CHAPTER 5

Between Idealism and Realism:
Architecture in Breslau

“The sensuous and the spiritual, which struggle as opposites in the
common understanding are revealed as reconciled in the truth expressed
by art.”
—C. W. F. Hegel, On the Arts

Fragmentation and variety were defining characteristics not only of Breslau art
in the 1920s but also of architectural design. Iain Boyd Whyte and others have
argued that, like its art, German architecture of the time responded to the “con-
tradictory conditions of modernity” by neatly dividing into opposing camps
organized around traditional and modern values.¹ But Breslau’s architects do
not fall easily into either camp; instead, they touch on both. Breslau thus pro-
vides a useful case study for correcting simplistic notions of binary division in
German architecture. On paper and built, the work of Breslau architects may be
disjointed and multivalent, but it is also rich in content and invention. The term
“Breslau work” needs to be carefully defined, however. Only a handful of out-
standing buildings designed by architects who worked in the city were actually
constructed in and around Breslau; most of their best work was commissioned
by clients in other cities in Germany and abroad. This was a twin consequence
of the economic situation in the 1920s, which constrained private construction,
and the relative cultural conservatism of many Breslauers of means. As the
economy stabilized and Silesia began to recover from the war, building activity
predictably picked up, but by the time of the crash of 1929 it still had not
reached prewar levels. Much of the interwar architectural production in Bres-
lau was therefore speculative and never constructed. However, unbuilt designs
can be as revealing as built ones, for architecture exists not only in the physical
world but on paper as well. Competition entries, visionary utopian designs, and
drawings of unrealized work can tell us as much about the variety of practice
as architects’ writings and actual buildings.
Breslau architects whose work demonstrates the incredible variety of approaches during the Weimar period include Richard Konwiarz, Heinrich Lauterbach, Adolf Rading, Hans Scharoun, Max Berg, Moritz Hadda, Albrecht Jaeger, Heinrich Tischler, Hugo Leipsiger, and Ludwig Moshamer. Lauterbach, Hadda, and Leipziger were all Breslau natives; Jaeger and Tischler were Silesians; and Berg, Konwiarz, Moshamer, Rading, and Scharoun came from other parts of Germany. Rading and Scharoun initially moved to Breslau to teach at the Academy, while Berg, Konwiarz, and Moshamer came to the city to work for the Breslau Municipal Housing Office and did private work on the side. Only Lauterbach, Rading, and Scharoun are associated with the Neues Bauen (New Building) of the 1920s, though Lauterbach and Rading rejected the label, while Scharoun is usually set apart by art historians because of his idiosyncratic work. All these architects were open to multiple theoretical and formal possibilities and willing to marry positions usually understood as mutually exclusive. The aesthetic identity they assumed was an amalgamation of traditional and modern tropes. In many cases, they derived their traditional architectural values from direct study of local and regional vernacular buildings and took their modern values from national and international movements like the Neues Bauen. Like their colleagues across Germany, Breslau architects believed they could improve living conditions and contribute to social harmony by improving the built environment. As with Breslau artists, most architects in Breslau depended upon local, regional, and national, if not international, recognition for success, and the tensions between provincial, national, and international played out in their individual careers.

Berg, Hadda, Jaeger, Konwiarz, Lauterbach, Leipsiger, Moshamer, Rading, Scharoun, and Tischler are largely overlooked in post-World War II histories of modernism and Weimar culture. Regina Göckede suggests that Rading and Lauterbach were neglected both because much of their built work is in Breslau and Silesia, where it lay forgotten during the division of Germany, and because neither was truly radical. Göckede’s analysis can extend to many of the others. Scharoun is ignored because his work does not conform to the aesthetic categories typically used to evaluate architectural design from the period, being neither a functionalist nor an expressionist or traditionalist. Christoph Bürkle and Peter Blundell-Jones both describe Scharoun’s architecture as “organic” and place him squarely in a group with Hugo Häring and Alvar Aalto, though Bürkle admits that Scharoun himself tried to avoid classifying his work. Blundell-Jones argues that Scharoun was a practitioner of an “alternative tradition,” a common way of viewing architects, like Scharoun, Aalto, and Häring, whose work does not fit neatly into expressionist or functionalist aesthetic models. Peter Pfankuch opens his 1970 retrospective with the assis-
tion that Rading “is today virtually unknown although he belongs to the few and consistent contributors to the development of Neues Bauen,” despite the fact that Rading repudiated the label. In truth, the Breslau work reflected the kind of reconciliation C. W. F. Hegel refers to above. As they wrestled with design problems and the conflicting pressures of tradition and modernity, Breslau architects created new aesthetic formulations. Because they grappled with the same issues as their peers—new modes of living, technologies, spatial ideas, and more—their work should not be seen as unusual. The fact that much of that work was not aesthetically radical does not mean it lacked merit; rather, it demonstrates the broad scope of Weimar modern production.

**Tradition and Modernity**

German and Breslau architectural practice in the 1920s took place in the context of powerful competing, even contradictory, aesthetic and social ideas. Modernist ideals included machine inspiration, international orientation, functional and rational thinking, obsession with designing in an up-to-date fashion, and the “rational” consideration of function to determine form. Aesthetic values associated with modernism, or Zivilisation, included geometrically determined forms, pristine white buildings with flat roofs, large glazed surfaces, new materials and construction methods, and open contiguous spaces. In contrast, romantic approaches to design—driven by a concern for the user, a desire to create beautiful, timeless spaces, and an interest in architecture as a means of manifesting the spiritual, intangible, and intuitive—were considered conservative and championed by proponents of Kultur. The architectural forms associated with this position were inspired by traditional and Völkisch German tropes: pitched roofs, small punched windows, individuated spaces, a reduced classicism of tripartite division, colonnades, stone, and monumental forms. Although attempts to classify architecture purely on the basis of formal tropes are inevitably reductive, these aesthetic distinctions nevertheless had powerful ideological ramifications, as illustrated by the famous Flat Roof Controversy, which reached ridiculous proportions in the War of the Roofs between Uncle Tom’s Colony and the Am Fischtal Colony in Berlin Zehlendorf. The inclusion of Gustav Wolf’s pitched roof building at the Breslau WuWA in 1929 caused a similar minor scandal, since pitched roof architecture was not considered sufficiently progressive for the show. Still, when examined closely, the divisions between proponents of Kultur and Zivilisation, or traditionalists and avant-gardists, muddy considerably.

Recognizing traditional and modern expression in Weimar-era architec-
nature is not always easy, since there were so many permutations to the mix of aesthetic elements. New technology, materials, and construction systems were generally associated with modernism, yet architects of all aesthetic stripes adopted them. Even buildings with traditional formal expression were built with new materials and methods. Many of the 1920s housing estates in and around Breslau, like Pöpelwitz and Oltaschin, were designed to look familiar, even though they were built with unfamiliar materials and building techniques. Conversely, even architects who professed to break with tradition and the past in favor of modernization were indebted to historical forms and spatial arrangements.\(^7\) Albrecht Jaeger’s villa for Dr. Paul Neumann (1930) looks from the outside like it conforms to the prescriptions of *Neues Bauen*, with its unadorned white stucco facades, flat roofs, simple volumes, and tubular steel handrails. Yet its interior contains a conventional set of separate spaces, nothing like *Neues Bauen* open planning.\(^8\) Very few Breslau architects positioned themselves as definitively traditional or modern. More often than not, they negotiated the territory between the two, creating a mix that may seem to lack aesthetic logic, by not conforming to the compositional rules for either traditional or modern work, but in fact reveals a balanced pragmatism.

One area in which out-and-out traditionalists did differ from their peers was their approach to new materials and technologies. Traditionalists often used new materials like concrete and new construction systems like reinforced concrete frame and steel frame, but they hid those systems behind historic-looking facade treatments or tried to make new materials look like old ones. Thus, rather than celebrating newness, traditionalists obscured it in favor of familiar appearances. One mark of avant-garde work, on the other hand, was the explicit expression of new materials and technology. Instead of hiding construction systems within walls, modernist architects exposed them to the eye and integrated them into the spatial composition of buildings. Revealing the underlying structure and systems put the rational thinking behind the architecture on display, celebrating and even reveling in newness.

In Breslau, architects were not only willing to combine aesthetic elements from different formal languages but saw this as a valid design strategy for inventing new solutions. Hans Poelzig and Max Berg pioneered this approach long before the Weimar period. Poelzig borrowed from Silesian vernacular as a formal source rather than imitating it as a model. The Church in Maltsch (1906) typifies his use of historic precedents. It has steeply gabled roofs, small windows, and the stacked forms of older churches, yet the massing is simplified, the facades are smooth white stucco, and there is no surface ornament whatsoever.\(^9\) Poelzig’s and Berg’s buildings for the 1913 Centennial Hall and
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Fair Grounds were equally important early projects. As Jerzy Ilkosz indicates, they are among the few Breslau masterpieces widely recognized in diverse architecture histories.10 Poelzig constructed a small exhibition pavilion with garden pergolas. Although decidedly streamlined, the project uses a reduced neoclassical vocabulary closer to Italian Renaissance than anything else, with symmetrically arranged buildings, fluted columns that form a series of colonnades, and pilaster-rimmed cupolas. In contrast, Berg’s Centennial Hall is a stunning reinforced concrete construction whose 67-meter clear spans broke records.11 Although its unadorned exposed concrete makes the structure’s outward expression more modern than Poelzig’s, Centennial Hall is laid out in a perfect circle, sits on a plinth, and is perfectly symmetrical. In other words, both projects abstract and alter elements from traditional architecture, bringing together old and new. In his study of the two projects, Ilkosz points out that before the First World War most architects synthesized old and new. Max Berg’s sketches for skyscrapers were another early example of this new attitude: Berg adapted the modern American skyscraper to Breslau by proposing buildings at a lower scale, made of brick rather than stone, and featuring undulating facades inspired by German expressionist design. These projects may more properly belong to what contemporaries called the “break into the modern,” but they are important precursors to the later architecture.

Breslau Buildings

In 1926, city architect D. Berg wrote about the need to establish a balance between traditional and modern in architectural expression, a common view in Breslau architectural circles. In his essay on architecture in and around the city, he underscores the lack of spirituality in functionalist and rationalist architecture.12 Berg reminds his readers that “contemporary art is art that only has meaning for its time. Timeless art is art of the great ones, that according to its greatness can have meaning over longer periods of time for generations.”13 In order to convey meaning, Berg explains, art and architecture must do more than respond to reason; they need to appeal to human emotion. Berg ends the article by calling for a return to spirituality in architecture and the inclusion of “feeling with invention.” The idea is that architects should use rationally inspired creativity in an emotionally appealing way. Berg accompanies his essay with examples of successful buildings and design propositions, including Max Berg’s Centennial Hall and Ludwig Moshamer’s Messehof, the entry to the Fair Grounds and new exhibition hall (1925).14 The Messehof, Moritz Hadda’s
Karlsruhe Life Insurance Building (1922), Richard Konwiarz’s Crematorium (1927) and Fraternity House (1927), and Hugo Leipziger and Albrecht Jaeger’s private home in Breslau-Carlowitz (1929) provide a general introduction to the range of work built in Breslau during the 1920s. Little information remains about the Karlsruhe Life Insurance Building, although the structure did survive the Second World War. The building dates to the 1860s, when it was built as housing. Hadda and his partner Wilhelm Schlesinger renovated its facade treatment and spatial organization in 1922. Their primary intervention was on the exterior, where they used reinforced concrete in a plastic way that recalls the prismatic forms of German expressionism along with more traditional elements. The roofline zigzags above a march of triangulated pilasters like a repetitive row of pitched roofs above a colonnade. The horizontal lines of window headers and sills offset the vertical thrust of the composition which is absolutely symmetrical. There is no surface ornament whatsoever; instead the play of light and shadow on the deeply set windows makes the building visually exciting. The reductive nature of the facade is absolutely modern; the oblique suggestion of traditional form in the roof and pilasters is incidental. The Karlsruhe Life Insurance Building depends on surface manipulation and, as Janet Ward reminds readers in Weimar Surfaces, a great deal of the new architecture was skin deep.15

Hugo Leipziger and Albrecht Jaeger collaborated on a number of projects in and around Breslau during the second half of the 1920s. Their work generally conformed to Neues Bauen aesthetics. The Cooperative House at Bischofswalde resembles their other projects in its flat roof, rectilinear plan form, white stucco facades, rational facade design, and rational planning. The curved ends depart from Neues Bauen tenets, however, as do the traditional spatial layouts. Although functionally arranged, the spaces of the units are ordinary in size and plan. The rooms are small and individuated (Leipziger and Jaeger do not use any open planning in either the horizontal or vertical dimension), finishes are minimized, and there is no surface ornament. Thus, as in the Karlsruhe Life Insurance Building, the building appears modern only on its surfaces. Like Berlin, Breslau began renewing the external face of its building stock during the 1920s, with a view to improving what was seen as outmoded and unattractive architecture. According to articles in the Silesian press, Breslau’s architects, both private and public, looked to Berlin and other German cities for their cues, but Breslau was short on funds and could do less than other German municipalities.16

Richard Konwiarz’s Crematorium was a sober brick building at the Gräbschen Cemetery just outside the city center. Unlike the buildings described
above, the Crematorium was new construction, so Konwiarz arguably had greater design freedom. Yet he too used a mix of traditional and modern. The building’s entry makes several direct references to classicism: it is capped with a pediment, a line of rectangular pilasters stretches rhythmically along its width, and a smaller pediment sits over the main entry. But the abstract allusions end there. The pediments are exaggerated totally out of proportion, as is the height-to-width ratio of the facade. The only surface ornaments are a citation from the Old Testament on the main pediment and a small bas-relief symbol atop the door. Otherwise, surfaces are smooth and unadorned. The interior is stark, with the materiality and pattern of the stone walls and wooden ceilings the only concessions to ornament. Modest, wooden, high-backed chairs are the only furnishings inside the Hall for Mourning. The windows have equally simple frames and mullions. Neither material nor space is wasted. Konwiarz thus freely used elements of the classical language alongside the spare surfaces and functional planning of Neues Bauen.

Konwiarz used a similar approach in his Fraternity House, although its expression was even more starkly reduced. According to August Grisebach, Konwiarz’s building was quite radical in its lack of finery and departure from traditional aesthetics. Constructed out of brick, the vernacular material, the building consisted of two rectangular flat-roofed wings. It has almost no surface ornamentation, just a simple cornice, echoed by a horizontal band that stretches the length of the exterior. The windows are set in light-colored frames that contrast with the brick, and the facade composition creates visual effect by grouping the windows and varying their sizes. Grisebach describes the building as “aware of function without sobriety, simple without seeming meager.” There are few surviving photographs of the building, which was destroyed during the Second World War, but the interiors seem to have had the same straightforward clarity as the exteriors. Here Konwiarz worked with a traditional material and program in a rational and functional manner.

Adolf Rading reviewed Moshamer’s project for the Messehof in Schlesische Monatshefte, where he not only remarked upon the apparent formal contradictions in the project but approved of how they produced a powerful piece of architecture. However, he saw a stark contrast between the project’s outside and inside. Rading found the stripped-down aesthetic of the exterior unattractive and out of proportion, albeit decidedly up-to-date. The problem was not a question of beauty per se, but what Rading viewed as a lack of consideration for the human spirit. On the other hand, he compared the building’s interiors to Gothic architecture, praising the “sensuousness . . . totally tied to light and space; building material, building mass seem necessary evils.” The inte-
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Rading enthused over is an enormous open hall, a long-span structure supported by arched, inverted trusses that recall the inside of a wooden ship. The top half of the building shell is glazed with transparent panes that bathe the space in natural light. The glazing also makes the upper portion of the building envelope appear diaphanous, in much the same way as the outer shell of a Gothic cathedral. The building thus merges the abstract simplicity of Neues Bauen with the spatial dynamism and manipulation of light found in Gothic architecture. Moshammer’s blend of old and new is not straightforward: the unadorned facades have elongated columns topped by squat capitals reminiscent of the Greek Doric, while the interior is sleekly rendered reinforced concrete. The Messehof demonstrates that there were infinite ways to merge old and new. It was possible to combine traditional building forms with new materials and contemporary space planning, use traditional space planning in new forms, or build with traditional materials in new forms. The sheer scope of possibility helps to account for the variety of solutions offered by Breslau architects.

Lauterbach

Heinrich Lauterbach was one of the few Breslau architects who tried to explain the apparent lack of direction in Weimar-era architecture and the thinking behind it. Born March 2, 1893, in Breslau, Lauterbach was the son of well-to-do businessman Richard Lauterbach, who owned woodland and mills in several locations in Silesia, Poland, and Hungary. Lauterbach first encountered architecture at the age of thirteen, when Hans Poelzig designed and constructed the family home, “an event that I followed with burning interest and that finally directed me to my profession,” he later wrote. Lauterbach enrolled in the sculpture course at the Breslau Academy, where he soon discovered that he had more of a talent for building design. Poelzig accepted him into the architecture course but then decided that he needed technical education and directed him to the Darmstadt Technical High School. In Darmstadt, Lauterbach studied under reform-minded Friedrich Pützer, who was principally a church architect, and conservative art historian Wilhelm Pinder, who later became closely associated with the National Socialists. After the First World War, Lauterbach completed his studies at the Technical High School in Dresden, where he primarily studied with Poelzig, though he completed his diploma with Martin Dülfer, who was known for his historicist and Jugendstil buildings. Lauterbach thus had a fairly conventional education, with no radical or experimental elements. He returned to Breslau in 1925 to establish his own architecture firm where he
designed a mix of single-family homes and housing projects that garnered him moderate attention in the national architecture press.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1926, Lauterbach began work on the Breslau WuWA, for which he designed and constructed several buildings. The extensive press coverage of WuWA cemented his national reputation. From 1931–32, he taught briefly at the Breslau Academy, and after the Second World War he received a professorship in Stuttgart, followed by an appointment in Kassel where he taught until he retired. Lauterbach’s postwar speeches suggest that he was a devout man, or at least spiritual. Unlike Scharoun and Rading, he did not join the new arts associations that sprang up in Berlin and Breslau after 1918, and he does not seem to have been involved in arts politics, apart from the local and regional Werkbunds. His work and writing make it clear that Lauterbach was open to new aesthetics, materials, and construction systems, but was also cautious about adopting new design methods and relinquishing old ones.

Little survives of Lauterbach’s prewar writings, but in 1958 he was invited to give a speech in Munich about his memories of the beginnings of Neues Bauen in eastern Germany, for he was one of the few architects who could provide an eyewitness account of the period.\textsuperscript{23} Lauterbach begins by lamenting the current historiography of the early modern movement, which he criticizes as one-dimensional and biased toward a very small group of architects like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius. He then recalls the buildings he looked to for inspiration as a young architect, among them Alfred Messel’s Wertheim (1904) in Breslau and Peter Behren’s Turbine Hall (1909), but above all Hans Poelzig’s designs for factories in Silesia, “the first important industrial buildings—designed according to the function and the building materials and construction method—without the formal pretensions of a ‘new style.’”\textsuperscript{24}

Lauterbach’s history includes buildings usually ignored because of their conservative aesthetics, but also pointedly references work based on diverse pragmatic considerations rather than aesthetic formulas. He thus offers a very different view of Neues Bauen, to which he ascribes the more traditional-looking architecture of Heinrich Tessenow, Paul Schmitthenner, and Richard Riemerschmid alongside Gropius, Meyer, Taut, and Mies. The archival copy of the speech has notes in the margins and crossed-out sections that he apparently decided were better left unsaid. One of these is the comment that neither Gropius and Meyer’s 1912 Fagus Factory nor their design for the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition “exercised the astonishing influence that one ascribes to them today.”\textsuperscript{25} Instead, Lauterbach notes the importance of Bruno Taut’s Frühlicht, a short-lived visionary magazine little studied after the Second World War, to him and his contemporaries. Lauterbach is trying to alert his audience to the
ways in which history is distorted as it is written, for the projects held up as exemplary today are not necessarily the ones the past considered significant, like much of the Breslau work from the Weimar era, which was important at the time but has been neglected by history. It is important to note that Lauterbach appraises architecture according to its aims rather than its aesthetics. This formulation explains the variety of aesthetic solutions he and his Breslau compatriots used: they saw form as the result of the design process, but not its goal. For Lauterbach, *Neues Bauen* represents an artistic approach and attitude toward making that is anything but technical; the notion of the “machine for living” is antithetical to his understanding of *Neues Bauen*, for he finds machines cold, unwelcoming, and inhuman. He absolutely rejects the codification of *Neues Bauen*, which in his view turns the idea of a new, open attitude toward creating architecture into a closed aesthetic ideology and style.

Lauterbach also devotes some time to explaining the significance of the name *Neues Bauen*. “Why,” he asks, “was the name not New Architecture?” Lauterbach believes that Heidegger’s famous essay, “*Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*” (Building, Dwelling, Thinking) correctly assessed the importance of *bauen* to contemporary architecture. He explains that the phrase *Neues Bauen* is appealing because it connects the old German word *buan* with the modern *bauen*, so that “New Building means also: New Living, which means also, a new way for man to be on the Earth.” Thus, the name reflects the desire to give form to a new society and its institutions and affirms the interest of German architects in public housing and other large institutional programs during the 1920s. In an earlier speech from 1953, Lauterbach addresses the relationship between building and dwelling by pointing out that these concepts have parallels in “means” and “ends.” He clearly privileges the “ends,” believing that a building only has value if it enhances human existence. This analysis leads to a critique of over-dependence on technology. Technology, Lauterbach asserts, “is always only the means with which to achieve a particular end.” In other words, technology should not drive the project but support it, a view that echoes Lauterbach’s former teacher Poelzig, who also believed that technology is neither the end nor the aesthetic. He goes on to assert that the purpose of technology is function, but function is not the “actual purpose” of building or design. The actual purpose of architecture is spiritual delight. Lauterbach thus rejects the basic function-driven tenets of *Neues Bauen* in favor of a more human-centered approach. This attitude toward technology sounds conservative, if not reactionary, and certainly was not in line with more radical modernist thinking.

Perhaps the most interesting passages in Lauterbach’s speeches relate to
aesthetics. Lauterbach recounts the “tale” of the architect commissioned to design a museum who makes all the walls glass. The “light blinded the viewers everywhere,” and there was no place for the curator to display his objects. “But the architect found his glass and steel construction so successful that he suggested that it would be best if nothing was exhibited in it!”29 Lauterbach’s parable makes the ethical problem clear: architecture is meant to serve the function housed within it, not displace that function. He blames such projects on the simple-minded application of aesthetic ideology (and even names Mies van der Rohe as one of the guilty parties). Lauterbach concludes his lecture by admonishing his audience that “Neues Bauen is no abstraction, by which alone one can discover the ‘how’—the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ are not separable—the how must be discovered in the ‘what.’”30 In other words, Neues Bauen is not a formula for design but an attitude toward design problems, an approach to solving formal, programmatic, and aesthetic challenges. By this measure, far more architects practicing in Breslau and Germany during the 1920s were modern than are usually credited.

Soon after Lauterbach returned to Breslau to set up a practice as an independent architect, he received his first commission, an estate house in Kadlub for Count von Strachwitz, an aristocrat from an old, established family of Silesian landed gentry.31 The house reflects its owner’s traditional and conservative values. It has steeply pitched, overhanging roofs above stucco facades and seems to borrow freely from local vernacular farmhouses in its roof contours and massing. The plans divide the building into public and private areas in a fairly conventional manner. The only hint of modern planning appears in the public spaces, which are relatively open to one another with pocket doors to allow for more continuous space. At House Strachwitz, traditional design dominates the modern, but the design demonstrates Lauterbach’s open-minded attitude toward building aesthetics.

House Hasek (1930) and House Schmelowsky (1932), both in Jablonec, Czechoslovakia, are very different from House Strachwitz and represent Lauterbach’s mature style. From Neues Bauen, he takes the exterior white stucco, flat roofs, steel and glass window construction, horizontal window proportions, and the entire volume of the houses, roof gardens, and open spatial planning in the main entertaining areas. From “ship architecture,” he borrows House Hasek’s rounded form of the rear wing, tubular steel handrails, exterior gangway-like stairs, and wrap-around decks, and House Schmelowsky’s curved roof over the living room, spiral stair, and circular window.
From traditional planning, he takes the small, private, individuated bedrooms and bathrooms that are upstairs at House Schmelowsky and in a separate wing at House Hasek. He asserts his design independence by mixing these elements together, but also, at House Schmelowsky, by painting the steel bright red, including a partition curtain in the open living space to allow privacy when desired, inverting the ship’s hull form, and inserting a cubic volume that protrudes over the garden facade and is flanked by a framed void. At House Hasek, Lauterbach departs from Neues Bauen with the complex volumetric plays between the wings, the solid/void schema evident at the rear of the house, and the irregularity of window sizes, which seem to defy rational planning. The visual and spatial tension between the design elements at both houses crystallizes Lauterbach’s own words (written in reference to Scharoun but apropos design more generally): “Everything living is interwoven from polarities and rhythms that are integrated . . . into form.” In Lauterbach’s designs, the polarities are the aesthetic and spatial ideas of traditional and modern architecture.
Like Lauterbach, Adolf Rading wove together disparate elements in his architecture and understood Neues Bauen in broader terms than many of his contemporaries. Rading’s education and early work experience undoubtedly taught him to respect differing attitudes toward design. Unlike Lauterbach, Rading completed his architecture studies at the conservative Berlin Municipal Building Trade School, rather than one of the more progressive architecture academies. After leaving school in 1911, he worked for three distinguished architects of the period, August Endell, Albert Gessner, and Peter Behrens. Gessner was known for his pioneering work in housing design in Berlin and would have shown young Rading how to question architectural practice. Behrens and Endell exposed him to the emerging sachlich (objective) attitude toward design, but also to more conventional approaches. Behrens began as a neoclassicist, then developed a refined modern classicism, before moving in an
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even more contemporary direction. Rading was in Behrens’s studio at the time of this breakthrough, so he witnessed his mentor’s development first-hand. Behrens’s work retained an obvious debt to neoclassical design until his death, serving as a successful example of the fusion of old and new. Endell was an autodidact whose first work, the Elvira Photo Studio in Munich, was in the Jugendstil, but by 1912 he too embraced the new architecture. In Endell’s studio, Rading worked on the Trabrennbahn for Berlin-Mariendorf, a building considered a precursor of Neues Bauen because of its formal simplicity and straightforward response to functional imperatives.

Rading moved to Breslau in 1919, when he accepted Endell’s offer of a teaching position at the Academy, but he kept his connections to Berlin. Initially, this was because he was uncertain about whether he would remain in Breslau; after 1926, he and Hans Scharoun operated a collaborative practice in Berlin because so few clients in Breslau and Silesia were interested in modern design. Rading was well connected to contemporaries like Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius through avant-garde organizations, like the Berlin Ring, and other associations, such as the Deutsche Werkbund and the Bund Deutscher Architekten (League of German Architects). He published widely, both regionally and nationally, weighing in on most important contemporary architecture and design issues. Among others, he wrote for the regional magazines Die Ostdeutsche Bau-Zeitung, Schlesisches Heim, and Schlesische Monatshefte, as well as Die Form, the national journal published by the Werkbund. His reputation was such that he was one of the fifteen architects chosen to contribute to the 1927 Stuttgart Weissenhofsiedlung, along with internationally known figures like Mies, Gropius, and Scharoun. Although Rading was a member of the architecture vanguard, he was a paradox: he belonged to progressive associations and designed in a formally modern idiom, yet he was highly skeptical of radical contemporary rhetoric. He espoused certain avant-garde ideas and traditional formulations, while flat out rejecting others.

More of Rading’s theoretical writing survived the war than Lauterbach’s, so it is easier to construct a picture of his ideas. Rading addressed Weimar-era cultural conflicts directly and often. His writings communicated the necessity for balance in good design, and particularly for equilibrium between extreme ideas. He not only advocated finding a middle road but positioned himself squarely in the center. He wrote explicitly of the experimental nature of his work and the potential pitfalls connected with pioneering design. Rading was also deeply concerned with the development of German building culture, especially as it related to the larger notion of Kultur. He viewed new architecture as a cultural product, not a technological or modern aberration. He was particu-
larly concerned with East German culture because it was generally thought to be underdeveloped in relation to German culture as a whole. Rading wrote that “Culture means . . . the growth of quality on local territory.” He recognized the importance of local and regional arts communities, for without them there was no national arts community.

Rading also saw a particular connection between building culture and the cultures of eastern Germany and Germany. Like members of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst and Rat Geistiger Arbeit, he believed that architecture was the pinnacle of all arts and culture. In his view, creativity was the key to building culture. Without creativity, there was no building culture. Without building culture, there could be no larger culture. By creativity, Rading meant the ability to interpret contemporary life through art: “whomever cannot judge the relationship between man and industry,” he wrote, “cannot build a house today.” Creativity was central to his thinking in other ways as well. Rading believed that the German system of reserving public projects for state-employed architects stymied innovation by awarding large public works designs, which could—and should—be inspirations, to entrenched bureaucrats who by definition lack imagination. Rading argued frequently and vehemently that independent architects should be commissioned for public projects to inject art and creativity into the bureaucratic process and thereby into the public realm. Elevating the artistic level of state-supported projects would in turn improve the quality of public space.

For Rading, a world without art had no life. He believed that art was more than the embodiment of spirit in material form; it was the physical manifestation of human life and culture. Art “is not a byproduct of life, but the most essential interpretation of human life, its formal result,” he writes emphatically. “It is therefore logical that a Volk that is not attuned to its art . . . has no life direction and actually stops living.” Rading underscores his points by discussing the negative psychological effects of poor architecture on its occupants, especially in Breslau housing developments like “Tschepine,” where cost savings were the excuse for poor design. The implication is that without good building, people will not have the sense of well-being necessary to develop culturally. If they cannot develop, cannot pursue Bildung—personal cultivation, education, and self-improvement—they cannot become fully participating members of modern liberal society. Equally, if their development is stunted, local culture will also be underdeveloped.

Rading applied his ideas about better housing in his 1922 project for Oranienstrasse in Breslau. This groundbreaking project proposed a row house scheme at a time when Breslau zoning would not accommodate this type of
planning. The developer eventually convinced the city to change the building code so the project could go forward. Rading developed the design to reduce building costs by consolidating construction of multiple homes into one larger volume, which would save on excavating, framing, and utility installation. From the start, he saw the project as experimental, not only in its approach to site planning and building massing, but in its spatial propositions. The units are tightly organized maisonettes, with well-thought-out functional spaces. There are no corridors; instead, rooms open onto one another, avoiding wasted space and saving on wall construction costs. The stairwell is open to below, so that even in the small, efficient rooms, there is a sense of openness and space. The street facade is lively but far less daring than the interior; with punched windows of differing sizes, a gambrel roof, and arched attic windows, the building hardly looks revolutionary. Still, despite its relative conservatism, Rading injected art into Oranienstrasse through the facade design, where he tested an idea that would reappear in 1929 at the WuWA: giving each unit a slightly different outward expression to counteract the repetitiveness of the plans and make residents feel that their units were unique and special.

Like the fully committed members of the avant-garde in the Arbeitsrat für Kunst and Rat Geistiger Arbeit, Rading saw art as necessary to all Germans, not just the educated elite, and he bemoaned the quality of German art education, not to mention much German art. Yet he did not accept the entire 1920s progressive agenda. In his essay “Neues Bauen,” Rading pointedly attacks certain tenets of the avant-garde while attempting to balance others with more traditional perspectives. He writes, “He who is clear that ‘Neues Bauen’ is not ‘new’ building, has achieved a lot. Then he knows that our building is not further developed than the old tradition that mankind always followed . . . He knows that white colored cigar boxes with deeply cut windows or horizontal divisions are not, as we often experience, the sign of Neues Bauen.” While Rading used the simplified cubic forms, flat roofs, white stucco, glass and steel, and new construction of the Neues Bauen, he discarded the notion of a break with history. Rather, he viewed these formal solutions as developments that arose naturally from earlier architectural forms. He supported his view by tying contemporary architectural values to historic architectural forms, tracing the relationship between building and landscape to the Greeks, Sachlichkeit (objectivity) to the Romans, cubic form to the Egyptians, and the organic connection between building and urban form to the French Baroque. New architecture was thus part of a larger historic continuum and one side of Kultur.

Rading believed in studying history and learning from it, not breaking with it. Yet he did not believe in imitating or enacting historical styles. In his
explication of the 1932 Instructional Plan for the Breslau Academy, he writes, “You can no longer see art from the contemporary situation but as part of a long historical development, that has deep significance for the development of human life.” Rading finishes the Neues Bauen essay by locating architecture in the present: “With this, is said, that this [Neues Bauen] has nothing to do with façade matters but with something detached, abstract, in itself present, therefore not something dissociated, organic, grown in the times.” That is, Neues Bauen is the “meaning of the times,” intimately tied to contemporary conditions. It arises from the “thinking of the times” and derives directly from the newly formed postwar “Gesellschaft” (society) with its automobiles, aircraft, and hydroelectric power. Neues Bauen is thus rooted in an attitude toward design, rather than a specific aesthetic or formal expression. To Rading, “new” building is identical with “building,” and “conviction” should be understood in Goethe’s sense as “agreement with the spiritual tendencies of the time.” Because it is the attitude that matters, formal solutions can encompass a broad range of possibilities, including elements both typical of Neues Bauen and not.

The aesthetic choices Rading made over his career manifest his insistent faith in history as a continuum. An early project, the house on Stifterstrasse in Breslau (1921), was clearly influenced by local vernacular, although unlike other Breslauers such as Poelzig and May, Rading was not explicit about the sources for his designs (see fig. 5). Outside, the house is a simple, unadorned volume covered in a tight skin, with punched windows so abstractly detailed they appear more like voids on the facades than openings. The general massing of the building is reminiscent of traditional German house design, but there are no protruding elements of any kind, no bays, window frames or sills, or eyebrow dormers. The facades are white stucco. The only traditional forms are the hipped shingle roof with its exposed beams and the slightly ornamental brick chimney element. The front door has an odd shape similar to a Gothic church window that is repeated as a cutout on the chimney. Rading intended the house to have a flat roof, but the Breslau building department would not allow it. Apparently, at this point in time, the city only let architects depart from traditional planning on the interior, where such novelties would not be visible to the public.

The interior is the earliest example of a spatial idea that became an ongoing motif in Rading’s design work. The living room and dining room are combined into one large space that dominates the ground floor, making these community spaces the center of the house. On the second floor, in a similar arrangement, the rooms all open onto the workroom, although the individuated bedrooms are more traditional. Both living/dining room and workroom spatially embody Rading’s notion of communal or Gemeinschafts living, a theme
that recurs in his work until his death. Rading also makes direct connections between inside and outside through doors to the garden and more window surface, at least in comparison with the norms of the day. “Today’s houses relinquish any connection with the outside world . . . the house shown here, whose small windows make it appear to close itself totally, has on the interior a connection to light and sun that is unknown in our usual houses . . . if human life is to have meaning, the unity of all life must occur, but not through the closing but through passion,” he explained. “Only he who is not reluctant can master life and to master life is life’s epitome!”54 The house’s combination of historic and new form was partly pragmatic, making it easier to obtain building permission at the conservative Breslau city planning commission. But it also may indicate a purposefully relative relationship to form, since Rading returned repeatedly to traditional spatial arrangements for private rooms. The open planning of the public zone—living room, dining room, and kitchen—reflects democratic and modern approaches to Weimar living. Modern appliances and efficient hygienic planning dominate kitchen and bathroom design, showing the value of technology. The bedrooms are still private, the preserve of family and tradition.55

For Rading, the most crucial aspect of architecture was the intangible and spiritual, yet he saw these as inextricably linked to the rational and functional. His ideas paralleled Lauterbach’s notions of “what” and “how,” but in Rading’s schema, the opposing pairs act together to produce a third entity called “art.” In 1919, Rading wrote a manifesto of sorts, “Fanal” (Signal), in which he outlines his beliefs about art and architecture, including the qualities that constitute

Fig. 37. Rading House Stifterstrasse floor plans (Akademie der Künste, / Architecture Museum Wroclaw).
Between Idealism and Realism

The language is polemical, similar in tone to the Arbeitsrat für Kunst and Rat Geistiger Arbeit manifestoes that appeared at roughly the same time. The name of the piece is a metaphor for its message: that art’s key role is to project the spiritual quality of life. As a beacon that projects truth, true art is invaluable because it addresses and expands the spirit, but more importantly because it embodies the human spirit. Thus, a house design is successful only when the architect manages to imbue it with spirit. By spirit, Rading means three things: the human emotions, the essence of the function at hand, and the mood of the age. “A house is not an accumulation of stones, cement and steel alone. The material appears dead, the work, the house is to you a dead body,” he wrote. “But every stone . . . is imbued with power . . . When one understands the spiritual nature of construction, of columns, loads, and tension, that are not only physical but spiritual phenomena, then it will not be difficult to fashion from body and spirit a new third thing artwork.” For Rading, then, architecture is the embodiment of spirit in a building, accomplished through the rational mediation of an architect. It is important to note the opposition between the “live” spirit and “dead” material. Architecture only has value when the architect instills it with emotion; neither material nor technology alone can accomplish this goal. Rading thus directly opposes the German avant-garde belief in the power of technology and new materials to energize architecture.

Rading emphasizes the dual aspect of art and architecture and the notion of the “third entity” again and again. In a letter published in Die Form, he discusses art as the combination of the “visible and invisible,” manifest through tangible material and intangible ideas, its essential elements, which are as interdependent as the human body and soul. Rading is less clear about how the architect should unite the material and immaterial, alluding rather elliptically to “skill” as the necessary quality. By “skill” he seems to mean talent and intuition, since the spiritual nature of material has to be sensed, which requires an ineffable quality or talent one is born with. Although spirit is the essence of good design, rational thinking brings the spirit forth. In one essay, he asserts that “Art means order, rationalization of needs, and thereby the most rational use of the materials and most economical use of money.” Without reason, intuition cannot be exploited to its fullest potential and the architect cannot make successful buildings. Thus these two seemingly opposing qualities, intuition and reason, must both be mobilized in the interest of good design.

Rading also struggled with what he termed “idealism and realism.” He did not use the terms in their pure philosophical senses, but was careful to define them. In his opinion, the city architect was either “a realist for whom contemporary life and economy are givens from which he makes set forms, as functional...
as possible; or he is an idealist under the attraction of man as a unique personal-
ity for whom he seeks to discover forms for the new community life. The
realist sees the world as it is and uses rational methods of analysis to solve its
problems. The idealist, on the other hand, is a romantic, as the historian George
Mosse points out. For the idealist, the world consists of perfect yet unattainable
types toward which art should strive. Rading explicitly positioned his work be-
tween idealism and realism: he attempted to functionally realize new forms that
would enable his clients to realize their romantic, intuitive, spiritual needs and
desires. By pragmatically using traditional architectural elements and spatial
configurations, he could introduce clients to new design, mixing familiar with
unfamiliar, old and new, so that they could embrace new design.

The House of Dr. Rabe (1930) in Zwenkau typifies Rading’s approach. Three stories high, the house is white stucco and has a flat roof with a barely
articulated thin metal drip edge. At first glance, it appears to be an unremark-
able example of Neues Bauen design. But on closer examination, Rading’s
quirky personalization becomes apparent. Each facade has a unique aspect, and
none is symmetrical. The main entrance is offset to one side of the front facade,
marked by an asymmetrically placed awning. Inside, the visitor discovers a
rationally arranged square plan, with simple rectangular rooms organized
around a two-story central void. Rading decorated the void and the rooms sur-
rounding it as a multicolored three-dimensional art installation, with colored
shapes that wrap around corners while Oskar Schlemmer created metal sculp-
tural figures to hang from the surfaces.

Schlemmer’s work was designed to be an integral part of the architecture;
together, space and art distinguish the house. The house is sparsely furnished
with contemporary pieces; walls and floors are smooth, clean surfaces; and the
layout of the rooms is highly functional. Services like lights and heating ele-
ments are exposed and unadorned. In a nod to traditional planning, the piano
nobile is raised up off the ground, servant quarters and parking are on the
ground level, and bedrooms are on the third floor. It would be possible for the
bedrooms to overlook the double height living space, but Rading kept them
separate and private, as was his wont. Conjoining idealism and realism pro-
duces a compact, well-functioning house with wonderful, unique spaces that
reveal the dialectical power of Rading’s work.

Rading’s writings reveal a deep mistrust of technology that is tied to his
belief in the spiritual nature of art. Like Lauterbach, he disliked purely techno-
logical work. “Is it not so,” he asks, “that this ‘technology’ is only technology
and not something spiritual and therefore is not in a position to alter the spiri-
tual structure of mankind and with a ‘feeling of happiness’ give other form and
content?" For Rading, technology’s greatest failure is its inability to improve man’s spiritual wellbeing. Furthermore, technology by itself has no creative force, but requires man’s intervention. His wariness about technology did not keep Rading from using the latest materials and building systems, nor did it prevent him from developing types for mass construction projects, like the floor plans he designed for the Breslau Oranienstrasse row housing (1922), which repeat one basic plan type with slight variations, and the apartment house for the Breslau WuWA, for which he developed eight basic layouts. While capitalizing on the economy inherent in repetitive types, Rading took care to avoid straight-out repetition, varying facades, for instance, so they would not be deadly boring. Avoiding repetition was not just an aesthetic choice; it was part of a design method that responded to spatial experience rather than spatial function, sublimating the technological to the human order. By using perceptions of interior spaces to govern things like window size and placement, Rading was able to exploit technology without celebrating it.

Rading’s criticism of Typisierung (standardization) follows a logic similar
Fig. 39. Oskar Schlemmer wall piece for the Dr. Rabe House in Zwenkau (Bauhaus Archiv).
to his position on technology. “Typisierung does not develop automatically,” he writes. Rather, it develops when there is a clear need and an application for that need. Furthermore, it is only an effective building strategy when part of a comprehensive design plan that takes into account the “living needs of the residents,” by which Rading means the individual day-to-day habits of particular occupants. Designing in the abstract for some unknown future occupant thus becomes very difficult, since people have different “living needs.” Rading believed that the strength of Typisierung lay in its technical potential, but that potential could only be realized in the context of the spiritual dimension of design. For Rading, technology, standardized type-form, and economics were always secondary to design’s more abstract considerations: “Investigating the housing problem of the times independently from economy and numbers and to make the results fit practical and economic conditions will be the most important theoretical task of the coming years.” Rading views the architect’s ability to think about design—that is, his deployment of both reason and intuition—as his greatest strength, through which he can reduce building costs, create a better functioning building, and, above all, bring the ineffable to architecture.

It is certainly possible to standardize parts in architectural design without creating dull architecture. When Rading designed the third—and last—renovation of the Mohrenapotheke in Breslau he made minimal alterations to the interior but used an elegant standardized facade system to update the building’s street face. Horizontal fingers of white opaque glass panes overlap the rightmost bay of the building, giving the illusion that the facade is in motion. Black opaque glass accents interspersed between the windows make the facade look clean and sleek. The top floor has a balcony bordered by a tubular steel handrail. Given Rading’s openness to historic architecture, his choice to update the facade and give the Mohrenapotheke the first truly modern facade in Breslau’s medieval town center may seem odd. But in fact Rading’s renovation is extremely sensitive to its context, marrying the new outward expression with the historical fabric around it. Its horizontal thrusts align with the historic buildings on either side, while its roof respects the heights of adjacent structures. Although their horizontality is exaggerated, the Mohrenapotheke windows are actually about the same height and width as windows of neighboring buildings and the rhythms of the building’s facade echo its neighbors. Although some saw the use of glass as jarring and out of context next to ornate seventeenth- and eighteenth-century buildings, Rading was able to design a modern facade that was responsive to its historic context, epitomizing his belief in the historical continuum and the viability of marrying the old and the new.
Scharoun

Of all the Breslau architects, Hans Scharoun was the most unusual. He was a signatory to the avant-garde groups Arbeitsrat für Kunst and Novembergruppe, joined the Ring, and was considered radical and important enough to be included in the Weissenhofsiedlung. Yet according to his biographers, Scharoun’s work never fully conformed to any classification, traditional or modern. Syring and Kirschenmann call him “the outsider of Modernism,” while Colin St. John Wilson includes him in his book *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture*. With modifiers like “outsider” and “other,” historians try to locate Scharoun’s work within an alternative stream of modernism, as if there was such a thing as mainstream modernism. Yet modernism, like Weimar culture, was always multivalent. Although Scharoun may not belong in Neues Bauen, that does not necessarily mean he was an outlier. Rather, his work represents one of many approaches to modernism.

Scharoun moved to Breslau when he secured an appointment as a professor at the Academy, with Rading’s help. Scharoun was a unique architect from the start, basing his work on his personal ideas about architecture, rather than the tenets of any particular movement. At seventeen, he declared that “The independent architect must not be governed by sensations, but by reflection,” by which he meant several things: the architect should not be ruled by what he sees, whether historic precedent or current fashion, nor by the material, spatial, and light impressions he experiences, but by what he discovers through personal contemplation. Of course the architect should take into account what he sees and experiences as he develops his designs, but contemplation should control the decision-making process. Scharoun pondered most aspects of his art: human being, space, form, structure, program, house, city, landscape, and the future potential of architecture. The numerous conceptual drawings and paintings he executed over the years attest to his active imagination and the originality of his vision. Like Rading and Lauterbach, he saw form as something essential, “not a symbol, but a productive agent of the substance of all considered forces.” “The independent architect” was also crucial to his vision, in both of its meanings: the architect’s status vis-à-vis the state building apparatus, in a country where many architects were state employees, and the individual architect’s relationship to other architects and aesthetic movements. Above all, Scharoun believed deeply in the unfettered creative mind of the individual, a belief that, in the history of architecture, is definitively “modern.”

While Scharoun embraced certain core tenets of 1920s modernism, he ignored others. Thus, like Rading, he believed in a rational approach to design,
as well as the importance of function for spatial planning, but he refused to be
governed by these values, placing the human experience of space and form at
the center of his design work. Profoundly influenced by his friend Hugo
Häring, who also deeply affected Lauterbach, but unlike Rading, Scharoun
thought that intuition took precedence over reason, a point to which he re-
turned repeatedly over the years. He observes that “The creator makes form
intuitively, responding not to his individual temperament, but to the times he
serves.” For Scharoun intuition is not just an individual trait but a sense that
is strongly connected to the contemporary cultural context in which the artist
finds him or herself. Describing the interwar avant-garde group *Gläserne Kette*
(Crystal Chain) many years later, he wrote:

> Thereby was determined, the diversity of individual powers of imagina-
tion whether it occurred as the realization of sensual-dynamic aspect or
the glass clear spirit . . . From this began the new theme of “organic build-
ing” which Hugo Häring later developed in his theoretical work. Instead
of “placing form,” “finding form.” Instead of architectonic elements as
preconditions, structural order, as an essential depiction of the event with
regard to function and spirit. 

Successful form finding meant arriving at the essential in architecture, which
was “not a symbol, but the active origin of all solemn effects.” This picture
presents the creative mind as an open agent engaged in an act of discovery—
“finding form”—rather than rational choice—“placing form.” Scharoun em-
braced order as necessary to good design but viewed it not as mere geometry,
but as a natural system whose parts were integral to the whole—that is, “or-
ganically related to one another.” Orthogonal geometry was effective only
when it best served a project’s formal and spatial order or functional purpose,
not as an end in and of itself. Using modern idioms was, by extension, not an
end, but a means to a design end.

Scharoun’s unorthodox approach to geometry, evident throughout his ca-
reer, appeared even in his earliest sketches for unbuilt projects, which depicted
formally animated, geometric experiments, like his Honorable Mention sub-
mission for the 1922 competition to design a skyscraper on *Friedrichstrasse*
in Berlin. The perspective sketch for the skyscraper shows a complex building
volume that steps back from the street and up to a tower at the back corner of
the site. The triangular main entry contrasts with the curve of the sidewalk in
front. The building facades undulate in strange ways: one side curls around the
corner, while another waves in and out. The geometry in the plan is even more
complex. Though at first glance it appears to be symmetrically ordered and centrally focused, the plan is in fact asymmetrical, with rooms made up of an odd assortment of irregular forms. Scharoun clearly determined the plan logic from something other than rational or geometric ordering, and reviewing the competition entries for *Bauwelt*, Max Berg extolled his “fantasy” and “artistically formal” invention.\(^74\)

Along with geometric freedom, Scharoun felt that architecture should express the *Lebensgefühl* (attitude toward life) of an era, but he did not believe there was a single or correct aesthetic solution to this expression, nor did he believe in ignoring the lessons of history. In his lectures, he repeatedly referred to historical architecture as a model for what can be done, though not something to imitate, a position that echoed Polzeig and Rading. He also seems to have shared Poelzig and Rading’s belief in the mystical connection between the *Volk* and true architecture. In 1920, he wrote, “A thousand possibilities flow through our fantasy . . . our fierce will must feverishly look forward to the night of agreement with the primal impulse of the people [Volk]. Only then will building fundamentals have the sensuality of mankind and the purity of the crown of the hereafter. Then we will be true again.”\(^75\) This mystical and romantic tone permeates his writings of the 1920s, at odds with his otherwise rational explications of the new building art. Scharoun wrestled with the notions of *Lebensgefühl* and the related concept of *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times). In one revealing passage, he explained how style emerges from tensions between the will of the times, function, and material.\(^76\) But he remained vague when it came to a precise explication of the will of the times. He believed in the new society but tried to humanize the community (*Gemeinschaft*) by creating buildings with individual identity and shared spaces.\(^77\) Like Rading, he utilized new materials and construction methods yet rejected the technological and the machine as determinants of architectural form.\(^78\) In 1921, he said, “The gears of the spirit must be brought to intensive work, so that booming technology in its victory lap, but also in its terrible mechanization and the loss of intellectual power [it creates] does not crush the spiritual structure of contemporary Europe.”\(^79\) Scharoun feared that technology and the machine would stifle positive human instincts, especially in the arts.

Scharoun was equally cautious about the development of *Typisierung*, warning that it could only emerge in response to the specific needs of architects, clients, and technicians, not in the context of artificially created needs.\(^80\) For the 1932 competition The Growing House, Scharoun embraced prefabrication and standardization as essential principles for developing inexpensive kits-of-parts that could easily be added to over time.\(^81\) In this case, *Typisierung* made sense
because it responded to client needs, promising cost controls and flexibility. The Transportable House, constructed for the 1927 Deutsche Garten- u. Gewerbeausstellung in Liegnitz, was one of Scharoun’s rare forays into prefabricated design. Though the house design was based on a repetitive unit type comprised of repeating standard panels, Scharoun could not accept the monotony implicit in Typisierung. Within this highly rationalized system, he varied window sizes and forms, changed rhythms, and offset the entrance to counter the symmetry of the form. Inside, he managed to undermine the regularity of the construction system with rooms of varying sizes whose disposition obscured the modular nature of the structure. The idea was that the owners would participate in the configuration of the house, using the repetitive units to create the house of their desires, adapted to their way of living. Scharoun thus approached Typisierung in a manner similar to that of Rading by taking advantage of the benefits of modern construction while avoiding its pitfalls, particularly the monotony that can result from repetitive systems. The foray into Typisierung was an anomaly in his practice, however, to which Scharoun never returned.

Scharoun’s design work always combined intuitive and rational impulses, even as it varied over the years. His solutions differed from Rading’s in their formal and expressive freedom. His 1918–20 sketches for the Gläserne Kette were decidedly expressionist in their transparent crystalline forms, vibrant colors, and utopian aspirations. However, the theater fantasies of 1922 are dynamic and sculptural, rather than strictly expressionist. Gone are the prismatic forms and transparent glass volumes. Instead, the forms swirl and surge upwards and even the sky spins or radiates, in a visual realization of Scharoun’s belief in movement and its relationship to form. Scharoun defended his designs by explaining how human motion through space generated the form. The palette is lighter than the earlier aquarelles, reinforcing the sense of motion as the buildings seem to float lightly on the page. Proposals for housing in Insterburg and Prenzlau (1919), on the other hand, have all the hallmarks of traditional German Siedlung design, including pitched roofs and punched windows and gables, although the beginnings of a more abstract approach appear in the simplified massing, smooth surfaces, and experiments with roof profile and facade composition. In 1921, Scharoun participated in a competition for a Museum of Hygiene in Dresden, tellingly naming his entry Kultur und Zivilisation. The plan is an odd mix of orthogonal, rational spaces and prismatic ones, while the elevation similarly depicts a dry functionalist facade that seems to have been taken over by a series of parasitic prismatic forms. Like Insterburg and Prenzlau and the Museum of Hygiene, the 1922 competition entry for the Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper (see above) bears the hallmarks of Scharoun’s
later work in its mix of idioms combining soaring crystalline forms with curvilinear elements at the street. Some volumes are almost all glass and others have punched windows typical of contemporary skyscrapers, making the design resemble a collage of ideas or an amalgamation of different design impulses.

Even at the Weissenhofsiedlung (1927), Scharoun did not quite toe the line. Although his single-family home displays many of the hallmarks of the new style—he could not bring himself to restrict the house to a simple cubic form, instead curving two corners to help direct movement around the house and garden.

The interior staircase sits inside one of the curved corners, while a large curved horizontal window with a panoramic view of the neighborhood cuts the other. A piece of the roof dips down toward the entry. Scharoun does not seem to have minded being a bit of a renegade or being called a “Kurvenromantiker.” Adolf Behne summarized Scharoun’s position: “Orthogonal rooms, that are straight lines, are not functional, merely mechanical entities.” The house is well thought out but eschews the constrictions of the “modern” box form used at other Weissenhofsiedlung projects, instead displaying Scharoun’s iconoclasm.
Scharoun used the word “balance” to describe his 1927 competition entry for an addition to the Reichstag, for which he proposed a radically different contemporary extension to the neoclassical structure. Balance referred to the aesthetic equilibrium between these two very different approaches to building form, but Scharoun also frequently used the terms “ausbalancieren” (balance out) and “Ausgleich” (balance or equalize) to indicate his larger architectural strategy. In the body of his work, Scharoun found the balance between different aesthetic and philosophical extremes. Balance also described how his designs seamlessly integrated differing forces. Scharoun could work with the functional planning and new technology of the Neues Bauen while responding to his intuitive drives; he could simultaneously use white stucco, steel, glass, and curvilinear form; he could respond to the new social program and relate it to larger notions of German society; he could take an alien white building and successfully integrate it into the natural landscape. In sum, Scharoun was able to balance tradition and modernity in an original and elegant fashion.

Clement Greenberg claimed that we more or less know what “modern” means in the case of architecture, but the definition is far more problematic in the case of art. In his view, “modern” architecture entailed “functional, geometric rigor and the eschewing of decoration or ornament.” He pointed out that the early return of the figurative and representative to “modern” art made it difficult to make distinctions in pictorial art, whereas the elements of architectural classicism did not return until 1980s postmodernism. Turning Greenberg’s assertion on its head, the clarity of “modern” elements in architecture should make it relatively easy to distinguish modern from traditional work. But although there is some truth to this assertion, in architecture, as in art, the divisions are not as clear or absolute as they may seem, as the 1920s work of Breslau architects demonstrates. The difficulty in pinning down the modern should be seen not as problematic, however, but as a sign of the richness of architectural invention during the Weimar period.