resource for the present? And what, if anything, constitutes their current relevance?

what is problematic, and in this respect I am concerned with exactly this precision, this clarification of what it is all about and

- [O] I also consider that to be absolutely necessary if it is to have any kind of relevance, which is why I am so categorical on this point.

### Doreen Mende

I would like to come back once more to the question of the extent to which this Bauhaus complex is embedded in political-economic, geopolitical and ideological struggles. I think that this panel has clearly shown a wide variety of conflicts and struggles, and that this discussion offers a good opportunity to link into problems and issues raised in the previous panels. I'm interested in the aspects Simone Hain has brought into focus and what Marion von Osten together with Grant Watson and the *bauhaus imaginista* research and exhibition project stand for, in terms of understanding the Modernist project as also being about a history of attitudes. I think we must practice using various vocabularies and methods that make a range of different attitudes possible. It may be difficult but it is more necessary than ever and perhaps the Bauhaus in this context is also a very central kind of platform or a post-historical foil that can make it possible to address the discrepancy between nationalism—with the Bauhaus having a kind of state-founding function—and internationalism, where emancipatory potentials of independence arise from the various Bauhaus geographies. These areas of tension are very tangibly present. They are articulated very differently, as Ronny Schüler has just explained so wonderfully. That's why I'd like to put a question to Ronny: Do we understand the Bauhaus—as Marion von Osten does—as being embedded in labour movements as societal projects of Modernism that tried to pave the way for another society that engages with economy, politics and internationalism? Hannes Meyer is certainly a central figure here. I would also view kibbutz architecture and geopolitics as very central themes in this context. But there is also the question of how this social-utopian project of the kibbutz was received in Moscow. Other issues that tie into that would be the question of architecture as a weapon and the state-founding function of architecture—architecture as a practice of state crafting.

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

modernist project as a history of attitudes

tension between state/nation-building and internationalism

societal projects of modernism labour movement

kibbutz movement social-utopian aspirations bauhaus and geopolitics

architecture as a weapon bauhaus and nation/state building

### Ronny Schüler

Yes, thank you—that is of course the fundamental question that concerns us: Why was Modernism so successful specifically in Palestine in the 1930s? Tel Aviv, we have heard, is an absolute

labour movement  
kibbutz movement

anomaly in this context. Most of what has been produced originates as a specific manifestation in the context of the labour movement and the kibbutz movement. I deliberately did not focus on the kibbutz movement in my paper, as we have already very extensive and wonderful literature on the topic.

Of course, the Soviet Union was always a point of reference. To this day, Stalin portraits still hang in the dining halls in some particularly orthodox kibbutzim, while the majority have since been transformed. People read Soviet writers, the anarchist authors: Pyotr Kropotkin is always mentioned. At the same time, however, it is important to bear in mind that this is a unique, a very characteristic phenomenon. Shmuel Mestechkin, for example, quite deliberately did not choose *HaShomer HaTza'ir*—an international Socialist-Zionist youth organization—, because it was too uncritical of the Soviet Union, and he had seen for himself the kind of pogroms that took place in his homeland after the Revolution. His family had also suffered from them.

bauhaus and geopolitics

kibbutz movement

I really have not engaged with geopolitics, but I have read that the Soviet Union was more a point of reference for intellectuals in the kibbutz movement, especially in *HaShomer HaTza'ir*. Moscow probably had little interest in the region in the 1930s and 40s; geopolitics were determined by Great Britain and France. In this balance of power, the Yishuv, i.e. the Jewish community, did not play a role either in terms of numbers or economically. It was probably more of an irritant to the Mandate authorities because of the nascent conflicts with the Arab population. The money initially came from Europe and then from the USA, in other words, from countries that were capitalist—and, ironically, socialist projects were financed.

I do not know of any special interest in the kibbutzim in the period after the founding of the state—attention was directed more in the opposite direction. However, the Soviets had supported the Arab states in the 1967 and 1973 wars, especially Syria. That must have significantly cooled the kibbutzniks' enthusiasm. The turning point came in 1973, when the USA, which for so long had not been at all interested in the region, suddenly discovered Israel's strategic importance. I showed those photos of the *Aircraft Carrier*: In 2012, the Israeli pavilion at the Venice Biennale dealt with precisely this situation of rupture, and the *Aircraft Carrier*—i.e. the largest aircraft carrier that the USA has, namely the State of Israel—was suddenly located within Cold War geopolitics there.

bauhaus and nation/  
state building

national identity construction

architecture as a weapon

Architecture naturally plays an essential role when it comes to nation building or state crafting. Anna Minta dealt with this more than fifteen years ago, looking back on the period between the founding of the State of Israel (1948) and the Six Day War (1967). As well as looking at urban planning and policy on protecting cultural monuments, she also addressed architecture, which was intended to create a new, Israeli identity—and therefore necessarily had to be different from the culture and architecture in Galicia or Morocco. In recent years, Zvi Efrat and Alona Nitzan-Shiftan have published collections of material on this subject. Such considerations existed much earlier, and this could be one reason why *Neues Bauen* [New Building] was successful in the 1930s.

The topic of «architecture as a weapon» is admittedly very delicate. I did not mention it in the lecture, but Shmuel Mestechkin was involved in the «Wall and Tower» operation in 1936. In this operation, prefabricated elements were used to erect a tower and an enclosing wall overnight, which then had to be recognized as a settlement under old Ottoman law. There were already armed conflicts with the Arab population at this time, and these outposts served not only for defence—but also in seizure of land. This is still a problematic issue today, as many kibbutzim have emerged from such settlements. That is where the real explosive power of geopolitics lies when it comes to architecture.

#### Doreen Mende

modernism complex

bauhaus' history of reception  
bauhaus as a social project

bauhaus as a marketing strategy

decolonial approach

Yes, there is a great deal to discuss. This brings me to the question of why the Bauhaus is so suitable as a platform and offers such a wide spectrum of conflicting and ambivalent aspects of this Modernism complex. Is it because of the international dimension of the Bauhaus as a Modernist project? Or is it because of the history of its reception? Simone Hain's lecture clearly emphasized the extent to which the history of reception must be understood as part of the Bauhaus as a social project. The same applies to Philipp Oswalt's paper, which showed how the Bauhaus project operates as a marketing strategy, as if this Modernist principle of architecture as a mass medium was fulfilled precisely in that respect, as Beatriz Colomina put it a few decades later in the publication *Privacy and Publicity: Architecture as Mass Media* (1994). Can we take this relationship of tension as a locus of reflection? Perhaps it would be possible to introduce a de- or anti-colonial approach here, as suggested by Samia Henni or Marion von Osten,

for example: an approach that, on the basis of both architectural practice and architectural theory, attempts to think about politics, or rather about types of colonialism and imperialism as part of architectural practice and theory. Could or should that perhaps be today's mission?

Philipp Oswalt

It is a little difficult to make this clear in a short statement. The point I tried to explain in more detail in my new book *Marke Bauhaus 1919–2019: Der Sieg der ikonischen Form über den Gebrauch* is why the Bauhaus is more present than ever, even eighty years after its closure. I think there are certainly multiple reasons. I would identify one as being the fact that building this brand was perhaps Walter Gropius' greatest achievement. Admittedly, that can be appraised in both positive and negative terms, but I would in the first instance view it as an achievement. The aspect I find so disturbing about it is the discrepancy between what the Bauhaus promised and what it achieved in terms of practice. I have a problem with that. In my understanding, Gropius was not a Functionalist architect, but rather, to put it bluntly, he was an advertising architect, and very successfully, as a matter of fact. And in this respect, the question arises as to whether Gropius should not be read quite differently, because this is also an innovation that undoubtedly touches a nerve in consumer capitalism. And he was already very successful in this role during his Bauhaus period: The 1923 exhibition was an unparalleled PR coup, where he really inscribed himself in European avant-garde history, at a time when his colleagues on the Council of Masters were wondering what they were actually showing or why they were doing this exhibition in the first place due to a lack of results that could be presented. Yes, there were great doubts about that and Gerhard Marcks was already joking back then that they would all be smoking the Bauhaus brand now, i.e. cigarettes; in 1922, when they were debating the exhibition in the Council of Masters, he was the first to discuss building a brand. Gropius however was not to be deterred and was determined to build up a brand, which, as we all know, he did very successfully. These constant disputes about the Bauhaus certainly played a role in brand profiling, these political controversies, and it has to be said that it wasn't just a matter of the National Socialists but also the conservative forces during the Weimar period—at times it is somehow entertaining to see how much CDU supporters identify with the Bauhaus today,

bauhaus brand

bauhaus as a marketing strategy

bauhaus myths

national identity construction

bauhaus as  
nazi germany's antithesis

while the CDU's predecessor party was very much in the other camp. Of course, that also contributed to processes of solidarity, as well as to a PR presence, although this demonstrative closure by the National Socialists or under their pressure created a myth that was given a particular boost by the Bauhaus' post-1945 role in constructing West German identity. There are multiple causes for the Bauhaus brand's success. Even the term Bauhaus is simply an incredibly good brand name. It is now disputed whether Gropius invented the name or not. Dietrich Neumann published an article («Wie Gropius einen Namen stahl», in *FAZ.NET* on October 8, 2019), demonstrating that the architect and entrepreneur Albert Gessner had already founded a «Bauhaus GmbH» in Berlin in 1915—in other words, four years earlier. We will probably never find out whether Gropius knew about this or whether he came up with the name himself.

#### Simone Hain

modernist project  
as a history of attitudes

Perhaps I could just pick up on that immediately: It is also part of the Bauhaus narrative of someone sitting in a glass house and trying to throw stones. I am talking about Hannes Meyer, who should probably be given the honour of being the first to defy the anti-social stylisation and marketing trends and the unrestrained branding. In historiographic terms it is regrettable that Meyer, who said of himself, «as Bauhaus director I fought against the Bauhaus style», does not really move beyond this position of being diametrically opposed, which in Gropius' eyes cast him as someone who destroyed the Bauhaus. Meyer is portrayed as being at odds with himself and remains incomprehensible. More radical architects, such as Mart Stam or Hans Schmidt, would never, ever, have become entangled in any copyright issues. Yes, Stam did distance himself a little from Meyer during his time at the Bauhaus by mockingly commenting that «Meyer takes himself too seriously». I think that, while in conflict with Gropius, Hannes Meyer was driven to do something that simply did not fit into the alternative concept of Co-op, a cooperative, labour-based «grassroots Modernism» inspired by Kropotkin. At first it was said that they all worked collectively and anonymously at the Bauhaus, then Meyer himself repeatedly retracted this for reasons of competition and thus pushed himself forward as «that» Hannes Meyer with «his» Bauhaus in an effective promotional strategy that carried his renown as far as Moscow. And that was a twofold tragedy for the completely solid substantive programme.

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

constructivism

societal projects of modernism

new building of the future  
reshaping the world

We need to understand the theory and aesthetics of Constructivism, which had its roots in Basel and in Prague, Vitebsk, Kovno, Amsterdam. This is crucial both for academic research and for contemporary *Baukultur* [creating and interacting with the built environment] and the establishment of tradition. Modernism in the Twenties was Janus-faced, as we have known since Alexander Schwab (1887–1943)<sup>5</sup>. Just because nowadays we no longer think about fundamental alternatives in terms of the ethics of production does not by a long stretch mean we can afford to perceive the Bauhaus exclusively as a vehicle of rampant capitalism. For all those involved at the time, it was an open-ended project, an experiment aimed at shaping the world, which was highly conflictual and therefore escalated in every conceivable political direction. Gropius was a member of the liberal Democratic Party, while Meyer, who had shared Rudolf Steiner's radical economic democratic position, ended up far to the left, and comrade Hans Schmidt became a co-founder of the Communist Partei der Arbeit in Switzerland. The Bauhaus was highly political at every moment of its existence because, as its PR agent Karel Teige aptly put it, it acted «with new images and plans for another globe». Nowhere can this be demonstrated more concretely than in the programmatic alliance that Mart Stam and Piet Mondrian entered with Mies van der Rohe in planning and constructing Stuttgart's Weißenhof housing estate. As Exhibition Director, Mies allowed Stam to speak at length; he gave him plenty of propaganda space, because at the time nobody in architectural circles could express it better than this religiously motivated Dutch Marxist. Then as now, the focus was all about the rational use of land and the collective pleasure of play. His house in the Weißenhofsiedlung, which echoes Mondrian, is pure jazz, as many Stam connoisseurs have aptly pointed out. «Just like floating»: That is how Stam still described this poetic principle of shaping objects and relationships as late as 1967. With his biography, the term «avant-garde» falls by the wayside, as perhaps the idea of revolution does too.

rewriting history

depolitization of the avant-garde

neoliberalism  
as a paradigm shift

And there is another aspect: It really struck me in our discussion how these historiographical projects of rephrasing or rewriting from scratch are cyclically linked to the onset of neoliberalism and thus to global, economic processes of change. Historiographical research on Modernism, Bauhaus research in particular, has long been an emancipatory project, a project of the generation of historians shaped by 1968, if you will: Michael Müller, Franziska Bollerey and Karl-Heinz Hüter had good reason

[N]

- [B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?
- [M] What are the criteria for being included in history or excluded from it, and for historical relevance? What kinds of stand do they reveal, and which blind spots and cognitive shortcomings do they generate?

emancipatory promise of  
modern architecture and design

modernism as an attitude

to be passionate scholars, researchers who were moved when, for example, they deciphered Gropius' three-tiered Functionalist programme, moving towards a «total architecture». They experienced their material in its actual magnificence and historical unfulfilled promise as a challenge. As an example of a persistent anti-zeitgeist approach, I would like to recall Kristiana Hartmann's defiant *Trotzdem modern* from 1994, *Why Modernity Still Matters* by John Lash and Jonathan Friedmann from 1992, and to mention Anatol Kopp too, who defended the social character of the modern movement against purely ritualised patterns of reception as early as the 1970s. All of us, an entire generation of critical theorists who wanted to envision an open-end project, are defeated by the historically powerful narratives of Postmodernism, which I unfortunately did not have room to address in my paper. I would just like to refer briefly here to the unrealized DAM exhibition project in Frankfurt am Main for Mart Stam's 100th birthday. Its opponents argued that Mart Stam was massively overrated and could at most claim historical validity because of his radical attitude. Some asserted that authorship has not been clarified for many of his projects, which is a sign that we are in a culture of auratic authorship and no longer in a Structuralist or even Marxist discourse. No one opposed the idea of auratic architecture more than Mart Stam: On the train, on the trip to Moscow, the entire May Brigade had to promise him that they would never claim authorship of buildings again. If you look for the reason for this passion, you will come across a Marxist conviction of the Constructivists, the idea that the production and reproduction of space is subject to structural powers that make a leading role of the individual seem downright ridiculous, or to put it in Stam's words, extremely bourgeois. It was about a completely different form of *Baukultur* [constructing and interacting with the built environment], completely penetrating the economy and consumption. However, there is also some evidence to suggest that it was Mart Stam's unsentimental architectural language that offended taste in the 1990s, if not before. Yes, it is also a matter of taste: It's not «lekker architecture» [appealing architecture]. That was the time when the Rotterdam Lijnbaan came under pronounced pressure to refurbish because of its «shabbiness». Docomomo<sup>6</sup> was founded around this period when the tradition that Modernism was lovable and sustainable began to collapse. The «White City» is a child of Docomomo, a result of a collective rebellion against the rampant Modernist bashing of Postmodernism. Several Docomomo conferences

[M]

[B]

constructivism

- [D] How can we discover the social and political processes behind buildings and objects, planning and building activities as well as reception processes?
- [I] What can we learn from the history of the Bauhaus and Modernism when facing current issues? And how can this enable us to gain new insights into the past?

aimed to demonstrate Modernism's diversity and lived practices. They had become necessary because the built testimonies were crumbling, the Sanatorium Zonnestraal in Hilversum and the Narkomfin flats in Moscow, Avion Hotel in Brno, and the ADGB Bundesschule [Federal Trade Union School] in Bernau. Historical research itself has cycles, asynchronicities and contradictory oscillations. And in a decade that proclaimed the «end of history», as I would learn during a Bruno Taut project, sources of academic funding held that Modernism had been «researched to death». There was scarcely any research worth mentioning; just think of the fate of the «Gropius Professorship» in Weimar.

#### Doreen Mende

I should just like to conclude by asking a question that is central to our topic and the symposium as a whole: Is it a matter of shaking up a canon and designing a politics of difference in order to criticize and to some extent disarm various forms of interpretative power, in order to make a broader spectrum of narration possible? Or is it a matter of rewriting a narrative and asking how this could find its way into structures of education and discourse. In connection with this, there would be the development of a para-academic vocabulary, in other words, a vocabulary that would be able to oscillate between practice and theory, as well as between past and present and between various contexts. In her paper, Simone Hain elucidated vividly that there is an avant-garde that is not solely about images. How could this avant-garde be rendered visible?

designing a politics  
of difference

tension between micro-practice  
and macro-concepts

modernism complex

- [D] That is not an easy task: I would say that it can only be carried out in the permanent field of tension between micro-practice and macro-concepts. Perhaps this could be understood as updating a «Bauhaus spirit» in the context of this complex of Modernism. That would make it possible to position the Bauhaus within political and social processes in the entire breadth of its forms of practice—reflection, research, building, organizing, discussing—and to link it to contemporary questions.
- [I]

## 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/articles/6262/dry-time?0bbf55ceffc3073699d40c945-ada9faf=671a369567b540d932ca-a2dc8777848b> (Consulted on June 10, 2020).
- 2 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press 1994.
- 3 Samia Henni, «The End of Theory?», talk: e-flux Architecture presents: *History/Theory*, New York, November 14, 2017.
- 4 Marion von Osten, inaugural lecture at the conference *Warum das Bauhaus schwer auszuhalten ist*, weißensee kunsthochschule berlin, October 22/23, 2019.
- 5 See for example his publication, published under the pseudonym Albert Sigrist, *Das Buch vom Bauen: Wohnungsnot, Neue Technik, Neue Baukunst, Städtebau*, Berlin 1930, Reprint: Alexander Schwab, *Das Buch vom Bauen. 1930—Wohnungsnot, Neue Technik, Neue Baukunst, Städtebau aus sozialistischer Sicht*, (= *Bauwelt-Fundamente*, 42), Düsseldorf 1973.
- 6 <https://docomomo.de/> (Consulted on June 10, 2020).