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Kai Gutschow, review of Adolf Behne, *Modern Functional Building*, ed. R.H. Bletter (Getty 1996) in *JSAH* 56, n.3 (Sept. 1997): 380-382. Kai Gutschow, review of Adolf Behne, *Modern Functional Building*, ed. R.H. Bletter (Getty 1996) in *JSAH* 56, n.3 (Sept. 1997): 380-382.

ture would only lead to a repetition of the old way of thinking in terms of historical styles. The main task of a house is to protect the private sphere from the world outside. When asked if a house should look like a ship or a railway sleeping car, Frank answered, "No, like a house." His criticism was directed primarily against the all-embracing design ideal of the Bauhaus; indeed, he belittled the ambition to create a dominant style. Frank's personal mixture of English, Japanese, Persian, Biedermeier, and contemporary elements gave his interior designs the sense of having been developed piece by piece, with each part originating in a different context. Against the puritanical empty room, which can be quickly seen and comprehended, and against functional designs which have no secrets, he favored interiors, or "collections," as he called them, which were heterogeneous, boundless, and only slowly comprehensible. Frank's separation of house and furniture was a radical position in the modernist context. He set limits on the architect, eschewing the ambition to change people's lives, heighten their spirituality, or improve their taste.

Although the book aims to illuminate all aspects of Frank's work, the main emphasis is on the decorative arts, and here a problem arises because architecture was the basis of Frank's achievement. He created some of modernism's leading single-family houses, such as the Villa Wehtje and the Villa Beer, and organized his houses in a distinctive fashion by fusing Loos's *Raumplan* and Le Corbusier's *promenade architecturale* with the unaffected English way of grouping rooms. He formulated his criticism from the viewpoint of an architect and developed ideas about "chance" and "temporariness" as a starting point of architectural creation in his "fantasy houses" of the 1940s and 1950s.

It is tempting to regard Frank as an exemplary critic of modernism, but he resists simple categorization. He did not have a uniform approach, nor did he formulate a consistent alternative program. He had ambivalent reactions to both tradition and modernism. He disliked jazz and modern art, and did not embrace the new mass media. His book, *Architektur als Symbol*, is rambling and disconnected; his line of reasoning moves in circles, and it is impossible to draw any clear or unambigu-

ous conclusions from what he wrote. The problem of pigeonholing Frank emerges in the introductory essay by Nina Stritzler-Levine, "Three Visions of the Modern Home: Josef Frank, Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto," which emphasizes Frank's similarities with Aalto and his differences with Le Corbusier. The author has arranged the evidence to fit her objectives and overlooks the fact that none of these architects had a simple relationship to the past or to modernism.

The most valuable essay is Penny Sparke's "Convenience and Pleasantness: Josef Frank and the Swedish Modern Movement in Design." In 1934, just after Frank arrived in Sweden, he participated in an exhibition at Liljevalchs art gallery in Stockholm. The other exhibitors, all Swedish furniture designers, represented a new, sensible style with roots in the Swedish rustic tradition. Frank's living room, on the other hand, featured a leopard skin on the floor, a large, open cocktail cabinet, tall mirrors on the walls, and an oversize sofa which was too deep for any position except reclining. Sparke interprets Frank's living room, which evoked an entirely different lifestyle from the other interiors, as a protest against what Frank called "the tedium of the Svenska Slöjdföreningen" (Swedish Society of Craft and Industrial Design). His refusal to accommodate the mainstream explains in part why he built very little in Sweden and was isolated from the Swedish architectural establishment.

Christian Witt-Döring's essay, "Steel is Not a Raw Material; Steel is a *Weltanschauung*: The Early Furniture Designs of Josef Frank, 1910-1933," reveals a contradictory aspect of his furniture designs. Frank frequently referred to the taste of the average man, yet his designs were not aimed at a wide public. With the exception of a few models for Thonet, his furniture could not be mass produced and was never inexpensive; he used only traditional construction methods and exotic, expensive woods, and the work contains hidden meanings which only the initiated can read.

Notwithstanding the reservations mentioned here, *Josef Frank Architect and Designer* succeeds in conveying the immediate and undogmatic attitude to life embodied in Frank's furniture, textiles, and architecture. The book has broken Frank's isolation, and it will be a source of inspira-

tion and a reference point for future research.

— Mikael Berquist  
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*Adolf Behne*

**THE MODERN FUNCTIONAL BUILDING**

Introduction by Rosemarie Haag Bletter, translation by Michael Robinson

Texts and Documents Series; Santa Monica, Calif.: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996, 280 pp., 115 b. & w. illus. \$40.00 (cloth). ISBN 0-89236-363-0. \$24.95 (paper). ISBN 0-89236-364-9.

Adolf Behne's *Der moderne Zweckbau* has long been acknowledged as a key document in the struggle for a modern architecture in Weimar Germany. Written in 1923 and published in 1926, it is here available for the first time in English translation. This seventy-page book and the many articles from which it sprang were instrumental in mobilizing a radical shift in German architectural modernism during the mid-1920s: from the romantic, craft-oriented attitude of Hermann Muthesius, the German Werkbund, and the early Bauhaus, toward a more progressive emphasis on the machine, technology, and social causes, as in the work of Hannes Meyer and Martin Wagner. The combination of history, criticism, and theory in Behne's text is both typical of the period and an important precedent for the canonical studies of architectural modernism by Sigfried Giedion (*Bauen in Frankreich*, 1928), Henry-Russell Hitchcock (*Modern Architecture*, 1929), and Nikolaus Pevsner (*Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, 1936). Only Walter Gropius's *Internationale Architektur* (1925) was published earlier, and it was little more than a picture book, with none of the trenchant critiques found in Behne's text.

Behne (1885-1948) was one of the most influential and prolific cultural critics of his day. The references in this book reveal the tremendous breadth of sources from which he drew ideas and inspiration, especially on the subject of technology and society. Influenced by the lectures of the sociologist Georg Simmel, Behne was a

committed socialist and lifelong student of German society. He was trained as an art historian and began his career writing about Berlin's theatrical scene and the circle of Expressionist artists around Herwarth Walden's Sturm gallery. He wrote incisively on modern photography, film, graphic design, art, and urbanism in addition to architecture. Much like Simmel, Behne was acutely aware of the dialectical aspects of production in modern capitalist society, with its tendency toward both formal reification and communal dynamism. He constantly warned of extremes in either direction.

Behne made it his cause to find the analogues for this dialectic in architecture, seeking a balance of function and form. In his many books and hundreds of essays in literary journals and socialist newspapers, he tried to forge both a formal, artistic policy for the various socialist parties and a working-class art and architecture for Germany. Behne mediated between politics and architecture in his criticism, but the architectural critiques were often thinly veiled propaganda for his socialist politics. This was particularly evident in his promotion of a broad range of "constructivist" architects, from Le Corbusier and De Stijl artists in the West, to the Vesnin brothers and other Russians, many of whom Behne introduced to German audiences. El Lissitzky's famed Cloud-hanger (*Wolkenbügel*) project, for example, was first published on the dust jacket of this book.

*Der moderne Zweckbau*, Behne's most important book, is organized into three chronologically arranged chapters. The first analyzes the earliest attempts of pioneers such as Hendrik Petrus Berlage, Otto Wagner, and Alfred Messel to replace the nineteenth-century emphasis on ornamental facades with a more functionally oriented architecture. In the second chapter Behne criticizes the stylized functionalism and "exaggerated character" of pre-World War I and Expressionist buildings, such as Peter Behrens's A.E.G. Turbine Factory and Erich Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower. He has praise only for Walter Gropius's Fagus Factory, because it approached the unselfconsciously "shaped spaces" of American industrial architecture Behne so admired.

The third and longest chapter examines the architecture of Behne's immedi-

ate contemporaries, and it remains one of the most cogent attempts to identify and untangle the various strains of functionalism at the time. Behne argues that Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Hans Scharoun, despite their incessant calls for a functional architecture, were all prone to an arbitrary, individualized formalism and to extreme swings in style. Their work, particularly in terms of its philosophical and political underpinnings, was more closely allied to an outmoded expressionism than to the newly emergent forms of constructivism. Behne endorsed a more objective (*Sachlich*) architecture, one that balanced the demands of social function and aesthetic form. Presaging many of the later critiques of modernism, he called for a socially responsible architecture. Modern functional architecture was to be inspired not by construction techniques, the biological functions of the users, or the genius of the artist, but by the communal nature of society, though he remains unclear about precisely how form should reflect this communality.

Bletter's introduction, the first extended study of Behne in English, weaves together an overview of Behne's career with discussion of some of the more difficult theoretical issues raised in the text. Her incisive analysis extends Behne's project of deciphering and differentiating many related ideas circulating within the avant-garde at the time, ideas that are all too often homogenized in other histories of the period. The essays by Behne and Bletter work together to sort out what Bletter calls the "eclectic amalgam of several modernisms" coexisting in Weimar Germany (27). Functionalism, rationalism, utilitarianism, organicism, and constructivism are all distinguished in this book.

This task is complicated by the fact that in the 1920s definitions of frequently used, seemingly interchangeable terms differed among users and also constantly shifted over time. Bletter is particularly strong in uncovering these shifts. She argues, for example, that while the term *modern*, meaning of the time, was commonly used to describe the avant-garde artistic movements before 1923, thereafter the term *neu* (new) attained a wider currency and implied a dynamic sense of change and progressivism often associated with the political left. The use of *moderne* in the title of

Behne's book is a holdover from 1923, when it was written. The title of his next book, *Neues Bauen—Neues Wohnen* (New building—new living; 1927) was much more up to date. Similarly, Bletter explains that the always difficult German word *Sachlichkeit*, which had denoted a realist, sober, or very mathematical attitude to form since the late nineteenth century, to Behne implied a social attitude. It captured the idea of addressing social and human needs within a form, and thus corresponded closely with the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, coined by the contemporary German art historian Gustav Hartlaub for painting of the period.

This nuanced, philological analysis of Behne's book offers English-language audiences a deeper understanding of modern German architecture. Bletter's introduction exposes with greater clarity than before the depth and scope of the dialogues and confrontations that made Germany the international focus of architectural modernism in the 1920s. However, her ambitious attempt to cover such a broad spectrum of material in the limited space of an introduction sometimes makes it read more like a mosaic than a closed argument. There are original insights about the role of Germany's competitive, multitiered education system in the development of modern architecture, but the effects of regionalism, local and national politics, patronage, and philosophy on Behne and his colleagues are only suggested. Similarly, the comparison of Behne's ideas on functionalism to those of Horatio Greenough and Louis Sullivan will pique the interest of American readers, but discussion of the European context is limited.

Behne's perspicacious critiques of the primary protagonists of the period have recently attracted scholarly attention. Although the German reprint of *Der moderne Zweckbau* (Frankfurt, 1964) remains out of print, there has been a concerted effort to republish some of Behne's work. Haila Ochs published an anthology of thirty-five of his most important architectural writings (Basel, 1994; reviewed in *JSAH* 55 [1996]: 94), and Behne also features prominently in the rich anthology of source material assembled in Kristiana Hartmann's *Trotzdem modern* (Brunswick, Germany, 1994). Bletter's introduction is part of a

growing trend in scholarship to uncover a more complex, self-critical picture of modernism by analyzing critics like Behne, as seen in Alan Colquhoun's article, "Criticism and Self-Criticism in German Modernism" (*AA Files* 28 [autumn 1994]: 26–33). Earlier articles by Francesco Dal Co (*Oppositions* 22 [1980]: 74–95) and George Baird (*Harvard Architecture Review* 7 [1989]: 82–89) identified Behne's essay "Art, Handicraft, Technology" (1922) as a turning point in the drive toward the anonymous, machine-based production of late twentieth-century capitalism and helped to place Behne's rejection of craft in favor of technique into much larger socioeconomic frameworks. Bletter's introduction opens many new intriguing avenues of exploration and makes clear that more work remains to be done on Behne, about whom relatively little is known. Only archival research will reveal the impact of his career as a teacher in Berlin's schools of continuing education, the political engagement he brought to the many avant-garde circles in which he participated, and the wide range of audiences he targeted through various forms of the emerging mass media. Indeed, Behne, along with a host of other critics, played a crucial yet rarely acknowledged role in defining and promoting modern architecture: credit is given to architects, patrons, or technology, but seldom to the critics and the press.

This translation is part of a commendable series published by the Getty to make seminal works of architectural theory available to English-language readers. The present volume is less fussy in design than earlier volumes, and the layout of illustrations is arguably more readable than that of the first German edition, but it would have been desirable to maintain the original proportions, orientations, framing, and pairings of photos and illustrations. Behne was fastidious about the graphic effect of his publications, often hiring such avant-garde designers as Walter Dexel and Johannes Molzahn to help with innovative layouts, and complaining when publishers altered his texts.

The shifting terminology mentioned above also makes for arduous translation work, especially with Behne's sometimes abstruse German. The present translation is not without its awkward passages, inconsistencies, and errors. One example: the

word *Sache* is consistently translated as "object," even though Bletter discusses in depth Behne's insistence on a more socially oriented definition (e.g., 92, 106, 108); "essence" would have come closer to Behne's ideas. A typographical error makes it easy to miss the reference to the conservative architect Friedrich Ostendorf (111).

As with other volumes in the Getty series, the unattributed editor's notes, intended to clarify obscure references in the translated text, are erratic and frustrating. At times they give little more information than the original text; at other times, original citations are not commented on at all, even when the sources are readily accessible, such as Le Corbusier's articles in *L'Esprit Nouveau* (131–132). While earlier volumes included complete bibliographies of the author's writings, Behne's prolificacy makes this a daunting task. The bibliography in the present volume, drawn from Ochs's anthology, includes nearly 600 entries, but it is woefully incomplete and riddled with errors. Let us hope the Getty will continue to publish key texts from the early twentieth century; as this volume demonstrates, they are crucial to a proper understanding of the development of modern architecture.

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#### *Wilma Fairbank*

#### **LIANG AND LIN: PARTNERS IN EXPLORING CHINA'S ARCHITECTURAL PAST**

Foreword by Jonathan Spence;  
Philadelphia: University of  
Pennsylvania Press, 1994, xvii + 208  
pp., 30 illus. \$41.95 (cloth).  
ISBN 0-8122-3278-X.

Although few western scholars are familiar with the Chinese architectural historians Liang Sicheng (1901–1972) and his wife Lin Whei-yin (1904–1955), this biographical memoir is a page-turner; their story will fascinate, humble, enrage, and enlighten architectural historians in all fields. The passion of the Liangs for China's historic architecture was all the more remarkable given the tumultuous times in which they worked. They were swept up in the cyclone of Chinese cultural upheaval and prevented from pursuing their research, but

the work of the Liangs has inspired later Chinese architectural historians.

Probably no one but Wilma Fairbank, wife of the eminent historian of China John Fairbank, could have written so intimately about the saga of Liang and Lin. The Fairbanks and the Liangs shared much as friends; they met in Beijing in 1932, when the Fairbanks arrived in China. Wilma Fairbank is the last survivor of the foursome. Correcting her memory with personal correspondence, supplemented by recollections of contemporaries and some secondary materials, she writes with a familiarity, frankness, and eloquence that will hold the interest of readers with only a limited knowledge of China. For those more familiar with China, the Liangs' story will be further confirmation of the significant impact of political events on twentieth-century Chinese culture.

Liang, the eldest son of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, one of China's most important late nineteenth-century intellectuals, met Lin, the daughter of the poet Lin Ch'ang-min, in 1919. Educated in Chinese and western traditions, they dreamed about studying architecture in the United States. They were admitted to the University of Pennsylvania, where the distinguished architectural educator Paul P. Cret (1876–1945) was teaching and where a few other Chinese students had already been welcomed. However, Lin was not permitted to matriculate as an architecture student because of her gender; she studied art instead and pursued her architectural interests informally. The couple settled in Philadelphia in 1924, graduated in 1927, and were married a year later.

By then Liang began to wonder why the field of western architectural history was so much more advanced than its counterpart in China. He spent a year at Harvard learning about China's rich architectural heritage and was encouraged in his pursuit by Chu Chi-ch'ien's republication of the imperial construction manual, *Ying-tsoo fa-shih*, written by Li Chieh in 1103 (facsimile edition, Shanghai, c. 1920). Liang and Lin embarked on a lifelong research program to understand Chinese architecture, especially wood-framed temple structures of the T'ang, Sung, and later dynasties. Liang and Lin toured Europe and then returned to China, where they began to teach in a newly formed department of architecture