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The Bauhaus: Crafts or Industry?

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duced. They include lesser-known buildings such as Shimmei Shrine (Nagano Prefecture), Nachi Shrine (Wakayama Prefecture), Yokokan Villa (Fukui-shi), and a number of informative scenes from picture scrolls. The only illustration not up to standard is No 33, a section of Toshodai-Ji Kondo which shows the results of poor restoration done early this century, with some western trusses in the roof; another restored section should have been used.

Finally, I know very well that Bill Alex has a wonderful collection of color pictures of Japanese gardens and architecture. It is a pity that none of these could be reproduced in this book. One may hope that he will show us some of them some day in a second work on Japanese architecture.

BUNJI KOBAYASHI
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Other Books Received

Inclusion here does not preclude review in a future issue.

STRUCTURE IN ARCHITECTURE. Mario Salvadori and Robert Heller. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963. \$9.75.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF FANTASY. Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich; translated, edited and expanded by Christiane Crasemann Collins and George R. Collins. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962. \$16.00.

PIER LUIGI NERVI: BUILDINGS, PROJECTS, STRUCTURES, 1953-1963. Pier Luigi Nervi; translated by Giuseppe Nicoletti. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.

Letters to the Editor

The Bauhaus: Crafts or Industry?

Sir:

In his answer to my statement on the Bauhaus in your last issue, Mr Dearstyne has come to a wrong conclusion. Since he alleges that I am trying to "rewrite history," I feel obliged, for history's sake, to offer evidence from my own original files for the correctness of my statement. Mr Dearstyne, not knowing sufficiently the background to the initial Bauhaus program, errs when he states that the original Bauhaus was set to educate craftsmen only, and that I was only later "persuaded by Doesburg of the error of the Bauhaus way." The craft training in the Bauhaus was indeed, right from the beginning, not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Everyone who cares to look at my own production in architecture (prefabrication and industrial buildings and products) and into my writings *before* I started the Bauhaus and before I met van Doesburg cannot be in doubt that my thinking was all along aiming at industry, and not at craft work as an end in itself. Here is the chronological evidence from my early articles:

1) November 1911. From an article on industrial buildings printed by Poeschel und Trepte in Leipzig: "One has to put up with the fact that the craftsman's profession is dying out today, so to speak. Whereas the individual craftsman of old combined in one person all three fields of the technician, the businessman, and the artist, the modern so-called craftsman is now only a salesman or a tradesman, slipping more and more into the realm of industry. All along the aim is to mechanize the work to eliminate the accidental. This tendency, no doubt, has smothered any artistic urge of the modern worker,

and probably the decline of the crafts is closely related to the bankruptcy of the arts during the past decades. . . . Since the machine is lifeless and since the independence of the modern worker had to be limited to a minimum, the necessity has arisen to guarantee the artistic quality of the machine product *right at the start* and to ask the artist to conceive the fitting form for the product to be multiplied. Only such a teamwork between the technician, the artist and the businessman might perhaps replace permanently all the factors of the individual work of old."

2) 1913. From an article in the Yearbook of the Deutscher Werkbund titled "The Development of Modern Industrial Architecture": "Industries face today the task seriously to consider artistic problems. The manufacturer must be intent on removing more and more the connotation 'ersatz' from his products and to give them back the noble qualities of the former craft product on top of the advantages of the machine process. Only then the initial main idea of industry, namely, the replacement of handwork by mechanical means, will find its perfect realization. . . . Exactness of form free of everything accidental, clear contrasts, clear order of the component parts, rhythmic repetition of equal parts, and harmony of form and color, will become the esthetic tools of the modern designer according to the energy and economy of our public life."

3) January 1916. From "Proposal for Founding an Institute to Advise Industry, Commerce and Crafts" written in active service during the War and sent to the State Ministry in Weimar who had asked me, after an interview with the Archduke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, to write down my ideas in answer

to their own tentative suggestions for the future of van de Velde's School of Arts and Crafts. Published in "Das Bauhaus" by Hans Wingler, pages 29-30: "While in former periods the total amount of human production was made only by hand, today an infinitesimally small part of the world's production is still made without the help of machines; for the natural effort to increase the output of work by introducing mechanical means is growing steadily. The artist, whose task it is to conceive form and to develop it consistently, can prevent the imminent danger of letting form decline into insignificance only by coming to terms with the mightiest means generating form, with the machines of any kind . . . by making them subservient to himself instead of avoiding them in misapprehension of the natural trend of the development. When this trend is understood, however, it will by necessity lead to a close collaboration of the businessman and the technician on the one side, and the artist on the other."

4) October 1919. From "Baugeist oder Krämer-tum?" a lecture published in "Schuhwelt" No 37-38 Pirmasens, and in "Messe und Qualität," January 10, 1920. In promoting state-supported workshops as training ground for crafts and industries, I state, "It has been doubted whether the installation of state workshops would not cause competition detrimental to private enterprises. However, danger of competition can never arise, for the aim of such workshops points to the opposite direction. Their intent is to help all crafts and industries, not to hinder them. They are meant to establish a suitable professional training ground for the rising generation of craftsmen and industrial workers. . . . They want first of all to create models, the particular quality in workmanship and form of which should bring commissions into the country for the benefit of all crafts and industries which have been stimulated by the activities of these workshops."

5) Spring 1919. In the first Bauhaus Proclamation from which Mr Dearstyne quotes that "a *foundation* in handwork is indispensable for every artist," which I believe to be true even today, there is also the following sentence, not quoted by Mr. Dearstyne: "constant interrelation with leaders of the crafts and with the industries of the country."

6) Spring 1919. Right after the opening of the Bauhaus, I addressed the representatives of the local crafts and industries in Weimar. I quote from the original manuscript: "We can reach our aim only when arts, crafts and industries interpenetrate each other. Today they are widely separated from each other, so to speak, by walls. The crafts and also the industries need a fresh influx of artistic creativity

in order to enliven the forms which have gone stale and to reshape them. But the artist still lacks the craft training which alone will safely enable him to shape materials into masterly form."

From these quotations it is evident that I believed that the student must learn how to use craft tools before he can understand refined modern machine tools. This was the reason for making a craft training basic for the Bauhaus curriculum. It would have been wrong to have students, right from the start, design for industrial production, for they had to find their own way first by themselves through playful studies in the preliminary Bauhaus workshop, and through the more serious apprenticeship in our professional workshops before I could expect them to do competent design work for industry. A gradual development of the curriculum in progressive stages, in which both faculty and students should have a hand, was my intention from 1919 on. Consciously, I abstained from imposing my own conclusions on the students, whom I wanted to find their answers from their own research and observation. I certainly was, myself, in the beginning of the Bauhaus not as articulate in my answers to all our problems as in later years after a step-by-step clarification via innumerable discussions and arguments within the faculty and the studentship took place. My basic trend of thinking, however, as to the role of the crafts as a means to an end only, and to the role of industry as the future basis of production has never changed since the beginning of my professional activities (see quotation No 1). The emphasis on crafts during the first three Bauhaus years was, therefore, not an error, as Mr Dearstyne regards it, but it was the first logical and necessary step. The students knew very well from innumerable discussions with me—which unfortunately were not written down—that learning a craft was for training's sake, but not an end in itself.

Theo van Doesburg wanted to teach in the Bauhaus in 1922. I refused, however, to appoint him since I considered him to be too aggressive and too rigidly theoretical: he would have wrought havoc in the Bauhaus through his fanatic attitude which ran counter to my own broader approach. I was determined to avoid narrow one-sidedness and oversimplification until a new totality and unity would grow organically and naturally out of the initial chaos of the Bauhaus melting pot. We all were interested in Doesburg's philosophy, but his influence was temporary and has been greatly exaggerated.

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