

Erich Mendelsohn:  
Constructing an Image of Modernity Between Expressionism and the 1920's Avant-Garde

by

R. Jeffrey Leiter

Bachelor of Architecture  
Wentworth Institute of Technology  
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Architecture Studies

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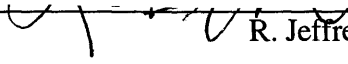
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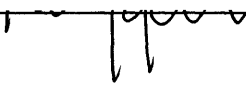
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Signature of Author  \_\_\_\_\_  
R. Jeffrey Leiter, Department of Architecture  
12 May 1997

Certified by  \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Jarzombek  
Associate Professor of History and Architecture  
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by  \_\_\_\_\_  
Roy Strickland  
Chairman, Departmental Committee on Graduate Students

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**ABSTRACT**

The role of Erich Mendelsohn in the formation of Modern architecture has been a subject of divided opinion throughout historical writing. On the one hand, he has been described as a romantic visionary whose creativity belonged to a pre-Modern age of subjective fantasies. On the other, he has been credited for his contribution to modern rationality and architectural innovation. The rift between these divergent interpretations has created nothing short of an enigma. However, the ambiguity of Mendelsohn's history reflects a deeper chasm in his own thinking and ideological position. This thesis examines his artistic image as it was constructed between Modernist interpretations of history, and his own ideological changes in the early 1920's.

My study will focus on his publication of a "picture-book" titled, *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* in 1926. Based on his travel to America in autumn 1924, Mendelsohn portrayed an image of modernity through photographs of urban environments, grain elevators, and industrial buildings. He combined these images with moralistic commentaries that explained the cultural condition of each photograph to his European audience. This associated Mendelsohn with avant-garde experimentation in photography and the "picture-book", but it also provided a vehicle for Mendelsohn to deliver his own theoretical ideas through mass-communication. Further, I have found that Mendelsohn manipulated and appropriated many of the photographs to reinforce his theoretical vision in the book. This has both sustained an image of Mendelsohn's artistic vision, and obscured his interpretation within history. My investigation will begin to situate this phenomenon within the construction of Mendelsohn's identity and larger issues of Modernity.

Thesis Supervisor: Mark Jarzombek  
Title: Associate Professor of the History of Architecture

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## Chapter One - Introduction

The role of individuals in the formation of Modern architecture has been one of the most complicated subjects of historical inquiry. The autonomous function of architectural creativity has been both denied and embraced as a generative force in determining the values, images, and physical environment of society. Consequently, Modern architects have been torn between their responsibility to the collective needs of society (i.e. mass-production, vernacular, etc.) and liberation of their own intellectual “genius” through unique design. Indeed the determined self-confidence of Howard Roark and his struggle against the homogenizing demands of society in Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead* has become a monument to that crisis.<sup>1</sup> More recently though, many studies of Modern architecture have reinterpreted the role of individuality as a malleable and shifting reaction to particular circumstances. Images of the architect standing in unyielding commitment to his ideals and vision are increasingly seen as only a small part of larger political and personal intentions. Architects such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Philip Johnson among many others have been studied to understand the effects of personal agenda on their work.<sup>2</sup> In the spirit of

continuing this kind of investigation, my study of the German architect Erich Mendelsohn will attempt to understand the negotiation of his ideology within the early 1920's avant-garde. Mendelsohn's own sense of individuality during this period is a glimpse into the larger problems of how Modern architects construct their identity around artistic theories.

Erich Mendelsohn's significance over other architects of the period is that he created an artistic persona that has remained largely outside historical contextualization. Very few studies have attempted to go beyond the creative image portrayed by his quick, bold sketches that became synonymous with the name: Mendelsohn.<sup>3</sup> Numerous historical accounts, articles, and exhibitions continually reinforce the idea that these sketches represent his architectural genius. As the covers for his exhibition catalogues attest, the sketch has become a symbol of an intensity and passion of creative inspiration [see figures 1.1 - 1.8 for a collection of exhibition catalogues and pamphlets for Erich Mendelsohn]. Moreover, Mendelsohn's early association with German Expressionism generally overshadows historical accounts that do criticize this creative image. Instead of enlarging the context that formed his artistic persona, histories of his origin in Expressionism have been directed toward slighting his presence in Modern architecture. This presents an enormously complex project that I will not attempt to resolve, but only use as the fertile background of a much smaller investigation into Mendelsohn's ideological development in the early 1920's and his journey to America in 1924.

As Mendelsohn had been continually re-articulating his architectural views during this period, his travel to America became a way to form a position on the rational and objective trends of avant-garde architects. After returning to Berlin, Mendelsohn constructed a book of photographs and captions that represented his travel experience in America during autumn 1924. The title of that book is *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* (America: Picture-book of an Architect) and was published in the early part of 1926. Although it remained largely outside of Mendelsohn's history, I will argue that this book was a vehicle for him to convey a theoretical vision through mass-communication. His control over how America was represented in the book appeared as both an objective source of information and also a work of the avant-garde. This double role of the book was an extension of Mendelsohn's own sense of self and demonstrates the malleable function of photographs in the formation of modern vision.

Mendelsohn's photographic book was also part of a larger tendency to use "picture-books" as a means to represent modern civilization in the 1920's. In fact, the German architect Richard Neutra published two books on America shortly after Mendelsohn released his *Amerika* (Richard Neutra published in 1926 and 1929). Additionally, the Bauhaus began publishing several "picture-books" under the series of "Bauhausbücher" (Bauhaus Books) in 1925. Among these were books by Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy that used illustrations as experimental forms of mass-communication. And El Lissitzky was also involved with developing new modes of photographic reproduction in books as well as advertising. In this context, Mendelsohn's

book was not radically new, but it was significant to how he represented himself within the avant-garde. With the text and photographs of the book, he constructed an image of himself as a visionary architect capable of seeing into the cultural conditions of America. The subtlety in which he manipulated the book to serve these intentions, and the fact that it has gone mostly unrecognized in architectural history, are both reasons that it should be re-examined.

The first chapter will explore the larger historiographical context of Mendelsohn through his relationship to German Expressionism. His usual association with the Einstein Observatory limits a fuller understanding of Mendelsohn's architectural thinking after 1921 and reveals a problem in how he has been historically represented. My analysis will attempt to describe the context in which this Expressionist association was formed and some of the motivations for historians to portray Mendelsohn in this way. This has effected much of how we perceive Mendelsohn today, but also derived from attitudes and opinions that were beginning to take shape in Mendelsohn's time. The same views that helped determine his role in history began to influence the development of Mendelsohn's identity in the early 1920's.

Chapter two will briefly consider some of the theoretical sources of Mendelsohn's artistic ideas and his relationship to avant-garde ideology in the early 1920's. The influence of pre-war painter groups like *Der Blaue Reiter*, as well as the writing of Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Worringer, and Martin Buber helped form a theoretical base for Mendelsohn's

understanding of creativity. These became a source for his involvement in architecture and distinguished his claim on the avant-garde from more functionalist ideologies. Although his architectural position underwent many changes from before WWI to the height of his popularity in the mid-1920's, his ideas generally remained separate from those of more central figures of the avant-garde. As with the publication of *Amerika*, I believe this made it possible to engage in theoretical maneuvers that often went unnoticed.

My third chapter will analyze Mendelsohn's travel book, *Amerika* as a tool to establish his theoretical stakes in modernity and create an image of his role in the avant-garde. The journey to America in 1924 provided Mendelsohn with a new way of looking at modern society and effected his vision for the future of architecture. But the publication of his travel experiences was also a method of delivering a particular impression of America that reinforced Mendelsohn ideological views. I will examine the techniques by which he conveyed these views through the book and their effect on how Europeans perceived America. This will lead into an investigation of the cultural conditions that determined the book's reception in both America and Europe. And finally I will make some connections from Mendelsohn's book to larger questions on the use of photography as an instrument of propaganda in modernism.

I will end with conclusions on the effect Mendelsohn's travel book had on development of his identity. The success of his book within Europe



reaffirmed and solidified many theoretical ideas that were still tentative in Mendelsohn's thinking. His later publication of another picture-book including Russia was the result of a similar photographic strategy, but represented a maturity in his ideological views. Common to both of these books (and particularly *Amerika*) is the questions they raise on the role of travel literature in establishing a theoretical discourse during the 1920's. The use of photographs was certainly a common instrument of manipulation, but how do they fit into a larger history of Modern architecture? I will propose that Mendelsohn's control over how he portrayed America was part of a larger construction of his identity in the 1920's.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although Ayn Rand published *The Fountainhead* in 1943, she began working on the character of Howard Roark as early as 1935. The development of his character came through consultation with several architects, but more importantly her own perception of individuality in the modern world. For a fascinating reprint of several notes by Ayn Rand on the development of her ideas about the characters, see the Afterword by Leonard Peikoff in Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> There has been numerous studies of this kind on different architects as well as historians. One of the most intriguing studies of Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos was by Beatriz Colomina in her book, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994. Philip Johnson has been studied by Alice Friedman, and an interesting biography of Mies van der Rohe that accounts for more personal forces in his life been done by Franz Schulze in *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Although outside the realm of Modern architecture, a study of Gustave Courbet through a psychological perspective has been influential on my overall interest in this kind of history. See Klaus Herding, *Courbet: To Venture Independence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Most historical studies of Erich Mendelsohn in the past thirty years have been limited to just biographical accounts that rarely attempt to situate him within a critical context. Books by Arnold Whittick and Bruno Zevi are well known for this, as well as smaller publications like Wolf Von Eckardt's for *The Masters of World Architecture Series*. Only more recently have historians such as Kathleen A. James, Hans Rudolf Morgenthaler, and Alona Nitzan-Shifan begun to investigate his complexity in a way that contributes to a more critical history of architecture. But the confusion on how to discuss Mendelsohn also reveals something very valuable about the role of individuals in modernity. See bibliography for citation of above authors.

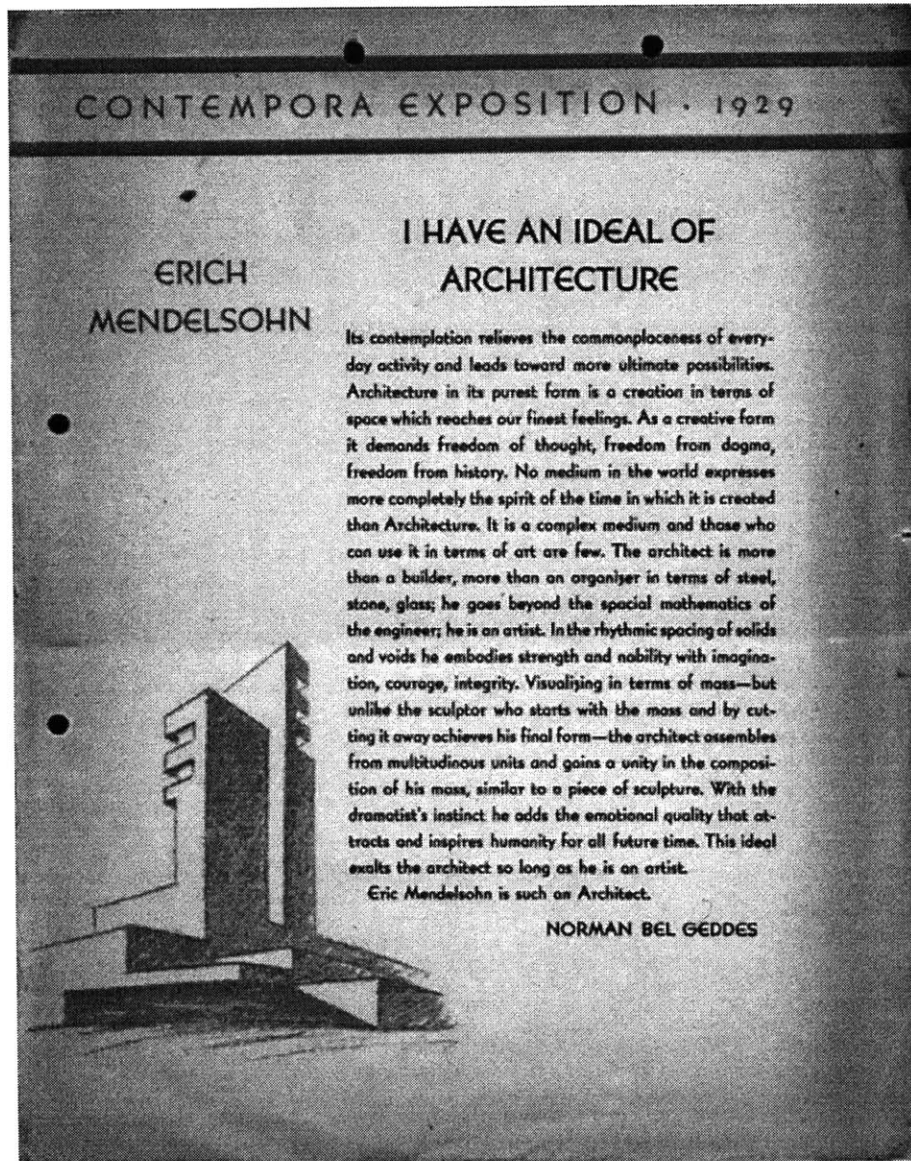
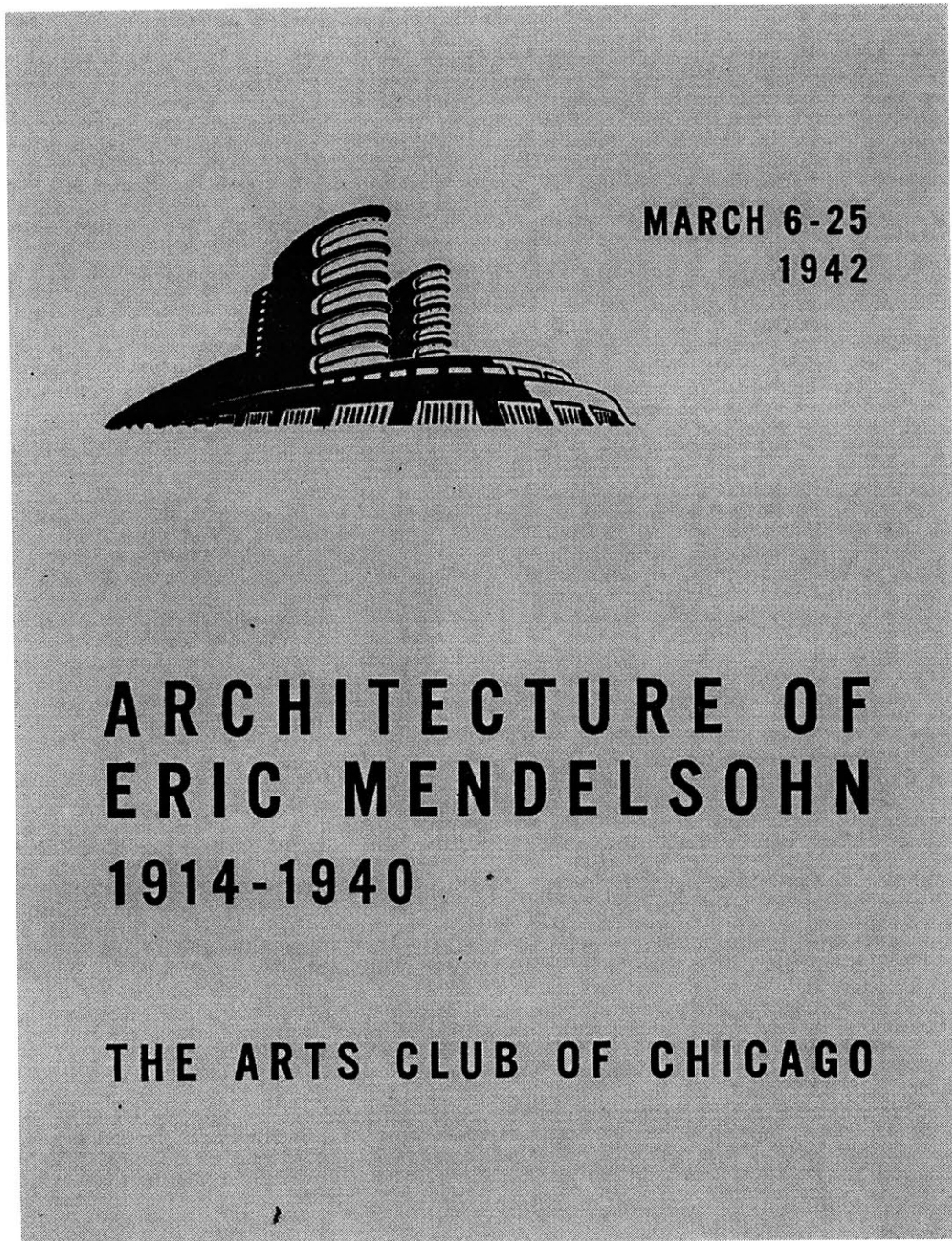
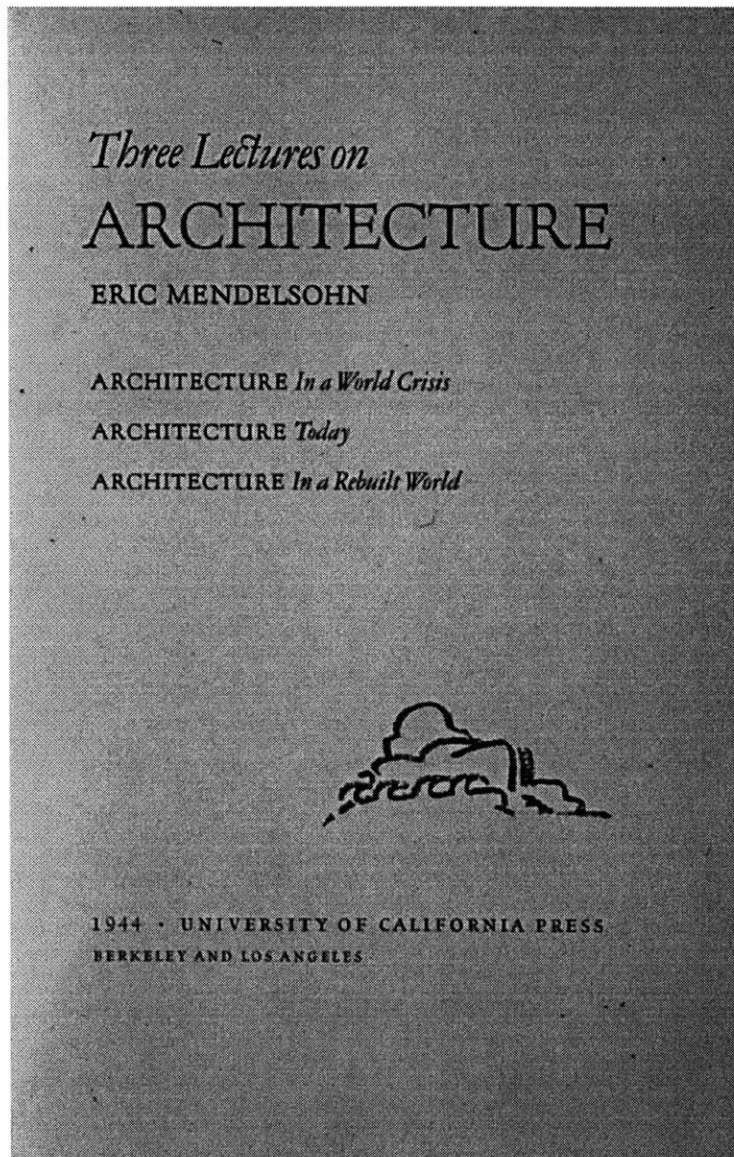


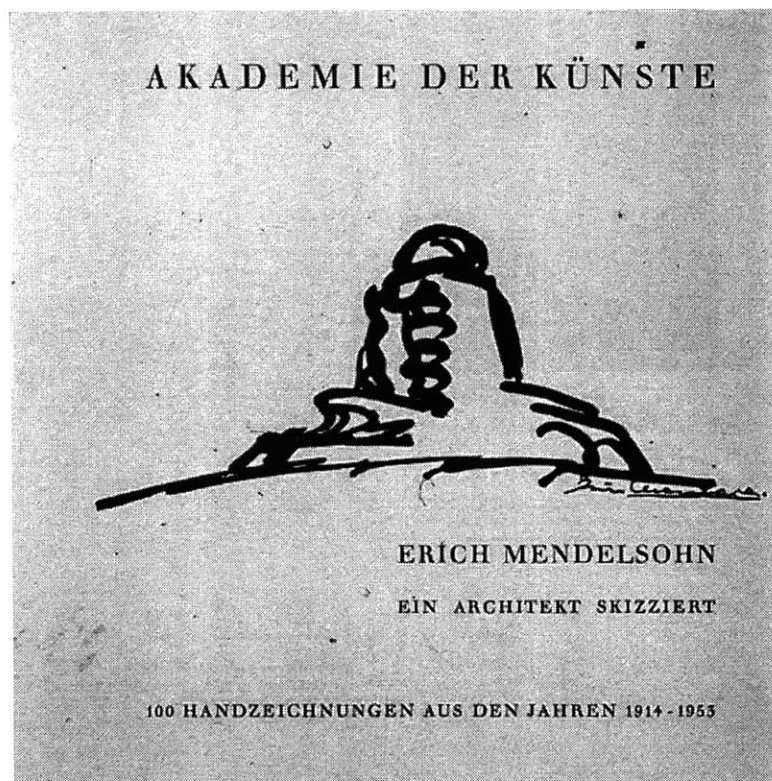
figure 1.1 *Contempora Exposition*. Cover of exhibition catalogue. New York. 1929.



**figure 1.2** *Architecture of Eric Mendelsohn: 1914-1940. Cover of exhibition pamphlet. 1942.*

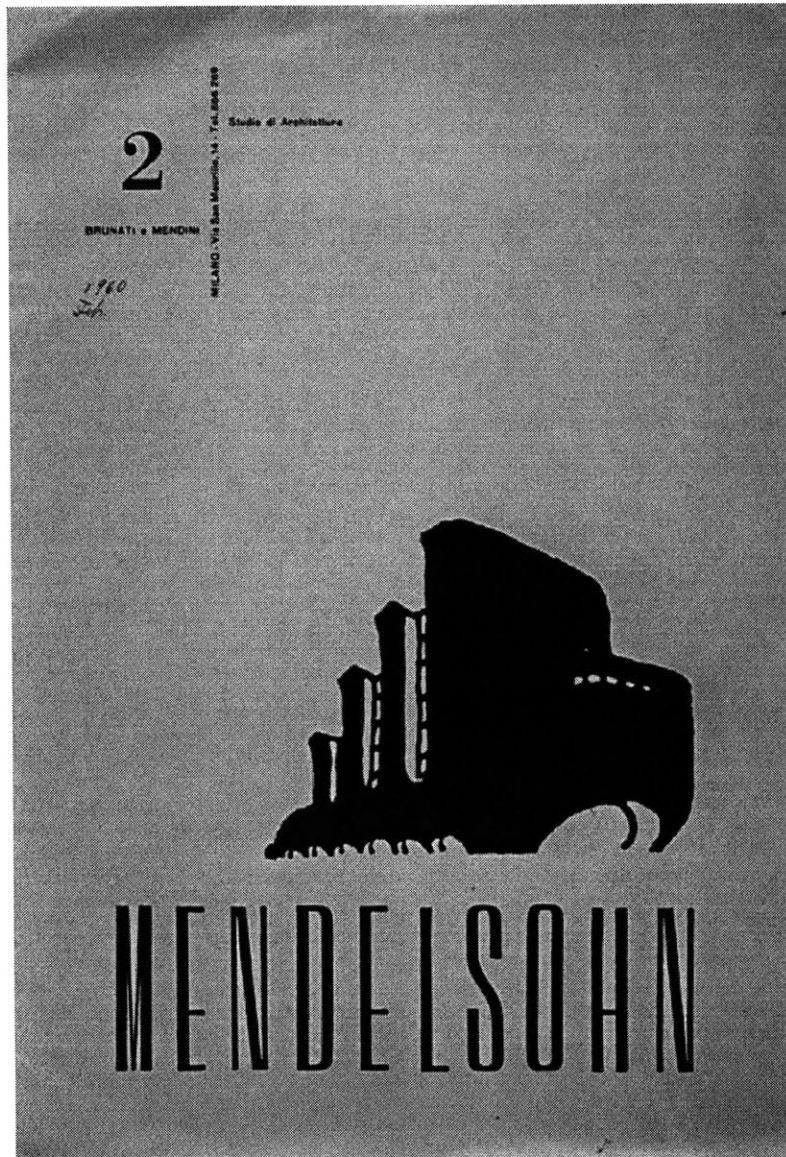


**figure 1.3** *Three Lectures on Architecture*. Cover of Invitation. 1944. Sketch is titled *Observatory*.

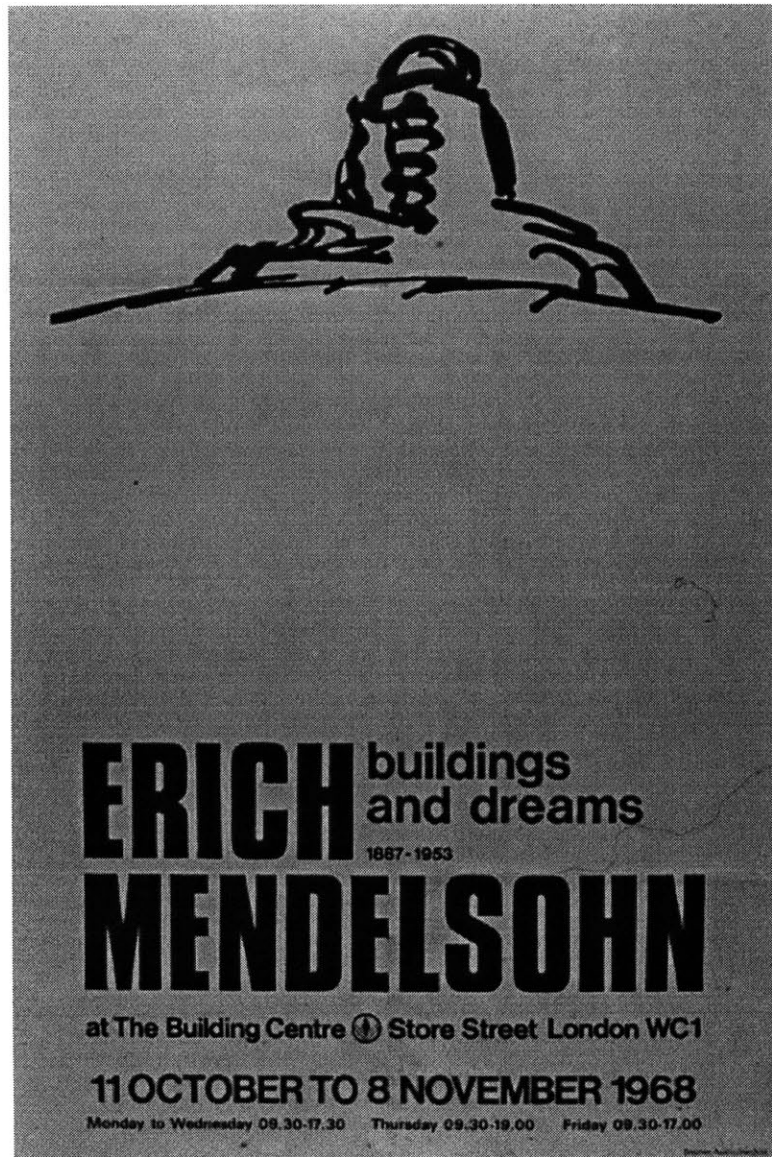


**figure 1.4** *Erich Mendelsohn: Ein Architekt Skizziert.* Cover of Exhibition catalogue. Sketch of Einstein Observatory.

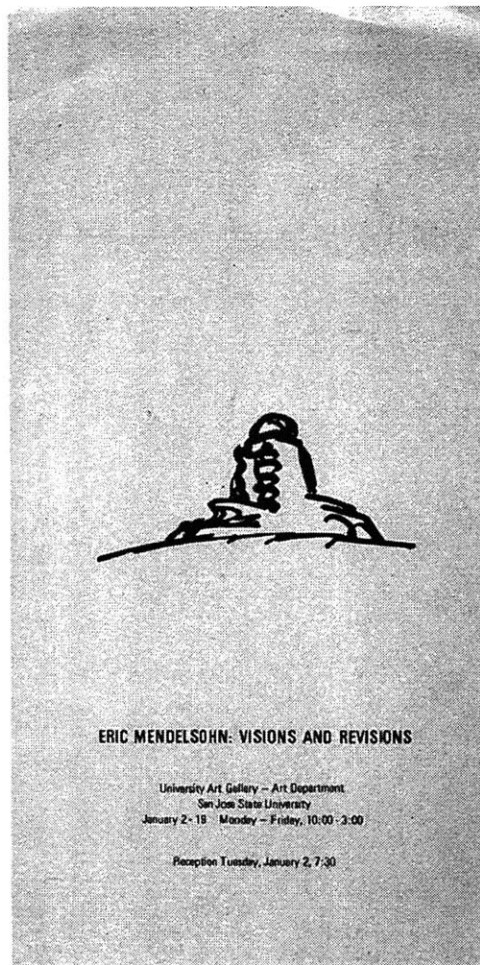




**figure 1.5** *Mendelsohn*. Cover of Exhibition catalogue for Studio di Architettura, Milan. 1960.



**figure 1.6** *Erich Mendelsohn: buildings and dreams.* Cover for exhibition catalogue. The Building Centre, London. 1968.



**figure 1.7** *Erich Mendelsohn: Visions and Revisions*. Cover of exhibition invitation. University Art Gallery, San Jose State University. Sketch of Einstein Observatory.





## Chapter Two - An Image of Mendelsohn

Even today the slightest mention of the German architect, Erich Mendelsohn [figure 2.1] recalls images of his plastic and curving forms at the Einstein Observatory. In almost every architectural textbook or historical survey class, photographs of the building reaffirm the sculptural genius of Mendelsohn and his innate talent for artistic expression. The crisp lines of molded concrete articulate each surface and plane in a way that suggests a new physics of form [figure 2.2 & 2.3]. Indeed the sketches that usually accompany any photograph are all the more assuring that Mendelsohn was not just a master of technical accomplishment, but a conceptual seer too! And yet this is usually as much of Mendelsohn as is commonly discussed. The fact that this building came at the beginning of his career, at the beginning of an avant-garde fervor in the 20's, and before many of Mendelsohn's more typical buildings is crucially absent. That he was responsible for nearly 75 buildings and projects after the Einstein Observatory is also a routine oversight limiting a fuller understanding of his career. Curiously, this suggests both a general level of ignorance surrounding architectural history and a more determined effort to remember Mendelsohn in a particular way.

But the control of how Mendelsohn is imagined reveals a much larger historical problem in the origins of Modernity. For the historians writing on the formation of Modern architecture nearly seventy years ago, the Einstein Observatory was a symbol of romantic thinking. It represented the subjective creativity of Mendelsohn: The Expressionist, as an attitude and ideology which Modernity had surpassed.

Writing in the late 1920's on the development of Modern architecture, historians perceived the bizarre experiments of artistic passion under Expressionism as both enchanting and threatening to their idea of objectivity. The avant-garde of *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) explained the fantastic anxiety of those artists and architects as a product of troubled time around the social and political turmoil of war. The sheer drama of these events made rational thought seem unattainable and their contribution to cultural values was understood as an anomaly in the development of society. To many historians, it stood outside the more serious issues of architecture. As Sigfried Giedion wrote, "Faustean outbursts against an inimical world and the cries of outraged humanity cannot create new levels of achievement. They remain transitory facts - however moving they may be - and not constituent ones."<sup>1</sup> Still, Expressionism was not so easy to dismiss. That last vestige of a romantic past lurked around every corner of Modernity, especially inside the architects themselves. The strength of its grip was precisely its elusive existence within the concrete history of Modernism's most revered architects. While they continually exiled their Expressionist origins from a connection to later

work, historians frantically detached its significance from their past. Consequently, the memories of Expressionism lived on through symbols of that emotional time. Like Mendelsohn's Einstein Observatory, a generation's tumultuous memories were compressed into monuments representing an era before the modernity of Modern architecture.

Not for nostalgia did the relics of Expressionism survive in the 1920's avant-garde though. Far more care was taken to remember those monuments in a particular way, and architects like Mendelsohn certainly received criticism beyond what sentimental remembrance would bring. On the contrary, the monuments and lingering memories of Expressionism played a vital role in constructing the *Neue Sachlichkeit* avant-garde. As much as historians attempted to divorce any connection between the post-war years and the later avant-garde, Expressionism still remained fundamental to their ideology, if only through negation. The sense of moving away from a degradation of modern rationality in the post-war years was implicit within their vision of the future. To architects and historians at the end of the 1920's, monuments of an Expressionist past served as continual verification that they were moving in both a productive and enlightened manner. However, I believe the role of Expressionism in the 1920's was not just a dead phenomenon looked upon in hindsight, nor was it completely incompatible with *Neue Sachlichkeit* ideology. Instead my interpretation of Expressionism is through its effect on the imagination and visions of later avant-garde attitudes. Its history and Mendelsohn's association with the Einstein Observatory provide

a glimpse of the dynamic interplay between Expressionist hopes and the later avant-garde practices.

### *Visions of Deliverance*

Although the events and ideas of Expressionism range from around 1910 to the early 1920's, its greatest influence on architecture came after WWI in the formation of an avant-garde devoted to the spiritual renewal of German society. For most radical artists and architects, a feeling of desperation brought on by the war and recent political troubles indicated that society was in a period of decline. Numerous writings predicted the degeneration of German culture in a future that was doomed to spiritual unrest. Books like Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* in 1918 set a mood of pessimism over any hope in the idea of progress. But his theory that humanity had already reached its high point of development and was declining to its ultimate destruction was only one of many. Shortly after, Sigmund Freud explained in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) that humanity demonstrated a tendency to "self-destruction" as a complement to its "sexual instinct". Other writers like Hermann Hesse argued the true future of civilization was not in Europe, but in the Orient. In his article of 1919 on "The Downfall of Europe", Hesse claimed that decline of European societies would lead people back toward Asia from which society could be reborn.<sup>2</sup> Within these gloomy prospects for the future, many architects placed their hope in the idea that a new form of society would be born from within the distress of their present

day. Nietzsche's idea of creation through destruction was pessimistic, but also implied that conscientious work toward spiritual regeneration could lead to a new future. Out of this hope, the younger radical architects attempted to find a new basis of life in the cultural redemption of the arts.

This distant glimmer of salvation was the bond that links most Expressionist architects together in the post-war years. Their understanding of art and their role in the avant-garde was determined by a larger sense of obligation to society and cultural rejuvenation. As the historian Kurt Junghanns has astutely characterized, "The idea of the unavoidability of catastrophe was slowly linked with the notion of a great turning-point, a powerful coming awakening to an existence with new relations between men and with novel forms of art and architecture."<sup>3</sup> In anticipation of a new world, most radical architects were united in the search for an architectural style to coexist with and manifest their social ideals. These investigations were shaped by their belief that architecture held primary responsibility for expression of the cultural zeitgeist and could guide the direction of spiritual regeneration. In a similar sentiment to much of how the avant-garde perceived their relation to society, Mendelsohn began to formulate his own direction in architecture as an extension of cultural will.

Architecture is the expression of the will of an epoch and of the spirit of that epoch. It binds its single law to the fate of a nation. It bears witness to this nation's needs and hopes, its achievements, its longings and its God. It bears witness to origin, to growth and decay. Architecture is proof of its inherited, its nourished and its spontaneous, self-engendered

will. It is a document of its political history, its spiritual mission, its intrinsic culture.<sup>4</sup>

Especially among the Expressionists, this idea became an underlying justification for a broad range of artistic experimentation. The notion that architecture and art could play an active role in the cultural development of Germany partially came through the art historical methods of Wilhelm Worringer.<sup>5</sup> His writing in the books, *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) and *Form Problems in the Gothic* (1910) became the theoretical basis for the value of abstraction in Expressionism. But fundamental to Worringer's use on how art could play a meaningful role in the modern world was his call for a new sense of activism in the arts. As early as 1908 he wrote,

We stand today in the middle of a crisis, in which the young generation with its unconsumed energies and its restless need for activity breaks through all restraints, as they are ankered in an all too differentiated hyperconsciousness, in an all too sensitive receptivity, and, unconcerned about yesterday's truth, this young generation creates for itself a new truth from its own flesh and blood. It appears that we have matured for a second, other naiveté that will restore to us the happiness and unself-consciousness of an active individual.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the general anxiety of the post-war period, numerous manifestos and declarations of artistic principles were an outcome of such theoretical rationalization. Through the enthusiasm of painter groups such as *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) in the pre-war years and radical organizations afterward, Worringer was adopted as the

ideological source of how Expressionist artists and architects explained their work. After the political revolution in 1918, the rebellious spirit of these artists created numerous organizations in an attempt to demonstrate the solidarity of artists united under one cause.<sup>7</sup> Reacting to the social pessimism and anxiety caused by losing WWI, these groups achieved much of the original sense of activism Worringer called for in 1908. The ideas of Expressionist literature and art from before the war inspired their cooperation in developing a closer connection between art and the people. Although most of these organizations were in the realm of art, the smaller percentage of architect's had disproportionate influence on the period through their leadership of other arts and potential role in postwar reconstruction.

The programs and manifestos of these radical organizations generally reflected a socialist outlook in their vision for rebuilding society. Most created a list of demands intended to bring society in closer contact with art in order to promote a spiritual rejuvenation. Among the most influential of these groups, the "council of spiritual workers" met in November of 1918 to form their own list of demands under what became the *Novembergruppe*.<sup>8</sup> The majority of participants in this organization were active in the fields of painting and sculpture, but shared the belief in an alliance of all the arts. Using their collective influence, they set up a series of guidelines that demanded a voice in "all architectural projects," "the reorganization of art schools," "the transformation of museums," "the allotment of exhibition halls," and "legislation on artistic matters." This would be accomplished



through a comradeship among artists, as their manifesto read, dedicated to improvement of society.<sup>9</sup>

We stand on the fertile ground of Revolution. Our slogan is LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY! We have come together because we share the noblest duty to dedicate our efforts to the moral task of building Germany young and free."<sup>10</sup>

As a unified group of artists, they intended to spread the ideas of a new future through various catalogues, and exhibitions of visionary art. Additionally, the publication of many periodicals like *Der Kunsttopf* (The Artpot), *Novembergruppe* [figure 2.4], *Die Schöne Rarität* (The Beautiful Rarity) were intended to present these visionary ideas to a larger proletariat. However, the magazine *An alle Künstler!* (To all Artists!) indicated a more revolutionary goal on its front cover [figure 2.5]. The magazine contained a collection of statements, poems, and prints by 14 artists, but the cover depicted a man clutching his heart and pointing forward while the city behind him was engulfed in flames. This reveals the sense of scale through which artists were committed to the rebuilding of society, and the significant role of architects in that rebuilding. Surprisingly, only one architect attended the first general meeting of the *Novembergruppe* on 3 December 1918 - Erich Mendelsohn. His radical position in the founding of the *Novembergruppe* was influenced by an association with painter groups like *Der Blaue Reiter* before the war. Although Mendelsohn was the only initial representative of architecture at the meeting, the ideas of the organization would later draw numerous other architects like Otto Bartning, Walter Gropius, Hugo Häring,

Hans and Wassili Luckhardt, Adolf Meyer, Hans Poelzig, and Mies van der Rohe.<sup>11</sup>

Other artists groups of similar ambitions were set up in many other cities, but more influential for architects was the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Working Council for Art) set up in Berlin under the direction of Bruno Taut on 13 November 1918.<sup>12</sup> Their intentions were more ambitious since they intended to form a new society through physical rebuilding of the environment by the cooperation of all the arts. The first few lines of their inaugural publication read:

Convinced that the political revolution must be used to free the arts from the decades of tutelage, a circle of like minded artists and friends of the arts has come together in Berlin...Art and the people must form a unity. The arts shall no longer be the enjoyment of the few but the happiness and life of the masses. The goal is consolidation of the arts under the wings of a great architecture.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after the organization's establishment, Taut resigned from his presidency and Walter Gropius took over to continue operating the organization until its dissolution in 1921. During this short time, the organization was successful in publishing two pamphlets on architecture, a collection of essays on the role of arts in the revolution, and several exhibitions of architectural work.<sup>14</sup> In addition to a long membership list of architects, the group bolstered their commitment to a unification of the arts

through a wide membership of painters, sculptors, and various other artisans.

Out of shared fear for the social degradation of German life, avant-garde ideology became obsessed with future worlds and scenarios that were impossible to achieve.<sup>15</sup> Artists and architects perceived themselves as victim-heroes destined to sacrifice themselves in the hope that a better world would be achieved through their own demise. In *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Renato Paggioli described this quality as a tendency toward agonism in the avant-garde. It points to an intellectual and artistic motivation that, while dominated by an anticipation of imminent catastrophe, still strives to transform the catastrophe into a miracle. As a result, the artistic principles of Expressionist avant-garde work were based on awareness of its continual state of becoming. Projects and ideas gained status within the avant-garde by the hope and vision they created in an imaginary future that was simultaneously optimistic and out of reach. This legitimized the utopian work of architects and created a theoretical framework to reorganize social and political relations.

Ironically, some of the most sophisticated images of this agonistic renewal came from avant-garde architects that would later reject it with utter revulsion. Among them, Walter Gropius was one of the strongest promoters of Expressionist sacrifice through a return to past (primitive) methods of production. Similar to medieval building guilds, he anticipated a new “brotherhood” of humanity through a return to the crafts. His

rejection of professionalization in art and architecture was based on the social ills he perceived in the division between artists and craftsmen. The phrase, "Architects, sculptors, painters, we must all return to the crafts!" proclaimed a new sense of purpose and spiritual renewal in what Gropius believed to end in a "cathedral of the future".<sup>16</sup> The *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* became a method of uniting all disciplines of artistic production toward this common goal, but its deeper, and more enduring agenda was to influence artistic education. With the support of *Arbeitsrat* members, Gropius argued for a complete renovation of the nation's school system to incorporate a new program of manual training. For Gropius, the integration of Handwerk (hand-labor) in the pedagogical structure of artistic education would create a new artist whose creative ability developed out of manual skills. This new type of artist was the means to a more genuine form of artistic production and the key to a renewed social order. In the 1919 *Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus* he writes,

Let us create a new guild of craftsmen without the class distinctions which raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artist. Together let us conceive and create the new building of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will rise one day toward heaven from the hand workers like the crystal symbol of a coming new faith.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to more humble ambitions of the Bauhaus in later years, Gropius had a utopian vision of both artistic and religious renewal in mind here. For Gropius, as for many other architects, their vision accompanied a complete

regeneration of faith in the world. The clairvoyant anticipation of his “crystal symbol of a coming new faith” is reinforced on the cover to Gropius’ *Bauhaus Proclamation* in a woodcut image titled, “Cathedral of Socialism”, by the Expressionist artist Lyonel Feininger [figure 2.6]. Its crystalline forms and cubist abstraction of a Gothic cathedral reinforce the visionary optimism that was common among radical architects of Expressionism. But the romantic source of that image in the 1818 painting by Caspar David Friedrich [figure 2.7] reveals the more underlying and transcendental hopes that a renewal in artistic values might bring.<sup>18</sup> The profound anticipation of another world, on the other side of what seemed an epoch of destruction and decay, transformed not only the architects but the way in which architecture became a viable form of creation.

That architectural expression of unity or a human brotherhood was the motivation for many utopian projects that explored new forms of community planning and programmatic design. Some of the most widely published work that aimed at an entirely new landscape of architecture was the visionary projects of Bruno Taut. As a well known architect before the war, he extended his ideas of the Glass Pavilion at the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition in a more fantastic direction [figure 2.8 & 2.9]. His friendship and inspiration from the German poet and novelist, Paul Scheerbarth was a lasting influence on Taut and inspired much of his thinking about the future. The symbolic and physical importance he placed on the use of glass in architecture is consistent with the lofty spiritual interests of many architects.

Even as Sheerbert wrote before the war, his ideas seemed to play a vital role in the regenerative spirit that became so pressing afterward.

If we wish to raise our culture to a higher plane, then we are compelled, for better or worse, to change our architecture and this will only be possible for us when we remove the boundaries from the rooms we inhabit. We can however only achieve this by the introduction of glass architecture which lets the light of the sun and the moon and the stars into the room, not only through the windows - but through as many walls as possible that are completely of glass - of coloured panes. The atmosphere which we thereby create for ourselves must bring us a new culture.<sup>19</sup>

This optimism toward spiritual renewal through glass architecture became far more visionary with Taut after the war. His folio of colored drawings published as *Alpine Architektur* in 1919 is an example of some of the most elaborate metaphors of crystal and light [figure 2.10 & 2.11]. It proposed a fantastic vision of the alpine peaks sculpted into crystalline forms based not on the pragmatic concerns of rebuilding a war-torn country, but on a spiritually exalted architecture of the future. These same ideas were expanded in another book of the following year titled, *Die Auflösung der Städte* (The Dissolution of Cities: The Path toward Alpine Architecture).<sup>20</sup> The aim of this book extended the ideas of rebirth to include all of Europe in the design of smaller communities that freed people from their dependence on the old congested cities. Each of Taut's communities consisted of a collection of houses organized around a central Crystal Palace which unified the community and symbolized their spiritual ideals [figure 2.12].

Throughout these schemes for the reorganization of European community life, the underlying motivation was to unify all of the arts in the service of cultural and spiritual needs. Like many other utopian plans of the future, the sense of purpose for most architects was based on the notion that cultural changes hinged on an equivalent change in the architectural and urban environments.

With the support of radical organizations like the *Arbeitsrat*, the limitations and boundaries of what previously defined architecture were replaced with a broader understanding of artistic methods and ideology. Consequently, it is not hard to understand the aversion many radical members of the *Arbeitsrat* had to the pragmatic and commercial interests of the Deutsche Werkbund. Among more spirited opponents, Adolf Behne denounced the Werkbund as an elitist organization and attributed their industrial and commercial interests to the same capitalist greed that helped cause the war.<sup>21</sup> Although the radical architects rarely agreed on how architecture would function outside of a profession, their openness to artistic ideas from other disciplines stimulated a diverse atmosphere of experimentation. This was evident in much of the writing by architects, but visually promoted through the exhibitions of radical architecture projects. The first of these exhibitions sponsored by the *Arbeitsrat* was held in April 1919 under the title, "Ausstellung für unbekannte Architekten" (Exhibition of Unknown Architects). This was followed by another show in 1920. Both exhibitions were conceived as an opportunity for young architects to present their visionary ideas of the future to the public.

The range of artistic disciplines represented in the “Exhibition of Unknown Architects” is an indication of the commitment radical architects had in expanding the domain of architecture [figure 2.13 & 2.14]. Besides many projects by architects like Hugo Häring, Max Taut, Hermann Finsterlin, and Paul Gösch, other artists without an architectural background were invited to display their work. Painters such as César Klein and Joannes Molzahn, graphic artists and musicians also exhibited work that presented a fantastic image of the future. Indeed, the catalog forward to the exhibition by Gropius underscored the far reaching implications that he believed such a unity of artists and architects could bring:

All our works are no more than splinters; objects shaped by needs and utility cannot fulfill the longing for a fundamentally new world of beauty, for a rebirth of that spiritual unity which rose to the miracle of the Gothic cathedral. We shall not live to see it. But there is one consolation: the idea, the building-up of a white hot, bold, far advancing idea which a happier time, bound to come, will realize.<sup>22</sup>

Although the architectural fantasies and visions of this exhibition would seem obnoxiously Romantic only a few years later, the projects exhibited in 1919 were consistent with most radical work of its time. In addition to these exhibitions and meetings of the *Arbeitsrat*, Bruno Taut began the interchange of ideas known as the “Utopian Correspondence” among members of the famous “Gläserne Kette” (Glass Chain) in November 1919. Intended as a way of sharing the thoughts of everyone involved, it also



served to promote these visionary architects as one unified image. This came through the publication of their correspondence in Taut's short lived magazine, *Frühlicht* (early light). The magazine presented the various attitudes developed in the correspondence of the circle as well as the publication of many architectural projects.<sup>23</sup> The work of radical architects was stylistically diverse, but remained united under the common idea of developing new forms of expression to represent a future era of humankind.

Mendelsohn was not directly involved with the Glass Chain, but still remained active in the radical thinking about architecture. Most of what was understood about his ideas at the time came through his gestural sketches of large industrial structures created in the German army during WWI [figure 2.15-2.17]. These were presented to the public in an exhibition of his work titled, "Architecture in Steel and Concrete" at the famous Paul Cassirer gallery in 1919. Despite the independence of this show from any organizational sponsorship typical of such exhibitions, Mendelsohn maintained very close contact with other radical architects. As a founding member of the Berlin *Novembergruppe* and a member of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, his revolutionary intentions were well known among the public and avant-garde alike. Indeed, the *Arbeitsrat* invited him to repeat the speech delivered at his Cassirer exhibition to an audience of the *Arbeitsrat*, and later Bruno Taut published several of Mendelsohn's architectural projects in *Frühlicht*. The bold lines of Mendelsohn's sketches showed less interest in promoting a new social order, but his work shared the conviction that modern times required a reconception of architectural form. Investigations

in the mass and contour of buildings inspired him to propose a new expression based on future possibilities of steel and concrete.

Though the post-war avant-garde would begin to shift away from Expressionism in the early 1920's, the unity that so many utopian architects struggled for occurred for a time without much notice. Extensive variations in stylistic expression disguised an underlying unification in their creative intentions and self-awareness. As with Mendelsohn, all of the radical architects held various relationships and investments within Expressionism. But all shared a similar stake in the idea of the "avant-garde" as a means to achieve spiritual regeneration. Their hope for a spiritual transition anticipated their own decline and rebirth in what became the *Neue Sachlichkeit* avant-garde in later years. This sense of sacrifice within all Expressionist projects was inherent to the avant-garde vision that lay not in the historical future, but in an afterlife of ideological change. As Renato Paggioli described the agonistic tendency of avant-garde movements, this could also be seen as a force behind the doctrines of Expressionism.<sup>24</sup>

...followers of the avant-garde in the arts act as if they were disposed to make dung heaps of themselves for the fertilizing of conquered lands, or mountains of corpses over which a new generation may in its turn scale the besieged fortress.<sup>25</sup>

This points to a fundamental attitude of avant-garde architects as they shifted from Expressionism to the more rational and "objective" thinking in the early 20's. Not only was defeat and self-destruction built into the very idea of

Expressionist avant-garde, but in the following years it was easy to believe in the rejection of Expressionism as salvation from the original social crisis that the movement began with.

### *Monument to Expression*

Shortly after Mendelsohn's lecture to the *Arbeitsrat*, his visibility within the avant-garde and public realm greatly increased. His construction of the Einstein Observatory became a building of popular discussion as well as visionary optimism. As a major contribution to this period of experimentation, it was one of the few realized projects. This was an important fact for Mendelsohn since he criticized many Expressionist projects for keeping strictly to the realm of fantasy without any hope for realization. For that reason, the Einstein Observatory became one of the most lasting and memorable monuments to that realm of fantasy.

The project began through a long correspondence with the German physicist Findlay Freundlich, who was interested in performing spectral analysis experiments to study Einstein's recent theory of relativity. As early as 1914 Mendelsohn and Freundlich had discussed the possibilities of building an observatory tower for this experiment. Many early conversations resulted in some of Mendelsohn's war time sketches that became a signature of his creativity. However, the project did not become a reality until the end of 1917. While Mendelsohn was stationed at the French front in the German

army, he maintained close correspondence with Freundlich and developed many of the sketches that influenced the final design [figure 2.18-2.20]. Upon Mendelsohn's return to Berlin in 1918, the project became more real and by early 1919, Freundlich had begun to acquire funds for the construction. Mendelsohn's final drawings were prepared in 1920 and construction began later in that year through 1921 [figure 2.21 & 2.22]. Although the necessary financing delayed the operation of the optical devices until 1924, it was an amazing accomplishment to finish the project in the economic difficulties associated with inflation. As it happened, the project cost nearly three times more than was originally estimated.<sup>26</sup>

The observatory was intended as a building shell to contain the optical instruments which formed the main part of the experiment. The tower form was designed to accommodate a mirror at top, directing light rays down through the core of the tower into a dark room with refracting lenses [figure 2.23]. In this room, the light rays could expose photographic paper or bend light into the laboratory in the next room for measuring light bands with a spectrometer. As Mendelsohn's assistant, Richard Neutra described the building in 1921:

In its interior, a concrete stairway climbs upward, and through its spiral the refractor lets the rays, captured from the infinite, fall down into a laboratory where they are broken up, and where they are thrown into a subterranean room of great length, three times insulated, absolutely pitch dark and inaccessible. There, the rays pass through a mysterious apparatus which reflects them back to the laboratory.<sup>27</sup>

At the ground level, the building contains only a work space and guest room to accommodate scientists spending nights at the facility. The sculptural forms on the exterior of the building went through many phases of design. Earlier schemes suggest that Mendelsohn intended an anthropomorphic quality of the building through what appear as four vertebrae that define the tower portion [figure 2.24]. However, the built projects is the culmination of a design in which Mendelsohn explored the possibilities of an architecture conceived through mass. As shown in a change toward a more monolithic treatment of the sketches in 1919, Mendelsohn remarked to his wife in a letter, "line must die, [it] must become the contour of the mass...Architecture is domination of the mass."<sup>28</sup> It was this treatment of architectural form over the scientific functions of the interior that Mendelsohn attempted to represent as the conceptual idea of Einstein's relativity. The sculptural contours and streamlined mass suggested a building in motion that explored many of Mendelsohn's ideas on a dynamics of form.<sup>29</sup> Like Taut's use of glass for a new architecture of utopia, Mendelsohn used concrete to explore new forms of expression. The opportunities offered in concrete were the basis for a new style and an organic conception of form. Like many other Expressionist architects working at the time, Mendelsohn aimed at creating a symbol of the postwar commitment to harmony between art, science, and nature.

In the years immediately after construction of the Einstein Observatory, Mendelsohn enjoyed widespread notoriety from the project in both the

public sphere and architectural discussion. The first publication of the building came through the Dutch architecture magazine *Wendingen* in October 1920 before it was even completed. Nationalistic support and enthusiasm for Einstein's accomplishment with relativity channeled extensive attention to an architecture proposing to represent his theories. Through a number of headline stories and photographs in the most popular newspapers, the building was already famous before its dedication in 1924. Much of the attention directed to the tower was in consideration of whether it represented the new direction of architecture. Some criticism like that of the Dutch architect, J.F. Staal in his articles for *Wendingen* argued that the building looked more like an old-fashioned monument than a futuristic workplace.<sup>30</sup> This was a larger criticism aimed at the general work of avant-garde architects who appeared to privilege individual expression at the expense of function. Although Staal was not positive toward the building, his writing still placed the tower as part of the best German work at the time. Other criticism was based on a more overtly anti-Expressionist position. The German art critic and editor of *Das Kunstblatt* Peter Westheim used the Observatory to point toward everything wrong with Expressionism. In condemning the monumentality of the building, he argued that it represented an overall regression to imperial architecture and dismissed Mendelsohn for his tendency toward individualism.<sup>31</sup> But the more moderate criticism was based on the buildings innovative use of concrete and its ability to provoke a heightened sensualism. Even criticism from devoted architects of functionalism like Ludwig Hilberseimer praised Mendelsohn for his achievements in concrete and the ability to imagine the

structure as a monolith.<sup>32</sup> Overall, most contemporary criticism was enthusiastic to the accomplishments that Mendelsohn made toward development of Modern architecture.

### *Displacement in History*

Very shortly after the construction of the Einstein Observatory, avant-garde architects began to reject Expressionism as a source of inspiration for their work. The utopian dreams and aspirations common in the period after WWI were quickly replaced with a desire for greater rationality. Although the underlying intention of creating a new society remained central to the avant-garde even after Expressionism, their methods of accomplishing this were focused on more practical innovations. In 1923 the museum director, G.F. Hartlaub began to organize an exhibition of paintings and graphic arts for the Mannheim Art Gallery which played a large role in solidifying the break with Expressionist work. His use of the phrase “*Die Neue Sachlichkeit*” in a letter to other museum directors, art dealers, and critics to solicit new artists quickly became a representational category of the most modern work. Hartlaub’s understanding of the relationship this avant-garde held to the more personal Expressionism is apparent in the original letter of 18 May 1923.

I wish in the autumn to arrange a medium-sized exhibition of paintings and prints, which could be given the designation “*Die Neue Sachlichkeit*.” I am interested in bringing together

representative works of those artists who in the last ten years have been neither impressionistically relaxed nor expressionistically abstract, who have devoted themselves exclusively neither to external sense impressions, nor to pure inner construction. I wish to exhibit those artists who have remained unswervingly faithful to positive palpable reality, or who have become faithful to it once more.<sup>33</sup>

Used here in reference to painting, the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* became widely understood in following years to identify a post-Expressionist avant-garde. Its more fashionable use to describe architecture in later years assumed the role of categorizing a transition in the minds of avant-garde artists.<sup>34</sup>

Much of the enthusiasm of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in architecture was set against the background of Expressionism. The force and quickness of its adoption by avant-garde architects required an utter rejection of the imagery associated with Expressionism. Indeed the appeal of *Neue Sachlichkeit* for many architects was that it represented a return to the true path of modern development, in which Expressionism was a divergence and corruption of ideals set out in the 1914 Werkbund Exposition. As the historian Nikolaus Pevsner would later write, Expressionism was blamed for distracting a more genuine course of history.

The Expressionists, in looking back at them from the safe port of 1936, were ineffectual deviationists. To me what had been achieved in 1914 was the style of the century. Here was the one style which fitted all those aspects of economics and sociology,



of materials and function. It seemed folly that anyone would wish to abandon it.<sup>35</sup>

Aside from the dismissive tone that overlooks any contribution or connection between Expressionism and the later avant-garde, Pevsner articulated another layer of disassociation from the post-war years. His identification of “The Expressionists” as an autonomous group implies this was an organized, yet separate movement with its own set of misdirected intentions. Rather than accounting for the origins of *Neue Sachlichkeit* avant-garde within Expressionism, the post-war years begin to sound like an external association. To most avant-garde architects in later years, this way of understanding Expressionism could isolate its ideas and values from their own past.

As early as 1923, Bruno Taut and Adolf Behne had accused Expressionist design of stooping to the level of kitsch. Walter Gropius also shifted the direction of Bauhaus ideology away from Expressionist thinking in 1923 by denouncing the aims of creativity in the interest of self-expression. Additionally, much of the Werkbund activity was based on a renewal from the contamination of modern art caused by Expressionist goals. Bruno Taut may have summarized this attitude toward the transition from Expressionism best when writing his *Modern Architecture* in 1929. Its similarity to how so many other architects understood the post-war period makes this passage worth quoting at length.

Conditions in post-war Germany with regard to art were of unparalleled difficulty. War and revolution had thrown all such matters so completely out of gear that it was at first impossible for anyone to evolve a mental basis. It was not possible to make use of any pre-war traditions, for that period was perforce regarded as the cause of the misfortunes of the past, and because every achievement of those days seemed more or less to hang together with the origins of the war. The progressively minded, revolutionary and anti-militaristic youth on whom things depended had been decimated by the war, and were thus greatly at a disadvantage, even numerically speaking, in comparison with the older generation. At first there was practically little or no building done, while the "inflation years" that ensued with their ghastly exploitation of the people, prolonged the cessation of productive activity, and created still further havoc in the mental attitude of the public. Small wonder that in these circumstances, the architects desirous of paving the way for a new architecture, could at first find no other basis but in themselves. Small wonder, that they felt forced to give uttermost and noisiest vent to their own feelings, if only to be heard at all, preaching and rhapsodizing about unity which neither existed nor could be evolved. That this state of mind, known as "Expressionism," was abandoned by the best of them as far back as 1923 (the time of the inflation) can only be valued at its true worth by those familiar with the conditions in Germany which then prevailed.<sup>36</sup>

Like many other architects eager to disavow their affiliation with Expressionism, Taut portrayed the post-war condition as a time of artistic misfortune. His apologies for the subjective self-interest of architects were based on factors that he argued were outside the control of architects. But the weakness perceived in Expressionism also doubled as the foundation for the new architecture. The famous German historian, Walter Curt Behrendt

used a military metaphor to describe the manifold forms of expression in his 1920 book on “the battle over style in the arts and crafts and in architecture”. By 1927 Behrendt had achieved a vested interest in what the aesthetic image of social conditions would be with his newly published book, *Der Sieg des neuen Baustils* (The Victory of the New Building Style).<sup>37</sup> With this, Behrendt suggested that the new way of life had not only obtained some form of unified expression but that it had been a conclusive struggle. The ideology that runs throughout most later ideas on Modernity depend on some form of reorientation from chaos.

Behrendt continued to perceive Modern architecture after the decline of Expressionism as a regrouping of architects toward a common cause of humanity. Any understanding of Modernism had necessarily to be set against the frivolity and capriciousness of stylistic experimentation before. As Behrendt resolved in the Preface to his 1937 book, *Modern Building: Its Nature, Problems, and Forms*, “For almost a century the idea of developing a new style to the needs of a new age was carried on by a spiritual movement of international scope whose strength and perseverance finally succeeded in the realization of new forms of building.” However, the success of this endeavor hinged on the idea that old forms of individualism were discarded with the old social systems. For Behrendt, the division between the new architecture and the old was drawn between form inspired by universal purpose and subjective expression. His regard for the later was best stated in a section of *Modern Building*,

In modern times, it has become, and still is at present day, the tragedy of many talented architects, and especially of the strong and imaginative ones, that they believe in the sovereign consciousness of their own artistic personalities, that they can rise above the social conditions of their epoch; and so they exhaust their strength on ideas in which the age no longer believes, and which, in spite of all their abilities, they cannot actualize. Their works may be interesting, even admirable as documents of personal expression; yet they are not capable of further development, because they contain too much of personal caprice and special opportunity and contribute too little to the general problems of their time. (Modern Building, p.109).

According to Behrendt, Modern architecture necessarily responded to the larger social forces of production and politics. His interest in a new style was based on an architecture that derived its inspiration from technics or functional requirements.

By 1932 Modern avant-garde thinking had all but eliminated the subversive images of Expressionist fantasy. The infamous vindicators of modern architecture, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson wrote the book on this development of the twenties. Their history was called *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*. Written as an accompaniment to the exhibition of International Style architecture at the Museum of Modern Art, the combination of text and exhibition helped define a new aesthetic for the "Modern Style" over the next thirty years. The exhibition consisted of enlarged photographs, models, and drawings of buildings by mostly European avant-garde architects that Hitchcock and Johnson regarded as part

of a cohesive movement [figure 2.25]. Their similarities in facade, structure, or programmatic organization were evidence for the manifestation of a unified spirit in construction. The three principles of “volume”, “regularity”, and “avoidance of applied decoration” each received a chapter in the text that explained the main attributes these buildings had in common. Yet this presentation of Modern work also reinforced a historical perspective that set modern architecture against subjective creativity.

Their introduction on “THE IDEA OF STYLE” distinguished the avant-garde from past architecture by a rejection of individualism and romanticism in design. Modern architects stood as leaders in a new era through their subjugation of old methods of thinking and creating. Hitchcock had identified this quality of the avant-garde several years before in his book, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* which established a system of historical categorization. As he explains, the New Tradition and the New Pioneers were a rough grouping of architects that contributed to architecture’s evolution from an Age of Romanticism to the Modern world. While the New Tradition made the first efforts toward an architecture that broke from an eclecticism of taste, it was the New Pioneers that Hitchcock truly admired. Unlike the experiments in form and composition of past architects, he described the New Pioneers as a new breed of artists:

Instead of composing in three dimensions in values of mass, the New Pioneers compose in values of volume; instead of complexity as a means of interest they seek a strenuous unification; instead of diversity and richness of surface they

strive for monotony and even poverty in order that the idea of the surface as the geometrical boundary of volume may be most clearly stressed.<sup>38</sup>

Their willingness to subdue individualistic expression for the benefit of universal will was an indication that architecture could finally respond to all people, not just a bourgeois few. For Hitchcock and Johnson, this rejection of personal and subjective methods of design was a distinguishing characteristic of Modernity. It was a triumph of modern perseverance in which they described the International Style as: "This contemporary style, which exists throughout the world, is unified and inclusive, not fragmentary and contradictory like so much of the production of the first generation of modern architects".<sup>39</sup>

Although later development of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* avant-garde and International Style architects assumed a sense of autonomy, their links to the concept of Expressionism remained. Indeed that image of autonomy depended on a rejection of Expressionism. Histories of Modern architecture in the later 1920's constructed an image of chaos and "contradiction" in which the ideologies of functionalism and objectivity set themselves apart. Hitchcock and Johnson's *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* set a clear division between new work and the old, but by drawing such a clear division, they used Expressionism as the background on which a new style was formed. This kind of historical construction underlies most later attitudes toward Expressionism. But since historians could not reconcile the connections between Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* or International

Style, the memory of a chaotic and subjective time survived through monuments such as Mendelsohn's Einstein Observatory.

### *An Image of Mendelsohn*

Like most artists and architects at the end of the 1920's, Erich Mendelsohn was not any less suspicious of the utopian ideals and twisted forms of Expressionism. By this time his aesthetic interests and understanding of form had shared much of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* ideology that characterized other avant-garde work. But his role in the histories of Modern architecture remained focused on memories of the Einstein Observatory. Through its construction, Mendelsohn had both erected a monument to Expressionist ideas and committed himself to that work in the minds of historians. Indeed it became an icon representing the creative essence of Mendelsohn. So strong was his identification with this building that upon Mendelsohn's death in September 1953, obituaries in magazines and newspapers located an image of the Einstein Observatory alongside his name. However, the more enduring effects of this association were in his link to the history of Expressionism. The same historians that situated Expressionism against the modern developments of architecture after 1922 also used Mendelsohn as an example of that outmoded ideology.

As might be expected from Sigfried Giedion's investments in Modern architecture, Mendelsohn played a marginal role in the scope of *Space, Time*

*and Architecture*. In fact, he was not even mentioned until the 10th edition in 1953! And then even after he was included, Mendelsohn's name was only casually cited in a list of other architects describing the entries for a competition. But this historical slight continued even in the index listing that merely referenced his last name and first initial, while other people of less significance were usually listed by full name [figure 2.26]. Before the 10th edition though, Mendelsohn had been implicitly referenced in Giedion's criticism of Expressionism. He writes,

The expressionist influence could not be a healthy one or perform any service for architecture. Nevertheless it touched almost every German worker in the arts. Men who were later to do grimly serious work in housing developments abandoned themselves to a romantic mysticism, dreamed of fairy castles to stand on the peak of Monte Rosa. Others built concrete towers as flaccid as jellyfish.<sup>40</sup>

Along with identifying Bruno Taut with his work in *Alpine Architektur*, the "jellyfish" tower developed an image of Mendelsohn that became an icon of Expressionist architecture. So evocative were they in the minds of architects, historians, and critics that they symbolized everything that a new objectivity sought to overcome.

Among the most critical historians, Walter Curt Behrendt portrayed an image of Mendelsohn that also fell short of Modern expectations in the book, *Modern Building: Its Nature, Problems, and Forms*. His preoccupation with a new style of architecture based on objectivity marginalized Mendelsohn's



relationship to other avant-garde architects in the 1920's. Within this history, the usual crowd of Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies, and Oud lead their colleagues out of a period of angst and confusion. Behrendt's attitude is most clear in the chapter titled "From Personal Expression Towards A New Style", but here the image of Mendelsohn's Einstein Observatory is used in a different way. The significance of the Observatory is less for its worth as architecture, than for a lesson on Expressionism's lure away from Modern architecture. He writes how Mendelsohn was partially able to overcome this in terms of the more "serious work" later in the decade, "The numerous commissions which soon came to him from the commercial and industrial world, strengthened him with their discipline, and led him happily out of the blind alley of expressionism."<sup>41</sup> However, after crediting Mendelsohn with a more lengthy career than most historians typically acknowledged, Behrendt found him inconsistent with the underlying aims of a new style. He writes,

After having yielded, as a youngster, to the temptations of expressionism...he finally succeeded in developing an individual style. These conceptions, however, were definitely determined by his urge toward self-expression, and so was his style: eloquent in its effect, filled with declamatory power, the form itself full of expressive movement. But this individual style, although it showed decisive preference for all sorts of modern materials and forms of construction, is not quite adequate to the spirit of the age in that it was too subjective and still contained too many romantic remainders and ostentatious personal elements.<sup>42</sup>

As this kind of characterization implies, Mendelsohn was increasingly identified with the Einstein Observatory and consequently associated with the misguided vision of Expressionism. The list of other historians who portrayed Mendelsohn in similar ways is long and only reconfirms much of the attitudes demonstrated here. Even historians like Nikolaus Pevsner, who tended to look more favorably on Mendelsohn, were also critical of the Einstein Observatory. As was common after the 1930's, Pevsner's writing on Mendelsohn or the Observatory was usually linked to a larger discussion of topics like "the troubled mood of 1919", the effects of being "doped by the fumes of Expressionism", or discussion of an "Expressionist episode".<sup>43</sup>

As historians and architects continually attempted to define the doctrines and formation of Modern style, Expressionism became a way of describing the threat that modernity had overcome. Since the Einstein Observatory was one of the few realized projects of that period, it was easily adopted as a symbol of Expressionist dreams. It represented an architecture that could-have-been, had Modernity not been salvaged through the rationality of architects awakening from an Expressionist stupor. Even though Mendelsohn went on to produce many projects characteristic of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, his affiliation with the Observatory remained a hindrance to a fully "Modern" image. Of course much of his marginalization from the avant-garde was the consequence of historical studies that portrayed Mendelsohn in that way. But the memory of Expressionism also had a strong influence on how he was perceived by his colleagues, and on the construction of Mendelsohn's own sense of identity in the 1920's.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: The Harvard University Press, 1949, p.418

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Hesse, "Die Brüder Karamazoff oder Der Untergang Europas", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970, vol.12. Gordon gives a good account of this turning back toward the Orient in *Expressionism*, p.115-121 as well as Pehnt in *Expressionist Architecture*. It was relatively common among intellectuals of this period to look toward Asia as a source of spiritual rebirth. The architectural critic, Adolf Behne similarly said, "Light perpetually comes from the East" in *Die Wiederkehr der Kunst*, 1919; Bruno Taut often described the "ecstasy" of Indian architecture; Walter Gropius wrote in an early draft of a Bauhaus speech, "To build! To give form! Gothic--India"; and Hans Poelzig's design for the *Grosses Schauspielhaus* contains a number of Indian or Islamic similarities.

<sup>3</sup> Kurt Junghanns, *Bruno Taut 1880-1938*. Berlin: Henscel, 1970, p.32. After Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.61.

<sup>4</sup> From "Reflections on New Architecture", a passage of writing that Mendelsohn claims to have written at the German Front between 1914-1917. This section is from the translation by George Scheffauer published in *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*. Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth Publishers, 1924, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> I believe Worringer was more directly influential on Expressionists artists because his historical methodology seemed more applicable to modern situations. This was mainly through his formal and psychological views on the role of art in society. However, the aesthetic theories of Fiedler and Riegl were also a crucial source of inspiration during the closing years of Expressionism and the beginning of *Neue Sachlichkeit* avant-garde.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, "Moderne Idealisten", *Berner Rundschau* 2 (1907-8), p.737-42. Translation and further discussion in Magdalena Bushart, "Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch" in *Invisible Cathedrals*, p.69-85.

<sup>7</sup> For a good account of the various artist organizations that formed in most German cities after the war, see Peter W. Guenther, "A Survey of Artists' Groups: Their Rise, Rhetoric, and Demise" in *German Expressionism: The Second Generation*, ed. Stephanie Barron, Munich: Prestel, p.99-115.

<sup>8</sup> Artists that are commonly credited with the founding of the *Novembergruppe* are: César Klein, Moriz Melzer, Max Pechstein, Heinrich Richter, and Georg Tappert. Other members of the organization that were present at the founding meeting were: painters- Rudolf Bauer Otto Freundlich, Bernhard Hasler, Karl Jakob Hirsch, Richard Janthur, Bruno Krauskopf, and Wilhelm Schmid; sculptors- Rudolf Belling; architects- Erich Mendelsohn.

Very similar to this group was the *Dresdner Künstlerschaft* (Dresden Council of Artists). This is significant because the more radical *Dresdner Sezession Gruppe* broke off of this in 1919 under the leadership of Otto Dix and Conrad Felixmüller. Ironically, Otto Dix would later become one of the leaders of Berlin Dada and an enduring critic of the *Novembergruppe*.

<sup>9</sup> See *German Expressionism*, p.45-50 for more on the *Novembergruppe's* social agenda.

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<sup>10</sup> "Manifest der Novembristen", from Kliemann, *Die Novembergruppe*, p.56. Trans. in *German Expressionism*, p.48.

<sup>11</sup> Kathleen James lists these names in *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years, 1918-1933*. University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. dissertation, 1990, p.46. The extensive source material that James has uncovered in this dissertation will be the basis for many of my later observations.

<sup>12</sup> The name *Arbeitsratt* or Working Council is an indication of the groups endorsement of socialist views. The Russian term Arbeiterräte describes the workers' councils or "soviets" which represent workers in the Communist Russian government.

The founding members of this organization included Bruno Taut, Walter Gropius, Adolf Behne, Käthe Kollwitz, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

<sup>13</sup> From Peter W. Guenther, "A Survey of Artists' Groups" in *German Expressionism*, p.100.

<sup>14</sup> The pamphlet was titled *Ja! Stimmen des Arbeitsrates für Kunst*.

<sup>15</sup> See the introduction of *German Expressionism*, p.27 for list of periodicals and essays that give a sense of this attitude.

<sup>16</sup> This phrase organized much of Gropius' writing for the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* and can be found in *Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar*, Weimar, April 1919. For a description of its use in the larger context of German avant-garde activity, see Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, p.50.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Gropius, *Proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus*, April 1919. Quoted from translation in Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.65.

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Gropius' relationship to the ideas and movement of Expressionism, see Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.64-65

<sup>19</sup> Paul Scheerbart, *Glasarchitektur*, Berlin, 1914, p.11. After translation in in Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.88.

<sup>20</sup> *Die Auflösung der Städte, oder Die Erde, eine gute Wohnung, oder auch Der Weg zur Alpinen Architektur, oder Weg zur Wahnsinn*, Hagen: Folkwang Verlag, 1920.

<sup>21</sup> Adolf Behne, Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut and most other radicals after WWI were very suspicious of the Werkbund because it seemed to perpetuate many of the bourgeois values and passivity that they rejected. Several critics even called for a complete dismantling of the Werkbund because of its war-time cooperation with propaganda and Pan-Germanic policies. Despite much criticism and lack of funds though, the Werkbund began to draw wider support in the early 1920's. The election of Hans Poelzig to President in 1919 helped to unite many architects under his vision of a return to the purity and idealism of previous years. His enthusiasm of "Art" and "Craft" over the profit-seeking materialism of "Industry" helped to win the favor of younger radical architects, especially Gropius and Behne. For more on the relationship of radical architects to the Werkbund during the post-war years, see especially the chapter "Revolution and Renewal 1918-1919" in Campbell, *The German Werkbund*.

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<sup>22</sup> Translation from Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.67.

<sup>23</sup> Of these, Scharoun, Mendelsohn, Krayl, Söder, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe had all published projects or visionary drawings in the pages of the magazine. Sharp gives good description of activity surrounding the Glass Chain in Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.69-71. Also see Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, chapter: The Glass Chain: European architectural Expressionism 1910-25, p.116-122.

<sup>24</sup> See Iain Boyd Whyte, "The End of an Avant-Garde: the example of 'Expressionist' architecture" In *Art History* 3. Vol.3, No.1, p.102-114 for another interpretation of Expressionism in this agonistic sense.

<sup>25</sup> Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, p.68.

<sup>26</sup> See James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, chapter on "The Creation of an Icon" for more detailed account of Mendelsohn's involvement with the Einstein Observatory.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Neutra in a letter to Lilly Niedermann, his fiancé Dione's mother, dated December 1921. *Dione Neutra, Richard Neutra: Promise and Fulfillment 1919-1932, Selections from the Letters and Diaries of Richard and Dione Neutra*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1986, p.54.

<sup>28</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to his wife, dated 28 June 1920. Translated from James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, p.71.

<sup>29</sup> See Mendelsohn's 1919 lecture for more on his idea of dynamics. A excerpted copy can be found in *Erich Mendelsohn: Letters of an Architect*. ed. Oskar Beyer, New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1967. For a better discussion of the connection between the Einstein Observatory and Einstein, see Kathleen James, "Expressionism, Relativity, and the Einstein Tower." In *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. Vol.53, No.4, p.392-413.

<sup>30</sup> James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, p93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.95

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96

<sup>33</sup> G. F. Hartlaub, letter dated 18 May 1923. Quoted from Fritz Schmalenbach, "The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*", *Art Bulletin*, No.22, September 1940, p.161. Original German for this passage of letter reads: "Ich möchte im Herbst eine mittelgrosse Ausstellung von Gemälden und Graphik veranstalten, der man etwa den Titel geben könnte 'Die *Neue Sachlichkeit*.' Es liegt mir daran, repräsentative Werke derjenigen Künstler zu vereinigen, die in den letzten 10 Jahren weder impressionistisch aufgelöst noch expressionistisch abstrakt, weder rein sinnhaft äusserlich, noch rein konstruktiv innerlich gewesen sind. Diejenigen Künstler möchte ich zeigen, die der positiven greifbaren Wirklichkeit mit einem bekennerischen Zuge treu geblieben oder wider treu geworden sind."

<sup>34</sup> As Schmalenbach points out, the later use of *Neue Sachlichkeit* to describe a tendency in the arts and architecture had a limited connection to its original use. Most historians or critics using the term in the later part of the 1920's understood the term as describing a completely

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new form of creativity with little direct connection to Expressionism. See Schmalenbach, "The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*" for more on its changing meaning.

<sup>35</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, "Architecture in our time", *The Listener*, 29 December 1966, p.953.

<sup>36</sup> Bruno Taut, *Modern Architecture*. London: The Studio, 1929, p.92-93.

<sup>37</sup> In the history of Modernism, *Der Sieg des neuen Baustils* is often perceived as a decisive shift toward a more unified and coherent agenda of the avant-garde. Detached from the fluctuations in administration of the Werkbund and other professional organizations at the time, *Der Sieg* identified an aesthetic style that would represent the common interests of the avant-garde. Even before writing this book though, Behrendt was committed to finding a particular style to associate with the aspirations of German radical architects. His belief that the artistic will of the German people would be expressed through vernacular forms was emphasized in his 1920 book on "the battle over style in the arts and crafts and in architecture" (this is how Lewis Mumford describes the book in his "biographical sketches" in *Roots of Contemporary*. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1952, p.422). Although Behrendt wrote this book before the war, its publication afterward was not inconsistent with his sympathy for vernacular form.

<sup>38</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*. New York: Payson & Clarke Ltd., 1929, p.160.

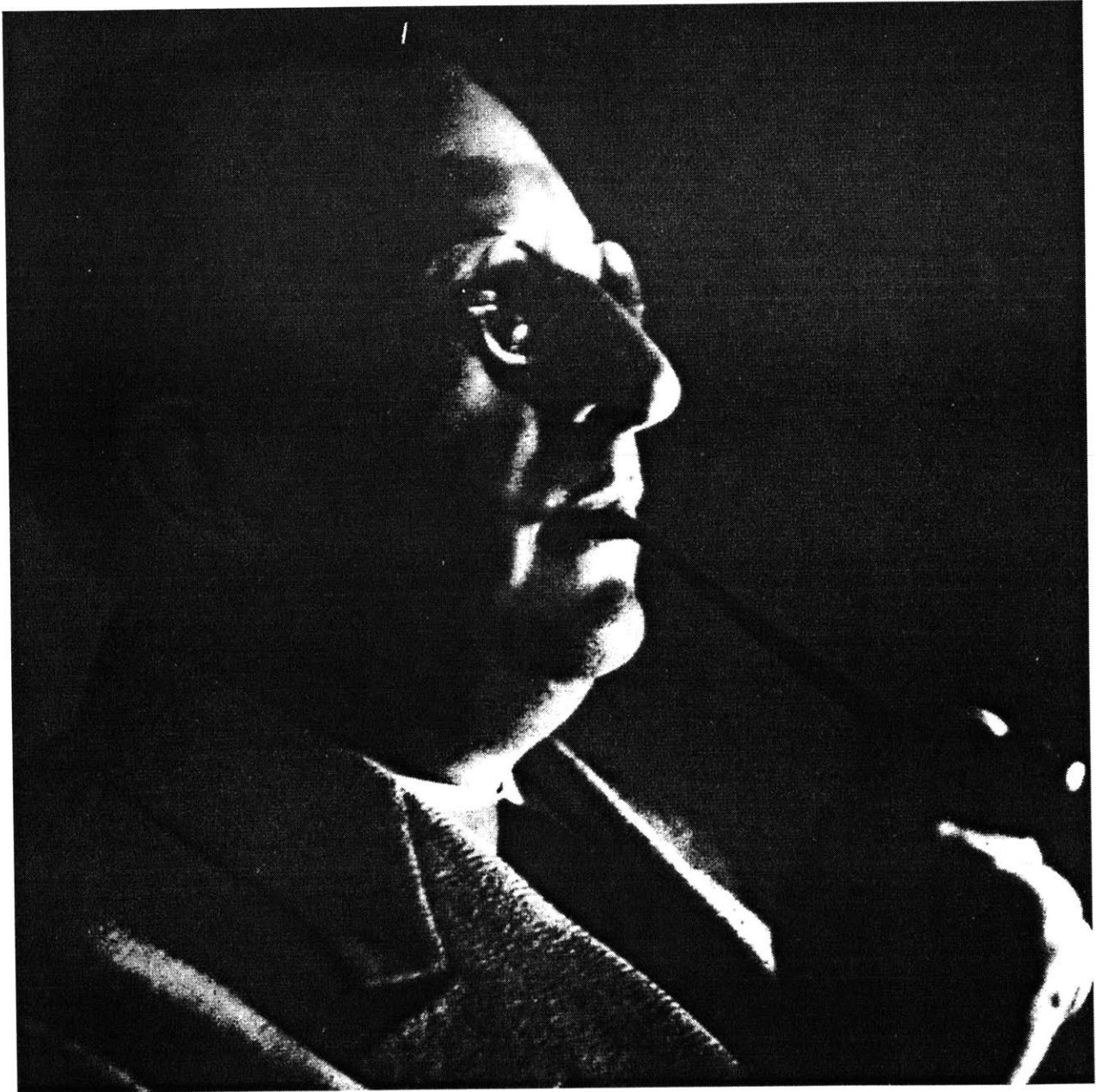
<sup>39</sup> Hitchcock & Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, p.31??

<sup>40</sup> Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 1949, p.419.

<sup>41</sup> Walter Curt Behrendt, *Modern Building: Its Nature, Problems, and Forms*. New York: Halcourt, Brace and Co., 1937, p.146.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157-158.

<sup>43</sup> These are only a few of many descriptions surrounding his discussion of post-war architecture and Erich Mendelsohn in his book, *An Outline of European Architecture*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1960. These quotes are from p.661, 667, and 666 respectively.



**figure 2.1** Erich Mendelsohn in 1940. Portrait used in his biography by Arnold Whittick.

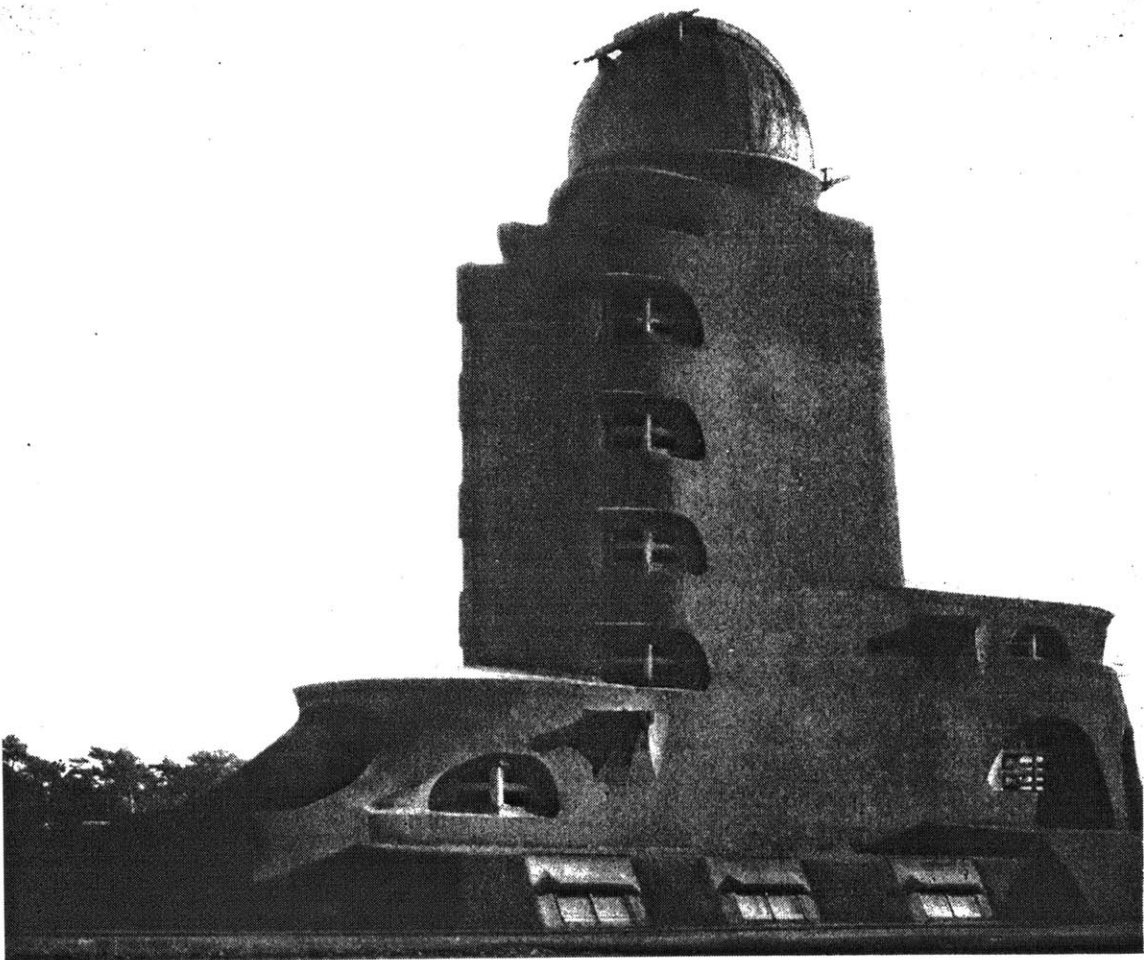


figure 2.2 Einstein Observatory, 1921.



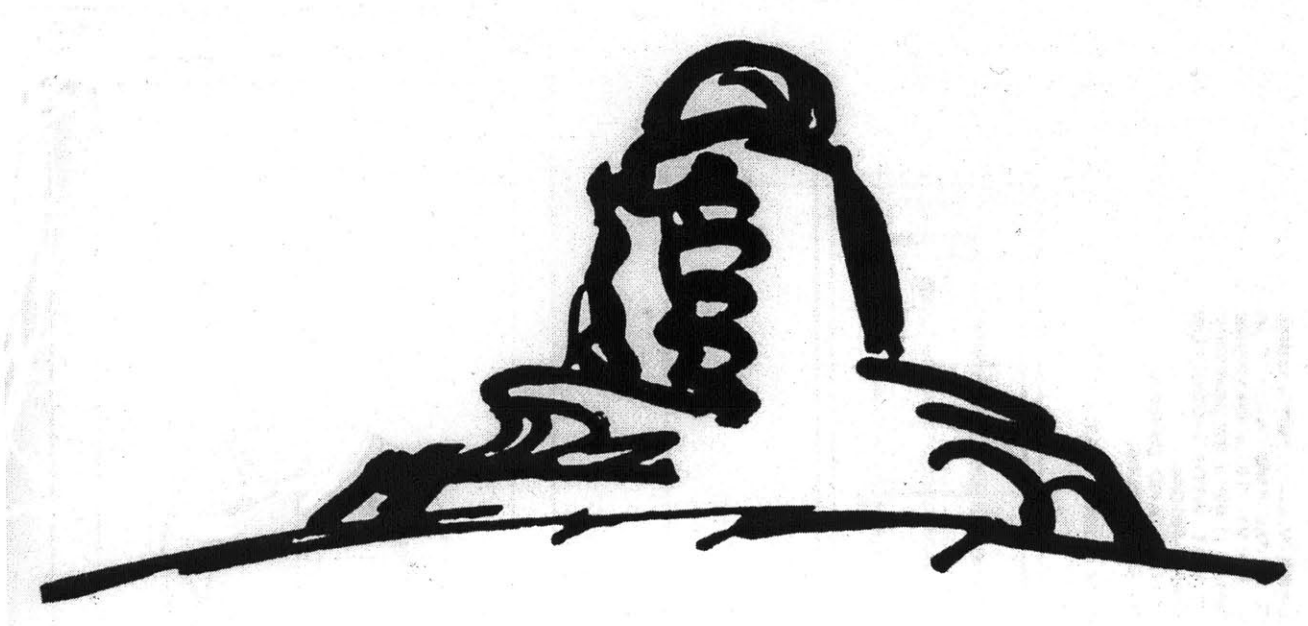
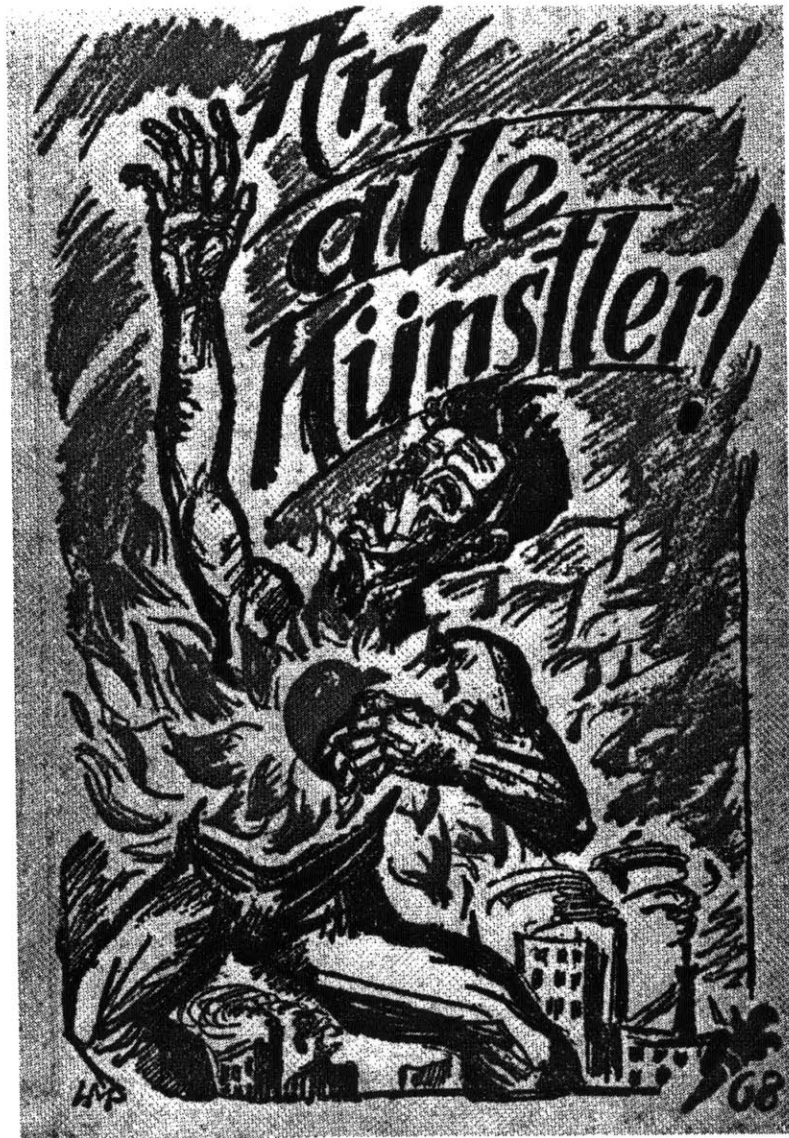


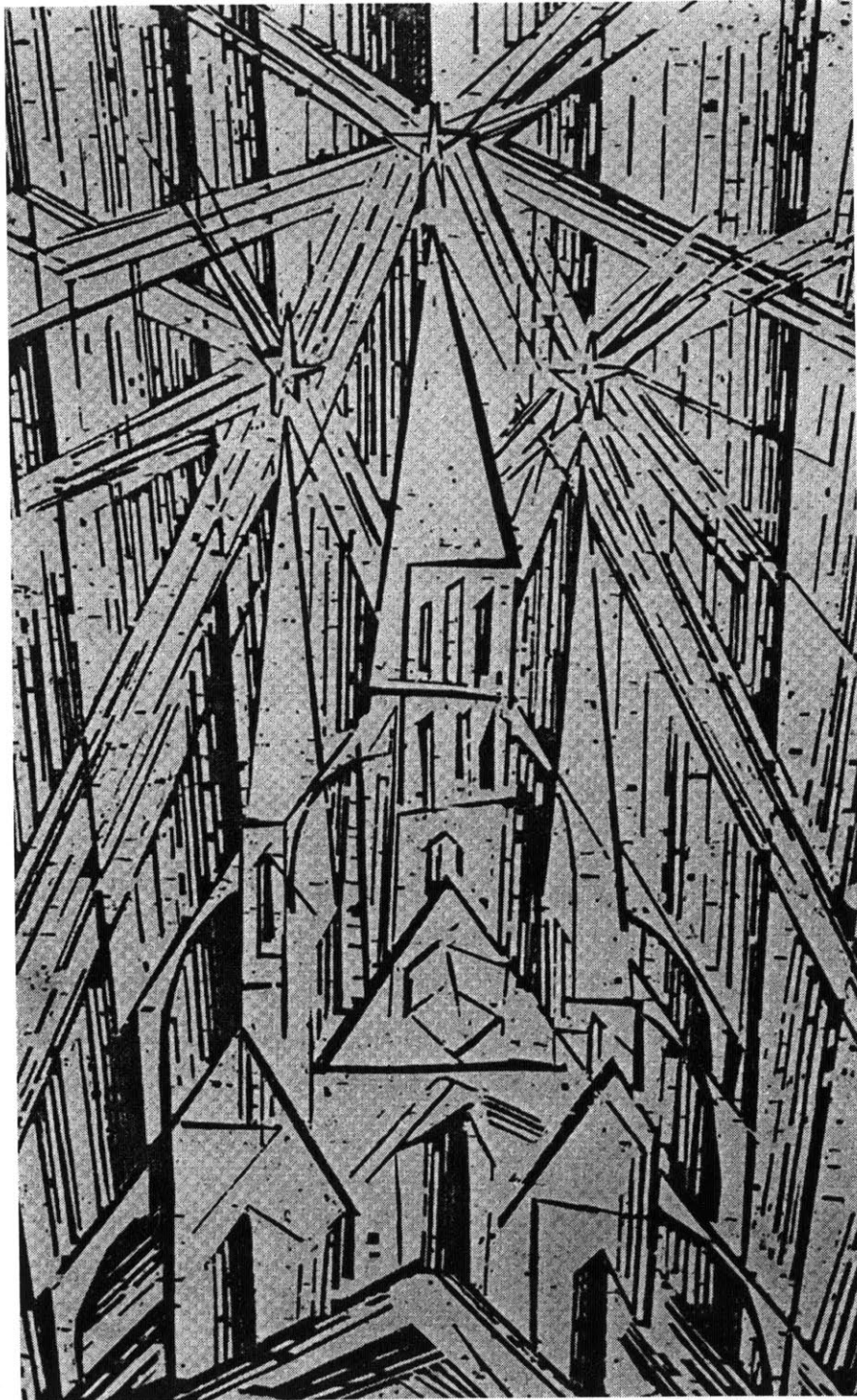
figure 2.3 Final sketch for Einstein Observatory.



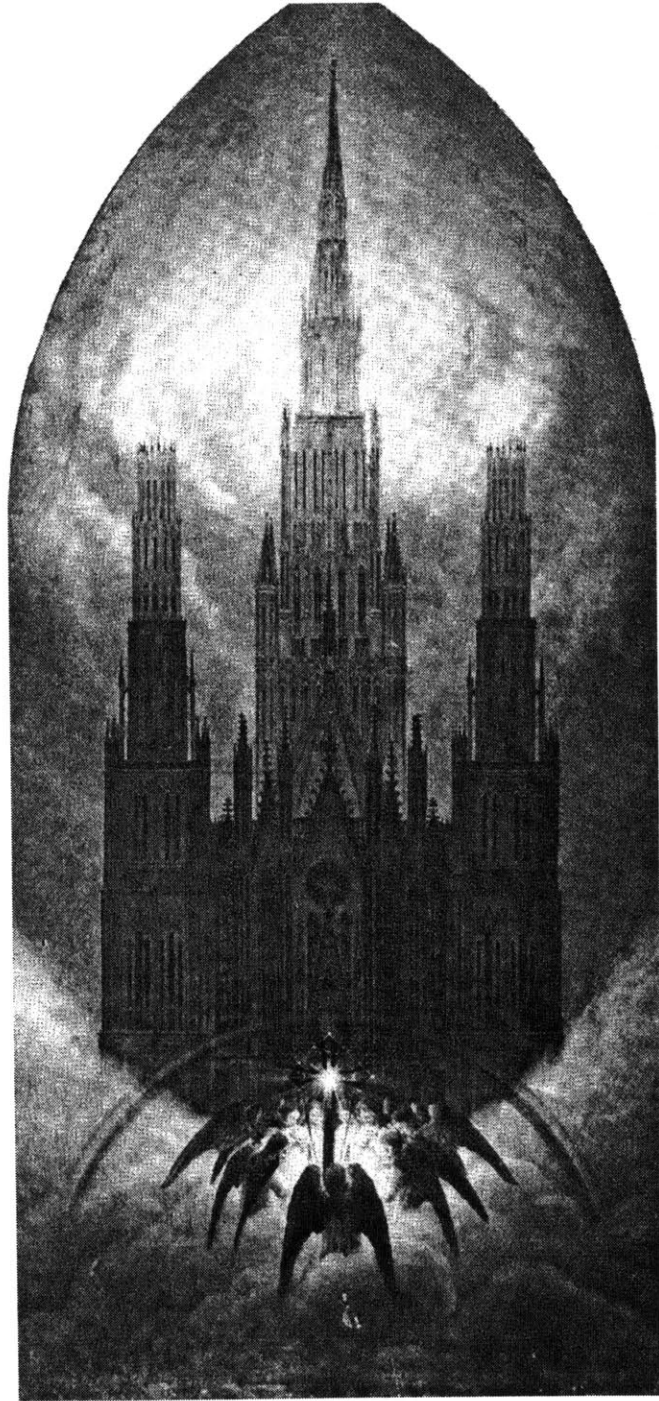
figure 2.4 Cover design from the periodical *Novembergruppe*, that helped disseminate art and ideas of the organization by the same name.



**figure 2.5** Cover from the magazine, *An alle Künstler!* (To all Artists!).



**figure 2.6** Lyonel Feininger. Woodcut. From Walter Gropius, Cover to *Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar*, 1919.



**figure 2.7** Caspar David Friedrich, *The Cathedral*, oil on canvas, 1818



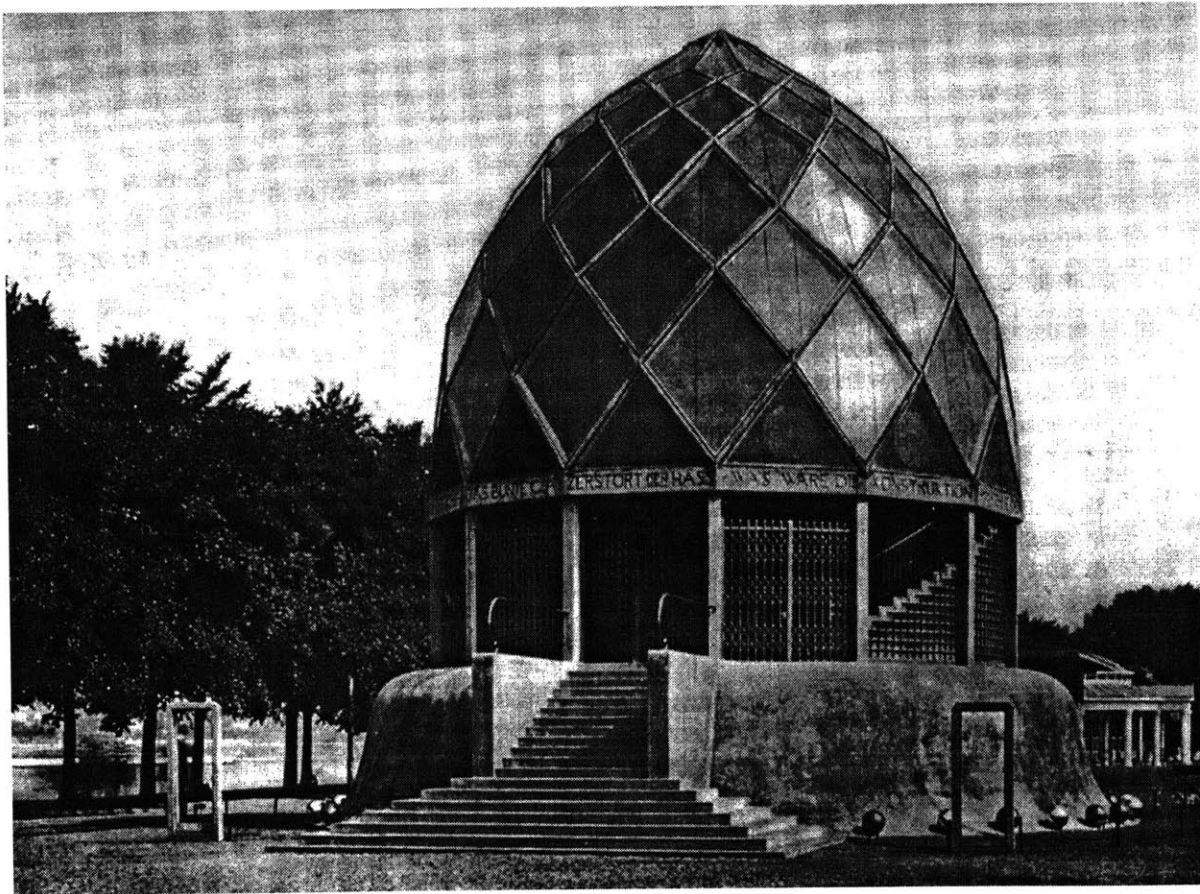
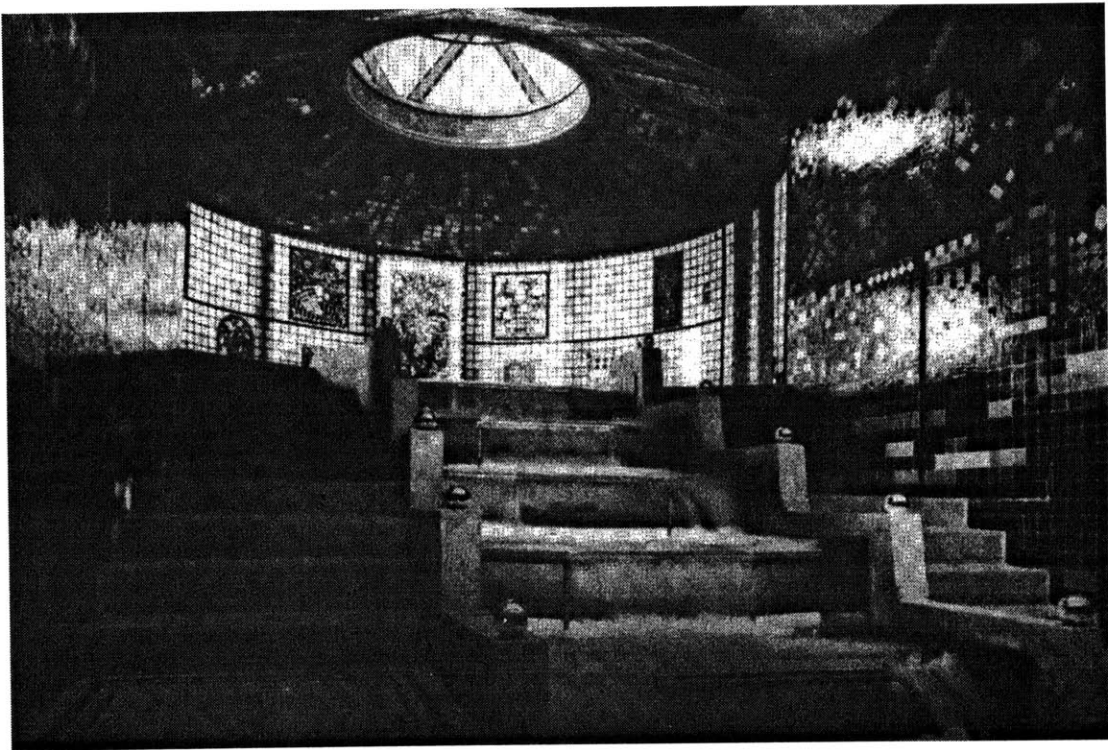


figure 2.8 Bruno Taut. *Glass Pavilion*. 1914 Werkbund Exposition, Cologne.



**figure 2.9** Bruno Taut. *Glass Pavilion*, interior at ground floor. 1914 Werkbund Exposition, Cologne.

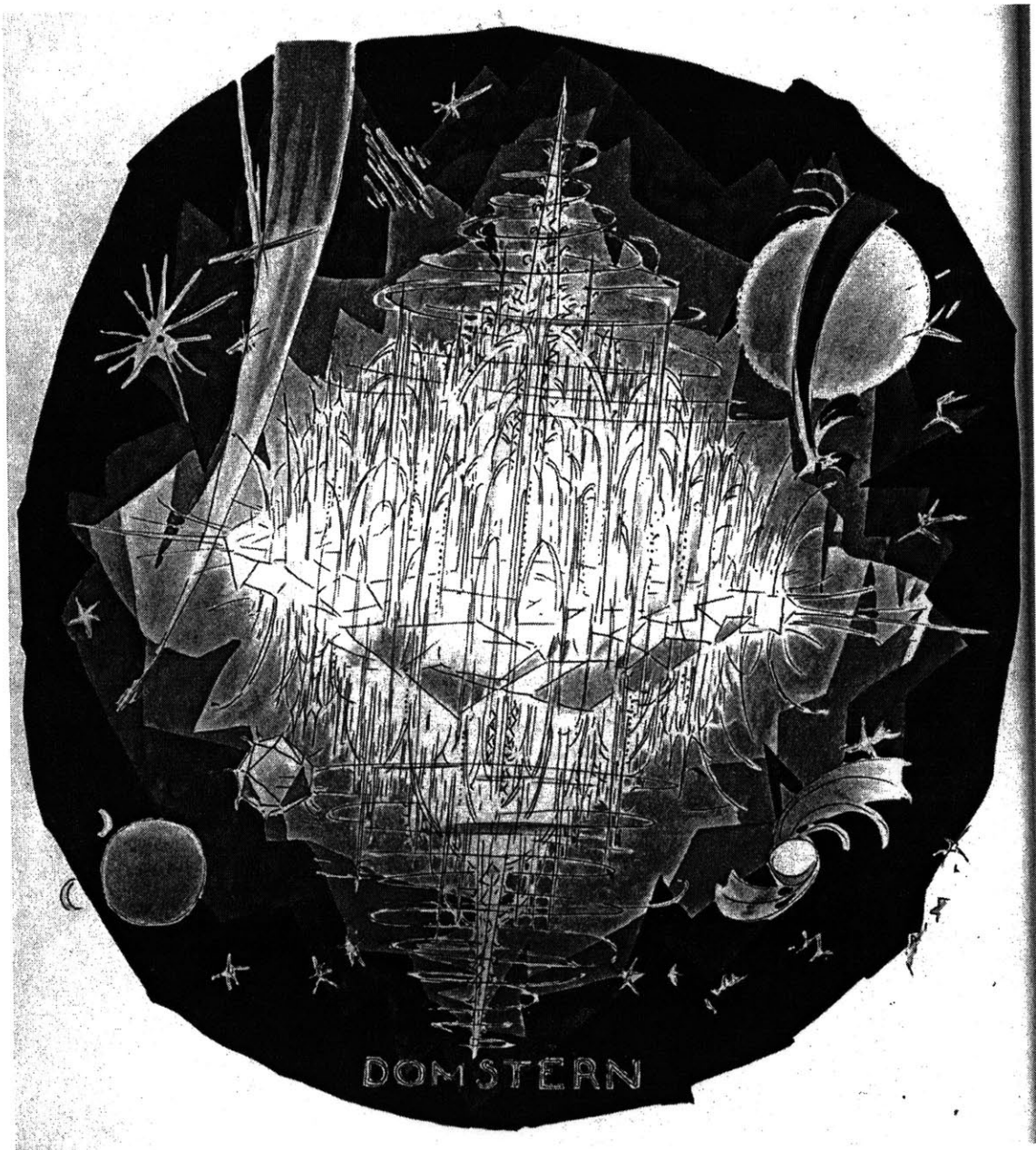


figure 2.10 Bruno Taut. *Domstern*. Illustration for *Alpine Architektur*, 1919.



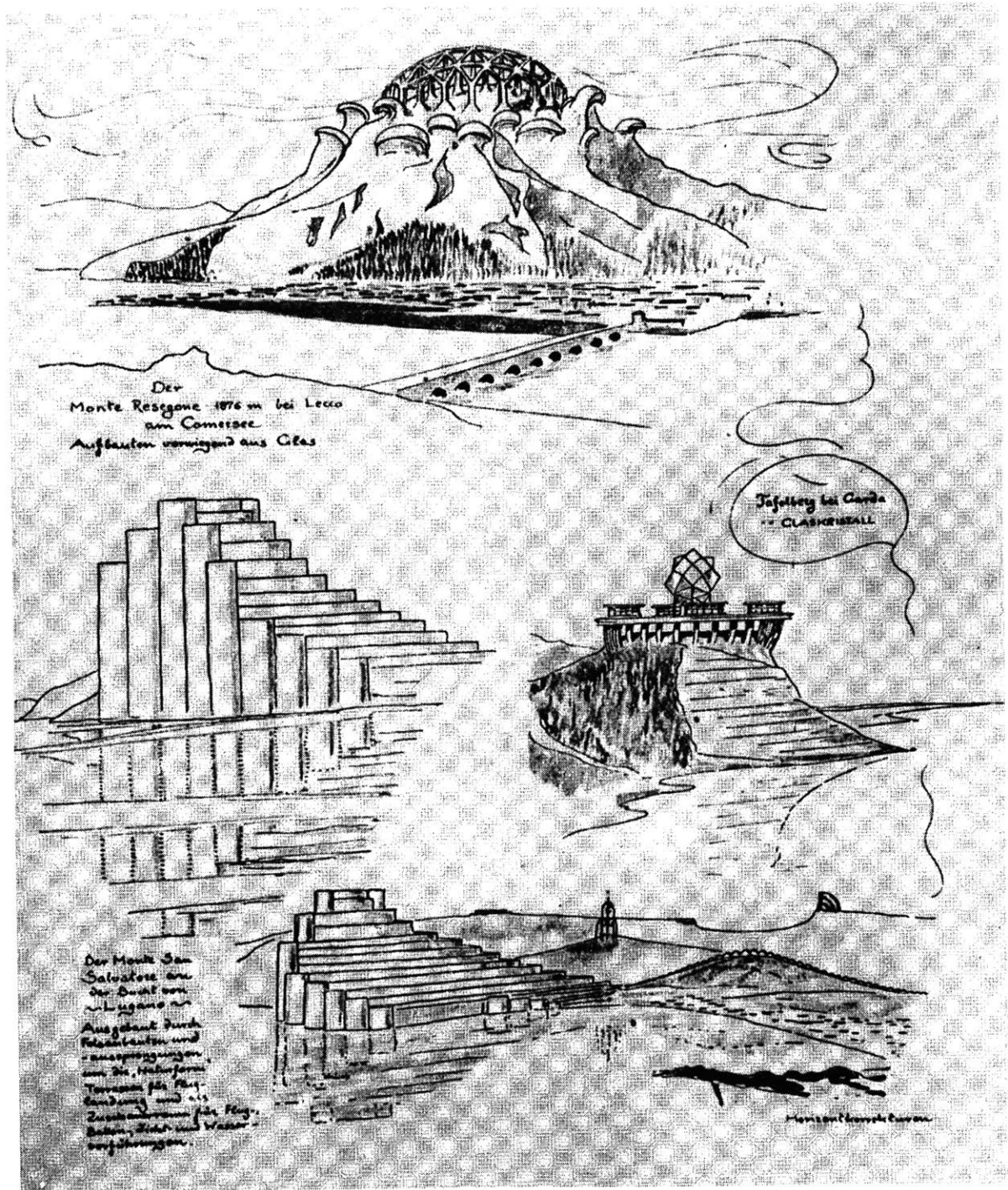


figure 2.11 Bruno Taut. Illustrations for *Alpine Architektur*, 1919.

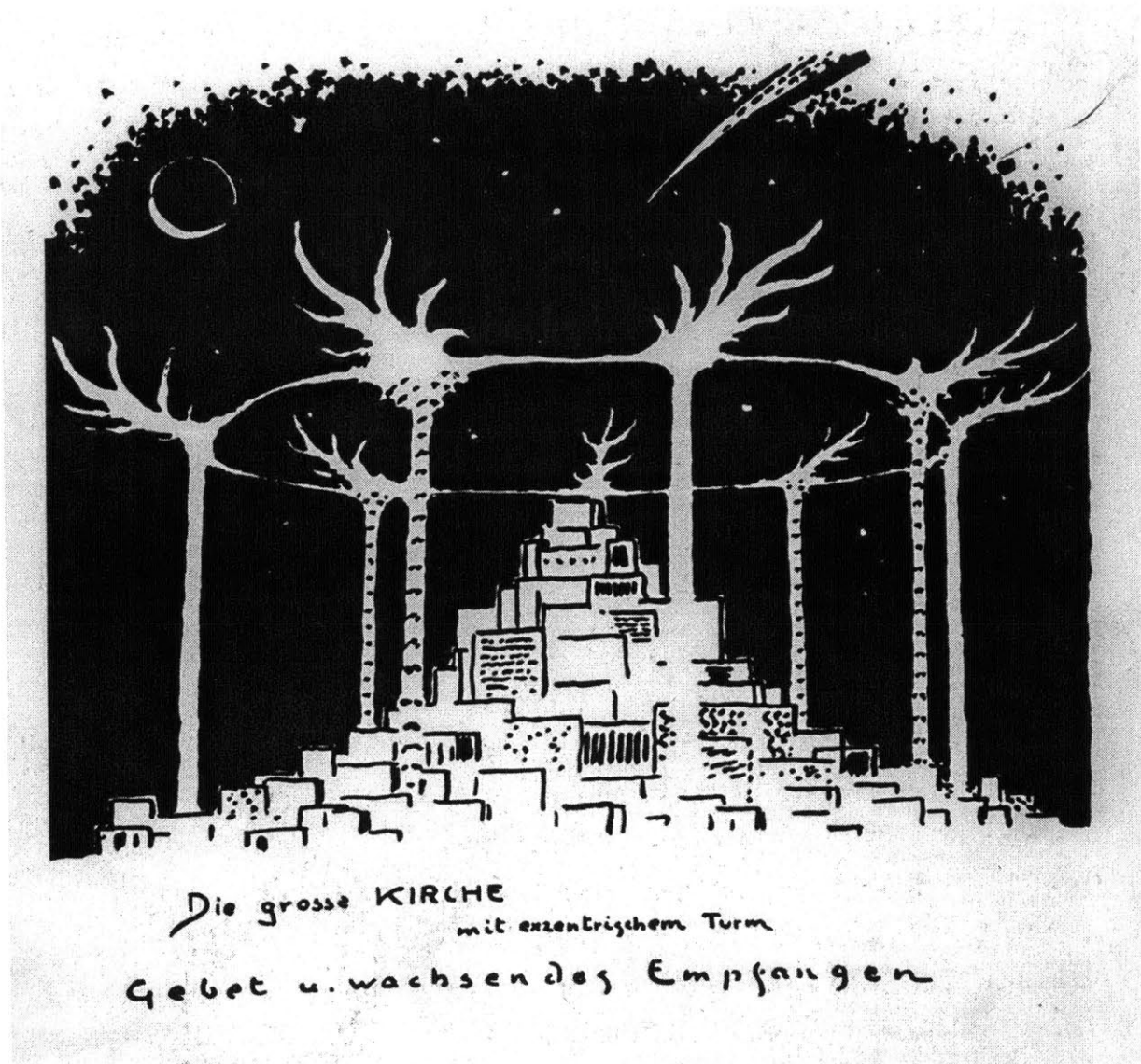
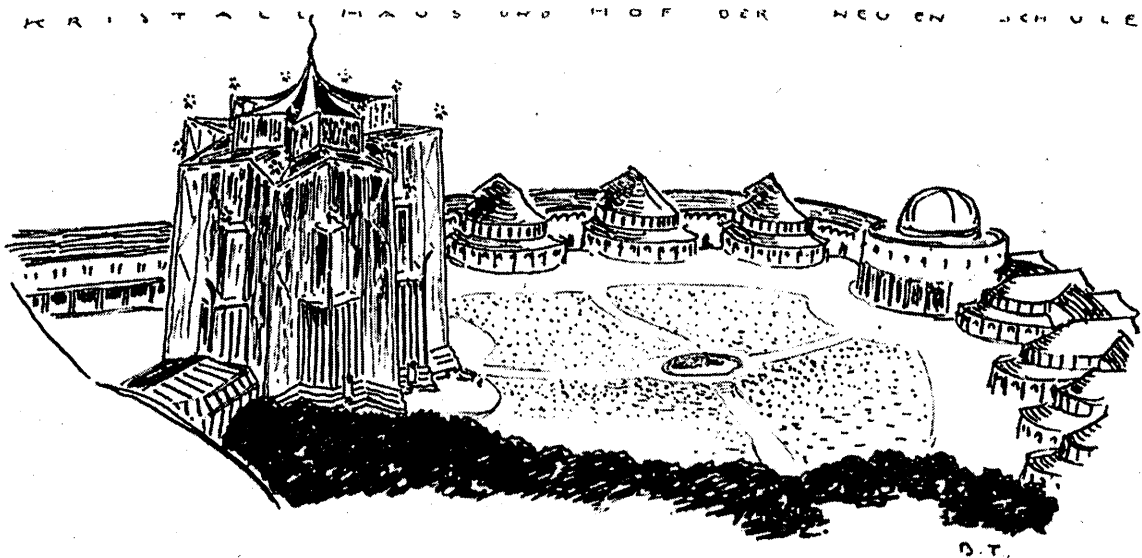
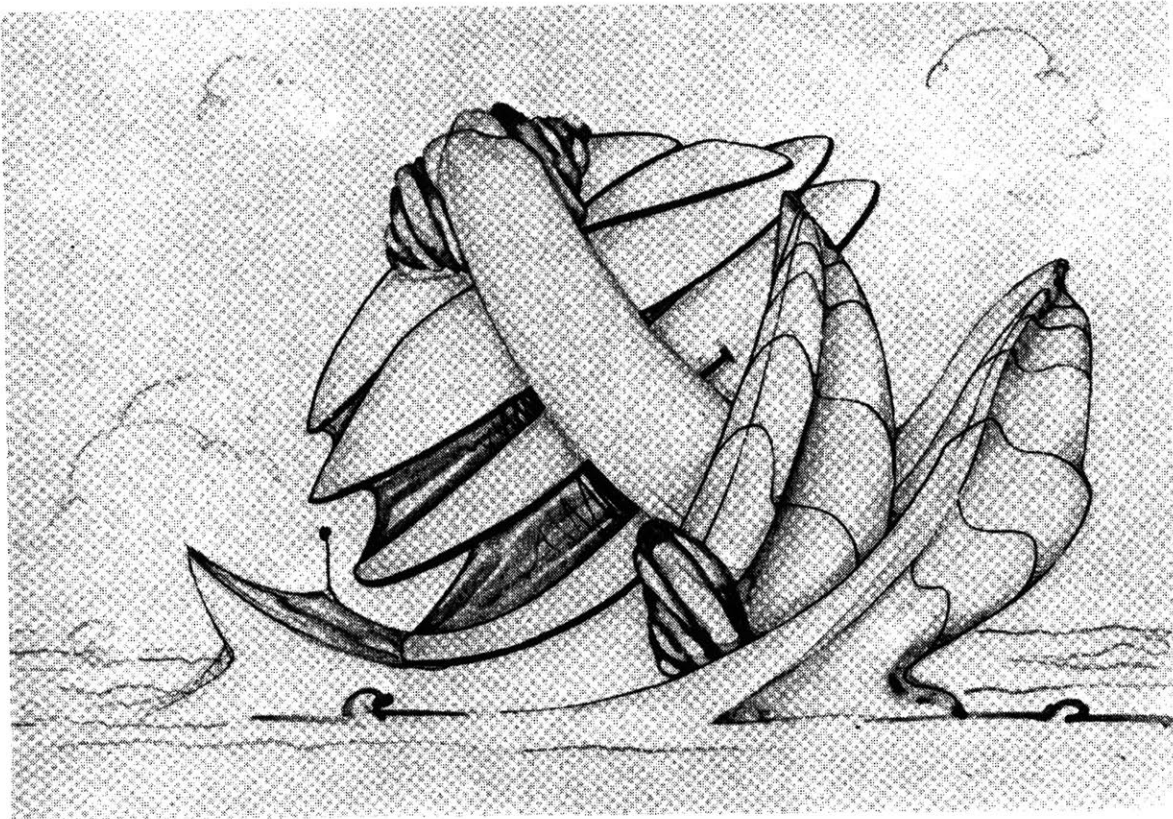


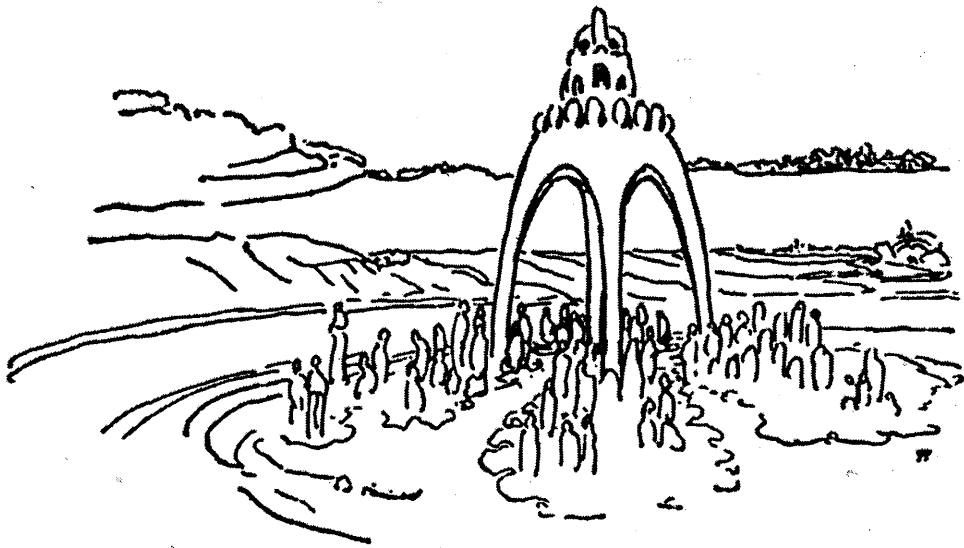
figure 2.12 Bruno Taut. Illustration for *Die Auflösung der Städte*, 1920.



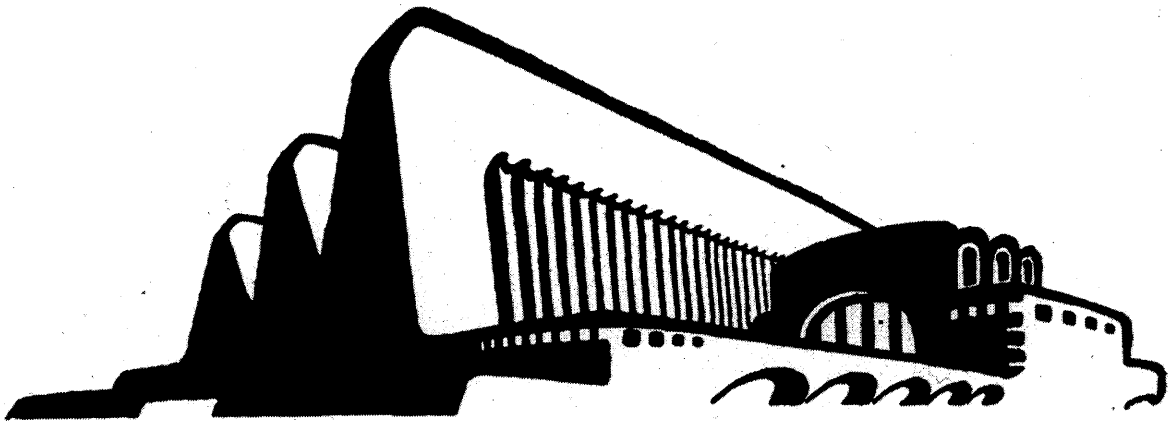
**figure 2.13** Bruno Taut. Project for the *Folkwang School*, Hohenhagen estate, Hagen, 1920. Resembles the type of communities that Taut envisioned in his book, *Die Auflösung der Städte*.



**figure 2.14** Hermann Finsterlin. *Casa Nova*, 1920. Watercolour. Resembles the type of drawings that Finsterlin would have exhibited at the “Exhibition of Unknown Architects” in 1919.



**figure 2.15** Paul Gösch. *Cemetery*, 1920. Similar to the type of work Gösch would have exhibited at the "Exhibition of Unknown Architects" in 1919.



**figure 2.16** Erich Mendelsohn. *Triple Hall*, 1917. Part of the series of Mendelsohn's war-time sketches.

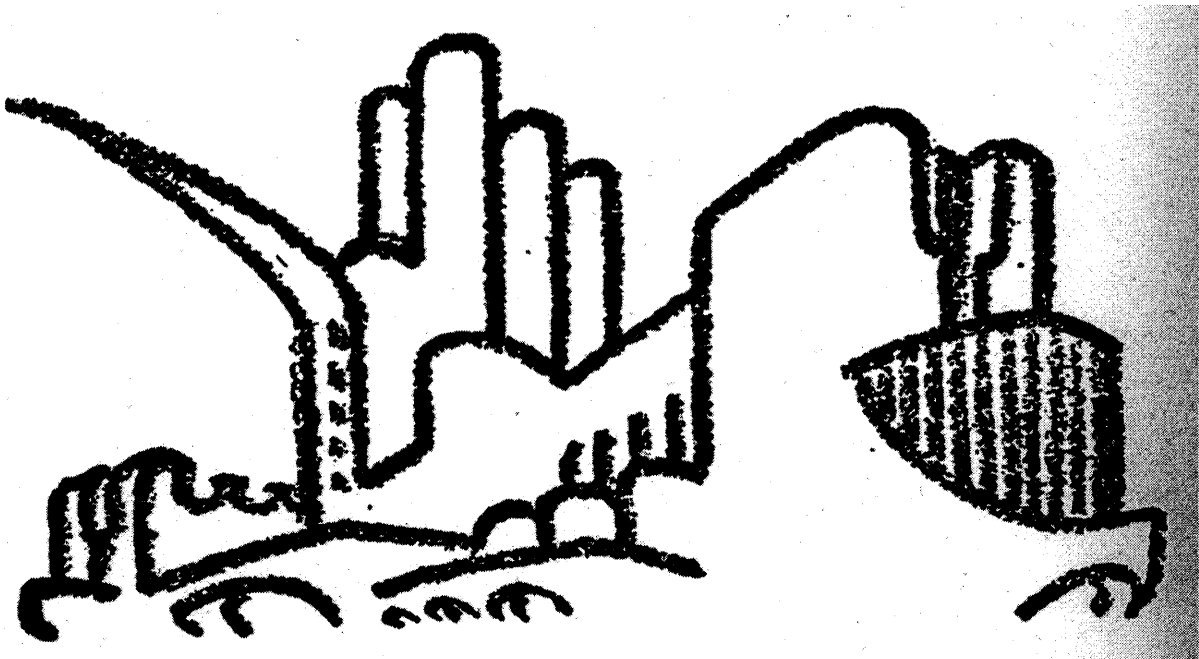


figure 2.17 Erich Mendelsohn. *Factory with Crane*, 1917. Part of the series of Mendelsohn's war-time sketches.

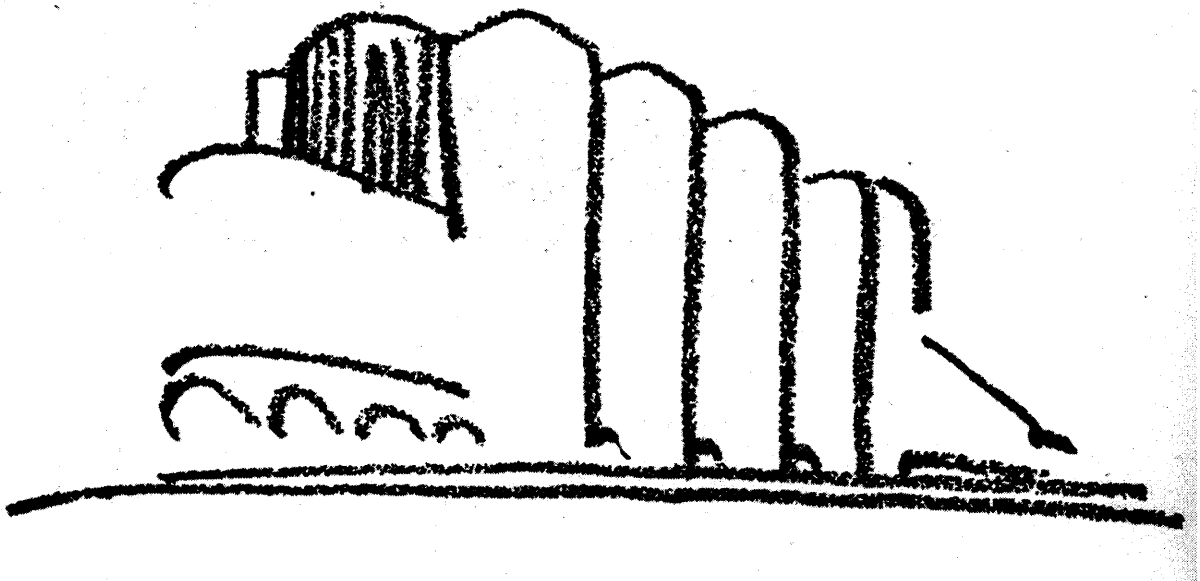
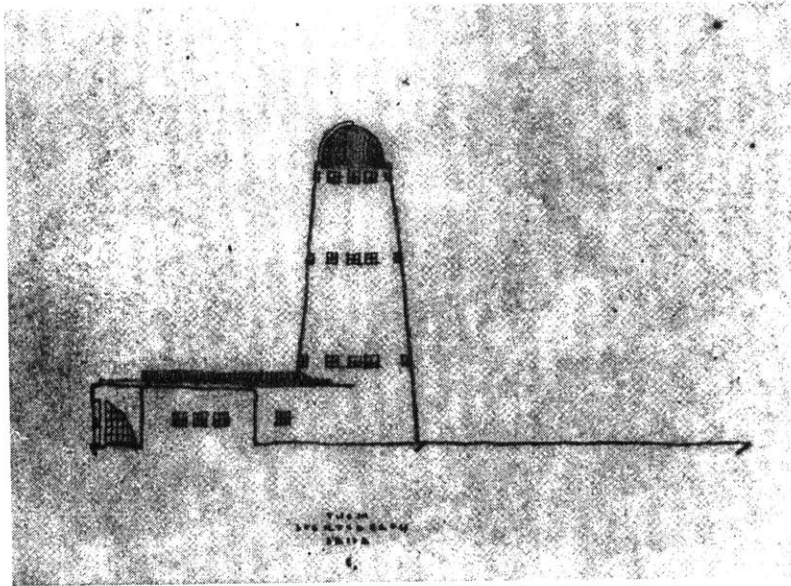
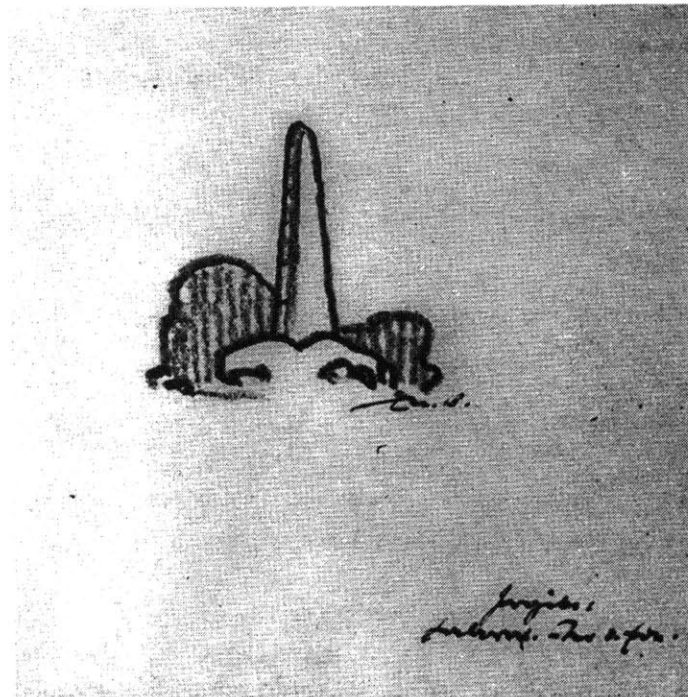


figure 2.18 Erich Mendelsohn. *Grain Elevators*, 1915.

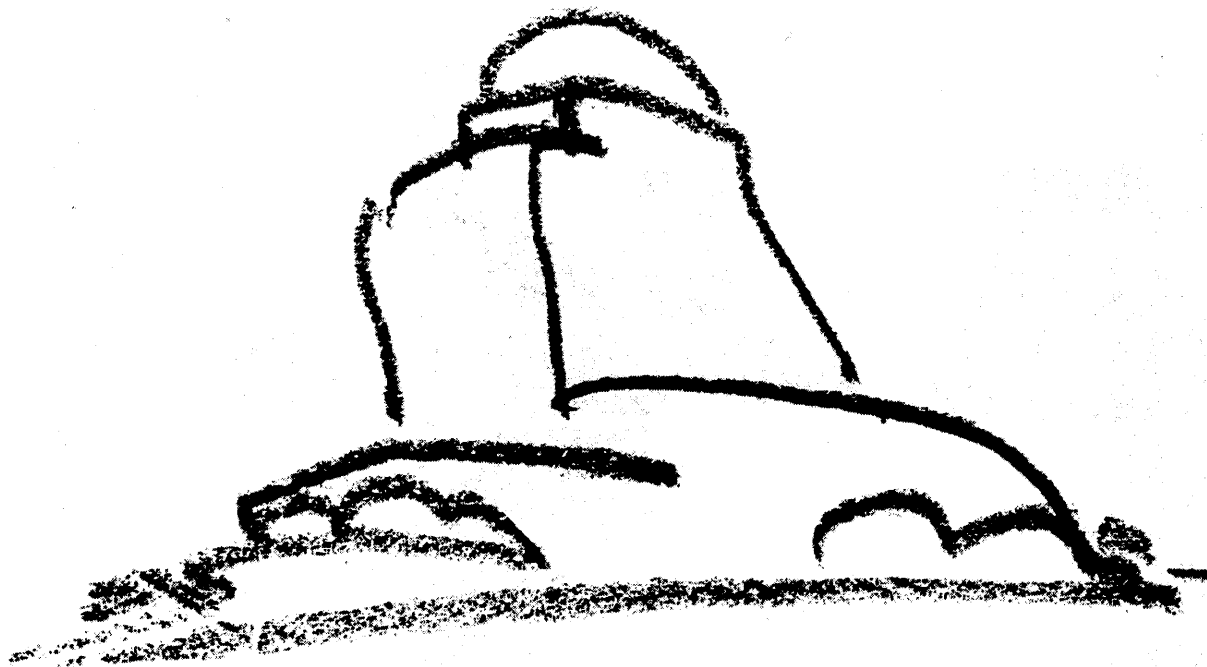




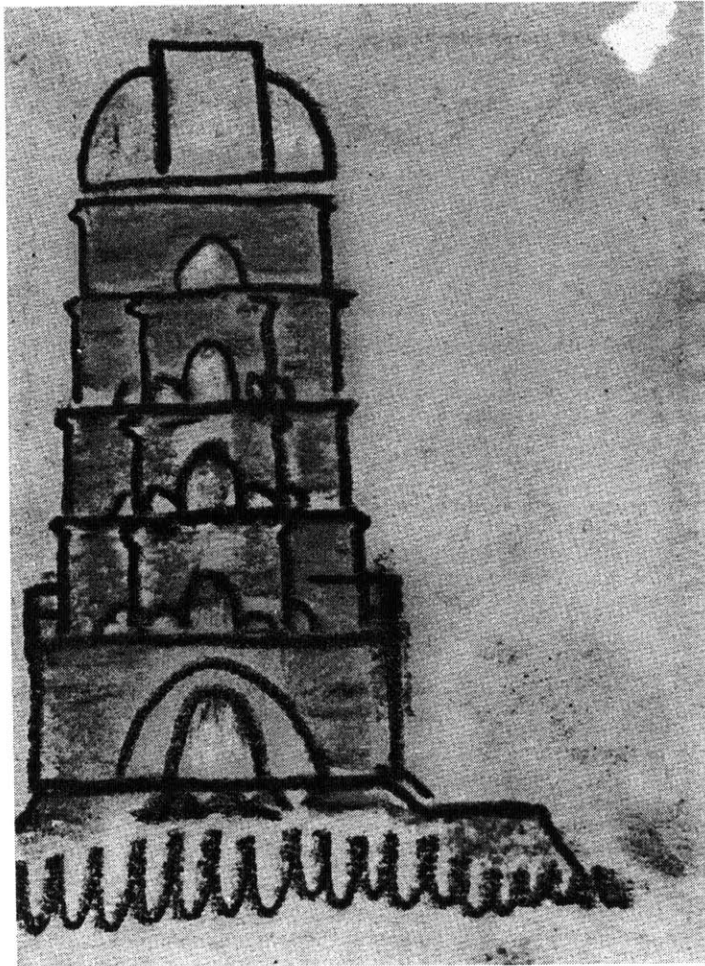
**figure 2.19** Erich Mendelsohn. First presentation drawing for the Einstein Observatory, 1917.



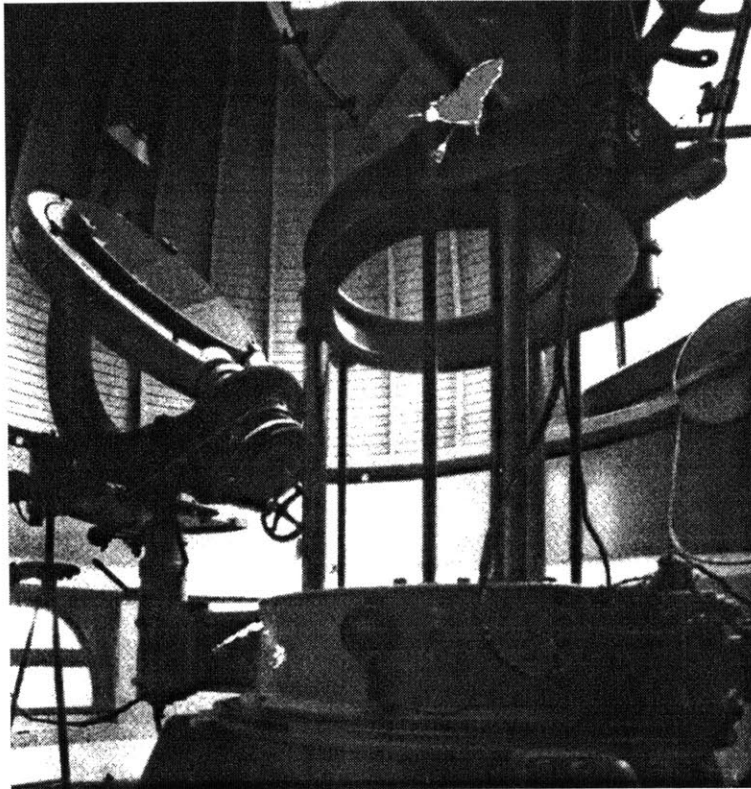
**figure 2.20** Erich Mendelsohn. Perspective drawing for the Einstein Observatory, 1918.



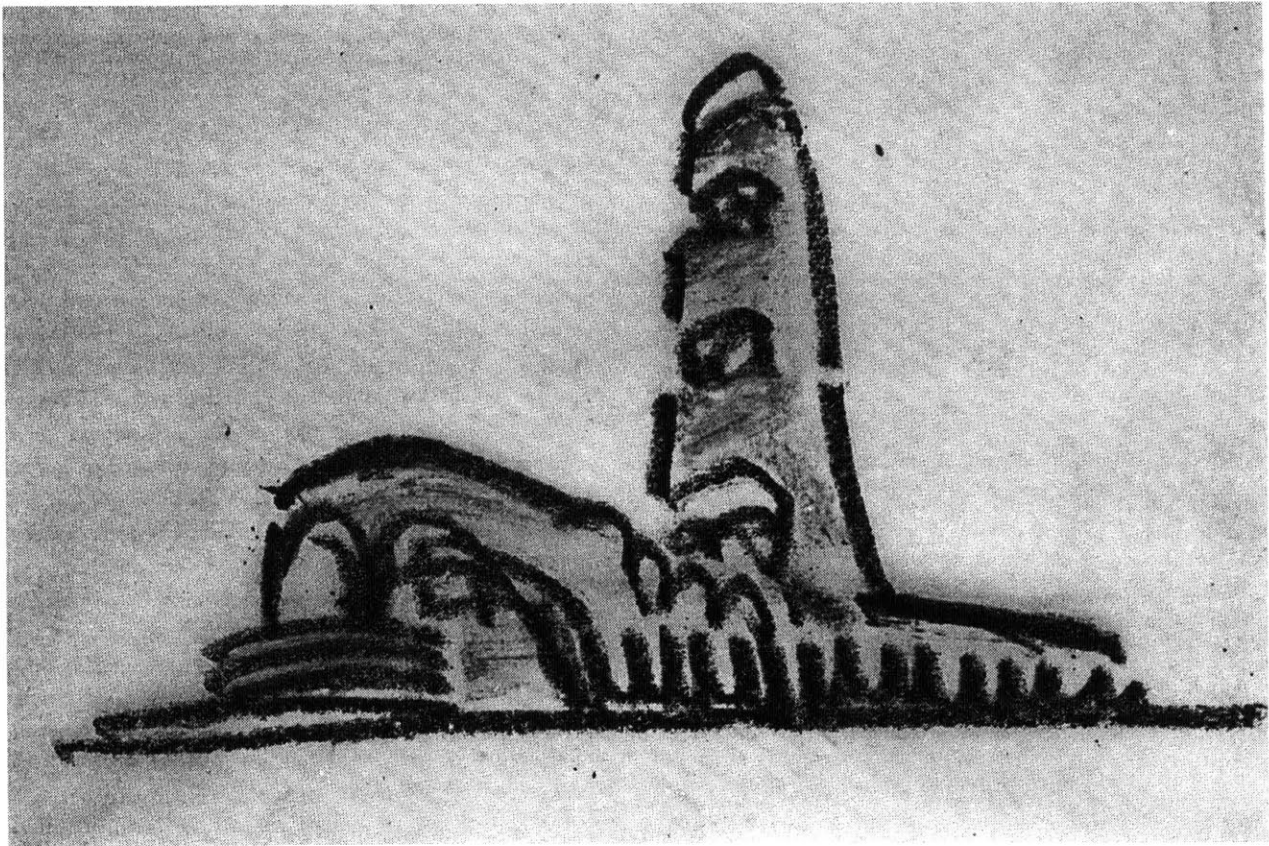
**figure 2.21** Erich Mendelsohn. Perspective sketch for Einstein Observatory, 1920. Near final design.



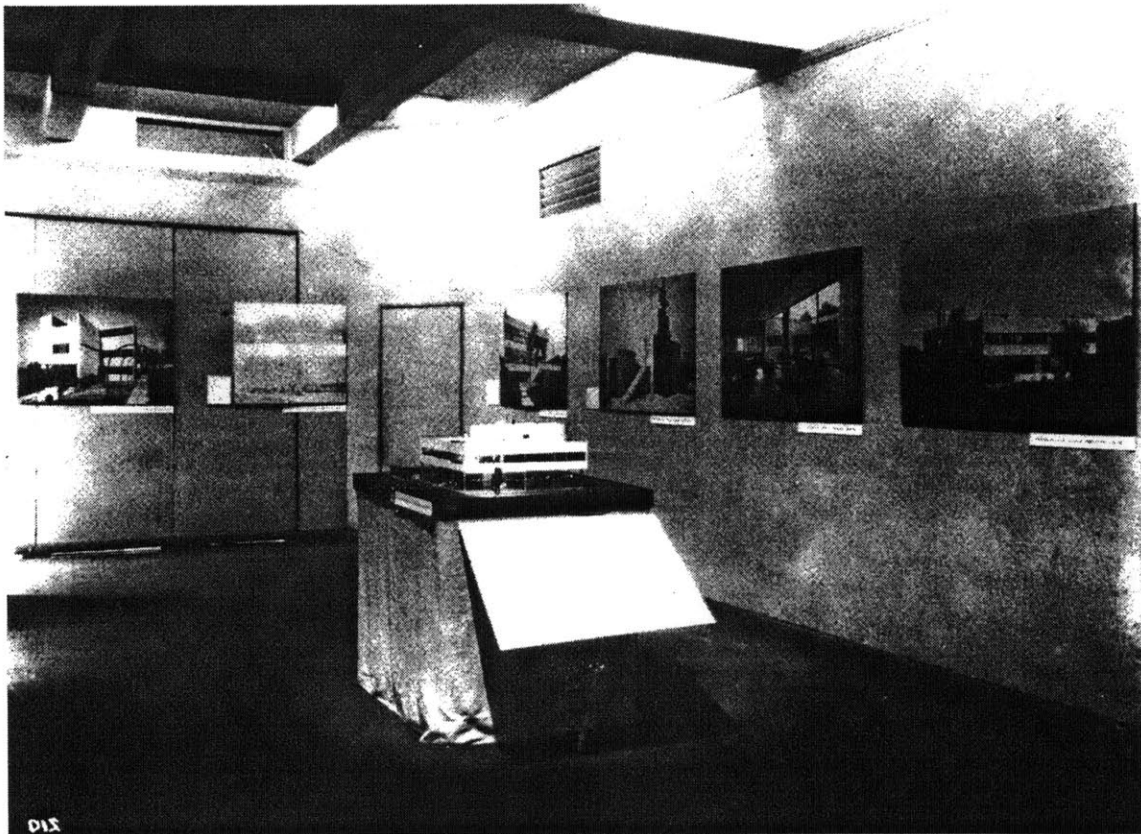
**figure 2.22** Erich Mendelsohn. Elevation for the final design of Einstein Observatory, June 1920.



**figure 2.23** · Coelostat installed at top of the Einstein Observatory, 1924.



**figure 2.24** Erich Mendelsohn. Perspective sketch for Einstein Observatory, 1918/1919. This sketch reveals a period where Mendelsohn considered the tower in anthropomorphic forms.



**figure 2.25** Installation of Le Corbusier Exhibit. "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition", Museum of Modern Art, NY. 10 February - 23 March 1932.



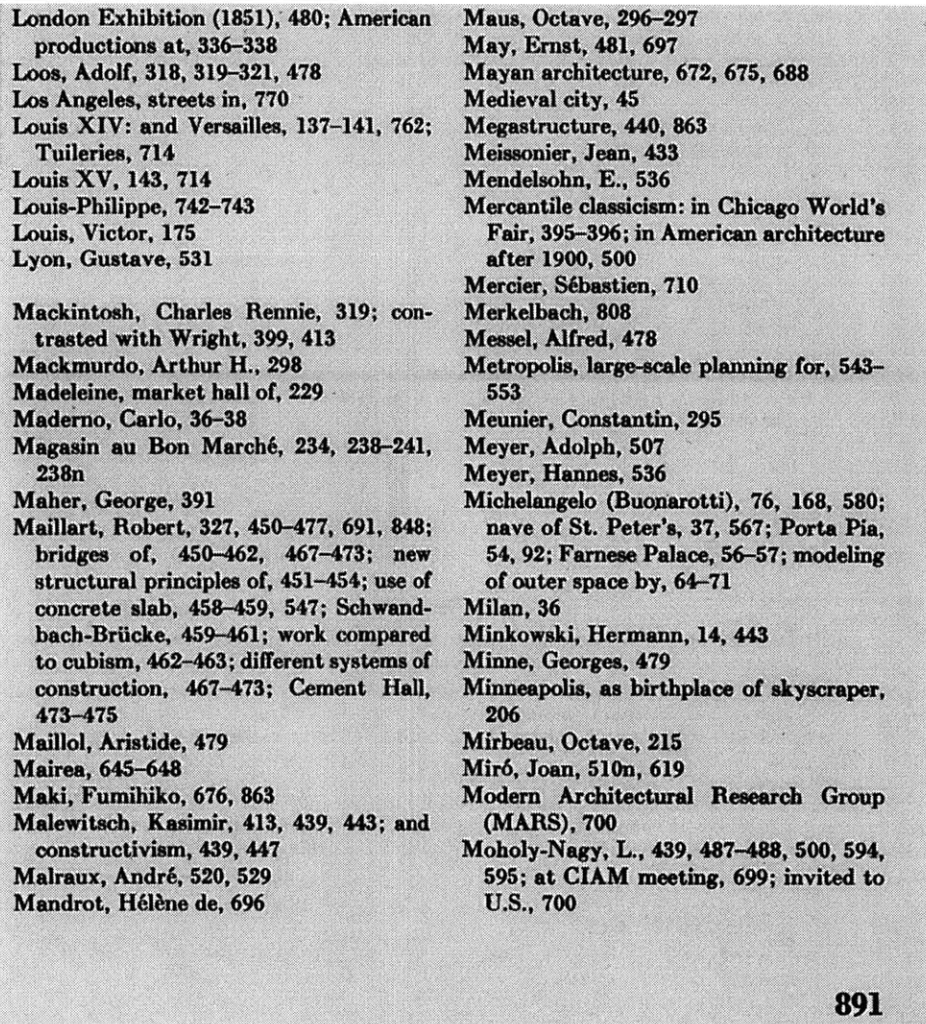


figure 2.26 Index page 891 from Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*. Shows the entry for Erich Mendelsohn as abbreviated in relation to other (sometimes less significant) persons.



## Chapter Three - Constructing an Ideology

Although Erich Mendelsohn is often understood in relation to Expressionism, the formation of his ideas about architecture were far more complex. Many histories portray him as a strong, individualistic figure in the post-war days, but he was continually redefining his views on artistic creation and his role in the avant-garde. The period from WWI through the 1920's was a time of negotiating his ideological position within a larger course of modern architecture. For this, Mendelsohn relied on his ability to fold artistic theories into an image of individualistic genius. The concept of "dynamics" he developed during this time enabled him to bind all of these theories into one cohesive doctrine that explained architectural forms as well as his process of creation. As I will show in chapter four, this idea was a theme to his photographic studies in America during autumn 1924 and played a large role in the construction of his own identity.

Mendelsohn's sense of creativity derives mainly from the idea that architects express an intuitive artistic force. Architectural talent in his view is based on the ability to understand and utilize this forceful presence in an individual's

creativity. As Mendelsohn wrote in 1917, "The artist carries the compass needle for his own work within himself, his creativity depends on faith, never on outside demands."<sup>1</sup> According to Mendelsohn, faith in one's self was the final justification for any vision of architecture. However, this image of an artistic seer was based on many sources of theoretical origin. As with most Expressionist artists and architects after WWI, the writing of Friedrich Nietzsche played a large role in how Mendelsohn perceived modernity. Additionally, the ideas of gothic abstraction from Wilhelm Worringer influenced Mendelsohn's conception of form as an expression of modern artistic volition. And the Zionist interpretation of Mendelsohn's Jewish identity from Martin Buber effected his heroic sense of artistic creation.

### *Nietzsche*

One of the most influential sources of these philosophical ideas came through Mendelsohn's association with the Munich painter group, *Der Blaue Reiter* from 1911-14. Friendship with several of its members made him very familiar with Expressionist ideas and especially Nietzsche's notion of Dionysian renewal [figure 3.1]. Both founders of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, were inspired by Nietzsche in their own work and incorporated his ideas into their artistic theories. In fact, Kandinsky paraphrased an entire passage from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* in his *On the Spiritual in Art* describing a "war of spirits" in a new age. Later, Kandinsky

portrayed a very similar struggle as a “Spiritual Turning-Point” and referred to Nietzschean values through a passage of writing that describes this change: “When religion, science, and morality are shaken (the last by the mighty hand of Nietzsche), when the external supports threaten to collapse, then man’s gaze turns away from the external toward himself”.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, the other co-founder of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Franz Marc had also been inspired by Nietzsche’s idea on creation through destruction. This explained the violence or primitivism of a number of his paintings such as *Fighting Forms*, *Wolves (Balkan War)*, and *Animal Destinies* [figure 3.2].

The appeal of Nietzsche for these artists was that he perceived a renewal in society to occur in the arts, not in philosophy. His writing was absorbed into Expressionist rhetoric because instead of keeping ideas of social renewal at a philosophical distance, he proposed a sensuous theory of art by stimulating “animal energies by images and desires of an enhanced life”.<sup>3</sup> As he is quoted, “I agree with the artists more than with all philosophers up to know: they did not lose the great track where life advances, they were fond of the things of ‘this world’ - they were fond of their senses”.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, this attitude was widely accepted by many pre-war Expressionist groups and found particular relevancy to developing a new purpose and role for art in society. It was this dramatic and monumental task that drew Mendelsohn, and many other young artists to the visionary program of groups like *Der Blaue Reiter*.

From Mendelsohn's earliest period of student training, he was concerned with the artistic impulse and urge toward artistic creation. His first letter to his future wife Louise Maas began with attempts at defining artistic creativity as an individualistic gift. He writes,

You will be aware that every work of art is an expression of a person's own sense of rhythm...The rhythm alone makes for aesthetic value: not the amount of technical ability which has been used, but the flood of recognition which comes over us, derived from the personality of the artist when he was inspired by nobly rhythmic feelings.<sup>5</sup>

After graduation from the Technical University in Munich, Mendelsohn supported himself by working as a graphic designer which put him in close contact with many of the radical developments in Expressionist illustration.<sup>6</sup> But Mendelsohn's involvement with designing stage sets from 1912-14 was a more direct introduction to Expressionist artists. In 1914, Mendelsohn even collaborated with other artists and the famous theater director, Hugo Ball in establishing the first dedicated Expressionist theater in the Munich Kammerspiele. Signatures of other artists partaking in this reorganization of the theater included: Heinz Braune, Wilhelm Hausenstein, Franz Marc, Franz von Stuck, and Albert Weisgerber.<sup>7</sup> Although their attempt to set up the theater failed, it still made Mendelsohn popular within Expressionist circles of Munich at the time. Had it been successful, Mendelsohn would have worked with leading proponents of pre-war Expressionism, and had full control of "Stage Architecture" in the theater.<sup>8</sup>

These painter groups influenced so much of Mendelsohn's artistic ideas that he even began to express the wish of becoming a painter. In a letter to his wife, he acknowledges, "this most secret wish...to become a painter...following only myself and the inner voice."<sup>9</sup> Indeed Mendelsohn's later interpretation, as an unbending individualist stems from these early years of developing an artist identity. His own reading of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* became another source of Mendelsohn's view of artistic creation. From this book Mendelsohn learned first hand about Nietzsche's concepts of Dionysus and Apollo and understood that creation emerged from within conflicting forces. He writes in a letter of 4 January 1914,

The purpose of the artist - that is to say, the form in which is expressed the coming to terms of the individual soul with the cosmos, the everyday with the solemn hour, man with God, the concrete with the abstract, the physical with the metaphysical - gives the work its character, its spirit and its attraction.<sup>10</sup>

This sense of struggle in the creative process would be a recurring theme to many discussions on his creative process. His sketching during the war was a means to study creativity as a mysterious force similar to the passion of Nietzsche's Dionysus. The boldness and sense of motion in those drawings was the basis for many later experiments in establishing a formal language.<sup>11</sup> But Mendelsohn's method of listening to Bach late at night and madly sketching dozens of schemes in a fury of action fulfilled a more primal interest in architecture. As he writes in a letter to his wife in June 1917, these sketches of buildings were supposedly an instantaneous flash of architectural wisdom.

I live among incessant vision. Their transcendence is such that it often carries me away. It is hard to catch it and impossible to grasp fully: to express it in solid terms is the task. But I am glad to be subject to its law, because for me it is the truest life."<sup>12</sup>

At later times Mendelsohn would even regret that the hand and "vision" were not mechanically linked so that he could keep up with his bursts of vision.<sup>13</sup> For Mendelsohn, only this kind of attitude toward artistic creation was in tune with what he termed as the law of Life. But his debt to Expressionist painters like Kandinsky and Marc was great. Their development of Nietzschean ideas on spiritual creation and a primordial instinct were a strong inspiration for Mendelsohn. Indeed many sketches and drawings by Kandinsky are so similar in their forceful gestures that it would be difficult not to make comparisons [figure 3.3 & 3.4]. For Mendelsohn, this dynamic quality of the sketches was part of larger attitude on creating a new forms for Modernity.

### *Worringer*

Aside from introducing Mendelsohn to Nietzschean ideas, the pre-war painter groups were also responsible for much of his knowledge of the historian, Wilhelm Worringer. A large part of Mendelsohn's devotion to "dynamic" form in later years was based on Worringer's notion of abstraction. These ideas were first established in his book, *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) and became a highly influential force in the development of

Expressionist art and architecture. Worringer called for a rejection of all past styles that obstruct a new expression of modern society. In an essay published for a 1911 book promoting Expressionist doctrine, Worringer outlined his position on the new artistic volition of the age and established his role as a theoretician of Expressionism. This article was solicited by Wassily Kandinsky because Worringer criticized Impressionism for being subjective and arbitrary, while arguing for a new art reaching toward objectivity.<sup>14</sup> To achieve that, he describes a return to simpler forms of expression and a renewed sense of individualism.

Today we certainly cannot return ourselves, forcefully and artificially, back to the level of primitive mankind, but what arises in us today beneath the surface is ultimately a reaction not only to Impressionism, but also to the entire preceding development in which we find ourselves since the European Renaissance and whose point of departure and direction can be broadly captured by Burckhardt's lapidary term about the discovery of the individual. The great wealth of external knowledge of prior epochs has left us impoverished and from this feeling of poverty we impose today certain demands on art that correspond roughly to those that primitive mankind naively posed.<sup>15</sup>

Worringer's writing gave many of the radical painters and artists of the time much more theoretical weight.<sup>16</sup> The idea that a suprapersonal "artistic volition" determined all expression of the epoch assured artists that they were working in the right direction. For Mendelsohn though, Worringer provided a way of applying many theoretical ideas to a formal language in architecture. Worringer's second book, *Form Problems of the Gothic* (1912)

was an analysis of how the Gothic style developed. This was important to Mendelsohn because it inspired him to pursue the use of contour to define architectural space in his own modern work. Indeed Worringer's interest in writing the book was more than just examining elements of medieval culture and design. He was also interested in establishing a way of discussing how all cultural production reveal a transcendental "vitality" or spirituality. This enabled Worringer to theorize on the direction of Modern architecture parallel to his discussions on the Gothic. In one case, he established the "principle of the Gothic" and then links the same kind of spiritual expression with Modern construction techniques. An illustration of the Woolworth Building in New York accompanies a passage of text that reads: "Only modern steel construction has brought back a certain inner understanding of the Gothic. For in it people have been confronted again with an architectural form in which the artistic expression is supplied by the method of construction itself..."<sup>17</sup> The opportunity to apply these ideas to Modern design was something that Mendelsohn was very eager for. Worringer's ideas supplied a historical continuity to many of Mendelsohn's early designs and guided the course of his future visionary projects. That enthusiasm is revealed in many letters before the war, but here he tells of his first reaction to the book in a letter from May 1914,<sup>18</sup>

But I must recommend that you make a study of Worringer's *Formprobleme der Gotik*. There is so much in every sentence - and so wholly new - that along with an understanding of the problem of form in the Gothic style, you would also gain insight into the whole development of art and the driving elements in our joyful struggle of today.



Such books are rare, and the very possibility of applying his ideas, beyond the period in question, to all artistic creation means that it is assigned a higher, more comprehensive task.<sup>19</sup>

Worringer's interest in the linear quality of Gothic art was easily transferred to studies of Modern architecture. His claim that all architecture is ordered by expression of the structural system enabled Mendelsohn to make direct connections between an art historical analysis and his own search for style. In fact, many of the same ideas Worringer explained on the relationship of structure and expression were echoed throughout Mendelsohn's theoretical writing many years later.<sup>20</sup> While Worringer wrote about a spiritual essence that was revealed in the expression of a structural idea, Mendelsohn simply used his term "dynamics" to describe that same understanding of structure.

### *Zionism*

The influence of Nietzsche and Worringer were very strong and filtered through many channels in his pre-war experimentation, but Mendelsohn's Jewishness was another source of artistic development. His commitment and reconciliation of both Judaism and Zionism played a large role in forming his identity throughout the 1920's. Most of his ideological position was based on the idea that artistic ideals, religious views, and nationalistic identity were all part of one agenda. The writing of Martin Buber supplied Mendelsohn, as well as a large part of his post-assimilated generation with the intellectual strength to pursue this unification. In fact, Buber was

himself involved with many art circles and contributed to the synthesis of national, religious, and artistic trends during that period.<sup>21</sup> The publication of Buber's early addresses on his Zionist view of Judaism came in a book titled, *Drei Reden uber das Judentum* (Three Speeches regarding Jewishness). This was an influential source for many Jewish youth, as well as Mendelsohn's developing identity. It is apparent that the ideas expressed in the book appealed to Mendelsohn's search for his own role in society as he writes in a letter to his wife on 2 April 1915:

I am sending the "Three Speeches" of Buber with a letter of 7 September 1914 which contains...the strict confessions of my Jewishness. And indeed exactly as the mixture Buber attempts to realize.<sup>22</sup>

This connection with Martin Buber is an important way to understand Mendelsohn and his view of artistic creation. Indeed Buber refers to the concepts of a "heroic life" and "heroic deeds" as methods for spiritual and mental renewal of the human will. This was a central idea in Mendelsohn's own theory of the creative act and the mystical role he assigned to the artist.<sup>23</sup> As he writes in a letter from 1915, the act of artistic creation operates at a level of abstractness that is comparable with the creation of life.

Conception means fertilization; it describes the moment when for the first time the idea takes shape, that is, when it takes on the form of the material in which it is conceived.

The intensity of the moment often precipitates conception and birth together and renders tangible what has hitherto only been present in one's subconscious.<sup>24</sup>

Together with Mendelsohn's understanding of Dionysiac creation, the heroic role that Buber proposed can explain much of how Mendelsohn interpreted his own artistic passion. The "intensity of the moment" or artistic frenzy from which most of his sketches emerge represents both his enthusiasm for an explosive moment of creativity and a higher purpose to which he was contributing.

### *Dynamics*

Most of Mendelsohn's architectural theories in the 1920's functioned outside of avant-garde work. As I suggested in chapter two, this separation from the avant-garde was reinforced through certain historical agendas, but it was also the product of Mendelsohn's own distancing. Using the term "dynamics" to describe his theories for architectural practice, Mendelsohn maintained a position that weaved between the trends of avant-garde architects like Walter Gropius and pre-war Expressionist ideas. Although movement or mechanical motion were frequently adopted by radical architects, the concept of dynamics was not intrinsically avant-garde. In fact, it did not represent any clear ideology at all. The ambiguity of what the term meant allowed Mendelsohn to continually adjust and change its meaning to suit different circumstances. Since he used dynamics in reference to both the material form of his projects and his artistic process, that ambiguity created a mystique around his work and the descriptions which tried to contextualize it.

In Mendelsohn's early work, he often used "dynamics" to describe the physical forces that architecture could express. His emphasis on architectural surfaces and rhythmic articulation of masses were common among sketches of the period. Indeed the manifesto he wrote titled, "Reflections on New Architecture" identified a "dynamic condition" as the ideal that architects should strive for.

The dynamic condition - the movement of space - to visualize its linear elements by means of its contours; the rhythmic condition - to visualize the relation of the masses - by means of the projection of the surfaces, and the static condition - the equalization of movement to visualize this as elements of construction by means of ground plan and section.<sup>25</sup>

Although it is still vague on exactly what Mendelsohn meant, the sketches he created during the war years add to an understanding of the term. Additionally, he used "dynamics" as a way to describe the interplay between forces of movement and counter-movement in many letters. The historian, Cornelis van de Ven described it as: "Dynamic means to Mendelsohn the logical expression of movement of forces residing in matter. It is not the real mechanical movement, but the expression of it. All shapes express energy; in fact, mass equals energy."<sup>26</sup>

That this is a common interpretation of Mendelsohn's work reflects his own desire to be remembered that way. Mendelsohn worked with the German architect, Herman George Scheffauer to present this image of "dynamic"

architecture in his introduction to an American audience in March 1921. In the article titled "Dynamic Architecture" for *The Dial* magazine, Scheffauer wrote about how Mendelsohn was one of few architects involved with expressing the new potential of modern materials. He presented a selection of Mendelsohn's sketches, and then pointed to their "dynamic" qualities as the basis for a new language of form [figures 3.5 & 3.6].<sup>27</sup> From the boldness and vitality that they suggested, Sheffauer writes, "...the strength and purity of the architectonic will which they display... [creates] the impression that we are face to face here with a new conception, a new philosophy of the feeling for space - that sixth sense all great architects must possess."<sup>28</sup>

The energetic gesture in Mendelsohn's drawings and exploration of architectural form obscure a deeper ideological intention for "dynamics" though. As he uses the term to discuss, not the mere formal composition of masses, but the expression of an architectonics that extend into the *Absolute* - he references "dynamics" in terms of the act of creation and transcendental gift of the artist.<sup>29</sup> This underlying personal criteria for "dynamics" to occur is evident even in the way Sheffauer concludes the article: "The intuitive element in building plays its part here. The end in view will always produce its own form if the architectonic instinct be properly experienced..."<sup>30</sup> For Mendelsohn, an intimate understanding of one's own capabilities or "instincts" is required in order to conceive of "dynamic" forms. Therefore, "dynamics" was not just a formula of construction, but a transcendental phenomena that occurred when the artist understood the spiritual relationship of architectonic form and cultural aspirations. In addition to

describing the aesthetic quality of his sketches and buildings, the idea of “dynamics” was used by Mendelsohn to package a multitude of theoretical ideas on the spiritual process of creation and role of individual artists for translating it into material form. Much of Mendelsohn’s debt to Expressionist painters, Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Worringer, and Martin Buber can be understood in this way.

### *Changes in the Avant-Garde*

Although Mendelsohn had been involved with avant-garde artists and architects since his early association with *Der Blaue Reiter* in 1912, it was not until the post-war period between 1917 and 1923 that he began to assume an independent significance. The completion of several residences, offices, two projects for the Luckenwalde Hat Factory and of course, the Einstein Observatory earned his notoriety within Berlin and abroad. Publicity from journals, newspapers, and magazines on these projects contributed to his image of “avant-garde”. For instance, the popular picture magazine, *Berliner Illustrierte*, published the Einstein Observatory on its front cover shortly after completion in 1921. This generated many further commissions and contributed to Mendelsohn’s status as a leading architect within Germany.<sup>31</sup> Indeed much of Mendelsohn’s later success depended on his ability to distinguish his own personal vision for architecture in a time that could be described as a frenzy of artistic activity.<sup>32</sup> Shortly after 1921 though, the intellectual fervor that characterized post-war Weimar Republic was

overshadowed by activity at the Bauhaus. The ideas of Walter Gropius and his colleagues emphasized a “new era” which would be brought about by the machine and industrial production. They began to define a social and cultural revolution to reintegrate all spheres of German life in what Gropius called, “a new totalism”.

In contrast, Mendelsohn’s interest in architecture was far more concerned with the liberation of artistic expression in modernity. His skepticism of ideas that emphasized utility and function over personal forms of creativity had been a recurring theme to his thinking since 1910. Consequently, the ideas of artists such as Theo van Doesburg gave rise to Mendelsohn’s firm opposition. In fact, the position that Van Doesburg outlined in the ‘First Manifesto of De Stijl’ in 1918 was directly opposed to many of Mendelsohn’s most valued notions of individuality. That threat to Mendelsohn’s understanding of creativity as a sudden and consuming burst of individual expression is evident in reading only the first point of the manifesto. In many ways, Van Doesburg initiated much of the widespread rejection of individualism that would gain support in the following decade.

1. There is an old and a new consciousness of the age. The old one is directed towards the individual. The new one is directed towards the universal. The conflict of the individual and the universal is reflected in the World War as well as in art today.<sup>33</sup>

Van Doesburg quickly gained a great amount of influence in avant-garde circles, but his visit to the Weimar Bauhaus in 1921 had the most profound impact on design. His ideas of Neo-Plasticism appealed to many students

and quickly influenced several of the workshops [figure 3.7]. In addition to his warm reception at several French exhibitions, this enthusiasm indicated a growing support for a more rational approach to art and design. With Van Doesburg as a major proponent, the German avant-garde underwent a gradual emphasis toward deriving form from productive methods, material constraints, and pragmatic necessity.

This shift toward greater emphasis on functionalism in architecture did not cause great concern in Mendelsohn until around 1923. The Bauhaus exhibition, "Art and Technology - A New Unity" in that year raised Mendelsohn's anxiety on the implications of such pragmatic and utilitarian ideas dominating design [figure 3.8]. But more importantly, the combination of this exhibition with the Weimar Werkbund Congress under the same venue served to substantiate these ideas in the eyes of other architects, critics, and the public at large. Not only did it seem possible to reclaim some of the artistic unity that had been lost in prior years, but the enthusiasm for *handwerk* that characterized much of the Werkbund's earlier interests had given way to the understanding that mechanization was inescapable.<sup>34</sup> This carried great economic advantages to a relatively weak economy and provided the much needed medium for artists to impress their vision on mass society. Among the more influential avant-garde, the 1923 exhibition represented a commitment to functionalist agendas that would have very profound effects on the thinking of architects like Gropius and Taut. The notion of *Neue Sachlichkeit* was quickly adopted as a way of describing the current direction for architecture and suggested its break from earlier forms



of functionalism.<sup>35</sup> For historians like Walter Curt Behrendt, *Neue Sachlichkeit* was almost immediately applauded as the unifying ideology that modern artists and architects needed so badly. His promotion of this concept began when starting the journal *Der Neubau* in 1924, but contributed most to the establishment of a stylistic cannon shortly after with his editorialship of the Werkbund journal, *Die Form*.

For Mendelsohn though, the strict formalism and functionality that he witnessed at the exhibition became a topic of criticism for many of his future lectures and writing. He argued that function needed to play a complementary role with sensation and emotional ideas to create an architecture of “reconciliation”. This position was best described in responding to a lecture by the Dutch architect, J.J.P. Oud, he wrote,

Here is where I seem to detect an understandable tactical error on the part of Oud. Oud is, to borrow Gropius’ language, functional. Amsterdam is dynamic.

A union of both concepts is conceivable, but cannot be discerned in Holland. The first puts reason foremost - perception through analysis. The second, unreason - perception through vision. Analytic Rotterdam rejects vision. Visionary Amsterdam does not understand analytic objectivity.

Certainly the primary element in architecture is function, but function without sensual contributions remains mere construction.

More than ever do I stand by my program of reconciliation. Both are necessary. Both must find one another.<sup>36</sup>

Mendelsohn developed his individual position as a balance between the more subjective forms of Expressionism and the highly rational Functionalism. However, the enthusiasm and support for a rigorous functional program quickly dominated most facets of the avant-garde. In addition to the Bauhaus exhibition and Werkbund congress at Weimar, much of Mendelsohn's sense of a shift toward functionalist and *Neue Sachlichkeit* ideas must have been reinforced by changes in the Werkbund itself. In 1924, many of the younger architects that had adopted *Neue Sachlichkeit* principles took over leadership positions in the Werkbund. By 1926, the Werkbund had made a complete rejuvenation that situated younger radical architects - Haring, Gropius, Sharoun, and Rading - in prominent positions, and most importantly, Mies van Der Rohe as vice-president. The transformation of Werkbund leadership from an older generation to younger, visionary architects contributed to its sense of momentum and radicalism in the following years.<sup>37</sup> Within this environment, Mendelsohn's criticism of Gropius, Van Doesburg, and other functionalist programs only served to marginalized his presence in an avant-garde increasingly identified with the "Modern work" at the Bauhaus. Moreover, in taking a middle position between functional and emotional, Mendelsohn associated himself with memories of the old "romanticism" that Bauhaus enthusiasts were so eager to purge from German life. His practice of Expressionist ideas of individuality were perceived as an obsolete way of thinking by the avant-garde.

As Mendelsohn was increasingly aware of these changes in avant-garde expectations, his own architectural work began to shift away from the “dynamic” forms in prior years. His travel to Holland in 1923 allowed Mendelsohn to come into contact with Dutch Modernists such as de Klerk, Oud, and Dudok.<sup>38</sup> The influence of their rectangular and cubic forms can be seen in Mendelsohn’s sketching almost immediately after his return [figures 3.9 & 3.10]. By the mid-1920’s, Mendelsohn had even begun to reject his own early work in order to move closer to the objectivity of the avant-garde.<sup>39</sup> As Julius Posener described in an account of his reaction to the question of what his best building was, Mendelsohn responded, “Luckenwalde” -- the Steinberg, Hermann hat factory. His reaction to the Einstein Tower was, “Dear child, never again! There we had to call in ship builders to make the formwork. And yet [pause] it was good that it was built.”<sup>40</sup> Of course Mendelsohn did not regret the popularity he gained from the building, but it was clear that his interests had moved in another direction.

Shortly after producing projects like the Einstein Observatory or the Berliner Tageblatt Building [figure 3.11], he shifted toward forms that were more consistent with Neue Sachlichkeit design. Projects such as his Weichmann Silk House [figures 3.12 & 3.13] or the Karolinger Platz housing project [figures 3.14 & 3.15] attempted to change his Expressionist image in order to align it with avant-garde expectations. The programmatic rationality and cubic forms of these projects incorporate many of the same aesthetic concepts promoted by the Bauhaus and housing planners during this time. But underneath this change in Mendelsohn’s aesthetic forms, his interest in the

“dynamics” of form and artistic conception still lingered. Mendelsohn’s travel to America in 1924 was an opportunity for the cultural and spiritual implications of these ideas to resurface in his work.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to his wife dated 26 August 1917. *Letters*, p.42.

<sup>2</sup> Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*. Vol.1, p.145. After Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.15-16. See Gordon for a good discussion on Kandinsky’s interpretation of Nietzsche.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted after K. Gilbert & H. Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*. London, 1956, p.518. Also see Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism* for a good discussion of Nietzschean influence on Expressionism.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, after Gilbert & Kuhn, *History of Esthetics*, p.246.

<sup>5</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to Louise, 16 August 1910. See *Letters*, p.23. As Morgenthaler writes in his *Early Sketches*, the idea of “rhythm” is very similar to Kandinsky’s idea that paintings consist of forms that cause the human soul to vibrate. Additionally, Kandinsky held that expression of the artist’s inner meaning is the goal of art.

<sup>6</sup> Morgenthaler, *Early Sketches*, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> “Münchener Künstlertheater”, *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 14 April 1914, 1-2. See Morgenthaler, *Early Sketches*, p.9.

<sup>8</sup> This mention of Mendelsohn was part of Ball’s diaries in which he lists Kandinsky, Marc, Fokine, Hartmann, Paul Klee, Kokoschka, Yevrenov, Mendelsohn, and Kubin. See “A History of the Almanac” by Klaus Lankheit in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, ed. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, The Viking Press, New York, 1974, p.34.

<sup>9</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter dated 27 December 1911. After Morgenthaler, *Early Sketches*, p.14.

<sup>10</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to wife, 4 January 1914. See *Letters*, p.28.

<sup>11</sup> In a letter to his wife dated 17 June 1917, Mendelsohn mentions that he is sending some of his sketches for the latest in the sequence of “Industry” projects. He writes that these drawings can be kept together under the heading: “Mente Cordis Sui- After one’s heart’s desire, as the beginning of the Magnificat intuitions.” This is intriguing that Mendelsohn would begin to understand his sketches in this way, and even begin to develop a classification system for how to describe the buildings. I think this reveals a shift toward Mendelsohn’s conception of his architecture and designs at a more formal level.

<sup>12</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to wife dated 17 June 1917. See *Letters*, p.40.

<sup>13</sup> This wish for the hand and vision to be mechanically connected is an intriguing insight into Mendelsohn’s personality as well as his how he describes his artistic process. He writes in a letter to his wife, “The visions are once more behind every ring of light and every corpuscle in

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my closed eye. Masses standing there in their ripeness flash past in a moment and slip away, so that it is almost impossible for the hand to note them down even approximately. I lament the fact that hand and vision are not linked together mechanically." See letter dated 11 August 1917, *Letters*, p.41.

<sup>14</sup> The article was titled "Remarks on the Historical Developments of Contemporary Art" and appeared in a book titled *In Battle over Art* which was a response to a pamphlet initiated by the German landscape painter, Carl Vinnen. The pamphlet was titled "Protest of German Artists" and criticized the art institutions for contamination of German art with the overrated French work. Source for this information. is in Magdalaena Bushart, "Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch", in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil Donahue. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, p.78-79.

<sup>15</sup> Translated in Bushart's essay from original in German ("Remarks on the Historical Developments of Contemporary Art"): Worringer, "Entwicklungsgeschichtliches zur modernsten Kunst", in *Im Kampf um die Kunst*, Munich: Piper 1911, p.92-99; here p.95.

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that Worringer was indifferent, even ambivalent toward the new art of Expressionism, only sympathized with their anti-impressionist view not their own artistic conceptions. He believed that the true artistic achievements lied in spiritual intellectual extensions of knowledge, not in the fine arts (this is an indication of his preference for philosophy and scholarship). He later, especially in a lecture on "Questions about Contemporary Art", denied any relation to the Expressionist art movement and claimed that they had been a failure with respect to the "broader cultural turn toward a new intellectuality". Information was obtained from Bushart, *Invisible Cathedrals*, p.81. Lecture citation: "Künstlerische Zeitfragen", lecture on 19 October 1920 in the local chapter of the German Goethe Society. (Munich: Bruckman, 1921).

<sup>17</sup> This passage is from a larger passage of text (several chapters) that attempts to draw connections from classical to Gothic to Modern day construction. For this quote see Wilhelm Worringer, *Form Problems of the Gothic*. New York: G.E. Stechert & Co., 1918, p.88. Worringer also draws frequent connections to Modern construction, particularly American, in his later book, *Egyptian Art*.

<sup>18</sup> I have found several other instance of Mendelsohn directly referring to Worringer in letters to his wife. Although these letters remain unpublished, most of the dates for them occur in 1914-15. See "Letters of Erich Mendelsohn" in Accession No. 880406, Series I of the Special Collections at The Getty Research Institute for the entire collection of Mendelsohn letters.

<sup>19</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter dated 18 May 1914. *Letters*, p.32.

<sup>20</sup> In Mendelsohn's 1919 lecture, "The Problem of a New Architecture" he supported his argument for a dynamic expression of structural forces in a way that is nearly the same as Worringer's ideas on expressing an abstract, structural law. Mendelsohn also uses a similar reference to other historical epochs and their harmony between form and structural principles that Worringer does. As an example, Mendelsohn writes, "Out of the columns and marble beams of the Greek temple, Out of the pillars and stone vaults of the Gothic cathedral, Evolves the girder rhythm of iron halls." See an excerpt from that lecture in Erich Mendelsohn, *Structures and Sketches*, trans. Herman George Scheffauer. London: E. Benn, Limited, 1924, p.3-4, or Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, Appendix 2.

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<sup>21</sup> My knowledge and writing of Martin Buber's influence on Mendelsohn is based on a very informative and enlightening thesis by Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, as well as Morgenthaler.. See Nitzan-Shiftan, *Erich Mendelsohn: From Berlin to Jerusalem*, S.M.arch.S. thesis, M.I.T., 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Erich Mendelsohn letter in *Brief*, p.35. After Nitzan-Shiftan, *Erich Mendelsohn*, p.17.

<sup>23</sup> See Morgenthaler, *Early Sketches*, chapter on "Design Theory: From Chaos to Form", p.64-77.

<sup>24</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter dated 7 April 1915. *Letters*, p.36.

<sup>25</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, "Reflections on New Architecture" (Written at the Front 1914-17), in *Structures and Sketches*, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> Cornelis van de Ven, *Space in Architecture*. Amsterdam: Van Goreum Assen, 1978, p.168.

<sup>27</sup> Herman George Scheffauer, "Dynamic Architecture". In *The Dial*, March 1921, Vol.LXX, No. 3. This article is one of the first introductions of Mendelsohn to an American audience and was based on several conversations

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.324.

<sup>29</sup> Mendelsohn often uses the idea of "Absolute" in writing about his notion of dynamics and its transcendental qualities.

<sup>30</sup> Sheffauer, "Dynamic Architecture", p.327.

<sup>31</sup> Wolf Von Eckardt, *Eric Mendelsohn*, George Braziller, Inc., New York, 1960. p18. The commission for Erich Mendelsohn to provide an addition to the Berliner Tageblatt building in Berlin is said to have been decided by a survey of all the employees. Von Eckardt writes, "Nearly all of them, it turns out, from his top editors down to the apprentices in the composing room, had seen the pictures of the Einstein Tower and were intrigued by it."

<sup>32</sup> The conflicts and ideological struggles that characterized the Werkbund in this period is testimony to a diverse number of visions for the future. After Hans Poelzig resigned his presidency of the Werkbund in May 1921, the dissension between younger, radical artists and the older reactionaries served to split any accordance that had been provisionally achieved before. In the years up to the Bauhaus exhibition in 1923, it was hard to find any agreement on a future role of the arts in society, let alone concurrence on a particular styles. See Joan Campbell, *The German Werkbund: the politics of reform in the applied arts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, p.146-149 for an description of the transformations in the Werkbund in this period. The Werkbund exhibition in 1921, Deutsche Gewerbeschau was an example of this eclecticism of creative ideology. Its display of products was meant to demonstrate the Werkbund concept of quality and consisted of all different styles, traditional and expressionistic alike. See Campbell, p.156.

<sup>33</sup> Theo van Doesburg, "First Manifesto of De Stijl", 1918. Reprinted in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads, trans. Michael Bullock. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970. Van Doesburg's criticism of the designer who valued individuality as central to the creative process reflected his larger interest in reinventing a

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methodology for creative disciplines. The emphasis of universal principles over subjective whim was intended to bring greater harmony between the individual and spiritual needs. Though his early ideas of what this universality meant (i.e. 1918 manifesto) underscored a greater rationality, his later writing admitted that a balance between functional and spiritual needs had to be satisfied. See "The Rebirth of Art and Architecture in Europe" (trans. in Straaten, *Theo van Doesburg: Painter and Architect*), 1931 for an ideological position that still maintains the fundamental tenets of his 1918 manifesto, yet begins to soften on the question of creativity.

<sup>34</sup> For a very good discussion of the Werkbund's affiliation with Handwerk organizations like Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Handwerkskultur, see Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, p.165-170.

<sup>35</sup> I think this break with earlier forms of functionalism is most interesting and important with regard to Walter Gropius. While some historians like Reyner Banham have argued that this shift turned back toward the prewar ideas of Muthesius (See Banham, *First Machine Age*, p.192-93), I agree with Joan Campbell that this functionalism was of a new breed (Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, p.176, n.16). Instead of the industrial standardization that defined Muthesius's functionalism of the 1914 Cologne Werkbund, Gropius was reacting to the Expressionistic forms of subjective creativity that even he was guilty of. Without the large scale belief and acceptance of expressionist values through the early 1920's, it would be hard to imagine why so many architects and artists united in their common rejection of it.

<sup>36</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to his wife dated 19 August 1923. *Letters*, p.59.

<sup>37</sup> For an account of these changes in the Werkbund political structure see Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, p.181-182.

<sup>38</sup> See James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, p.166-175 for an account of his travel to The Netherlands.

<sup>39</sup> An article by Reyner Banham in 1954 is one of few accounts that characterize this change in Mendelsohn's design in the early 1920's. Banham points to the Luckenwald factory (1924) as the decisive transformation in his thinking. See Reyner Banham, "Mendelsohn" in *The Architectural Review*. Vol.116, August 1954, p.84-93.

<sup>40</sup> This account was quoted from James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, p.96.

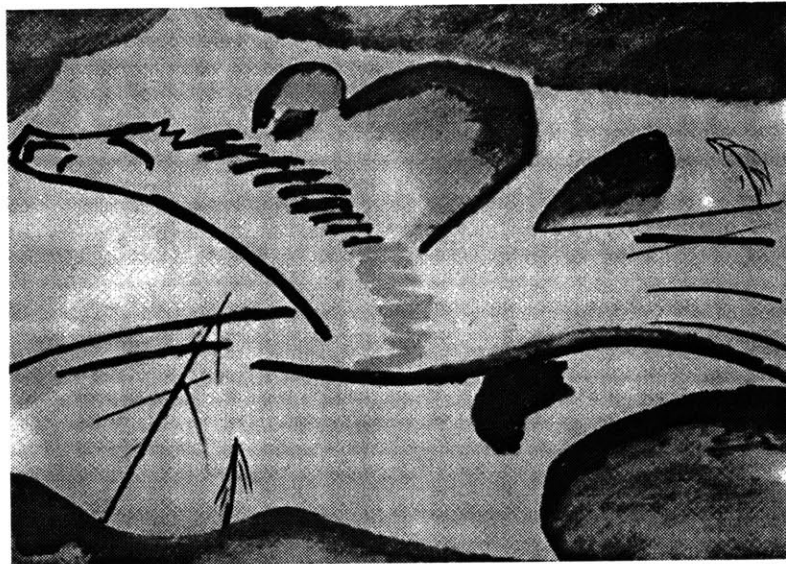


**figure 3.1** Wassily Kandinsky. Cover design for Der Blaue Reiter. Water color, dates to around 1912.





**figure 3.2** Franz Marc. *Animal Destinies*, oil on canvas, 1913.



**figure 3.3** Wassily Kandinsky. *Lyrical*. Originally published in the almanac of *Der Blaue Reiter*, 1914.

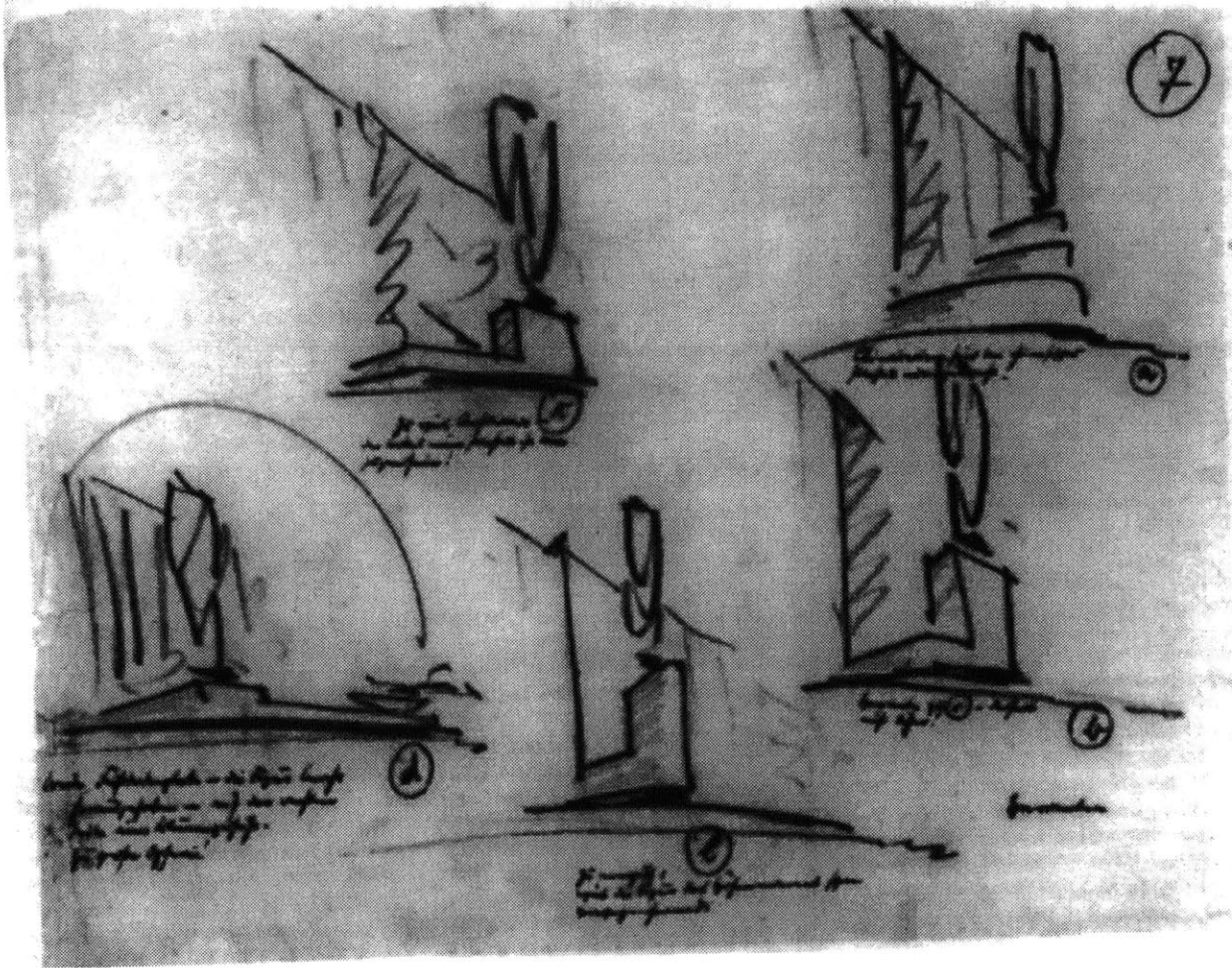
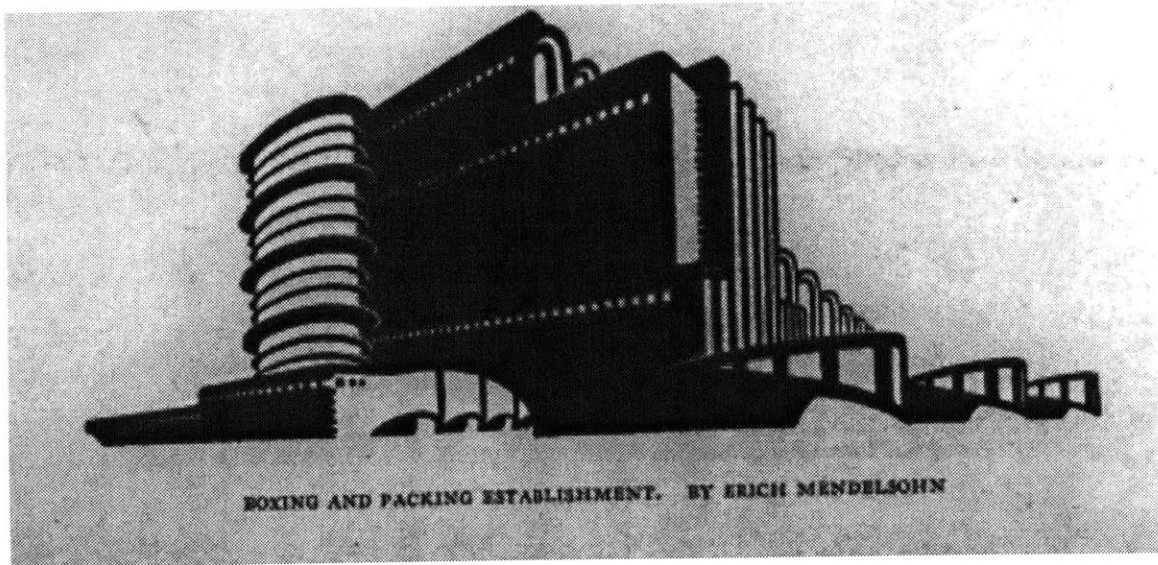
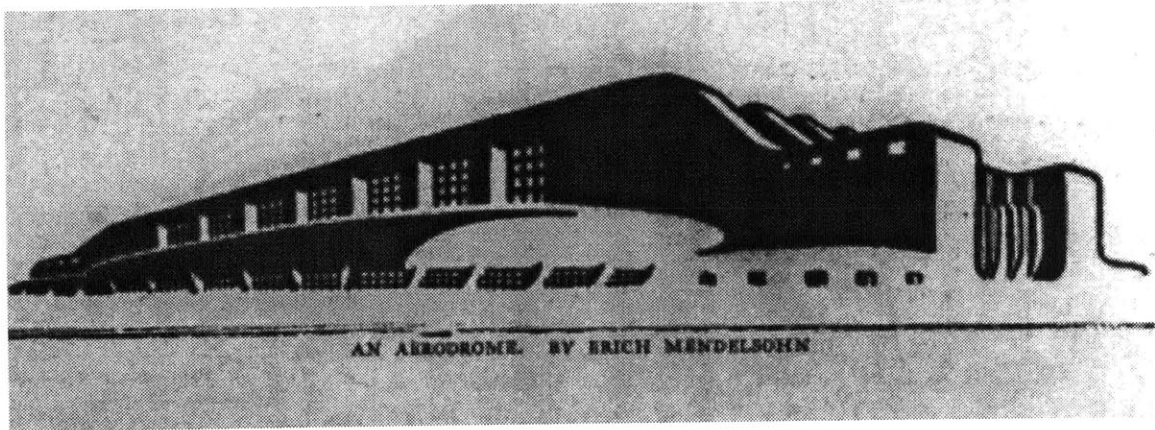


figure 3.4 Erich Mendelsohn. Perspective sketches, post-WWI.



**figure 3.5** Erich Mendelsohn. Sketches: *Aerodrome & Boxing and Packing Establishment*, 1917. Published by Herman George Scheffauer in *The Dial*, March 1921.



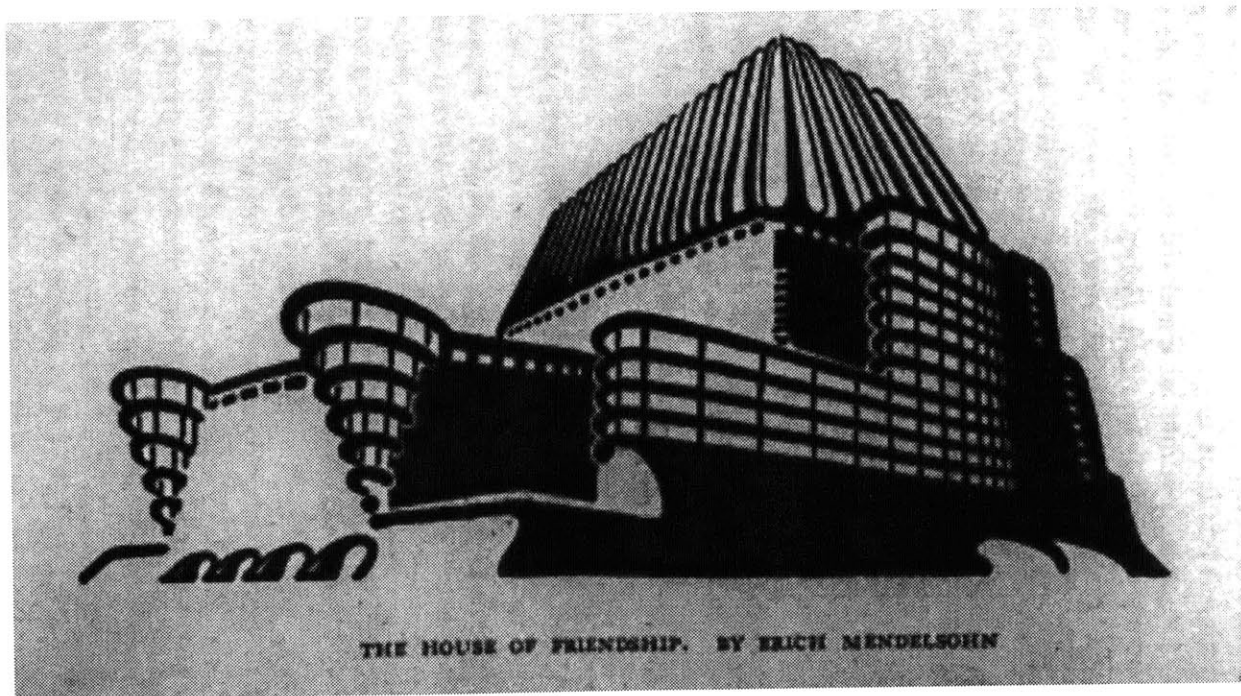
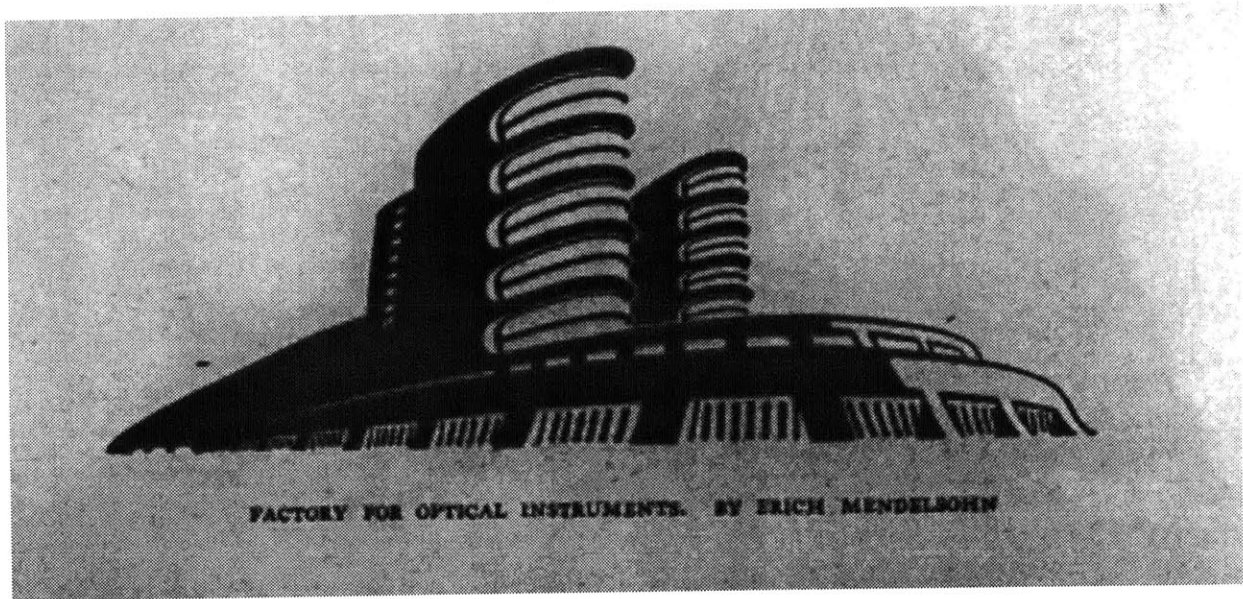
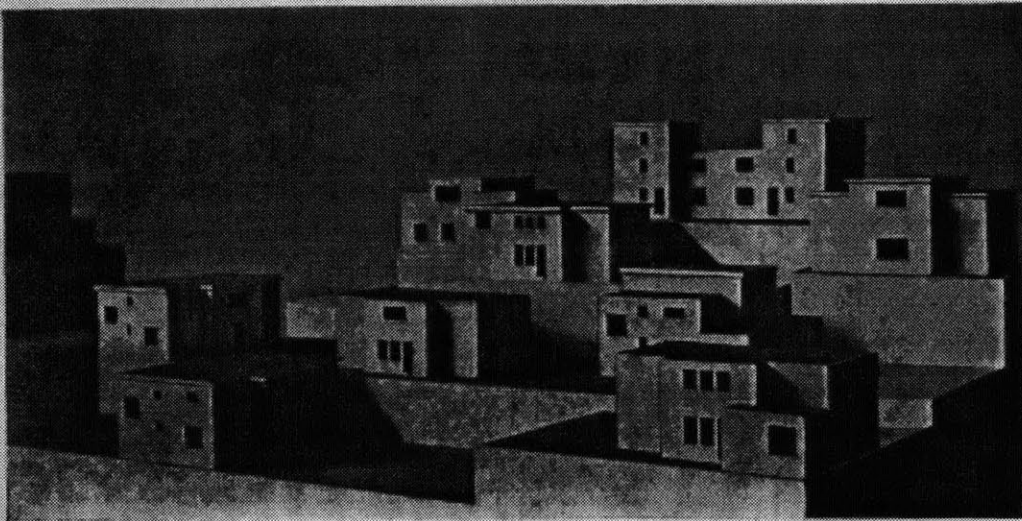


figure 3.6 Erich Mendelsohn. Sketches: *Factory for Optical Instruments* & *The House of Friendship*, 1917. Published by Herman George Scheffauer in *The Dial*, March 1921.



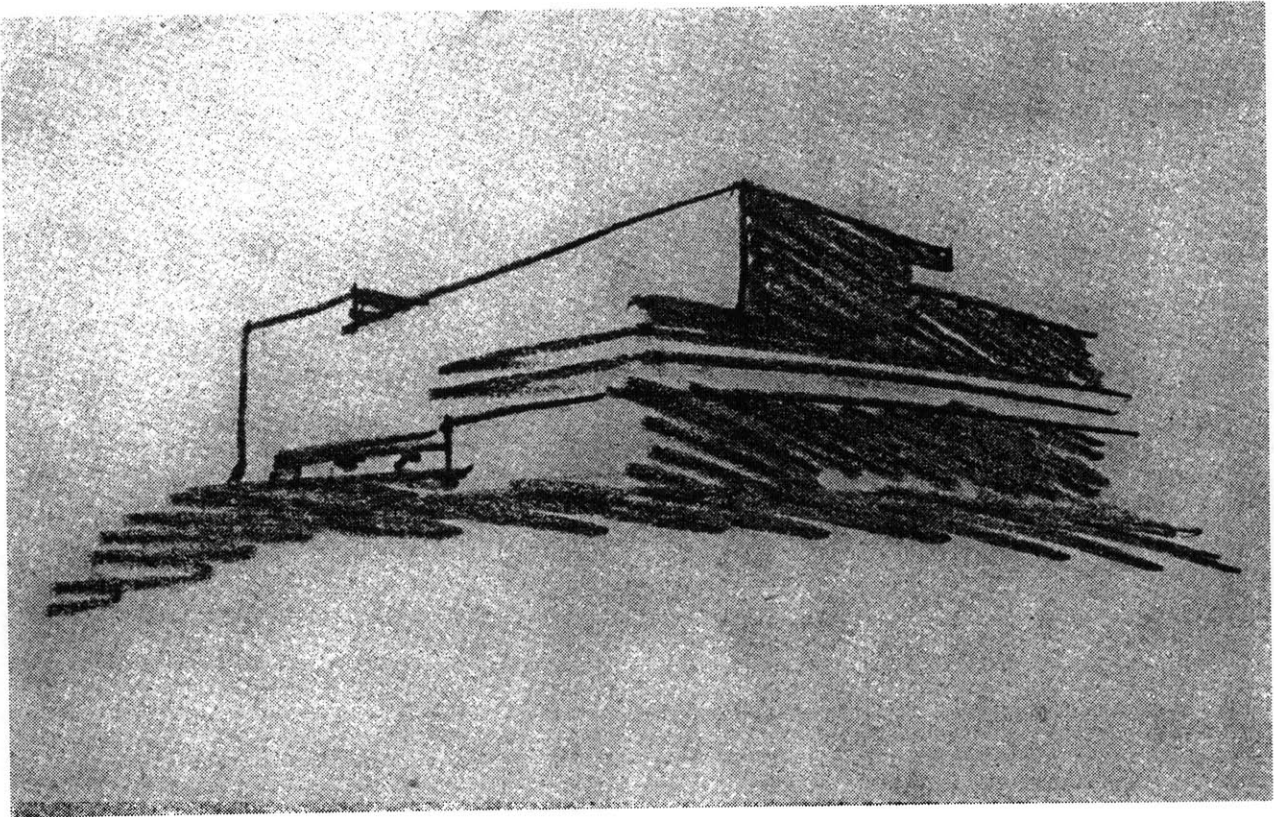
Architekturabteilung des Staatl. Bauhauses, Weimar (Leitung W. Gropius).— Modelle zu Serienhäusern. Variabilität desselben Grundtyps durch wechselweisen An- und Aufbau sich wiederholender Raumzellen. Grundgedanke: Vereinigung größtmöglicher Typisierung mit größtmöglicher Variabilität. 1921

figure 3.7 *Architekturabteilung des Staatl. Bauhauses, Weimar, 1921. Reprinted from Walter Gropius, Internationale Architektur; Bauhausbücher 1, 1925.*



**figure 3.8** Weimar Bauhaus exhibition, 1923. Photograph.





**figure 3.9** Erich Mendelsohn. *Meyer-Kauffmann Textile Works*, sketch, 1922.



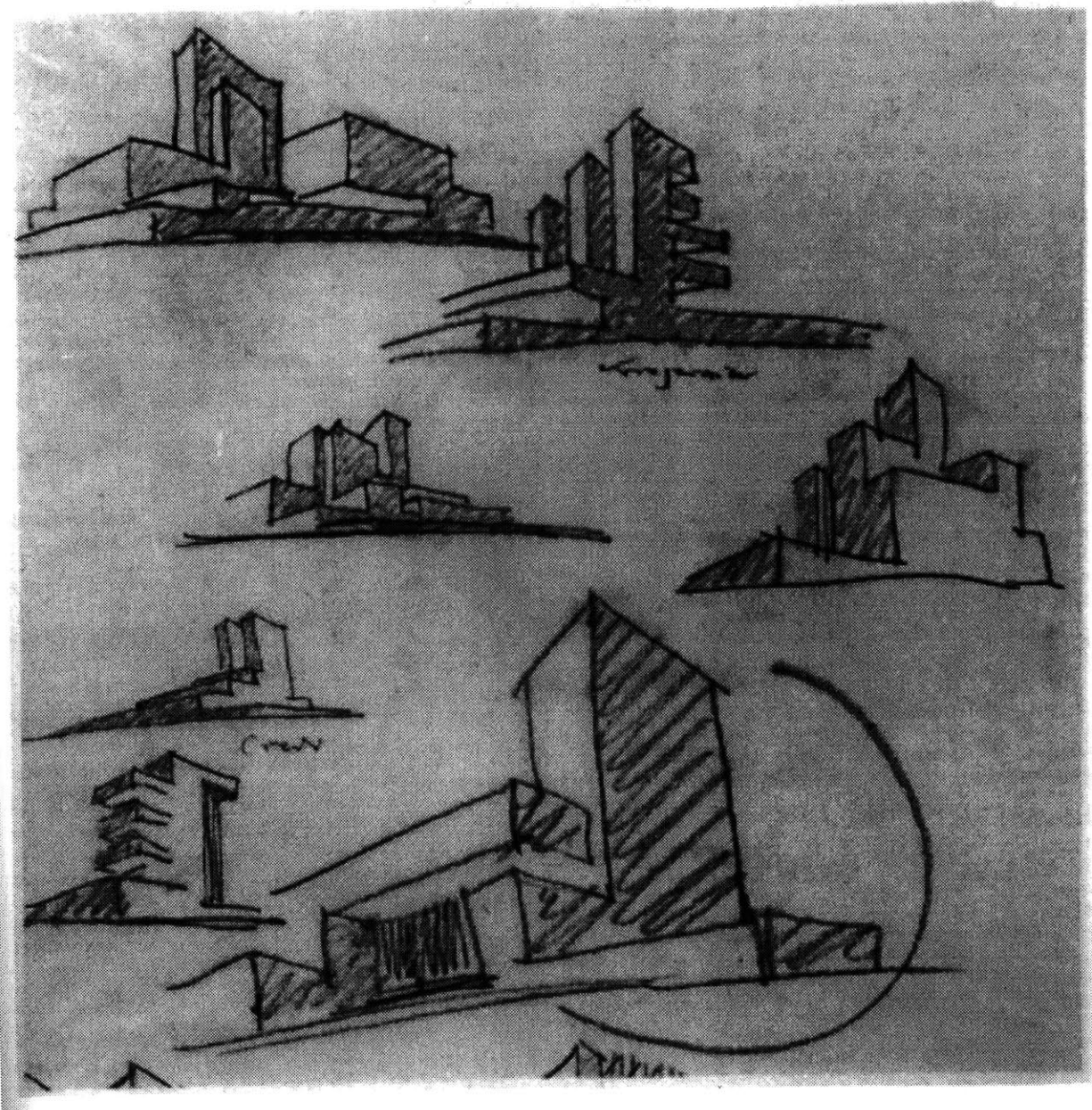
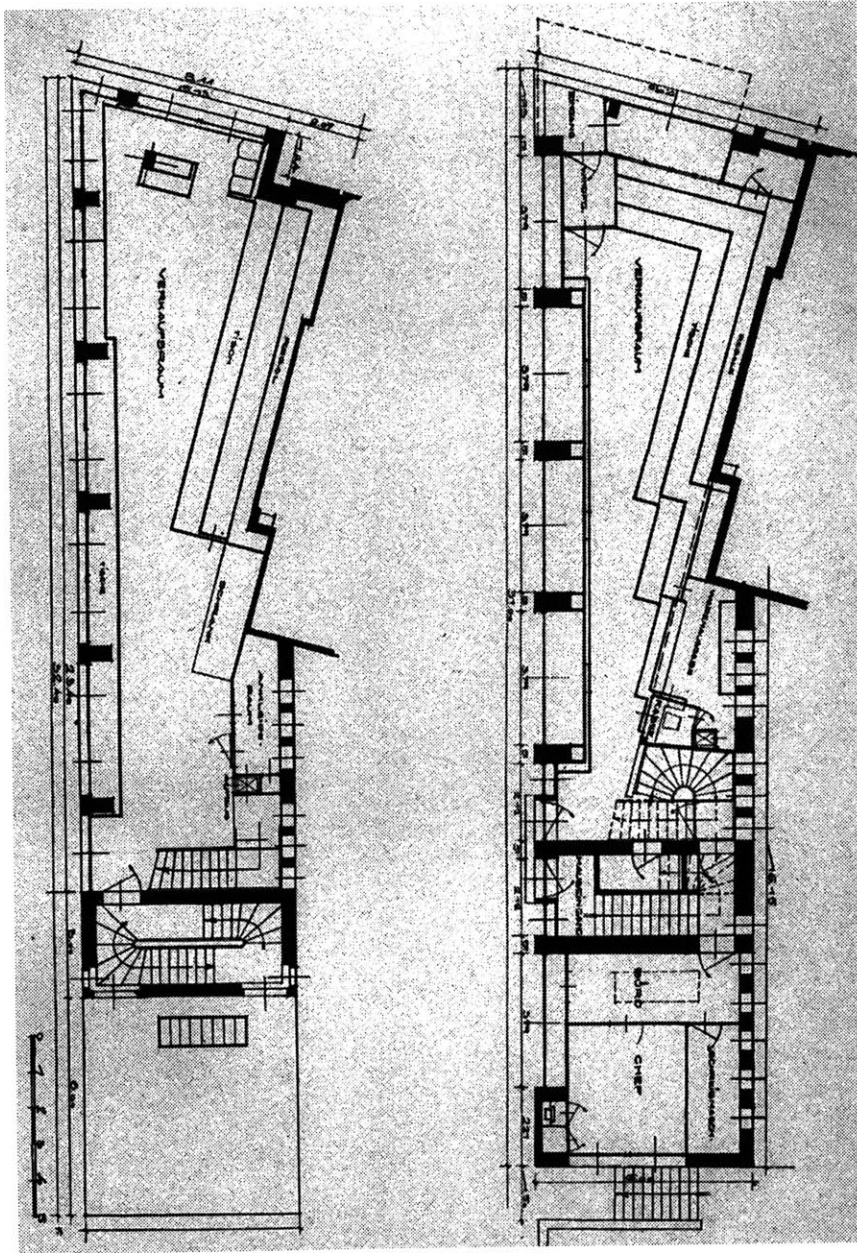
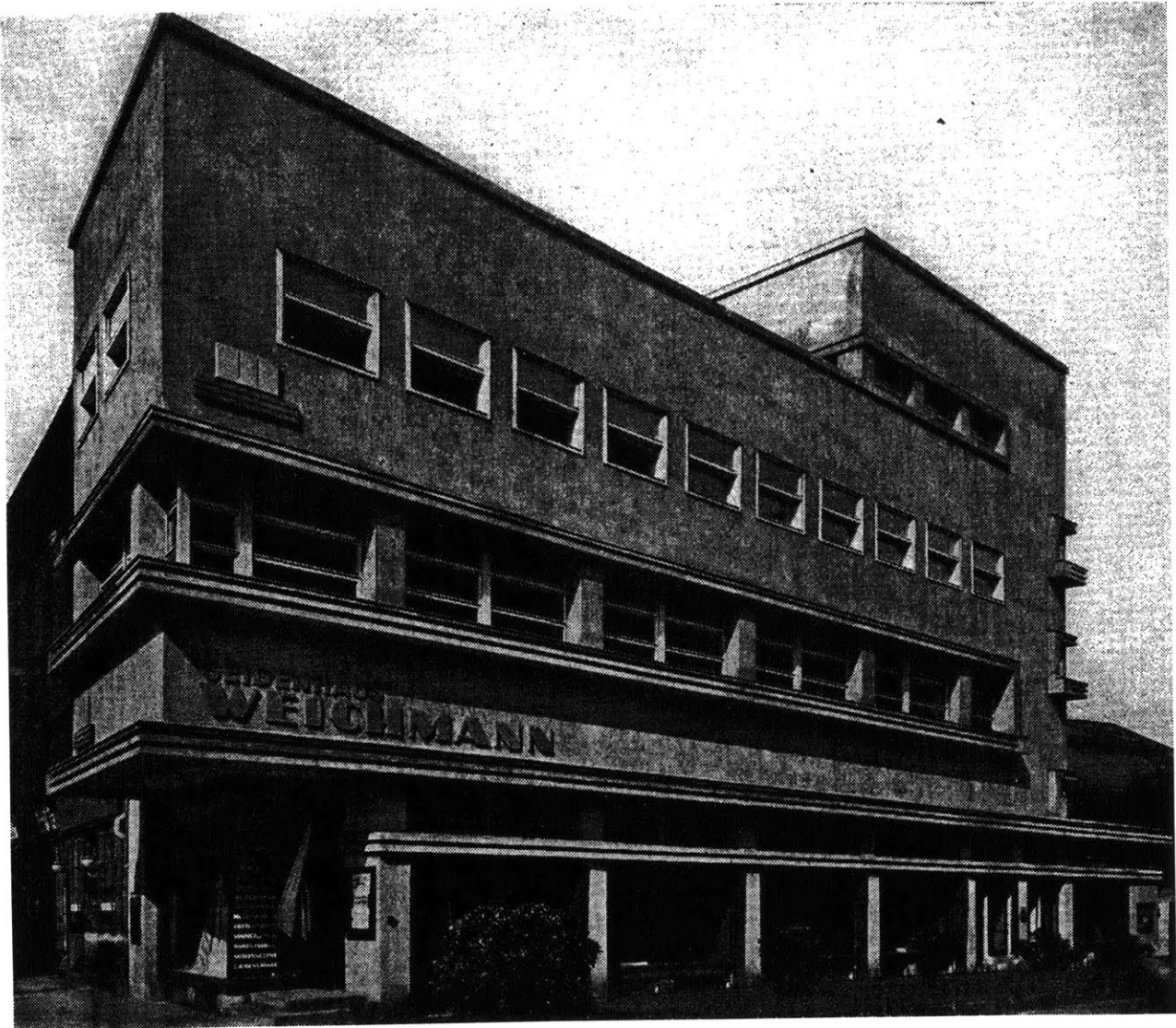


figure 3.10 Erich Mendelsohn. sketch, 1923.



**figure 3.11** Erich Mendelsohn. *Berliner Tageblatt Building*, Berlin, 1921-23. Photograph of entry.



**figure 3.12** Erich Mendelsohn. *Weichmann Silk House*, 1922.



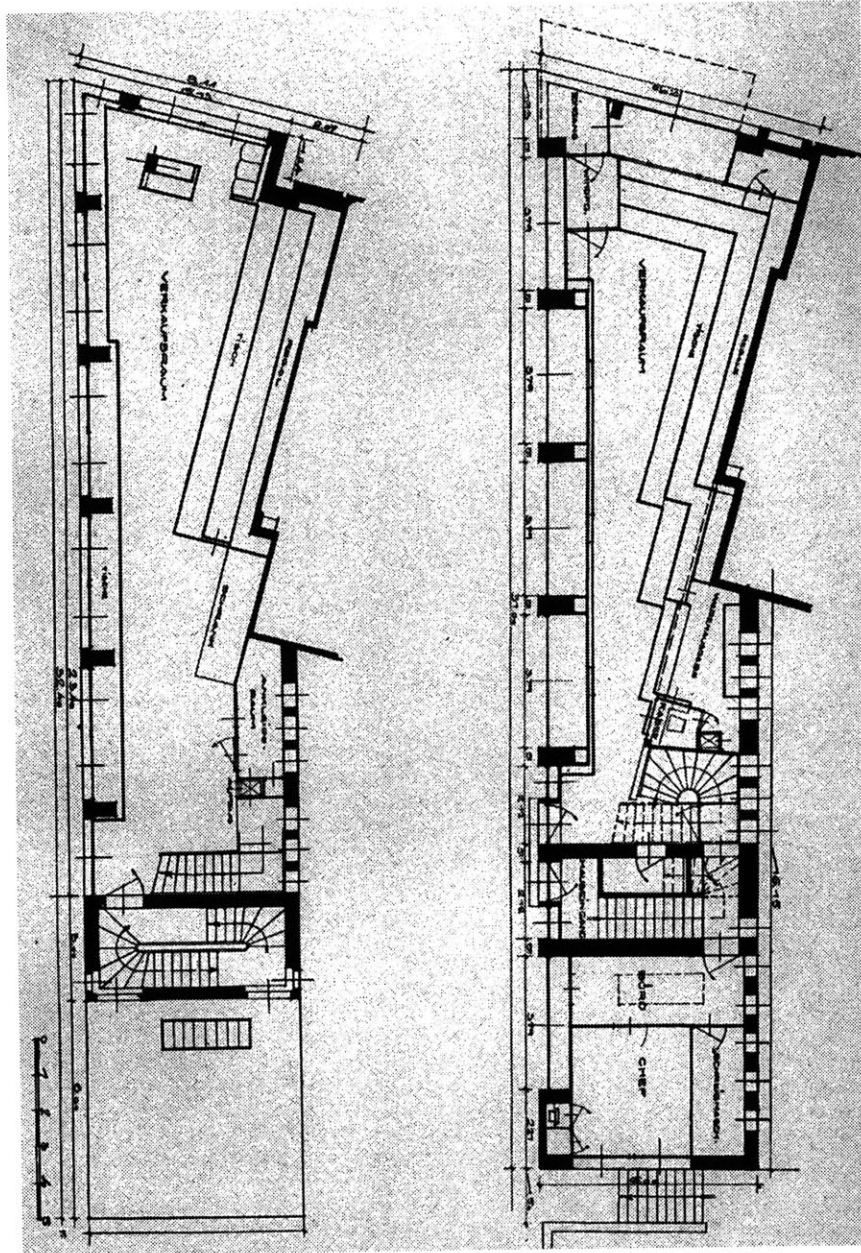
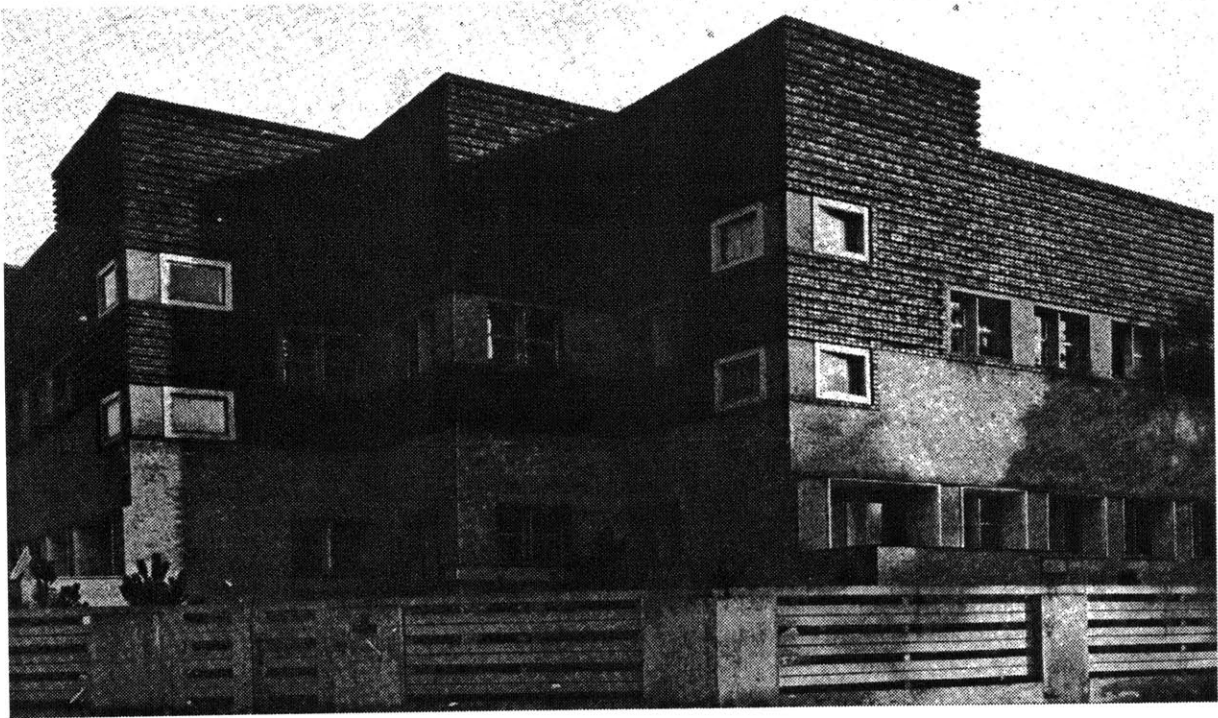


figure 3.13 Erich Mendelsohn. *Weichmann Silk House*, 1922. Plan.



**figure 3.14** Erich Mendelsohn. *Karolinger Platz* housing project, 1922.

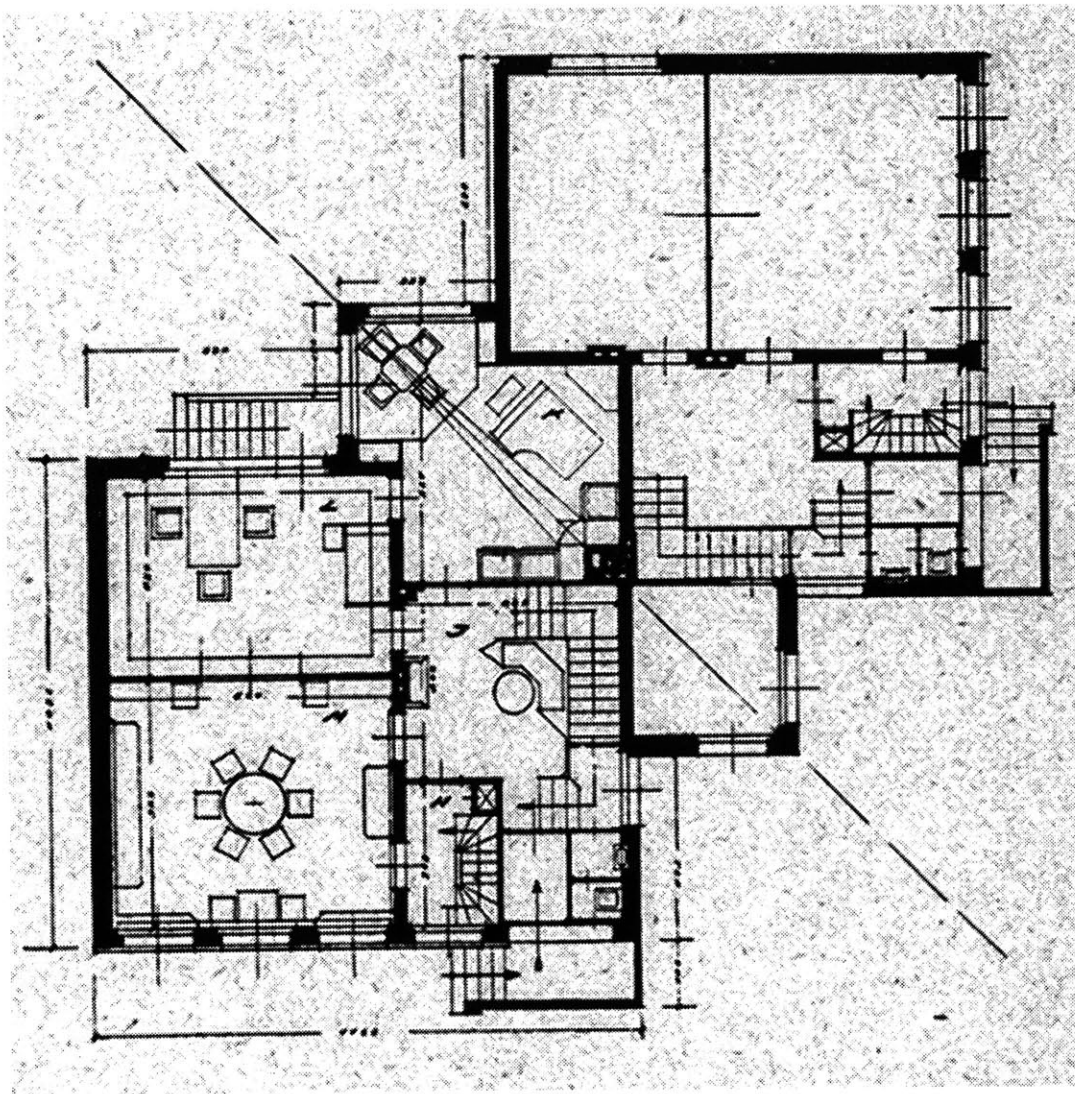


figure 3.15 Erich Mendelsohn. *Karolinger Platz* housing project, 1922. Plan.

## Chapter Four - Mendelsohn and *Amerika*

Despite his outdated theoretical position by the rational standards of some avant-garde architects, Mendelsohn's popularity as a leading architect in Germany opened new opportunities. As I mentioned earlier, few Germans would have been completely ignorant of his name by 1923. This notoriety and his affiliation with the Mosse Publishing company in Berlin made it possible to travel and publish his ideas about America and Russia over the next several years. While most German architects were still overcoming the economic hardship that accompanied post-war inflation, Mendelsohn received the financial support to become one of the first German architects (the first German avant-garde architect) to travel to America after WWI.<sup>1</sup> This arrangement provided for the financial expenses of traveling to America in the fall of 1924 and assurance that the results of his travel would be published through articles and in some form of picture book.<sup>2</sup> The first of these articles appeared on 3 January 1925 in the Mosse owned *Berliner Tagblatt* and described Mendelsohn's experience in New York. But the publication of his travel in book form came early in 1926 under the title, *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* (*America: Picture-book of an*

*Architect*) and was released in both German and English editions [figure 4.1]. The publication of a second edition in 1928 is an indication of the wide success his book had in the general audience that Mosse had targeted. It was probably also a strong motivation for Mendelsohn to publish an additional book that included his travel to Russia in 1925-26. Again under Mosse Publishing, this book appeared in early 1929 under the title, *Russland - Europa - Amerika: ein architektonischer Querschnitt (Russia-Europe-America: an architectural Cross Section)* [figure 4.2].

Mendelsohn's first trip to America in October 1924 was important to both his own career and the European understanding of American society. The opportunity of meeting Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin would make him something of an authority on new developments in American architecture.<sup>3</sup> However, the chance to witness American culture and their spiritual development was something that the German public, as well as the more functional minded avant-garde were both very interested in. Artists and architects of the avant-garde had been looking toward America as a model of economic and scientific efficiency since the beginning of the century, but by the early 1920's America's influence on Germany had become more profound. At least part of the appeal for America was its seemingly utopian accomplishments when understood within the social and political context of Germany. America's market driven innovations in architectural planning, engineering, and industrial management were frequently used as models in the reconstruction and rebuilding of Germany during postwar economic depression. Additionally, the Dawes Plan provided American financial



investment in German businesses to stimulate their post-war economy. This brought an even greater number of German businessmen and planners into close contact with American capitalism and rationality. The time saving efficiency of Frederick Taylor's management techniques and Henry Ford's standardization in industrial plants both moved German manufacturing toward a more competitive position within Europe and encouraged a modern aesthetic that embodied these ideas in design.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of America on shaping a new form of modern culture was also the topic of much debate among German architects and intellectuals. Responding to a world that had accepted Taylorism and Henry Ford as inescapable forces, critics argued that these came at great cost in the reduction of German *Kultur*.<sup>5</sup> The 1924 Werkbund meeting in Karlsruhe addressed these concerns under the theme, "Work and Life" in which the general sentiment deemed industrialization as a necessary evil, but that Germany had to find a way of rising above the spiritual impoverishment of America.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Walter Gropius shared the view of many Germans interested in the profits of rationality, but condemned American functionalist ideas that came from "below" instead of "above". However, the harshest criticism of America came from a fear that all things associated with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (i.e. functionalism, mass-production, rationality, universality, etc.) threatened the integrity of Germany as a race. This nationalistic outlook identified American buildings and architecture as symbols of capitalistic powers depleted of any moral or cultural soul.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there was great interest in visualizing the physical environment of America whether

for the purpose of aspiring to greater rational efficiency or denouncing it as a threat to cultural values.

For most Germans, and Europe in general, the source of these ideas and representations of America came in the form of advertising photographs, popular American magazines, music, and written descriptions. In fact, it was not uncommon for European artists and writers to use American subject matter without ever having traveled to the new world. Writers such as Karl May wrote scores of potboiler novels on the American Wild West without ever leaving the continent. Franz Kafka wrote many mistaken and inaccurate descriptions in his 1912 manuscript that would be known as *Amerika*. His story about a German immigrant and his travel westward from New York was almost entirely conceived through travel books, lectures, and conversation with emigrants. Additionally, Bertold Brecht wrote many plays based on American environments long before his journey overseas of which plays like *Arturo Ui* and *Mahagonny* bear little resemblance to the reality of their Chicago and Alabama settings. Although the frequency and cost of ocean liners made it possible for a greater number of people to travel to America on their own by the 1920's, there was clearly a need for new literature that answered modern needs and interests.[Brecht's compliments of *Amerika*] The lack of fresh images, or at least "authentic" images, is probably a cause for the large success of *Amerika* and its reprinting in 1928.

## *Vision of America*

Mendelsohn's journey through America was hardly an appreciation of the country in its entirety though. His arrival in New York and subsequent travel to Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Chicago was a small but very deliberate itinerary.<sup>8</sup> For Mendelsohn, New York was the representation of America's moral degeneration and its urban conditions would become the source of how he would later write about its "spiritual value". This intention seems clear in a letter Mendelsohn wrote to his wife four days after arrival, "So I must concentrate! Here in New York lies all America. One need not search far. But all America means an undreamed-of mass of material for study."<sup>9</sup> It seems New York revealed something of America that the more common images of industrial production and grain elevators did not. As with many other artists and photographers of this time, New York skyscrapers became a way for Mendelsohn to understand the spiritual condition of America. However, it also seems that Mendelsohn's mind was made up very quickly on what those spiritual and cultural condition were. In the same letter to his wife, Mendelsohn described New York in a way that formed a theme throughout much of how he would characterize America in the future.

Four days in New York. Still giddy from the voyage. Hindered by ignorance of the country and particularly of the language.

Altered dimensions of vital energy, of spatial relationships and of traffic.

This beats against one's brain and deafens it, but without robbing it of awareness and detachment. Both are particularly necessary here. I walk as an observer through the streets, disturbed by the unforeseen dimensions of this colonial city, this disorderly wild growth in which, utterly undemocratically, individual financial wills to power have erected their twenty- to fifty-story-high egos. Pushed up by the amassing of money which was itself unforeseen, inflated in an unprecedented short time from the immigrants' port into the business center of the world, from being an adventurer's city with the romanticism of castles and Gothic churches into being the heart of the world with the crazily circulating pulse beat of the cathedrals of commerce.<sup>10</sup>

In light of the praise that had more typically described American ingenuity in the early 20th century, the cynicism of Mendelsohn's interpretation probably contributed to his book's "freshness". Even today, Mendelsohn's vision of America is often referred to as prophetic in its time. However, his method of making spiritual and cultural determinations was based on some of the same ideas that made him out of date within the Modern avant-garde. These ideas were central to his sense of individuality and informed how he understood creativity and artistic inspiration. In contrast to the pragmatism of Gropius<sup>11</sup>, Mendelsohn believed the value of an architect derived from understanding the expressive needs of a particular moment in time. Artistic creativity was the source of a deeper insight into the physical needs and spiritual condition of a society.<sup>12</sup> The creative individual, for Mendelsohn, "can only be understood from the collective whole of the manifestations of the age."<sup>13</sup> Much of these ideas were inspired by Mendelsohn's earlier association with Expressionism and *Der Blaue Reiter* group, but the work of Wilhelm

Worringer was a more original source. In addition to determining how Mendelsohn conceived his own role in architecture (the avant-garde particularly), Worringer's writing on *Einfühlung* and "self-objectification" determined much of how he wrote and portrayed his travel.

The idea of *Einfühlung* was originally developed by Theodore Lipps in the 19th century and advocated that an observing subject experiences aesthetic pleasure through the urge to empathize with external objects. In other words, the feeling that a person has toward an object, whether it is an art work or another person, is dependent on the observer projecting something of himself to the external object which, in turn, becomes the empathetic content that the observer experiences. Worringer's contribution to this idea was that an observing subject could make judgments on a foreign culture or historical period by the degree to which that culture demonstrated an ability to empathize with their surrounding environment. He argued that the 'urge to abstraction' was at the opposite extreme of the 'urge to empathize' and that the degree to which a culture demonstrated either of these two, as manifested in their material productions, indicated their cultural and spiritual development.<sup>14</sup> Although Mendelsohn's fascination with New York was in the construction of a new landscape of skyscrapers, the spiritual implications of this new kind of form were the more immediate and significant concern.

After leaving New York, Mendelsohn's urban anxiety was eased by traveling through the suburbs and countryside of the city. Although his original

intentions had been to travel as far as California, he canceled that stretch of his trip and passed through Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, to make it as far West as Wisconsin. He presented two lectures on his architecture and theoretical ideas at the Carnegie Art Institute in Pittsburgh and then at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. But this travel through the northeastern section of America also played a large role in how he understood the American landscape. Aside from the skyscrapers of New York, his visit to grain elevators in Buffalo and Chicago, and the Ford factory in Detroit were primary influences in Mendelsohn's "vision". The highlight of his entire trip was meeting Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin. Not only was Mendelsohn interested in Wright's architectural views, but he found consolation in many of their shared criticisms of urban conditions. His stay at Taliesin also allowed Mendelsohn to visit Richard Neutra, who was an apprentice of Wright at the time, but had previously worked for Mendelsohn in Berlin [figure 4.3]. In fact, Neutra was then working at his own book on America and probably had much to discuss about his experiences. As Mendelsohn had already been a great admirer of Wright and Louis Sullivan, this visit to Taliesin and Chicago was influential on how Mendelsohn portrayed American architecture in his later writing.

After his return to Berlin, Mendelsohn used 1925 to prepare his photographs and commentary text that would illustrate the book. The uniqueness of an architect producing this type of book was that it could carry out a two-fold purpose. The more official agenda fulfilled Mosse Publishing's interest in selling enough copies to make a profit. For this it was marketed as a book

containing images of modernity through the eyes of a visionary architect. At the same time though, it was also an opportunity for Mendelsohn to strengthen the avant-garde image of his own theoretical position. It might be impossible for anyone not to include personal bias in this type of literature, but Mendelsohn's book was the result of a conscious strategy to convey a particular impression. This representation of America both reinforced his own architectural agenda and created a platform on which to attack the more Modern, Functionalist avant-garde. Unlike most theoretical statements though, this book occupied a place in the German popular culture that was generally inaccessible and uninteresting to the avant-garde.

### *Photography as Theory*

The opening lines in the Preface to *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* betray a much more serious tone than its simple name suggests.

The reality of the U.S.A. - the United States of America - is usually seen in Europe through admiring rather than conscientious eyes.

Of course those admiring eyes refer to a long lineage of travelers enchanted by the technical prowess and rational aptitude of America. The 1913 photographs of factories and grain elevators published by Gropius in the *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes* were some of the most famous and early images of "admiring" reverence [figure 4.4]. In contrast, Mendelsohn's

“conscientious eyes” refuted that narrow outlook in order to emphasize the social aspects of the seventy-seven photographs that follow. His images of America mostly consisted of urban street scenes, industrial buildings and grain elevators. However, the text which accompanied and referenced each photograph was his method of revealing the cultural conditions manifested in the image. Combining Mendelsohn’s text and the photograph made his claims on the cultural development of America seem self-evident.

In many cases, it appears the photograph was only printed to give rise to another opportunity of writing about the spiritual degradation that modernity had brought to America. Many captions were clearly inspired by an agenda beyond the modesty of a simple “Picture-book of an architect”:

[figure 4.5]

...A dream only for as long as the sun is favorable. Gigantic nonsense when the sun reveals everything, a fantastic effect as soon as it is displaced by the evening. Unbridled, mad frenetic lusting for life. Chicago wants to become New York, to outdo it.<sup>15</sup>

[figure 4.6]

...Here, at the tip of the narrow, high-lying peninsula, visible far out to sea, the whirlpool bursts, rearing up into a joyous shout of wealth and power, a cry of victory over old mother Europe, over the whole world. Overpoweringly loud, but also falling overpoweringly silent. Delirium of action - phantom of the yet greater America.<sup>16</sup>

[figure 4.7]

Admire the greatest dimensions in the smallest space - as the work of man - but at the same time it takes away your faith in



human worth. For, no longer under the control of the creative spirit, the unbridled life, the quicksand of the huge population, drives you into the funnel of the centrifugal force, money...<sup>17</sup>

As judgmental as this writing was, its juxtaposition to his photographs suggest an authenticity that would make Mendelsohn's claims more convincing. The 1920's represented a time when photography enjoyed a new status of objectivity in Germany and most of Europe. This attitude privileged the photograph as a mechanism to attain truthfulness that was beyond what subjective descriptions could convey. It was probably best summarized in 1923 by an article in the avant-garde magazine, *Disk*: "PHOTOGRAPH: Objective truth and documentary clarity above all doubts".<sup>18</sup> The fact that Mendelsohn produced a book of photographs instead of the more customary book of travel sketches, implied he was both more modern, and his images would be more objective. However, the 1920's were also a time of experimentation with photographic methods and technique. The work of photographic surrealists and Dadaists made photo manipulations and montage a common practice in avant-garde circles [figures 4.8 & 4.9]. Most of these images concentrated on non-representational experiments which exploited the objectivity that had been associated with the unrelenting "eye" of the camera. The mechanical image-making processes of Dadaist photography were valued as a means of expression that questioned the validity of art.

In 1922 László Moholy-Nagy articulated this bipolar interpretation of how photography was used and understood. He coined the term "production-

reproduction” to distinguish between photography for visual experimentation (production) and photography of objective truth (reproduction).<sup>19</sup> Both trends claimed a different interest in modern life. Although the experimentation of Dadaism questioned the medium of photography and art, the interest of objective reproduction was in precisely recording images of machines and technology [figure 4.10]. Erich Mendelsohn’s photographs in *Amerika* are intriguing because, like the rest of his theoretical position, they fall somewhere in between both tendencies. Initially, they appear as an objective and truthful source of graphic information about America in which his commentary text merely elaborates. Certainly, this is how it was meant to be understood. Upon closer inspection though, the purity and objective truth that “reproductive” photographs would have valued, is tainted by numerous examples of photo-manipulation.

Unlike the manipulation of Dadaist technique (they would have called attention to the transgression of the medium), Mendelsohn’s manipulation of the images is far more subtle. In most cases, it only involves his drawing-in or emphasizing aspects of certain buildings. In one example, the facades, windows, cornice treatment of a block of buildings was drawn over the photograph to make a bolder presence [figure 4.11]. However, the final section of *Amerika*, “The New - The Coming”, contained several photographs that were retouched in a way that hinted at some of Mendelsohn’s theoretical interests. The choice of buildings with austere facades and long sweeping lines epitomized his hope for a new architectural

style that reconciled both Functionalist pragmatism and Expressionist dynamics. Like much of Wright's work, images of buildings such as the Schiller building in Chicago represented the new future of architectural form for Mendelsohn [figures 4.12 & 4.13]. But in order to reinforce the dynamics of their work in the photographs of his book, Mendelsohn traced over lines and emphasized the powerful forms after the photographs were developed.

The tendency to emphasize long sweeping, vertical lines had been characteristic to much of Mendelsohn's earlier sketching [figures 4.14 & 4.15]. As he often wrote on the importance of contours in creating dynamic forms, the vertical line produced a sense of balance and vitality to architecture. Among many influential sources for these ideas, the historian Wilhelm Worringer argued that architecture should embody a spirit of abstraction through the gothic line. As Worringer wrote in 1910 for his *Form Problems of the Gothic*:

We see in the line the expression of organic beauty just because the execution corresponded with our organic sense. *If we meet such a line in another production, our impression is the same as if we had drawn it ourselves.* For as soon as we become conscious of any kind of line, we inwardly follow out involuntarily the process of its execution.<sup>20</sup>

Certainly the similarity between Worringer's theory and Mendelsohn's photo manipulation is partially unplanned, but the larger issue is how the buildings were appropriated. By graphically emphasizing his own interest in

the buildings and omitting any note of their authorship, Mendelsohn put those images at the service of his own ideas.

The combination of these less-than-objective photographs with the judgmental text declaring each images' larger implication is much more contrived than was probably understood in 1926. In fairness though, many of the photographs in *Amerika* were not retouched by drawing over the original. In fact, many of the photographs that appeared in the original edition were not even of Mendelsohn's camera! The absence of photographic credits in his first edition made the entire book seem as though it was Mendelsohn's own work. Interestingly, even the 1993 Dover edition continues in the spirit of this deception by also neglecting any credits. For whatever reason though, the 1928 edition revealed the true author for most of the images. Although many were by Mendelsohn, his assistant Erich Karweik, Fritz Lang and Lönberg-Holm were responsible for the others.<sup>21</sup>

The images by Fritz Lang were probably some of the most provocative in Mendelsohn's entire book. It is likely that Mendelsohn acquired them directly from Lang since their friendship developed during the sea voyage they shared to America in 1924. For Lang, that trip to America was very influential on the imagery that he would later develop in the movie *Metropolis*.<sup>22</sup> The photographs Lang took indicated a fascination with the effect of technology on civilization. Since his photographs in *Amerika* were night scenes taken by time-lapse exposure, they created an impression of speed and dynamics in the city lights of New York. His image of Times

Square titled, "New York - Broadway at Night" [figure 4.16], was unique in that it involved double exposure. During the time of producing *Amerika* in 1925, the use of double exposure was still an experimental application of photography by the avant-garde.<sup>23</sup> Mendelsohn was probably very aware of this because Lang's image would associate *Amerika* with the more radical visions and developments of avant-garde photography. Shortly thereafter, double exposure photography became a popular means of representing the lights and energy of modern civilization in various advertisements and propaganda. In fact the same Lang image was later used by El Lissitzky as the background for a collage titled, "Runner in the City" [figure 4.17]. Even conservative opinions such as Christian Zervos for *Cahiers d'art* in 1926 illustrated Lissitzky's collage with the text, "despite our resistance, we are coming under the influence of an order issuing from the other side of the Atlantic...Towers rise up, lights catch and dazzle...this is the new rhythm."<sup>24</sup> For Mendelsohn though, the evocative night images of New York provided another opportunity to situate himself between astounding wonder and suspicious apprehension. Mendelsohn's text for that same Lang image reads,

Uncanny. The contours of the buildings are erased. But in one's consciousness they still rise, chase one another, trample one another. This is the foil for the flaming scripts, the rocket fire of the illuminated ads, emerging and submerging, disappearing and breaking out again over the thousands of autos and the maelstrom of pleasure-seeking people.

Still disordered, because exaggerated, but all the same already full of imaginative beauty, which will one day be complete.<sup>25</sup>

### *American Context*

Regardless of Mendelsohn's ideological maneuvers, or quite possibly in spite of them, *Amerika* was enthusiastically received by both the general public and the European avant-garde. Yet his ominous style of photographs and criticism on modern urban life conveys a mood that is closer to American technique than the more formal interests of his European contemporaries. Indeed, Alfred Stieglitz had been engaged in photographing and interpreting modern life for over a decade by the time *Amerika* was published. His vision of how photography could represent objective reality created an aesthetic that resembled utilitarian documentation, but also hinted at sublime qualities in many of his subjects. With connections that Stieglitz maintained to France and Germany, Mendelsohn must have at least been aware of such images like the famous Flat Iron Building. However, some of Mendelsohn's images in *Amerika* bear such striking resemblance to Stieglitz's architectural photographs that the influence may have been more direct [compare figures 4.18 & 4.19]. Similarities in composition and urban subject matter reflect a mutual interest in the effect of modernization on physical elements of the city.

Shortly after most of Stieglitz's architectural photography, a large number of American artists began to perceive huge metropolises like New York as dehumanized and impoverished places [figures 4.20 & 4.21]. The work of

Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand are some of the best examples of avant-garde photographers addressing these issues. Their interest in the effects of modernity on urban life reached its high point by around 1921. Through the 1910's, Strand had been photographing New York to study the effects of massive buildings and abstract shadow patterns on the human subject [compare figures 4.22 & 4.23]. His photographs portrayed a sense of monotony and loss of individuality in urban life. In 1920 Strand and Sheeler collaborated on exploring some of these ideas of urban dehumanization in the movie *Manhatta*. Its seven minute duration attempted to illustrate an average day in Manhattan with images of the ferry boat, Brooklyn Bridge, buildings under construction, and skyscrapers. At intervals between views, Strand and Sheeler inserted short intertitles from such Walt Whitman poems as "A Broadway Pageant", "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Manhatta". Quotations like, "When million-footed Manhattan unpent, descends to its pavements", punctuated the urban imagery throughout the film. Each image lasted for a few seconds and consisted of unusual perspectives set at extreme angles. The tops of buildings framed views toward the ground and street level views shot up toward skyscrapers suggesting the dynamic energy of city life. Strand described that the intention of these views were "to register directly the living forms in front of them and to reduce through the most rigid selection, volumes, lines, and masses, to their intensest terms of expressiveness."<sup>26</sup>

Although *Manhatta* and Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika* were done through different mediums, their similarity in format is intriguing. Much of

*Manhatta's* significance at the time of its release was the elongated perspective views of skyscrapers that revealed something of how people really experience them on the street. The publication of several film stills in magazines such as *Vanity Fair*<sup>27</sup> and other journals encouraged a wider interest in the aesthetic of skyscrapers, but also may have contributed to Mendelsohn's use of similar perspective angles in his own photography [figure 4.24]. It is also more than reasonable that the movie itself had become available in European countries. The short and concise phrases appearing at intervals between views is remarkably similar to how the short descriptive captions relate to photographs in *Amerika*.

While the contribution of American artists and photographers were limited to technique and presentation of urban characteristics, literary forms of criticism could have also been found long before *Amerika's* publication. Social commentary on how cities, industries and modernization were effecting the human spirit were a theme throughout many American writers in the decade after WWI. Indeed Mendelsohn echoed many of the moralistic critiques that Frank Lloyd Wright aimed at urban metropolises. His influence on Mendelsohn's perception of American cities may have become very profound after their meeting at Taliesin. Additionally the prolific writing of Lewis Mumford provided some of the most cutting criticism of that time. For instance, in 1922 he wrote "The City" which expounded the effects of industrialization on the common worker.

...We have failed to react creatively upon an environment with anything like the inspiration that one might have found in a



group of mediaeval peasants building a cathedral. The urban worker escapes the mechanical routine of his daily job only to find an equally mechanical substitute for life and growth and experience in his amusements...The movies, the White Ways, and the Coney Islands, which almost every American city boasts in some form or other, are means of giving jaded and throttled people the sensations of living without the direct experience of life - a sort of spiritual masturbation. In short, we have had the alternative of humanizing the industrial city or de-humanizing the population. So far we have de-humanized the population.<sup>28</sup>

Like Mendelsohn, Mumford argued that the physical environment reflected deeper cultural and spiritual conditions. In fact, much of the moralizing that is evident in Mendelsohn's writing on American urban environments could be understood as a direct descendent from Mumford. Like his mentor Patrick Geddes, Mumford believed that the condition of modern cities was a symptom of transition from paleotechnic to neotechnic culture.<sup>29</sup> The industrial patterns of development that characterized cities like New York and Chicago were the product of an old way of thinking that belonged to the paleotechnic age. But his vision for architecture and urban planning anticipated a modern environment consisting of natural and organic manifestations of neotechnic culture. For Mumford, this new cultural environment would also reveal itself in the form of a new "style" that naturally expressed neotechnic society. This he described in the 1921 article, "Machinery and the Modern Style" as "fundamentally the outcome of a way of living, that it ramifies through all the activities of a community, and that it is the reasoned expression, in some particular work, of the complex of social and technological experience that grows out of a community's life".

Although Mendelsohn did not share the same organic view of cities, the idea of urban environments expressing modern life through a new conception of form was not foreign.

The point of closest agreement between Mumford's social criticism and Mendelsohn architectural commentaries is on the issue of skyscrapers. For Mumford, these buildings were damaging to how people perceived the urban environment because they clouded the development of a new style with Paleolithic thinking. More insidiously, he felt that skyscrapers discouraged social interaction by locating many of the functions of urban life into isolated buildings. The motivation for building skyscrapers was based on the needs of capitalistic investing that neglected consideration of urban life. He wrote,

Unfortunately, the skyscraper, as Montgomery Schuyler pointed out, was an almost automatic response to land speculation: mechanization was subservient to the desire to achieve profitable congestion; and the architects as a profession did not oppose with any conception of public interests the private and shortsighted rapacity of the businessman - although that shortsightedness was, in time, to impose wastes, in efficiencies, and increased taxes upon every inhabitant of the city, in a vain attempt to correct a paralyzing congestion that should never have been allowed to come into existence in the first place.<sup>30</sup>

Even though Mumford's concern for the sociological effects of modern industrialization extended across many disciplines, the skyscraper landscape of New York represented a veritable manifestation of these concerns. Their overwhelming presence and familiarity to anyone living or working in

modern metropolises made it easy for critics to adopt these buildings as a symbol of all that was wrong with society. But the imputation of moral inadequacy that Mendelsohn charged to American skyscrapers is so similar to Mumford that it would be naive to overlook his influence. In fact, a high-point of Mendelsohn's 1924 travel to New York was a meeting with Lewis Mumford arranged by the German architect, Herman George Scheffauer.<sup>31</sup> This solidified a relationship between the two that helped generate greater familiarity with Mumford in Germany and later served as an introduction of Walter Gropius to Mumford.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, future letters from Mendelsohn to Mumford frequently implied that they understood the problems of modernization in similar ways.<sup>33</sup> For Mendelsohn, the "conscientious eyes" with which he opens *Amerika* were likely to have also been embodied in the discerning vision of Lewis Mumford.

To any American acquainted with cultural debates of the time though, Mendelsohn's book would have failed to reveal anything new and original about American society. By the time of *Amerika's* first printing in 1926, most American intellectuals and avant-garde had been working on other projects that surpassed Mendelsohn's ambitions by many years. In fact, Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand had abandoned their social studies of urban landscapes by around 1921-22. Strand had gone on to produce many distinguished cinematic projects, while Scheeler had become involved with commercial and advertising photography.<sup>34</sup> Although Lewis Mumford was still interested in the form of the physical environment, his enthusiasm was increasingly directed at finding a particular style for modernity.

Mendelsohn's book neglected to answer this problem in a sufficient way, and Mumford even began to direct criticism toward Mendelsohn's work as being overly individualistic.<sup>35</sup> In many ways, *Amerika* described a condition to Americans that was and had been apparent for many years.

### *Amerika and the avant-garde*

The European audience was quite different though. Regardless of *Amerika's* relationship to the real America, the book was perceived as a new and prophetic vision. This was partially caused by Mosse Publishing's interest in making the book a success. Since Mosse owned the smaller newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt*, many photographs, excerpts, and advertisements for *Amerika* were released early in an effort to generate enthusiasm [figure 4.25 & 4.26].<sup>36</sup> Mendelsohn also published several articles in that newspaper which represented portions of the new book. However, the reviews of *Amerika* were a method of stimulating its popularity within avant-garde circles. For instance, El Lissitzky wrote,

This "Architect's Album" which has just come out in Berlin is of course immeasurably more interesting than those photographs and post-cards by which we have known America up to now. A first leafing through its pages thrills us like a dramatic film. Before our eyes move pictures that are absolutely unique. In order to understand some of the photographs you must lift the book over your head and rotate it. The architect shows us America not from a distance but from within, as he leads us into the canyon of its streets.<sup>37</sup>

The value of this review, and others that trumpeted the unique insight of Mendelsohn, were that they made *Amerika* appear to be a new way of understanding American cities and their culture. In Germany, similar reviews contributed to Mendelsohn's image as a cultural critic on European-American developments, and later criticism often referred to this American experience as a unique cultural insight. One article that was advertising Mendelsohn's book in the German picture magazine, *Der Welt Spiegel* declares,

Erich Mendelsohn's standing, measured by the eminent importance of his work and influence, his artistic personality in written and drawing technique, is indisputably a leader in the modern architectural movement and a contemporary authority on European-American cultural conditions.<sup>38</sup>

That Mendelsohn's representation of America was controlled by his own personal intentions is not included in these reviews or interpreted as a factor in his avant-garde status though. Unlike the role of photo-manipulation for other avant-garde visions of the urban environment, Mendelsohn's book was perceived as a characterization of real circumstances. Alternatively, urban projects like El Lissitzky's towers in Moscow (the *Wolkenbügel* or 'Sky-hooks') were clearly fabricated [figure 4.27]. His montage of architectural drawings within a metropolitan background articulated Lissitzky's ideas, but never attempted to represent an actual condition. Additionally, Lázló Moholy-Nagy was extremely interested in photographic representations of

urban life, but was also clear on its constructed status. His 1927 book *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* ('Painting, Photography, Film' was part of the Bauhaus series of books) included a section titled, "Dynamics of the Metropolis" to portray the energy of city life through photographic images [figures 4.28 - 4.30].<sup>39</sup> It even contained one of the same Lönberg-Holm time exposure photographs that Mendelsohn published in *Amerika* a year earlier! (see bottom image of figure 4.30) But since Moholy-Nagy presented his photographs in combination with other typographic messages and graphic symbols, the composition portrays a more constructed intention. And finally, even the cover to Richard Neutra's book titled *Amerika* reveals a more contrived quality than does Mendelsohn's *Amerika* [figure 4.31]. Its double exposure image by El Lissitzky manipulates photography in an unambiguous way that Mendelsohn avoided.

Rather than praising Mendelsohn's *Amerika* for constructing an image of modernity, his book was probably understood as a factual representation of American society. Indeed much of the avant-garde enthusiasm for *Amerika* was that it provided a way of thinking about the future of urban development. Especially among Russian Constructivist architects, the photographs of American cities were inspirational for how to think about their own urban conditions. The rapid pace of industrialization within their dilapidated urban infrastructures and city plans made the pictures of America seem as a new direction for their own cities.<sup>40</sup> Many Russians wrote reviews of *Amerika*, but one by Alexander Pasternak summarizes the book as a lesson for their own planning efforts.

In a simple collation of photographs you are suddenly hit by the realization of an idea that was formerly only vaguely coalescing in your mind. In certain photographs in particular, the idea of the urbanistic city turns from an abstract concept into a reinforced-concrete reality.<sup>41</sup>

For the Russians as well as Europeans, Mendelsohn was perceived in the same manner as other avant-garde architects like Le Corbusier for his fantastic vision of modern urbanism. Indeed Le Corbusier's *Urbanisme* (1924) may have made his ideas on urban development widely known among radical architects, but his work was mostly theoretical while Mendelsohn's *Amerika* portrayed an actual condition. In that sense, much of Mendelsohn's radical image was acquired by providing a more concrete vision among avant-garde architects. The construction of Mendelsohn's image in *Amerika* was based on its appeal to both the imagination of other avant-garde architects and its transmission through mass-communication.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Of notoriety, Berlage travelled to America in 1911. Martin Wagner made the trip in the summer of 1924 to study the construction industry and ways of rationalizing the German building methods. His interest in applying the ideas of Taylorism to construction technologies are the focus of his book, *Amerikanische Bauwirtschaft* (1925). Later in 1924, Werner Hegemann traveled to America in order to study city and town planning. His subsequent book, *Amerikanische Architektur und Stadtbaukunst* (1925) documented significant buildings and planning schemes for many major cities. In fact, Hegemann's photographs, sketches, diagrams and maps of the civic functions of cities may have been more objective than most other accounts of America during that period. Although a substantial number of pages are dedicated to cities like New York and Chicago, there is also a substantial amount of documentation on smaller cities like Rochester, Providence and Savannah. Additionally, architects such as Friedrich Paulsen and Ernst May traveled in 1924 and 1925 which, not unexpectedly, resulted in many articles on their experiences.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Mendelsohn, "Biographical Note on Erich". In *L'architettura, Cronache e Storia* 9, 1963. p.317.

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<sup>3</sup> After Mendelsohn's return to Germany, he wrote many articles on Wright. Widely known were: "Frank Lloyd Wright", *Berliner Tageblatt*, 22 Jan. 1926; reprinted as "Besuch bei Wright", *Baukunst* 2, 1926; "Frank Lloyd Wright", *Berliner Tageblatt*, 17 June 1931; "Frank Lloyd Wright und seine historische Bedeutung", *Das neue Berlin* 1, 1929. pp.180-181. He also had articles within *Wendigen* 7, 1926, pp.96-100; *Wasmuth's Monatshefte für Baukunst* 10, 1926, pp.244-246.

<sup>4</sup> See Tolzmann Rainer Hanns, *Objective Architecture: American Influences in the Development of Modern German Architecture*, Arch.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1975. The research in this dissertation provides a great deal of information on the role of America in developing Functionalist ideology during the Weimar Republic of Germany. Hanns argues that the New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) that encouraged greater simplicity, dynamism and social utopianism in architecture was an ideological change determined by modern mass-democracy and industrial rationalization, not liberalism and the English Arts and Crafts Movement. The value of New Objectivity in architecture was that it relocated the political and spiritual understanding of Kultur from its ideological position to integrate it with positive and materialistic issues. This process of integrating social and individual forms of consciousness with concrete products of everyday use was reinforced through American industrial processes. Hanns traces how Americanism influenced these ideological changes in Germany.

<sup>5</sup> See Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968; and Tolzmann, *Objective Architecture* for more on the German reaction to American modernization.

<sup>6</sup> Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, p.194-198.

<sup>7</sup> Tolzmann gives a very good historical account of German anti-Americanism during the mid-1920's. See *Objective Architecture*, p.219-229.

<sup>8</sup> This particular path of travel through the American Northeast towards Chicago was probably selected because of its heavy concentration of commerce, factories, and industry that Europeans were so familiar with in photographs. It was also a common itinerary among businessmen. See Mary Nolan, "Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.69, No.1, 1997, p.181.

<sup>9</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter dated 16 October 1924. See *Letters*, p.67.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on personal, artistic creativity by Mendelsohn is probably too close to the "academic spirit" which Gropius blames for spiritual decay in previous centuries. Gropius has a far more pragmatic image of creativity in mind: "The [academic] artist was a man 'remote from the world', at once too unpractical and too unfamiliar with technical requirements to be able to assimilate his conceptions of form to the processes of manufacture." and "My idea of the architect as a coordinator- whose business it is to unify the various formal, technical, social and economic problems that arise in connection with building...". See Walter Gropius, *New Architecture and the Bauhaus*. Trans. P. Morton Shand, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936. especially p.40-44 and 66.



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<sup>12</sup> Mendelsohn elaborates on his vision for architecture and the role that “creative” architects should play in a somewhat energetic lecture titled “International Agreement in New Architectural Thought”. An extract of it reads as follows, “...Rarely, it seems to me, has the order of the world revealed itself so directly, rarely has the *logos* of existence been further revealed than in this supposed chaos. For we have had time to rid ourselves of prejudices and of sated contentedness. As creative people, we know how very differently the driving forces and the play of tensions work themselves out in the individual...Seize, hold, construct, and calculate anew the earth! But shape the world that is waiting for you. Shape with the dynamics of your own vision the actual conditions on which reality can be based, elevate these to dynamic transcendence.” In this lecture, Mendelsohn argued that the creative architect should exploit the statics of modern materials as a manifestation of the modern will. This idea combined with the revolutionary tone of his lecture were a response to the geometric formalism and mass production of Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and others.

This lecture was delivered to audiences in both Rotterdam and the Hague, Amsterdam in November 1923. It was published in German shortly thereafter as “Zur neuen Architektur”, in *Berliner Tageblatt*, 13 December 1923. An English excerpt can be found in Mendelsohn, *Letters*, p61.

<sup>13</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, letter to the Dutch architect J.J.P. Oud on 16 November 1923. See *Letters*, p.63. Most of the writing that reveals Mendelsohn’s understanding of the “creative artist” is found in his letters to Louise Mendelsohn from 1910-1918. After that his attention generally turns to other issues, but many of his early ideas on art are implicit.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Jarzombek, “De-Scribing the Language of Looking: Wölfflin and the History of Aesthetic Experientialism”. In *Assemblage: A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture* 23, Summer 1994, p.28-69. In this article Jarzombek investigates the history and origins of aesthetic experientialism and its effect on art theory. Although most of these ideas have their origin in the 19th century, their influence on art criticism is felt even today. By situating these formalistic ideas in a historical context, Jarzombek was attempting to move aesthetic experientialism out of the enigmatic cloud of perceptual psychology and discuss it in terms of theory.

<sup>15</sup> Erich Mendelsohn, *Amerika*. New York: Dover Publications, 1993, p.26. Caption: Chicago - Michigan Avenue.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35. Caption: New York - Downtown-The Beginning of Broadway (Bowling Green).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36. Caption: New York - The Beginning of Broadway-Closeup.

<sup>18</sup> Jindrich Styrsky, “Picture”, originally in *Disk*, no.1, 1923; translated in Stephen Bann, ed., *The Tradition of Constructivism*. New York: Viking, 1974, pp. 97-102. This slogan was brought to my attention in Hambourg & Phillips, *The New Vision: Photography Between the World Wars*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.

<sup>19</sup> Hambourg & Phillips, *The New Vision*, p.77.

<sup>20</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Form Problems of the Gothic*. New York: G.E. Stechert & Co., 1918, p.49. My emphasis. It is interesting to note a passage of Worringer’s writing in the following paragraph of the section quoted for how he understands the act of drawing the line. This bears remarkable similarities in how Mendelsohn often describes his own sketching process.--

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"If we are filled with a strong inward excitement that we may express only on paper, the line scrawls will take an entirely different turn. The will of our wrist will not be consulted at all, but the pencil will travel wildly and impetuously over the paper, and instead of the beautiful, round, organically tempered curves, there will result a stiff, angular, repeatedly interrupted, jagged line of strongest expressive force. It is not the wrist that spontaneously creates the line; but it is our impetuous desire for expression which imperiously prescribes the wrist's movement. The impulse once given, the movement is not allowed to run its course along its natural direction, but it is again and again overwhelmed by new impulses. When we become conscious of such an excited line, we inwardly follow out involuntarily the process of its execution, too. Now, this following out, however, is not accompanied by any pleasure, but it is as if an outside dominant coerced us."

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen A. James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, p.189. James provides an exhaustive study of Mendelsohn's travel to America in her chapter titled "Foreign Images of Modernity".

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179. James refers to a letter that Mendelsohn wrote to his wife on 9 October 1924 that pointed toward his friendship with Lang and how he described him as "a thoughtful, active and certainly daring man". This letter was published in Erich Mendelsohn, *Briefe*, p.59.

<sup>23</sup> Hambourg & Phillips noted in *The New Vision* that the first double exposure photograph reproduced in service of the avant-garde was probably Stieglitz's portrait of Dorothy True, with the caption, "Watch Your Step!" in the single issue of *New York Dada*, April 1921. Double exposure was not used in a more mainstream way until later in the decade. See *The New Vision*, p.277, n.39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.277 n.63.

<sup>25</sup> Mendelsohn, *Amerika*, p.52.

<sup>26</sup> Most of the description of Manhatta is based on descriptions in Karen Lucic, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine*. London: Reaktion Books, 1991, pp. 49-53. The original source for Strands quote is Jan-Christopher Horak, "Modernist Perspectives and Romantic Desire: Manhatta", *Afterimage* 15, November 1987. p.11-12.

<sup>27</sup> Film stills were released under the title, "Manhattan - 'The Proud and Passionate City'" in *Vanity Fair*, April 1922, p.51.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The City", in *Civilization in the United States*, Harold E. Stearns, ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922; reprinted, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971, p.9. Also see Lucic, *Charles Sheeler*, p. 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> As a disciple of Ebenezer Howard and leading proponent of the Garden City paradigm in city/town planning, Geddes is probably most responsible for Mumford developing an organic view of cities. The distinction between paleotechnic and neotechnic culture was first developed in Geddes' 1915 book, *Cities in Evolution*.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Backward Glance" in *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture*. New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1952, p.20-21.

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<sup>31</sup> Mumford's first knowledge of Erich Mendelsohn and other architects of the German avant-garde probably came through his involvement with the literary magazine, *The Freeman*. At the time that Mumford had been submitting articles on a regular basis in the early 1920's, the magazine was considered to be one of the leading radical journals on literary criticism. Much of its writing promoted slightly anarchistic views of its editor, Albert Jay Nock, and founder Francis Neilson based on Franz Oppenheimer's vision of a "world free of the exploiting state, where laborers would enjoy the privilege of the "Freeman's Citizenship"" See Donald Miller, *Lewis Mumford: a life*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p.148-151. Within this politically charged magazine, the German poet and architect Herman George Scheffauer wrote articles on the development of avant-garde architecture in Germany. These articles contributed to Mumford's knowledge of architectural activity in Germany, but most importantly introduced Mendelsohn through two articles in *The Freeman* in 1921 and 1923, and one in *The Dial* in 1921. In effect, Scheffauer served as a mediator not only in introducing Mendelsohn's work through the articles, but also helped arrange Mendelsohn's meeting with Mumford on his 1924 trip to New York. See David Samson, "'Unser Newyorker Mitarbeiter': Lewis Mumford, Walter Curt Behrendt, and the Modern Movement in Germany". *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol.55, No.2, June 1996, p.128.

<sup>32</sup> This introduction came in the form of a letter to Mumford in March 1928 advising him of the forthcoming arrival of Walter Gropius. See Mendelsohn, *Letters*, p.99.

<sup>33</sup> Mendelsohn's letter of 8 January 1925 specifically refers to his own work and Mumford's as the "realization of our common ideas". But in a letter of 24 December 1925, Mendelsohn sent a copy of his not yet released *Amerika* with a note asking for Mumford's comments and impressions of the new book. Both letters suggest that Mendelsohn was very concerned with gaining Mumford's respect. See Mendelsohn, *Letters*, p.75, 89.

<sup>34</sup> See Lucic, *Charles Sheeler*, p.53, 66-74 for description of the transition in their careers.

<sup>35</sup> Mumford's later criticism of Mendelsohn may be partly explained by his turn toward vernacular architecture, instead of individual expression, to generate a new symbolism for the time. This is a fundamental point which Mumford shared with the German architect Walter Curt Behrendt in what became an influential friendship. As I mentioned in the beginning, Behrendt played a large role in marginalizing Mendelsohn's historical position in the history of German avant-garde architecture. See Samson, "Unser Newyorker Mitarbeiter" for excellent account of connection between Mumford and Behrendt.

<sup>36</sup> James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*, p.188-189.

<sup>37</sup> El Lissitzky, "Glaz Arkhitektoira", *Stroitel'naya promyshlennost (Construction industry)* 2, 1926. An English reprint can be found in *Photography in the Modern Era*, ed. Christopher Phillips, The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, New York, 1989. pp.221-226.

<sup>38</sup> *Der Welt Spiegel*, p.2. In *Berliner Tageblatt*, 8 December 1929. The German for this passage reads: "Erich Mendelsohn steht, gemessen an der Zahl und dem Gewicht seiner ausgeführten Arbeiten und an dem Einfluss, den seine künstlerische Persönlichkeit in Wort und Schrift ausübt, unbestritten an führender Stelle der modernen baukünstlerischen Bewegung, die heute alle Einflussgebiete europäisch-Amerikanischer Kultur umfasst." Translation by the author.

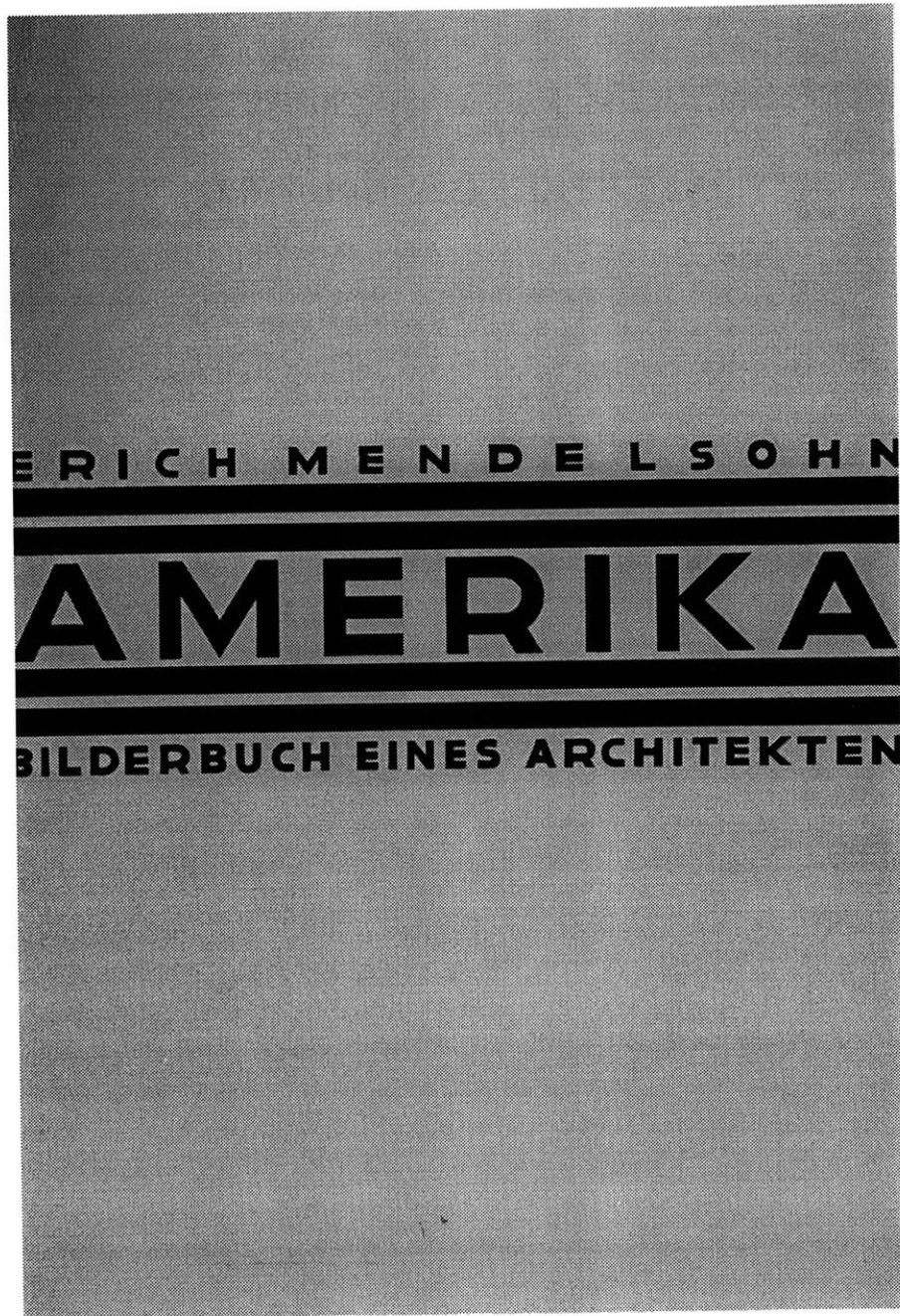
<sup>39</sup> Lázló Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*. Bauhausbücher 8, Munchen: A. Langen. The section titled "Dynamic of the Metropolis" was intended as only a sketch of a film that

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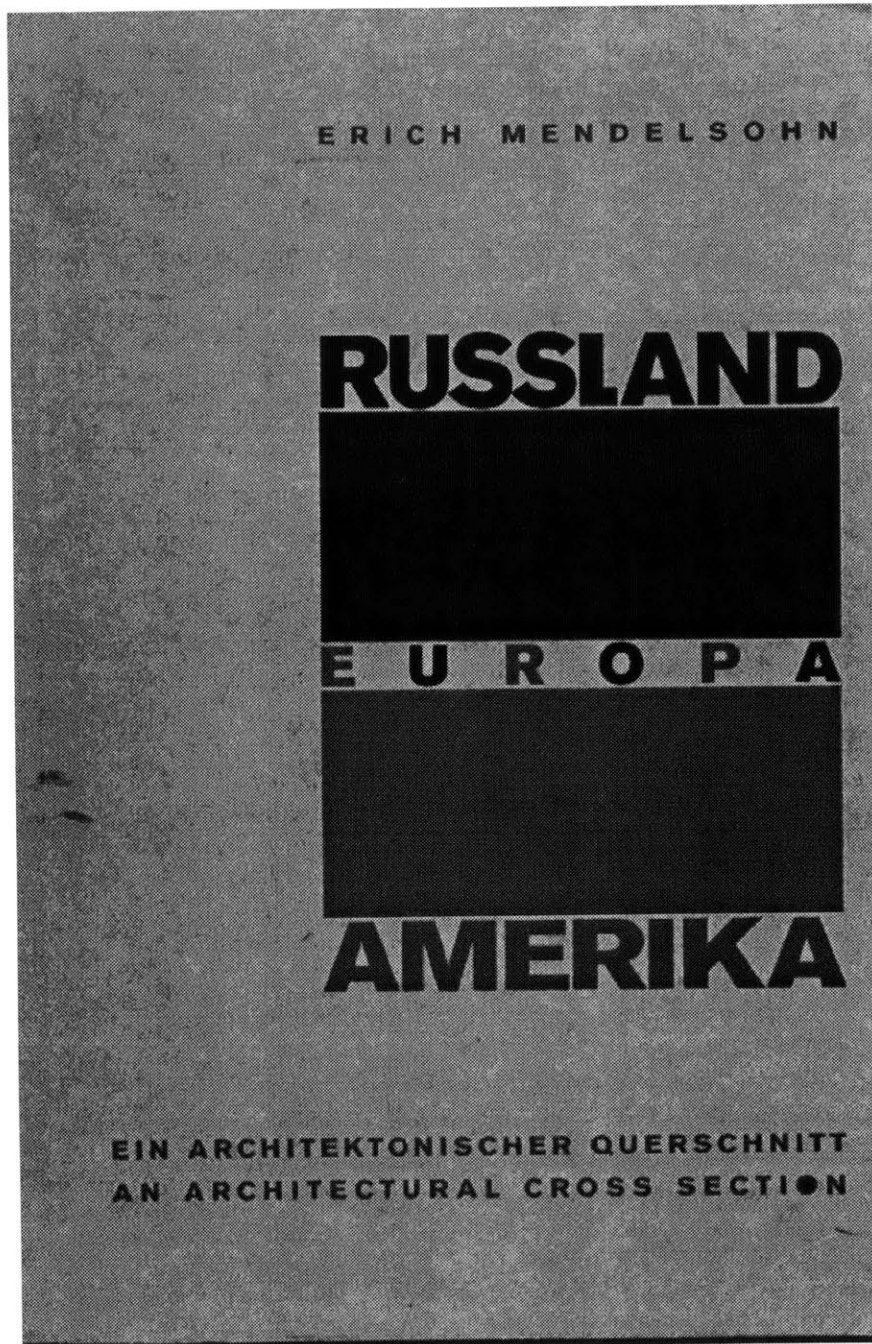
Moholy-Nagy planned on producing with Carl Koch. His original work on the manuscript and film concept dates from 1921-22.

<sup>40</sup> For more on the role of Russian Constructivist architects and their images of modern cities, see Catherine Cooke, "Russian Constructivism and the City". In *International Union of Architects Journal of Architectural Theory and Criticism: Vision of the Modern*, Vol.1, No.1. New York: Rizzoli, 1988, p.16-25.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Pasternak, "Amerika", *Sovremennaiia arkhitektura* (Contemporary Architecture). No.4, 1926, p.92-4. After translation in Cooke, p.20. In addition to Pasternak, Moisei Ginzburg, who was a leading Constructivist architect at the time, also wrote a review of *Amerika* in the same magazine for No.1, 1926, p.38.



**figure 4.1** Title page for *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten*, 1926.

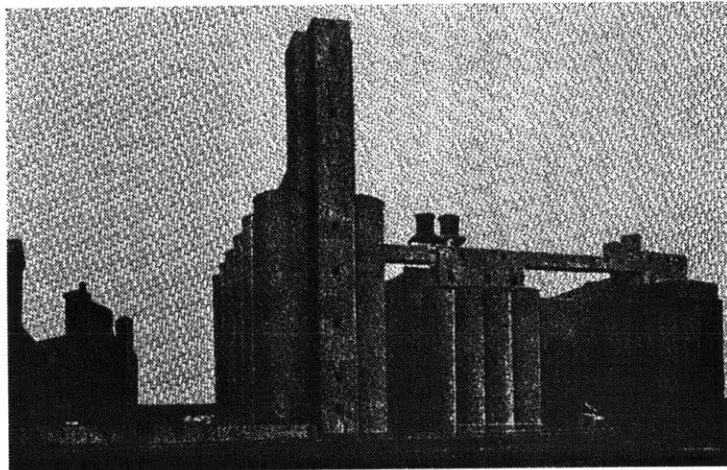


**figure 4.2** Cover for *Russland - Europa - Amerika: ein architektonischer Querschnitt*, 1929.





**figure 4.3** Photograph of Erich Mendelsohn (left), Frank Lloyd Wright, and Richard Neutra at Taliesin, autumn 1924.



**figure 4.4** Washburb-Crosby silos in Buffalo. Original photograph from Walter Gropius, *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes*, 1913.

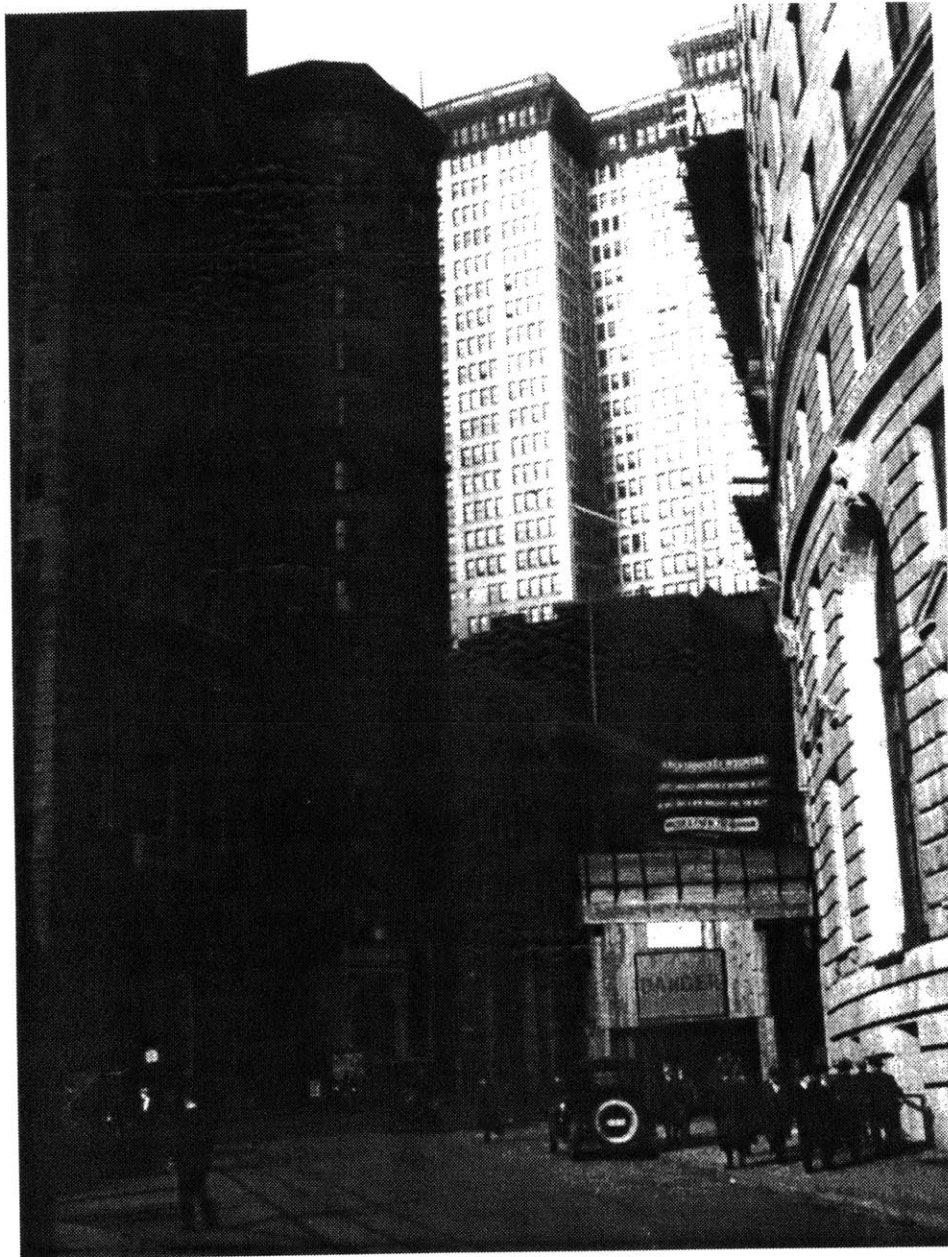




**figure 4.5** Erich Mendelsohn. Photograph from *Amerika*, 1926. Title: Chicago: Michigan Avenue.



**figure 4.6** Erich Mendelsohn. Photograph from *Amerika*, 1926. Title: New York: Downtown - The Beginning of Broadway (Bowling Green).



**figure 4.7** Erich Mendelsohn. Photograph from *Amerika*, 1926. Title: New York: The Beginning of Broadway - Closeup.

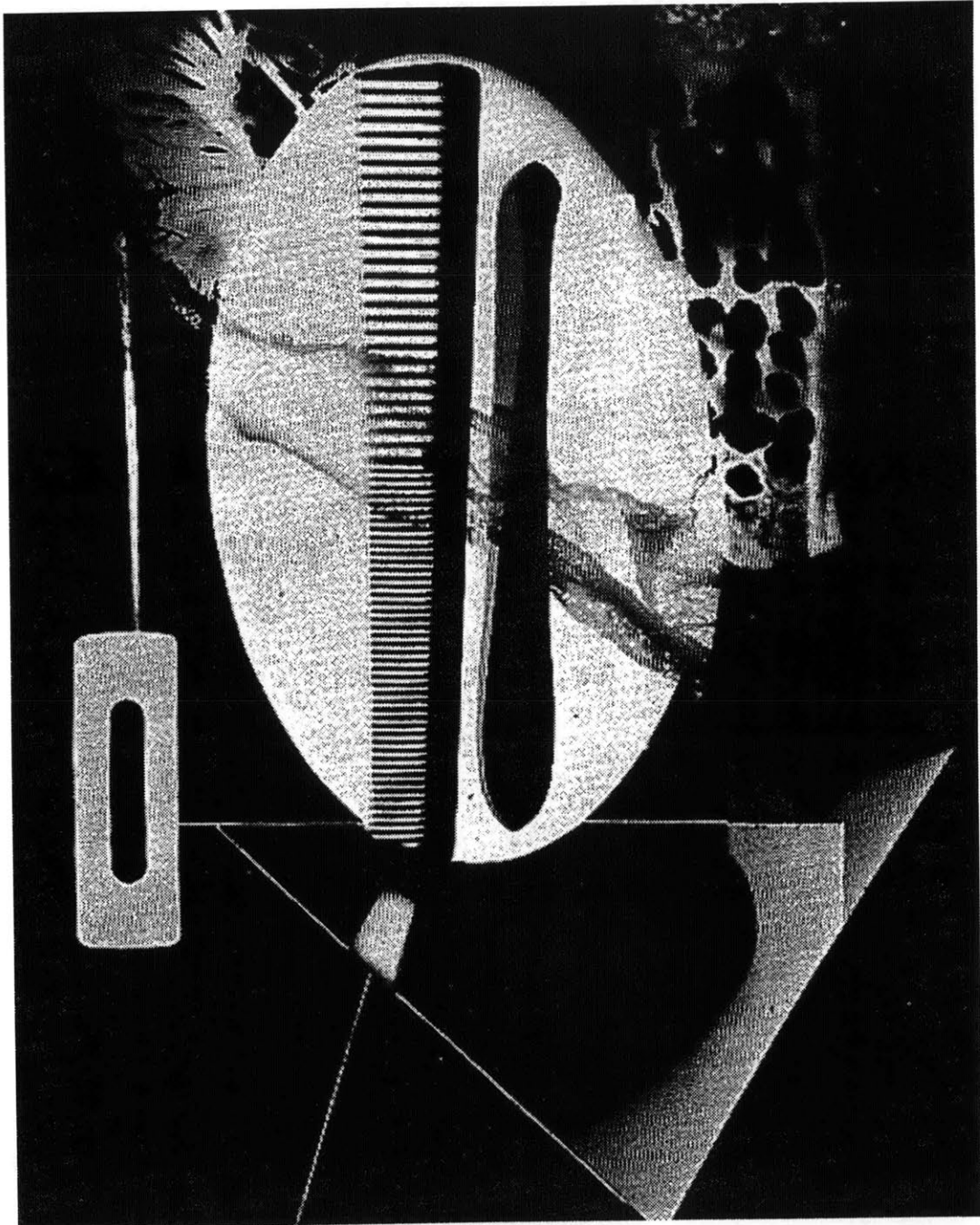
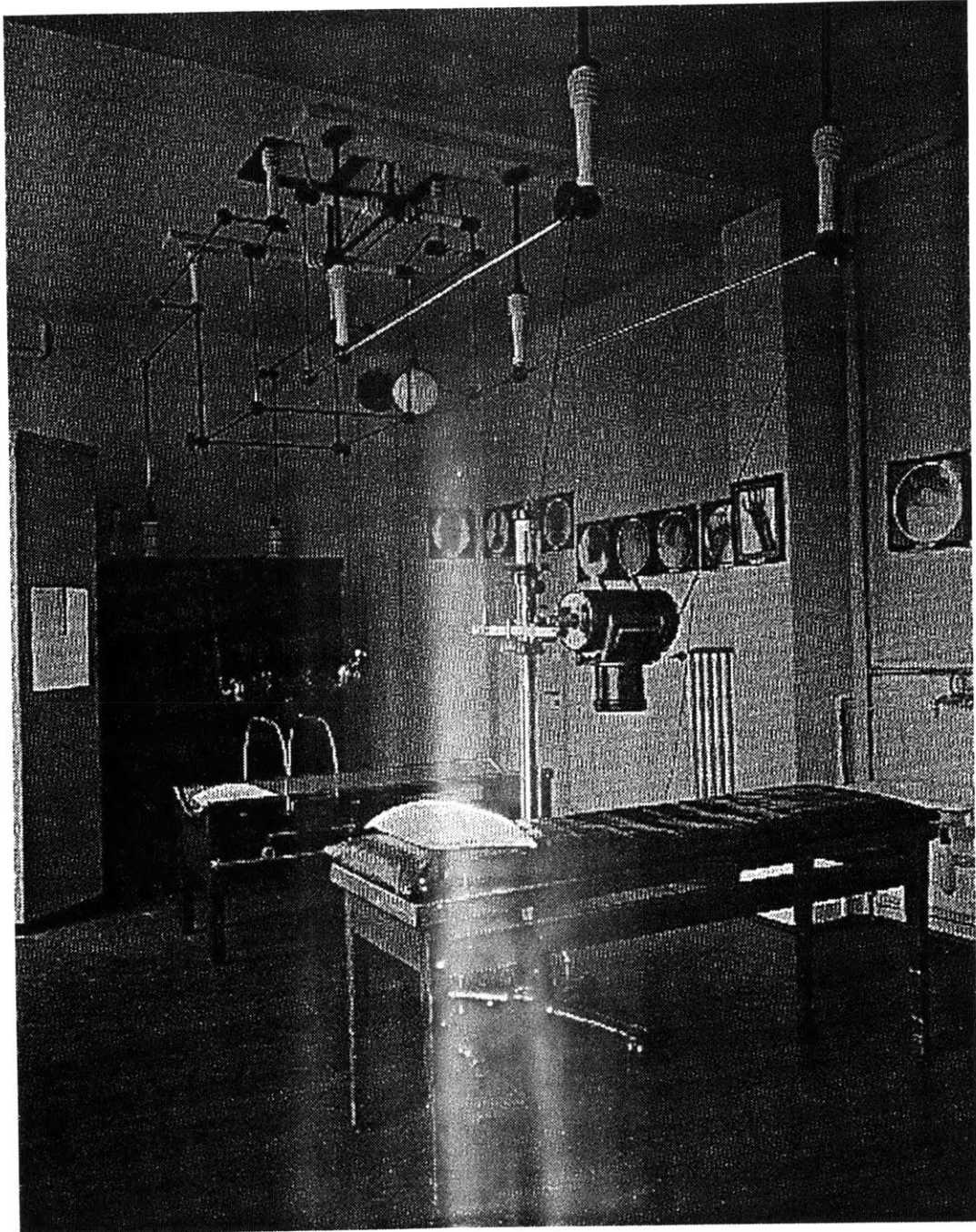


figure 4.8 Man Ray. Rayograph, 1922.





figure 4.9 Paul Citröen. *Metropolis* advertising poster, 1923.

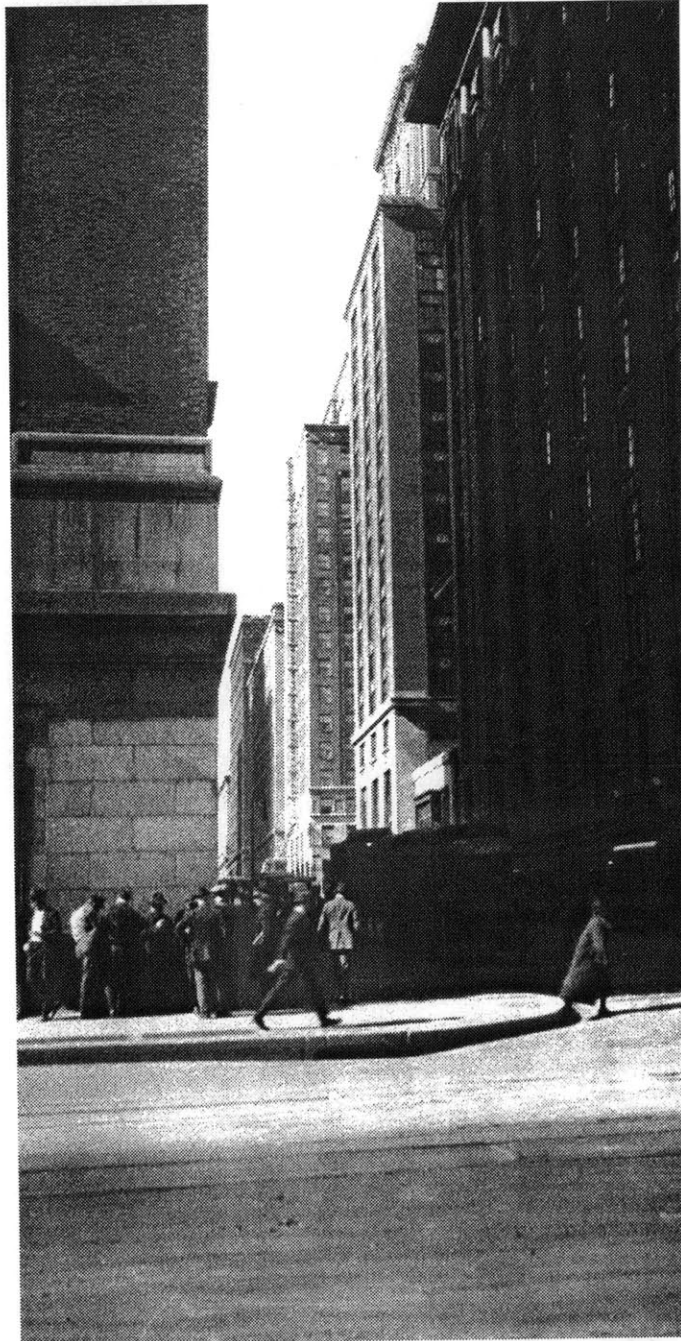


**figure 4.10** Werner Mantz. *X-Ray Clinic*, 1926.



**figure 4.11** Erich Mendelsohn. Photograph from *Amerika*, 1926. Caption: New York: Seventh Avenue.



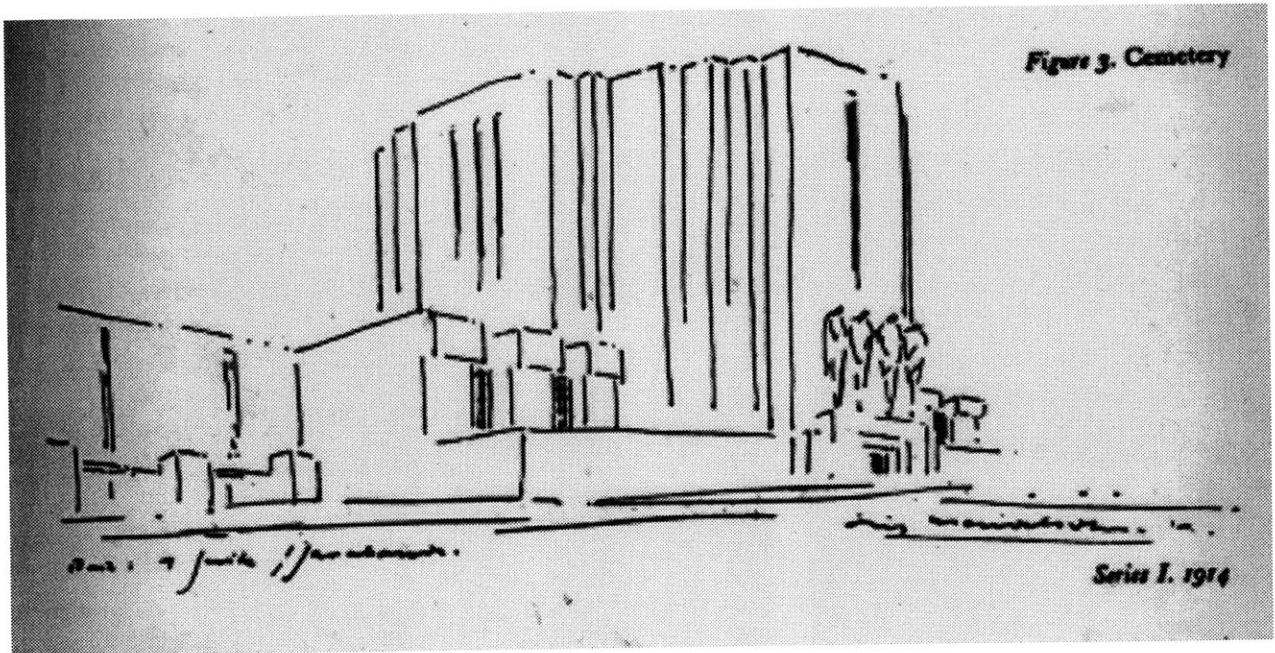


**figure 4.12** Erich Mendelsohn. Photograph from *Amerika*, 1926. Caption: New York: Side Street "B". Lines on building at left were traced over in order emphasize its verticality.

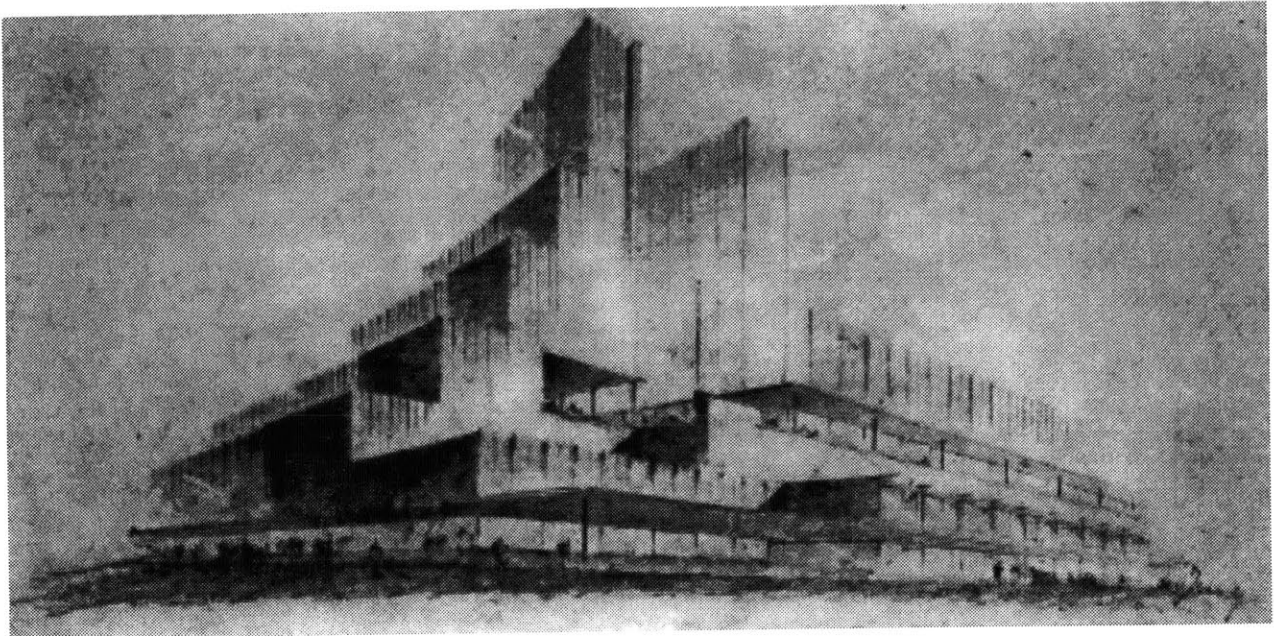




**figure 4.13** Erich Mendelsohn. Photograph of Schiller Building by Louis Sullivan from *Amerika*, 1926. Caption: Chicago: 1st Skyscraper Style. Lines were traced over in order emphasize its verticality.



**figure 4.14** Erich Mendelsohn. Cemetery, 1914. Sketch showing the emphasis of vertical lines.

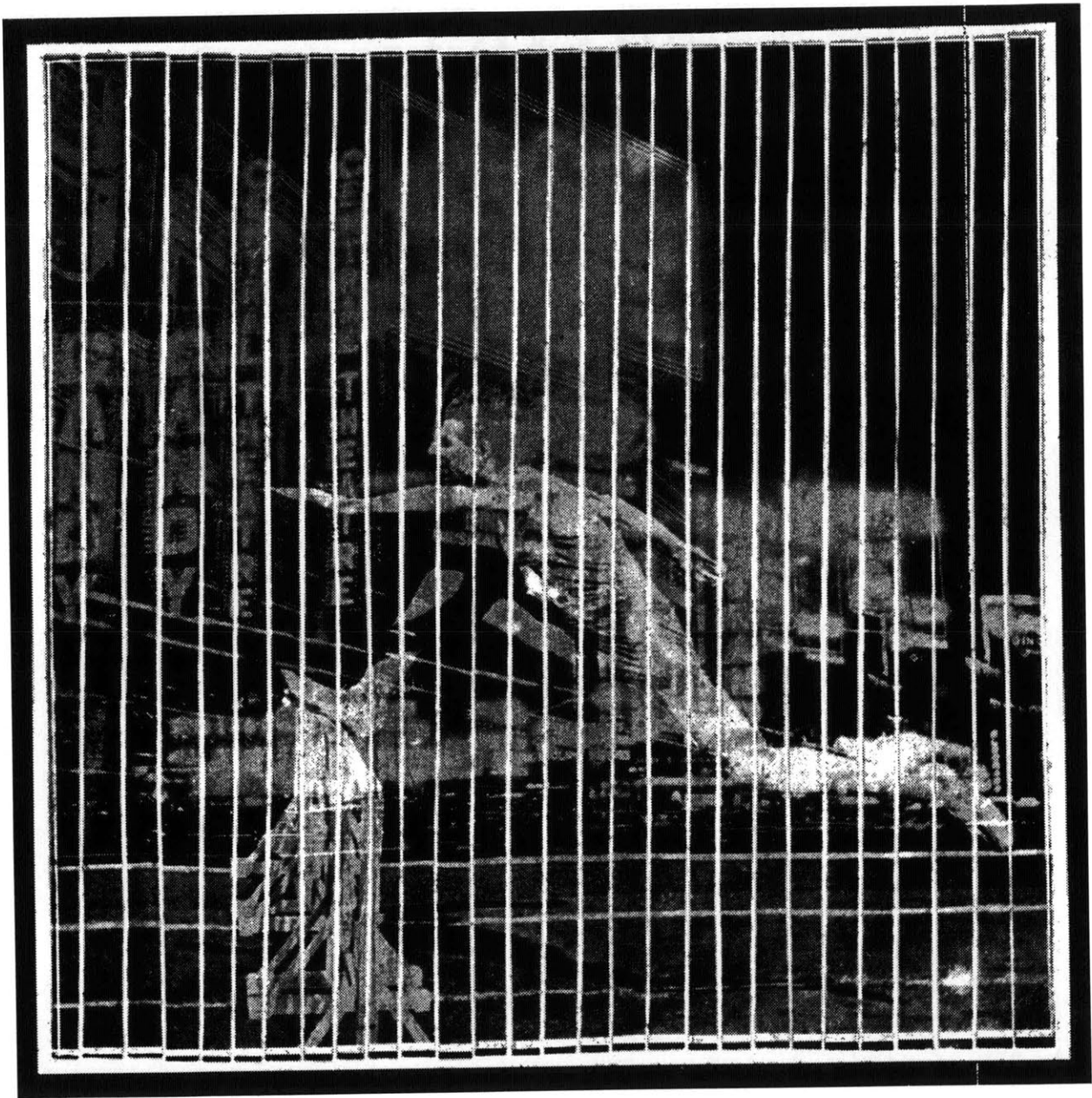


**figure 4.15** Erich Mendelsohn. *Entwurf für ein Amerikanisches Hochhaus*, 1924. Perspective sketch showing his emphasis of verticality.

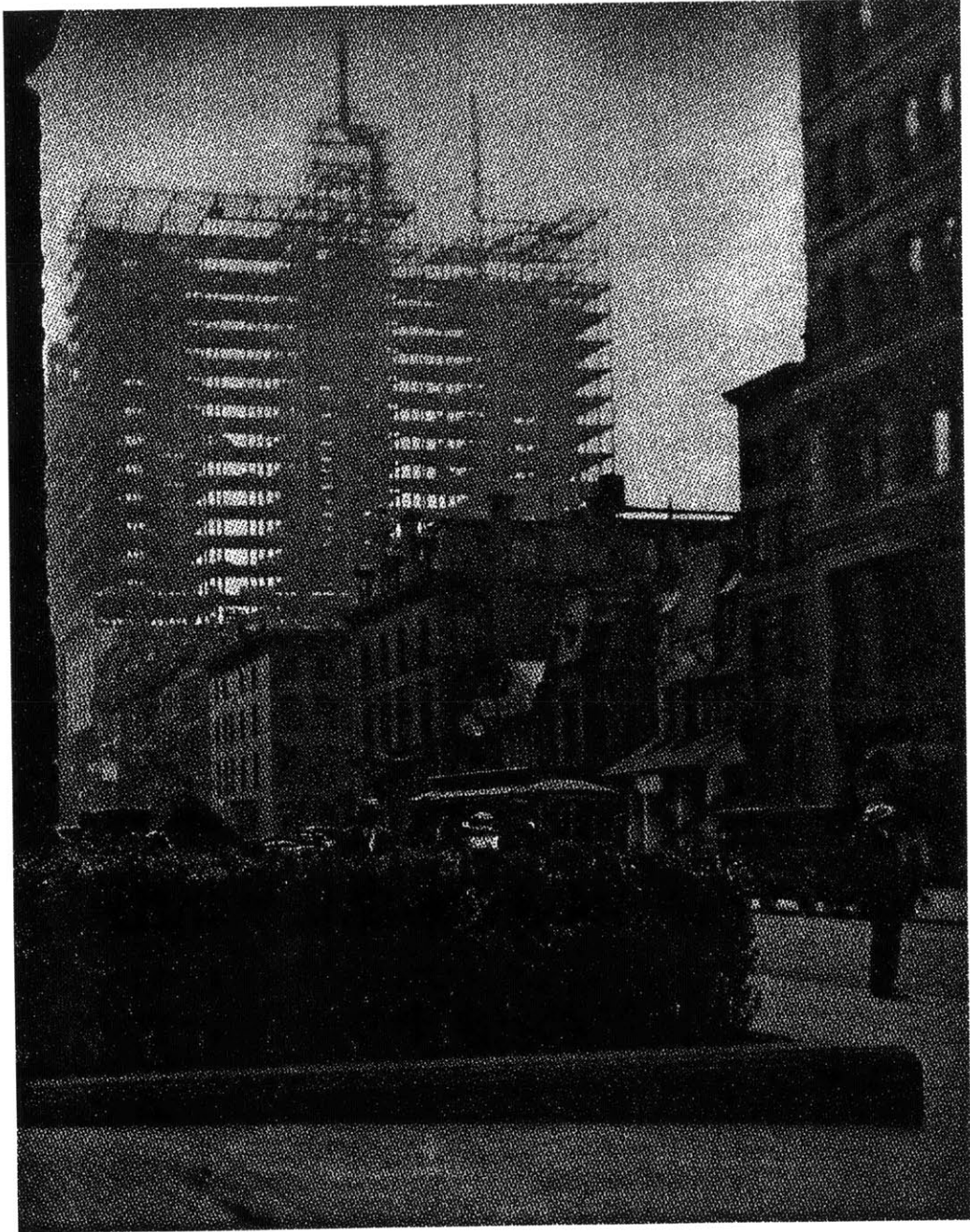


**figure 4.16** Fritz Lang. Photograph published in *Amerika*, 1926. Caption: New York - Broadway at Night.





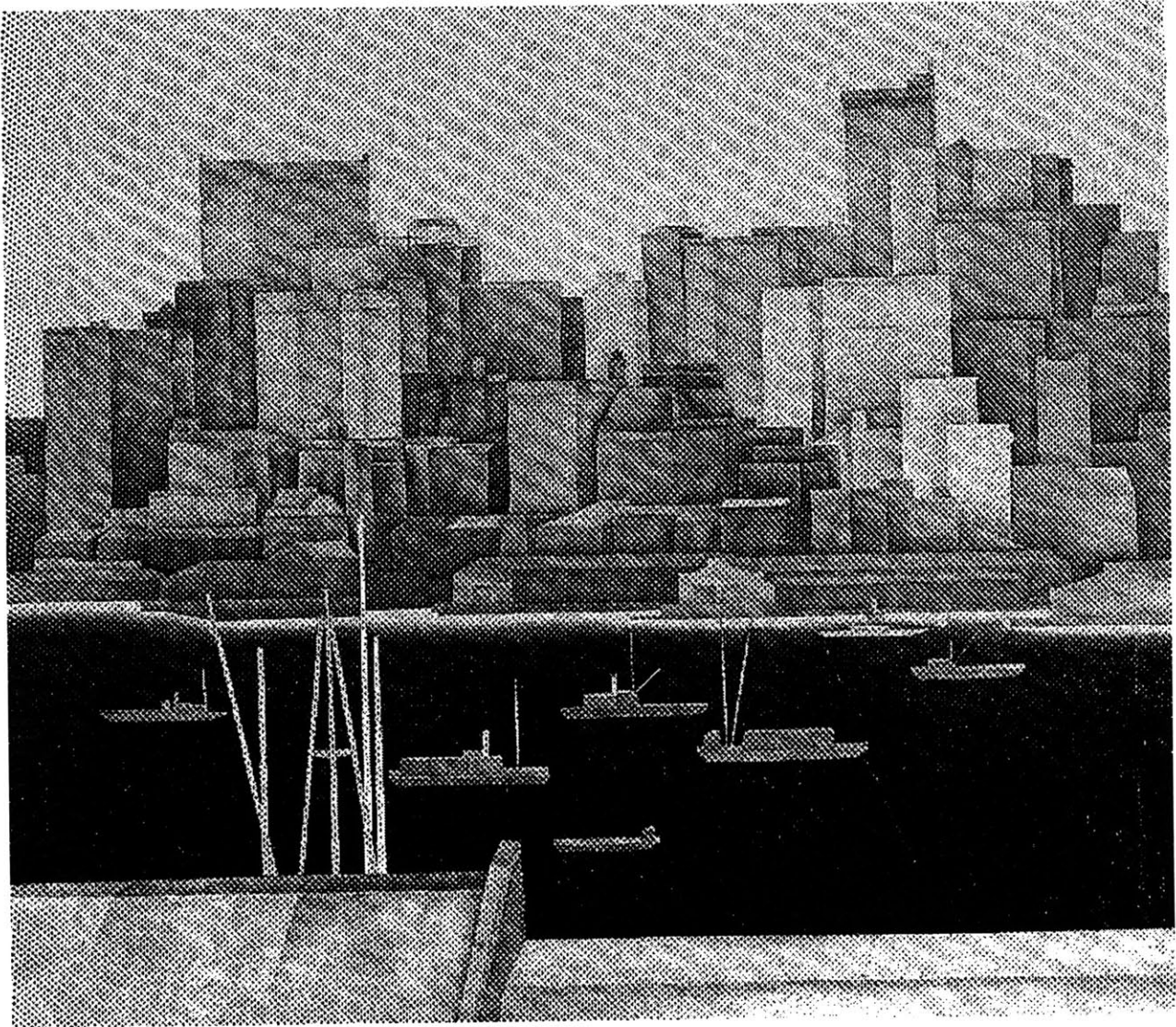
**figure 4.17** El Lissitzky. *Runner in the City*, 1926. Collaged created with background image by Fritz Lang.



**figure 4.18** Alfred Stieglitz. *"Old and New New York"*, 1910. Photogravure.



**figure 4.19** Photograph reprinted in Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika*, 1926. Caption: New York: 43rd Street..

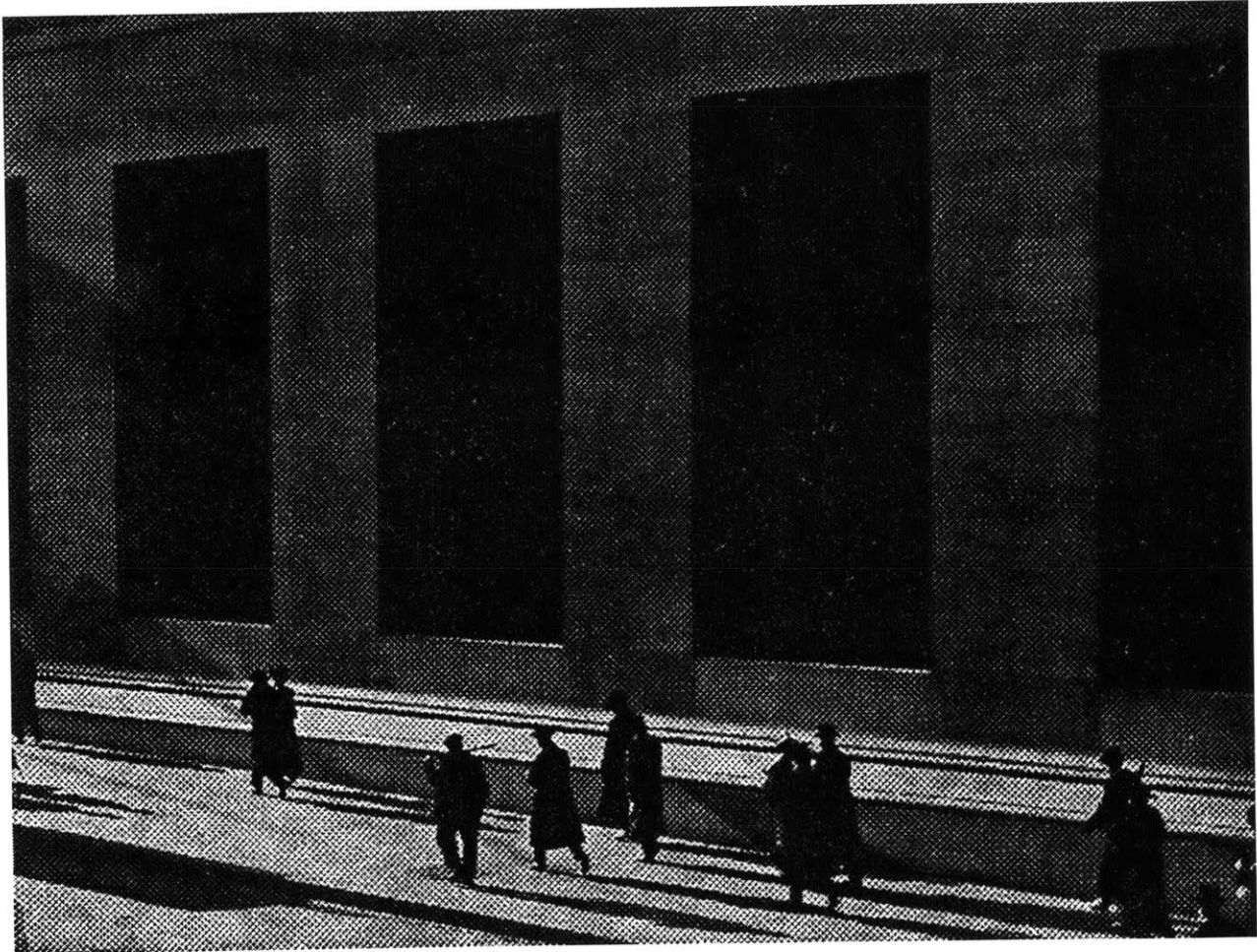


**figure 4.20** Stefan Hirsch. *New York, Lower Manhattan, 1921.*





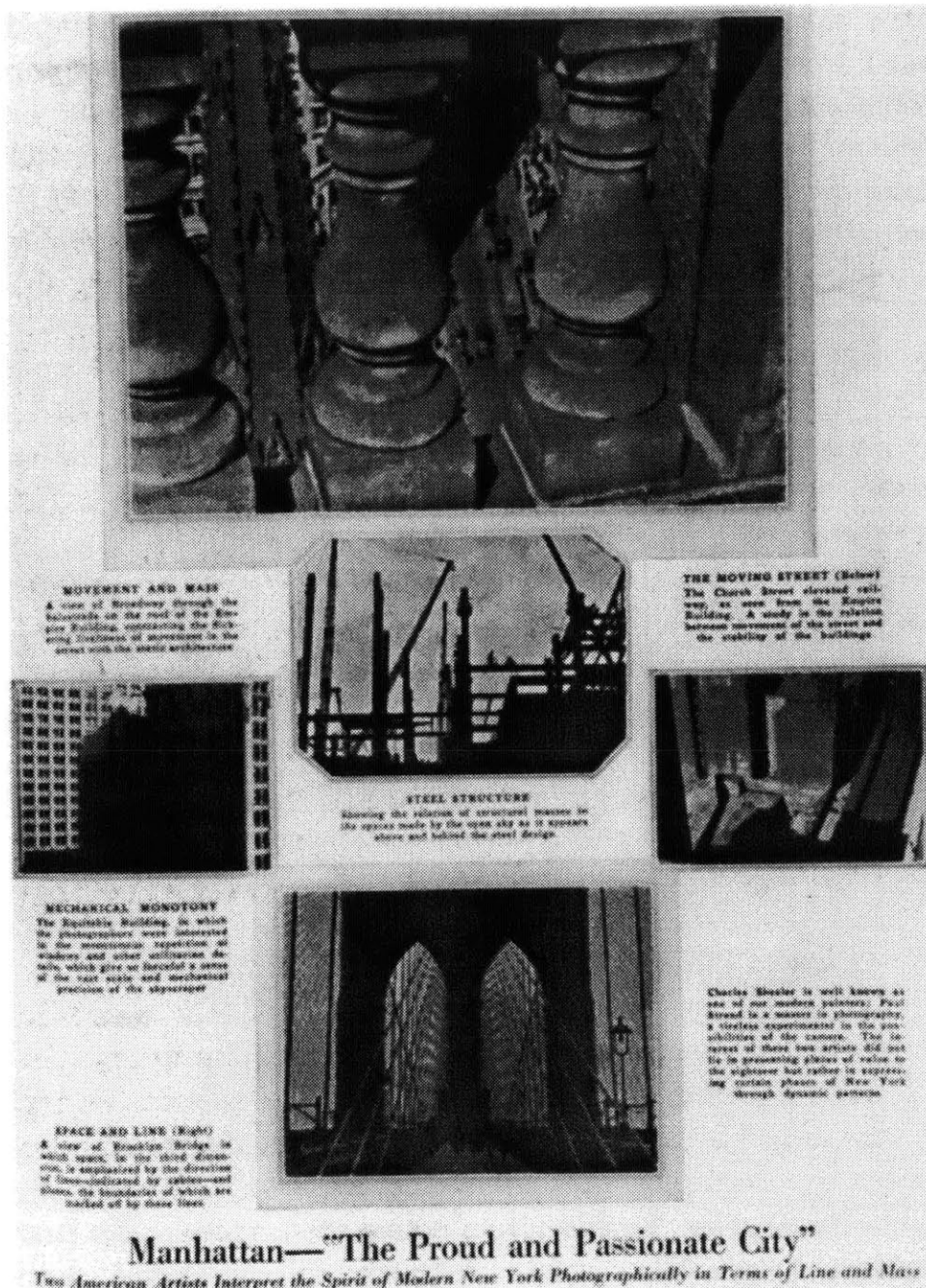
**figure 4.21** George Ault. Construction Night, 1922.



**figure 4.22** Paul Strand. *Wall Street, 1915*. Photogravure.



**figure 4.23** Photograph in Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika*, 1926. Caption: New York: Fifth Avenue.

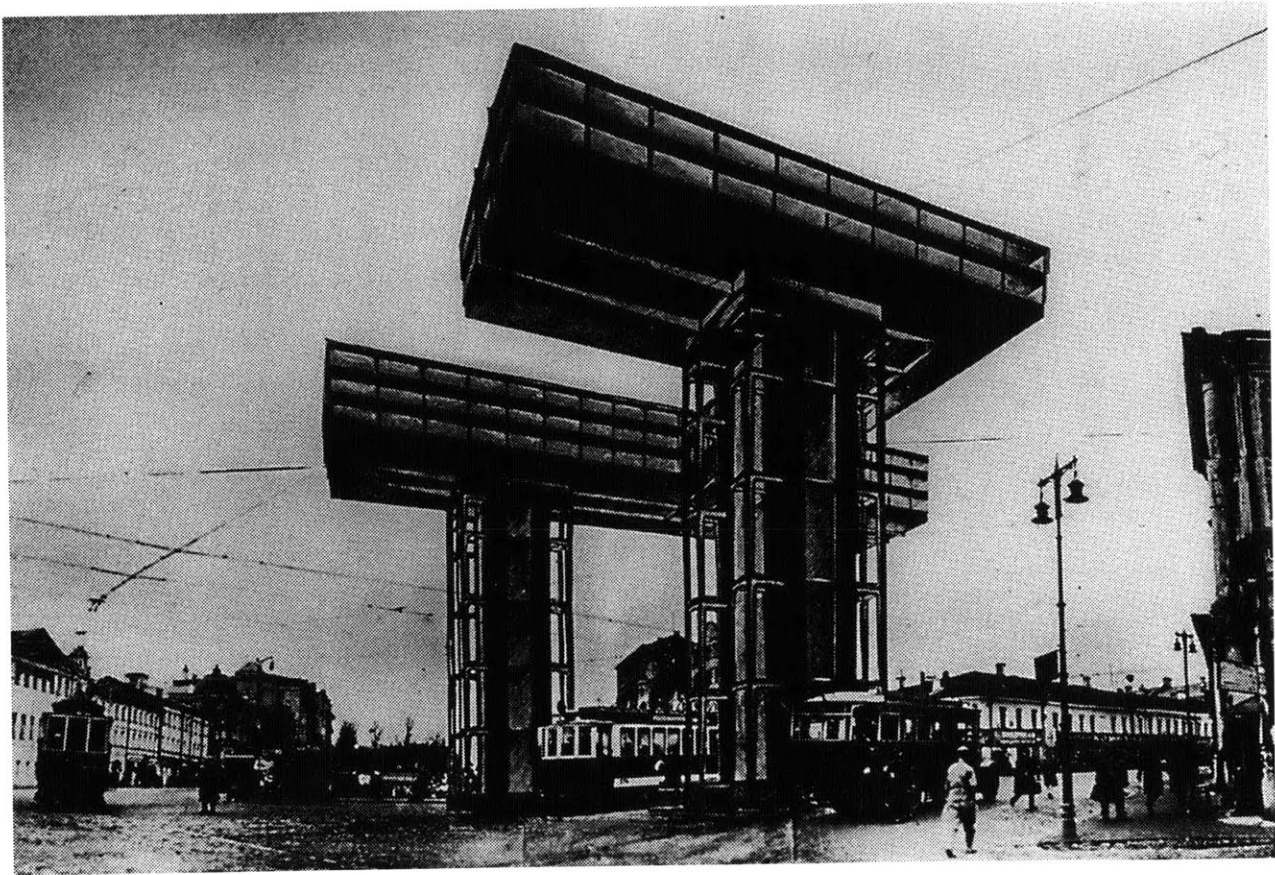


**figure 4.24** *Manhattan - The Proud and Passionate City, 1922.* Film stills from the film by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, *Manhatta*. Reproduced in Vanity Fair, April 1922









**figure 4.27** El Lissitzky. *Wolkenbügel*, or 'Sky-hooks', 1924, 1925. Photomontage.

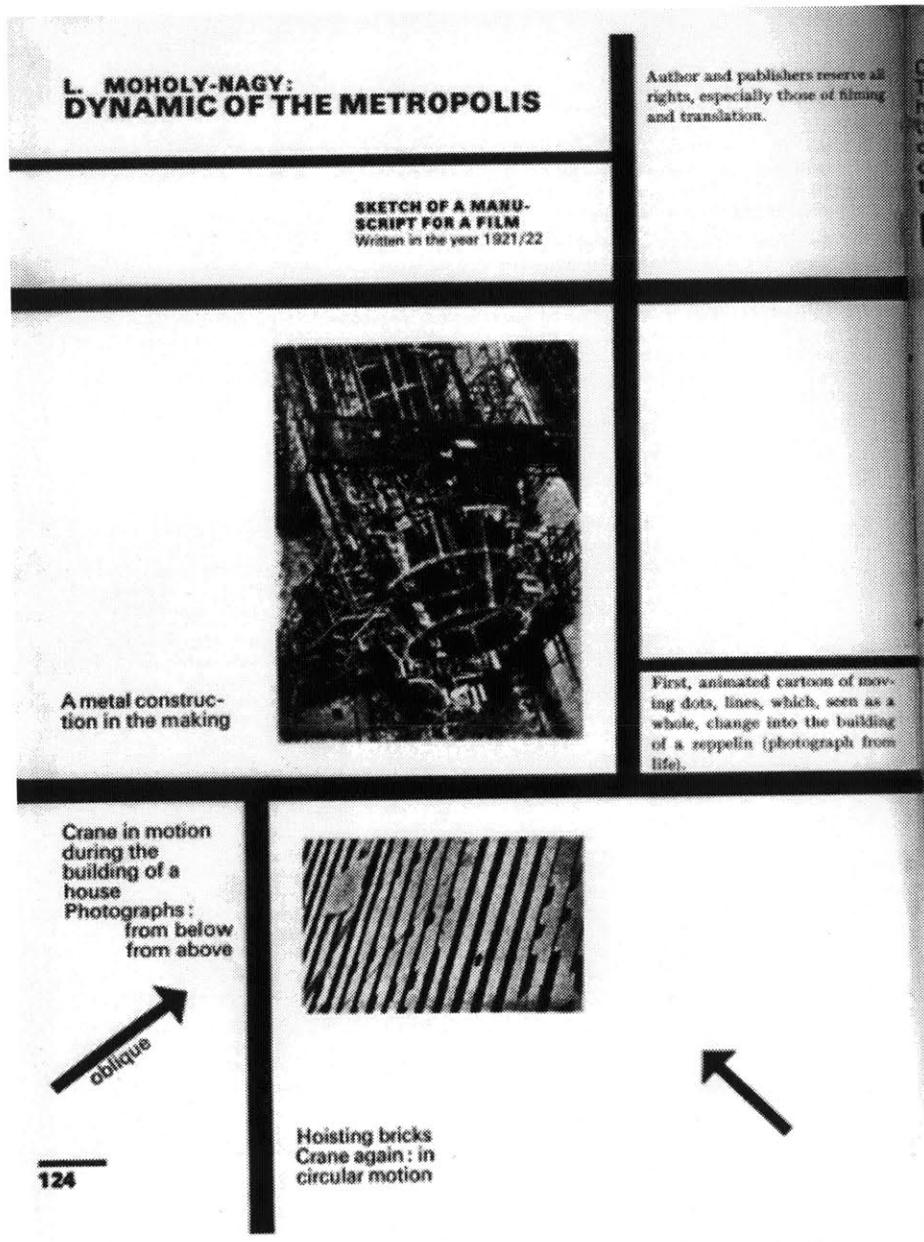
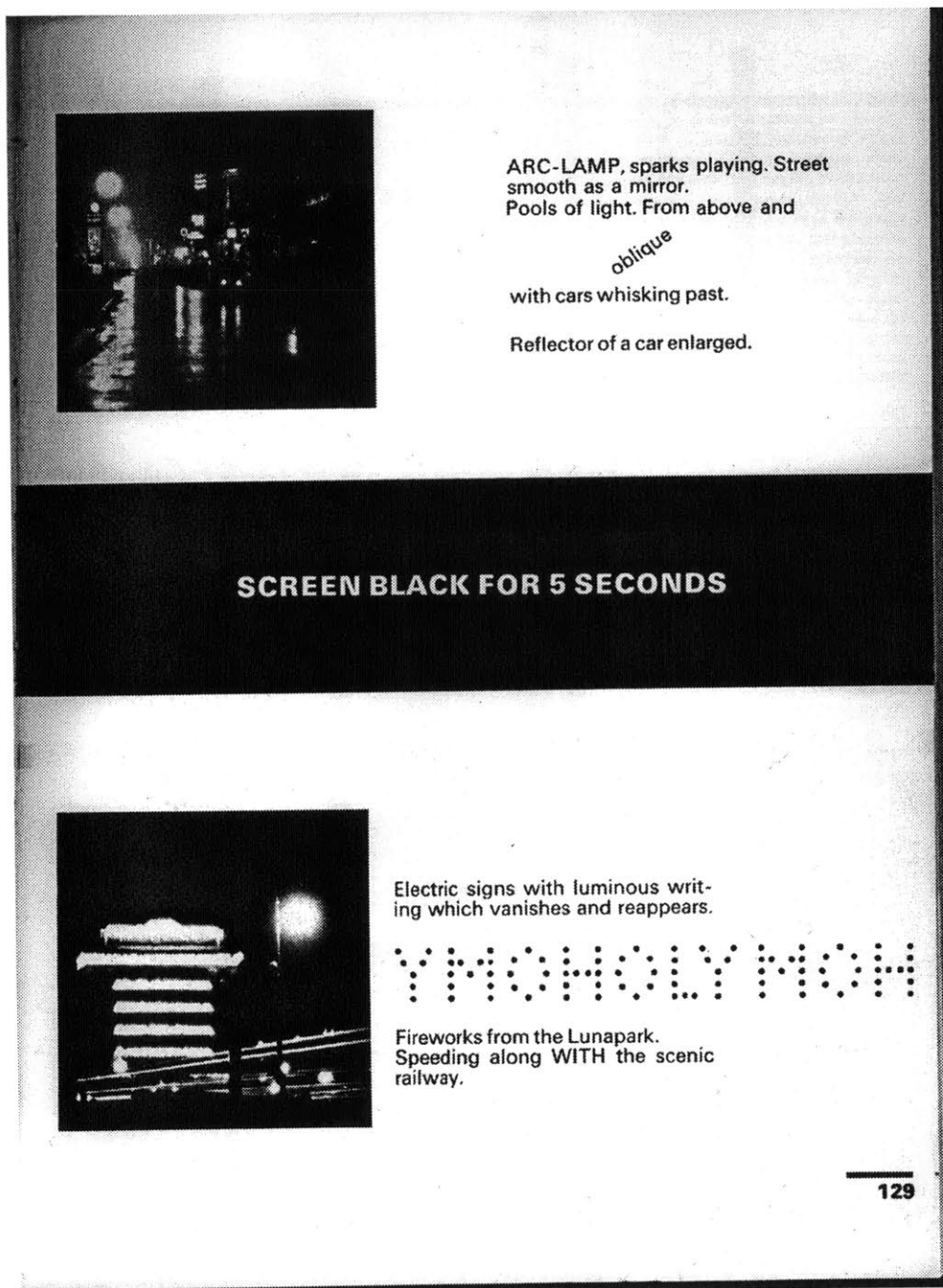


figure 4.28 Lázló Moholy-Nagy. From "Dynamic of the Metropolis". In *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, 1927. Bauhausbücher 7.





figure 4.29 Lázló Moholy-Nagy. From "Dynamic of the Metropolis". In *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, 1927. Bauhausbücher 7.



**figure 4.30** Lázló Moholy-Nagy. From "Dynamic of the Metropolis". In *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, 1927. Bauhausbücher 7.

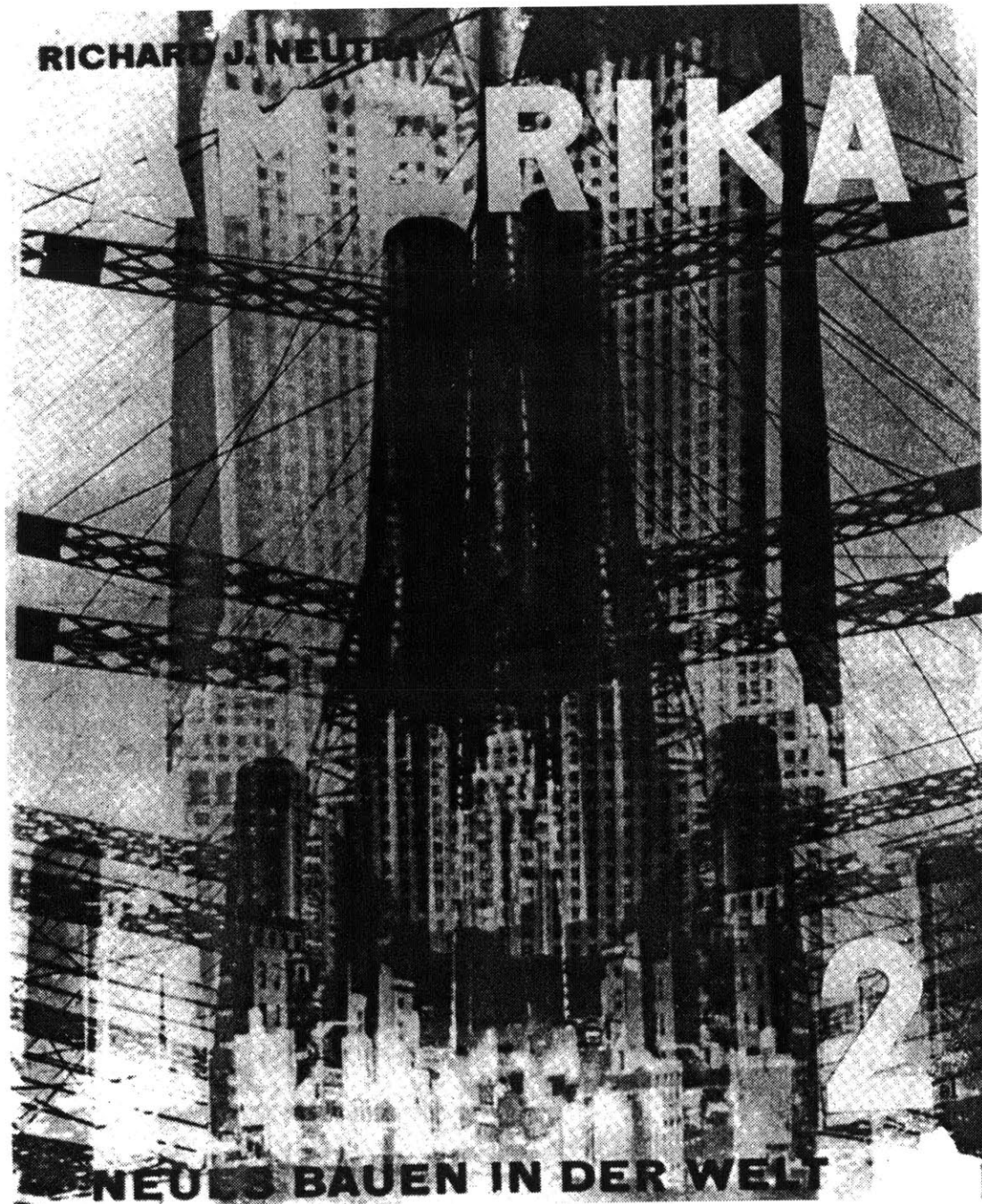


figure 4.31 El Lissitzky. Cover for Richard Neutra's *Amerika*, 1929.

## Chapter Five - Conclusions

Images of Erich Mendelsohn in contemporary scholarship derive from a multitude of divergent, yet superimposed interpretations that the past seventy years have cultivated. While many histories frequently portray Mendelsohn in a limited or disjointed engagement with the development of Modern architecture, they present only a partial picture. As I described in chapter two, these histories are subject to an internal ideological struggle that used Mendelsohn as a pawn in larger debates over the formation of a Modern style. Even in more contemporary histories that are removed from those ideological agendas, similar attitudes are often adopted toward Mendelsohn's work in the 1920's. But this does not call for a more honest history of Mendelsohn. The complexity of Mendelsohn is that even he was responsible for many of the images that portray him as pre-Modern. In fact, Mendelsohn was especially responsible for creating and perpetuating an image of mystical artistic creation in the four or five years after WWI. His distance from the center of avant-garde activity in the early twenties compelled him to change much of that artistic image though. In those years of transition from German Expressionism to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* avant-

garde, Mendelsohn developed an architectural identity that juggled his own Expressionist values behind an objective and sober mask.

Mendelsohn's theoretical writing and attitudes toward architectural form in the early 1920's underwent many changes that followed the trend of other avant-garde architects. The concept of "dynamics" that I briefly explained in chapter three continually transformed and staked positions on avant-garde ideas, but also maintained Mendelsohn's sense of artistic individuality deriving from Expressionist sources. This ability of Mendelsohn to present many aspects of his theoretical position within one simultaneous image of individuality is what intrigues me most. In that context, I believe his construction of the picture-book on America is important to understanding both the complexity of Mendelsohn and larger issues of identity within Modern avant-garde studies. Indeed interpretations of *Amerika* bear on other investigations into the formation of a Modern consciousness, as well as an enlarged appreciation for the role of pictures in architectural ideology.

Photographs have been a form of mass-communication since the turn of the century and created many new opportunities for modern architects.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 1910's, pictures were used in the propaganda for everything from home fashion to Soviet revolution. But by the early 1920's the 'picture-book' was credited with new status within the avant-garde. Walter Gropius and Lázló Moholy-Nagy made one of the largest contributions to the function of picture-books within an architectural discourse by establishing the Bauhausbucher (Bauhaus Books) series of illustrated books. Gropius's

first book for that series, titled *Internationale Architektur* was almost entirely composed of pictures and Moholy-Nagy's book, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* focused on the applications and potential of photography within popular culture. El Lissitzky's enthusiasm for new forms of books also pointed the way to using 'picture-books' as a revolutionary method of communication. He writes of this quality in an article titled "Our Book" in 1926,

The book finds its channel to the brain through the eye, not through the ear; in this channel the waves rush with much greater speed and pressure than in the acoustic channel. One can speak out only through the mouth, but the book's facilities for expression take many more forms.<sup>2</sup>

Mendelsohn's publication of *Amerika* and its subtitle, "Picture-book of an Architect" was targeted for this avant-garde enthusiasm over new forms of 'picture-books'. If anything boosted Mendelsohn's image as an avant-garde architect in the mid 1920's, it may have been more from this book than his architectural work. And yet, as I mentioned at the end of chapter four, *Amerika* did not convey the same avant-garde qualities of other 'picture-books' in the twenties. The ambiguity over what purpose *Amerika* served was one of its strengths and allowed Mendelsohn to engage other personal agendas behind the surface of his 'picture-book'.

Although Mendelsohn's manipulation of the images in *Amerika* was certainly not a radical phenomena, it is still crucial to understanding his involvement with the book. The subtlety to which Mendelsohn controlled only particular aspects of certain photographs denotes an essential level of

intentionality. The fact that it occurred with such subtlety made his theoretical objectives all the more powerful. To my knowledge, this aspect of Mendelsohn's photographic manipulation has escaped any discussion in an architectural context! The effect of Mendelsohn emphasizing the verticality or "dynamics" within the photograph was that he appropriated those images of America for his own theoretical discourse. His publication of Frank Lloyd Wright buildings or tracing over Louis Sullivan's Schiller building [figure 4.13] without mention of their names allowed Mendelsohn to control his presentation of America. Additionally, his neglect to mention the true authorship for photographs by Fritz Lang, Lönberg-Holm, and Eric Karweik allowed him to appropriate their work as well. The combination of these manipulations with the moralistic commentary that runs throughout the book made *Amerika* subservient to his own theoretical interests.

Mendelsohn's subsequent picture-book, *Russland-Europa-Amerika* in 1929 expanded into an analysis of Russian culture that followed many of the same theoretical objectives in *Amerika*. Again, the manipulation of both American and Russian images served Mendelsohn's theoretical intentions. His appropriation of the authorship for photographs also continued, and even included images by Lewis Mumford from his social history of architecture, *Sticks and Stones*. However, with *Russland-Europa-Amerika* Mendelsohn was more clear on the role it played in a theoretical discourse over the future aspirations of architecture. It was clear that he perceived Europe as a mediating force between the rationality of America and the romanticism of Russia. But this balanced image of Europe, between excess at

either extreme also functioned as a manifestation of Mendelsohn's ongoing commitment to the idea of "dynamics". While it seemed that Mendelsohn was discussing such large issues as the artistic volition of entire regions in the world, he was also playing out a theoretical idea that began with his earliest struggles between Expressionism and the 1920's avant-garde.

The value of Mendelsohn's first book, *Amerika* is that it became an instrument for constructing his own identity at a time when that involved many different facets. It provided an opportunity to construct his own architectural image that incorporated avant-garde expectations as well as his personal sense of individuality. But this also raises many questions on how other architects constructed their identity within the ideological changes of the 1920's. How can a history of avant-garde architecture be written and still account for the intricate control those architects had over their own representation? Moreover, how should historical studies carry out this kind of research? It is remarkable, and yet to my advantage, that *Amerika* has remained largely outside of architectural history. While studies of the 1920's avant-garde frequently consider Le Corbusier's *L'Esprit Nouveau*, there is rarely mention of *Amerika* except within books of photography.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Mendelsohn's own biography by Arnold Whittick only uses seven lines out of 197 pages to mention his production of *Amerika!* This void in history is an anomaly within Modern architectural scholarship and raises many issues on how to contextualize such phenomenon. For the study of Erich Mendelsohn though, this book and his ideological transformations create another dimension of his artistic image.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Werner Oechslin writes an interesting account of how the “picture” became a vehicle for representation and propaganda of Modernist ideas. See Werner Oechslin, “The “Picture”: the (superficial) consensus of modern architecture?”. In *Architecture & Urbanism*. Translated by Maria Georgiadou. No.245, p.28-39.

<sup>2</sup> El Lissitzky, “Our Book”, 1926. Trans. in *Twentieth Century Art Theory: Urbanism, Politics, and Mass Culture*, ed. Richard Hertz & Norman Klein. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990, p.295.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen James has studied *Amerika*, but mainly for the effect of American imagery on Mendelsohn and not for how Mendelsohn used *Amerika* for his own intentions. See James, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Berlin Years*. Also, Miles David Samson has studied *Amerika*, but although I have not seen the result of this research, I think that it is a study focused on cross-cultural exchange. See Miles David Samson, “Erich Mendelsohn’s *Amerika*: American Modernity as Threat or Totem”, paper presented to the Society of Architectural Historians, Boston, 1990.

# Illustration Credits

## Chapter 1

- 1.1 "Contempora Exposition"  
Cover of exhibition catalogue for Erich Mendelsohn, 1929  
New York  
source: The Getty Research Institute; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 9.
- 1.2 "Architecture of Eric Mendelsohn: 1914-1940"  
Cover of exhibition pamphlet  
The Arts Club of Chicago, 1942  
source: The Getty Research Institute, Special Collections; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 10
- 1.3 "Three Lectures on Architecture"  
Erich Mendelsohn  
Cover of invitation, 1944  
University of California Press  
source: The Getty Research Institute; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 9.
- 1.4 "Erich Mendelsohn: Ein Architekt Skizziert"  
Cover of exhibition catalogue for Akademie der Künste, 1953  
source: The Getty Research Institute; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 9.
- 1.5 "Mendelsohn"  
Cover of exhibition pamphlet  
Studio di Architettura, Milan, 1960  
source: The Getty Research Institute; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 9.
- 1.6 "Erich Mendelsohn: Buildings and Dreams"  
Exhibition poster, 11 October- 8 November 1968  
The Building Center, London  
source: The Getty Research Institute; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 9.

- 1.7 "Erich Mendelsohn: Visions and Revisions"  
Cover of exhibition catalogue for University Art Gallery  
San Jose State University  
source: The Getty Research Institute; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 9.
- 1.8 "Exhibition of the Architectural Works of Erich Mendelsohn"  
Exhibition invitation, 9 October- 8 November 1974  
Institute of Architects/ Association of Engineers and Architects in Israel  
source: The Getty Research Institute, Special Collections; *Mendelsohn Papers*, Accession No. 880406, Box 10

## Chapter 2

- 2.1 Erich Mendelsohn, 1940  
source: Whittick, *Erich Mendelsohn*, introduction
- 2.2 Einstein Observatory photograph  
source: Whittick, *Erich Mendelsohn*, p.12
- 2.3 Einstein Observatory Sketch  
source: *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.113
- 2.4 Moriz Melzer  
Novembergruppe, 1919  
source: *German Expressionism, 1915-1925*, p.14
- 2.5 Max Pechstein  
An alle Künstler! (To all Artists!), 1919  
source: *German Expressionism, 1915-1925*, p.15
- 2.6 Lyonel Feininger  
Cathedral of Socialism, 1919  
Woodcut  
From Walter Gropius, *Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses*  
source: Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.64
- 2.7 Caspar David Friedrich  
The Cathedral, 1818  
Oil on Canvas  
source: Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.64
- 2.8 Bruno Taut  
Glass Pavilion, 1914 Werkbund Exposition, Cologne  
Exterior  
source: Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.89
- 2.9 Bruno Taut  
Glass Pavilion, 1914 Werkbund Exposition, Cologne  
Ground floor interior  
source: Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.89

- 2.10 Bruno Taut  
*Domstern*, 1919, from *Alpine Architektur*  
source: Conrads, *Phantastische Architektur*, p.6
- 2.11 Bruno Taut  
Illustrations from *Alpine Architektur*, 1919  
source: Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture*, p.82
- 2.12 Bruno Taut  
Illustration from *Die Auflösung der Städte*, 1920  
source: Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture*, p.81
- 2.13 Bruno Taut  
Project for the Folkwang School, Hohenhagen estate, Hagen, 1920  
Good example of Taut's ideas in *Die Auflösung der Städte*  
source: Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, p.94
- 2.14 Hermann Finsterlin  
*Casa Nova*, 1920  
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- 2.15 Paul Gösch  
*Cemetary*, 1920  
also published in *Frühlicht*, 1, no.14, 1920  
source: Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture*, p.96
- 2.16 Erich Mendelsohn  
*Triple Hall*, 1917  
source: Whittick, *Erich Mendelsohn*, p.53
- 2.17 Erich Mendelsohn  
*Factory with Crane*, 1917  
source: Whittick, *Erich Mendelsohn*, p.52
- 2.18 Erich Mendelsohn  
*Grain Elevators*, 1915  
source: Whittick, *Erich Mendelsohn*, p.50
- 2.19 Einstein Observatory Sketch, 1917  
source: James, *Expressionism, Relativity and the Einstein Tower*, p.397
- 2.20 Einstein Observatory Sketch, 1918  
source: James, *Expressionism, Relativity and the Einstein Tower*, p.400
- 2.21 Erich Mendelsohn  
*Einstein Tower*, 1920  
source: Morgenthaler, *The Early Sketches*, plate #50
- 2.22 Einstein Observatory Elevation  
source: James, *Expressionism, Relativity and the Einstein Tower*, p.403
- 2.23 Coelostat installed at Einstein Observatory, 1924  
source: James, *Expressionism, Relativity and the Einstein Tower*, p.404

- 2.24 Einstein Observatory Sketch, 1918-19  
source: James, *Expressionism, Relativity and the Einstein Tower*, p.401
- 2.25 Installation of Le Corbusier Exhibit  
"Modern Architecture: International Exhibition"  
Museum of Modern Art, NY  
10 February-23 March 1932  
source: Mathews, "The Promotion of Modern Architecture by MOMA",  
*Design History*, p.43
- 2.26 Index page 891 showing Mendelsohn's name  
source: Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (1967), p.891

### Chapter 3

- 3.1 Wassily Kandinsky  
Cover design for *Der Blaue Reiter*  
source: Kandinsky, *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, p.253
- 3.2 Franz Marc  
*Animal Destinies*, 1913  
source: Gordon, *Expressionism*, p.17
- 3.3 Wassily Kandinsky  
*Lyrical*  
source: *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac*, p.67
- 3.4 Erich Mendelsohn  
Perspective sketches  
source: *Kunstabibliothek catalogue*, p.31
- 3.5 Erich Mendelsohn  
Sketches  
source: Scheffauer, *The Dial*, March 1921, p.327-328
- 3.6 Erich Mendelsohn  
Sketches  
source: Scheffauer, *The Dial*, March 1921, p.329-330
- 3.7 Architekturbteilung des Staatl  
Bauhaus, Weimar, 1921  
source: Gropius, *Internationale Architektur*, p.99
- 3.8 Weimar Bauhaus 1923 exhibition  
source: Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius*, p.61
- 3.9 Meyer-Kauffmann Textile Works, Power Station  
Wüstegiersdorf in Silesia, 1922  
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source: *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, p.50

- 3.10 Erich Mendelsohn  
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source: *Kunstabibliothek catalogue*, p.53
- 3.11 Berliner Tageblatt Building  
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entry head-on  
source: *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, p.37
- 3.12 Weichmann Silk House  
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source: *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, p.45
- 3.13 Weichmann Silk House  
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ground plans  
source: *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, p.48
- 3.14 Karolinger Platz  
Charlottenburg - Westend, 1922  
Double or Twin Villa  
source: *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, p.26
- 3.15 Karolinger Platz  
Charlottenburg - Westend, 1922  
Double or Twin Villa, plan  
source: *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, p.27

#### Chapter 4

- 4.1 Cover page to *Amerika*, 1926  
source: Mendelsohn, *Amerika*, title page
- 4.2 Book Cover for *Russland-Europa-Amerika*, 1929  
source: Mendelsohn, *Russland-Europa-Amerika*
- 4.3 Photograph of Mendelsohn, Neutra, and Wright at Taliesin  
source: *Richard Neutra: Promise and Fulfillment*, p.52
- 4.4 Walter Gropius  
Jahrbuch des Deutsch Werkbundes  
source: *A Concrete Atlantis*, p.246
- 4.5 Photograph from *Amerika*  
source: *Amerika*, p.26
- 4.6 Photograph from *Amerika*  
source: *Amerika*, p.35
- 4.7 Photograph from *Amerika*  
source: *Amerika*, p.36

- 4.8 Man Ray  
*Rayograph*, 1922  
source: *The New Vision*, p.74
- 4.9 Paul Citröen  
“Metropolis” advertising poster, 1923  
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Leiden, Nederland  
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- 4.10 Werner Mantz  
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source: *The New Vision*, p.78
- 4.11 New York: Seventh Avenue  
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- 4.12 New York: Side Street “B”  
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- 4.13 Chicago: 1st Skyscraper Style  
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- 4.14 Erich Mendelsohn  
*Cemetery*, 1914  
source: Whittick, *Erich Mendelson*, p.35
- 4.15 Erick Mendelsohn  
Sketch, 1924  
source: *Kunstabibliothek catalogue*, p.58
- 4.16 New York: Broadway at Night  
source: *Amerika*, p.53
- 4.17 El Lissitzky  
*Runner in the City*, 1926  
source: *The New Vision*, plate 79
- 4.18 “Old and New New York”, 1910  
Photogravure  
source: *Architecture Transformed*, p.90, plate 95
- 4.19 New York: 43rd Street  
source: *Amerika*, p.69
- 4.20 Stefan Hirsch  
New York, Lower Manhattan, 1921  
source: *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine*, p.45
- 4.21 George Ault  
Construction Night, 1922  
source: Lucic, *Charles Sheeler*, p.73

- 4.22 Paul Strand  
Wall Street, 1915  
Photogravure  
source: *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine*, p.49
- 4.23 New York: Fifth Avenue  
source: *Amerika*, p.81
- 4.25 Advertising for Amerika  
source: *Der Welt Spiegel*, 13 December 1925
- 4.26 Advertising for Amerika  
source: *Der Welt Spiegel*, 22 April 1928
- 4.27 El Lissitzky  
*Wolkenbügel*, design 1924/25  
Photomontage  
source: *El Lissitzky: architect, painter, photographer*, p.188
- 4.28 László Moholy-Nagy  
"Dynamic of the Metropolis"  
source: *Painting, Photography, Film*, p.124
- 4.29 László Moholy-Nagy  
"Dynamic of the Metropolis"  
source: *Painting, Photography, Film*, p.128
- 4.30 László Moholy-Nagy  
"Dynamic of the Metropolis"  
source: *Painting, Photography, Film*, p.129
- 4.31 El Lissitzky  
Jacket for Richard Neutra's book, "*Amerika*", 1929  
source: *Amerika*, cover



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