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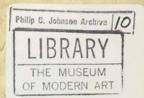
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'Architecture in the Third Reich', Hound and Horn, vol. VII no.1, 1933, pp. 137-39

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# HOUND & HORN





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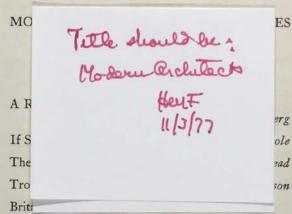
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### Architecture in the Third Reich

Philip Johnson

IT WOULD be false to speak of the architectural situation in national socialist Germany. The new state is faced with such tremendous problems of re-organization that a program of art and architecture has not been worked out. Only a few points are certain. First Die Neue Sachlichkeit is over. Houses that look like hospitals and factories are taboo. But also the row houses which have become almost the distinguishing feature of German cities are doomed. They all look too much alike, stifling individualism. Second, architecture will be monumental. That is, instead of bath-houses, Siedlungen, employment offices and the like, there will be official railroad stations, memorial museums, monuments. The present regime is more intent on leaving a visible mark of its greatness than in providing sanitary equipment for workers.

But what these new buildings will look like is as yet completely unknown. Germany as the birthplace of modern architecture can hardly go back to Revivalism since there exist no architects who could or would design in styles. Nor is it possible that they will adopt the Bauhaus style. It is not monumental enough and it has irretrievably the stamp of Communism and Marxism, Internationalism, all the "isms" not in vogue in Germany today. Somewhere between the extremes is the key; and within the Party are three distinct movements each of which may win out.

First and up till recently the strongest are the forces of reaction, with Paul Schulze-Naumburg at the head. He is the enemy of anything which has happened in the last thirty years. His book Art and Race, contains the most stupid attacks on modern art which he considers mere interest in the abnormal, a point of view which he defends by showing juxtaposed clinical photographs of physical abnormalities and modern paintings. In architecture, he approves of nothing since the War, and is himself the architect of many simplified but Baroque country houses including the Crown Prince's

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Hound & Horn

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palace in Potsdam. As a personal friend of the leaders of the party he is strongly entrenched.

Paul Erwin Troost, best known to Americans as the designer of the interiors on the S. S. Europa, is a friend of Hitler's and is also a strong conservative. (That some Americans might consider the Europa modern merely shows that "modern" with us has hardly caught up with reaction in Germany.) The strongest single factor in favor of this group in the new state is that Hitler himself is an amateur architect. Before he entered politics he earned his living as a draughtsman and renderer in Vienna and Munich. This fact, combined with the tradition in Prussia from Frederick the Great to Wilhelm II, that the ruler be his own architect, makes the outlook

depressing.

The second group and at present the strongest is that represented by the Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur, an inner party organization for the purification of German culture. Their architectural hero is the newly appointed director of the Prussian state art schools, Paul Schmitthenner. Though an outspoken enemy of Die Neue Sachlichkeit he claims modernity. His houses are sound, well proportioned but uninspired adaptations of the vernacular of the early 19th century, much in the same feeling as the best adaptations of the Cape Cod farmhouses in America. His larger buildings are in a half-modern tasteful style, better really than much work in Germany, more modern in intention. It is notorious that official architecture is conservative and Schmitthenner occupies the position formerly held under social democratic regime by Hans Poelzig and Bruno Paul. He is as competent an architect as either of them.

The third group is composed of the young men in the party, the students and revolutionaries who are ready to fight for modern art. The most powerful of these is the new director of the National Gallery, Alois Schardt. So far the battle has been fought in the field of painting and mainly around the names of those venerable German artists, Nolde and Barlach who are especially hated by Schulze-Naumburg. In architecture there is only one man whom even the young men can defend and that is Miës van der Rohe. Miës has always kept out of politics and has always taken his stand against functionalism. No one can accuse Miës' houses of looking like factories. Two factors especially make Miës' acceptance as the new architect possible. First Miës is respected by the conservatives. Even the Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur has nothing against him. Secondly Miës has just won (with four others) a competition for the new building of the Reichsbank. The Jury were older architects and representations of the bank. If (and it may be a long if) Miës should build this building it would clinch his position.

A good modern Reichsbank would satisfy the new craving for

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Notes on Architecture

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monumentality, but above all it would prove to the German intellectuals and to foreign countries that the new Germany is not bent on destroying all the splendid modern arts which have been built up in recent years. All revolutions, seemingly against everything of the past, really build on the positive achievements of the preceding decades. Germany cannot deny her progress. If in the arts she sets the clock back now, it will run all the faster in the

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