Beyond the Bauhaus

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Chapter 3

The Breslau Academy of Fine and Applied Arts

“The [Breslau] academy, once the petrified embodiment of all that was mediocre in popular taste, is now the avant-garde of art, and often in conflict with the same public to whose wishes it once pandered . . . .”
—Adolf Behne, The Studio, June 1931

“In the Breslau Academy one worked from . . . the relationship to man, solved the task from the point of view of the individual and sought to respond to the temporal context with a critical comparison to history.”
—Hans Scharoun, Poelzig, Endell, Moll, 1965

Once deemed the foremost arts academy in Germany by the likes of esteemed cultural critic Adolf Behne, the Breslau Academy of Fine and Applied Arts has been eclipsed over the decades by its more famous contemporary, the Bauhaus. But in 1983 Hartmut Frank, a professor of architecture theory, asked, “Was the Breslau Academy a Bauhaus before the Bauhaus?” Frank discovered that Breslau had instituted workshop-based arts education and combined fine and applied arts curricula at the turn of the twentieth century, long before the Bauhaus. Although Frank rightly concluded that the answer to his question was “no,” Breslau nonetheless remains significant, not as another example of Bauhaus-style arts education, but for offering an alternative progressive model, at a time when there were many experimental approaches to arts education in Germany. As architects Hans Scharoun and Heinrich Lauterbach explained several decades later, the Breslau Academy helped pioneer and develop a model for arts education that is still in use today, a pluralistic arts education whose goal was to develop each student’s individual creative expression. In other words, the scholarly and popular focus on the Bauhaus has negated the reality of Germany’s diversity, and in particular the importance of Breslau in embodying that diversity.
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As at other progressive art academies between the wars Breslau Academy faculty and students were encouraged to interrogate aesthetic norms and traditional ways of making art. But in Breslau this mandate did not translate to “Out with the old, in with the new!” Rather, faculty explored a myriad of new, experimental, and traditional approaches, while also combining old and new methods. Breslau faculty and student art displayed a variety of aesthetics based on different formal approaches, but that variety was itself founded on an underlying common philosophy, for Breslau artists believed in the primacy of individual expression and aesthetic freedom, rejecting both dogma and fashion. Perhaps most importantly, the Breslau Academy faculty lacked the enthusiasm of their Bauhaus colleagues for new technology, mass production techniques, and machine-driven objectivity, preferring the more traditional emphasis of arts education: the creation of unique works. This, however, was the only vestige of traditional arts education the Academy maintained. Like the Bauhaus, Dresden Academy, and other German academies after the First World War, Breslau did away with most of the trappings of nineteenth-century academic arts instruction, as Nikolaus Pevsner emphasizes in his history of the art academy in Europe.

The Academy is central to any history of Breslau’s cultural community because it acted as a magnet for young creative talent from Silesia and across Germany. Beginning in 1918, the Academy created a nucleus of first-rate artists, who in turn attracted their peers to the city, noticeably energizing the art scene. Public art events and exhibitions increased in number, art patronage blossomed, and art associations stepped up their activities, drawing new attention from the national arts press. When the Academy closed in 1932, most of the artists left for other cities in Germany and abroad, dissipating the group that had energized the city and ending Breslau’s presence as an important German Kunststadt (arts city). Any story about Breslau’s cultural scene during the Weimar era thus begins and ends with the Academy.

Pluralism was a fundamental principle of the Breslau Academy. Writing decades after its heyday, Hans Scharoun pointed to Breslau’s range as one of its central and defining strengths:

There was Otto Mueller, of the vegetative, and [Alexander] Kanoldt, who espoused the Objective. Oskar Schlemmer was occupied with the rich relationship between the interval and [Georg] Muche with lyrical structures. [Carlo] Mense showed the expressive, Paul Holz the strength and power of origins, [Konrad] von Kardorff the representative-typical. [Johannes] Molzahn construed the connections of the heroic, [Paul] Dobers
showed the character of intimacy. Oskar Moll himself followed the congruence between colors. As sculptors, [Robert] Bednorz structured the everyday and [Theo] Gosen the special and monumental.7

In his diary, Schlemmer remarked similarly on the variety of aesthetics represented by Breslau faculty, while Johannes Molzahn wrote in a letter that “the Breslau Academy under Moll has been a prime example of an educational institution in the contemporary world, and considering the Bauhaus organization far superior, but not so lopsided, but broader with all currents reflected, was a faithful mirror of the contemporary debates.”8 The three directors who served from 1903 till the Academy’s demise—Hans Poelzig (1902–16), August Endell (1918–25), and Oskar Moll (1925–33)—all focused on maintaining a faculty with diverse perspectives, but the hiring of talented artists from all over Germany accelerated after 1918. The deprivations of the interwar period and the steady income the Academy could offer made Breslau more attractive than ever before, and between 1918 and 1930 the Academy was able to recruit a varied group of important artists whose work represented the spectrum of contemporary practice. Some were local, like Breslau natives Heinrich Lauterbach and Robert Bednorz, while some came from other parts of Germany, like Karlsruhe native Alexander Kanoldt and Rhein-born Carlo Mense. The faculty thus came to mirror the gamut of German art and architecture practice, rather than a narrow set of regional interests.

The history of the Breslau Academy offers a compelling picture of the fault lines of the German avant-garde and progressive arts education during the 1920s, as Germany wrestled to come to grips with modernization. What distinguished the Breslau Academy was not its originality but the quality of its instruction and the particulars of its pedagogical approach. Rather than invent a new type of art school, Breslau slowly reconstituted the old academy model along modern, progressive, and ultimately more effective lines.9 The school remained committed to the fine and applied arts as separate but related fields of study and upheld the old-fashioned notion of art as an endeavor focused on the creation of unique beautiful objects. Thus it favored High Art over commercial art and singular designs over mass-produced models. Academy faculty and students considered technology and machine production not as ends in themselves but as means to be used where appropriate. They did not repudiate history but studied and used it, as a basis on which to build new models or an example against which to react. Although faculty believed in the value of finding new forms that represented the Zeitgeist, they felt those forms had multiple sources, including the historic continuum. Thus they assimilated aspects of
traditional art into new methods and forms, rather than dismissing them whole-
sale. In short, the Breslau approach was fundamentally dialectical. The juxta-
positions of old and new and the contrasts between faculty points of view al-
lowed new syntheses to emerge for each artist. This individualism was also
central to Breslau’s model of pluralistic arts education, which based studio in-
struction on the particular interests of the instructor rather than a general area
of study (the norm in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German art and
architecture programs). This makes Breslau as important an antecedent for
contemporary arts education as the Bauhaus, especially since most art and ar-
chitecture schools follow its organizational model today.

But if Breslau represents such an important aspect of arts education, why
has it largely disappeared from histories of art and design? In comparison with
the Bauhaus, in particular, the Breslau Academy has received very little atten-
tion since it closed in 1933. One explanation for this discrepancy is the vigor-
os proselytizing of Walter Gropius, aided by first generation historians like
Herbert Bayer, Siegfried Giedion and Reyner Banham. In the 1920s, Gropius
developed a sophisticated propaganda campaign, which included ideological
rallying points. The number of former Bauhäusler who went abroad, especially
to the United States, helped further disseminate the Bauhaus myth. At the time,
Breslau directors did not mount such purposeful campaigns. Subsequently, the Academy’s profile has suffered further because of its location, which is now part of Poland and was largely inaccessible during the Cold War.

Until quite recently, scholars have continued to see Breslau as marginal to mainstream art history. While the Bauhaus was receiving wide attention by the 1930s, Berlin’s Akademie der Künste only mounted the first postwar exhibition about the Breslau Academy in 1965. Poelzig and Endell died before the Second World War and Moll died in 1947, leaving the Academy without a Gropius-like figure in the postwar period. Of the other candidates capable of keeping Breslau in the public eye, only Lauterbach and Scharoun remained in Germany. Both were involved in the Poelzig, Endell, Moll exhibition and were themselves the subjects of Akademie der Künste exhibitions and subsequent books. Art historian Ernst Scheyer, who was born in Breslau then immigrated to the United States, wrote about Breslau during the 1960s and 1970s, but his books were not widely circulated and did not have much of an impact. Since German unification in 1990, interest in Breslau and the Academy has surged in Germany and Poland, but scholarship in English remains sparse. The sole exception is a piece by Vladimir Slapeta, an architect trained in Breslau, who authored a special series of articles on Breslau in a 1989 issue of Rassegna. Although Slapeta emphasized the pedagogical importance of the Academy, recent scholarship has been more interested in recovering the factual record, focusing on the history of the Academy and its artists rather than their significance. Even the most recent comprehensive study of German academies continues the marginalization of Breslau and other eastern academies by not discussing Breslau, Dresden, or Königsberg. Yet as Slapeta, Scharoun, and Lauterbach assert, Breslau has a significant place in the lineage of arts education.

Early History

King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia founded the Breslau Provincial Art School in 1791, along with four other provincial arts and crafts schools, as part of an effort to broaden access to arts education in Prussia and specifically to improve the quality of work in cities with substantial manufacturing capacity. The Breslau School thus served a dual mission from its start: to train fine artists and to train designers for industry, in recognition of the importance of applied arts education to the development of high-quality industrial projects. Given the history of applied arts education in Europe, the Prussian decree of 1790, which paved the way for founding the Breslau Provincial Art School,
was extraordinarily forward thinking, as most German territories and principalities did not pay attention to applied arts education reform until well into the nineteenth century. The Breslau School was renamed several times over its history: it became the Art, Building and Handworkers School in 1816, the Royal Art and Applied Arts School sixty years later, and finally the State Academy for Art and Applied Arts in 1911. This progression reflects changing attitudes toward both fine arts and crafts education, as Germany industrialized and sought to compete favorably in international markets. The names also evoke increasing national ambitions, as well as the school’s eventual need to distinguish itself from the Breslau Municipal School for Handwork and Applied Arts, founded in 1899. The final name appropriately stuck. The Academy was always tied to the ministry in Berlin; its directors had national, if not international, reputations; and its mission was to educate artists of the first rank, not craftsmen for local industry.

From the beginning, the Municipal School was in continuous and often acerbic conflict with the Academy. The two schools competed for funding and students and had very different approaches. The Academy increasingly viewed itself as the purveyor of high culture in contrast to the commercial mission of the Municipal School. The difference arose in part from the unique political and financial situations of the two institutions. The Municipal School was under the purview of the Prussian Ministry of Commerce but ran largely on city funds, whereas the Academy was a nationally funded institution under the Ministry of Culture. In the 1920s, the Ministry of Culture oversaw only two fine arts programs, the Breslau Academy and the Royal School of Applied Arts in Berlin, while the Ministry of Commerce controlled the thirty-four other schools of arts, crafts, and trade in Prussia, including the Municipal School. The Academy’s location in the Ministry of Culture made a clear statement about its role as a purveyor of highly valued Kultur rather than lowly commercial production.

The historic split in authority between the Prussian Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Culture complicated reform efforts. The two ministries were in open tension by the end of the nineteenth century. Their “administrative dualism,” remarked on by art historian and Prussian senior civil servant Wilhelm Waetzoldt, was reflected in the very different approaches of schools under their respective jurisdictions. The Ministry of Culture emphasized the aesthetic aspects of art, manifest in good design, while the Ministry of Commerce valued the economic viability of commercial products, which meant that its sense of design merit rested on a product’s salability. These philosophical differences can be summed up as high versus low, elite versus popular, fine art versus craft,
and singular versus mass-produced. The fact that the Academy’s curriculum had a strong applied arts component only exacerbated tensions, since even in this realm its approach was decidedly aesthetic rather than practical.

The rivalry between the two institutions came to a head between 1918 and 1920. The postwar economic crisis made the idea of combining the two schools attractive to some members of the ministries, who sought to realize the budgetary savings such a merger would precipitate. The Academy resisted strongly, but Richard Heyer, the director of the Municipal School for Handwork, seems to have exploited the situation as best he could, evidently hoping to supplant the Academy and thereby increase enrollment in the Municipal School. Heyer recognized both the ministerial interest in conserving funds and the new interest in supporting practical education, represented by Hermann Muthesius. The Ministry of Commerce had sent Muthesius to England from 1896 to 1903 to observe and report back on English manufacturing techniques, as England was at the forefront of industrial production at the time. Upon his return to Germany, Muthesius continued to work at the Ministry of Commerce, where he began agitating for reform in the handicrafts and applied arts education systems, although he developed a point of view quite different from British reformers John Ruskin, August Pugin, and William Morris. Rather than advocating a return to traditional handicraft as they did, he sought a new model in which craft would serve industry. When he returned to Germany in 1903, he was appointed Inspector of the Prussian Schools of Arts and Crafts at the Prussian Board of Trade.  

Muthesius’s efforts put him in conflict with a succession of directors at the Breslau Academy because one of the reforms he favored was combining the academies and trade schools to create what he believed would be a more effective education system for future employees of German industry. In Breslau, this would have meant closing either the Municipal School for Handwork or the Academy. For at least two years, Muthesius and Academy director August Endell sparred in the local press and at the ministries, jockeying for sympathy and support. Ultimately, both schools remained as they were, and the Academy retained its role as the institution for noncommercial, creative work. As such, and given the rivalry between the two schools, the Academy emerged as a home for progressive artists who were skeptical about industrialization and new technology. Previous Academy director Hans Poelzig wrote often on the subject of technology and art, articulating the fundamental attitude shared by many of his colleagues: technology was a necessary evil but should not be the driving force behind art or design. For Poelzig, technology was tied to nature and natural law, whereas art was “outside nature,” beyond and superior to its
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The Academy therefore developed its curriculum to promote the supremacy of creative imagination over technological know-how.

German attitudes toward modernization, industrialization, and new technology varied widely during the early years of the twentieth century. Germany’s rapid industrialization had produced a backlash among members of the *Mittelstand*, the traditional middle class of small producers, who saw their traditional way of life disappearing as more and more white-collar clerks, secretaries, and office workers entered the middle classes. Among progressive artists, industrialization produced a full range of reactions. Some enthusiastically espoused new technologies and industrial production, and some rejected new technology outright, but others were more cautious and tried to find a middle ground. This cautious group dominated the Breslau Academy from 1902 on, beginning with Poelzig’s directorship and continuing under Endell and Moll.

**The Beginnings of Reform**

The story of reform at the Academy must be understood in the context of changes that began toward the end of the nineteenth century. Without these earlier interventions, the Academy of the Weimar Republic years would not have been possible. As Petra Hölscher demonstrates in her history of the Academy, the changes begun in the late nineteenth century set in motion its slow rise to prominence.

Hermann Adolf Kühn became the director of the Academy in 1881. A little-known craftsman who had trained as an architect, Kühn proved to be an administrative visionary. He hired Breslau’s first important progressive artists, taking on Max Wislicenus, a member of the Munich Secession; internationally acclaimed Munich landscape painter Carl Ernst Morgenstern; and then-unknown young Berlin architect Hans Poelzig. Master weaver Wanda Bibrowicz soon followed.

The name change from “Art, Building and Handwork School” to “Art and Applied Arts School” occurred under Kühn’s watch, and he understood the new name to speak to the combination, not separation, of the two spheres it brought together. As he put it, “They must follow the purpose of making the total applied and industrial occupations useful, they must make these valued, elevating meaning and understanding of form and color to purposefulness.”

Uniting fine and applied arts had long been a goal of reform-minded educators and bureaucrats hoping to improve Germany’s industrial production, so Kühn’s intentions were not unusual. Under Kühn, the Breslau school also successfully argued to become an “academy” rather than a “school,” on the basis of how its curriculum compared to Kassel, Königsberg, and Düsseldorf. The new desig-
nation elevated Breslau’s stature tremendously, though it did not turn it into a traditional academy. Although the Academy began as an art school, it soon added applied art courses with a mandate to educate handworkers for regional industry, so it was never deeply steeped in the outmoded and rigid European academic tradition. Thus, when Hans Poelzig became director in 1903, he could begin the transition to a modern academy fairly easily, despite some resistance from the faculty.

Kühn also oversaw several curricular changes that clarified and modernized the Academy’s teaching and smoothed the way for later reforms. One of his changes was to combine handwork and fine arts courses, in order to bring more art to craft, but also to bring more craft to fine art by widening the techniques students learned. In 1897, Kühn organized the curriculum into three broad stages: a combined first-year foundation course taught to all students, followed by free and applied arts, and finally master ateliers or workshops. While this tripartite division resembled the nineteenth-century model common in German academies, Kühn modified the course content to eliminate ossified methods like drawing from plaster casts in the Greek manner and approaching drawing and painting as imitative rather than creative acts. To learn to draw human figures, students observed live models; to learn to draw landscapes, they went out into nature. By taking nature as their source, rather than Greek or Roman statues, students were supposed to learn to draw what they saw as it actually appeared, rather than as a previous artist had already represented it. From this, they could develop their own personal way of applying line, shade, and color, rather than producing stylized copies. The most revolutionary aspect of Kühn’s program was his attempt to open workshops: a forge; an enamel, glass, and porcelain firing facility; a cabinet-making shop; a woodturning atelier; and an artistic weaving workspace. Kühn was familiar with the ideals of the English Arts and Crafts Movement and its emphasis on the workshop as a site for arts education. However, although he recognized the benefits of the English model, he did not see the workshop as a vehicle for reinstating medieval crafts, but rather as a way to help designers learn the dual skills of technical and aesthetic design, so they could both create for industry and work with an expanded set of material options. In other words, the workshops were to enhance student artistry and creative ability, not prepare them for careers in mass production.

Poelzig

Poelzig was not the Ministry of Culture’s first choice to replace Kühn in 1903. Hoping to appoint a better-known artist, the Ministry offered the post first to
realist painter Leopold von Kalckreuth (1855–1928) and then to the distinguished architect Fritz Schumacher (1869–1947). After they both refused the position, Poelzig was proposed, apparently due to the intercession of minister and famous reformer Ludwig Pallat, with whom Poelzig worked during a brief stint at the Ministry in the 1890s. Poelzig extended and transformed Kühn’s work, but he had his own profound effect on the institution and many of his core convictions—like his belief in pluralistic arts education and the importance of individual creativity and his suspicion of art fashions and machine technology—permeated the Academy long after his tenure. Poelzig’s impact rested on his national reputation, his involvement in regional and national cultural matters, and his continued involvement in the Academy, even after he left Breslau. Several key instructors like Heinrich Lauterbach had strong and lasting personal connections to Poelzig, but Endell and Moll were both hired after he left Breslau, put in place by Ministry officials in Berlin, which suggests that ministerial priorities also helped ensure continuity. Indeed, Endell and Moll hired most of the Weimar-era faculty after 1918, so the persistence of Poelzig’s philosophical beliefs cannot be attributed to his direct influence alone.

One of the first changes Poelzig made in Breslau was to require that all prospective students display a “pronounced artistic talent,” whether they were headed for fine art or applied arts. The emphasis on individual genius and creativity supported the notion that success in even the more technical, handcraft-oriented professions now relied on artistry and invention. Poelzig’s structural reforms included discarding the old three-part curricular division in favor of seven and eventually thirteen so-called daily classes. These included freehand drawing, decorative drawing and decorative painting, decorative model drawing and decorative model painting (soon broadened to drawing from nature, textile arts, figurative drawing and painting, landscape drawing and painting, and plastic modeling), then divided into figurative, ornamental and decorative sculpture, and architectonic drawing and design (later renamed space planning, then architecture). Because Poelzig’s system did not put fine and applied arts students into separate courses of study, the program had even more fluidity than during Kühn’s tenure. In addition, Poelzig broadened both the support classes and workshop offerings, adding workshops for embroidery, textile, and garment design; cabinet-making; lithography; and enameling and glass painting, as well as a bronze foundry with engraving and etching.

During Poelzig’s directorship, the workshops operated under the collaborative supervision of a professor and a master. The professor was responsible for design instruction and the master helped with execution of the design, an innovation that recognized the division between artistic imagination and tech-
nical execution and preceded the Bauhaus division of Form Instructor and Master Instructor.\textsuperscript{29} Students were permitted to enter the workshops immediately, rather than having to wait until they passed a preliminary course.

Along with modernizing the Academy’s pedagogy, Polzeig hired new young faculty to implement the curriculum, including Wanda Bibrowicz and Else Wislicenus for the textile workshop, Karl Mühl for bronze work, Ignatius Taschner and Tillman Schmitz for engraving, Hans Rossmann for glass painting, Arnold Busch and Anna Gritschker-Kunzendorf for graphics and ornamental art, and the painter Karl Hanusch, who is remembered for incorporating the latest artistic ideas into his teaching.\textsuperscript{30} Most importantly, many of the new faculty members had strong backgrounds in both art and applied art so they could effectively teach to both constituencies. Because Poelzig also kept many of the older faculty, like Carl Ernst Morgenstern, Edward Kaempffer, Heinrich Irrman, Wilhelm Schwarzbach, and Albert Werner-Schwarzburg, the Academy came to present multiple artistic viewpoints rather than a consistent single one.

Fig. 30. Metal workshops in the Breslau Academy (Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz).
Students could develop their individual artistic voices through exploring the many options available to them.

Poelzig believed in historic continuity but not historicism. Karl Schäffer, his teacher at the Technical University in Berlin, taught him to respect historic building types and forms. Schäffer taught a famous course on medieval architecture but was known for repudiating the imitation of historical form. Instead, he insisted that young architects study historical examples to learn from them. “The flight from all that history has given,” Poelzig wrote, “can so little rescue us as the purely decorative use of past forms.” For Poelzig, then, the point of studying history was to gather source material for developing new forms.

His distinction between studying historical forms to learn design principles and copying them was a key break from the old academic approach and a central tenet at the Breslau Academy through the 1920s. Poelzig’s innovations did not mean artist and craftsman lost their identities:

All of the workshops were conceived merely as experimental, and to a certain degree, teaching workshops, not as replacements for true apprenticeships. Herein I found myself in the strongest contradiction to Muthesius, who, finally through the renaming of the municipal Hand worker schools in his department [at the Ministry of Commerce] into Handworker and Applied Arts schools, wanted to take the name Academy for Art and Applied Arts from the establishment I directed.

In other words, where Muthesius tried to blur the boundaries between craftsman and artist, Poelzig always intended to keep them distinct, with the designer the conceptual mind behind the work and the master craftsman the technical executor. The artist’s principal crafts were drawing and painting—except when their art, as in the case of, say, sculpture, called for other skills—and the craftsman’s were use of tools and machines. Both art and craft required a spiritual foundation for good form-making. The technical aspect of making was a separate problem from creating form, and both needed to be taught.

Poelzig’s skepticism about avant-garde values and “isms” (like functionalism) was also highly influential in Breslau, even after his tenure. Poelzig viewed the functionalist approach as a dangerous worship of technology and machines, asking, “Is Sachlichkeit so absolutely factual?” For Poelzig, form, absolute in the Platonic sense, was the key to good art. He believed, “Through art man places himself outside nature, with the technical, he places himself inside nature,” so using function or machine analogies to inspire form did not make sense. Indeed, technology could not achieve the status of art: “All tech-
ical forms, in contrast to the absolute meaning of art, only contain a relative meaning.\textsuperscript{37} Art, by definition, was symbolic and therefore could not be relative. In a letter to Bruno Taut about a draft program for the \textit{Arbeitsrat für Kunst}, Poelzig warned that contemporary architects should not hold the machine sacred lest they fall into the trap that swallowed their nineteenth-century predecessors who worshipped styles.\textsuperscript{38} When Taut wrote, in the draft, “Art begins first of all with the technical,” Poelzig asked him to remove the sentence because it would make people think that practicality in a design was sufficient.\textsuperscript{39} In the end, Poelzig did not sign either the \textit{Arbeitsrat für Kunst} declaration or the \textit{Novembergruppe} Manifesto. His objections were not merely theoretical: he was highly suspicious of the popularity of design tropes like steel-frame windows, tubular handrails, white stucco, and flat roofs, seeing them as technological fashion and the dangerous beginnings of a style. One reason he promoted a pluralistic approach to art pedagogy was to avoid teaching a style or encouraging the students to develop a style, by demonstrating the complexity and richness of art.

Poelzig questioned the very notion of “\textit{Sachlichkeit}” or “Objectivity,” both because he saw it as a style and because the very notion of objectivity in art was inherently contradictory:

\begin{quote}
Is Objectivity so truly objective? . . . In place of hand-wrought and machine-made ornament is now mostly expensive material: lacquer, glass, metal, stone. They are supposed to replace animated ornament with their surface play, and there is no doubt that they snuggle up better with the naked, stratified forms of modern building, that the uniformity of forms truly is raised through the shine and color . . . This type of \textit{Sachlichkeit} is just as false as Romanticism and in the end as “\textit{Unsachlich}” as any other period that was enamored of a catchword.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

In other words, Poelzig did not believe ornament was dead, only that modernism had altered its form, favoring integral over surface ornament, a view which echoed that of the great Viennese architect and theorist Adolf Loos. Integral ornament was found in facade elements, material color and texture, columnar arrangements, handrails, lights, handles and other fixtures, and volumetric massing. More to the point, Poelzig saw little difference between the two approaches to ornament. Many advocates of \textit{Neues Bauen} would have found Poelzig’s opinion about \textit{Sachlichkeit} heretical.\textsuperscript{41} The curriculum at the Breslau Academy reflected Poelzig’s attitude toward ornament, replacing “ornament” as a subject with “material style,” thereby anticipating the connection between
abstraction and ornamentation in modern design. Poelzig himself admitted that the name of the new course did not say much. It focused on architectonic principles, and students occasionally participated in Silesian competitions to get an introduction to real-world design problems and a taste of “real” practice.

Another innovation Poelzig put in place was individualized educational programs tailored to each student’s talents and needs. This seemingly minor alteration had enormous implications, for it shifted the Academy’s educational emphasis from the acquisition of general skills to the development of individual creativity and invention. Poelzig’s aim as a teacher was “to bring each student to recognize his special qualities.” This drive to identify the individual’s unique imaginative ability was akin to the artistic pluralism he held so dear. Poelzig believed his role was to critically assess student work, contemporary buildings, and architectonic principles, and thereby help students develop the critical faculties that would allow them to discover their own voices. Years later, his students remembered him affectionately as a passionate and inspiring teacher who could not tolerate mediocrity, demanded independence, and had no patience for students who copied their teachers.

Poelzig’s focus on developing student talents extended beyond the classroom. Believing they ought to test their ideas in real world projects, he employed Academy students for his private commissions. Walter Gropius later implemented a similar program at the Bauhaus, formalizing the apprenticeship idea by providing a space for collaborative work on the upper floor of the Dessau building. Poelzig brought together students from fine and applied arts to work on projects like the renovation of the medieval Löwenberg Rathaus (1905).

The students collaborated with Poelzig on the design and execution and fabricated custom furniture and fittings in the Academy workshops. Löwenberg demonstrated Poelzig’s sensitivity to historic architecture. His addition complemented the medieval architecture rather than imitating it, drawing on elemental aspects like the steeply pitched roof as inspiration for design.

Poelzig emphatically believed that the Academy’s strength lay in its ties to Breslau and Silesia. He encouraged students and faculty to participate in local and regional competitions, volunteer for local associations, exhibit locally, and be active in local government. He instituted a practice of mounting regular student and faculty exhibitions that were open to the whole community, later maintained by both Endell and Moll. At the same time, he encouraged Academy faculty to participate in local exhibitions. In 1908, Poelzig and Theo von Gosen founded the Künstlerbund Schlesien to support contemporary art and artists in Silesia. The original group included Kalckreuth, Graf Harrach, Fritz and Erich Erler, Wislicenus, Max Berg, and Nickisch, along with other
“emigrated Silesians who still had strong connections to their Heimat.” After he left Breslau, Polzeig bitterly criticized his successors for distancing themselves from the community, although his criticism may not have been entirely fair. Both Endell and Moll were very involved with local cultural associations. Poelzig also blamed Endell and Moll for the closure of the Academy, which he directly ascribed to their abandonment of local priorities. He believed that hiring artists from all over Germany and pursuing national and international status had isolated the Academy from Breslau and Silesian cultural life, thereby removing the province’s incentive to keep financing it. Ironically, however, he had made similar moves. Endell and Moll, along with less biased observers like Alfred Behne and Adolf Rothenberg, viewed the situation differently, believing that by raising the Academy’s profile, they had made it attractive both to students who otherwise would have left Breslau and to private artists who, likewise, would have settled in other parts of the country.

When Poelzig stepped down from the directorship in 1916, he served as an advisor for the search for a new director. In a series of letters to the Ministry of Culture, he struggled with the question of who should take his place. The candidates included a number of leading figures in German culture: the archi-

Fig. 31. Hans Poelzig renovated the Laski (Lowenberg) Town Hall. Contemporary photograph (Wikipedia image, courtesy of Oslm).
tects Friedrich Lahrs, Bruno Taut, Heinrich Tessenow, and Gropius, along with Endell. Gropius was very eager for the position and corresponded with Poelzig about it at some length. But despite his efforts, Poelzig eventually backed Endell. He feared that Gropius was too enamored of technology and industrial production to be a good fit for Breslau. This was prescient, as Gropius did not adopt a strong pro-technology stance at the Bauhaus until 1923. In a 1916 letter, Poelzig commented on Gropius’s proposal for establishing an art school that would be a consulting entity for industry, applied arts, and handwork: “I am naturally rather skeptical and know, from experience, how difficult it is to mediate between a school and industry. In my opinion, one ought not to keep the schools in their current favored form. One ought to found privileged workshops so the concerned supervisors—architects, sculptors, etc.—can give consecutive state or city assignments.” He further articulated his position in an essay about technical and arts education: “Any technical [education] as subject in an . . . art academy cripples . . . the best proof of this is the increasing tendency towards a pseudoscientific approach to the architecture profession.” Poelzig believed Endell was committed to art and creativity first and foremost

Fig. 32. View of the medieval town hall with a modern building in the background showing the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity in the city itself.
over technology and industrial production. Marg Moll later observed, “When Poelzig left Breslau in 1916, he esteemed Endell and his art, for his clear ideas and integrity. Poelzig held the conviction that Endell was not ready for any concessions, and therefore suggested him as his successor.” Poelzig seems to have believed Endell was a kindred spirit, someone who would continue to steer the school in the direction Poelzig had pointed it, preserving the emphasis on individual genius and invention.

Endell

Endell was educated in philosophy, psychology, and aesthetics at Tübingen but never formally studied art or architecture. When he moved to Munich, he attended philosopher Theodor Lipps’s lectures on “empathy theory,” which were groundbreaking excurses on the importance of human empathy to understanding objects and especially to aesthetic appreciation. The lectures apparently had a profound effect on Endell’s way of seeing the world. In 1896, he published “On Beauty,” a tract in which he described how line, color, form, and proportion outwardly manifest inner beauty. His professed goal as a designer was to use these tools to realize beautiful objects. In Munich, Endell also befriended several pioneers of the German new art and architecture, including Hermann Obrist, Richard Riemerschmid, Martin Dülfer, and Bernhard Pankok. This group exposed him to the latest ideas, aesthetics, and pedagogical directions for art instruction. Endell apparently turned to design at Obrist’s encouragement. He made his initial splash with the 1898 design and construction of the Atelier Elvira facade and interiors in Munich. The project was an unabashed sally into the Jugendstil with its animated forms and highly colored elements. Atelier Elvira received a tremendous amount of attention in Germany, bringing Endell into the national limelight. He followed the Elvira project with several others, including the well-known Berlin Trabrennbahn (Race Track, 1911–12), though his work quickly departed from the stylized Jugendstil, becoming more and more sachlich (objective), arguably in adherence to contemporary German design trends.

Endell’s lack of formal art or architecture education experience made him a controversial choice in Breslau, although the range of his work on buildings, furniture, and objects certainly qualified him to head an art and applied arts school. According to Rading, Endell met with bitter resistance at the beginning of his tenure, especially among older faculty members, several of whom left the Academy shortly thereafter. In spite of the opposition, Endell made
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substantial changes. He assumed his position in 1918, just after the November Revolution, when the Arbeiterrat für Kunst in Berlin and Rat Geistiger Arbeit in Breslau published calls for arts education reforms. Endell was particularly sympathetic to abolishing bureaucratic privilege, firing unimaginative teachers, teaching new artistic ideas, and opening instructional workshops. Although he does not seem to have belonged to either revolutionary group, many of his faculty members did: Mueller and August Grisebach signed the Berlin Arbeiterrat für Kunst manifesto, and von Gosen, Wislicenus, Moll, Bednorz, Hanusch, Paul Heim, Franz Landsberger, Friedrich Pautsch, and Heinrich Tischler signed the Breslau document.

Endell responded to the calls for reform by altering Poelzig’s organizational system, which his predecessor never forgave, and reinstating the three-tiered structure: preliminary course, free and applied arts, and master ateliers or workshops. Following the model implemented several months earlier in Dresden, he then changed the course names from subject matter to faculty member. Thus, in place of courses on Material and Style, Form-making, or Decorative Arts, students chose between the Mueller, Moll, and Von Kardorff studios. This change in nomenclature had enormous philosophical implications, for it suggested the preeminence of artistic concepts and personal vision over general knowledge and skills. Practically, the new system reinforced the central role of individual creativity and imagination. Teachers taught their own personal methods, leaving students to amalgamate what they learned into their personal styles. This model built on the nineteenth-century Master class, first implemented at the Düsseldorf Academy, but with important modifications. Whereas the Master class was fashioned after the medieval workshop where students learned their craft by working on paintings with the master, in his style and under his signature, in the new approach students worked on their own canvases under the master’s tutelage.

During his first two years as director, Endell concentrated his energies on improving the quality of the faculty, a necessary step if the new personality-dependent system was to be effective. He hired several distinguished artists, including Matisse-trained Moll, Brücke member Mueller, Berlin Secessionist Von Kardorff, Berlin-trained Rading (who became a leading figure in the Neues Bauen), well-known art historians Wilhelm Pinder and August Grisebach, and sculptor Robert Bednorz, whose work exemplified abstract figural realism. This faculty brought together a broad range of aesthetic approaches, styles, and techniques, which also helped ensure that the system worked.

Under Endell, the architecture program expanded to include instruction in
The Breslau Academy of Fine and Applied Arts

The Breslau Academy of Fine and Applied Arts

general design as well as building conversions, country cottages, urban housing, and housing estates. The addition of housing estates was in direct response to Germany’s postwar housing demands, especially in Breslau, where shortages and substandard conditions persisted into the beginning of the 1930s (see chapter 1). However, the architecture program had only one full-time faculty member, Adolf Rading, because it was not an accredited program, despite the efforts of Endell and his successor, Oskar Moll, to gain accreditation. Students could begin their architecture studies in Breslau but had to continue elsewhere to qualify for exams and the professional title of “architect.”

Endell shared Poelzig’s skepticism toward technology. As one scholar put it, “he accepted the need for the machine, but demanded logic and considered application. He also understood the artistically motivated use of technology.”

Thus the workshops retained their function as places to test ideas, and Endell added two more, the printing and plaster casting facilities. Like his predecessors, Endell was active in local arts associations and maintained an active public exhibition program. Overall, his reforms continued to propel the Academy forward, and historians credit him with paving the way for Moll, under whom the Academy reached its zenith.

Moll

Although Oskar Moll had no formal arts education in a school or academy, he was not an autodidact like Endell. Moll began studying biology at the University of Hannover but soon realized he wanted to become a painter, not a scientist. Rather than enroll in an academy, Moll studied in various master ateliers, including those of two famous German painters, Hans Leistikow (1892–1962) and impressionist Lovis Corinth (1858–1925) in Berlin and Henri Matisse (1869–1954) in Paris. Moll quickly narrowed his focus to landscape and still life. Although he joined the Berlin Secession in 1897, he was, as Breslau architect Heinrich Lauterbach later recalled, “a man of the best education, a Grand Seigneur, no Bohemian, and no revolutionary.”

In keeping with this stance, Moll did not invent new approaches but modified the innovations of his peers. By his own admission, Moll was less interested in a painting’s subject matter than in exploring color as a medium for expression. By the time he joined the Breslau faculty, Moll was a well-known painter who had exhibited at the progressive Paul Cassirer Gallery in Berlin, alongside the great Norwegian symbolist painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944).

From his appointment in 1925, Moll continued to reform the Academy.
The greatest structural change he made was to abolish the distinction between students pursuing careers as fine artists and students studying for teaching careers. This change implicitly recognized the critical importance of art teachers to the profession and their resulting need to be as versed in technique and craft as practitioners. Moll maintained Poelzig’s individual study plans but had students work with two instructors simultaneously, so they were always under the influence of at least two different masters. This ensured that students were exposed to multiple points of view, while diminishing the authority of individual instructors. Moll strengthened the master atelier system because he believed “the many-sided aspects of the masters encouraged the students to develop their own strengths and hindered them from simply copying [their professors].”

Capitalizing on positions vacated by an inordinate number of retirements, Moll lured leading figures of German progressive art to Breslau, among them Paul Dobers, Paul Holz, Alexander Kanoldt, Carlo Mense, Josef Vinecky, Li Vinecky-Thorn, Johannes Molzahn, and, later, former Bauhäusler Georg Muche and Oskar Schlemmer. These artists and architects, who came from every corner of Germany and had varied educational and professional backgrounds, also represented very different positions within avant-garde and progressive art. This diversity made for a dynamic educational atmosphere but also led to conflict and tension, as Marg Moll later recalled.

Moll purposely tried to balance differing viewpoints within the school, rather than bolster one camp or another. He wrote, “the Breslau Academy is not a school in the true sense of the word, with pre-set teaching methods but rather an expression of personalities who do not impart their knowledge to the students according to a plan but each in his own particular way.” Like his predecessors, he believed that arts education is best served by offering students a plurality of artistic positions from which to develop their individual ideas, an approach supported by both the two-mentor system and the workshops.

Moll also managed to slightly expand the architecture program. In 1925, Rading convinced him to fill Endell’s vacant position as director of the applied arts with a second architecture instructor. The position went to Rading’s friend and associate Hans Scharoun, which meant that close collaboration between the two teachers was easy to achieve. With Heinrich Lauterbach, who was hired as a part-time assistant, Rading and Scharoun proceeded to overhaul and expand the depth and range of subjects offered in architectural design. The architecture faculty seems to have compensated for its limited size by offering a variety of building types studied, imaginative design challenges, and open-mindedness.

One interesting aspect of the Breslau ateliers was the unusually high num-
bers of women artists employed as teachers and at work as students.\textsuperscript{68} In 1896, the Academy hired Gertrud Daubert as director of the technical assistants in the artistic embroidery and weaving classes. In 1903, when Poelzig assumed the Academy directorship, he promoted Daubert to director of the entire workshop for embroidery, fabric and fashion arts.\textsuperscript{69} When Daubert passed away, Charlotte Marquardt took over.\textsuperscript{70} In 1903, the Academy also hired Wanda Bibrowicz as a technical assistant for the textile design class and Anna Gritschker-Kuzendorf to teach the course in flower painting. Bibrowicz, who was known for her experiments with textile design, particularly tapestries, eventually became director of the textile workshop. When she stepped down in 1911, another distinguished woman artist, Else Wislicenus, replaced her.\textsuperscript{71} Wislicenus was followed by Li Vinecky-Thorn, a former student of Henri van de Velde in Weimar, who assumed directorship of the textile workshop in 1926 and remained until the Academy closed. In 1906, Margarethe Pfauth became technical assistant in the workshop for enamel art. Anni Adelmann taught in the paper workshop after it opened in 1925. Moll also opened workshops for fabric printing and paper fabrication, run initially by Edith Rischowski, then by Anna Rading, wife of architect and professor Adolf Rading.\textsuperscript{72} Rading, Vinecky-Thorn, Bibrowicz, and Wislicenus all exhibited widely and had national reputations. But although approximately 27 percent of students in all subjects were women, there were no women teachers in the fine arts.\textsuperscript{73} It is unclear whether Breslau’s relative openness to women faculty was an extension of its aesthetic tolerance or an expediency. It was difficult enough to convince talented artists to come to Breslau; discriminating against women would have narrowed the prospects even further.

For Moll, the most important attribute shared by his faculty was “belief.” He called artists “the dreamers with great belief,”\textsuperscript{74} presumably referring to belief in art itself, but also to self-belief, a necessary quality for the distinctive personal approach to art and personality-driven approach to teaching that he espoused.\textsuperscript{75} For Moll, belief was not “simply truth, in the sense of rational, thoughtful belief, but a secure knowledge of the heart,” by which he perhaps also meant the intuition and intuitive knowledge that were so important to his own art.\textsuperscript{76} Like Poelzig, Moll believed in the continuity of art, stating explicitly, “We do not break the bridges to the past.”\textsuperscript{77} If “belief” entailed the self-confidence to go against the grain, in Moll’s case that meant the personal strength to hold onto traditional art practice along with new methods. Although he was considered progressive, Moll was hardly radical; while he was open to just about everything, his flirtations with contemporary ideas were usually tentative or temporary. He was interested in abstraction but combined it with figu-
ration; he toyed with cubist principles but never fully embraced them; he de-
parted from reality in his use of color but not too dramatically. Many of his
faculty members were far more innovative and experimental than he was, but
his claim that “what matters is not style but, quality” led him to support a vari-
ey of aesthetic approaches, both traditional and progressive.

Under Moll, the Academy’s workshops retained their importance as
places for trial and experimentation. As noted above, he opened a paper work-
shop modeled after the Bauhaus, where Josef Albers and Johannes Itten had
successfully used paper modeling as a design tool. He also lobbied the Min-
istry of Culture for permission to start a bookbinding workshop but was re-
fused, though he was allowed to add typography to the roster, for which he
hired Molzahn. The addition of Scharoun enabled Moll to further broaden the
architecture program, which had become quite advanced by the late 1920s, ac-
cording to study plans and notes. Instruction covered architecture history; de-
sign principles; typological study; and technical, practical, economic, psycho-
logical, and spiritual aspects of design, though the courses were framed as
artistic rather than technical endeavors. The Academy thus remained a school
for building creative talent rather than technical expertise.

The institutional and pedagogical structure in Breslau was designed by
Poelzig, Endell, and Moll to reinforce ideological and creative independence.
Thus, even where the Academy seems similar to other academies like the
Bauhaus, the intent was different and therefore so were the results. Both
schools, for instance, had two teachers responsible for workshop instruction—
the master craftsman and the formal teacher—and at both institutions stu-
dents rarely used production machines. The reasons for this, however, were
different. Whereas the Bauhaus initially used workshops to fuse fine art and
crafts practice, based on Gropius’s understanding of the medieval workshop,
Breslau used workshops primarily to test design schemes. In both cases ex-
pert machinists helped students execute their designs, but at Breslau the point
of this was to stress the creative aspect of design over the making, keeping a
distance between the mind and hands involved in the project and separating
students from craftsmanship. Hands-on experience, when permitted, was not
meant to lead to hands-on practice, but rather was a way of becoming famil-
iliar with materials and methods in order to improve the quality of design. By
1922, the Bauhaus was moving toward teaching type-forms (or standardiza-
tion) for industrial manufacture as its mode of artistic production; Breslau
rejected this approach. In Breslau, students learned that all design was art
and that objects should be conceived on the basis of design, not production,
and thought of as unique handcrafted artifacts. The Bauhaus, then, empha-
sized creating useful objects, while Breslau focused on individual expression and imaginative form.\textsuperscript{82}

The Academy’s understanding of imaginative form was as broad as possible. In the drawing and painting departments, for example, there was the figurative work of Oskar Schlemmer and Otto Mueller, the abstract work of Georg Muche, the traditional still life of Oskar Moll, and the new subjects of Alexander Kanoldt. In sculpture, Robert Bednorz used traditional materials, like wood and bronze, to treat the figure in abstract ways, whereas Schlemmer used nontraditional materials, like wire, for figurative work. Although Marg Moll, Oskar’s wife, was not a member of the faculty, her work, which used the human body as the basis for cubist abstractions and truncated forms, was well known in Breslau. Buildings designed by Breslau Academy faculty ranged from Lauterbach’s public housing projects, which played with traditional form and spatial arrangements, to Rading’s streamlined glass-clad Mohren Apothecary Building (1929). In short, the Academy’s varied talents produced varied work throughout the 1920s.

The Academy and the Community

Most historians and local observers, whether writing in the 1920s or more recently, hail the meteoric rise of the Academy as the primary catalyst for the progressive art scene in Breslau. The Academy brought talented and energetic young artists and architects to the city, offering them free atelier space, a stable livelihood, and a support network of colleagues. Academy faculty participated in every aspect of local cultural life, including serving as active, often leading, members of the various Breslau and Silesian art associations. Von Gosen chaired the Künstlerbund from 1908 to 1930, when Kanoldt assumed the directorship. Members included Scharoun, Rading, Karl Hanusch, Holz, Kanoldt, Von Kardorff, Mense, Moll, Marg Moll, Mueller, and Hans Zimbal.\textsuperscript{83} Moll was also on the boards of the Society of Friends of Art, the Applied Arts Association, and the Silesian Alliance for Protection of the Homeland, where he was joined by Rading, von Gosen, and Academy graduate Theo Effenberger.\textsuperscript{84} Lauterbach, Rading, and Scharoun belonged to the Deutsche Werkbund’s Silesian chapter, which Lauterbach headed for many years. Academy faculty also judged local and regional architecture competitions, served on the boards of the Museum of Fine Arts and Museum of Applied Arts, and advised the city on cultural matters. They helped organize the biannual public exhibition at the Academy and exhibitions sponsored by the Künstlerbund and Gruppe 19, a group of artists for whom inclusiveness was more important than merit. These
Beyond the Bauhaus exhibitions, instituted by Poelzig and continued by Endell and Moll, helped raise the school’s profile and educate Breslauers about contemporary art. By 1918, they had largely supplanted the commercial galleries and were often covered in national art magazines like Kunst und Künstler and Das Kunstblatt. Rading, Grisebach, and Landsberger contributed regularly to local, regional, and national magazines and journals like Bauwelt, Die Form, Ostdeutsche Bau-Zeitung, Schlesisches Heim, and Schlesische Monatshefte. Although Breslau residents often resisted new art, the Academy faculty was instrumental in bringing it to the city, disseminating it, and thereby helping to develop local taste. Not surprisingly, the Academy’s inclusiveness permeated other Breslau cultural institutions.

Dr. Erich Wiese, director of Breslau’s Museum of Fine Arts, noted that, after 1925, “The majority of the best artists working in Silesia are employed by the Breslau Academy or somehow connected to it. Today, this institute mirrors most clearly of all German establishments the situation of art and its many-sided countenance, from expressionism of gesture to abstract form, from Impressionism to Neue Sachlichkeit. And everything in the entire field moves between these poles.” Wiese was not alone in his high estimation of the Academy and its faculty, but his emphasis on the value of Breslau’s diversity is telling. Rather than criticizing the Breslau approach as confused and unclear, Wiese extolled it for precisely its variety, even arguing that it reflected the arts situation in Germany as a whole. In other words, Wiese painted Breslau during the 1920s as a picture of Weimar-era modernism, in all its richness. Of course Wiese lived and worked in Breslau, so he may not have been the most objective observer. But well-known architecture critic Adolf Behne had a similar opinion, asserting in 1931 that the “Breslau Academy was the first to become re-animated with the new, fresh contemporary spirit . . . a teaching body which, while not unmindful of or ignoring the many diverse tendencies of modern art, yet contrives to achieve a unity of purpose and outlook.” At Breslau, unity manifested not as a style but in intention and, indeed, diversity itself.

The 1930 Exhibition

The 1930 Academy Student Exhibition, held from June 11 to July 6 at the school building on Kaiserin Augusta Platz, epitomized the Academy’s diversity of faculty interests and student expression. It was the last exhibition the Academy mounted before it closed and possibly the most complete picture of the Academy at the end of the 1920s, since it seems to have assembled work
from every class. The catalog included three essays: an introduction by Moll, a discourse on the “Biophysics of Form” by Molzahn, and a piece on the “Academy and Theater Studio” by Schlemmer.

Moll introduced and situated the student work by acknowledging the responsibility of his faculty to the future of art and the difficulties facing educators, given the “tough contemporary battles.” He clearly has in mind not just the student work but German art more generally and the growing hostility toward modernism. As he often did in the 1920s, Moll asserted the connections between modern and traditional art, writing, “We will not break the bridges to the past; we ourselves are standing on them . . . we will all belong to the past for others . . . artists are normally inseparable from their times.” Placing modernism in a continuum with traditional and classical art, he justifies the modern work of the contemporary artist who, because of his place in history, must engage with current ideas. Moll ended his introduction by asserting that life is the model for art, not its subject or object, but its inspiration. Here he differs from the more radical German notion articulated by the Arbeitsrat für Kunst and others that art is life, which is to say, that art and life should be inseparable. Instead, reiterating the connection between modernism and traditional art, Moll shifts the ground slightly: traditional art imitates nature and life, whereas new art uses nature and life as inspiration for new forms.

Molzahn begins his essay with an affirmation of nature as the source of form: “form is only understood biologically, never aesthetically.” He brackets the article with images of natural phenomena: the division of a cell, the structure of a snowflake, electrical discharge, and radio signals. He explains that art is neither “content” nor “material” for the intellect, but “is a sign, symbol for a material, for the process itself.” The projects that illustrate the essay are all works on paper that experiment with optical phenomena, basic forms, and structures in an abstract way. Molzahn divides them into two primary categories, the physics of the surface and a black/white scale. Molzahn explains the first image, six drawings of black lines on a white square, as “the activating of the surface” with lines, since surface is passive by nature. The second image shows a series of oppositional line drawings in which black lines of differing thickness and direction divide the white squares. The last image is also black and white and is comprised of three rows of rectangles of varying thickness progressing from thin to thick, thick to thin, and thin to thick. Molzahn describes these as “the course of an evenly progressive rhythmic movement.” In four other exercises, Molzahn has students experiment with optical abstraction using linear elements to differentiate direction, scale, and form. There is nothing recognizable, realistic, or natural in any of the images, only abstract geo-
metric forms manipulated in different compositions. Molzahn explains that his exercises in the “Biophysics of Form” are designed to teach young artists the “ABCs” of form, since “art is not teachable but rather the means and the elements” are.\textsuperscript{94}

Schlemmer discusses how art has broadened its scope from traditional to new media, including the theater.\textsuperscript{95} By the beginning of the 1930s, Breslau embraced both aesthetic pluralism and pluralism in media. Schlemmer positions theater as the most comprehensive art after architecture because it incorporates all the other arts, using three-dimensional architectural constructions, painting, and sculpture in its sets, and music, dance, and poetry in its book. As Schlemmer notes, “Form, material structure and commitment, color, light, lighting, transparency, projection and film attest to the complex shapes being adopted and used as controlling elements for the scenic stage.”\textsuperscript{96} He argues that architects should participate in theatrical productions to, at minimum, enhance their design skills and, at best, learn how to design for human movement in space. Theater also allows students to engage with real problems of production, since so much of what they “design” in school never leaves the page, whereas in theater productions they can realize their ideas. Schlemmer illustrates his essay with student designs for a set, a festival, and Igor Stravinsky’s ballet, \textit{Nightingale}. All three are highly abstract, nontraditional designs in which abstract forms like triangles or linear elements are arranged to evoke a mood rather than to represent a real place. A photograph on the catalog’s last page, of the Production Machine designed by the theater class for the 1929 festival, shows a stage crammed with an array of objects, ranging from abstract forms, like a rectangle, to recognizable objects, like a bicycle wheel. The objects are totally out of scale, with no recognizable spatial hierarchy, and text and symbols adorn some of the forms. Students clearly treated the stage as a fantasy space to test new ideas about form-making.

The work represented in the Exhibition Catalog demonstrates the aesthetic range at the Academy and its “bridges to the past.” Hermann Sanne’s line drawing \textit{Kopfschema} (Head Scheme) is actually two measured drawings of the front and side of a head. Walter Ebelings’s \textit{Studie} (Study) is a delicate line drawing of two shoes. Both Sanne and Ebelings use realistic rendering techniques. In contrast, Artur Bonk’s \textit{Im Kaffee} (In Café) is a stylized line drawing of a couple drinking coffee and wine. Gerhard Hein’s freely rendered \textit{Portraitstudie} (Portrait Study) uses impressionist strokes to evoke character. Studies of natural things, like Richard Seidel’s \textit{Dekorative Malerei} (Decorative Painting), show flowers, stalks, and leaves. At the same time, there are numerous abstract compositions, such as the work of Molzahn’s students and Gerhard Neumann’s
painting *Komposition* (Composition), whose fractured image demonstrates clear cubist influences. Landscapes like Charlotte Arndt’s dreamlike aper-透视型 *Landschaftsimpression* (Landscape Impression), with its misty atmosphere floating among odd, almost surreal, trees, show the influence of Magic Realism. Alongside the fine arts pieces, the exhibition displayed work from the architecture studios, weaving and paper-making workshops, and industrial design courses. Woven pieces feature abstract linear patterns and varying textures. Kurt Vogt’s proposal for an artist’s house has the open spaces, functional planning, clean facades, and modern tubular steel furniture typical of *Neues Bauen*. In short, the student work reflected the pluralistic outlook of the Breslau Academy faculty, spanning the possibilities from traditional to modern means of expression.

It is interesting to consider the Breslau Academy in relationship to contemporary historiography of the *Bauhaus*, which attempts to dismantle the mythology and construct a more balanced view of its curriculum, faculty, importance to arts education in the 1920s, and legacy. The story of Breslau compliments this historiography in several ways. By demonstrating the continuities between Weimar-era arts education and its predecessors, it helps to undermine the myth of a definitive break between modernism and tradition. Breslau also underscores the broad diffusion of innovation in Weimar-era German arts education, the role women played, and the existence of alternative educational options for progressive-minded artists and architects. The development of Breslau’s curriculum was no accident. Both Endell and Moll wished to distinguish Breslau from other German academies, including the *Bauhaus*. Comments by their contemporaries suggest that these differences were commonly known. Schlemmer, for one, reveled in the “wonderful relaxation [in Breslau] after the boiling cauldron in Dessau,” due not to lack of rigor but to an atmosphere of emotional support and pedagogical acceptance. If the *Bauhaus* was an experiment in a new coordinated arts curriculum, the Academy was a paradigm of the antistyle, pluralistic approach to art education. Today, the undefined nature of most art school curricula is similar to the Breslau model; contemporary curriculum is intended as a guideline for teachers, not a set of prescriptive instructions. Perhaps most importantly, we can now recognize that Breslau’s approach was as central to the development of progressive art as the *Bauhaus*. Breslau’s emphasis on art as an individually creative act supports one of the fundamental tenets of modernism: challenging authority and accepted practices of all kinds.