

Life behind ruins: Constructing *documenta*

by

Mariel A. Villeré

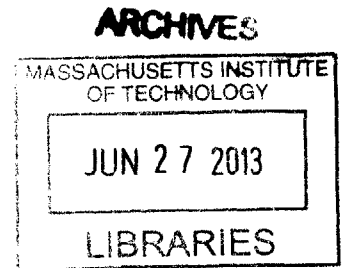
B.A. Architecture
Barnard College, 2008

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Abstract

A transnational index of contemporary art, *documenta* in its current form is known in the art world for its scale, site-specificity and rotating Artistic Directors, each with their own theme and agenda. On a unique schedule, the expansive show is displayed in Kassel, Germany from June to September every five years. The origins of the exhibition-event are embedded in the postwar reconstruction of West Germany and a regenerative national Garden Show. This thesis focuses on the architectural condition of the first *documenta* in 1955, which I argue has ultimately shaped the nomadic and parceled form of *documenta* as it evolved. In a liminal space between a violent, isolated history and a hopeful, democratic future, the organizers of *documenta* appropriated the damaged, but centrally located Museum Fridericianum as shelter for an exhibition of modern art.

I trace the early history of the siting and architecture of the Museum Fridericianum and central urban plaza, the Friedrichsplatz, to unfold the urban planning schemes and controversies of the 1940s and 50s. In the midst of re-planning, the national Garden Show— the *Bundesgartenschau*, a catalyst for economic regeneration as a tourist attraction and proponent of urban parks, offered the support needed for the germinating plans for an art show that would be called *documenta*. Arnold Bode, a designer, painter and professor at the Art Academy in Kassel took advantage of the *Bundesgartenschau* exposure and funding to install an exhibition of modern art in the damaged neoclassical Museum Fridericianum. Although the details of the building's restoration are often overlooked, the thesis examines the built conditions of Bode's Fridericianum in an attempt to reposition *documenta* in the history of architecture. I argue for the influence of Kassel's urban and landscape history on the staging of *documenta*, and in turn, the exhibition's dialogue with the form and ideology of the *Bundesgartenschau*. In displaying the architecture as part of the exhibition, Bode resurrected the Enlightenment ideology that birthed the building and reinterpreted it for a postwar message. Now one among many biennial format global exhibitions, *documenta* offers a unique and compelling confluence between the subject's relationship with landscape, urban design, architecture, exhibition design and art, based on its inception in 1955 in the Museum Fridericianum.

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Over the past year of researching and writing this thesis, I have had the privilege of interacting with many individuals, here at home and in Germany. They all have contributed to its final form through meaningful discussions and diligent editing. At the start, my advertisement in the Kassel newspaper seeking “witnesses of *documenta*,” elicited responses from more Kassellers than I could have imagined, and more than I had the time to meet with. My conversations with them made an incredible impact on me beyond this project. For their hospitality and friendship, I thank Enne Lux, Hartmut George Müller, Helga Meseck, Sylvia Stoebe, Frank Möller, Barbara Eidmann, Karl Bolzmann, Wolfgang Heinrich Fischer, Irmgard Gaenger, and Willy Vasserot. My extended network in Cambridge provided introductions in Berlin to Andres Lepik, Wilfried Kühn and Adrian von Buttlar, who all became mentors and provided meaningful dialogue. I am indebted to the fine people at the documenta Archiv, Susanne Rübsam, Karin Stengel and particularly Sara Niedergesäß, who also assisted as an interpreter in interviews. For additional translation help, I thank Uta Musgray, Kenneth Kronenberg and Leslie Allison. I’d also like to thank MIT Libraries, particularly Lorrie McAllister for her research assistance early on. The project was made possible by funding from the Louis C. Rosenberg travel grant from the MIT Department of Architecture, the MISTI 2.0 travel grant for independent research, and the Council for the Arts at MIT Director’s Grant.

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"I thought of the beauty of ruins ...
of things which nothing lives behind
... and so I thought of wrapping ruins
around buildings."
-Louis I. Kahn, 1961

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Introduction: Rubble and Roses

A transnational index of contemporary art, *documenta* in its current form is known in the art world for its scale, site-specificity and rotating Artistic Directors, each with their own theme and agenda. On a unique schedule, the expansive show is displayed in Kassel, Germany from June to September every five years; its reputation so impressive and influential, it has transformed the city with the permanent headliner “*documenta* Stadt” – “*documenta* City.” The origins of the exhibition-event are embedded in the postwar reconstruction of West Germany and a regenerative national Garden Show. This thesis focuses on the architectural condition of the first *documenta* in 1955, which I argue has ultimately shaped the nomadic and parceled form of *documenta* as it evolved. In a liminal space between a violent, isolated history and a hopeful, democratic future, the organizers of *documenta* appropriated the damaged, but centrally located Museum Fridericianum as shelter for an exhibition of modern art. I trace the early history of the siting and architecture of the Museum Fridericianum and central urban plaza, the Friedrichsplatz, to unfold the urban planning schemes and controversies of the 1940s and 50s. At the same time, the national Garden Show– the *Bundesgartenschau*, a catalyst for economic regeneration as a tourist attraction and proponent of urban parks, offered the support needed for the germinating plans for an art show that would be called *documenta*. Now one among many biennial format global exhibitions, *documenta* offers a unique and compelling confluence between the viewer’s relationship with landscape, urban design, architecture, exhibition design and art, based on its inception in 1955 in the Museum Fridericianum.

Built a decade before the French Revolution and touted as the first public museum in continental Europe, the 1779 building was transitioned to a state library in the early 20th century and then damaged in World War II, reduced to its shell and



fig. 1: A March 8 1949 image in the local newspaper shows the damage suffered by the Museum Fridericianum on Friedrichsplatz in Kassel. The interior had been completely destroyed after bombings throughout World War II. Image sourced from Stadt Archiv, Kassel.

an indeterminate fate. Ninety percent of the inner city's historic structures had been destroyed in World War II, then incrementally rebuilt and unevenly conserved. The bombing had heavily damaged Friedrichsplatz, the cultural center of the city, and the buildings surrounding the Fridericianum were successively cleared in postwar demolition and clean up efforts.

Hardly left unscathed, the Fridericianum's roof had completely collapsed, taking the

interior floors with it, and later its southeastern corner was partially torn down in fear of further subsidence. [fig. 1] As if a symbol, the neoclassical façade optimistically stood tall on the plaza, at the center of the restructuring city and as token of Enlightenment ideals in public imagination. Without a clear decision on an alternative programmatic purpose for the building, the city slowly rebuilt portions of the structure over the next ten years. In February 1954, a photograph of the second story "Grand Hall" appeared in the local newspaper with an enticing caption, it "would provide ideal opportunities to exhibitors to design their own exhibition." [fig. 2]

Meanwhile, the city busily prepared for the grand event, the *Bundesgartenschau*, which would travel to and open its third postwar show in Kassel after Hannover in 1951 and Hamburg in 1953. Kassel's once fortuitously central location became peripheral upon the division of East and West Germany. The city fell outside the protective arms of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the "economic miracle" of the decades following World War II. Lagging behind the progress as seen throughout the American sector, the *Bundesgartenschau* was to make up for this shortfall of the recovery program.¹ Arnold Bode, a Kassel painter, designer and professor, recognized an opportunity for global

1 It is also important to note that on May 5, 1955, the German military was officially reconstituted and accepted into NATO and Kassel remained one of the most important industrial hubs in Germany, the city's technocratic past following it into a postwar future.

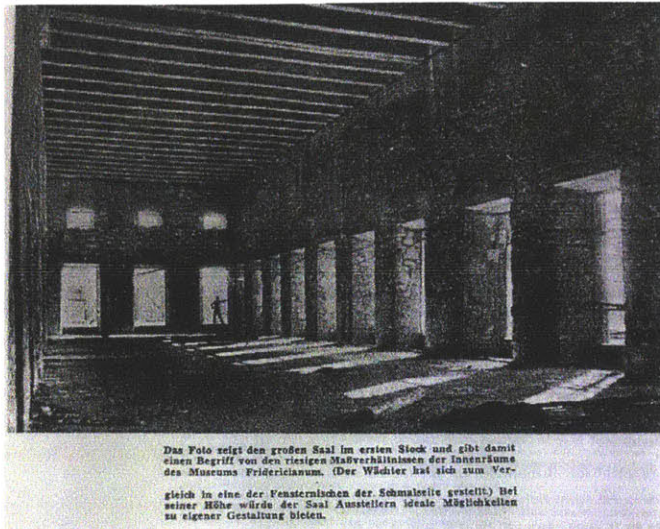
attention and financial support for an art exhibition if he could position it alongside the nationally recognized and sponsored agriculture and garden show, scheduled to arrive in Kassel in 1955. Although the prevailing historical narrative has only obliquely related the first *documenta* to the *Bundesgartenschau*, this thesis puts forth the *Bundesgartenschau* as a progenitor for *documenta* in 1955 and its evolution as an art exhibition operating at the urban scale. Orchestrated by the ten years young Federal Republic of Germany, the traveling *Bundesgartenschau* and its locally developed counterpart, *documenta* would together foster an ideology of beautification through landscape, architecture and art for the reconstruction of this archetypal mid-sized German town.

Having actively built an exhibition repertoire as a participating artist, organizer and designer for exhibitions,² storefronts, theater sets and trade shows, Bode set his aims higher in 1946, when he first conceived

of an international exhibition with his colleagues at the Art Academy³ in Kassel, before

2 The Kasseler Kunstaussstellung (art exhibition) of work from the Kunstakademie (Art Academy) was held in the Orangerie in the summers of 1922, 1927 and 1929, which were known for the opening parties that lasted late into the night. Bode participated as an artist and as a member of the selection committee.

3 The Werkakademie (the new name for the Kassel Art Academy), followed a similar ethos and structure as the Bauhaus. Bode taught painting and Mattern, landscape culture, which he put in equal importance as traditional painting, graphics, sculpture, set design



Das Foto zeigt den großen Saal im ersten Stock und gibt damit einen Begriff von den riesigen Maßverhältnissen der Innenräume des Museums Fridericianum. (Der Wächter hat sich zum Vergleich in eine der Fensterbänke der Schmalseite gestellt.) Bei seiner Höhe würde der Saal Ausstellern ideale Möglichkeiten zu eigener Gestaltung bieten.



fig. 2: A 1954 article in the local newspaper, Hessische/ Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA), shows the Grand Hall after provisional repairs had been completed by the city. We see that the original attic floor has been absorbed into the second floor. Sourced from Stadt Archiv, Kassel.

fig. 3: Frei Otto's first four-point tensile structure, used as the music pavilion at the 1955 Bundesgartenschau in Kassel.

plans for the *Bundesgartenschau* were confirmed. When presented with the early option of a tent designed by architect-engineer Frei Otto to be placed on Friedrichsplatz, Bode was seduced by the site rather than the nomadic structure; specifically by the promise of the vast space within the Fridericianum, which by 1954 had been provisionally rebuilt by the city since bearing damage from the war [fig. 3]. Bode and his art students as assistants reconfigured the interior structure of the Fridericianum as a modernist gallery behind the building's conserved façade. While the decision to use the salvaged building may be unremarkable for citizens whose city had been nearly completely destroyed and the ruins of which made up their postwar environment,⁴ Bode's architectural intervention dissolved the tense dichotomy between preservation and demolition and presented an early form of adaptive re-use. As an identity marker of Kassel and a symbol of Enlightenment ideals, staging the exhibition in the Fridericianum represented a return to the tolerant and humanist neoclassical society and politics.

Alongside a garden show that teetered between the display of the art of gardening and the industry of agriculture, *documenta* challenged the exhibition-making status quo by using available architecture to display art and repair social and political fractures. Having assembled 670 pieces of sculpture and painting from galleries and collections in Western Europe and America, *documenta* was the first exhibition that endeavored to enthusiastically introduce modern "art of the twentieth century" to the general public since the encyclopedic Dresden Exhibition in 1927, as referenced by Haftmann in his introduction to the exhibition catalog. More poignantly, it was the first exhibition of its kind since the Third Reich forbade the production and display of modern art, culminating in the *Entarte Kunst* exhibition of "degenerate art" in Munich, 1937. In supporting the display of modern abstract art, Kassel asserted its liberal democratic governance against the former National Socialists, as well as against the German Democratic Republic's single-party communism and its dominant artistic style, Soviet Realism. As Kassel

and architecture. Bode had forged the plans for a "fundamental reorganization of the former Kassel Art Academy" in 1948.

4 The ruins had also entered pop culture with *Trümmerfilme* shot on location in ruined cities and shown in cinemas across Europe, for example *Anno Zero* directed by Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini.

transformed into a hub of abstract and expressionist art in 1955, the exhibition and correlative fringe events including lectures, films, theater and music “softly”⁵ conditioned the viewing public to accept modernist thought and ideals. Furthermore, content shown at *documenta*— although ‘mainstream modernist’ for most of Western Europe, yet still ‘new’ for Germans— championed the European hybrid as an alternative to the polar Sovietization in East Germany and Americanization in the West. The exhibition, as a display of modern art and also an event, sought to cross-fertilize artists and ideas across Europe, despite the impediment of flows across the metaphorical iron curtain, just thirty kilometers northeast of Kassel.

In a precise staging, Bode installed “documenta: Art of the Twentieth Century” within the shell of the former Museum in what he called *Inszenierung (mise-en-scène)* leveraging the architecture’s historical value in site and form while putting forward the possibility for a democratic, modern Germany through the provisional design and relationship between interior space and art content. In this thesis I focus on the repurposing of the damaged, but historic, Fridericianum to display the artwork and the architecture itself, pointing to the building’s restoration as part of the exhibition, a fundamental fact that is often overlooked in the scholarship on the exhibition. Once the city had replaced the roof, restored the exterior walls, inserted new columns in the footprints of those former and rebuilt the second floor, Bode made alterations to the bare interior: he formed temporary walls from concrete blocks, painted the walls white, and hung black curtains as partitions and white curtains as light filters. In light of war time destruction throughout Europe, the problem of exhibition making is prefaced by the problem of exhibition space, which Bode embraced as a valuable challenge. Therefore, the larger stakes of the thesis rest in the problem of postwar rebuilding in the face

5 I am loosely referencing the notion of “soft power,” discussed in Greg Castillo’s captivating and eloquent *Cold War on the Home Front*. Castillo traces the term to political scientist Joseph Nye, who frames “hard power” as that which “relies upon instruments of compulsion and control: occupying armies, trade embargoes, and payoffs for good behavior among allies... in contrast, soft power wields the force of attraction. Rather than coercing, soft power entices, enlisting support through intangibles like culture, values, belief systems and perceived moral authority.” Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), xi.

of historical anxiety. While the *Bundesgartenschau* buried rubble into the garden and interpreted landscape as the perfected ideal through forgetting, *documenta* left the past uncomfortably legible in a process of reanimation. Forming space with walls of varying typologies, the exhibition architecture created dynamic thresholds between interior and exterior, neoclassical and modernist, past and future, the ruin and polished industrial surfaces.

Implicit movement and texture in the displayed abstract modern paintings and sculpture were set in dialogue with the roughness of the Fridericianum's walls. Bode choreographed the viewer's movement through the space with pauses triggered by half-walls, overhanging structures, objects protruding from exhibition walls at a diagonal –borrowing unconventional display techniques from earlier examples by architects and artists including Frederick Kiesler, László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer. Although the show did not include many experiments in the applied arts out of the Bauhaus, for example El Lissitzky's *Abstract Cabinet* or Moholy-Nagy's *The Room of Our Time*, the space experimented with modular monotone planes for a range of spatial possibilities at a scale of occupiable space. Two dimensional art became three dimensional with paintings on standing supports amongst sculptures that littered the space, sometimes without a base aside from the bare floor. Anthropomorphized, the art directly engaged the viewer. With inventive and surprising strategies, *documenta* in 1955 contributes to an early history of exhibition design while echoing the punctuated picturesque landscape of the past and new movements through the modern city.

Though Kassel's urban condition after World War II is hardly unique within Germany, *documenta* offers an important lens for the understanding of rupture and continuity in German culture and identity. The thesis moves chronologically through Kassel's history on the levels of landscape, architecture and art. Chapter One charts the development of Kassel through landscape and urban expansions and connections, premised by the German relationship to nature and wilderness. This leads to a discussion of the postwar moment through urban plan proposals and the 1955 *Bundesgartenschau* as a return to the landscape as an economic solution and metaphorical allusion for Germany to grow from the rubble of World War II. I then move into the site of *documenta*, the

Museum Fridericianum, connected in urban plan to the garden core, the site of the *Bundsgartenschau*. In Chapter Two, I discuss the exhibition design of *documenta* in 1955 in the repurposed Museum Fridericianum for a modernist display of twentieth century art.⁶ Design decisions balancing conservation and temporality are considered in light of the exhibition's second iteration in 1959, and the turn to establish the "sideshow" into a full-fledged autonomous international art fair that continues to infiltrate the city of Kassel and its architecture, all reflected upon in the Epilogue.⁷

documenta continues in a five year pattern nearly sixty years later, still in Kassel, still headquartered in the Fridericianum; an object of pride for some citizens, a distant tourist attraction for others. Although more recent shows (for example no. 10 in 1997⁸ and no. 13 in 2012) have added temporary sites around the globe, the Fridericianum remains the cradle, a symbolic presence for the temporary exhibition. In 2012, the exhibition "experience" occupied multiple, diverse and surprising venues, including vintage movie theaters and derelict homes, under the direction of historian-curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. Following the popularity of the contemporary art show, the number of written histories continues to expand within art history and criticism. Despite the exhibition's quinquennial return to the *site* and history of itself through performance, conceptual and archival interventions, the architecture of the exhibition has been left

6 Discussed in the epilogue, *documenta 2* in 1959 introduced graphic design, and later, industrial design in *documenta 3*.

7 Throughout the thesis, I use the nomenclature of each *documenta* exhibition as the titles were designed and written. Although there exists discrepancy in scholarship's treatment of the "d" in *documenta*, whether it is capitalized or not, I am following the lead of the *documenta* Archiv in Kassel, which has strictly kept the lowercase "d" in their name, honoring the 1955 typographic design choice.

8 The retrospective theme of *documenta X*, curated by Catherine David, is most similar to the exhibition in 1955 in a shared emphasis on the urban history. She writes in the short pamphlet: "To combat the promenade or »rummage sale« effect, it seemed necessary to articulate the heterogeneous works and exhibition spaces -the old sites of the Fridericianum and the Orangerie and the new sites of the railway station, the Ottoneum, and the *documenta* Halle- with the «here and now« context of Kassel in 1997, by establishing a historical and urban parcours or itinerary, attentive to history as embedded in the city itself." Furthermore, she cites Bode's decision in 1955 not to display dada and radical art from the Weimar period as justification for establishing geographical limits to the origins of the art that she would display. For more, see: Pat Binder and Gerhard Haupt, "documenta X, 1997. Special by Universes in Universe," accessed May 15, 2013, <http://universes-in-universe.de/doc/english.html>.

out of this scholarship. Reciprocally, the exhibition design falls out of architectural history. This thesis contributes to the larger body of work surrounding the history of the influential art show, bridging German landscape design and postwar rebuilding to stress the urban implications of an art exhibition more generally. I write this history of *documenta* across scales from landscape, urbanism, architecture, exhibition design and the art object to mediate disciplinary boundaries and extreme past with present, as a way to get at the ideology that reached past the historical moment of National Socialism in forming a new German identity. The thesis's distribution of historical focus aims to reflect the deeper roots emphasized in a West Germany under the Allies' wings and the origins of the "raw" materials of the *Bundesgartenschau* and *documenta*.

Histories specific to Kassel and *documenta* in 1955 are brief and limited, and few are translated to English. Karl Hermann Wegner and Folckert Lüken-Isberner have offered rare histories of the city's architecture and urban development from Enlightenment to postwar modernism. Comparative studies on the destruction and postwar reconstruction across Germany have been helpful, most notably Jörg Arnold's on Kassel and Magdeburg. Andrew Weiner has offered a complex interpretation of the exhibition's rhetorical narratives of memory in comparison with other postwar exhibitions. The literature and personal essays on Arnold Bode and the first *documenta* exhibitions is much wider and has given me perspective on the personality and energy behind this historical project. Local historians including Derek Schwarze, Heiner Georgsdorf and Harald Kimpel have contributed a great deal to that collection. Harald Kimpel has published personal essays in a recent volume *documenta emotional Erinnerungen an die Weltkunstausstellungen* (2012) and in 1995 with *documenta* Archiv director Karin Stengel, a photographic reconstruction of the exhibition. Also edited by Karin Stengel with Michael Glasmeier, the "Archive in Motion" collection of short essays, published to mark the exhibition's 50-year anniversary, has offered several streams of the history of *documenta*, Arnold Bode and Kassel. Historian Walter Grasskamp has written focused essays on *documenta* 1955 in comparison to the Degenerate Art Show of 1937 in regards to format and ideology. Artist and writer Ian Wallace has reflected on the definition of modern art in postwar Germany, *documenta* 1955 as a "closing of the wound" of the effect of Nazi era

politics on art and the show's development as a quinquennial. His essay was republished as one of the *100 books*, a pamphlet series for dOCUMENTA(13) in 2012. This thesis attempts to weave the disparate historical accounts of *documenta* to emphasize the 1955 event's value as an architectural and urban model for exhibitions in the post-traumatic and post-industrial condition, complicating notions of history, memory and conservation.

I was privileged to travel over the course of researching for this thesis, attend dOCUMENTA (13), see a "naked" Kassel, and meet just a few of the 130,000 visitors to the 1955 exhibition, as well as some who witnessed the 1959 exhibition or had special collections and personal investment in my studies. Though largely anecdotal, their stories rounded out a fuller understanding of *documenta* and its impact, some suggesting the growing distance between *documenta* and Kassel since 1955, a backdrop to the thesis and its relevance.⁹

⁹ Surprisingly, the response to the newspaper advertisement I placed seeking witnesses was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. First met by a reporter who broadcasted my project further, I received nearly twenty responses in the weeks I was there in January 2013. Most revealing, it seemed I had been one of few international visitors who took initiative to meet with Kassel natives about their histories, despite the exhibition's recurring mnemonic approach, documenting itself and the city, in and alongside the contemporary art, most often created by foreigners.

1 . The Nature of Kassel: through the garden and into the plaza

We see how that dream of Jean Jaurés in which the European people would be like a bunch of flowers, in that each flower maintains its own scent and color and yet fits into a larger whole, has already become a reality in art.

–Werner Haftmann in his opening speech at *documenta* 1955¹⁰

The first problem is to establish the museum as a center for the enjoyment, not the interment of art. In this project the barrier between the art work and the living community is erased by a garden approach for the display of sculpture. Interior sculptures enjoy an equal spatial freedom, because the open plan permits them to be seen against the surrounding hills. The architectural space becomes a defining rather than confining space. –Mies van der Rohe about his “Museum for a Small City” project, 1943¹¹ (original emphasis)

A Third Nature

Kassel was named “the scene of the year” in a March 1955 tourism article in the New York Times, bringing international visitors to the once quaint town near the new East/West border dividing Germany.¹² From the main train station, rising modernist buildings guided visitors down the stepped pedestrian way of the *Treppenstraße* (staircase street), to Friedrichsplatz, the large open plaza capped by the Museum Fridericianum hosting the

10 Haftmann repurposed this quote several times, also seen in his introductory essay to the *documenta* catalog.

11 Quoted in Mirka Beneš, “A Modern Classic,” in *Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art*, edited by John Elderfield, et al. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 136. The likeness between van der Rohe’s famous Barcelona chair and Bode’s “Federstahlsessel” (Spring steel chair) earned Arnold Bode the nickname “Mies van der Bode.”

12 Albion Ross, “Germany: Good Travels, Prices, Eating.” *The New York Times* 15 Mar. 1955: accessed from digital archive 18 February, 2013.

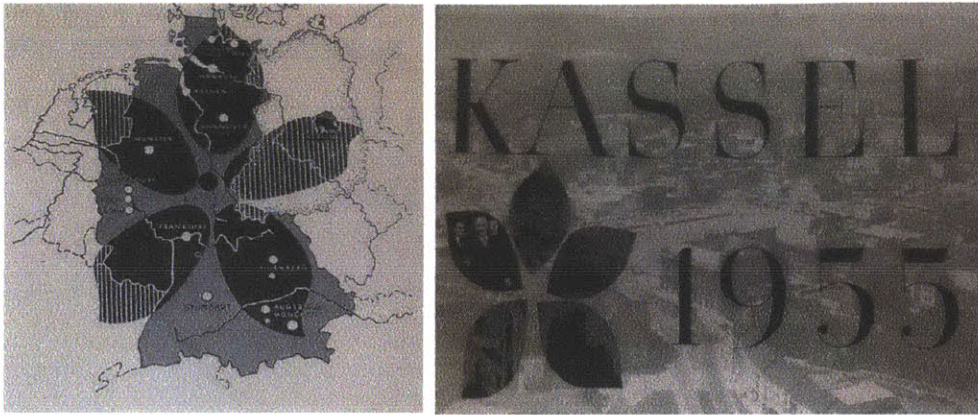


fig. 4: left: an imaginative map of the new West Germany with an overlay of the *Bundesgartenschau* emblem, placing Kassel once again at the center of the map. right: An advertisement for the *Bundesgartenschau*, with the trademark flower, is overlaid on an aerial view of the ruined city, making the metaphor of “planting flowers over ruins” visual.

temporary *documenta* exhibition of modern art. Just beyond Friedrichsplatz and down the hill in the baroque Orangerie and surrounding Karlsaue Park, the *Bundesgartenschau* (National Garden Show) had arrived after building great enthusiasm and anticipation, both local and international, for its promise to spur recovery from Kassel’s urban park outwards, planting flowers over ruins. Rebuilding fever was in full force. This was Kassel’s moment. [fig. 4]

Architects and planners saw opportunity in the space opened up by the devastation, however uncertain and gloomy the rubble was for the population more generally. Many postwar German cities, Nuremberg for example, made efforts towards reconstructing historically accurate versions of their prewar selves, idealizing a German architectural heritage in a desperate search for deeply rooted “culture.” Kassel instead took a slow approach to demolition, patchwork conservation and building anew in the modernist style of the 1950s and 60s, providing a lens on the permutations of preservation and rebuilding strategy throughout postwar Germany within a single urban plan that ultimately centered itself around a cultural agenda. At the nexus is *documenta*’s site, the Museum Fridericianum. In the following study of *documenta*, the Museum is considered more than a container for art, but an architectural object within an urban and landscape history. I posit that *documenta* organizer Arnold Bode created a clear link between the Museum Fridericianum’s historical value as a product of the Enlightenment and the city’s future guided by an idyllic marriage of nature, architecture and art. In the

same gesture, he re-introduced modern art into the public sphere with “*documenta: Art of the Twentieth Century*” in 1955, the first of what is now an ongoing quinquennial contemporary art exhibition.¹³

As discussed in the Epilogue, the urban dimension of *documenta*’s subsequent episodes is intrinsically tied to the 1955 postwar condition and the exhibition having grown out of the *Bundesgartenschau*. *documenta* was conceived in 1954 as a side exhibition to the federally initiated and funded garden show that redesigned the historic baroque Karlsaue park at a stone’s throw from the urban center Friedrichsplatz. Seen within the efforts of landscape preservation and exterior place-making, the urban Museum Fridericianum disrupts the privileged pastoral garden,¹⁴ the modernist art exhibition a “thorn” to the garden show’s “rose.” But if we consider *documenta* in the foreground, as most art histories do, the garden unfolds outside the walls of the “Museum” and perhaps, figuratively, even outside of its ideological structure. Maintaining this uncertain dichotomy, the thesis will continually put forth the enigma of exhibition making and curating, considering the landscape garden and the *Bundesgartenschau* within the same historical trajectory as the traveling fair and the modern art museum. Scaffolding on the “industrial” tone and structure of the *Bundesgartenschau*, *documenta* leveraged the impression of stability in the prewar model to install a new exhibition type, an ontological laboratory, that would teach the public to see, and through the act of seeing and circulating, to develop itself as a community.

13 *documenta 2: Art after 1945, Painting – Sculpture – Printmaking* opened in the summer of 1959 with hopes of becoming a quadrennial exhibition. The plans for the third *documenta* were stalled due to the slow pace of the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe’s reconstruction as an additional venue, delaying *documenta* another year, until 1964, and initiating a vacillating schedule before it established itself as a quinquennial. Now a private corporation, Documenta is heavily subsidized by civic and state agencies including the documenta und Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungen GmbH, documenta Archiv, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, and Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen. A corporation committee selects an Artistic Director who then is responsible for the ideological character and program of the exhibition. The dates of exhibitions to date is as follows: 1955, 1959, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017.

14 “Exterior place-making” is a term borrowed from John Dixon Hunt, an authority on 17th and 18th century garden and landscape design. For further reading, see John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000).

The relationship between the two shows is clear on paper: an April 1954 Statute to establish the non-profit status of the “Society for Western Art” lists its organizational purpose as an exhibition to “mark the National Garden Festival in Kassel (1955).”¹⁵ In the dossier proposal sent to local and state governments to build support, the new non-profit for *documenta* stressed the importance of the exhibition “for Hesse to underscore the local significance of the garden show”¹⁶ and solicited tax-deductible donations for the imposing costs of insuring and freighting the art. While *documenta* added art to the garden show, it leaned on the federal program for financial support, 50,000 DM from the federal government and 100,000 DM from the state of Hesse.¹⁷ In one of several versions of their outlined plan, the *documenta* organizers noted that “cultural events testify to the living spirit of the city and the countryside” and proposed the exhibition’s potential to repeat “about every four years” maintaining the goal of showing “contemporary art in Europe,” each exhibition a “variation of the same theme...given the changing character and distribution of gravity.”¹⁸ The pronounced need for *documenta*, the first of its kind in Germany, was three-fold: “For the artist, in order to create a closer contact with the outside world; for Hesse to underscore the local significance of the garden show; for the Federation, because the idea of a common European art may mark the European Movement as proof of a unifying force.”¹⁹ Coinciding with the *Bundesgartenschau*, the

15 Satzung: Des Vereins ‘Abendlandische Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts.’ 28 April 1954. *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 9. Accessed 16 January 2013.

16 Undated letter, *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 8. Accessed January 2013.

17 Supplemented by donations, the total budget of *documenta* in 1955 came to 200,000 DM. Tallied *documenta* budgets were scribbled on the backside of *Bundesgartenschau* stationery, found by the author in the *documenta* Archiv, Kassel.

18 Unterlagen zum Plan (Bode-Plan), *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 6a.

19 Ibid. These words were recycled in slightly different language across the planning and publicity of *documenta*. Charlotte Klonk offers another iteration and translation, credited to Bode: “it is worth promoting –and important to promote –the idea of a common European form of art as part of the Europe movement. Kassel is the German city that is predestined for an exhibition like this. Kassel is close to the East German border, was largely destroyed, and has been very actively reconstructed. It is an exemplary deed to manifest the idea of Europe in an art exhibition thirty kilometers from the East German border.” Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 174 (fn 10).

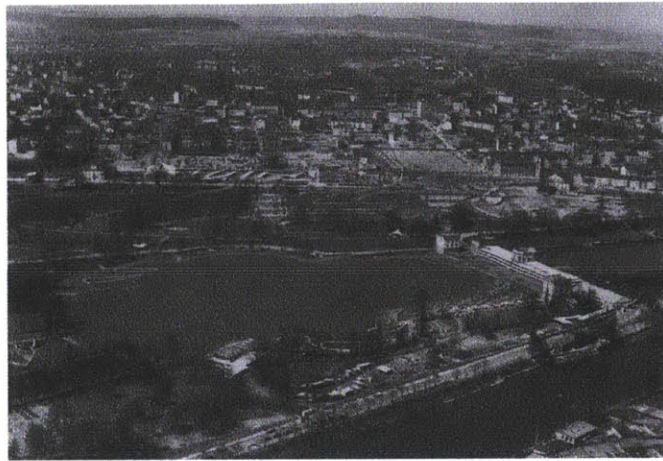
expandable art exhibition would redirect national and international attention to Kassel by positioning art as part of a larger economic recovery plan. For 100 days from July 15 to September 18, *documenta* nested itself within the garden show's season from April 29 to October 16.

Within close proximity, the *Bundesgartenschau* and *documenta* shared visitors and their processional movement reinforced the aesthetic character of the city's plan around the dominant Karlsaue Park, the central Friedrichsplatz and the geometrical links between key architectural moments across the city. [fig. 5] Both the garden show and the art exhibition took up temporary residence in the city's damaged historical buildings – the Orangerie and the Fridericianum, respectively – anchoring the temporary shows to the main components of the city's urban layout at the moment of postwar urban reconfiguration and architectural rebuilding.

Visitors walking to the pastoral *Bundesgartenschau* from the train station through Friedrichsplatz would have perhaps unexpectedly stumbled upon a series of individual banners supported by simple steel rods spelling out <<d-o-c-u-m-e-n-t-a>> in sans-serif lettering, immediately asserting the exhibition's modernist aesthetic. In photographs documenting the show, license plates on the Volkswagens and Mercedes-Benzes parked on Friedrichsplatz displayed a range of origins, underscoring Kassel's international status that summer and echoing the international flags that fluttered in the place of missing vases along the roofline of the damaged brick Fridericianum. [fig. 6] Behind the scorched and pockmarked façade punctuated by potted palms, the Fridericianum's interior had been manipulated into a grid of semi-temporary walls and various surfaces for presenting art. In the neoclassical style, the façade stood as a symbol of the city's continued architectural richness and dedication to the advancement of the arts, while the interior hovered in liminality. *documenta* embodied and propelled “recovery” in the postwar era, even as a darker past hovered above its subjects.

Site specificity in a former public museum and royal library positions *documenta* within Kassel's long history of advancing knowledge through public institutions and the impact of the architecture of those institutions in forming new urban domains and political bodies. In 1955, formal and logistical connections to the *Bundesgartenschau*

reinforced the urban implications of the modern exhibition and the reconnection of the fragmented, peripatetic viewer, who was geographically and psychologically remote. This chapter looks back on the historical development of the city to then situate the designs of both the *Bundesgartenschau* and *documenta* within Kassel's architectural lineage and urban identity.



Memories of the city's vernacular architecture framed the question of postwar rebuilding, exaggerating the difficulty in mediating the pre-Nazi past with a democratic future. Although cited as one of Germany's most beautiful cities in the 1901 Brockhaus Konversations-Lexikon encyclopedia for its "strikingly broad, straight streets, large open squares and beautiful buildings,"²⁰ the widely accepted architectural heritage of Kassel is based on



fig. 5: Kassel from above: Karlsaue Park in the foreground, with the Orangerie to the right of the frame and the Fridericianum at center-right.
fig. 6: The Museum Fridericianum open for *documenta* in 1955.

a distanced image. From the city's monumental heroic statue (Herkules) in the crowning *Bergpark* ("Mountain Park"), the eye follows a geometrically perfect connective axis to the quaint town with intricate streets in miniature. This aerial view, further elevated by the airplane²¹, is how the Royal Air Force saw Kassel on the date imprinted in every Kasseler's

20 The Brockhaus Konversations-Lexikon Encyclopedia, Volume 3. (Liepzig, 1901) quoted in *Architekturführer Kassel*. Edited by Berthold Hinz and Andreas Tacke. (Berlin: D. Reimer, 2002), XIII.

21 Sonja Duempelmann has written fascinating histories of the development of air travel and its impact on the professionalization of urban design, briefly addressed in this chapter. Though largely outside of the scope of this thesis, the "aerial view" is a resonating tangent with consideration of Kassel's "Stadtkrone" and landscape development and urban development (see footnote 37 in this chapter).

mind, October 22, 1943, the night of the firestorm.

Similar to the assault on Hamburg, Kassel was attacked by the Royal Air Force with one of the heaviest air raids of the war –more than 1,800 tons of bombs, including 460,000 magnesium fire sticks in a concentrated grouping, inducing an engulfing, choking firestorm. Military historian Jörg Friedrich’s spatial description of Wuppertal transfers to the systematic bombing of other German cities in 1943, including Kassel:

The typical half-timbered buildings, the narrow and twisted alleyways, the valley basin –which acted as a chimney– and a treacherous wind all served to fan the flames. With the smoke filling everything, the crashing of the “cookie” or “blockbuster” bombs that tore away entire buildings, the din of the collapsing roofs and façades, and the racing speed of the flames, it was impossible to tell what could still be saved. Building residents fled to the coolness of their cellars, while the flames continued to spread for three or four hours. Mile after mile, building after building was ablaze

–some only in the attics, some all the way down to the ground floor. At 2:30 a.m., the fires had not yet all merged into one. It can take a while for individual blazes to fuse into the carpet that might eventually become a firestorm, drawing everything that moves into an oven from which there is no escape.²²

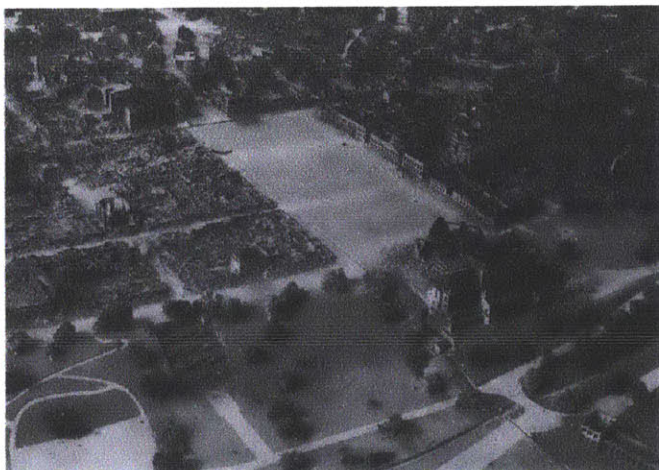


fig. 7: A model of the thorough destruction of Kassel's city center after the bombings in 1943.

Having killed 6,000, the event is the most memorable of several successive attacks on the city, and by the end of the war in 1945, sixty percent of the inner city was destroyed.²³ [fig. 7] On the outskirts of

Kassel, factories had produced munitions at some of the highest levels in Germany and the city was a major administrative headquarters for Hitler, making it an advantageous target for the Allied Forces over the course of the war.²⁴ The Third Reich had developed

22 Jörg Friedrich. “Weapon.” *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*. (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 3.

23 These figures vary slightly across sources. I have considered a war historian the authority: Horst Boog, Gerhard Krebs, and Detlef Vogel. *Germany and the Second World War*. (Oxford (GB): Clarendon Press, 2006), 50.

24 In addition to the well known Henschel facilities that manufactured the Tiger

ambitious urban plans for Kassel and so, Hitler's influence did not immediately disappear, of course, when American troops arrived in 1945. In 1946 a contentious series of plans emerged that closely resembled the monumental urban blocks of the Speer plan, setting off public alarm and interest in the future of their city. After several competitions and public exhibitions of urban plans, traffic networks were reconfigured around the modern pedestrian, pushing cars to an outer ring. With the new, iconic *Treppenstraße*, a single cut connected the main train station to Friedrichsplatz, the expansive rectangular plaza faced by the Palladian-inspired Museum Fridericianum.²⁵

While modern architecture started to fill in the gaps of the city's urban fabric, the Fridericianum would remain in a state of in-betweenness until it was entirely renovated in 1982. As part of the expanded *documenta 7* that same year, artist Joseph Beuys planted "Seven Thousand Oaks" throughout the city of Kassel, each paired with a concrete plinth, dispersing the "seed" of *documenta* and gesturing toward local urban renewal as part of a global mission to affect environmental and social change.²⁶ Simon Schama understands

I and King Tiger tanks, Kassel was also home to a Fieseler aircraft plant, factories for locomotives, engines, motor transport, railway works, as well as military headquarters at Wehrkreis IX and Bereich Hauptsitz Kassel, the Central Germany Headquarters of highway and railway construction, as well as the Regional Supreme Court. Henschel had built the first railway steam engines in 1848. The company also designed and builds today's "Transrapid" electro-magnetic hovering train.

25 The expansive and central Friedrichsplatz has a traumatic, conflicted history in the public imagination. Originally a source of Enlightened knowledge and impressive public urban space, unsurprisingly, it was tainted by Nazi influence. Adolf Hitler used the Museum Fridericianum as an administrative headquarters and the plaza served as a burial ground for those killed in the firestorm of 1943. Prince Philip of Hesse-Kassel had developed a close but uncomfortable relationship with Hitler, written about by Speer in his memoir: "[Philip] was one of the few followers whom Hitler always treated with deference and respect. Philip had often been useful to him, and especially in the early years of the Third Reich had arranged contacts with the heads of Italian Fascism. In addition he had helped Hitler purchase valuable art works. The Prince had been able to arrange their export from Italy through his connections with the Italian royal house, to which he was related." It became clear that Philip had been passing number codes to his wife and sending information to the royal Italian house, thus betraying Hitler. The Third Reich arrested the Hessian couple in 1943. Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*. (New York: Avon, 1971), 307.

26 "Joseph Beuys, 7000 Oaks." *Dia Art Foundation*. Web. Accessed 15 Dec. 2012. Furthering the reach of *documenta* and this concept for Kassel is the installation of oaks and paired plinths lining West 22nd Street between 10th and 11th Avenues in New York City.

this work through the German relationship to the forest and concept of *Heimat*. Connecting to a larger world outside of the gallery space or the park, Beuys' continually growing project "suggests making the world a big forest, making towns and environments forest-like."²⁷ This chapter traces the city's urban design at the edge of the hinterland, with and around the boundary of Karlsau Park, and considers the Fridericianum's plaza as a pivot point to set up the following investigation of *documenta* and its perennial regeneration.

The Metamorphosis of Plants²⁸

Planned and constructed during the expansion of Kassel in the 18th century by Landgrave (Prince²⁹) Friedrich II of Hesse-Cassel, the Museum Fridericianum (completed in 1779) and adjoining Friedrichsplatz are situated at the rift of the city's old fortification system.³⁰

27 Simon Schama. *Landscape and Memory*. (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995), 124.

28 Goethe's "Metamorphosis of Plants" offers a reading of the forces on growth that are useful to the thesis, the realm of the "supersensuous plant archetype" lying beyond the empirically visible, touchable, smellable, classifiable plant, undergirding and guiding the formation and transformation of the material shapes we see on the stem," leading to an account of the "apparent oneness in the great multitude of different plants and for the similarity of structure in the different parts of a single plant," the *Urpflanze*. For these double emphasis on the particular and universal, and his impressive body of work more generally, Goethe emblemized a cultural figure of "German roots" for divergent nationalist strategies in the postwar era, and in this case, *documenta's* pursuit of "illuminating knowledge from within" through dialog "between the human spirit and the informing spirit of nature." Gordon Miller in Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe. *The Metamorphosis of Plants*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), xviii.

In August 1951, members of the Free German Youth organization (FDJ) would march with a portrait of Goethe and a banner reading "Defend our national cultural heritage from American cultural barbarity!" in response to the Marshall Plan and the "cultural hegemony" of Americans over Germany in the early postwar years. See Hans Belting's Chapter entitled "The Late Cult of Modernism: Documenta and Western Art" in *Art History After Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

29 The title of Landgrave can be understood as a Count who ruled over a specified domain during medieval times, and was used after 1806 to signify various sovereign Princes in central Germany.

30 Prior to 1928, the city's name was spelled "Cassel." The city's name is derived from the ancient Castellum Cattorum, a castle of the Chatti, a German tribe that dates to the Roman Empire. Kassel was first mentioned in 913 CE as the site of the signing of two deeds by King Conrad I. First called Chasella, it was simply a fortification at the River Fulda, paired with a bridge across the river. An 1189 deed shows that Kassel had city status, but the date of that issuance is not known.

One of the largest European squares of its time, Friedrichsplatz bridged Kassel's organic medieval and geometrical baroque urban districts. The architecture of the Fridericianum absorbed the medieval tower (Zwehrener) as an observatory and thus marks a point of confluence on Kassel's map over the course of the city's development.



fig. 8: The Zwehrener Turm at the backside of the Museum Fridericianum.

[fig. 8] The following historical account is meant to serve a basic understanding of the city's form through the central urban components (park, plaza, architecture) that form a basis for my argument in the conservation and urban implications of *documenta* in 1955 as the city restructured after the war.

After several successive urban connections and enlargements, the Zwehrener Turm is one of three remaining relics of the town's 13th century ring wall.³¹ Between 1526 and 1547, the city was further extended and made into a modern fortress through a combination of earth moving and imposing fortifying walls. Landgrave Philip (1518-67) established a precedent in Kassel's relationship to landscape when he set aside a plot for a pleasure garden in 1529 adjacent to the Zwehrener Turm but on the other side of the south town wall, which later expanded when cemeteries were relocated outside of the city walls for hygienic ordering. At this suggestion of expansion, land increasingly seemed limited around the 13th century medieval *Burg*, tightly tucked into the branching Fulda River.³² Philip's son, Wilhelm IV, annexed the piece of land that formed an "island"

31 The enlargement of the town wall from the 13th century inner defenses around the old city was financed by the collection of fines issued by Landgrave Heinrich II. *Architekturführer Kassel*. Edited by Berthold Hinz and Andreas Tacke. (Berlin: D. Reimer, 2002), XL.

32 Settled on the river, Kassel was a focal point for Hesse along trade routes. Kassel had a large regional market for agricultural produce, first recorded in 1189 and a staple that still exists today. Fairytale writers the Brothers Grimm reportedly met the source of their rural tales at the produce market of Kassel. At the crossroads of trade and transit in Germany, Kassel was fortuitously located centrally until the division of West and East

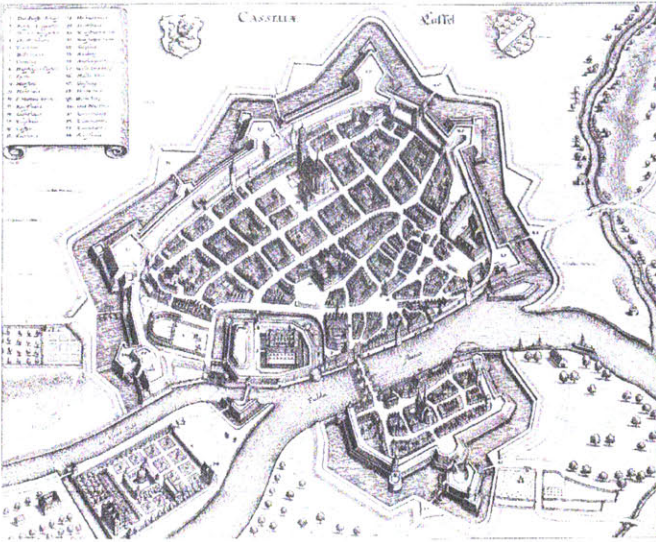


fig. 9: Kassel in 1648 with the beginnings of Aue Park

below the *Burg* (castle), between the Kleine Fulda and the Grosse Fulda, and developed the area's landscaping and building in 1568. A bridge was built over the Kleine Fulda that year to connect the castle to the new park, which began to fill out with a small pavilion and boathouse in 1570/71, a hunting lodge in 1575, an orangery and other service buildings on the farm in 1578.

Berthold Hinz and Andreas Tacke note in their formulaic Architectural Guide to Kassel that the residence garden in Kassel

was among the most impressive of its kind in Central Europe, its exotic plants gaining particular fame. The first of Northern European countries “in winning a place for the town garden,” German governing bodies in some towns developed their gardens so extensively in the late 16th century that complaints were filed by townspeople that their living space was being encroached upon, a counterpoint to the later “garden city” that would mitigate the negative effects of industrialization and urbanization.³³

Wilhelm IV's successor, royal dilettante Landgrave Moritz der Gelehrte (“the Learned,” reigned 1592-1627) demonstrated an interest in science, the marker of the pursuit of modernity, and commissioned the first freestanding theater in Germany, the *Ottoneum* (1603-1606), positioned just south of the *Zwehrener Turm*. Moritz expanded the role of the theater in the city by way of elaborate Italian-inspired triumphal processions (*triumfi*), a bleeding of art into the streets for which he had the *Rennbahn* (racetrack, effectively a public plaza) redesigned. As French and Italian books on gardening became available in German, Germany climbed to reach its height of

Germany, when it then sat only 30 kilometers from the iron curtain, truncating passage and exchange on both east-west and north-south axes.

33 Marie Luise Schroeter Gothein. *A History of Garden Art*, edited by Walter P. Wright; translated from the German by Mrs. Archer-Hind, M. A., with over six hundred illustrations. (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent; New York: Dutton, 1928).

gardening while borrowing from other European examples.

The garden, like the 16th century *Wunderkammer*, became a site for royalty to tour and impress guests with novelties and curiosities, sharing the stories of disparate objects from foreign places, connected only by their containment in the royal cabinet. An expanded outdoor gallery, the garden came to life as a venue for music and social events.³⁴ Early maps of Kassel's Aue Park show a small grid pattern contained within short walls, the edges of which are reinforced by the garden architecture within, or linear series of shrubbery. [fig. 9] Precious, the garden is contained as an isolated experience, framed outside of the city, and even more particular within the larger "park," an island within an island.³⁵ Man took control of nature, representing the landscape in sharp contrast to Tacitus's wooded Germania and its savage wild men and primitive constructions.

The Thirty Years War reconfigured the Holy Roman Empire into a modern nation-state system. Despite the city having been spared, Landgrave Karl of Kassel faced the results of the war when he entered power in 1677: half of the population had died due to starvation and disease and building stock had degraded due to neglect, an urban condition which he would address with architectural prowess. Most notable of his many responsive architectural and landscape projects was the development of the checkerboard *Oberneustadt* (top new city), redesigned in the contemporary style by Paul du Ry (grandfather of Fridericianum architect Simon Louis du Ry) as housing for French Huguenot refugees, the architect himself being one, after the Grant of Liberty was issued in April 1685. In an early iteration of the building exhibition and variation of the *Kunstkammer*, Karl instituted a 'Model house' to exhibit the buildings he had planned or carried out while in power, putting himself in the role of the omnipotent architect standing over the scale model, a tour guide of Kassel architecture in miniature.³⁶

34 In one of the earliest first hand accounts of the 17th century garden typology, an attendee to a March 1613 *Sbrove Tuesday* celebration in Vienna hosted by Grafengeschlecht (Baron) Jörgger described the gardens, "decked with lovely trees, citrons and others, and with music playing," Marie Luise Schroeter Gothein. *A History of Garden Art*, 325.

35 This idea of "containing" nature is further technologized in a design drawing by Mattern for the *Bundesgartenschau* in 1955, building a glass box around a tree to put it on display within the gallery space, see image 23 on page 63 for more.

36 Another example of Karl's interest in exhibition space is the Ottoneum, designed

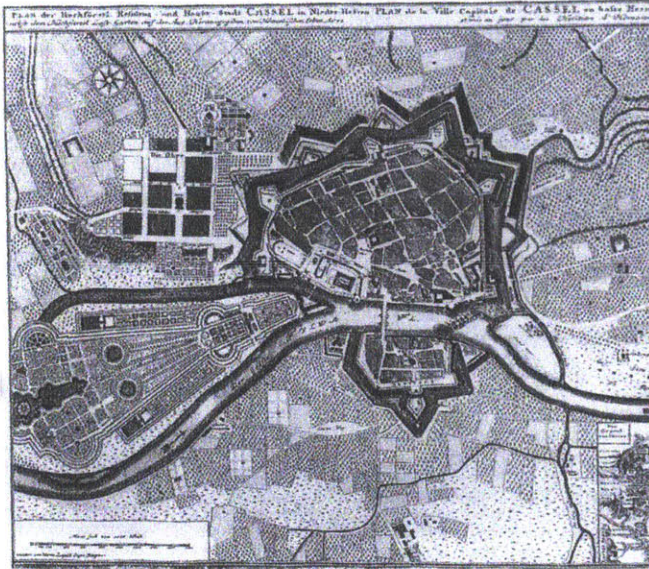


fig. 10: 1742 Leopold: colored copperplate engraving showing the enlarged Orangerie

One of the most significant buildings on that tour is the formal baroque Orangerie, expanded from the original 1578 building in 1701 and 1711. Typical of the style, the iconic Orangerie was a pleasure palace for the Landgrave, decorated with ornate paintings and sculptures. Set within a park and connected to other urban elements by multiple axes, what was built is only a portion of the Landgrave's plan; extensions from the baroque palace were meant to dot the cloverleaf laid out in the garden. Of what was built, an octagonal pavilion centers

the main building and galleries extend on either side to two-story corner pavilions.³⁷ [fig. 10] Extending from the river's elbow, the geometry of the garden reaches out from the royal Schloss, filling out the area between the "small river" and the "large river." Nearly the same size of the city contained in the medieval walls, the park dominated the former island, a mystical place once cut off from the city, then regulated by man's hands. From 1790, symmetrical beds were adapted in the English landscape garden style, keeping some baroque features. In plan, the garden layout is scientifically symmetrical at the macro, while each sectioned bed determines its own kaleidoscopic character. Nature was rationalized, idealized and aestheticized in the space of the garden, both a complete image in itself and a display of multiple art objects (follies and false ruins, sculptures, garden beds), with which we can consider it within art and exhibition history.

Inspired by his journeys to Italy, Karl erected a copper copy of the Hercules from

by architect Wilhelm Vernukken and built from 1603-06, renovated to house Karl's art collection in 1696, and later for the Collegium Carolinum scientific society in 1709, it is now the Natural History Museum of Kassel and was a venue for dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012.

37 Although the architect cannot be confirmed, stylistic windows in blind arches and balustrades over three window bays with pilasters and segment gables are trademarks of the French Paul du Ry.

Rome's Palazzo Farnese as the Herkules Oktogon, one of the most monumental statues in all of Europe and the *Stadtkrone* of Kassel.³⁸ [fig. 11] Located outside of the city gates, he connected the monument to the river valley along a continuous Cartesian projection line over newly landscaped Karlsberg Gardens, the eye carried quicker than the feet through the garden's sinuous paths. Landgrave Friedrich II (1760-1785) extended the Karlsberg with additions in the



fig. 11: Bergpark in the Picturesque style, with the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe at the vantage point and Herkules at the horizon, right.

38 "Die Stadtkrone" (City Crown) was termed by Weimar period architect Bruno Taut. The regular appearance of the words "Stadtkrone" and "Volkshaus" in the writings and projects produced by Taut's group of collaborators signal the importance of a town's community building. Taut's slogan for the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (Work Council for the Arts), "The earth a good habitation!" situated architecture as a humanitarian effort. The council's goal for all arts under the wing of "a great architecture" paralleled many revolutionary artist and architect groups during the interwar period, including the Bauhaus, the manifesto for which was published in 1919, just one year after that for the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (1918). Die Stadtkrone (City Crown) was developed in 1919 as an urban planning scheme with a central mountain or stepped pyramid, inspired by the lightness of the cosmic world, following the Expressionist form making with organic or crystalline materials. Taut's concept argued that an impressively scaled crystalline form in the center of a town would compensate for the loss of a figural center of the modern, alienated man, and root him to 'deeper' meanings in an integrated society. Taut saw the responsibility of the artist to reveal the form of this utopian polity, rising from the ruins of European civilization, immediately evident in the face of Berlin's decline after World War I and establishing the Expressionist eagerness to destroy in order to create. Although it ultimately could not contribute to the production of architecture, Expressionism infiltrated all arts and crafts in Germany, including the Bauhaus and served as an underlying informant of the artwork displayed at *documenta* in 1955. Under Gropius, the Bauhaus school and movement aimed to unite fine arts, craft, and architecture, reconnecting the artist with the community, one aspect of the greater social ideals to bring Germany out of the "damned wild beast cage the war made of Europe." For more, see William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*. (London: Phaidon, 1996), 183-184. Jos Bosmon refers to the Herkules as the expressive *Stadtkrone* in his 2007 paper, "The Tale of Kassel - From a Unique and Intact 1000 Years of Urban Heritage to a Cityscape Saturated with Modernist Buildings, Crowned by a Copy of Hercules from the Palazzo Farnese in Rome." Paper presented at Urban Heritage: Research, Interpretation, Education, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Vilnius, Lithuania, September 25-26, 2007.

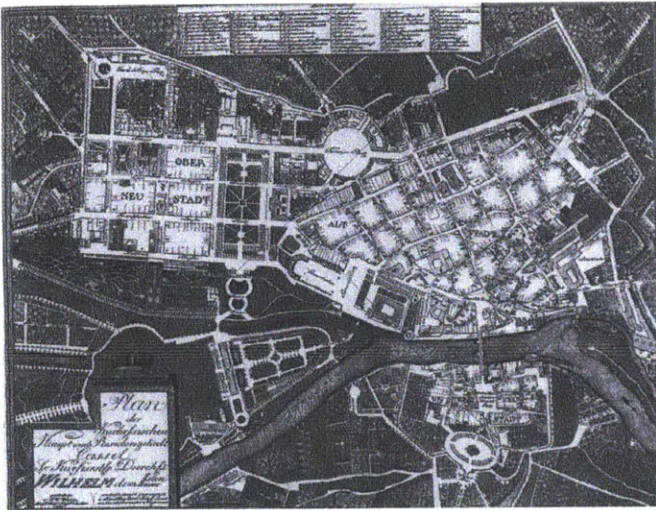
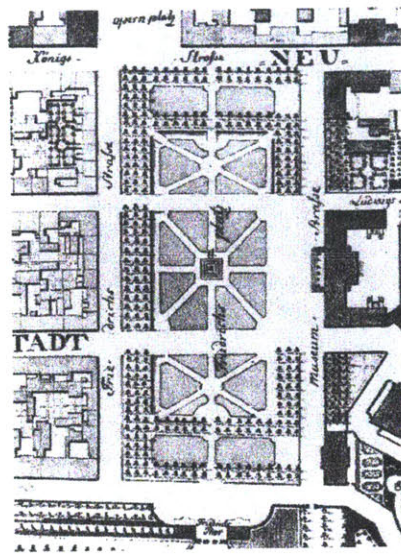


fig. 10: 1803, G.W. Weise, Kassel Town Plan, engraving

faux-untamed English picturesque style, to later be further transformed into an idealized natural landscape by his successor, Wilhelm IX (reigned 1785-1821). Guests would typically be toured around the garden, guided through the botanical features and the twelve sculptures of Greek and Roman gods added in 1804 and the other temples, memorials and bridges incorporated over time. Elements that moved the eye across the landscape worked in harmony with the larger geometries and topography of the city with moments of *mise-en-scène* with the integrated architectural follies, gigantized in the castle in the distant rustic forest. The Herkules Oktogon is the pinnacle of the several follies and sculptures peppered throughout the gardens that give the viewer a narrative to construct along their path, a German trend that is traced to the Italian garden that cultivated spiritual experiences and inspired artistic pursuits.

In another appropriation of the classical style, the Museum Fridericianum was completed in 1779, historicizing the Baroque style of the Orangerie. Under Friedrich II, its namesake, the city's impressive fortifications were destroyed to construct the central Museum and plaza, effectively bridging two areas of the city. A student of Blondel whose family of Huguenot descent found refuge in Kassel and established themselves as prolific architects, Simon Louis du Ry designed the Museum Fridericianum and laid a parade ground next to the Rennbahn, decorated by several rows of chestnut trees at the northwest and beds with sculptures at the northeast.

[fig. 10] The garden began to spill out of the Karlsaue and into the new “public space” of the enlightened city, once again in a regularized grid.

Culminating the Landgrave’s enlightened ideals, the cabinet of wonders (*Wunderkammer*), art gallery and royal library were moved from the upper story of the four-wing Renaissance-style Marstall, and placed in the Fridericianum.³⁹ With this, the neoclassical building qualified as the first public museum in continental Europe. The Landgrave’s collection of antique copies in marble, bronze and plaster was shown on the first floor alongside a “gallery of modern statues” including the Kassel copy of the Roman Apollo, cabinets of machines and watches and an extensive collection of cork models of classical ancient buildings.⁴⁰ Upstairs, the library contained 100,000 books and on display were the weapons collection as well as wax figures of previous Hessen Landgraves, and in the *Zwehrenturm*, a collection of scientific instruments.⁴¹ The museum’s original collection⁴² and Friedrich himself are familiar in American history due to his lease of the state’s mercenary army, “the Hessians,” to the British military⁴³

39 Additionally, Friedrich added the *Gemaldesgalerie* to Kassel’s growing roster of cultural institutions and decorated its walls with paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and other Dutch old masters.

40 One of the most notable oddities in Friedrich II’s collection was the skeleton of an Indian elephant that had been a wedding gift in 1773 and a member of the Landgrave’s zoo in the Karlsaue until it died in a tragic accident, when it rolled down the embankment in the park in 1780 after being shown at a performance at the opera house. The skeleton was preserved and used by Goethe for anatomical research from 1783. Now known as “Goethe’s Elephant,” the remains are still on view in the Natural History Museum (*Ottoneum*) in Kassel.

41 Freiherr Friedrich Justus von Guenderode, Travel letter from Kassel, Frankfurt, Leipzig 1781, referenced in Merkel, Kertin. “Die Besichtigung von Kassel – Reisekultur im 18. Jahrhundert” in *Kassel im 18. Jahrhundert Residenz und Stadt* edited by Heide Wunder, Christina Vanja and Karl-Hermann Wegner, (Euregio Verlag: Kassel, 2000), 235. For further details on the collection, see Museum Fridericianum, Kunsthalle. “Fridericianum - from the Museum of Fine Arts Hall.” n.d. Web. 5 Mar. 2013.

42 For more history on the germination of the Fridericianum’s medieval collection in its *Kunstammer*, see Franz Adrian Drier’s essay “The *Kunstammer* of the Hessian Landgraves in Kassel,” in *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, edited by Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1985).

43 Hessians were leased to various military efforts across Europe throughout the 18th century. Hired by George I of Great Britain in 1715, they fought against the Jacobite Rebellion, the Austrian Succession in 1744, and then with Ferdinand of Brunswick’s army by 1762. 30,067 men from Hesse served in America during the Revolutionary War,

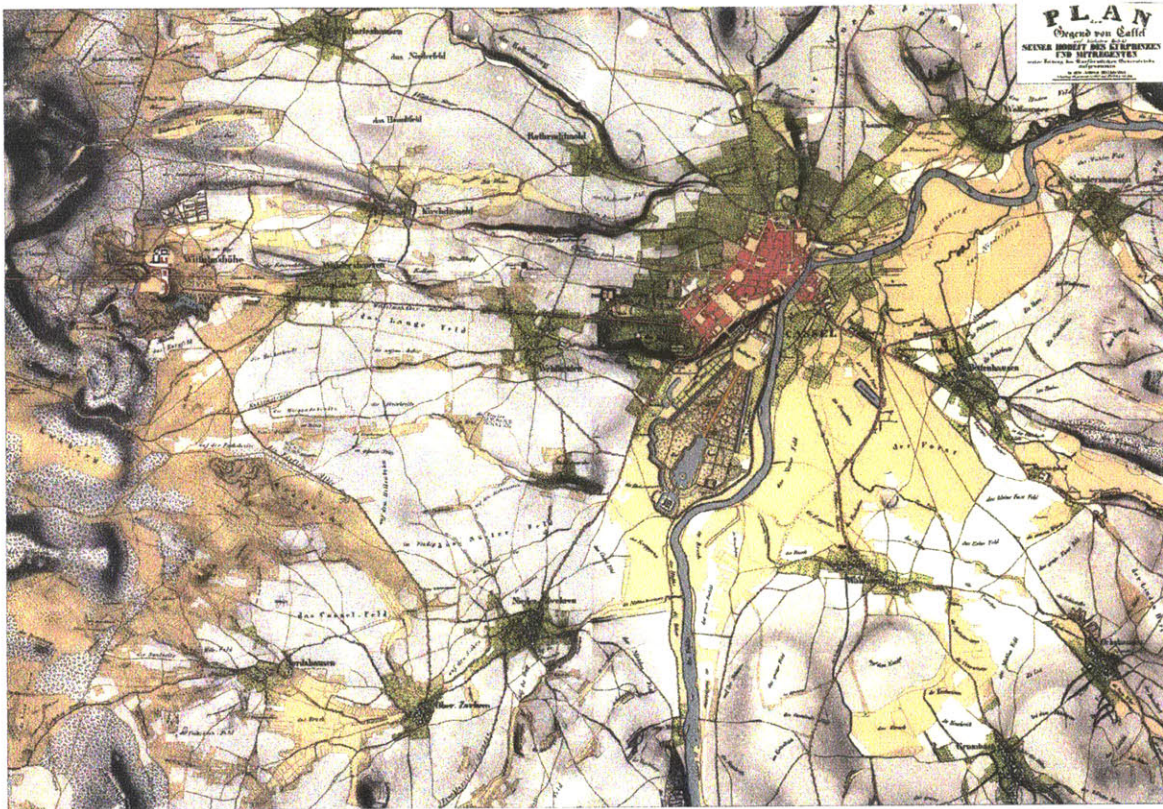


fig. 11: A long green artery extends to the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe and surrounding Bergpark, creating a networked garden city from the center and the Karlsaeue to the picturesque landscape.

for the American Revolutionary War, 1776-1783. Their battle compensation went to the Landgrave, and in combination with other similar arrangements, Friedrich II was able to fund the Fridericianum and the collections it contained writing it off as “state support.” Conveniently, architects, construction workers and craftsmen were exempted from the draft, building work became steady and “Hesse-Kassel became a showplace of public works and public buildings.”⁴⁴

Despite absolutist planning programs such as those enforced by the city’s building department, established in 1775, du Ry’s town plans and architecture demonstrate the

12,992 of which came from Kassel (the largest group). John Brewer, Eckhart Hellmuth, German Historical Institute in London. *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64.

44 Industry also expanded under the same pretenses of wartime draft exemptions. Uniforms, weaponry, agriculture and sheep-raising kept bellies full for those who stayed home.

Dennis E. Showalter and William J. Astor. *The Early Modern World*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), 42.

spiritual and stylistic revolution of the age. Namely, the Museum Fridericianum “marked the change of direction towards the Enlightenment and classicism,” exposed within a large square and architecturally distinct from the late Baroque styling of surrounding buildings.⁴⁵ The joining of Altstadt with Oberneustadt fulfilled functional, aesthetic and town planning requirements with three distinguished squares along the former fortification ring at the southwest of Altstadt. Due to this bridging, the larger geometries of the city were straightened in making formal connections to the Schloss Weissenstein, adapted from a previous hunting lodge by Simon Louis du Ry from 1786-1801 for Wilhelm IX and thenceforth known as the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe.⁴⁶ [fig. 11] Sealing Friedrichsplatz’s symbolic and urban importance, a monumental statue of Landgrave Friedrich II was mounted in 1783 at the center of the parade ground, and once du Ry’s work was complete around the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe and Bergpark, Kassel was considered successfully modernized.

In 1806, French troops occupied the Electorate of Hesse and Napoléon Bonaparte’s brother, King Jérôme, moved into the Schloss on the Fulda.⁴⁷ With architect Leo Klenze, Jérôme transformed the Fridericianum into a German legislative “diet” building, asserting the city’s new identity in the Kingdom of Westphalia.⁴⁸ After the fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 that formed the German Confederation of 39 states under Austrian leadership, Wilhelm I was restored as Elector,

45 Winter, Sascha in *Architekturführer Kassel*. Edited by Berthold Hinz and Andreas Tacke. (Berlin: D. Reimer, 2002), XLIV.

46 With director of building works Heinrich Christoph Jussow (1754-1825), Wilhelm concentrated on the Schloss and surrounding hill park, continuously built over 130 years from 1700 and ultimately combining the architectural and landscape ideals of the late 18th century, an unmatched example of its style in Europe. *Architekturführer Kassel*. Edited by Berthold Hinz and Andreas Tacke. (Berlin: D. Reimer, 2002), XIII.

47 Napoléon had renamed the Musée Louvre “Musée Napoléon” in 1803 as he filled its walls with art, both pillaged and negotiated, from the territories he conquered during the Napoleonic Wars, 1803-1815. The museum had opened on August 10, 1793 with 537 paintings and 184 other art objects on display. Previously a Palace, the Louvre was transformed into a museum during the French Revolution, declared in May 1791 that it would be “a place for bringing together monuments of all the sciences and arts” to “preserve the national memory.” Nora, Pierre, and Lawrence D. Kritzman. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 278.

48 Notably, Jérôme is also held responsible for the infamous fire of 1811 that destroyed the Schloss on the Fulda and threatened the royal library.

a title rendered meaningless by the governmental restructuring of states into a loose coalition. At the same time, the famed Brüder Grimm began publishing their folktales, the first volume of *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (“Tales of the Brothers Grimm”) in 1812 and the second in 1814 (postdated 1815), eventually becoming one of the best known pieces of literature in the German language. The brothers staffed the royal library in Kassel from 1808-1830 and collected their folktales from the Hinterland by way of a woman they first met at the agriculture market in town. This secondary connection to the wild forest translates in their tales’ mystical representation of the unknown. As poets, the Brothers Grimm inscribed the spirit and integrated the parts of landscape in a form other than physical material.⁴⁹ Grimms’ Tales figure the forest as a place for camouflaging, transforming and discovering, crystallizing a set of German cultural values and relationship with territory and landscape. “Embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication,”⁵⁰ the tales of the Brothers Grimm illuminate man’s derivational relationship from nature. Similar to Milton’s 17th century epic poem, Paradise Lost, the poems act as a connective tissue across the regions inhabited by German people.

Upon Prussian acquisition of the Electorate of Hesse in 1866, Kassel was made the capital of the Hesse-Nassau province, a major industrial center and railway junction, opening up new opportunities and rapid economic development. Alongside the influx of manual workers and increase in small-scale artisan production, steam and railroad development in Germany followed English industry, transitioning Germany from the country of the handworker and farmer to a leader in the industrial age.⁵¹ Industrial development in other German cities at the time, including Hamburg, inevitably created undesirable urban conditions including congestion, pollution and a greater distance from the light and air offered by the landscape. As an antidote, landscaped urban parks of various sizes were incorporated into larger plans, at times linked by tree-lined avenues and

49 In the words of Emerson, “landscape has no owner” except “the poet” who can integrate its parts. *Nature* (1836) quoted in W. J. T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 14.

50 Mitchell, 14.

51 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture; the Growth of a New Tradition*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 473.

parkways. Sigmund Aschrott, a Kassel textile manufacturer supplying the army, bought new land in the latter half of the 1860s, providing space for new urban construction with higher standards of design. Leaving fifty percent of the land undeveloped, thousands of buildings were constructed between 1858 and 1873, interspersing large courtyards, border planting, broad streets, and parks.⁵² While Kassel incorporated and distributed green space, successive plans worked around the historic Karlsau Park, a central component of the city plan and social ideals.

The growing importance of incorporating nature into the city affected the developing field of city planning, parks and park systems as primary tools in a planner's toolkit. In the first half of the twentieth century, German architects and planners were most directly influenced by examples set by American cities and the City Beautiful movement, combining utility and beauty in urban development. A 1910 international town planning exhibition in Düsseldorf exposed the *Chicago Plan* to European visitors for the first time, inspiring planners including Hamburg architect Hugo Koch to visit the American park sites in person. For Koch, who later included Chicago in his popular 1914 book, *Gartenkunst und Städtebau*, praised the Chicago plan, which "exemplifies with its system of useful and representational parks and promenades the excellent extent to which garden art can contribute to the construction of the modern metropolis."⁵³ Marking the shift away from traditional garden design, Friedrich Bauer's 1908 Schiller Park for Berlin was held in high respect for expressing "the spirit of German landscape into a *Gesamtkunstwerk* through the moulding of the earth and the selection of plants."⁵⁴ With a similar nativist aesthetic as seen in Chicago, citizens' appreciation of the regional landscape was enhanced and the garden edged closer to a transnational tool to control populations and promote national identity. These widely publicized trends in German garden design and coevolution of urban design practice are prominent in the postwar

52 *Architekturführer Kassel*. Edited by Berthold Hinz and Andreas Tacke. (Berlin: D. Reimer, 2002), XLVI.

53 Koch, *Gartenkunst*, 234. Quoted in Sonja Duempelmann (2009): *Creating order with nature: transatlantic transfer of ideas in park system planning in twentieth-century Washington D.C., Chicago, Berlin and Rome*, *Planning Perspectives*, 24:2, 160.

54 W. Jänicke, 'Friderich Bauer ist tot!' ['Friedrich Bauer is dead!'], *Die Gartenkunst* 50, no. 9 (1937): 5. Quoted in Duempelmann, 161.

rebuilding plans in Kassel.

New City on Old Ground⁵⁵

By 1933, a strong network of architects had been designing gardens in Europe and her colonies, connected by the meetings of Le Corbusier's Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) and resultant manifestos, specifically the "Athens Charter," which called for the classic modernist separation of housing, work, recreation and traffic.⁵⁶ Made available in German in 1947, the universal model for functional urban development was reproduced in Kassel under urban planner Wolfgang Bangert, a former CIAM member. With dramatic shifts in population due to the extent of the war damage and the migration of East German residents to West Germany, housing became the first priority in reconstruction. In 1950, new housing laws were passed to exponentially increase the rate of construction, but planning was left in a complicated political territory. Historian Leonardo Benevolo tells us, "Town-planning legislation left the whole responsibility for planning to local authorities, so that the individual interests weighed more than was necessary on the planning schemes for German cities."⁵⁷ Kassel's City Council had already given preliminary approval to a Master Plan in 1948 at the same time the State government of Hesse passed the Instrumental Reconstruction Act,⁵⁸ moving forward the governmental framework for planning and reconstruction, what historian Lüken-Isberner has called a "verbal consolation prize" for a public opposed to a modern urban form.⁵⁹ With the flexible open plan after the destruction of Kassel's urban

55 Roger Buergel cites this phrase as the slogan for the situation in Kassel after eighty percent of the city had been destroyed and, as this section addresses, a modern city would replace the historical organic structure without a trace. *Archive in Motion*, ed. Michael Glasmeier and Karen Stengel, (Germany, 2005,) 173.

56 Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 190 (fn 47).

57 Leonardo Benevolo. *History of Modern Architecture*. (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1971), 733.

58 Bangert, "Reconstruction of the City Centre," *The Town Planning Review*, 29: 2, (July 1958): 99.

59 Folckert Lüken-Isberner, "Verständnisse von Stadt und Städtebaulicher Planung: Determinanten für die Aufbaurealisierung der Innenstadt von Kassel," *Die Aktualität der Moderne und die 50er Jahre*, (Kassel: Architektursalon, 2007), 107.

center, decisions to rebuild Kassel were made by individual voices fraught with political allegiances and burdens.

Already in the 1920s and 30s, planners were concerned with the inner traffic situation and took on renovations of the Old Town by first gutting the blocks to better circulate traffic. Along with new housing projects, the city set a national example as a “City on the Field” and earned three spots in the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition “The International Style: Architecture Since 1922,” organized by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in 1932.⁶⁰ Between 1933 and 1937, Kassel became a critical example for the megalomaniac Nazi party, imagined as a militarized “large Kassel” to accommodate 300,000 people in 1980 and then, in 1937 as a capital of the reconfigured province Kurhessen. The Fridericianum became an administrative headquarters for Hitler, who befriended Prince Philip (see footnote 24) and the industrial infrastructure of the city was modified to produce war machinery. In 1941, planning official Erich Heinicke drafted urban schemes prioritizing industrial production and traffic, widening Willemshöhe Allee, creating a second outer ring in the 1938 Traffic Plan, as well as developing an air raid protection plan for the city. Before these plans were realized, the Third Reich abruptly prioritized Kassel as ‘a city to be rebuilt’ (*Weideraufbaustab*) in September 1943, one month before facing massive destruction.⁶¹

60 The exhibition, which put architectural icons of the International Style, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, at the forefront, also included three architectural works in Kassel. Disproportionate with built works in Frankfurt am Main and Berlin, the following were shown for their contribution to the local *Neues Bauen* movement with clear form and modest scale, but not without critique: Dapolin Filling Station (Hans Borkowsky, 1930): “Dominating roof plane over transparent screen wall. Colors: Brilliant red and white for advertisement. A design easy to standardize. Compare with standardized American station,” which, along with the car, was symbol of modernity and mobility; Siedlung Rothenberg (Otto Haesler, 1930): “The long bands of windows are made possible by steel construction. The inset balconies and the thick capping of the stairwells break the regular fenestration disagreeably. The stepping of the roof line, on the other hand, gives an interesting variety to the general system of regularity”; Office of the City Architect (Jobst), Savings Bank (1931): “A municipal building, sound but not brilliant in design. Lower lettering better placed than silhouetted lettering above.” Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. (New York, NY: Norton, 1995), 115, 159, 236.

61 Also under the Nazi era plans, one-fifth of Kassel’s 7,500 buildings in Altstadt were slated for demolition in a renewal project. Diefendorf, 309 (fn 14).

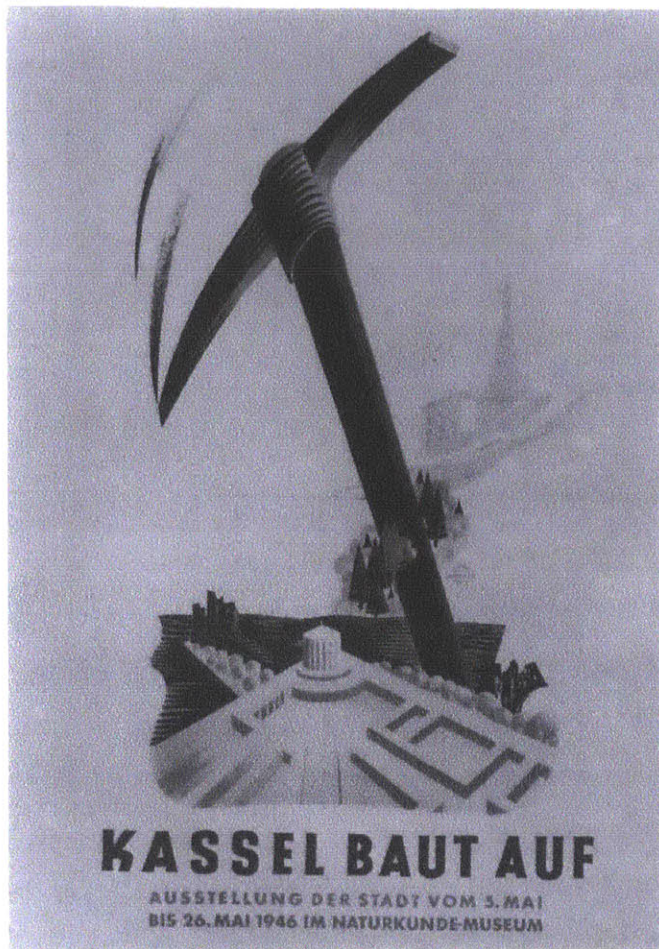


fig. 12: Poster for Heinicke's exhibition for the rebuilding of Kassel in 1946—the gardens and historic monuments are relegated to the outskirts of the city while new monumental architecture whitewashes the foreground.

A Berlin panel under Albert Speer's leadership drew up the master plan and several planners and architects were commissioned to submit plans, including Heinicke and Kassel architect Werner Hasper. After the October bombings had destroyed a large percentage of the city's housing as well as the cultural center, plans to modernize the half-timbered houses and medieval streets were spatially feasible, although financially restricted. Friedrich Bleibaum, the provincial conservator, issued recommendations in July 1944 that would preserve specific buildings, particularly those of the defining Renaissance Weser style, and to add onto the existing to create a modern city from the old rhythm. Instead, under Heinicke as planning advisor (*Stadtbaurat*), National Socialists filled the seats in the planning office, transitioning provincial rebuilding plans to the postwar situation.

In August 1944, the city held a closed competition and invited architects one of which was Hasper, who had made an impression during the Weimar *Gauforumspanning* period. Bombing continued through the end of the war in 1945, by which point over 77% of the city had been destroyed. Old urban plans with shaded blocks radiating from the train station were eventually displayed in the 1946 exhibition, "Kassel Baut Auf" (Kassel Builds On) in the partially destroyed Ottoneum. Evocative of political propaganda, the exhibition poster mobilizes the emblematic pick axe, an industrialist call to the people, hovering over a city plan resembling Speer's monumental marble architecture. [fig. 12] Removing historic fabric from the new city, ruins recede into the field at the



fig. 13: Urban plans from 1944/45 (top, Heinicke) vs. 1951 (bottom, Bangert). Characteristic of Speer's plans, the top forms megalithic blocks from the once medieval fabric, while Bangert's plans maintain a hierarchy of scale between residential, commercial and cultural.

horizon while a white rectilinear city plan imposes itself, most likely Heinicke's own unrealized *Gauforum* for Kassel at the vineyard, projecting over the black field with hints of classicism in columns and a spearheading pavilion. Suggesting a proposal of the relocation of the garden to outside of the city walls, the poster echoes the historic plan of Kassel, producing useful narratives from historical interpretations. From the pavilion stretches the wild Wilhelmshöhe Park diagonally to a faint Herkules, the *Stadtkrone* to be retired.

In his speech at the exhibition opening, Heinicke highlighted the plans for Kassel as a "new" healthy organism. However, citizens picked up on Speer's influence on the proposed plans and the exhibit closed prematurely, after only a few days. With growing urgency to rebuild the downtown, the Kassel Architecture Association and the Working Group on Arts and Culture organized another competition with the City Council, this time nationwide, putting forth the following parameters for entries: a reorganized urban transport network; prioritized management, trade and culture; retained train station; and preservation of the Fridericianum –although other historic buildings were vulnerable depending on the overall urban requirements of the proposed plans. The historic growth of the city would not determine postwar reconstruction, but the Fridericianum would be prioritized for its cultural status and architectural achievement in West Germany. [fig. 13] Jurors evaluated the nearly 170 diverse and diametrically opposing entries and the national press actively covered the results, culminating in an exhibition at the Ottoneum in 1947. The winning entry, by Hans Högg, called for extensive preservation of previous urban structures, a plan that was ultimately unrealized. Hasper's plans appealed to this jury as well; he won fourth place and later administered the reconstruction as the principal town planner from 1947 to 1954, and Bangert joined the team in 1949. In the years between 1949 and 1951, landscape architect Hermann Mattern developed an unrealized plan for Kassel's rebuilding with professor and artist Arnold Bode and his brother Paul Bode, an architect, mapping out the city's topography and existing built parts from which to create new living and working areas. Wilhelmshöhe Allee was imagined as a green artery that branched to circumscribe Friedrichsplatz, the round plaza Königsplatz and the Karlsau Park. The plan incorporated a new design for the theater, developed later

with Hans Scharoun (and described below), which would take advantage of the city's topography and vistas over the landscape, putting the park on stage.⁶² Although developed from another competitor's entry in 1947, the Treppenstraße was credited to Hasper and completed in 1953 as the first pedestrian zone planned in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, "West Germany") and an asymmetrical urban and



fig. 14: Treppenstraße and the EAM tower at rear, photographed in 1956.

architectural ensemble, changing the definition of city life with a promenade through the commercial district to the cultural center. The stepped street connected the main train station with Friedrichsplatz, adding a second axis to the city after that from Herkules to create an "impressive gateway to the Kassel inner city."⁶³ With the EAM high-rise at the new intersection at Scheidemannplatz, opposite the train station, Kassel demonstrated its participation in CIAM's modernist formula –a tower on an open square. [fig. 14] After careful examination by the City's "technical officers" and by an advisory committee of German and foreign architects and planners, the final Master Plan was developed from a combination of several entries. The plan for a structured and dispersed city kept the basic strategies of an inner ring road that would shift traffic out from the center, first dissecting the formerly unified Altstadt through the cultural center Friedrichsplatz, disembodying the Staatstheater from the Museum Fridericianum, the modern cars on the Steinweg prioritized over the cultural center.

As early as 1929 at the XII International Congress on Housing and City Planning, the ring road was declared a formidable solution to the modernization of cities characterized by historically conserved city centers. The Congress concluded with a design

62 Hermann Mattern, Arnold Bode and Paul Bode. "Wiederaufbau der Stadt Kassel: Erläuterungen" (1949-1951) TU Berlin Architektur Archives. Accessed January 2013.

63 "So Wird die Treppenstraße Aussehen, wenn sie bebaut ist." in *Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA)*, Number 271. Samstag, 21. November 1953. translation by Ken Kronenberg.

solution for a green belt immediately around the generic city center, circumscribed by a ring road to keep the center clear of motor traffic.⁶⁴ Kassel's Old Town was sealed and the issuance of building permits was paused from 1948-1951 as master plans were developed, leaving demolition unchecked and preservation undone, aside from the protected Red Palace and Fridericianum on the north side of Friedrichsplatz and the Orangerie in the Karlsaue. Foremost was the idea of a "new city on old ground"⁶⁵ rather than "rebuilding." Urban plans were showcased once again in the Fridericianum in the early 1950s, adding to the roster of public involvement in the urban planning process, offering transparency after Heinicke's deception. Bangert wrote in 1958 of the modernist plans and vertically arrayed architecture: "Many portions of old buildings and mediaeval [sic] features can be appreciated if their general appearance is compared with those of districts which are entirely new, where planning has been under no restraint at all. Sometimes these latter districts seem to lack feeling."⁶⁶ How would town planners and architects reconcile this rift between the charm of historic architecture and the new modernist aesthetic, in the urgent housing situation? Plans continued under the concept of "city landscape." As authoritative historian Folckert Lüken-Isberner writes, "What was the *Altstadt* became a suburban estate, mainly residential in use. Echoes of the old city centre were completely suppressed; there was to be no possibility of identifying the district with the past," and memory was erased in the architectural manipulation of façades from gable to eaves. The Orangerie and Museum Fridericianum would be exceptions to the new functional city plan, their façades remaining tall.

Between these two urban nodes at the top of the slope was the site of the former State Theater (*Staatstheater*), destroyed in the war, followed by a controversial architecture competition for its replacement. [fig. 15] A 1952 design competition was awarded to a scheme proposed by Hermann Mattern, landscape architect for the *Bundesgartenschau* and Hans Scharoun, a utopian⁶⁷ architect of the "heroic period" in modernism. The two

64 Duempelmann, 165.

65 Buerger, *Origins*, 173.

66 Bangert, 99-102.

67 Scharoun biographer Peter Blundell-Jones has purposefully distinguished the 'Utopian period' from the earlier referenced 'Expressionism' to describe the interwar

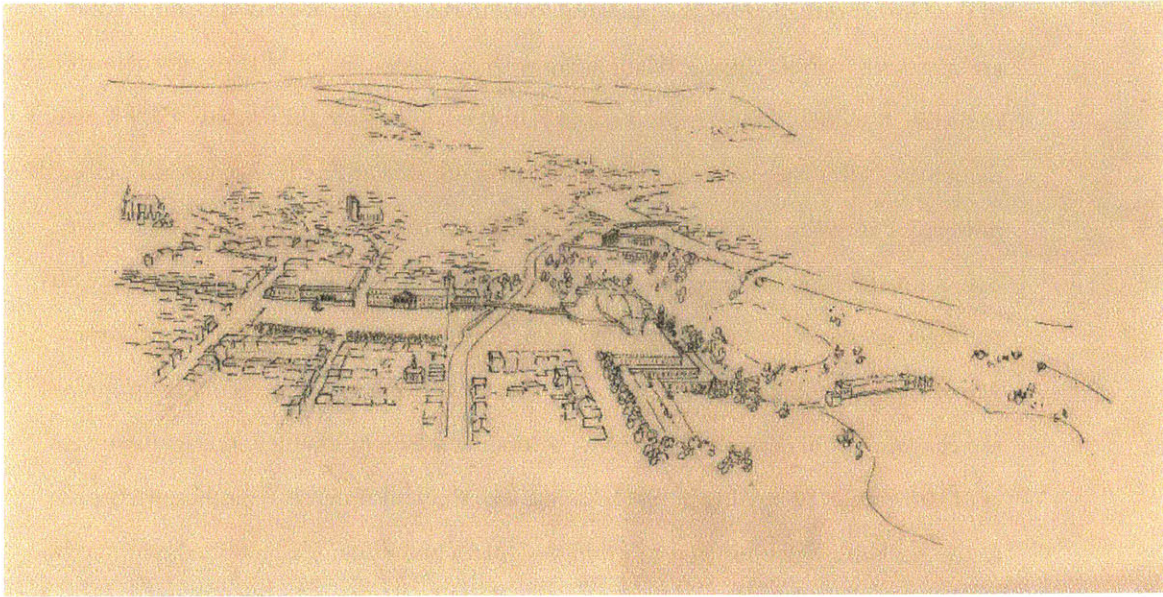


fig. 15: Hermann Mattern, designs for Stadt von Morgen entry showing the design with collaborator Hans Scharoun for the new Staatstheater, 1954. On the left is Friedrichsplatz and the Fridericianum, linked by the Staatstheater over the Steinweg to the Karlsau and the Orangerie.

architects had collaborated on several projects since the 1930s. A young member in Taut's Crystal Chain Letters Group (see footnote 27), Scharoun adopted the ideology around the *Volkshaus* or 'people's hall' as the "principal element in a town, a physical representation of the people and their aspirations, and the living evidence of unity between art and people."⁶⁸ Scharoun's theater and concert hall designs translated the social significance

sentiments among architects and artists in Germany. Blundell-Jones characterizes Scharoun as an outlier of the later European modernists in architecture, alongside Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. Although not living in the active Berlin, but in Insterburg during these years, Scharoun was a member of Bruno Taut's "Glass Chain" group that exchanged inspirational and revolutionary circular letters and drawings. He took a professorship at the Breslau Arts Academy in 1925 and from there, he worked on his first important work, the Weissenhof house (1927-33) in the Deutsche Werkbund's estate-cum -building exhibition of the "Neues Bauen" movement in Stuttgart. Meanwhile, he was working on his first modular and mobile house for the German Garden and Industry Exhibition at Liegnitz in 1927-28. Blundell-Jones praises the single story timber-framed house as a free design with formal and spatial articulation. I call this work out of his oeuvre to point to the existing relationship between architecture displays in garden shows in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the fundamental values established in his earlier work, inclusive of the Liegnitz Exhibition house, carry through to his architecture after 1945, including the design for Kassel's Staatstheater from 1951-53. Furthermore, his Weissenhof house is featured in the small "Architecture 1905-1955" photography exhibition on the third floor of the Fridericianum at *documenta* in 1955.

68 Blundell-Jones, Peter, and Hans Scharoun. *Hans Scharoun*. (London: Phaidon, 1995), 61.

of the Gothic cathedral for the medieval town to the communal event around art and architecture's "correct organic relationship with the townscape."⁶⁹ Historically determined in its site, the double-theater proposal in Kassel was to replace the original 1909 theater⁷⁰ demolished after irrecoverable damage, on the south side of Friedrichsplatz and across the new major roadway, which had bisected the cultural core. With the original site cleared, Scharoun and Mattern were given the option to skew the building off the east-west axis and open up access and views by placing the building on the extreme northeast corner. Moving slightly downhill, the curvaceous theater's cascading seating could form against the contour of the natural topography, positioning the orchestra pit and stage basement at incrementally decreasing levels. To create a continuous itinerary from Friedrichsplatz to the Karlsau, Scharoun and Mattern designed a pedestrian bridge over the motorway, separating man from automobile. This idea was exaggerated by the theater's design turning its back on the motorway to face the park, a glass façade looking to the garden as the future of the city. Subtle devices choreograph people through the controlled and mediating space of the foyer. Shaped by the other programs in the architecture, the foyer, like the plaza, is determined by circulation –across the street, up and down the staircases and levels, from the urban plaza. Scharoun's biographer, Peter Blundell-Jones relates the unpredictability of these paths to the "excitement of a theatrical performance" quoting Scharoun from his report on the theater design for Kassel, "The progress of the visitor across the bridge, or from the lower approach road, through the entrance hall and cloakrooms into the auditorium is not merely a physical act, but an emotional experience."⁷¹ An emphasis on multiple interpretations carried over to the theater itself, which rejected the picture-frame stage for its rigidly dichotomous relationship between viewer and actor. Instead, the pair designed a wider stage for various and experimental uses, not limited to theatrical productions but also meant for concerts and opera,

69 Ibid., 61.

70 Built under the orders of German emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II, the theater had one of the largest stages in the country and seating for over 1,450 at the time it was built in 1909.

71 Hans Scharoun quoted in English in Gerd Hatje, Hubert Hoffman and Karl Kaspar, *New German Architecture*. (London: Architectural Press, 1956), 118. Referenced in Blundell-Jones, 28.

incorporating some of the older programs of the Ottoneum and other buildings in the area surrounding Friedrichsplatz. Unusual for a theater design, Scharoun opened the back of the auditorium with a large window to give the option of natural light for illuminating the stage. A revised scheme was prepared in 1953 but in some bureaucratic unraveling after the first two months of construction, the project was abandoned in 1954. The project was then given to Arnold Bode's brother, the architect Paul Bode, and ultimately completed in 1959. Mattern's 1954 drawings for the *Bundesgartenschau* include his own design for the Staatstheater although the site was empty by the show's opening in 1955.⁷²

Bundesgartenschau Revival

The FRG revived the garden show as a biennial, traveling to the most devastated of West German cities after World War II, temporarily installing an agricultural industrial fair with "permanent" landscape garden renovations to deliver the economic benefits of tourism. The postwar biennial effort aimed to revitalize bombed cities through the improvement of inner city urban parks, agriculture industry and to educate city dwellers who could take up farming to grow their own food, or start a business to offer an economic boost to the local and national industry.

The National Authority with local branches, the *Zentralverbandes Gartenbau* (ZVG) administered and selected each city and architect, with the goals of "recuperation, revision, development of new green areas and green connectivity...and ecologically meaningful open spaces,"⁷³ while the *Deutschen Bundesgartenschau-Gesellschaft* mbH (DBG) would handle the day-to-day orchestration of the event.⁷⁴ While along the same vein as industrial or trade fairs in display technique and format, German garden shows are directly connected to the history of German landscape architecture and park design with

72 Scharoun and Mattern's winning proposal was widely admired and its fate lamented. The project holds a prominent place in the monographs of each architect and a place in the short section on Germany's postwar rebuilding in Leonardo Benevolo's 2-volume *History of Modern Architecture* published in 1960, without mention of it having forever remained architecture on paper, or the realized theater by Paul Bode (1959).

73 Theokas, Andrew C. *Grounds for Review: The Garden Festival in Urban Planning and Design*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 33.

74 Theokas, 85.

the vision of “nature in the city,” of which we have a glimpse of in Kassel from the above.

On an erratic schedule from 1898 to 1939, the Hamburg International Horticultural Exhibition of 1897 and the Dresden International Garden Show of 1897 demonstrated a burgeoning domestic interest in garden art. Germans responded to the English Picturesque and landscape gardening of Humphry Repton and Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, by developing the *Volkspark* based on modern ideals of the country house and garden city movement. The precisely defined boundaries of the symmetrical *Volkspark* and the “harmony and logic” of its clear system of footpaths made the garden a functional extension of the home, an outdoor living room decorated with furniture, pergolas and other garden architecture.⁷⁵

19th-century debates in England on the picturesque and landscape gardening were dependent on ideas of beauty, objects that “please the eye in the *natural state*; and those, which please from some quality, capable of being illustrated by *painting*.”⁷⁶ What was once “common nature” became standards for judging a work of art. Paintings and landscapes oscillated between an imagined state and the real, framing and reframing the other as a system of ideals and values. In the German quest for cultural and consolidating origins, “Paintings depicting German wilderness scenes came to reflect an immortal ‘German nature’ that encompassed even the ruins of classical antiquity.”⁷⁷ Historians have dwelled on the leveraging of the garden for National Socialist political and social control, extending the “hygiene” of garden design to ideas of racial hygiene and racial purity, “which at the same time suppressed all forms of ‘degenerate art,’ including landscape architecture not in conformity with Reich ideology.”⁷⁸ Perhaps a

75 Theokas, 31.

76 Gilpin, Reverend William (1724-1804) quoted in Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1986), 63.

77 Hans Belting, *The Germans and Their Art: A Troublesome Relationship*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 27.

78 Theokas, 31. Landscape design, or the picturesque, is no stranger to the political and social control of “untouchables.” John Ruskin responded to the picturesque controversy of late 18th century England with a moral and humanist analysis of the picturesque and its root and implications for the fragmented modern man. Invisible lines in the seemingly vast and boundless landscape correlated directly to mechanisms of control between the British Royal Empire and its “savage” colonies. For further reading, see John Ruskin, *The*

vulgarized version of the English garden, the *Volkspark* is wrapped up in ideas of religion, nationalism, and preservation. Theorists on the British Picturesque in the 19th century forecasted the exclusionary judgment of art that deviated from impressionist paintings, including landscapes without roughness, irregularity or variety, both within the paintings hanging on the walls of Museums and in the exterior gardens. The garden movement in Germany and other parts in Europe could be related to American park system reform, which represented the “progressive faith in science and efficiency as the basis of moral reform.”⁷⁹ American planners took to quantifying and calculating nature in the early 1910s, and by 1915, similar tables and charts appeared in Berlin as part of modernist architect Martin Wagner’s dissertation, “The Sanitary Green of Cities.”⁸⁰ From Tacitus, to the Brothers Grimm and Goethe,⁸¹ the development of German understanding of nature diverges from the “American wilderness ethic, an ideal that has valued spaces devoid of human influence,” and rather envisioned the ideal environment in a pastoral sense, the *Landschaft* as a cultivated garden stylized with consideration for the entire physiognomy of the landscape, both natural and built.⁸² The protection of meadows and forests under *Heimatschutz* extended to restoring vernacular “peasant cottages, researching rural customs, and publishing poetry and stories in regional dialects,” first signaled at the turn of the 19th century.⁸³ As Goethe wrote in 1778, the space of the garden took on the narrative structure of a fairytale.⁸⁴

Seven Lamps of Architecture. (New York: Noonday, 1961).

79 Bachin *Building the South Side*, 167 quoted in Duempelmann, 149.

80 Duempelmann, 149.

81 Goethe’s writings address and reflect upon the German relationship with Nature. Goethe calls for “true and natural laws” in the arts, like those “generated by the greatest of nature’s wonders: those wonders that enrich the spirit and ultimately reveal to it the highest possible intuitive concept of nature and of art.” Belting, *The Germans and Their Art*, 23.

82 Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 15.

83 Lekan, 22.

84 Jost Hermand, “Rousseau, Goethe, Humboldt: Their Influence on Later Advocates of the Nature Garden” in *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 18 (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 38.

Mobilizing heritage to define a German identity, the National Socialists developed a landscape design agenda alongside a nationalist art agenda, further discussed in Chapter Two. Through the militarization of *Heimat*, specifically through the concept of “Blood and Soil,” the Third Reich also developed a robust landscape preservation program that approached social reform. Practicing landscape architects who did not fit this program were banned from practicing, just as some modern artists were. Spared from that designation and fate, Hermann Mattern, a former *Wandervogel* and who would later design the 1955 *Bundesgartenschau* in Kassel, was enlisted to design the 1939 *Reichsgartenschau* in Stuttgart, a city just outside of and protected by the Black Forest in the *Stadt der Auslandsdeutschen* (City of Germans living outside of the Third Reich).⁸⁵ Historicized as the most influential on subsequent German park design and the “only large, well-preserved example of horticulture from the 1930s,”⁸⁶ the design of Höhenpark in Stuttgart demonstrates Mattern’s technique and manipulation of earth to define spaces and foreshadowed the scale of postwar *Bundesgartenschauen*. Through relocating one million cubic meters of earth with “subtle ground modeling,” in the former rubbish-strewn quarry at Killesberg and incorporating romantic and rustic garden of bushes, grasses, bulbous plants and trees complemented by cottages and cabins, the landmark 1939 garden largely rethought the *Volkspark* and its geometrical predecessor, the *Architekturgarten* for the purposes of a National Socialist landscape design.⁸⁷ Stuttgart was to be the premodern, antiurban capital of Swabia, a prototype of a people’s garden city. After the park was severely damaged in the war, Mattern oversaw the restoration

85 Mattern was named “commissioner for landscape and garden design of the inspector general of building of the Reichs-capital” by architect Albert Speer in 1943. Gert Gröning, “Ideological Aspects of Nature Garden Concepts in Late Twentieth-Century Germany,” *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 18 (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), 227 (fn 30). The *Wandervogel* (which translates to rambling, hiking or wandering bird) can be related to the American “boy scout,” premised on the activity of “nature walks” and pedagogical exercises using the forest. Another notable member is Walter Benjamin. The group was absorbed into the German Youth Movement, which inspired and was co-opted by the Hitler Youth less than five years later.

86 Hendrik Neubauer and Kunibert Wachten. *Urban Design & the 20th Century Architecture*. (Postdam: H. F. Ullmann, 2010), 171.

87 Theokas, 43.

of his original project in Stuttgart in 1950,⁸⁸ the political baggage following him into the postwar era of recovery and regeneration, emblemized by his work in Kassel at the 1955 *Bundesgartenschau*. Once a decorative feature of the garden, the ruin became an object to bury under the landscape, forming 'grave mounds,' across the war torn country. Kassel would confront the pragmatic concern of disposing of the city's rubble with the *Bundesgartenschau*. However, in combination with *documenta*, the Garden Show would subvert the frame of the 18th century garden as a form of preservation and the Museum as a mausoleum. In a landscape of traumatic rubble rather than romantic rubble, the dialectical exhibitions expressed new possibilities of departure from historic preservation.

Marshall Plan of the Mind

Occupied by American troops under the Marshall Plan in the years after the war, the political, social and cultural were inextricably tied and expressed in urban planning, architecture and exhibitions. In July 1947, after the Morgenthau plan for a pastoral Germany was dismissed in March of that year (see footnote 103), the initial planning for the Marshall Plan put forth that "an orderly, prosperous Europe requires the economic contributions of a stable and productive Germany."⁸⁹ With the main objectives of denazification, demilitarization, decartelization and democratization, the Marshall Plan was in effect from 1948 to the end of 1951, when it was replaced by the Mutual Security Plan. George Marshall explained the Plan at Harvard University Commencement in 1947:

It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health to the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace. Our policy is not directed against any country, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Any government that is willing to assist in recovery will find full co-operation on the part of the U.S.A. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist....⁹⁰

Under the first post-war Chancellor of Germany Konrad Adenauer, the Marshall Plan

88 Theokas, 32.

89 Marshall Plan JCS 1779, quoted in "Pas de Pagaille!" *Time Magazine*, July 28, 1947.

90 George Marshall. Commencement address at Harvard University. June 5, 1947.

spawned the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the “economic miracle” of West Germany, a model dependent on a consumer culture after the American capitalist example. The concept proved effective in much of the FRG—a cultivated inner being of consumer desires would motivate West Germans to build new lives for themselves with material goods and thereby forget the rubble of the war.⁹¹ Kassel, however, did not experience the benefits of this plan in full based on its peripheral geographic location and truncated transit routes in the proximity to Soviet territory. Still with high unemployment and migration rates in the early 50s, the city earned the attention of the heroic national organization of the Federal Garden Show, which would offer an alternative mode of generating capital through the land and tourism, despite the fact that Kassel had been cut off from its Hinterland.⁹² The *Bundesgartenschau*, rejuvenating a pre-war festival form, set itself against the fairs organized by Marshall Plan committees in the years prior by way of its funding, politics, architecture and content. In the ten years between 1945 and 1955, exhibitions in West Germany were regulated by the Marshall Plan organizations and established the value of culture as a medium of encouraging peaceful relations. However, with a focus on consumer goods, fine arts were largely neglected in the spectrum of exhibition content. Germans, as we will see in more detail by the example of Arnold Bode in Chapter Two, were the ones to take initiative in the realms of fine arts and music. Ian Wallace points out that Konrad Adenauer and the Christian Democratic Party in Bonn, the majority in 1953, pursued alignment with Western Europe. Wallace argues that *documenta* was wrapped up in the political motivations of a cultural rehabilitation with a focus on the role of history and tradition.⁹³ In the blending of art and life with local history, *documenta* offers rich comparison against the Marshall Plan exhibitions on several points: the expansion of the fine arts exhibition with film, music, catalogs and lectures; the use of

91 Castillo, 16 and Wallace, 30.

92 Historian Charlotte Klonk goes so far as to refer to Kassel as the Soviet “provincial backwater,” painting a grim image of Kassel’s identity within West Germany and making the impact of the *Bundesgartenschau* and *documenta* even stronger. It’s important to note that Kassel had also been nominated as a capital city for West Germany, but lost the title to Bonn in 1949.

93 Ian Wallace, “The First Documenta 1955.” Paper presented at “The Triumph of Pessimism,” University of British Columbia Department of Fine Arts, September 26, 1987, 4.

consumer goods and recognizable brands of banal materials as exhibition architecture; an atmospheric sensibility of spatial design; the graphic design aesthetic of advertising; and an extroverted importance of cultural exchange between Western artists and viewers.

Post WWII/Cold War era exhibitions straddled the line between “soft” and “hard” conditioning of democratic citizens in an American occupied West Germany. When President Truman signed the Marshall Plan into law in 1948, the control of mass media took precedence over German cultural renewal,⁹⁴ but a small subset, the Information Program, established a film unit, magazine unit and an exhibition unit. This structure later informed the development of the United States Information Agency (USIA, also known as Propaganda Agency of the United States). Through the 50s, exhibitions were considered tools of “information” or “propaganda,” for “mutual understanding” and the display of fine arts remained out of the government’s cultural agenda. Ideological propaganda through theater and movies extended to Expos, World’s Fairs and international trade fairs by the 1950s. Large-scale exhibitions saw exponential increase in audience numbers, typically in the millions, and across demographic boundaries, attracting residents and tourists alike.

Another entity, the Marshall Plan Exhibits Unit, never ran a single show for longer than a year and never returned to the same city twice. The Marshall Plan’s Caravan Program took on a familiar traveling format of European circuses and fairs, and demonstrated an expansive reach in various forms including traveling tents, trains, Deplirex trucks with foldout exhibition walls and barges. Through overt, independently verifiable sources, the size of these shows accommodated multiple issues and messages within a single show. Ensuring several access points for viewer involvement and connection translated to a tougher and broader war on communism while promoting the benefits of modern capitalist societies and strong economic relationships with the United States.⁹⁵ Circulating lessons about American culture, the Marshall Plan has since been

94 Goldstein, 750.

95 Three exhibitions are of interest to this thesis as precursors and comparisons to the *Bundsgartenschau* and *documenta* in 1955: the “Europe Builds” exhibit in 1950-51, the “Caravan of Peace” exhibit in 1952 that emphasized the economic benefits of NATO, and the exhibits in the *Europa Zug* (“Train of Europe”), which reinforced the importance of



fig. 16: *Bundesgartenschau* poster, graphics by Kurt Kranz.

criticized as a tool for cultural imperialism and specifically in terms of art production and display, critics Louis Aragon and George Cogniot referred to it as the “Marshall plan of the mind.”

Although major programs took form in industrial trade fairs, the Marshall Plan was complemented by the work of OMGUS and specialized branches MFA&A (Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives) and ICD (Information Control Division), which showed dedicated fine arts exhibitions in the late 1940s and early 50s. Although OMGUS included a few branches adjacent to fine arts cultural policy, the MFA&A was dedicated to restitution. The ICD, “a regulatory and censoring organ that controlled the mass media and all cultural activities in the American Zone, had no special fine arts section” but

instead the Theater and Music section was in charge of “monitoring” the fine arts.⁹⁶ Under this heading, the fine arts were considered “slow media” alongside education, science, and

an economic cooperation between Europe and the US. Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan. *Cold War Confrontations: US Exhibitions and Their Role in the Cultural Cold War*. (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 2008), 28. The Federal Republic of Germany would align with NATO in 1955, the same year of the first *documenta*, and with the EEC in 1957. Andrew Weiner argues that *documenta* in 1955 and 1959 “mobilized various forms of historical memory in the service of a hegemonic cultural politics that sought to facilitate the realignment of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).” Andrew S. Weiner, “Memory Under Reconstruction: Politics and Events in *Wirtschaftswunder* West Germany.” *Grey Room* 37 (Fall 2009): 98.

96 Just as the National Socialist party had regulated artists through registration as “degenerate,” the ICD required clearance of artists to de-Nazify before opening a gallery, organizing an art exhibit, deal in art, and publish art journals, exhibition brochures, and even posters. Still, in contrast to SMAD’s regulatory structure, artists in the American zone were not required to adhere to a particular style or subject matter in their work, “The ‘free’ pursuit of ‘pure’ art without political interference by the state has become a standing paradigm of American cultural policy in Germany.” Cora Sol Goldstein, “Before the CIA: American Actions in the German Fine Arts (1946-1949)” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, November 2005), 756-757.

“high culture.” As Greg Castillo has sketched, “fast media” (radio, film, and the press) were preferred because of their wider audience, and quick and direct access. *documenta* would bridge both, incorporating theater, film and music with the exhibition of fine arts, all alongside a garden show that had similar reach to the Expo-scale trade fair.

“Kassel lives, despite all this”

Left without the full benefits of the Marshall Plan’s “economic miracle,” FRG President Theodor Heuss introduced the *Bundesgartenschau* program with the promise that a “damaged or endangered community can make a recovery.”⁹⁷ The rhizomatic unpredictability of a growing season was juxtaposed with the societal changes that Germany was in the midst of, which Mattern attempted to address in his landscape and urban design, specifically the Kassel *Bundesgartenschau* in 1955, and the latter seen in rebuilding proposals from 1949-1953.⁹⁸ [fig. 16] The postwar garden shows introduced recreation, game and sports, teaching, exhibitions special gardens, “Vivarium,” gastronomy and the recently introduced landscape restoration.⁹⁹ Hannover, in British territory, was chosen for the first postwar *Bundesgartenschau* in 1951, to benefit from the sponsored restorations of damaged parks and provide an atmosphere of optimism and creativity through integrated sculpture, objects and horticultural elements or natural artifacts.¹⁰⁰ Establishing a two-year cycle, the *Bundesgartenschau* traveled to Hamburg in 1953 (also British zone) and then to Kassel in 1955 (American zone), the latter two cities with comparable damage after the war. With a warning about political affiliation checks, Kassel residents were reminded by the organizing committee via the local newspaper

97 Theodor Heuss quoted in Roger M. Buergel, “The Origins” in *50 Jahre Documenta: 1955-2005*, ed. Michael Glasmeier (Göttingen: Steidl, 2005),173.

98 Connections can also be made to his Staatstheater project with Hans Scharoun and his contribution to the 1957 International Bauausstellung in Berlin, with Kassel as an exemplary “City of Tomorrow.”

99 Vroni Heinrich, *Hermann Mattern: 1902-1971; Gärten, Gartenlandschaften, Häuser; Ausstellung D. Akad. D. Künste U. D. Techn. Univ. Berlin Vom 17. Oktober Bis 17. November 1982*. (Berlin: Akad. D. Künste, 1982),122.

100 In Kassel, the content of the *Bundesgartenschau* also picked up on the city’s scientific and natural collection, which documented nature to be contained in the walls of the Ottoneum, including herb samples and Goethe’s elephant.



fig. 17: Rubble is carted from the city along the rail lines, made obsolete after the war by the iron curtain. The Orangerie is just behind the row of trees.
 fig. 18: Bundesgartenschau workers bury the rubble to form a hill between Karlsaue Park and Friedrichsplatz, a massive architectural burial mound.

to “do everything possible to make the *Bundesgartenschau* a success. This event opens many and important opportunities for commerce and the economy in the city.”¹⁰¹ As opposed to the “restorations” of the parks and gardens in Hannover and Hamburg, in Kassel’s case, nationally recognized architects did not restore but rather *redesigned* the city’s historic baroque gardens in the Karlsaue.

Upon arriving in Kassel, organizers of the *Bundesgartenschau* set teams of workers to beautify the grounds of the Orangerie and Karlsaue. [fig. 17, 18] *Bundesgartenschau* workers buried the rubble to form a hill between Karlsaue Park and Friedrichsplatz and over the former “small” river Fulda, rehashing the demonstration of mastery over nature and over the more recent horrors of mankind, burying memories of the war by growing roses out of the rubble.¹⁰² In a demonstration of malleability, turning up the earth for new growth within defined

101 “Bundesgartenschau kostet über 5 Millionen” in *Hessische/ Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA)*, Number 267: 7. translation by Uta Musgray.

102 The 1944 Morgenthau Plan poses an ideological and political precedent to this aesthetic decision. Although not implemented, the plan proposed to remove the industrial core of Germany as a strategy to debilitate the country in future wars, and allow the ruined cities to fully decay and return to nature, effectively pastoralizing Germany. This American strategy for Germany could be compared to the political implications of the picturesque, reinterpreted by the German *Volkspark* and the evolution of the *Bundesgartenschau* to inform the reading of the 1955 *Bundesgartenschau* next to *documenta* and interpretation of ruins, nature, hygiene and control as part of conservation and preservation schemes.

boundaries, *Heimat* was reinterpreted for a postwar subject. Under the theme of *Man and Space*, the Darmstadt Talks in 1951 convened architects and artists of the time.¹⁰³ It was at this conference that architect Egon Eiermann declared that the old homeland with folk-songs did not exist anymore, the new homeland was the whole world, and so it was his duty to design “homelessness.”¹⁰⁴

Emerging architect-engineer Frei Otto likewise resolved to work on the “*terre des hommes*,” an earth for mankind.

Otto adopted this term, “homelessness,” interchangeable with “in-betweenness,” and thoroughly rejected the idea of everlasting monumentality and groundedness that had “contaminated” architecture and planning during the Third Reich. Silencing the “whispers of eternity,” expressed in Albert Speer’s theory of ruin value in favor for a “new modern” Germany, Frei Otto’s utopian tensile structures designed a potentially nomadic modernity, connecting man back to the earth by rebuilding a habitat for the people.¹⁰⁵ Upon the new Aue hill and throughout the park, Otto perched his early experiments, including the first

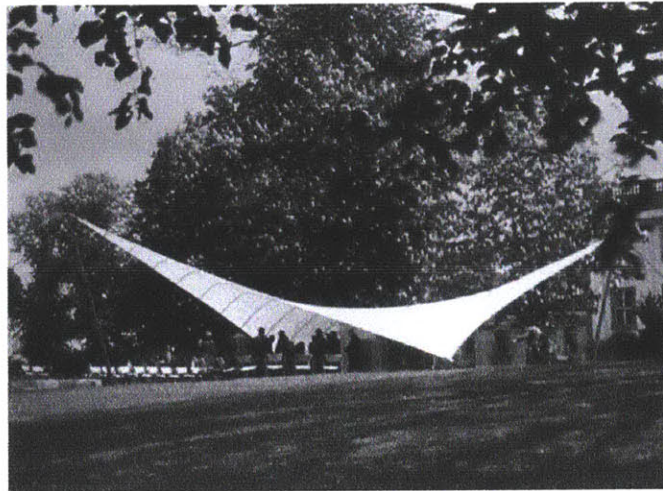


fig. 19: Frei Otto’s four-point tensile structure as the Music Pavilion at the Kassel *Bundesgartenschau*, 1955.

103 The conference reportedly “provided the opportunity for philosophical consensus yet ended in controversy, after enemies of modernism such as Hans Sedlmayr, who had just been appointed to the chair of art history in Munich, chose precisely modern art as the target of the “loss of the center,” which they understood to mean the loss of a humanism in art.” Belting, *Art History After Modernism*, 41.

104 Winfried Nerdinger, *Frei Otto: Complete Works, Lightweight Construction, Natural Design*. (Boston: Birkhäuser, 2005), 11. Eiermann won the architecture competition in Berlin for the postwar architecture of the 1890s Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church on Kurfürstendamm. Badly damaged in the bombings of 1943, Eiermann designed four buildings around the ruined tower, saving the remaining entrance hall and spire in the new additions built between 1959 and 1963. Although the original competition design called for demolishing the ruins, Eiermann adapted the remains after facing public pressure.

105 Architect Albert Speer appropriated the term “ruin value” to design for everlasting political power with ruins, equating Germania to the classical world and its inspiring ruins, still revered relics of past greatness.

of his now famous lightweight four-point tents. [fig. 19]

Otto began developing the idea of lightweight architecture as an urgent response to the shifting global politics in 1940, while advocating for its timeless beauty and elegance later saying, “Lightweight architecture is nothing new. It flourished both in the Gothic period and in the English greenhouses in the 19th century.”¹⁰⁶ He built his first four-point tent in Kassel as the Music Pavilion, in addition to two other temporary structures for the show that year, the cluster of Three Mushrooms and the Butterfly. Modeled from biological, living things, the lightweight structures extended the canopy of replanted trees with a new concept and protean form for postwar architecture, translating the organic materials on the inside of the Orangerie into mimetic spaces for inhabitation and human interaction with nature at a giganticized scale. Materially efficient and strong, the tents at Kassel demonstrated design ethos of standardized sizes and construction techniques while creating forms of dynamic movement. With continuous sight lines through the tent’s interior, they did not disrupt the progression of the landscape, but instead were part of the overall transformation and evolution. Mimicking nature in form and function, the mushrooms performed as biological systems, collecting rainwater in aluminum gutter edging, which was then channeled to their tubular masts. The scientification of architecture attempted to uncover the secrets of nature through form, in a “unifying knowledge of nature,”¹⁰⁷ and universalizing the human species as a single body distinct from, but part of nature and its laws. Although borrowing from natural forms and systems connected to the ground, Otto’s architecture for the *Bundesgartenschau* established itself in the early history of nomadic architecture, along the lineage of Archigram and Ant Farm, even Buckminster Fuller. Perched on the slope, two wing-like half-waves opened toward the valley, as if to take off in flight.

Mattern’s design for the Baroque Karlsau connected the garden to the city center and returned the visual substance to nature. He obeyed the general geometries but added visual details in the beds, turning up, blending and reconfiguring the historic geometries. [fig. 20] Aue Hill, recently formed with the rubble of a painful recent past, could support

106 Otto quoted in Nerdinger, 42.

107 Miller, *The Metamorphosis of Plants*, xxiii.

a limited range of plant species. Although the soil was still rich in nutrients, it did have an elevated temperature, which only roses, salvias, daisies and lupines could endure as warm weather plants, making for pleasant fragrances for strollers on the bordering the promenade. Interior to that, swooping teardrop garden beds made for a dynamic “carpet” on the Bowling Green, softening the transition from gardens and parkland and

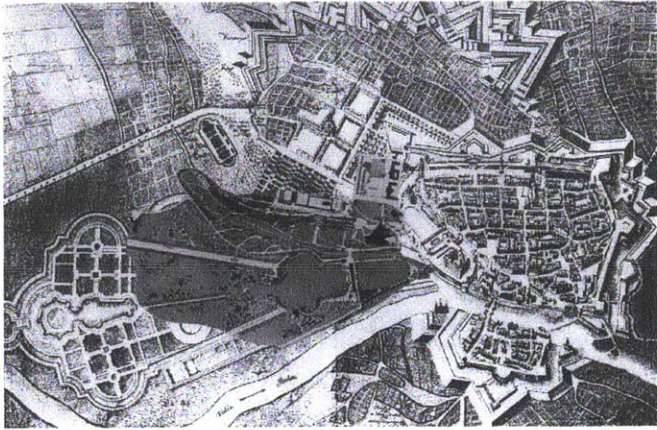


fig. 20: Hermann Mattern's design for Karlsruhe spun paisley print from the baroque lines of the former garden.

opening space for “vigorous activity in a salubrious setting,” as the sketches from Mattern’s “City of Tomorrow” proposal for the 1957 Internationel Bauausstellung demonstrate with animated figures.¹⁰⁸

Mattern’s technical mastery shone through in the planting of 100 old growth trees balanced by expansive garden spaces, apothecary herb gardens and perennial shrubs, or “bushes to hide behind,” as remembered by Hans Haacke, an art student at the Kassel Werkakademie at the time.¹⁰⁹ Architecture was organically integrated with the garden, Otto’s tents were juxtaposed with pergolas and modern interpretations of the Chinese and Japanese elements from the combinatory picturesque gardens. Strollers were given space to experience themselves as liberated, independent beings with an enlightened tolerance. Folding in other programs from the city to emphasize the park’s integration with urban life, Hermann Mattern included a milk bar on the hill, offering views of the park and the Orangerie, the centerpiece of the show. Inspiring new path directions for the visitors, the paisley islands opened up to the central axis, pointing to his architectural installations,

108 Theokas, 31 (fn 11) Following the tenets of Ebenezer Howard’s *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, Mattern’s proposal integrated spaces for living, working and recreation into a residential landscape that built upwards to a central *Stadtkrone*. Writing in 1959 about this visionary city, Mattern used Kassel as an example of a society that is in the midst of change but could not yet see its own end.

109 Haacke later became a guard and tour guide at *II. documenta* in 1959. He writes about the influence of *documenta* on his own work in the biennial format in “Lessons Learned,” *Tate Papers: Landmark Exhibitions Issue*, 12 (London: Tate Research, 2009).

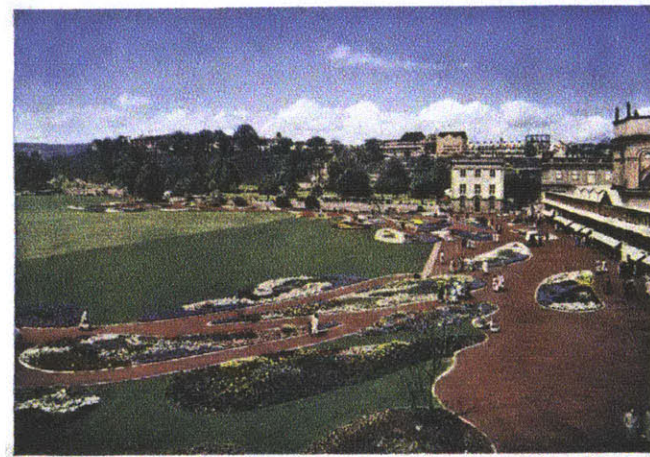


fig. 21: Mattern laminated the facade of the Orangerie with a modular glass and steel system: Kassel *Bundesgartenschau*, 1955.

fig. 22: Karlsaue Park was transformed into a colorful abstraction of its former self: Kassel *Bundesgartenschau*, 1955.

and opposite, filtered movement into the entrance of the Orangerie.

The garden show designer was charged the difficult task of synthesizing the guest exhibitors and their economic interests in a single artistic gesture.¹¹⁰ Mattern created an industrial exhibition hall out of the ruins of the baroque Orangerie, hemming “the bitter truth [with] glorious past.”¹¹¹ The external structural frame of the ruined Orangerie acted as a brace for a temporary glass and steel modular structure, which laminated the baroque façade with proportional awnings, the central octagon visible and asserting its architectural grandness in ruins, and absorbed into the garden as a visual folly, interior and exterior no longer distinct. [fig.

21, 22] Doubling the space of the Orangerie with glass walls opened up 5,000 square meters for an exhibition hall and a series of

stalls for fruits and vegetables. A temporary wooden truss system designed by Paul Bode was erected on three sides of the Orangerie and the original walls served as a provocative backdrop for cut flowers and ivies.

A revealing rendering by Mattern pictures a tree with perched birds inside a glass room, or void, at the center of the exhibition hall, lined with booths and collaged images

110 Horticultural exhibitors were reimbursed for expenses, transport and freight. The Central Association of German vegetables, fruit and horticulture were promised 25,000 DM and 5% net profit for given support from the city of Kassel, while, as with all garden shows, the fiscal health depended on thousands of foreign visitors as a tourist industry. “Bundesgartenschau kostet über 5 Millionen” in *Hessische/ Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA)*, Number 267: 7. translation by Uta Musgray.

111 Hampf-Heinrich and Mattern, 66.

protruding from the walls and ceiling, the *Bundesgartenschau* poster prominently placed in the center. [fig. 23] The space enclosed by the Frederick Kiesler-like walls recalls Peter Behrens's designs for the *Kunst und Garten Ausstellung* of 1904, in which the garden was brought into the exhibition environment as a diorama, fully contained and hermetically sealed.¹¹² With even greater control over nature than the "nature garden,"

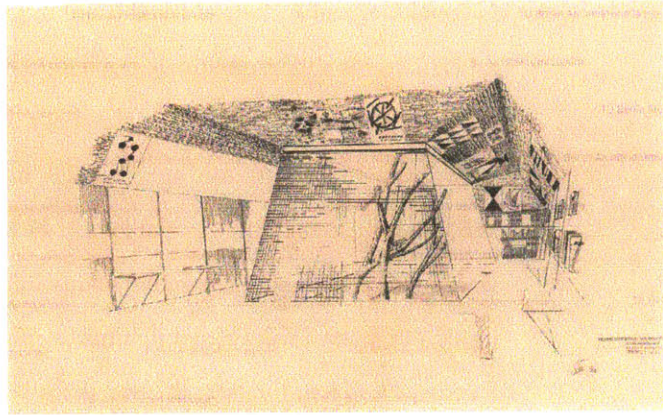


fig. 23: Mattern imagined a display system for nature that recalls Frederick Kiesler's calculated and encompassing environments of tilting planes.

the plants on display are framed in such a way that art is not only representing nature, but can physically contain and forever preserve nature, a mastery over nature as a scientific specimen. This plan, however, was never built and only existed as a perspective sketch, an architectural picturesque, and remained in the realm of imagination.

Peripheral booths in that rendering were, however, built, and followed the specific exhibition design of industrial fairs. Mattern's alterations to the Garden architecture of the Orangerie recalls the famous 1851 Joseph Paxton exhibition building for the first World Exhibition in London, constructed from prefabricated cast iron, laminated wood and glass elements for quick and expandable assembly. Paxton designed the greenhouse as a "cathedral of glass" at an unprecedented scale, over 560 meters long, 120 meters wide and 33 meters tall. In 1854, the building was relocated from Hyde Park to Sydenham, displaying ancient and erotic art with botanical specimens from around the world. The Crystal Palace emblemized the shift toward modernity in the new relationship it formed between technical achievement, and goals of prestige and architectural expression, and after the Great Exhibition of Works of Industry and All Nations in London (1890), cities and states across Europe adopted the model of exhibition architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. One such example is the Glaspalast in Munich, which was inaugurated by *Erste Allgemeine Deutsche Industrieausstellung* (First

¹¹² I thank my classmate at MIT, Christianna Bonin for bringing my attention to this early example in the history of German garden shows.

General German Industrial Exhibition) in July 1854, marking the first of many large art exhibitions and international trade fairs, often organized with local art academies and artists' societies.¹¹³ Glass and iron built the two-story German facsimile with 37,000 individual windows, measuring in full 234 meters long, 67 meters wide and 25 meters tall, about half the size of the Crystal Palace. However similar in revised form, the Orangerie was not an exhibition hall of anonymous architecture only reputed by technological ideals, but instead still carried significant cultural weight throughout the duration of the *Bundesgartenschau*, and later as a venue for *documenta* in 1959 and onwards.

Reportedly absent from the garden show was the illustration of new methods in agriculture and their application for economic benefit, goals for scientific research, and analysis of these results in practice.¹¹⁴ Overriding the importance of horticulture was the value of goods, including a tent for the Eternit fibre cement building materials, which, read as an unknowing mistake for its distance from the “high-culture” garden plants, attracted negative attention from the press.¹¹⁵ The didactic display of the Eternit material was set in contrast with the artful display of materials at *documenta*. Thinking back to Lilly Reich's display of building materials at the *Deutsche Bauausstellung Berlin* in 1931, where building materials were displayed on an internal balcony to make a rational point for the materials of modern construction through inter-subjective viewing experiences, “her displays united the discursive ambitions of the former Bauhaus members with the direct psycho-physical impact that Constructivists El Lissitzky and Friedrich Kiesler hoped to achieve in their exhibitions.”¹¹⁶ Their sensitive arrangement also promoted a sensuality of materials –between soft fabrics and smooth surfaces, raw material and shiny products.¹¹⁷ Inside the Orangerie, displays of cascading fruits and vegetables reinterpreted the ethos behind victory or war gardens, and citizens were encouraged to “plant for themselves

113 Bruce Altshuler, *Salon to Biennial*. (London: Phaidon, 2007), 13. Bavaria installed the first government-sponsored international fine arts exhibition independent of an international exposition in Munich's Glaspalast in 1869.

114 Hampf-Heinrich and Mattern, 155.

115 Eternit is one brand of the similar asbestos fiber cement used by Bode (Heraklith) in the design for *documenta*.

116 Klonk, 112-113.

117 Ibid., 112-113.

necessary vegetables, fruit and flowers” during the years after the war as an economic strategy. This “beautiful, meaningful activity” would encourage their children to “learn and prepare themselves for a life that would have more valuable content than that of a worker currently living in a great city.”¹¹⁸ Mattern is credited for having returned the garden and nature to public interest with the *Bundesgartenschauen*, alongside literature on the topic including *Der Deutsche Garten* (The German Garden) by Gustav Allinger (1950) and repeated literary references Goethe, Schiller, Kant and others, to establish a humanistic and antifascist attitude in the search for an aesthetic.¹¹⁹

Mattern’s landscape turned up and blended histories in the park and the architectural interventions were temporary, lightweight and mobile, and meant to encourage visitors to move around the landscape. Further, these visitors, some Kasseler, others tourists, could follow the show’s perambulation to other West German cities, on a path to re-aggregate a new democratic nation. The biological forms blended with nature only temporarily, and were de-installed when the Federal Garden Show closed in October, to open again at the Cologne *Bundesgartenschau* in 1957 with a revised version of the music pavilion. Otto’s architectural theory elicits a provocative tension between the *Bundesgartenschau* and the use of the Fridericianum in ruins, reinforcing urban logic and a distinct sense of place within the city. While this seems at first to suggest the same monumentality as the Nazis had enforced, Bode’s decision ultimately to slowly circulate the exhibition itself across the city makes for a nomadic and “ephemeral,” yet site specific model. The interwar sentiments of the Crystal Chain Letters group and Otto’s interpretation of postwar disentanglement from the “German land” both resonate with the “international” modern architecture of airplanes, ships and nomadic tents –lightweight and mobile, reflecting the people who would inhabit these forms. Otto philosophized his architecture “with lightness against brutality” as a dematerialization of objects and history. Instead, architecture was to “emerge from harmony with nature and its laws as a matter of course.”¹²⁰ It follows then, that an architecture adaptable for specific needs by changing

118 Rudolf Schwarz, postwar planner for Cologne, quoted (1947) in Diefendorf, 199 (fn 92).

119 Hermand, 54.

120 Nerdinger, 15.

owners over time is a workable and sustainable model, one that we would now think of as adaptive re-use.¹²¹

It was first thought that a sister tent could contain the art exhibition that Bode was in the midst of planning, if placed across the expanded ring road from the Orangerie, on the Friedrichsplatz, facing the symbolic neoclassical Museum Fridericianum. Bode measured the irregularly scarred façade toe to heel and declared the space better suited for his developing plans.¹²² Rather than accept the tent suggestion, Bode would install “*documenta: Art of the Twentieth Century*” within the shell of the former Museum, leveraging its historical value in site and form without abandoning the peripatetic philosophy, putting forward the possibility for a democratic, modern Germany with a temporary exhibition in the transient walls of the Fridericianum.

121 Nerdinger, 15.

122 Conversation with Karin Stengel, May 2012.

2. Life behind ruins: Unity in architecture, art and viewer

For the German who is ashamed of Hitler, it is a comfort that Johann Sebastian Bach was a German. For the German who feels humiliated by Germany's present position in the family of nations, it is a comfort that Germany produced artists as great as those of the other nations. For the German who despairs of the mentality of his countrymen, there is the hope that "Kultur" would be the force of regeneration.¹²³

–Kultur and Politics report, OMGUS, 1947 (emphasis added)

What the modern displayer introduces as a new way of exhibiting is of course inseparable from the content to be exhibited.

–Alexander Dorner on Curator and Artist Herbert Bayer, 1947¹²⁴

In the tension between mediating the recent past with hope for a peaceful future, the postwar West German subject simultaneously reached out –outside of herself, outside of Germany's borders, and inwards, to understand her own nature as an individual. The *documenta* exhibition participated in this fold, a cross-directional search from the Museum to the urban context, to the reconstituted German identity and the international arena. Furthermore, the exhibition design performed as an intercessor between architecture and art; as a provocation for visual understanding; and for what John Dewey would call

123 "Kultur and Politics," Restricted, Research Branch report, July 15, 1947, Landesarchiv Berlin: OMGUS, RG 260, 4/18-3/1. OMGUS's working definition of "Kultur" follows: "The German word 'Kultur' (for which there is no exact equivalent in the English language) is a dangerously indefinite word. One moment it is used to signify the sum-total of civilization, including its moral standards (as when the political parties promise to protect Christian-Western 'Kultur'); the next moment it means no more than an education (as when the word 'Kultur' appears on a poster advertising an illustrated lecture on Bulgaria)... This diversity of meanings permits many groups to consider themselves the guardians of 'Kultur.' Because of the noble connotations of the word, even the simplest activity, when described as 'Kultur,' and many hope to be saved by it. For some, it is the last refuge in defeat and disaster." Quoted in Goldstein, *Before the CIA*, 777.

124 Alexander Dorner, *The Way Beyond Art: The Work of Herbert Bayer*. (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1947), 201.



fig. 24: Friedrichsplatz from above. The Museum Fridericianum is at right center, next to it sits the ruined *Rotes Palais* (Red Palace), and Karlsau Park is in the foreground.

re-aggregating the social sphere through full bodied freedom and self determination.¹²⁵

This chapter moves from the garden into the museum as premised by my understanding of the two spaces as intrinsically linked through the urban plan and history of Kassel's development. [fig. 24] Drawing inspiration from exhibition precedents, *documenta* weaves architecture, art, and the human spirit together through design in the space of the Fridericianum.

The structural logic of this chapter follows the history and structural logic of the building itself, from the plaza, to exterior walls, to interior walls, to temporary walls, and integrates discussions on select art objects as the art and architecture blend. Along this path, we will see the spatial conditions of the gallery space as a rich territory for conditioning a new type of exhibition viewer. The centerpiece of the thesis is the feat of repurposing the damaged, but historically valuable Fridericianum to display the artwork and the space itself, pointing to the building's restoration as part of the exhibition, a fundamental fact that is often overlooked in existing scholarship.

While some reports offer that the site of the Fridericianum in its evocatively deteriorating state was the source of inspiration for *documenta*, Arnold Bode had already started scheming an art exhibition at a similarly ambitious scale in 1946 with his colleagues at the Werkakademie when he cautiously wrote a letter asking friend and colleague Teo Otto how one would *go about* executing an international exhibition.¹²⁶ Once the *Bundesgartenschau* was confirmed to come to Kassel in 1955, city and state governments made the necessary financial undergirding available and Bode began to harness the ingenuity of his colleagues, including Hermann Mattern to develop a design.

125 John Dewey, *Art as Experience*. (New York: Minton, Balch, 1934).

126 Arnold Bode and Heiner Georgsdorf. *Arnold Bode: Schriften Und Gespräche*. (Berlin: B & S Siebenhaar, 2007), 304.

A collection of exhibition ephemera from the early 50s held in the *documenta* Archiv points to a range of inspirations, but most notably the 1953 Picasso exhibition in the shell of the Palazzo Reale, Milan, which Bode traveled to visit.¹²⁷ After this example, Bode would accept ruins as an aesthetic, putting the architecture on display –not enclosed in a display case, rebuilt in the tradition of Romantic artificial ruins, or through ersatz reconstruction; but rather with historical fidelity and tangibly “as is.” Picasso’s paintings situated in the provocatively ruined architecture in Milan inspired the analogous content and form of the design inside the Museum Fridericianum, borrowing details that created space around the paintings to increase contact between viewers.¹²⁸ Transposed to the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, design elements, painting and sculpture implied motion and created a space for reinterpreting the role of modernity in architecture and art in a post-World War II Europe.¹²⁹

Having then made his way to the 1954 Venice Biennale, Bode jotted names of artists Léger and Braque on the exhibition pamphlet, perhaps a reminder for artists he would display at his own exhibition. Despite some overlap in content, Bode positioned *documenta* against the Venice Biennale, one of two predecessors in the arena of global

127 In a 1977 interview in *Kunstforum*, Bode cites the Picasso exhibition at the Palazzo Reale, also in ruins, as inspiration for inserting modern art within a war-torn, “primitive” structure. Arnold Bode (interview), “War wieder eine großartige Ruine da...” *Kunstforum International*, March 1977, 212.

128 Photographs by Rene Burri documenting the exhibition in Milan illustrate the concept of these paintings in space: viewers surround paintings on all sides, out of curiosity and forced by crowding –the rooms are packed and the standing paintings beginning to blur with the bodies of visitors. This set of photographs sets up an interesting counter example to the documentation of *documenta* in 1955 –the galleries of the Fridericianum devoid of viewers at the cusp of opening. In a comparative study of the Picasso exhibition and the first *documenta*, lies a rich territory for a future study of the ruins of World War II across Europe, and between Italy and Germany with consideration for totalitarian rule and classical antiquity.

129 The display of Picasso’s *Guernica* also evokes an analogous bombing and revolutionary spirit while re-establishing grand history painting in abstracted forms. Painted in 1937 for the World’s Fair in Paris, Picasso demonstrates the forces of darkness with a palette of black, white and gray. Haftmann writes in *Painting in the Twentieth Century* that “The Spanish Civil War aroused tremendous indignation among Western artists, who saw that it involved an organized attack on human freedom; the second world war aroused no response at all.” (312)

biennial format exhibitions.¹³⁰ He was critical of the Venice Biennale for what he perceived as a disingenuous and self-congratulatory event and aimed to create an atmosphere of a different sensibility, one that would bring artists to the public and public to the work. Originally following the Salons in Paris with a central exhibition building and surrounding international galleries themed by nation, the history of the Venice Biennale, like *documenta*, is rooted in the garden, the *Giardini*. Towards representing Venice as a functioning organism with healthy green spaces, convents and churches were razed at the far edge of the Castello quarter, the rubble of which was used to consolidate the grounds and create artificial hills, paralleling the topographic reconfiguration in Karlsruhe for the *Bundesgartenschau*. Founded on April 30, 1895 to “stimulate a new contemporary art market,”¹³¹ in a break from the industrial exhibits dominating Rome, Milan and Turin at the time, the Venice Biennale would show only art, housed in pavilions organized by nation throughout the *Giardini*. The exhibition grounds are composed today with 30 national pavilions representing 34 countries, as well as the central *Arsenale*, which has always taken a “provisional” aesthetic, worn by the Lagoon’s climate.¹³² Attracting a total of 171,600 visitors, the 1954 Biennale displayed a retrospective of Courbet’s nineteenth-century realist paintings in the central hall, while modernism and Surrealism dominated the national pavilions, displaying a total of 3628 works by 605 artists including Paul Klee and Oskar Schlemmer in the German pavilion.¹³³ There, eight months before the opening of *documenta*, Arnold Bode convened

130 Biennial precedents include: the Venice Biennale, established in 1895; the São Paulo Bienal in 1951; the Alexandria Biennale in 1955; and the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts in 1955.

131 Lamberti M. M. *Le mostre internazionali di Venezia* cit., 101. Quoted in Vittoria Martini, “A Brief History of I Giardini: Or a Brief History of the Venice Biennale Seen from the Giardini.” *Art & Education*. Trans. Jennifer Knaeble. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2013.

132 Architect Giannantonio Selva is quoted to have said that the *Giardini* were modeled after “the simplicity of the Italian garden.” Martini, Vittoria. “A Brief History of I Giardini: Or a Brief History of the Venice Biennale Seen from the Giardini.” *Art & Education*. Trans. Jennifer Knaeble. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2013.

133 Nancy Jachec, *Politics and Painting at the Venice Biennale, 1948–64: Italy and the Idea of Europe*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007), 65. Statistics sourced from presentation by Amin Alsaden (Harvard Graduate School of Design), Spring 2012 “Nationalism, Internationalism and Globalism in Modern Art,” MIT course taught by

with the freelance art historian Werner Haftmann who was living in Venice at the time after spending time in Florence researching for much of the war.¹³⁴ Annette Tietenberg has reconstructed the moment of the collaboration's initiation, when Haftmann

Found a small agitated man waiting for him one evening in his local *trattoria* in Venice, who introduced himself as Arnold Bode and began to enthuse effusively about a colossal war ruin in the transalpine town of Kassel. Whereas the much-traveled art author could only vaguely recall the visitor from his time in Berlin, Bode was well-informed over his prospective partner: indeed he was convinced that the author of the recently published history of *Painting in the Twentieth Century* was the indispensable figure he needed to realize his vision... Amidst lengthy discussions, drinking bouts, planning, and much juggling of imaginary art works, the obstacles were finally overcome and the exhibition had taken shape in their mind's eye.¹³⁵

Haftmann would offer an incisive editorial perspective to the selection of works included in the exhibition, following his recently published authoritative textbook, *Malerei im 20er Jahrhundert* (*Painting in the 20th Century*) written between 1950 and 1953,¹³⁶ and published in Munich in 1954 by Prestel-Verlag, the same publisher of the *documenta* catalogue in 1955.¹³⁷ Haftmann's book organized the material based on "the problems with which the artists were concerned"¹³⁸ rather than chronologically or by nationality, so as not to impede the organic development of modern art with an imposed order.

The exhibition would translate the textbook's content and historical approach into an immersive environment, without linear or strictly dictated paths.¹³⁹ Separating

Caroline Jones.

134 Wallace, 23.

135 Harald Kimpel, *documenta: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Cologne, 1997), 163-164 quoted in Annette Tietenberg, "An Imaginary *Documenta* or The Art Historian Werner Haftmann as an Image Producer" in *Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre documenta 1995-2005*, ed. Michael Glasmeier, Karin Stengel.

136 As the back cover of the English version boasts, the textbook "was originally published in English in 1961 as a boxed set of two volumes at 12 guineas. It was immediately acclaimed as a new standard work on modern art, brilliantly analytical and breathtakingly comprehensive."

137 Wallace, 12.

138 Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, 9.

139 Haftmann's book served as a theoretical "script" for *documenta*, so much so that the book has been referred to as the "imaginary *documenta*" by Eduard Trier, paralleling

discourse from content, Bode was more interested in creating a visual understanding between architecture and art.¹⁴⁰ Critics at the time wrote of the exhibition's architecture and design as having captured the *Zeitgeist* more powerfully than the work put on display.¹⁴¹ The design contributed a model of autonomous art, away from the traditional setting of an edifying Museum. Rather than impose political wall text onto the artworks, only the artist's name and a reference number accompanied each piece. The art could speak for itself. For an affordable price of five marks, however, viewers were offered a 240-page exhibition catalog, complete with 156 illustrations in black and white and 12 in color, to take home the art historical content of the exhibition, effectively a smaller version of Haftmann's textbook.¹⁴² What couldn't be transported from the site of *documenta* was the Fridericianum and Bode's interpretive exhibition design.

Despite the initial uncertainty of the postwar permanence of the Fridericianum in the infancy of *documenta*, an even smaller, flyer-like brochure put special emphasis on place. Introducing the exhibition brochure with a history lesson on the architecture and cultural significance of the Fridericianum set up the exhibition experience for the architecture as much as for art. The short text describes the evolution of the Fridericianum's impressive pre-war collections, from scientific instruments to musical instruments, gems and other natural artifacts, and the library and personal workspaces of the successive Princes and the building's successive transformations.¹⁴³ As a national

the title of Malraux's "imaginary museum," which was in Bode's personal library and has surfaced through loose references as an important informant in the conceptualization of *documenta*. See Annette Tietenberg's essay, *An Imaginary Documenta or The Art Historian Werner Haftmann as an Image Producer in Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre documenta 1995-2005* for further reading.

140 Players involved with *documenta* naturally had different opinions about the role of the exhibition, the first of its kind. While Bode stressed the sensorial aspects of the exhibition's design and Haftmann, the content of the artwork, Bode's assistant is reported to have said that the "chief aim of the venture was to instruct people's minds." Christoph Lange, "The Spirit of *Documenta*," in *Archive in Motion: 50 Jahre documenta 1995-2005*, 14.

141 Klonek, 175 (fn 12).

142 This token of the exhibition was popular, and necessitated a second print run. By the end of the show in 1955, 14,000 copies were sold.

143 The remaining books from the library were temporarily stored in the Murhard Library. Under Prussian rule, the art collections were moved to the Prussian capital of

Museum and State Library, the building did not just hold precious materials; it became a symbol of Hessian identity and an object of pride for the people of Kassel, reinforced by *documenta's* guidebook-like text.

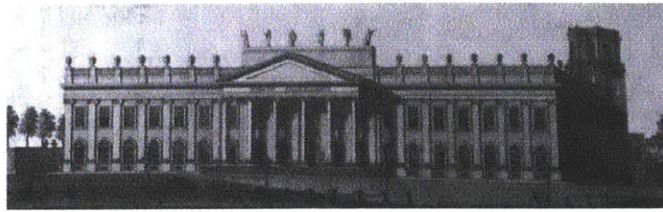


fig. 25: Simon Louis du Ry, the Museum Fridericianum. Depicted by F.W. Weise, 1784.

A two story¹⁴⁴ neoclassical structure, the Fridericianum is flanked by six ionic columns along a central porch and topped with a pediment declaring its Latin name. Continuing outwards from the center are seven pilasters on each side of the façade, each capped with urns along the balustrade cornice at its roofline, alternating with arched Palladian windows on the lower level and square windows on the second. Above the central pediment stand six allegorical statues representing philosophy, astronomy, history, architecture, painting and sculpture. The Fridericianum's left shoulder is grounded by the *Zwehrener Turm*, the city's only preserved medieval gate, adapted by the architect Simon Louis du Ry to be the first institutionalized observatory in Europe and a sign of Landgrave Friedrich II's commitment to expanded knowledge and Enlightenment ideals. [fig. 25] A remarkable rotunda modeled from the Parisian Parliament sits at the backside, masterfully accommodating the shift in grade.¹⁴⁵ "The beautiful rear entrance" was noticed by the Director of Art History at the University of Freiburg, who advocated for an "enhancement" of the few historic pieces of architecture remaining in Kassel in a September 1955 letter to Arnold Bode.¹⁴⁶ Although preservation had its advocates, Bode

Berlin in 1913 and the Fridericianum was remained a dedicated library until the first devastating fire in 1941. A 1954 article in the regional newspaper wrestles with the Fridericianum's postwar potential and points out that the building was far too large for the remaining books originally housed as the state library, but negotiations were pending to combine two large libraries in Kassel. "Museum Fridericianum als Ausstellungsbau" *Hessische/ Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA)* Number 31, 6. February 1954. Translated by Ken Kronenberg.

144 Prior to the damage from the war, the Fridericianum was three stories, the uppermost an attic.

145 The original staircase was lost in the reconstruction of the Fridericianum, completed in 1982, but was intact for the first six *documenta* exhibitions. Harald Kimpel, "The Unhoused Exhibition: Documenta in Search of its Own Architecture," *Archive in Motion*, 73.

146 *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 7b, accessed May 30, 2012.



fig. 26: The facade of the Fridericianum as it stood after the bombings of Kassel, before the city reconstructed the exterior walls.

being one of them, concepts of preservation in postwar West Germany were generally vague and undirected, wavering in historical amnesia or intentional forgetting of the violent recent past. Due to the shifting roles in the urban planning office as discussed in Chapter One, many historic buildings in Kassel were victim to haphazard demolition.¹⁴⁷ In a state of urgency, few did take on the challenge of “enhancement” as an early and imprecise form of adaptive reuse, Bode’s Fridericianum included as a bricolage. Visible from across the city, the spires of *Martinskirche* were raised again between 1954 and 1958 as broad rectilinear towers in place of the original Gothic pencil points. The addition of towers in the modern style was a subtle antiwar monument similar to Egon Eiermann’s winning 1957 proposal for the reconstruction of Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin.¹⁴⁸ While

memorials to the war’s losses were thought taboo in West Germany, these examples in religious architecture demonstrate a hesitantly defiant conservation, neutralized by additions in the architecture of the time. Marking the break between old and new with a message of redemption as opposed to memorial, these formal strategies in postwar architecture demonstrate the historical anxiety central to the rebuilding dilemma in Europe.

In a city still half built, the Museum Fridericianum’s impressive structure was once again significant as a beacon of hope for civilization. In 1953, the building was placed under the jurisdiction of the State Building Department (*Staatsbauamt*) and weatherproofing work began that year under Governor Georg Häring.¹⁴⁹ An

147 In West Germany more generally, façade reconstructions were typical of “historic preservation” in an attempt to return to pre-Nazi forms.

148 A deeper exploration and comparison of postwar conceptions of ruins and their rendering with modern forms could be a future trajectory from this thesis.

149 Kasseler Stadtausgabe, “Kunststeinwerk arbeitet Tag für Tag” 21 August 1963,

August 1963 newspaper article covering an interview with Kurt Bormann, the head of the State Building Department, roughly outlines the otherwise obfuscated history of the Fridericianum's restoration. Bormann recalls that a plank and slate roof was raised, interior and exterior walls were inoculated with a cement mixture applied with compressed air, and replacement windows were installed. Structural foundations of the entire building were questioned after the medieval tower, incorporated on the northeast corner of the Museum, had to be reinforced by a steel and concrete retaining structure.¹⁵⁰ Tests conducted by the Hessian State Department for Ground Research determined the Museum Fridericianum safe, but the expansion of gallery space by rebuilding the lost uppermost floor would be impossible, leaving Bode with two floors to install artwork.¹⁵¹

Creative Conservation

At the moment of *documenta*, the architecture of the Fridericianum wove several interrupted historical moments through successive destructions and repairs, most apparent on the interior, where it was put on display. However, the past was abstracted and unlike a memorial, the exhibition did not confront the viewer with sentiments of testimony or commemoration. Instead, recovery hovered in liminality, with hopes for regeneration in "an environment that had yet to acquire its character as a definite time-space."¹⁵² Its damaged sandstone base and unevenly patched marble façade blended with its unfinished environs, and the original brick structure was left exposed after provisional improvements after the war.¹⁵³ Compounded damage resultant of two separate incidents

translated by Ken Kronenberg.

150 The new tower's new foundation cost 270,000 DM. The State Department further invested in historically reconstructing the Tower for an unrecorded sum.

151 Photographs of the Fridericianum after the fire in 1941 show that both floor plates had collapsed, but by 1954, that which separated the first and second floors was rebuilt. Not yet illuminated in my research, it is unclear when this floor was built in relation to the Ground Research report. Bode would occupy the two floors with *documenta* as well as the partial floor just bordering the rotunda on the third floor.

152 Buerger, 177 (fn 3).

153 It wasn't until 1962 that the façades were dealt with, which required 100 different processes, costing 600,000 DM. Kasseler Stadtausgabe, "Kunststeinwerk arbeitet Tag für Tag" 21 August 1963, translated by Ken Kronenberg.

in 1941 and 1943 add another dimension to the “before” and “after” typically discernable from the doubled time of ruins, and here, with two significant events, two periods of recovery, any material sense of historical linearity was further confused. Concepts of “time” were inscribed in the exhibition design on multiple metaphorical registers as the decay seemingly continued, was paused, or partially reconstructed. The most immediate history lurked behind the swept spaces, liberated from the previously confined axial symmetry and gravity of the neoclassical interior with a new conception of space. An open floor plan reflected the sought after open political boundaries.

Against the backdrop of America’s growing influence as a global player and proponent of capitalism, which extended to the commodification of architecture and real estate turnover, Bode used what was already available in Kassel rather than building anew. His temporary stage within a monumental structure marks a paradigm shift in the consideration of permanence and monumentality. For *documenta*, the Fridericianum would be forever unfinished, an indeterminate architecture that could adapt to the needs of the time without producing waste. Having accepted the realities of the situation and using only the available means, Bode—a non-architect—was conveniently left with the default template for modernist architecture to insert a temporary sub-architecture.¹⁵⁴ Mid-20th century architects favored the open and adaptable plan in the face of capitalist-driven obsolescence, defined by the turn over of buildings to gain real estate value and collect taxes, as well as designing in styles that would just as easily be superseded with rapid industrial production.¹⁵⁵ Walter Gropius wrote of the Bauhaus in 1925, “Our object was to eliminate every drawback of the machine without sacrificing any one of its real advantages. We aimed at realizing standards of excellence, not creating *transient*

154 In modernist architectural forms, functional simplicity signified purity and hygiene, further emphasized by the smooth white industrial material palette.

155 Daniel Abramson’s recent work looks at similar patterns of obsolescence and modernity, which has inspired some of my thinking here. See his forthcoming book, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History*.

*novelties.*¹⁵⁶ Bode's design within the open plan of the Fridericianum would allow for future changes on the interior, perhaps again as a gallery space or library, but more importantly, his design established the exhibition-event's impermanence and perennial format.

A 1954 article in the HNA regional newspaper expressed a universal sentiment, "What surfaces! What space! In terms of floor space, it comprises almost two acres (5000 square meters); the rooms and halls are so unusually high, and the reconfigured space is so enormous that one can hardly imagine what a building of this size would cost today."¹⁵⁷ In fact, Kassel *could not* imagine building a new structure of the same size, but Arnold Bode *could* imagine using what was available to make a statement of progress and subverting ideas of permanence and obsolescence. After the State completed the necessary provisional work, Bode's non-profit would be responsible for financing all temporary furnishings from floors to lighting to outfit the exhibition.¹⁵⁸

Uninhibited by virtue of being reduced to a shell, the Fridericianum's flexible plan allowed for easy structural changes, surface treatments and lighting. In the "frank exposure of materials"¹⁵⁹ and spatial and volumetric effects, the neoclassical façade wrapped an interior that challenged the original architectural form. The original decorative ornament removed, the solidity and suggestion of mass was liberated and the stripped Fridericianum emphasized flexibility, regularity and volume. With elegant material choices, Bode changed the proportions of the interior design in the same language as modernist architecture of his time. Bode absorbed the techniques he saw at the Palazzo Reale in Milan and had seen that the entire exhibition space could and would be constructed from planks, drapes and plastic wall cladding. Bode was intent on making minimal changes to

156 Walter Gropius. *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (1925). Translated from the German by P. Morton Shand. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA. 1965, 54. Emphasis added.

157 "Museum Fridericianum als Ausstellungsbau" Kasseler Lokalausgabe, HN Nummer 31, 6. February 1954. Retrieved from the Stadt Archiv, Kassel. Translation by Ken Kronenberg.

158 Willy Vieweg, Letter to Arnold Bode dated 12.8.1954. *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 16. Accessed May 31, 2012.

159 Banham, 89.



fig. 27: left: the interior of Bode's Fridericianum, on the second floor we see the texture of the brick and various strategies to engage the walls. © documenta Archiv; right: a contemporaneous advertisement for hollow block construction, "it is cheap and good!"

the interior in order to keep costs down,¹⁶⁰ determining his material decisions on local availability and donations, but these limitations did not hinder his aesthetic decisions. Inspired by design precedents and through his own experience making and displaying in exhibitions, Bode built and designed *documenta* without architected drawings. He fashioned the exhibition on-site with compressed straw and concrete panels typically used for partitions (made by Heraklith), brick walls and plastic sheeting.

Didactically, Bode employed concrete blocks for the interior temporary partitions, which made a clear connection to the rebuilding efforts outside of the Museum's walls. The material transposition echoed advertisements of the time, "it's good and cheap!" and encouraged viewers to imagine new possibilities for their ruined urban landscape. [fig. 27] Architectural variety in details, including the canopied grid sub-architecture that pushed through and past thresholds; variety in wall treatment and texture; and attention to lighting, both artificial and natural, suggest deliberate, yet improvisational design decisions. Through the treatment of materials, the exhibition linked past and present, tradition and innovation, space and object. These types of relations were not confined to a pure white cube, which would cut it off from external contaminants of the outer world.¹⁶¹ Instead, Bode's Fridericianum is a porous membrane, bringing both the art and

160 According to the press release dated after the closing of *documenta* in September, the total costs were 364,000 marks 200,000 of which were granted by the city, state and federal governments, as well as donations from companies and individuals, and revenue from ticket and catalog sales. The configuration of the Museum Fridericianum cost 88,231 marks before the 30,969 marks were spend on the exhibition space. Verausgabte Beträge *documenta* bis 20.3.1956, *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 17. accessed January 11, 2013.

161 Bode's Fridericianum sits just outside of the lineage of the "white cube," of which only a short history precedes *documenta* in 1955, and after which it developed the fuller and more readily accepted definition in the 1960s. We can take Brian O'Doherty's tenets

architecture into spatial dialogue with the urban landscape.

Assisted by exhibition architect Rudolf Staeger, a civil engineer and one of his longtime collaborators in furniture design;¹⁶² Ernst Schuh,¹⁶³ and several art students, Bode thoughtfully responded to the neoclassical framework of the eighteenth-century Fridericianum with interpretive geometries specific to each wall of each room, transitioning the neoclassical symmetry to a modernist architectural regularity in a design/build manner. Bode is photographed during installation with his team, pins and brackets in a box at his feet, with a cigarette drooping off his bottom lip, flipping through what seems to be the *documenta* catalog and making design decisions on the fly while students climbed ladders to suspend wooden beams and hang paintings. [fig. 28] Charlotte Klonk credits Bode

as “the forerunner of an exhibition culture in which the curator is the greatest hero of the show.”¹⁶⁴ While the title “curator” had yet to truly take on a meaning, and Daniel Buren’s concept of an exhibition as medium had not yet taken form, for *documenta*, Bode embodied the spirit of the utopian artist-cum-architect of the Bauhaus and the Deutsche Werkbund.

The Enlightenment had frayed disciplines in a search for *reason*, as represented by the individual statues atop the 18th century Museum Fridericianum. In reversal, from

as the prevailing definition of the “White Cube” gallery space: “The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light... The art is free, as the saying used to go, ‘to take on its own life’...untouched by time and its vicissitudes.” Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 15.

162 Thomas Richter, “...zweckbewußtes, phantasievolles Experimentieren!” Arnold Bodes Entwürfe für Möbel, Plastics und Tapeten” in *Arnold Bode: Leben + Werk (1900-1977)*, (Staatliche Museen Kassel, Kassel: 2000), 30.

163 Lange, 14.

164 Klonk, 174. For further reading, see Daniel Buren, “Exhibition of an Exhibition” (1972) and Beurgel’s “Origins” in *Archive in Motion*.

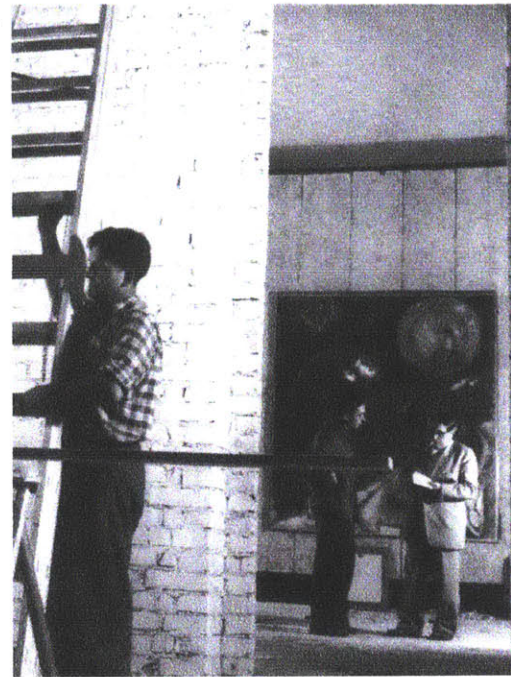


fig. 28: Bode is seen in the background while his assistants climb ladders with raw wood to hang the pergola structure.

1919, architecture had been fully absorbed by the marriage of fine arts and crafts through the Bauhaus and earlier working groups in Germany including the Deutsche Werkbund, of which Bode was a registered member in 1953, 1958 and 1962.¹⁶⁵ This biographical detail gives us insight on the reconvening of disciplines in universality with the painting-sculpture-architecture triad of Bode's *documenta*, blended by the design of the exhibition as a unifying force.¹⁶⁶ For Bode, the space of the Museum was not just a space to hang art but a place to make art, a meeting place of head and hand. The core of Bode's team came from the Kassel Art Academy, the *Werkakademie* that Bode, with Mattern, had re-established in Kassel after their return in the late 40s. Drafted by the Nazis in 1939, Bode built barracks in France, and emphasized his political position as a Social Democrat in letters and journal entries, pointing out that he only designed spaces and never "killed for the murderous." As a prisoner of war in 1945, he returned to the American camp in Kassel and was then released on May 5 after being cleared of affiliation with Hitler. Instead of returning to the "dead" Berlin, he saw promise in starting anew in Kassel, writing "Ab nach Kassel!" a colloquial phrase of fortitude shared across Germany.¹⁶⁷ Without money or food, he found solace in friendship and collective plans to build a new academy with sculptor Hans Mettel and Hermann Mattern as others were released from imprisonment and filtered back to Kassel from 1947 on.¹⁶⁸ The *Werkakademie* developed an impressive roster of faculty over the following years, which without a doubt contributed to the spirit, content and form of *documenta*. Celebrated painter Fritz Winter was brought in 1955 to join Mattern and Bode after he resigned from the Deutsche Künstlerbund. Instructor of classes on color, Heinz Nickel worked with students in his nearby atelier to create the advertising materials for the exhibition, plans and signage

165 Email exchange with archivist Rita Wolters at Werkbund Archiv, Berlin, February 4, 2013.

166 Bode articulated this intent in a rare interview in 1964. Arnold Bode, 'Das grosse Gespräch: Interview mit Professor Arnold Bode', *Kunst*, vol. 4, no. 2 (August 1964), 35-38. Quoted in Klönk, 187.

167 A friend and translator who offered her assistance for the thesis informed me of this colloquial phrase.

168 Georgsdorf, 303-304.

made by hand.¹⁶⁹ After the Bauhaus had been reconstituted in the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago under Gropius, the prevailing Kassel Werkakademie and the Ulm School, founded by artist Max Bill in 1953, were the two active descendants in Germany that shared a similar foundational philosophy on education and art out of the Bauhaus tradition. Shared tendencies toward commercialization, particularly in the graphic design of advertisements, are clear through the productions for *documenta* under the influence of the economic drives in Kassel in 1955. While Bode was struggling to support his family in the years following the war, he designed the shop interiors for Kassel businesses for the display of clocks, watches and jewelry. With his brother's architecture firm, he designed the interiors of new hotels and restaurants, and a modern interior for the historic meeting house, integrating wall paintings. He had worked with Hinnerk Scheper, the Bauhaus Dessau Master of Wall Painting workshop under Gropius,¹⁷⁰ to design contributions to the Rasch-Künstler-Tapeten wallpaper collection.¹⁷¹ Bode believed Kassel's famed wallpaper collection, which was temporarily held in the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, together with the collection of instruments, were conceptually linked in showing the precursors of important industries of the 1950s, and deserving of being put on display in later *documenta* exhibitions.¹⁷²

Bode's interest in architecture is arguably concentrated in the most basic element of the wall and its many material iterations and effects, complicating the line between art and architecture, architecture and product. As a designer for trade fair booths, he was able to develop his own decorative forms and a modular stand system for the Göppinger Plastics Company in 1951 at the Constructa building exhibition in Hannover. [fig. 29] The booth showcases a bar with stools, a table and chair set, wallpaper with an abstract motif and a plastic curtain backdrop that will return in 1955 at the

169 Email exchange with Enne Lux, widow of Nickel's assistant in the print shop, April 10, 2013.

170 My classmate at MIT, Christianna Bonin introduced me to this character and our conversations about the territory of wall painting between architecture and art have informed this portion of the thesis.

171 Lange, 14.

172 Abschrift Memorandum über die Unterbringung des Kasseler Museumsbestande, *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 3* Mappe 100.



fig. 29: Bode's design for the Goppinger display at the Constructa Building Exhibition in Hannover, 1951

Museum Fridericianum as a primary design element. As seen at the same time with the exhibitions of the Marshall Plan, modern art converged with consumer culture through the design of the household object—families could take a piece of art home with them as an affordable and utilitarian object that was wrapped up in modernist and internationalist style and politics.¹⁷³ Plastic sheeting, the most representative “exhibition

technology”¹⁷⁴ in the 1955 *documenta*, also may have informed the exhibition’s name. Christoph Lange has placed *documenta* as a title in the lexicon of interior design, or a “spin-off of the ‘1950s advertising neologisms” including the *Constructa* exhibition, the German furniture manufacturer *Korrekt* and the synthetic fabric line *Abstracta*, a material that Bode used in several design series for the Kaliko- and Kunstleder-Werke GmbH in Göpping.¹⁷⁵ Göppinger Plastics donated sheeting (to later be reused by the company) to *documenta* in 1955. Reciprocally, the company used the art show as an advertising tool when they reprinted installation photographs of *documenta* as a catalog under the name of their showroom in Frankfurt am Main, Göppinger Galerie, which opened in March 1956. Although the first *documenta* did not display design objects autonomously,¹⁷⁶ but rather through the exhibition architecture, it did depend on the commercial sponsorship, and fit itself into the industry with its name and graphic identity—lower case lettering; black,

173 The work of Willi Baumeister is one such example of modernist abstract art’s contribution, or appropriation, by interior decoration and domestic textiles. Ernst Wilhelm Nay’s bright palette and interpretive fluid forms also edged on the commercial advertising aesthetic of the time.

174 This term comes from the undated second draft of the *documenta* committee’s “Sales letter to the industry,” *documenta* Archiv, Mapped 6a. Commercial sponsors also included Rasch Tapetenfabrik (wallcoverings), Eternit AG (fiber and cement products) and Siemens AG (which donated lightbulbs).

175 Ernst Schuh, Bode’s assistant at the first *documenta* in 1955, quoted in Lange, 14.

176 The *Bundesgartenschau*, on the other hand, did didactically display building materials in a tent in Karlsruhe with Eternit fiber cement building materials, as discussed in Chapter One.

white, and primary colors; and the severe geometry and sans-serif typeset.¹⁷⁷ [fig. 30]

In the Fridericianum, Bode used black and white plastic sheeting in three distinct manners: draped over the windows, draped over the rough brick walls, and sheathing the Heraklith plate temporary walls to create yet another texture behind the paintings. More than displaying the material properties of the plastic, the wall treatment enhanced or shifted the reading of the art itself, playing with color, blacks and whites. As a total environment, the plastic altered and dignified the atmosphere over the course of the viewer's movement through



fig. 30: A reprint of photographs of documents in 1955 for the purposes of Goppinger Plastics advertising demonstrates the shared graphic design.

the space. Views through the windows to the outside world were reduced to silhouettes

by the curtains, to be looked at but not

through. The gallery space was kept sacred but not isolated, the exterior environment was suggested by transferred movement and filtered light through the diaphanous white plastic and projected shadows of the windowpanes as another dimension to the wall.

Whether they fluttered at the edge of the windows, or stretched nine meters from the ceiling to floor, the plastic sheets created unpredictable movement through the space or revealed stresses in folds and wrinkles, suggesting new possibilities in the materiality, or

177 Architecture critics at the time had apprehensions about technology's influence on German culture via American occupation and re-education. In response to the exhibition, "How America Lives" in Frankfurt, 1949, organized by Peter Harden and the OMGUS (Office of Military Government, United States) Exhibitions Workshop led by former Bauhaus Master Instructor of Graphic Design, Joost Schmidt, *Der Baumeister* published a stinging review of the show for its reflection of the technology obsessed American, far from the "sentient beings" that Germans had hoped to remain. Rudolf Pfister, "So Wohnt Amerika. Eine Betrachtung über das Fertighaus," *Baumeister*, no. 10, 1949, quoted in Castillo, 23.

dematerialization of architecture. Furthermore, at the points of adjacency or intersection between neoclassical and modernist, where arched doorways are rectilinearly bisected or axes are closed off by curtains, the modern is read more clearly against the neoclassical, illustrating the larger implications of adaptive reuse.

“With more advantages than disadvantages,” the organizers trumpeted in the exhibition brochure, the interior was stripped of historical context and correlated demands and constraints, allowing for an exhibition that takes advantage of modern technology’s potentialities. Paradoxically, organizers sent the message that while it was important for the viewer to realize the history of the building, it was equally important to note that the exhibition’s design depended on the unbound, uncluttered and facilitating interior. By the time *documenta* opened, it had become clear that the Fridericianum would remain in its “earlier determination and tradition” as a place for the display of culture, but with an improvisational and temporary aesthetic and format.¹⁷⁸

Using the symbolism of the building’s Neoclassical façade, *documenta* absorbed historical relevance and legitimacy in order to re-introduce modern art for the spiritual health of Germans. The National Socialist’s aggressive control over the landscape extended over art production and display, which culminated in the *Entarte Kunst* exhibition of “degenerate art” in 1937. *documenta* participated in the sociological shift from the imposed mass collective experience in National Socialist isolation, under which each subject was a symbol of the larger whole, the *Volk*. In the strict unification of blood, soil and art, artists producing work outside of the enforced singular definition of *Volk* had been banned from participating in society. Historian Walter Grasskamp has argued *documenta* in 1955 as an undoing of the National Socialist exhibition, *Entarte Kunst* in 1937, under the principle that *documenta* was “to propagate modernism on hostile ground in Germany at the cost of rendering harmless its central motives and achievements –a form of *preservation through abandonment*.”¹⁷⁹ While careful not to abandon, or ignore crucial details, the thesis takes

178 Heinz Lemke. Opening speech to *documenta* in 1955. *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 10.

179 Walter Grasskamp, ““Degenerate Art” and Documenta I.” *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*. By Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1994), 182. Original emphasis.

an approach parallel to *documenta* so as to reflect the continuous historical line that the exhibition put forward, while leaving the rupture productively vague. After the *Entarte Kunst* exhibition in 1937, *documenta* was the first encyclopedic exhibition championing modern art in West Germany.¹⁸⁰ Having displayed overlapping bodies of artwork, a few pieces of which I will narrow in on, it is important to acknowledge the form and presentation of *Entarte Kunst* to appropriately convey *documenta*'s impact in what it was working against.

Entarte Kunst was the most well attended exhibition of the century. Having attracted over two million visitors over four months in Munich, it then traveled to eleven other cities in Germany, reaching one million more.¹⁸¹ On two floors of the Hofgarten arcade in Munich, the linear exhibition displayed just over 650 paintings, sculptures, prints and books out of the 5,000 works the totalitarian regime had deemed degenerate. Paintings filled the structural walls in haphazard and claustrophobic Salon-like hanging, clustered around doors in the barrel-vaulted rooms on the first floor, and for more space, the second floor windows were partitioned by temporary exhibition walls. Inflammatory quotes and imitation modern shapes applied as if graffiti backed superficial, interrogative themes including "farmers seen by Jews," "insults to German womanhood," and "the mockery of God,"¹⁸² vilifying both the art object and the creator responsible for defacing "German culture" as defined by Hitler.¹⁸³

180 Ian Wallace compiles a helpful list of dedicated shows preceding *documenta* in postwar Germany, particularly in Berlin: Ernst Wilhelm Nay and Werner Heldt had solo shows at the Berlin gallery Gerd Rosen as early as 1946; "Masters of the Bauhaus" was displayed in Berlin in 1947; artists including Marc Chagall were included in "The French Masters of Today" exhibition and others similar to it; Willi Baumeister re-emerged and won prizes at the Venice Biennale in 1950 and the São Paulo Bienal in 1951. These artists and their exhibitions were still working in opposition to the stifling of modernism in the Soviet territories. Wallace, 7-8.

181 Altschuler, 257.

182 Klonek, 128.

183 At the Haus der Kunst in Munich for the Great Exhibition of German Art in 1937, the counterpart to *Entarte Kunst*, Hitler outlined the intentions behind both shows: "Until the moment when National-Socialism took power, there existed in Germany a so-called 'modern art,' that is, to be sure, almost every year another one, as the very meaning of this word indicates. National-Socialist Germany, however, wants again a 'German Art,' and this art shall and will be of eternal value, as are all truly creative values of a people. Should this art, however, again lack this eternal value for our people, then indeed

To dislocate abstract art from the recent past and place it in neutral, pre-national, deeper history, *documenta* crafted a teleological narrative of modernism's evolution along an "unbroken line."¹⁸⁴

Content and Container

As a preface to modern abstract art, beginnings and inspirations were presented in the entrance hall with a historic panorama. As if a memorial to the building's lost past, the ceiling and supporting columns of this entranceway were painted black, neutralizing the shift from the urban environs and signaling travel to a time even before the Fridericianum was constructed, an archaic, valid past. Recalling similar historical juxtapositions at Alfred Barr's 1936 *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, a colorful poster wall with photographic images of African masks, pre-Colombian totems, European art of the Middle Ages and the technically advanced objects of early civilizations hung in an otherwise empty hall. The objective photographs of ancient global origins, inspired by André Malraux's *Imaginary Museum* and Werner Schmalenbach's *Die Kunst Afrikas*,¹⁸⁵ grounded and validated the exhibition's abstractionist art by reconnecting the essential desire of humankind to represent the world with abstractionist language. Simple white panels bordered the doorway to the exhibition main hall. This initiated a rhythm, following the Bauhaus rubric of plane, space, color and black and white that continued throughout the individual gallery spaces to create a cohesive whole.¹⁸⁶

The display of anonymous ancient art free from organizational and didactic constraints, as if from an imaginary museum¹⁸⁷, was directly followed by another grid

it will mean that it also has no higher value today." Hitler, Adolf. "Speech Inaugurating the 'Great Exhibition of German Art'" Adolf Hitler, "Speech Inaugurating the "Great Exhibition of German Art"" (1937).

184 Werner Haftmann, Opening speech for *documenta*, July 16, 1955. *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mappe 6a. Accessed January 16, 2013. Translated by Leslie Allison.

185 Harald Kimpel, *Documenta: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Cologne, 1997), 367-77, n.67 as cited by Annette Tietenberg, 39.

186 Trained at the College for Art Teachers, which adopted a Bauhaus curriculum model, Bode taught a foundation course under these premises before graduating in 1930. Klönk, 187.

187 To reference Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire*, I am implying a "museum" that could

of reproduced photographs –portraits of the artists whose work would follow inside the walls of the Museum Fridericianum. Humanizing the space of the museum and the art, *documenta* displayed the artist as a hero, who despite being under attack by the Nazis, persevered through the war, emigrated underground or to decrepit factory halls without straying from his mission, driven by his “indispensable inner necessity.”¹⁸⁸ After the war, in a time of newfound tolerance and humanist subjectivity, the artist was reabsorbed into society, deserving of “German” heritage.¹⁸⁹ In demonstrating the artist as an individual, the photographs encouraged the viewer’s reading of herself as an individual in what Werner Haftmann later called a process of “self-interrogation.”¹⁹⁰ Many were photographed dressed in business suits, others captured in the process of working, their art shown alongside their tools, their names listed in formation below. By hanging these photographs at the backs of viewers as they entered the long hall, Bode created a gentle, casual encounter and an atmosphere of humanitarian exchange, universal and unhinged from nationalist markers aside from subtle cues. One reviewer wrote of the wall: “It is strangely compelling to observe how spellbound people are by these colossal photographic portraits... They nearly remain longer here than they do in front of the art works, unable to tear themselves away from studying these faces.”¹⁹¹ German artists were placed in the center of the wall, framing the door, and the poster wall subtly unraveled the dichotomy set up by Paul Schultze-Naumberg’s 1928 booklet *Kunst und Rasse* (Art and Race), in which works by artists including Modigliani and Schmidt-Rottluff were analogized with

be disconnected from the space of a traditional museum, transferred into democratic circulation via print, and rearranged for the pleasure or curiosity rather than an institutionalized linear timeline or geographical map.

188 Werner Haftmann, Opening speech for *documenta*, July 16, 1955. *documenta Archiv*, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mapped 6a. Accessed January 16, 2013. Translated by Leslie Allison.

189 The display of the artist as maker in a capitalist society is an interesting topic for further research, considering the other dimensions of this historical moment as one in sociological and economic imbalance. Some of the work was available for purchase, and a capitalist critique of *documenta* and the art on display is beyond the scope of this thesis.

190 Werner Haftmann, “On the Content of Contemporary Art,” *Quadrum VII* (1959): 22.

191 Walther Kiaulehn, “documenta. Fünfzig Jahre moderne Kunst im Spiegel der großen Kasseler Ausstellung,” in *Münchener Merker*, 30. June 1955. Quoted in Matthews, 57.

photographs demonstrating “physical and mental handicaps,”¹⁹² alluding to the disturbed psychology of the producer as well as their subject matter. Modern art was made approachable for the uninitiated viewer by giving a face and personality to the artists, who offered themselves to the public.¹⁹³ *documenta* obscured the recent past of degeneracy, visible only through oblique references, including the display of artists as individuals. As Theodor Adorno wrote in 1959, the process of “working through of the past” turned the subject to her own existential reality.¹⁹⁴ Alongside Theodor Adorno,¹⁹⁵ writers in Germany paralleled the visual arts in shared efforts to build knowledge outside of the representational realm, through psychology, metaphysics and science. Martin Heidegger’s seminal text, *The Question Concerning Technology*, was first published the same year as *documenta*, in 1955, and articulated the phenomena of modernity in seeking a common rhythm in man and nature through “the necessary interplay between subjectivism and objectivism.”¹⁹⁶ Viewers were prompted to “work through the past” with a developing self-consciousness set against another subject, the artist, reconnecting the social tissue of a democratic public realm that was not confined by nationality.¹⁹⁷

Despite its name evoking a “documentation” of art, as if comprehensive, *documenta* did not explicitly confront the recent past in form or textual framing. “European

192 Walter Grasskamp, “Degenerate Art and Documenta I” In *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 188. Grasskamp argues that *documenta* is a *counterexhibition* to “Entarte Kunst” in 1937 that “neglected to answer conclusively and concisely with their Documenta the questions that the Degenerate Art exhibition had raised.” Grasskamp isolates three galleries within *documenta* in 1955 to bring tensions to surface that the exhibition organizers had not directly confronted.

193 In a sentiment of mutual exchange and understanding, the *documenta* brochure reads, “what the public owes the artist has the artist neglected to give to the public first.” Translated by Uta Musgray.

194 Theodor Adorno, *Critical Models*, 102.

195 Adorno spoke at *documenta* in 1959 on “The Idea of New Music.” Lange, 17.

196 Heidegger, 66.

197 Through the *documenta* catalogs, we can start to trace the displacement of the artist by the curator as the “hero” of the exhibition. The catalog in 1955 included 16 concentrated pages of plates of Picasso, Braque, Léger, Max Beckmann and the Futurists. In 1959, the catalog scattered artist portraits throughout the catalog, and by 1964, no portraits of artists were included in print. Walter Grasskamp, “For Example, *Documenta*, or, How is Art History Produced,” in Reesa Greenberg, et al., eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 75.

Development since 1905” categorized by movement on the ground floor; then “Painting and Sculpture of Present and ‘Special Cabinets’” clustered by artist on the second floor; capped by a portion of the uppermost floor displaying “Architecture from 1905-1955” in “parallel” to the art, offering a symbiotic relationship between architecture and art in structural analogy¹⁹⁸ to the vision of Gropius’s Bauhaus of architecture as the star crown, the unity of all arts in the quiet culminating point of *documenta* in 1955 and a testament to Bode’s dedication to architecture. At the other extreme of didacticism, *documenta* left “degeneracy” a discursive and spatial void. Dozens of artists were included in *documenta* that had previously been barred from exhibiting in Germany. One such object by Wilhelm Lehmbruck draws out

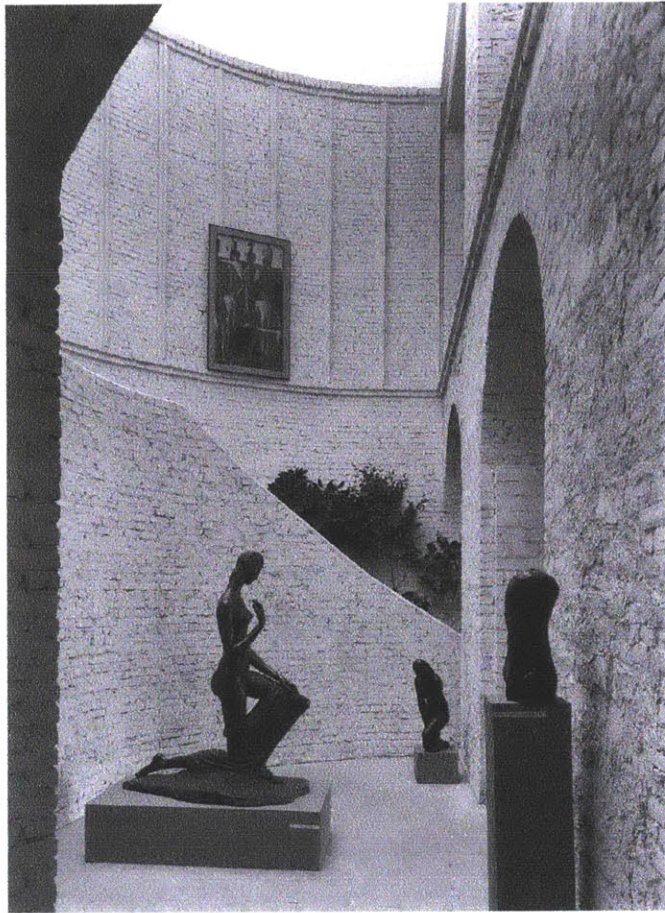


fig. 31: Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Kneeler* (1911) in the Museum Fridericianum Rotunda. Paintings by Oskar Schlemmer were hung along the stairway. Günther Becker / © documenta Archiv.

the overall curatorial and design decisions within the architecture of the exhibition. [fig. 31] *Kneeler* of 1911 was prominently placed in the center of a first floor gallery at the Hofgarten arcade and prematurely removed from the exhibition. Damaged in transit to Munich prior to the opening of *Entarte Kunst*, the scarred sculpture gently tilted her head within the rotunda of the Fridericianum nearly twenty years later, a raw but grand atrium with the lightness of three-stories. Between “art since 1905” on the first floor and “current young artists” on the second, *Kneeler* marked the architectural fold at the stairway and the

198 The directory lists the movements of art included on each floor, peripherally noting the proportion of exhibition space to the Fridericianum’s footprint.

historical void of public production during the years of the war.¹⁹⁹

On the second floor, paintings by Max Ernst, Fritz Winter, Emil Nolde and Ernst Wilhelm Nay expressed the influence of early modernism on young European painters of the time with bold and bright strokes. Haftmann was partial to Fritz Winter, having published a monograph on the Bauhaus-trained²⁰⁰ artist in 1951, included him in a prominent place in *Painting in the 20th Century*, and wrote a second dedicated book in 1957. Winter's paintings were praised by critic of the time, Will Grohmann, for their expression of volume and allegorical narratives to expose reality's unseen forces and relationships, painted while the artist stayed in isolation in Munich and then in a Russian prisoner of war camp.²⁰¹ A colleague of Bode's at the Werkakademie as of 1955, his work captures the spirit of the show:

Winter's paintings thus may be described as carrying on the great Romantic tradition – in so far as it is Romantic to believe that *there is an immaterial point where the inside and outside, the near and the far, the animate and the inanimate coincide, and that by attaining to that point it is possible to restore unity with the world of things on a universal plane.* This idea runs through the artistic spirit of our century like a powerful leitmotif and is in the truest sense its motivating principle.²⁰²

On *documenta's* opening night in July 1955, Haftmann stood against the backdrop of Fritz Winter's *Komposition vor Blau und Gelb (Composition Before Blue and Yellow)* (1955), facing Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror* (1932) to address a full Groß Halle. Glossing over

199 Altschuler, 263. In the meantime, *Kneeler* was shown at the MoMA exhibition, "Art in Our Time" in 1939, an exhibition that featured several works by artists banned from Nazi Germany. The exhibition celebrated the Museum's tenth anniversary and coincided with the New York World's Fair, and also included a section called "Houses and Housing," prepared in cooperation with the United States Housing Authority. In President Franklin D. Roosevelt's radio address on May 10 of that year, he referred to the Museum as a "living museum, not a collection of curious and interesting objects," and a "citadel of civilization" (MoMA website).

200 Winter studied under Klee, Kandinsky, and Oskar Schlemmer at the Bauhaus in the late 1920s. Wallace, 23.

201 Heather Mathews, "Making Histories: The Exhibition of Postwar Art and the Interpretation of the Past in Divided Germany, 1950-1959." PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2006: 46.

202 Haftmann, Werner. *Painting in the 20th Century*. English edition (London: Lund Humphries, 1961), 374. Emphasis added.

the details of the Nazi effect on artistic culture, he optimistically framed the future given the promise of the art that had emerged from the “most disdainful form of isolation –apostasy.”²⁰³ But a show of work produced across Europe in the years after the war²⁰⁴ “would not give nearly enough treatment to the specific German circumstance. This requires much more of a broad approach, from out of our history, so that any fleeting, constantly transforming, not independently definable, one-dimensional point of ‘present’ may regain width, depth, the multi-dimensional.”²⁰⁵ Between Haftmann’s art historical foundation and Bode’s architectural vision, *documenta* juxtaposed distinct and distant histories –ancient art across geographical boundaries, a neoclassical edifice, early 20th century painting and sculpture, contemporary paintings all within an exhibition design that then linked with urban conditions to expand the exhibition’s spatial and historical dimensions.

At the scale of the wall, Winter’s composition asserted color and form to “articulate and enhance a large-scale architectural assignment” representative of *documenta* from the first night, as art critic Franz Roh wrote at the time.²⁰⁶ Liberated from the “easel” format that we see on the poles in the Fridericianum, Winter’s rhythmic forms were positioned across from Picasso’s painting, equalizing the two in art historical terms, while making architecture from the art, as if a wallpaper or a wall painting.

Along the length of the central hallway to the main galleries, light curtains brushed the coarse concrete floor and softened the brick, still raw, in the structure’s impressive arched doorways. Horizontal beams across thresholds recalculated the interior proportions for a modernist serenity and brought the architecture to human scale with simple lines. This technique was carried through with independent pergolas in each room, self-referencing fragments that carried the viewer throughout the exhibition’s

203 Werner Haftmann, Opening speech for *documenta*, July 16, 1955. *documenta Archiv*, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mapped 6a. Accessed January 16, 2013. Translated by Leslie Allison.

204 The second *documenta* exhibition in 1959 would in fact take on this exact theme as “Art After 1945,” further reinforcing the historical break of the Nazi era.

205 Werner Haftmann, Opening speech for *documenta*, July 16, 1955. *documenta Archiv*, Kassel. *documenta 1* Mapped 6a. Accessed January 16, 2013. Translated by Leslie Allison.

206 Roh, Franz, and Juliane Roh. *German Painting in the 20th Century*. (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 129.



fig. 32: Toni Stadler, *Standing Woman*. Raum 15, first floor of the Museum Fridericianum, *documenta* 1955. Günther Becker / © documenta Archiv.

entirety in the architectural language of the garden and along any number of routes. The ephemerality of the event by design, however, does not match the seemingly static state of its own documentation. The author of *documenta's* documentation moves in a peculiar way through the empty halls, capturing the exhibition at a moment when it is not quite fully installed, as if to signal that the experience of *documenta* was a process in itself, an always in-between state, even without visitors.²⁰⁷ Photographs document the vast spaces, stools without sitters, paintings without viewers, suggesting the exhibition's autonomous architecture and art. One exhibition photograph in particular provokes a series of questions considering the viewer's relationship with the space.

On one end of the long central hallway, white plastic curtains weave and bundle behind the black arms of Toni Stadler's *Standing Woman* at the threshold of room 15, first pointing to the wall's temporary and nebulous character, and second, leading us to question their perambulatory function. [fig. 32] Were visitors free to create their own paths, even if it meant disrupting the plastic sheeting? Were walls completely broken down, only suggested, or ultimately necessary? Though the liberated architectural plan suggests diversified pathways, the second exhibition brochure for *documenta* contains on a mathematically gridded sheet, one of the only architectural

²⁰⁷ The archives of *documenta* do not give us a good sense of moving through the space, as Günther Becker's thorough documentation is oddly devoid of viewers, aside from one powerful photograph of exhibition visitors facing the wall of artists' portraits, reconciling the social and the spiritual through looking. Another photograph provides evidence that these installation photographs were taken just before opening; paintings rest on the rough floors set just within the photograph's frame.

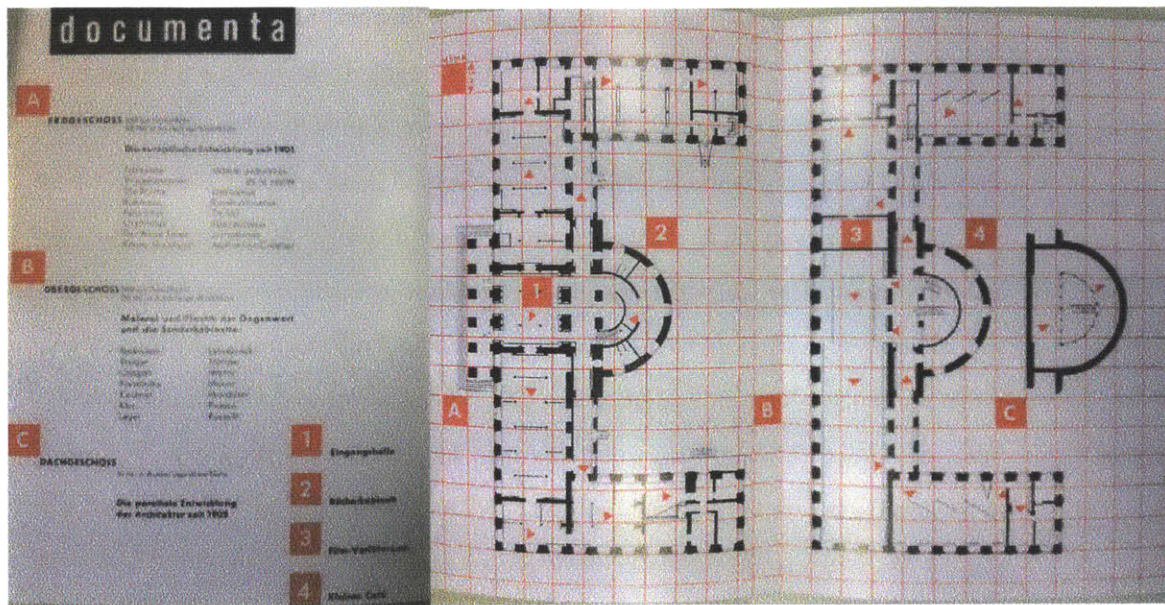


fig. 33: *documenta* exhibition brochure, in which the architecture becomes a graphic. Small cues are made for moving through the space to arrive at the bookstore, the film screening room and the small café.

plans of *documenta*, complete with measurements of the improvisational building, imposing order on the otherwise intuitive architecture and design and transforming the architecture itself into a graphic. [fig. 33] This color block scheme directs the visitor to the bookstore, the café and the film projection, accouterments to the art exhibition that expanded the walls, figurative and literal, of the traditional museum, of what the Museum Fridericianum once was.

Original walls had been reinforced with applied concrete, left rough and painted white without replacing the ornament, further emphasizing volume. From the “unfinished” and “provisionally” restructured building, the exhibition brochure continues, “the show is organized in spaces of unusual dimension,” unusually large, with small cabinet sized rooms for intimate viewing experiences. The traditional space of the Museum, a place of disparate historical objects with former lives, was transformed into a white walled gallery, with viewing spaces for individualized contemplation formed by the corners of these flexible walls. Screens of different types distinguished different sections of the gallery while maintaining a fluid continuity of the whole in a unified rhythm, “different from walking through the clearly circumscribed spaces of traditional museum

architecture, or the tedious line-up of booths at trade fairs.”²⁰⁸ This interior malleability was novel for its time, following one primary precedent, the Kunstverein in Hamburg, designed with flexible screen walls by Bauhaus architect, Karl Schneider and completed in 1930.²⁰⁹ In planes of white and black to designate and break up space, the color palette could also suggest varying levels of energy in technical materials. As outlined by Russian painter Kazimir Malevich, white signaled the “free flowing nature of dynamic space.”²¹⁰ This color interpretation aligns more closely with Bode’s Fridericianum, which was free and in motion, leaving time and space unmasked and apparent to the viewer, than the anonymous White Cube typology that was more fully expressed in the 1960s. [fig. 34] In his introduction to the expanded edition of O’Doherty’s Inside the White Cube, Thomas McEvelley compares the White Cube to the space of Egyptian tomb chambers, meditative space that likewise eliminated contextual references in the containment of sacred objects that could bring the viewer through time, through eternity and outside of objective reality. Though it has been noted that *documenta* in 1955 evoked a spiritual ‘temple-like’ environment with its white walls, perhaps akin to a tomb chamber or cave, history remained legible albeit neutralized, unlike the perfected White Cube, which expresses itself “untouched by time and its vicissitudes.”²¹¹

The Fridericianum’s architecture was in contrast to the non-mimetic abstract art on display, including artists that fit into the category of “Concrete Art.” As defined by Haftmann in his textbook, Concrete Art’s elimination of representational images and the overt use of pure geometry do not imply a radical and definitive rejection of the great art of the past, but rather a reassertion of its eternal values stripped of their historical and social disguises, and an application of these purified eternal values within the framework of a new society that is seeking, in every sphere, to re-interpret the world of objects in terms of abstract relationships.²¹² Haftmann uses the examples of artists Otto Wolfgang Schulze (better known as Wols) and Max Ernst to conceptualize the essence

208 Haacke, “Lessons Learned.”

209 Klonk, 123.

210 Klonk, 121.

211 Thomas McEvelley, Introduction to the Expanded Edition of The White Cube, 7.

212 Haftmann, 343.



fig. 34: Museum Fridericianum, Room 20 (second floor). The Chagall cabinet within a series of overlapping planes, evocative of de Stijl design and the various types of hanging in the first *documenta*. Photograph by: Erich Müller / © documenta Archiv.

of this movement and the dialogue created within the viewer to provoke individual introspection.

With the curtains muting natural light, artificial lighting was added but disguised by an extended network of a pergola-like structure, at once unifying the space with continuous lines and bringing the grand height of the ceilings down to human level, particularly in the double height of the second floor. In the *Groß Halle*, a black wooden trim outlines the trace of the former floor plate, encircling the void and floating an imaginary ceiling. Painted black to look like welded steel, the aesthetic of these stock wooden beams likens itself to modernist architecture and the allegiance to industrial materials. To create more wall space for paintings, Bode installed temporary walls covering the windows on the façade, shearing planes of old and new and adjusting the

architectural proportions for the viewer as a body and for the act of viewing art. [fig. 35] Using the same inexpensive and modular trade fair construction for an exhibition of “high art,” *documenta* elevating modular units to autonomous design elements.²¹³

More than just a white wall for hanging pictures, the gallery materialized as a medium for making art from architecture, a condition that Bode would take advantage of in the Fridericianum by framing the spaces *between* the frames. Beneath the canopy of roof beams, Bode hung paintings set out from the wall, displaying the space around the paintings and the “primitive quality” of the bricks just as much as he did the paintings. In a reversal, the art was instrumentalized for the exhibition design. Mondrian’s grids continued onto the surface of the monotone bricks and in the rotunda, the white bricks were framed by lumber painted white, alternating with paintings by Oskar Schlemmer that mimetically evoked climbing or traced motion.

Bode intended to “display each work in dignified, meaningful and interesting way, and to create lively interaction with the viewer.”²¹⁴ Borrowing the “key experience” of interaction from the Palazzo Reale and the lightweight modular construction of trade fair installations, paintings hung on vertical poles on V-braces at a remove from the brick walls and stood on short poles with square feet with a light touch on the rough floors, echoing the <<d-o-c-u-m-e-n-t-a>> signage in the plaza to link the gallery space with the urban space. Combined with the walls that seemed to hover off the floor, the lightness of the poles suggested the possibility of taking flight and the autonomy of the art from a “home,” from the Museum. Revealing the haphazard “as found,” or “as donated” necessity of the show, the floors varied dramatically from room to room, provisional concrete reads in the photographs as dirt in some views, and as carpet in others –turning to the garden and the trade fair in one move. [fig. 36] The height of the Grand Hall signaled a lightness and transcendence that was capped by the last gallery on the third floor.

On the third floor, a photography exhibit saturated in light, the floors and ceilings just one shade darker than the whitewashed walls, the exhibition symmetrically folds to

213 Buerger, *Origins*, 177.

214 Arnold Bode, *documenta* Archiv, Kassel. *documenta 1*.

conclude in the same simple, geometric and didactic poster style format as how visitors entered through the “primitive origins” hall. Framing the curvature of the walls from floor to ceiling, black latticework supported 50 photographs of contemporary architecture parallel to the modern art shown on the lower two stories. Characterized by their lightness, dynamism and transparency, works by Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, F.L. Wright, Aalto, Nervi, Mendelsohn’s Einstein Tower in Potsdam (1921), Scharoun’s Haus Schminke (1933) and Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation (1952) presented an alternate reality of the viewer’s built environment. On an optimistic finish, *documenta* covertly, and ironically, suggests new building to strengthen Germany’s ties to European movements at the moment that Kassel imagines its urban future. With an empty lot between *documenta* in the Fridericianum and the *Bundesgartenschau* in the Karlssaue, the display of architecture in photographs echoed the possibility of a new Staatstheater that could one day be displayed among canonical modernist works by and Hans Scharoun, for built architecture to replace the provisional spaces of the 50s. Leaving the viewer with objective images of built architecture inspired optimism for the future of Kassel at the time of its reconstruction.

Bode’s interest in contemporary architecture and the inclusion of Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles offers us a reading of the styles he developed with *documenta* in 1955, which remain unique to that year in the proximity to postwar rebuilding. A few months after *documenta* closed, architectural critic Reyner Banham wrote an article in *Architectural Review* titled “The New,” which canonized the work of architects Alison and Peter Smithson. In reaction to the shortfalls of the ever pervasive International Style modernism,²¹⁵ and growing impressions of CIAM’s imperialist tendencies, the Smithsons splintered off from CIAM in 1953 at its 9th Congress. They sought to revolutionize “a new way of seeing the ordinary, an openness to how prosaic ‘things’ could reenergize our inventive activity...and the properties of things it brings to

215 International Style modernism was the “aesthetic lingua franca” of the Marshall Plan. Castillo, xv. The guiding principles of CIAM expanded the political tone of American cultural policy to the urban space, relating classicism and humanism for civic spaces, monumentality, and public art.

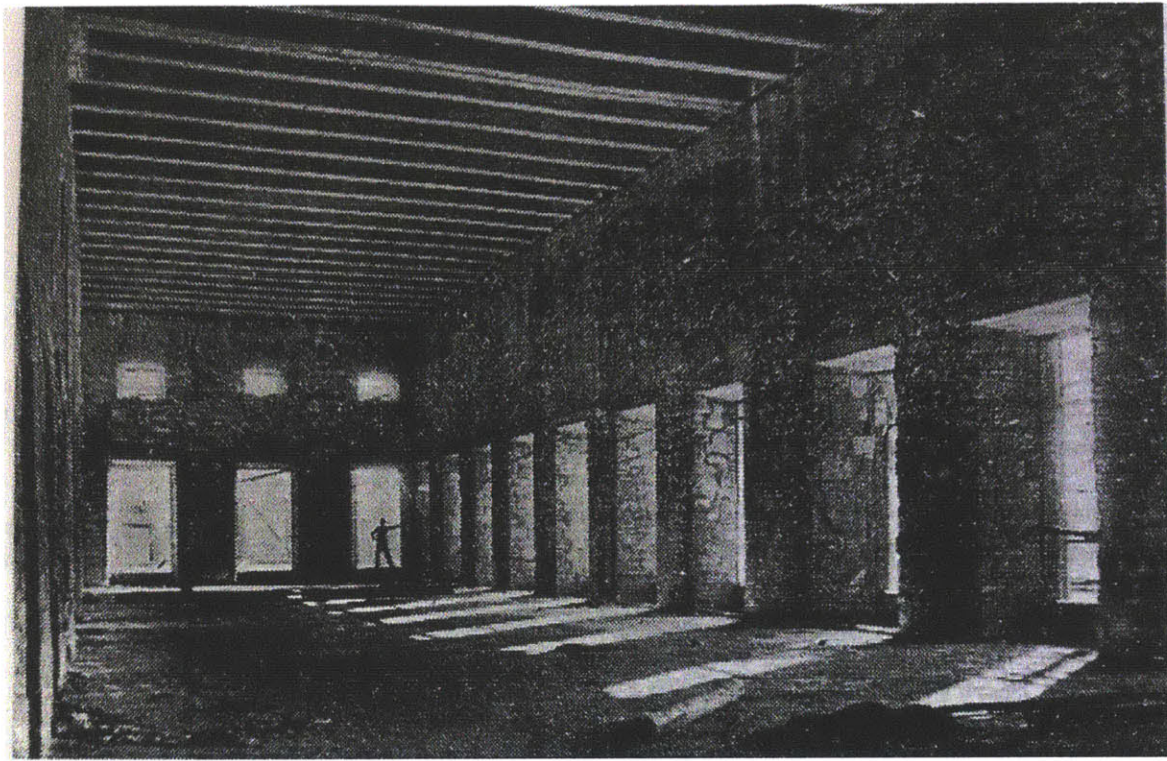


fig. 35: Museum Fridericianum Groß Halle, 1954 and 1955 (*documenta* – main painting gallery). Fritz Winter's *Composition* on the far wall.
top: HNA bottom: Günther Becker / © documenta Archiv

light are those of directness, immediacy, rawness and material presence.”²¹⁶ Extending from biology and early art to urbanism, their *As Found* ideology “was a concern with the here and now, with the real and the ordinary, with the tangible and the real –not with high-flown visions and enraptured ideals.”²¹⁷ Putting to use available structures and resources rather than starting from a “tabula rasa,” their New Brutalism was grounded by the question of aesthetic or ethic, with emotional rough-tough materials and dramatic space-plays in sectional organization, responding directly to the material language and context of a particular site. Banham summarized the validity of New Brutalism in “the persistence of an idea that the relationships of the parts and materials of a building are a working morality.”²¹⁸ These definitions, although not made explicitly by Bode,

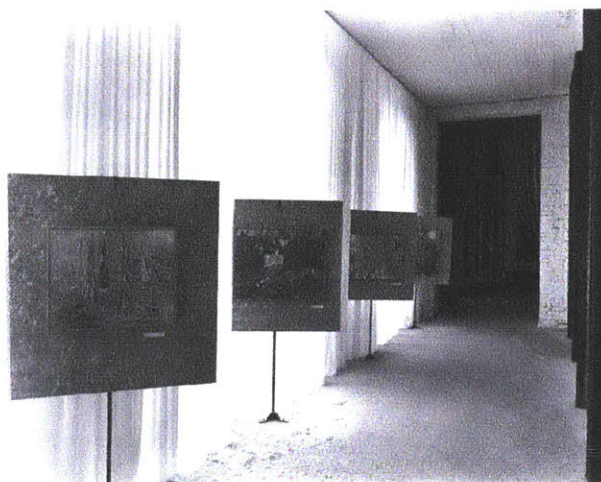
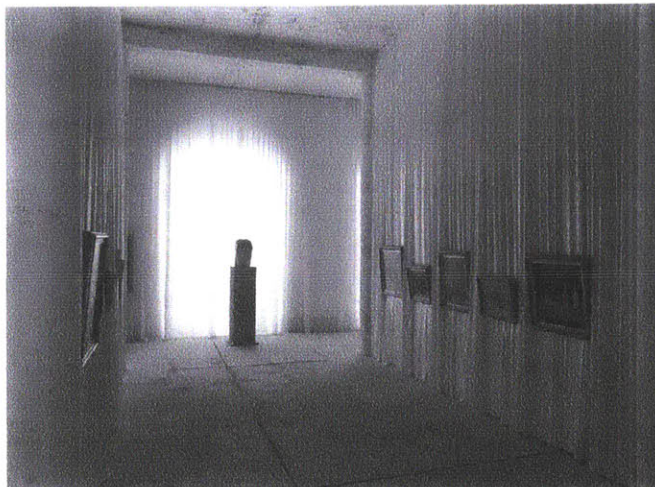


fig. 36: Milky white galleries on the first floor of the Museum Fridericianum. Goppinger plastics filter light through the windows. Günther Becker / © documenta Archiv.

parallel the conditions under which he was working, in a post war ruined European city, and also his aesthetic and ethic decisions within that context. Inserted into an existing environment with implicit coordinates and urban considerations, *documenta* was at once sympathetic and responsive to the history of Kassel, and true to its time.²¹⁹ The “near

216 Lichtenstein, Claude, and Thomas Schregenerberger. *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary*. Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 2001. 40.

217 Lichtenstein, Claude, and Thomas Schregenerberger. *As Found*, 9.

218 Banham, Reyner. “The New Brutalism,” *Architectural Review*, December 1955.

219 The Smithsons had organized an art exhibition, *Parallel of Life and Art* at the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) in London in the fall of 1953. A stream of consciousness sensory experience, reminiscent of work by Bayer and Kiesler, the

brutal” improvised design was sensorial beyond touch and appearance, the combination of the wet concrete and plastic curtains gave the space a particular scent, as one visitor (and volunteer seamstress of the plastic curtains) remembered in a personal interview, the exhibition would not have been the same if not for the immersive scent and dampness of the materials that created a living, breathing environment of art and architecture.²²⁰

Similar to the wooden mold-imprinted concrete used by Le Corbusier at the Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles, France (1948-54) and Alison and Peter Smithson’s school at Hunstanton in Norfolk, England (1949-1954), the painted white brick that dominated the interior design of *documenta* made its material history and process of making legible to the viewer, marking itself within the aggressive architectural informality of the mid-1950s. Undecorated, linear roughly hewn columns, and evocative of the Brutalist *pilotis*, had been installed by the State and followed the same plan as the former Ionic columns, ghosts to a previous architecture and program. Between the columns, Bode installed thin planes of lightweight materials to further divide the space, transforming the rigid neoclassical museum grid to a playful zig-zag maze, *within* and engaging the architectural detailing of the exhibition house with a unique fluidity. Thresholds played with negative and positive space, in one view, a narrow passage to the Chagall “cabinet” traces the silhouette of a column with stepped bricks toward the ceiling. Wood wool cement Heraklith boards and the plastic sheeting alike were conceived as sheer curtains between inner and outer space. Some walls hovered, disrupting any traditionally clear connection between load and support. As if a stage, the exhibition moved bodies with

exhibition hung enlarged photographic slides of specimens, drawings and images of archaeological objects. The material was edited by their collaborators: photographer Nigel Henderson, engineer R.S. Jenkins, and sculptor E. Paolozzi. Their 1952 exhibition proposal took the form of a manifesto: “In the 20s a work of art or a piece of architecture was a finite composition of simple elements, elements which have no separate identity but exist only in relation to the whole; the problem of the 50s is to retain the clarity and finiteness of the whole but to give to the parts their own internal disciplines and complexities. The second great creative period should be proclaimed by an exhibition in which the juxtaposition of phenomena from our various fields would make obvious the existence of a new attitude. Our exhibition would present the opening phase of the movement of our time and record it as we see it now, as did the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion for 1925.” Quoted in Lichtenstein, Claude, and Thomas Schreggenberger. *As Found*, 38. 220 Enne Lux, Personal interview. Kassel, January 15, 2013.

surprising turns and vantage points, reminiscent of the garden outside of the Museum's walls.

I position the inclusion of contemporary art in this first exhibition as a crucial fact in consideration of the exhibition-event's trajectory thereafter. With this content within the prestigious space of the second floor *piano nobile*, *documenta* did more than insert Germany back into the global modern art world with historic pieces that had been barred, but demonstrated forward movement, transitioning the space of the Museum from a historicizing institution to a flexible and contemporary force. Moving away from displaying a static collection due to obvious financial constraints, *documenta* abandoned the reciprocal relation between collecting and exhibiting and began to break down the traditional Museum model as the *modus operandi* for displaying art, while still depending on the institutional structure for the loan of the artwork on display. In format and function, *documenta* expanded the cultural dimensions of an exhibition and therefore undid the notion of the Museum as the arbiter for showing art --art could be seen in the cinema,²²¹ in the music hall or in the theater,²²² all of which connected back to the gallery. Visual and performing arts reinforced one another in conveying the artistic spirit of the century, demonstrating Bode's broad-based and novel approach in such an event.

Emerging from isolation could not happen at a specific point in time or place, but would be continually defined by shifting external circumstances; *documenta* in 1955 would not be the end, but rather one point in a process of transcendence. The extensions of these external circumstances tethered and stabilized the contours of the event and resisted an "escape" from the past; the exhibitions resisted what Frei Otto's nomadic architecture had proposed. Originally influenced by cross-European trends, the neoclassical dimensions of the Fridericianum inspired this integration once again with an interior of separate but analogous proportions, for the art and for the viewer.

Alongside the *Bundesgartenschau* and *documenta*, Festival flags and lectures,

221 The popular film program ran from August to September, and included eight full-length films and many more short films in a range of genres.

222 Due to the delay in the Staatstheater construction, *documenta's* "Week of Modern Theater" from July 15-22, 1955 was performed in the Municipal Hall.

screenings and concerts²²³ attracted not only the educated elite visitor but also the uninitiated Kassel native, encouraging repeat visits.²²⁴ Similar to Gropius's ideas for the Bauhaus, the exhibition was a community driven experiment with an event-like quality, announced in Bode's title. Despite Kassel's 1955 population of only 7,000, hundreds of visitors would open the Fridericianum each day and by the end of 100 days, *documenta* brought in 130,000 visitors, twice as many than were expected.²²⁵ The expanded biennial format and open-ended nationalist approach called for, and was reinforced by, a rotation of artworks –no proceeding *event* would be the same in content, form or attendees, adaptable to contemporary conditions.

As an architectural experiment that can be considered within the modern movement, *documenta* in 1955 did in fact establish itself as its own subject, a new mechanism for looking at tainted modern art while suggesting a new purpose for museums and historical architecture, assigning agency to the exhibition as medium. In the face of modernism's failed architectural promises, the exhibition architecture inverted the "disinterested pleasure" of the Enlightenment and attempted to return architecture to the general public.²²⁶

223 Opening night of the exhibition featured the Staatskapelle Kassel's performance of Benjamin Britten's Fantasy Quartet for oboe, violin, viola and cello. Five hundred people attended the July 21 symphony concert "Works of the 20th Century" in the municipal hall, performed by the Staatskapelle of the Staatstheater Kassel. Lange, 16.

224 Similar to Gropius's ideas for the Bauhaus, the exhibition was a community driven experiment with an event-like quality, announced in Bode's title.

225 Harald Kimpel and Karin Stengel. *Documenta 1955: Erste Internationale Kunstausstellung, Eine Fotografische Rekonstruktion*. (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1995), 140.

226 Lichtenstein, Claude, and Thomas Schregenberger. *As Found*, 9.

Epilogue: Points for Departure

Although Arnold Bode's inspiration may have derived from a single building, he demonstrated a desire to distribute the model, taking over additional sites of war-damaged architecture for a city of bricolage. Bode absorbed the *Bundesgartenschau's* format—a repeating schedule, and expanded *documenta* into its form in the space as an urban garden and the Orangerie. By expanding to the Orangerie, following the trails of the *Bundesgartenschau* in the

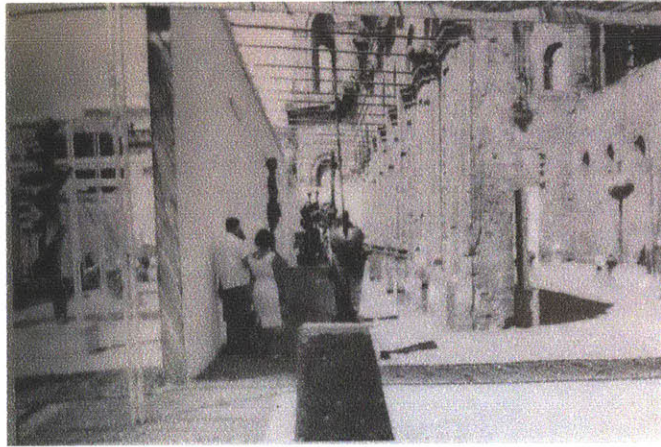


fig. 37: Shearing planes of old and new at *documenta II* in 1959, at the Orangerie. Visitors could weave between the ruined walls in a liminal indoor-outdoor space.

urban exhibition, *II. documenta* established a pattern for the recurring show thereafter, progressively taking on the city as exhibition “container,” with the walls of the museum further dematerialized, becoming, as Bode called them, “imaginary walls.” [fig. 37] As my argument builds around the *Bundesgartenschau* as the “thesis” of Kassel in 1955 and *documenta* as the “antithesis” in 1955, *II. documenta* in 1959 is a “synthesis” of the two in occupying the space of the garden and falling into a repetitive schedule. Bode adopted techniques from Frei Otto and Hermann Mattern, engaging the walls of the Orangerie, but not closing them off, so as to seamlessly integrate architecture and sculpture into the garden without disrupting sight lines or movement. It is in this synthesis of the three operative maneuvers from 1955 that *documenta* continues from in 1959 and after.

Continuing as Artistic Director of the following three shows in 1959, 1964 and 1968, Bode established *documenta* as a force for adaptive re-use, creating a nomadic series of temporary site-specific interventions and an archipelago of cultural loci. In 1973, Arnold Bode evaded the local political trauma and consigned the first of rotating Artistic

Directors to Harald Szeemann²²⁷ for *documenta 5*, who developed the event under the title “Questioning Reality – Pictorial Worlds Today.”²²⁸ Charting new directions for *documenta*, Szeemann organized an encyclopedic collection of works to draw parallels between contemporary visual forms of expression and the multiple realities of the everyday, which Daniel Buren famously called an exhibition of an exhibition, that is, an exhibition as form and the curator as artist of reconfiguration rather than of production. As the so-called father of *documenta*, Bode established a precedent in the exhibition’s relationship to the city, which was later reinterpreted by the successive Artistic Directors. While these figures carried the exhibition to its wide reach in the art world through international credentials and tourism; the global role of “curator” began to define itself more clearly, and the exhibition-event migrated from *documenta*’s origins and intentions. As foreigners became the directors of *documenta*, the exhibition shifted from instilling permanent urban effects at the local scale to city branding on the international art world circuit.

The 1955 *Bundesgartenschau* ended its season in mid-October, packed up Frei Otto’s tents and went to set them up in Cologne to restore the war-damaged Rheinpark in 1957. In preparation for the Garden Show, Cologne had already taken a competitive edge in positioning itself before *documenta* had opened. In planning the Cologne show, a newspaper critic doubted *documenta* and its plans: “...to bring ‘the style of our epoch.’ Promises, promises! Cologne has to be inventive not to be left behind. All in all, Cologne is responsible for more than Kassel.”²²⁹ Despite skeptics after the opening of *documenta I*, Bode went on to realize the plans he had formed in the beginning for a quadrennial art exhibition; he raised new funds from city, state and federal grants and private donors²³⁰ based on the demonstrated success in ‘55. Once the garden show had

227 See Caroline Jones’s chapter 5: “Transnational Openings” in her forthcoming book *Desires for the World Picture* for a discussion on the significance of Szeemann’s role and contributions.

228 The theme has also been translated as “Inquiry into Reality – Today’s Imagery” by Lawrence Alloway, “Reality: Ideology at D5” in “Documenta: A Portfolio,” *Artforum*, vol. 11, no. 2 (October 1972), 30.

229 Kölnische Rundschau Köln, June 29 1955, accessed in Stadt Archiv. translated by Uta Musgray.

230 In a return to the Kunstverein model, many of Bode’s donors for *documenta II* were involved as producers of the exhibition or with the Werkakademie in Kassel.



fig. 38: Bode occupies the space of the Karlsaeue and the Orangerie in 1959 for documenta II. In the foreground is Ossip Zadkine's *La Ville Detruite* (The City Destroyed), 1951 which parallels Picasso's *Guernica* in its memorial tribute to Rotterdam and the city's WWII destruction. With this, Bode maintained an emphasis on remembering the trauma.

been disassembled in October, the ruins of the Baroque Orangerie spoke to Bode as those of the Fridericianum had. Rather than floating a glass and steel structure over the Orangerie façade as Mattern had, Bode exposed the ruins as a dynamic backdrop for the modern forms, layering a series of walls, some braced with steel rods at the top, and inserting temporary white brick walls as screens in the bowling green, creating a sculpture garden within and surrounding the ruins, once again blurring the distinctions between art and architecture, ruins, memory and modernism. [fig. 38] The open landscape could accommodate sculpture at the larger scale of modernist production. Between the early 18th century walls and the white brick screens, outdoor living rooms were formed with lawn furniture and art. The space of the garden was completely assimilated by the art exhibition.

The Fridericianum was likewise imagined with more open air and light, Bode drew a plan for a skylight, ironically punching a hole through the replacement roof, perforating the structure once again. [fig. 39] With sculpture in the garden, the Museum was reserved for painting, which would be displayed independent of the other arts under

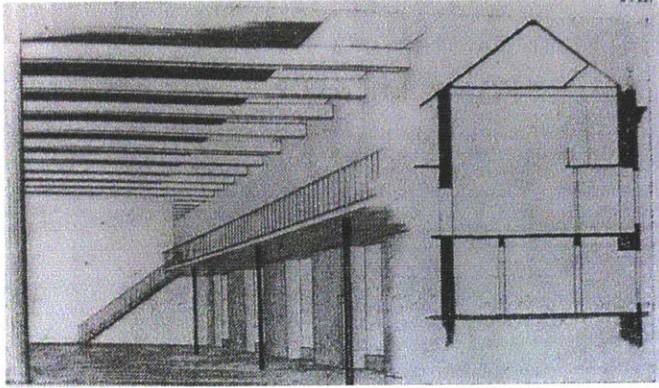


fig. 39: Bode imagines a skylight and a mezzanine for the Museum Fridericianum in 1956 in preparation for the second *documenta* in 1959.

the theme “Art After 1945” from July 11–October 11, 1959, organized by topic to facilitate international comparison.²³¹ Bringing the content up to speed with contemporary production, while the architecture of the exhibition would continue to reference the past as the paintings hanging would further interrogate the condition of the wall.²³² Bode considered the temporary construction of *documenta* as

part of the exhibition. While Bode’s alchemic *documenta* in 1955 blended fine arts and exhibition design, *documenta II* put graphic design in its own category and in a removed location in the Palais Bellevue, to “demonstrate the penetration of modern design ideas into the daily life and immediate environment of the people.”²³³

At the core of his project was a temporary exhibition that could adapt to display the art of the time, which necessitated on-demand architecture, *as found*. The very planes of architecture, interior and exterior walls alike, were challenged and redefined by materiality and simultaneous dematerialization. The sense of a disembodied museum was reinforced by the continued series of ancillary events. Lectures were held in the painting gallery and spaces throughout the city, extending the theater of the exhibition to the urban theater. In Brüder Grimm Platz, the Muhrhard Library was adopted by

231 Bode 4.11.56, *documenta* Archiv.

232 Each successive *documenta* has arguably challenged the status of the wall as a way to push the theoretical framework surrounding art historical discourse. Wall space was multiplied by staggered diagonal planes in 1959, and by 1964, Nay’s paintings were suspending from the ceiling and at angles reminiscent of Kiesler’s total environments. Pop art at the scale of billboards arrived in the Fridericianum in 1968 for *documenta 4*, and by the time Szeemann took the reigns, bodies performed within the gallery walls, altogether challenging the idea of “reality.”

233 Bode, Arnold. Letter dated June 1959. *documenta* Archiv. This letter also reveals that the original plan for *documenta II* was to contain industrial design objects (by only German companies) in small pavilions on Friedrichsplatz, a plan that was not realized in the show that opened on July 11, 1959, and content that was not shown until the third *documenta*.

documenta. Formerly the Amerika Haus for Kassel, which offered books and reading rooms, as well as exhibitions of American abstract artists, was programmed to disseminate American culture to Germans under the discretion of the Information Control Division in the Marshall Plan years. Architectural critic and Harvard professor Sigfried Giedion delivered the opening lecture of the series in 1959.²³⁴ Titled “Aspirations and Dangers of Contemporary Architecture,” Giedion expanded on his concept of “space-time,” which responded to contemporaneous conversations across physics, painters, sculptors and architects on the dissolution of perspective and the resultant “interpenetration of outer and inner space.”²³⁵ Giedion defined abstract art as a symbolic representation for human feelings, dissolving historical/future and interior/exterior boundaries. It was in this liminal space that the viewer in the 1950s could imagine herself as an individual in a new political setting, transcending the boundaries of isolation installed by the National Socialists, but still being built up around the FRG. Although Bode and his team attempted to dissolve boundaries across the west, Germany’s entrance into NATO and the growing concern around communism during the Cold War reinforced “the wall” between east and west, which remained figurative only until 1961, when the reinforced concrete Berlin Wall was constructed.

While Bode lamented the modern rebuilding of Kassel under the CIAM descendent Wolfgang Bangert, he inserted his own ideas for the future of the city, co-opting pieces of ruined, yet historically and spatially significant architecture for temporary exhibitions, and progressively configuring the space of the city as the space of the exhibition. Rather than isolating the gallery as a white cube, *documenta* has focused on putting things back together, tracing routes through the city of Kassel to create social and urban cohesion between notable architectural sites. He conceptualized this urban

234 Lange, 17. Representing the artistic and theoretical discourse they had hoped to surround *documenta* with, organizers had planned to invite both Sigfried Giedion and poet, playwright and theater director, Bertold Brecht to speak at the first *documenta* in 1955. March 1955 meeting minutes from the planning committee reveal that member Herr Hoch had objections to Brecht for fear of political appropriateness. Brecht did not speak at *documenta* and died in 1956 before reconsideration for 1959. *documenta* Archiv, *documenta* 1955: Mapped 9.

235 Giedion, Sigfried. *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, 430. See Lange, 18 for further reading.

form of an exhibition as a mode of transcending boundaries, writing to the Mayor of Kassel with plans for appropriating the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe: “So you could create a center in Kassel, where cultural issues in the inner circle would be debated and connected to similar circles entertained by the outside. This cultural and social venue has been considerably lacking in recent years.”²³⁶ His premonitions for international attention having been met in 1955, Bode sought to stabilize Kassel at the center of the conversation on contemporary art. It can be said that all and none of these ambitious plans were ultimately realized. The exhibition-event’s relationship with architecture and the urban plan shifted as it garnered international attention as a touristic biennial format exhibition, and would continue every five years after oscillating for the first several episodes, but each time with a different Artistic Director.

By the time of *documenta* 11, Artistic Director Okwui Enwezor had spread the seed of *documenta* to occupy several disparate sites across continents to then conclude his season in Kassel, in sites including the Binding Brewery. Built in 1897, the building had been abandoned in 1999 and Enwezor contracted architects Kühn-Malvezzi, who made a white cube on the interior to house forty percent of the exhibited work. The practice of rehabilitation transitioned from war-damaged buildings to buildings victim of industrial decay, adapting to the exhibition’s needs of the time. However, after the *documenta* season ended in 2002, the brewery fell into ruin again, no longer preserving the city’s fabric beyond the lifespan of *documenta*.²³⁷ Curators coming into the role of Artistic Director took on a form of nomadism beyond Kassel, beyond Germany, sacrificing the regeneration and sustaining of Kassel for the sake of the “*documenta* Stadt” brand.

Although *documenta* pronounced its “permanent capacity for self-renewal” in 1955, perhaps the exhibition-event has since lost the ability to properly adapt as it matures and drifts away from the events of World War II that it had aimed to heal in 1955. As an agent for transforming the ruin, the exhibition at once assigns art a moral and social function and architecture, also a civilizational, but territorial strategy. Alongside the Garden Show, the exhibition sought to regenerate cultural health as part of a “healthy

236 Bode, Arnold. Letter to Kassel Mayor, 4.11.56

237 Interview with Wilfried Kühn, June 2012.

urban life.” Bode occupied the space of the Federal funding to pull off an experiment that would otherwise not have been in the *Bundesgartenschau* program. With a different architectural strategy, the art exhibition then maintained the alchemy of landscape, architecture and art in a biennial (quinquennial) format. As demonstrated in its most recent episode in 2012, the sentiment that regeneration is never complete in its concept/non-concept “Collapse and Reconstruction.”²³⁸ Following Enwezor’s lead ten years prior, dOCUMENTA (13) dissolved national walls and expanded its territory to war-torn Kabul, Afganistan to once again take up its original mission of postwar reconstruction (but this time without a beautifying garden show). Artistic Director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev asked in the 2012 Guidebook, “What does it mean to know things that are not physically perceivable to us through our senses?”²³⁹ In responding to its history and documenting itself, *documenta* is a fairytale of distant *documentas*, spatially and historically, defining new modernities in a world of ever shifting walls and boundaries.

238 Schuh, as quoted in René Block, *Archive in Motion*, 6.

239 Christov-Bakargiev, Carolyn. Guidebook, 2012. 7.

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