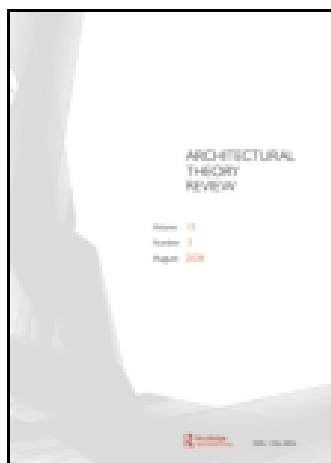




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ANDRÉ BIDEAU

O. M. UNGERS AND FRANKFURT: A Career Renewed and Architecture Repositioned

The career of Oswald Mathias Ungers as a practising architect, writer, and educator spanned more than five decades, reaching from post-war reconstruction well beyond German reunification. During the 1960s, Ungers was drawn to the technocratic planning culture to which mass residential commissions were central. His response to the criticism that was subsequently directed at him for his involvement in this mode of building production was to reposition his practice, investing vast energies in the theorisation of architecture as an autonomous discipline. After a decade-long absence from building, Frankfurt proved to be the crucial setting for the transfer of his architecture into the symbolic economy of the postmodern city. It was here that changes in urban governance facilitated both a reframing of the objectives of practice and an evolution in the public of architecture. This essay is centred on the German Architecture Museum (1979–1984), a building that, with its didactic ambitions, materialises a set of core conceptual issues for Ungers.

Introduction

Facing new configurations of power, consumption, and governance in postmodern cities from the 1970s onward, architects were challenged to redefine the object of their profession. Few practitioners grappled with the shifting boundaries of the discipline within a changing institutional and socio-economic landscape like Oswald Mathias Ungers (1926–2007). His case is one of a long career interrupted by a professional crisis, one that was not uncommon in the sphere of contemporary German architecture practice. As such, it affords insights into the shifting framework in which architects operated.

In his mid-40s, after a successful career as a designer (mainly of housing) and five years of teaching experience at Technische Universität (TU) Berlin, Ungers experienced unrestrained attacks on his work and his role. In 1968, the German *Großsiedlungen* became a perfect target along with the welfare state, technocracy, and the bureaucratic agencies and institutions tied to mass housing. In retrospect, this proved to be a watershed experience for Ungers, who saw himself as having been “manipulated by the institutions”.¹ One of the most spectacular instances was that of Märkisches Viertel in West Berlin, conceived for 50,000 inhabitants and designed by a roster of illustrious firms. Nearing completion in 1967, the development offered one of the foremost images for the brewing attack on the habitat the welfare state had produced. Just as housing had helped Ungers position himself in the 1950s, his involvement with Märkisches Viertel led to the demise of his firm and to his own conceptual uncertainty during a period of socio-political and economic challenge to the architectural profession. Yet, Ungers was not solely a victim of the transformations in his field. He would also go on

to contribute to these transformations by asserting a different style of professional identity in a cultural climate characterised by a reappraisal of history and urban fabric. In order to relaunch his practice, he had to make tactical choices. His decisions were situated actions that took considered account of the changes in the field of architecture production.

Successfully repositioning himself by the end of the following decade, Ungers and his career raise the issue of cause and effect. How consciously did he anticipate the new public role of architecture in the city? Or, how much does the conceptual and formal direction of his work represent a personal quest, a line that he would have pursued regardless of the socio-economic setting? The image of the personal quest was one perpetuated by Ungers himself and by numerous of his critics to this very day, from Fritz Neumeyer (“unconditional architecture”)² to Pier Vittorio Aureli (“counterform to the forces of urbanization”).³ Never acknowledged in such idealisations of resistance, Ungers’ claim for autonomy—for an “architecture as architecture”—was in fact a strategic asset in gaining entrance to the new cultural marketplace and to a client base as characteristic of the 1980s as large housing corporations were in the 1960s.

In order to grasp Ungers’ evolving professional identity and his success in repositioning himself in Germany, a discussion of his experiences in the United States from 1968 to 1976 is equally necessary. Following a phase of radical experimentation, apparent in student work from his first Cornell University studio years, Ungers gradually convinced himself that architecture is beholden to a set of “themes”. Through a growing output of theoretical texts, he demonstrated that these themes are universal and autonomous, articulated beyond

functional and technological parameters. He saw as crucial the explicit distance to the uncontrollable external factors of the construction economy. Although certain formal continuities can be identified, notably Ungers' investment in modular archetypes and their metamorphosis, a theoretical rigour now informed his design research.

Rather than recount the story of Ungers' departure from TU Berlin in 1967 and its aftermath, this essay is centred on his reinsertion into practice more than a decade later. It will demonstrate how, after the rupture with the ethics of mass housing, he repositioned architecture in a realm that was immune to the socio-economic parameters that had conditioned his earlier work. However, the discourse of autonomy that became pivotal for Ungers was itself beholden to an institutional setting—dependent on factors outside the precinct of design. In this setting, architecture began to participate in a new symbolic economy that would reshape cities, with a strategic role given to museums. Central to this essay is one such institution, its building designed by Ungers: the German Architecture Museum (DAM, or Deutsches Architektur Museum) in Frankfurt. Opened to the public in 1984, DAM is a testimony to a new relationship between ideas and built forms. Presenting a range of archetypal, abstract spatial configurations, DAM transcends the material, functional, and technological dimensions of architecture. Both its designer and the museum director saw the necessity of reinvigorating the discursive–intellectual dimension of architecture.

I will argue that both as a physical structure and through its activities, DAM was key to the transfer of architecture into the symbolic economy of the postmodern city and that the abstract scenography of its interior was

indicative of the mediatisation of architecture. It will therefore be necessary to examine the physical building and the context in which the museum was developed. Part of this investigation will be the identification of a “Frankfurt” postmodernism within the political and economic situation of the late 1970s and 1980s.

In the particular case of Ungers, a combined influence of cultural and locational politics on architecture production can be identified. Addressing a different audience than had been targeted by mass housing, DAM was crucial in allowing him to distance himself from his earlier career. Itself an artefact, the building can be seen as indicating a displacement of existing architecture culture in Germany. Before dealing with the actual design, however, I will situate DAM in the broader arc of Ungers' career and address the academic and institutional setting of his work in the late 1960s.

Negotiating Professional Contexts

After graduating from Technische Hochschule Karlsruhe in 1950, Ungers had established his practice in post-war Cologne, soon specialising in residential commissions (with Helmut Goldschmidt as partner until 1954). His appointment as professor of design at TU Berlin in 1963, coinciding with the work on Märkisches Viertel, was supported by Hans Scharoun, himself a living link to the heroic period of modernism.⁴ However, Ungers swiftly moved away from his organicist/brutalist idiom, which had garnered international attention around 1960. In tandem with the Märkisches Viertel project, his work took on an increasingly systemic and abstract direction, as was also evidenced in the research and publications of Ungers' chair. In the second half of the decade, these veered towards the exploration of an

infrastructuralist urbanism and an industrialised building technology, as demonstrated by the publication series released through TU Berlin between 1966 and 1969.⁵ The attempt of Ungers and his collaborators to recast architecture around organisational and managerial priorities was tantamount to the embrace of technocracy. This entailed a design logic antithetical to the more humanist and anthropological vein, which, along with exchanges with members of Team Ten, had previously informed Ungers' work.⁶

Inevitably, Ungers was positioned on the side of power in 1967 when the welfare state, capitalism, and the building sector in particular came under attack by the radical left. Serving as the institution's dean during the 1967 riots, he bore the brunt of student dissent in Berlin. He not only represented the authority vested in the university, but was also seen as complicit with an increasingly unaccountable and destructive building economy. The irony was that Ungers found himself berated for identifying with a purportedly "enlightened" system while also having to suffer the futility of a position working for its overbearing clients at Märkisches Viertel.⁷ Regardless of negative experiences, mass housing as a task still heightened the allure he felt for a scientific penetration of planning and construction processes. To him, both the established logic of construction and intervention in the urban environment were discredited. The isolated architectural object was obsolete, having lost "its importance as a self-contained unit" and was now "defined by its degree of integration with systems of organization, space, traffic, economy, technology and social life".⁸

In contrast to the obvious "shock" of events in 1967, what followed was a much more gradual shift away from housing, with Ungers in fact

continuing some of the Berlin research after his relocation to the United States in 1968, and his collaborators back in Berlin teaching equally radical studios at Technische Universität through 1969.⁹ During the following decade, his conceptual evolution was characterised by the exploration of an ever broader range of topics. This included a survey of nineteenth-century religious communes addressing physical, religious, and philosophical characteristics of their settlements,¹⁰ town planning for the Urban Development Corporation of New York State, and the development of low-budget, self-help homes for depressed rural areas. Yet, in the same decade, research on the "Urban Villa", an alternative residential typology engaging the existing fabric of West Berlin, appears, announcing a renewed interest in history.¹¹ All projects were connected to Cornell University, where Ungers served as chairman of the architecture school from 1969 to 1974. Although registered as a licensed architect in New York State, he would not move from pedagogy to practice, a series of architecture competitions held in a reformist New York before the fiscal crisis of 1975 failing to provide Ungers with any commissions. His ongoing participation in competitions in Germany was equally unsuccessful, leaving him with neither clients nor a firm for nearly a decade.

This difficult period shows Ungers immersed in the setting characteristic of architecture production in the United States that has been described by Dana Cuff.¹² On the one hand—and by contrast to Germany with its technical universities—architects typically receive training in an elite academic environment where the speculative and conceptual dimension of design is given priority over issues of technology and construction. Architecture programs such as the one at Cornell University are not tied to schools of engineering, but usually coexist

with departments of art, urban planning, or landscape architecture. This academic context, along with the fact that practice is of marginal importance for the majority of faculty, heightens the distance to the professional reality outside architecture school. The resulting containment of a self-reflexive academic culture is further increased by the rural isolation of schools such as Cornell. The entry into practice is all the more dependent on personal networks, financial resources, or access to private clients, public tender for commissions being virtually non-existent.

Cuff has explored the rites of passage and initiation that characterise a graduate's entry into professional life, drawing her research from a period only slightly removed from the one Ungers spent in the United States. His unsuccessful attempts at generating work can be seen as a failure to operate within a system that was distinctly different from the German model. Although riddled with doubts, Ungers may in fact have been unwilling to explore the "socially appropriate avenues of creativity"¹³ necessary to obtain work: essentially, American architecture culture and its professional rituals remained foreign to a practitioner who was at an advanced stage of his career

If there was a lasting impact of the American context, nevertheless, it was through its distance from the academic milieu and the architectural practice that Ungers had left behind in Germany.¹⁴ Combined with teaching and his attention to reorganising the curriculum at Cornell as department chair from 1969 on, the respite from building practice can be seen as having contributed decisively to his increasingly abstract notion of architecture. Now immersed in the academic environment described by Dana Cuff, Ungers was exposed to the East-Coast vein of formalist theory, the

foundations of which had been laid in the 1950s by Colin Rowe (1920–1999). This pivotal theoretician and historian, a student of Rudolf Wittkower, had invited Ungers to teach at Cornell in 1967, but, upon the latter's arrival in Ithaca, had been dismayed by his methodological obsessions and design interests. Only in the mid-1970s, when confronted with the oil shock and recession, did Ungers abandon the growth-based discourse of rationalisation, repetition, and infrastructure.

This would become the setting in which his texts and projects began to address issues such as identity, history, and urban morphology.¹⁵ Gravitating toward a discourse on images and metaphors, Ungers broke with the ethics of architecture as a service—the model that had been relevant for his practice in Germany. Increasingly invested in the iconic and the archetypal, he pursued phenomenological abstraction. A catalyst was the "City Metaphors" installation in 1976, when Ungers presented his narrative of archetypes at the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York City. Expressed in the dichotomy of "minimum solutions" and "maximum of interpretations", open form was generic and abstract, while also promising new forms of agency and authorship.¹⁶ This activation of metaphors and images would later serve Ungers as a conceptual foundation for engaging with the postmodern urban condition in Germany.

By the late 1970s, Ungers had begun to endow his own work with a retroactive theory that sought to rescue architecture from the "dead end" of functionalism.¹⁷ *Architecture as Theme*, a collection of theoretical essays and projects, was released while the construction of the German Architecture Museum was underway in Frankfurt.¹⁸ Both the publication and the building proved to be ideal showcases for the

autonomous discipline that Ungers identified with.

Founded in 1979, DAM represented the first institution of its kind: not a mere department within a museum, but an entire institution devoted to the presentation of architecture and to the collection of architectural drawings and models. Its founding director, Heinrich Klotz (1935–1999), was an art historian keenly interested in Ungers' work from the mid-1970s onward.¹⁹ Both men were convinced that architecture depended on a degree of artifice, fictionalisation, and narrativity. Especially in Germany, these qualities had been sacrificed for formulaic problem-solving in the wake of post-war reconstruction and a reckless real-estate sector. The pedagogy that Klotz established for DAM was to engage the public in a narrative that transcended the present utilitarian nature of building. Reintroducing the architect as a visionary creator also meant his insertion in the realm of high culture as *auteur*. Ungers would give equal importance to both, convinced of architecture's potential for "transforming pragmatic reality into the meta-physical world of ideas".²⁰ Both conceptually and as an institution, DAM represented a new rapport between architecture and culture.

Decontaminating the Discipline

DAM was built on the south bank of the River Main in a location where several new, expanded, or remodelled museums came to congregate in the 1980s. It was not housed in an entirely new building, but in a neoclassical residence dating from 1912. This structure was extensively remodelled and essentially gutted. For Ungers, the appropriation of the building meant a radical departure from its past as a high bourgeois "Doppelvilla" (a two-party home,

hence the unusual four-bay riverfront facade). Its axial symmetry inspired an act of rigorous organisation that would lead to a sequence of spaces from the street through to the backyard. Ungers enhanced his new sequence by extending the existing footprint fully to the property boundary, thus enlarging the building at ground level. This plinth encompassed a squat colonnade at the front and a courtyard at the rear, with additional micro-courtyards at the very back of the lot. Ample clerestory windows as well as the use of sandstone cladding made the ground-level access spaces (front) and galleries (rear) reminiscent of a series of streets and piazzas. An entirely different vertical theme was embedded in the historic building. Gutting its structure, a ring of offices and ancillary spaces was positioned directly behind the facades. This outer shell surrounded an atrium that housed a stack of galleries and, in the building's ground and basement levels, an auditorium. Its existence invisible from the street, the vertical core was secluded and also somewhat disconnected from the ground-floor circulation system (the stairs to the upper galleries being literally hidden in the ancillary shell).

The unusual organisational rationale allowed Ungers to develop his compositional idea in the heart of the building. Here, he chose to showcase one of his "themes"—formal operations that became crucial in the latter part of his career: the theme of the "House in the House". Spanning all five floors of the disembowelled townhouse, resting on four posts, a white structure holds a series of galleries that culminate in the abstraction of a pitched roof. Except for local access points, this feature is detached from the building's outer shell. Suspended in a void, the House in the House appears as a stereometric representation of architecture in a primordial state.



Figure 1. German Architecture Museum (1979–1984), main riverfront entrance on Schaumainkai, the gutted townhouse elevated on Ungers' colonnade-plinth. Photo: Tomas Riehle.

Upon entering the horizontal system grafted onto the existing building, the visitor is cast into a highly formalised spatial sequence that culminates in the stack of core galleries. The abstract, ethereal interior is infused with Ungers' architectural thinking, suggesting that design is the intellectual product of rigorous formal operations. It also opens a broader narrative. As a white prop, the House in the House is indicative of Ungers' desire to reposition architecture within a historic lineage. The visitor is in fact confronted with a watered-down representation of the *Primitive Hut*, as depicted in the eighteenth-century "Essai sur l'Architecture" by Marc-Antoine Laugier. The famous frontispiece etching by Charles Eisen in the 1755 edition shows an allegorical figure representing architecture reclining in nature, indicating that she has forgone all the formal conventions of scholarly *venustas*. Distilled into a minimalist module resting on corner posts, the House in the House is itself an attempt to reaffirm architecture's truths. Where

Laugier sought to replace fashion with simplicity and essence, Ungers rejects the economic, institutional, and social pressures that had embroiled his practice at Märkisches Viertel. In self-reflexive anguish, his primitive hut becomes the abstraction of an eighteenth-century abstraction, stripped of all material and atmospheric presence, denoting simply architecture itself, or rather Ungers' authorial vision of its disciplinary boundaries: in his own words, a "filigree space", the experience of which would raise "awareness to the possibilities and perhaps also the limits of architecture".²¹

The shift of architecture to an autonomous realm takes on a pedagogical tone in Heinrich Klotz's own comments on his new museum building: "its presence takes shape in spaces of white light", "actual silhouettes, forms and meanings emerging as if from an abstract, metaphysical sphere".²² But the Primitive Hut also served to anchor the very didactic curatorial concept of DAM's permanent



Figure 2. The “House in the House” as an architectural prop and curatorial infrastructure. Photo: Tomas Riehle.

exhibit, *Von der Urhütte zum Wolkenkratzer* (“From the Primitive Hut to the Skyscraper”). Housed in a ring of second-floor vitrines around Ungers’ structure, 24 models present an evolution of architecture from prehistoric times to the skyscraper.

Serving as a transmitter between a world of concepts and building practice, the Frankfurt museum was instrumental in the incipient mediatization of architecture production in Germany, also being experienced in the Anglo-Saxon and Italian contexts.²³ International exposure impacted the perception of Ungers’ work at home, as indicated by the remark of Martina Düttmann at a Berlin symposium in 1976: “Oswald Mathias Ungers is a voyager [...] he brings the architecture of other countries to Berlin in his suitcase; this is why his own designs are always exotic, always formalist, always exciting”.²⁴ As he resumed a place in the German scene, Ungers, as well as his patron, Heinrich Klotz, were involved in the relocation of the architecture discussion to a more

conceptual realm. Teaching in the United States after 1968, both men had experienced a climate of production distinctly different from that in the Federal Republic. A result of Klotz’s American exposure was the 1973 publication of the oddly transitional “Conversations with Architects”, featuring figures such as Philip Johnson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Bertrand Goldberg, Morris Lapidus, Louis Kahn, Charles Moore, Robert Venturi, and Denise Scott Brown.²⁵ In 1976, Klotz undertook a similar project in Germany where one of his “conversations” involved Ungers. They concurred that West Germany was trapped in a dated positivism and oblivious to the critical positions by then prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon scene.²⁶

Tellingly, in his 1984 inaugural exhibition, Klotz introduced a largely foreign polemic to the architectural backwater of Germany: *Revisions of the Modern: Postmodern Architecture 1960–80*. Crucial to the show was the display of the collection of drawings and models assembled since the museum’s founding in

1977. In collecting these artefacts as a focus for the new museum, Klotz had set the agenda of presenting the design process as a speculative and artistic endeavour. Such an acquisition policy, a tradition in the architecture department at the Museum of New York since 1932, now met with the academicising trend toward “paper” architecture: designs such as the work of Peter Eisenman or John Heyduk, which often only resulted in residential buildings when elite clients could be engaged.²⁷

To the public and professional establishment in Germany, the visual commodification of an international and architecture culture was as controversial as the abstract formal organis-

ation of Ungers' building with its representation of purified architectural ideas. The position of DAM in the emerging landscape of postmodernism is indeed unthinkable without taking the experiences Klotz and Ungers gained in the United States into account. As mentioned above, academic structures, forms of practice, and the tradition of cultural patronage in the USA supported a different form of architecture production from that in Western Europe. Within the inherently elite environment of an avant garde working for private and institutional clients, a heightened degree of reflexivity took hold. Although endowed with social awareness and aspirations to criticality, the progressive architectural scene was immersed in a setting



Figure 3. Models, suggestive of the fictional and narrative potentials of architecture, were a focal point in the acquisition policy of DAM founding director Heinrich Klotz. Photo: Fritz Philipp.

defined by connoisseurship and distinction. It is this reflexivity—best demonstrated through figures such as Robert Venturi,²⁸ Robert Stern, and Peter Eisenman²⁹—that initiated an early interrogation of the codes of representation of modern architecture. In his *Revisions of the Modern* exhibition, Klotz repositioned architectural modernity in a more universal history of ideas, thus rescuing it from the depleted lineage of functionalism. The periodisation was underscored by the implicit reference to Laugier's Primitive Hut, a trope of rationalism, or by the early work of OMA, also presented in the exhibition. Founded by Ungers' former student and collaborator Rem Koolhaas, OMA presented the only "tolerable Modernist language", which Klotz saw in the firm's Boompjes housing for Rotterdam, a project from 1980 that was "enhanced and enlivened by the narrative exploration of form".³⁰

Refabricating Frankfurt

There is a paradox in that Ungers—whose teaching, built work, and research was largely defined by a relationship to Berlin—relaunched his career in Frankfurt, Germany's financial centre.³¹ The critical site of his re-emergence as a practising architect was not the bruised, scarred, and fundamentally invigorating urban terrain of the former capital, but West Germany's "secret capital".³² Culturally somewhat suburban, the city itself underwent a process of remaking that offered a heightened visibility to architecture: a scheme to concentrate cultural functions within walking distance from its thriving, but ugly, commercial and retail centre. Although a new tone in the discipline of architecture was set by the collaboration of Klotz and Ungers, Frankfurt's politicians were equally invested in the allure of high culture.

Ungers would benefit from this local spotlight not just after receiving the DAM commission in 1979, but also with the first major retrospective of his work that was hosted there by Klotz in 1985. Instrumental in establishing his corporate practice in Germany were the commissions for the Frankfurt fairgrounds. After delivering the master plan for the expansion together with the local firm of Albert Speer Jr. in 1980, Ungers executed a series of exhibition halls and the administration tower for Messe Frankfurt, adopting an abstract iconography. This monumental corporate work, taken together with DAM as a programmatic cultural institution, indicated his move into a more mediated, and eventually commercial, field of practice than had ever been the case with subsidised housing. This market was predicated upon the development that Frankfurt had undergone while Ungers was in the United States. In any account of Ungers' success, these changes must be acknowledged for they reveal that architecture production is subjected to both the political landscape and to socio-economic dynamics.

During the 1970s, accommodating an economy dominated by the service sector was recognised as a political challenge in Frankfurt. The city image had suffered from the series of terrorist attacks beginning in April 1968.³³ A success story of the economic miracle, Frankfurt had inherited its role as Germany's banking centre from Berlin, positioning itself as the interface between the national and the world economy. With the growing importance of the financial sector, Frankfurt gradually inserted itself into the emerging hierarchy of Global Cities. This new scale of reference entailed the refabrication of a post-war identity that had been defined under the welfare state. Moreover, it rendered obsolete an architecture culture that had drawn indirectly from the

famed architectural legacy of the Weimar Republic *Siedlungen*.³⁴ This local connection of modernisation to urban identity further lost its legitimacy as recent mass-housing production obscured the heroic achievements of the 1920s. Overpowering the garden city scale of the *Siedlungen*, technocratic urban planning had endowed Frankfurt with its own sprawling periphery in the 1960s.

In response to its physical ugliness and lack of cultural distinction, Frankfurt evolved into the signature “architectural” city of Germany. A highly mediated form of architectural interventionism became key for the insertion of the discipline into the realm of high culture. Although itself not visually iconic, DAM was at the epicentre of this insertion. Discussions of postmodernism commonly attribute a paradigmatic role to West Berlin and its Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA). Launched in 1979 to counter outmoded, large-scale urban renewal policies, IBA also served Ungers as a strategic platform; he briefly officiated as exhibition commissioner before erecting buildings on several of IBA’s scattered demonstration sites. But centred as it was on affordable housing, dependent on the same artificial economy that had sustained previous architectural undertakings, IBA proved more a reformatting than a displacement of architecture culture.³⁵

The very setting of Berlin—unique in political, demographic, and economic terms in its struggles related to preservation—distanced anything happening there from the everyday reality of West Germany. In this regard, the reformatting of central Frankfurt into a landscape given over to culture, services, and retail held a larger significance than IBA: through its agenda of *behutsame Stadterneuerung* (literally “cautious urban renewal”), the Berlin exhibit was limited to a conceptual “repackaging” of subsidised housing in the

morphology of the nineteenth-century perimeter block.

The *Architekturpolitik* adopted in Frankfurt can be seen as a harbinger of strategies soon to be adopted in other cities, as support for post-war Keynesian forms of urban governance waned. By the mid-1970s, the traditionally social democratic city administration had come under attack by the far left for its pro-development stance. The *Häuserkampf* squatter movement in the historic Westend neighbourhood had produced well-publicised conflicts early in the decade³⁶ and, after the 1968 incident, terrorist attacks related to the Red Army Faction had further tarnished Frankfurt’s reputation. Beyond the radical left, dissatisfaction with a planning culture centred on growth and technocratic principles arose with the onset of recession in 1973, eventually ushering in a coalition led by conservative mayor Walter Wallmann (1977–1986).

Wallmann embarked on a two-pronged strategy that combined locational politics with heavy investments in the infrastructure of high culture, thus establishing a distance from the urban and mass housing policies of his predecessors. While taking into account the new importance of historical preservation, the new administration sought to create an urban experience geared towards a contemporary public composed of employees, shoppers, and tourists: a society based on mobility, increasing affluence, and needs for distraction and distinction. Municipal politics after 1977 targeted groups other than the traditional social democratic voters who had benefited from subsidised housing and were historically to be found amongst Frankfurt’s working and lower middle classes. Accordingly, the potential to correct Frankfurt’s image was identified in the visibility that the historic core, and not the periphery

with its *Siedlungen*, offered. The key element of this rebranding campaign was the string of new or expanded museums along the River Main as well as in the former medieval core, implemented by Wallmann's commissioner of culture, Hilmar Hoffmann, and coordinated by the *Museumsentwicklungsplan* in 1979.

Architecture—A “Sanctioned Product”?

With its massive urban renewal schemes and generic office towers, Frankfurt exemplified the paltry reality of contemporary German architecture. Hence, it was no coincidence that an institution devoted to the showcasing of architecture as a cultural enterprise was one of the first results of the newly adopted cultural policy. DAM was geared towards the presentation of an architecture culture distinctly different from the insecurities prevailing in Germany after 1968. Hovering between representation and reality, the building itself played an active part in organising a new form of spectatorship. The deliberateness gave the joint scenography of Ungers and Klotz a somewhat pedagogical bias, such as in the display of the evolution from the primitive hut to the skyscraper.³⁷ In *Architecture as Theme*, Ungers identifies the white interior as a “continuous interchange of inside and outside”.³⁸ Indirectly, these morphological transformations reappropriate the modernist trope of universal space. Formerly targeting the entire city, the discourse of continuity now addresses design operations that are confined by a site. The building lot becomes the stage for spatial exercises that deliberately blur the categories of interior and exterior. An alternative reality of streets and squares turns the former neoclassical residence into a small town, revisiting an earlier trope of Leon Battista Alberti that Ungers had first applied in his designs for student housing in

Enschede (1964) and the Tiergarten Museum in Berlin (1965).

Similar to the inversion of scale, time is suspended by the appropriation of the historic edifice. The existing relationship to its immediate surroundings is severed by the red sandstone plinth that occupies the entire surface of the property. This framing gesture exaggerates the fact that it is only an empty shell that houses the new museum, at the same time heightening the now institutional identity of the host structure. Through stylisation, the 1912 townhouse is elevated to a shrine, presenting the new status of architecture in the precinct of high culture. This elevation is also apparent in the museum auditorium on the lowest level. Here again, the focal point is defined by the House in the House, its four columns forming a white baldachin over the white space. Framed by Ungers' theoretical construct, the speaker is endowed with a quasi-liturgical presence when addressing the audience. With this highly formalised geometry, the auditorium anchors the discipline in the midst of Pierre Bourdieu's “sanctioned products”. The sunken space becomes a sanctuary to which the DAM visitor gains access after the “ceremonies and rituals”:³⁹ the premise for participation in a discourse on an autonomous architecture.

As this contextualisation of one building has sought to demonstrate, the performance of architecture is altered by factors that range from the socio-economic to the personal. In a professional setting going through transition, the practitioner Ungers succeeded in repositioning himself. His traumatic experiences with the parameters of the welfare-state-driven architecture production of the 1960s, and the subsequent decade of research and teaching in the United States, helped redefine a practice



Figure 4. In the bowels of the museum: auditorium with furniture designed by Ungers. Photo: Tomas Riehle.

that would be supported by a discourse on the fundamentals of architecture. Forsaking a discredited functionalism, Ungers' conceptual shift from the generic to the specific reveals an increasing interest in the iconic quality of architectural markers in urban space. Similar to Alberti's house–town analogy, this aspect had informed earlier work by Ungers,⁴⁰ but now emerges in the visual–spatial regime of the post-Fordist city.

In 1980s Frankfurt—as became the case for other German cities too—the focus of planning shifted from the management of growth to identity and locational politics. Strategic importance was given to the refabrication of the core, empowering architects such as Ungers who were invested in a discourse on context and urbanity.⁴¹ In negotiating scales, postmodern urban governance offers a novel task for architecture: designing interventions that can mediate between local interests and the increasing competition between metropolitan regions. In this regard, it is impossible to

overstate the functions taken on by the museum. In contrast with the Fordist tradition of planning, the Wallmann era combined cultural and locational politics. Yet, although scaling back its involvement in subsidised housing, the public sector would not shift to the neoliberal mode of governance characteristic of contemporary Britain and the United States.

The new spatial–symbolic priorities in Frankfurt did not entail the deregulation of planning and an embrace of market forces. Rather, the distribution of new museums and the refabrication of the city centre indicated a shift in the public addressed by a welfare state that was beginning to adapt to forms of post-Fordist production and consumption. The shift in the audiences and territories now targeted required a different expert culture in design. For Ungers, the *Kulturpolitik* certainly opened up a path to building commissions that reinvigorated his stalled career: more museums and fairgrounds, corporate headquarters and courthouses. Pared down to the most recognisable, elemen-

tary, and ceremonial typologies, his increasingly corporate-institutional work claimed timelessness. Underpinned with the cultural capital of

a personal architecture theory, Ungers' mute phenomenology and self-referentiality became a highly visible commercial signature.

Notes

1. Interview with Heinrich Klotz, in Heinrich Klotz, *Architektur in der Bundesrepublik. Gespräche mit sechs Architekten*, Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1977, 303 (translation by author).
2. Neumeyer, in Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Oswald Mathias Ungers, Architektur 1951–1990*, Stuttgart: DVA, 1991, 7 (translation by author).
3. Pier Vittorio Aureli, "Toward the Archipelago", *Log*, 11, Winter (2008), 114.
4. O. M. Ungers, in conversation with Rem Koolhaas und Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Log*, 16, Spring/Summer (2009), 61.
5. *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* (*Publications on Architecture*) were published in parallel between 1968 and 1970 by Ungers' chairs at Technische Universität and Cornell University. Typical of this period are topics such as high-speed trains and building programs (*Schnellbahn und Gebäude*, Nr. 21/1968), housing systems in large-scale prefabrication (*Wohnungssysteme in Grosstafeln*, Nr. 22/1968), housing systems in space capsules (*Wohnungssysteme in Raumzellen*, Nr. 24/1969), and planning models for a hypothetical future city of five million (*Berlin 1995. Planungsmodelle für eine Fünfmillionenstadt im Übergang zu den siebziger Jahren*, Nr. 25/1969).
6. Ungers released the protocol of the group's meeting in Berlin in September 1965 as TU Berlin, Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI (ed.), *Team X Treffen, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* Nr.3, Berlin, 1966.
7. Forced to add height to his buildings by the client, Ungers had even considered terminating his collaboration.
8. TU Berlin, Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI (ed.), *Schnellbahn und Gebäude, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* Nr.21, Berlin, 1968, unpaginated.
9. Undoubtedly, the studio run by Michael Wegener, leading to the publication, *Berlin 1995* (*Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur* Nr. 25/1969), was the most extreme example in this series of research projects.
10. Liselotte und Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Kommunen in der Neuen Welt 1740–1972*, Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1972.
11. André Bideau, "Housing as Discursive Void: Oswald Mathias Ungers in the 1960s and 1970s", *Candide*, no. 7 (2013), 61–88.
12. Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.
13. Cuff, *Architecture*, 54.
14. He retained his home in Cologne and would still participate in competitions and conferences in Germany while at Cornell, bringing his students to Berlin in 1977 and 1978 for summer studios. On the role of *Cornell Summer Academies* as conceptual incubators, see André Bideau, "Elusive Ungers", *AA Files*, 64, (2012), 3.
15. Oswald Mathias Ungers, "City Metaphors", in Hans Hollein (ed.), *Man transForms*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1976; O. M. Ungers, "Planning Criteria", *Lotus*, 11, (1976), 13–41; O. M. Ungers, Werner Goehner, Arthur Ovaska, and Hans Kollhoff, *The Urban Block and Gotham City. Metaphors and Metamorphosis. Two Concurrent Projects*, Ithaca, NY/Köln: Studio Press for Architecture, 1978; O. M. Ungers, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Riemann, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska, "Cities within the City: Berlin as Green Archipelago, Proposals by the Summer Academy for Berlin", *Lotus*, 19, (1978), 82–97; O. M. Ungers, Hans Kollhoff, and Arthur Ovaska, *The Urban Garden. Student Projects for the Südliche Friedrichstadt Berlin*, Ithaca, NY/Köln: Studio Press for Architecture, 1979; O. M. Ungers, "Architecture of the Collective Memory. The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms", *Lotus*, 24, (1979).
16. Ungers, "City Metaphors", 105.

17. Oswald Matthias Ungers, *Die Thematisierung der Architektur / L'architecture comme thème*, Stuttgart: DVA, 1983, 10.
18. Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Architettura come tema / Architecture as Theme*, Milano: Electa, 1982; O. M. Ungers, *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*.
19. Jasper Cepl dates the first encounter between Ungers and Klotz in 1974 at the Berlin symposium, "Old and New". Jasper Cepl, *Oswald Mathias Ungers. Eine intellektuelle Biographie*, Köln: König, 2007, 324.
20. Ungers, *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*, 10.
21. Ungers, *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*, 63.
22. Heinrich Klotz and Waltraud Krase, *Neue Museumsbauten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985, 16 (translation by author).
23. In 1980, the first staging of a Venice Biennale dedicated solely to architecture was as symptomatic as Ungers' installation in the "Stradissima Novissima" exhibition section.
24. Martina Düttmann, in François Burkhardt (ed.), *5 Architekten zeichnen für Berlin. Ergebnis des IDZ-Symposiums Stadtstruktur, Stadtgestalt vom Herbst 1976*, Berlin: Archibook, 1979, 7 (translation by author).
25. John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz, *Conversations with Architects*, London: Lund Humphries, 1973.
26. Klotz identified distinct differences in the "Anglo-Saxon consciousness" with its "ambiguity", its interest in "confrontation with an existing reality". Klotz, *Architektur in der Bundesrepublik. Gespräche mit sechs Architekten*, 276 (translation by author).
27. Also typified by the architectural avant garde being discovered by the art market when New York gallerist Max Protetch opened a commercial gallery dedicated to contemporary architectural drawings in 1978.
28. This refers to the period prior to his partnership with Denise Scott Brown when, as a product of his residency at the American Academy in Rome, Venturi authored *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of New York, 1966).
29. Here, the influence of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in New York City during the 1970s cannot be overstated. Directed by Peter Eisenman and founded in 1968 with the participation of the Museum of Modern Art, the IAUS developed into a critical platform for research, debate, and publications (periodicals *Oppositions* and *October* were published through the IAUS), hosting numerous events tied to Eisenman's alma mater, Cornell, and publishing a catalogue of Ungers' work in 1981.
30. Heinrich Klotz, *Moderne und Postmoderne, Architektur der Gegenwart 1960–1980*, Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1987, 312 (translation by author).
31. For a synopsis of his numerous publications and studios, first at Technische Universität and then at Cornell, see Erika Mühlthaler (ed.), "Lernen von O. M. Ungers", *Arch+*, 181–182 (2006), 15–21; André Bideau, *Architektur und symbolisches Kapital. Bilderzählungen und Identitätsproduktion bei O. M. Ungers*, Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2011; Florian Hertweck and Sébastien Marot (eds), *The City in the City. Berlin a Green Archipelago*, Zürich: Lars Müller, 2013.
32. After provincial Bonn was selected as the new—temporary—capital of West Germany, Frankfurt was awarded other national institutions, such as the Federal Bank, also developing into the country's international air hub, partially due to the presence of the Allied Forces' headquarters.
33. On 2 April 1968, firebombs in two downtown department stores were set off by Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, their sentencing and imprisonment leading to the formation of the Red Army Faction.
34. Before 1933, Frankfurt had been a key site of urban reform policies under social democratic leadership, expressed in the *Siedlungen* (housing estates on the urban outskirts) and in the periodical, *Neues Frankfurt*, both under the direction of city planner and architect Ernst May (1886–1970).
35. Regarding IBA and the milieu of architecture production in Berlin, Christine Hanneman and Werner Sewing identify an "evolutionary niche". Christine Hannemann and Werner Sewing, "Gebaute Stadtkultur: Architektur als

- Identitätskonstrukt", in Volker Kirchberg and Albrecht Göschel (eds), *Kultur in der Stadt: Stadtsoziologische Analysen zur Kultur*, Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1998, 73.
36. The expansion of the service sector and large-scale redevelopment of nineteenth-century residential neighbourhoods provoked numerous occupations and demonstrations during 1970–1974.
 37. It has been argued that in Germany, after the ideological confusion and trauma surrounding Modernism, there remains a fundamental unwillingness to respond to the failed project of Modernity with irony; Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Hat die Postmoderne den historischen Ironieverlust der Moderne aufgeholt?", *Merkur*, 9–10 (1998), 796.
 38. Ungers, *Architecture as Theme*, 63 (translation by author).
 39. Pierre Bourdieu, *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970, 105 (translation by author).
 40. The German version of Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* was published in 1965, concurrent with studios of Ungers that addressed iconicity and urban design. Equally noteworthy is the photographic/cadastral survey of party walls in Berlin, conducted by Ungers' collaborators and published as TU Berlin, Lehrstuhl für Entwerfen VI (ed.), *Berliner Brandwände*, Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur Nr. 27, Berlin 1969.
 41. In 1979, Ungers served as jury member in the competition for a new cultural centre between the *Dom* and the city hall of Frankfurt, won by a team of his former students. For the rebuilding of the historic core of Frankfurt, see André Bideau, "Fallstudie Frankfurt: Altstadt Reloaded", *Arch +*, 204, (2011), 100–103.