



Positioning: Erich Mendelsohn

ICOMOS · HEFTE DES DEUTSCHEN NATIONALKOMITEES LXXXII

# Positioning: Erich Mendelsohn and the Built Heritage of the 20th Century



ICOMOS · HEFTE DES DEUTSCHEN NATIONALKOMITEES LXXXII  
ICOMOS · JOURNALS OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE LXXXII  
ICOMOS · CAHIERS DU COMITÉ NATIONAL ALLEMAND LXXXII





INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS

# Positioning: Erich Mendelsohn and the Built Heritage of the 20th Century

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German and Israeli National Committees of ICOMOS  
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# Welcome and Greetings



# Welcome to Berlin and Shalom Aleichem!

I have the honour to welcome you very warmly on behalf of the organisers and hosts, the two ICOMOS National Committees of Israel and Germany and the Berlin Chamber of Architects. My name is Jörg Haspel – I used to be State Conservator of Berlin and President of ICOMOS Germany. I welcome the visitors to Berlin, here in the Alwin Brandes Auditorium of the Metalworkers' Union Building, designed by Erich Mendelsohn. And I warmly greet the participants from all over the world who have joined us online at the screens.

When Regina Stephan, Ita Heinze Greenberg, Inbal Ben-Gitler, Helge Pitz, Eran Mordohovich and I met a year ago for a virtual birthday celebration for Erich Mendelsohn (on 21 March 2021) and talked about Erich Mendelsohn's worldwide legacy, we had no idea what developments the next twelve months would bring. We did not anticipate the widespread interest and enthusiastic response to our idea of establishing an Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle, encompassing East and West. And we certainly did not foresee Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine, which violates international law, the rising number of victims, and the destruction caused by this invasion and aggression.

Erich Mendelsohn lived through and suffered two World Wars. In view of the terrible images and reports from Ukraine, some of us feel today as if we were on the eve of a Third World War. Our thoughts and hearts are with the people in Ukraine and with those who have been expelled from Ukraine. I would like to ask you to rise from your seats and observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the ongoing war.

After World War II the renowned German-Jewish philosopher Theodor W. Adorno claimed: "To write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric" (1949, published 1951). Many an art and memorial event in Germany has had to ask itself in recent weeks whether it is not ignorant to address questions of monument culture in other places in the face of death, injuries, displacement and devastation in Ukraine. We want to send a signal against war and tyranny with this Mendelsohn conference in Germany and with the upcoming meeting in Israel. We understand this gathering, attended by experts from all eight countries where the architectural heritage of Erich Mendelsohn has been preserved and in addition by many colleagues from regions where his architectural work and writings have found strong resonance, as a contribution to peace work and cooperation in the spirit of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

On the occasion of the Leipzig Book Fair last weekend (17–20 March 2022) the Ukrainian author Serhij Zhadan was cited as follows "Books cannot end war," he stated. "But during war," he continued, "books can help you to stay yourself, not to lose yourself, not to perish." Even monuments and memorials cannot end war, but they can help you to get through it better.

On behalf of the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle, I would like to thank Theresa Keilhacker, President of the Berlin Chamber of Architects, in a sense the local host of the meeting today and tomorrow, as well as Eran Mordohovich and

Tino Mager, the two presidents of ICOMOS Israel and Germany, for their hospitality and commitment as organisers who have jointly adopted this cooperative partnership. Included in these thanks are many partners from Germany and Israel and other countries. On behalf of all of them, I would like to thank the Wüstenrot Foundation and its director Philip Kurz, without whose unbureaucratic support this meeting would not have been possible so quickly.

The estate of Erich Mendelsohn includes not only the architectural, but also the drawn and written heritage he has left us, so to speak, an architectural and a documentary cultural heritage. UNESCO set up a World Heritage programme for both: the famous 1972 World Heritage Convention, whose 50th anniversary we are celebrating this year, and the Memory of the World documentary heritage, adopted in 1992. We thank the two Secretaries General of the UNESCO Commissions, Dalit Atrakchi from Israel and Roman Luckscheiter from Germany, for their video messages from Bonn and Jerusalem as UNESCO greetings.

Among the major international partners and supporters of the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle are the Art Library of the National Museums in Berlin / Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and the Getty Foundation in the USA. They are in charge of the main legacies of Erich and Luise Mendelsohn. The director of the Berlin Art Library, Moritz Wullen, is personally present today to introduce the local Mendelsohn Archive himself. Maristella Casciato will then speak to us on behalf of the architectural collection of Getty. Right from Los Angeles, the director of the Getty Research Institute, Mary Miller, will join us for her online greeting. We are very grateful for the greeting today and for the continued support of our Mendelsohn Initiative Circle.

The title of our event is *Positioning: Erich Mendelsohn and the Built Heritage of the 20th Century*. I am very pleased that Regina Stephan, long-time Mendelsohn expert at Mainz University, one of the "founding mothers" of our World Heritage initiative, and also the head and soul of our two-part conference series in Berlin and Haifa, so to speak, has agreed to give a personal introduction to the topic.

The opening of our conference is dedicated to UNESCO's World Heritage programme and the options as well as requirements of multinational cooperation. I am very glad that we could convince Katarzyna Piotrowska from Poland for the moderation of the initial session. She is a graduated landscape architect and has had international experience in the field of World Heritage nominations and World Heritage management for many years.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the presidents of the Chamber of Architects and of ICOMOS Israel and Germany, and in inviting them to the podium.

Prof. Dr. Jörg Haspel  
Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle, ICOMOS Germany

# Welcome by the Chamber of Architects

Good morning, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to this event today. We are very proud to host this conference here at the IG-Metall-Haus, one of the masterpieces built by Erich Mendelsohn. Tomorrow morning you will have the chance to visit the building in a guided tour and may then also see our offices located on the 2nd floor.

A particular welcome goes to ICOMOS Germany and Israel, represented by their presidents Tino Mager and Eran Mordohovich as well as to our Berlin partners and local managers of Mendelsohn's heritage, the Landesdenkmalamt and Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz represented by Christoph Rauhut, State Conservator Berlin and Moritz Wullen, Director of the Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Let me seize this opportunity to thank the latter once more for the wonderful pop-up exhibition at the Kunstbibliothek yesterday night, showing Erich Mendelsohn's works and related documents kept in its holdings.

Finally, I wish to welcome our special guest and long-term UNESCO Ambassador of Germany, now retired, His Excellency Mr. Michael Worbs.

Before we start the conference programme, let me briefly convey some facts about the Chamber of Architects Berlin to you: We count almost 10,000 members – mostly architects, but also including other professions from related fields such as city planners, interior designers and landscape architects. We consider monuments' preservation as an important building task and most of our members are highly aware and knowledgeable about architectural heritage conservation. Indeed, the Chamber of Architects is greatly committed to the conservation of architectural heritage in Berlin and in this spirit pursues a close

cooperation with the Berlin Heritage Authority or Landesdenkmalamt. We are convinced that monument protection is also active climate protection and therefore encourage energetic refurbishment of monuments and buildings that are particularly worthy of preservation. We have a dedicated working group for the protection and preservation of monuments with associated experts.

However, the city state of Berlin has faced financial difficulties for quite some time now and despite vast sums of private capital invested in real estate. As most private investors lack interest in cultural heritage preservation and sustainable renovation, protection of cultural heritage in Berlin, yet so important to us, remains challenging in most cases.

Given these difficult circumstances we are more than happy about this building's rather bright history: it has been refurbished recently and its architectural values are cherished and publicly promoted as reflected, for instance, in the information flyer or the drawings and historical documentation exhibited in the entry hall. As a matter of fact, IG Metall (workers' union) is a good owner looking after the building with care. Although not everything could be maintained in its original pieces, the overall state of conservation is in great condition.

Aware that you had an intense excursion yesterday to different Mendelsohn buildings in Luckenwalde and other places in Berlin and Brandenburg, I understand that you still have a dense and exciting conference programme ahead of you in these two coming days. I wish you fruitful exchanges and discussions and great success for the World Heritage nomination project of Erich Mendelsohn's oeuvre.

Theresa Keilhacker  
President of the Chamber of Architects Berlin



# Welcome by ICOMOS Germany

Dear Guests, Speakers, Partners and Organisers here at the IG-Metall-Haus and in the digital distance,

It is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of ICOMOS Germany to this special event on the exciting architectural work of Erich Mendelsohn. It is gratifying to see so many of you here in person. This is something we have missed very much and I hope that we can continue to meet in this way in the future, with physical presence and face-to-face conversations and exchanges during the breaks and after the official programme (which is a very essential part of conferences, as we have learned not least in the last two years).

We are grateful to be able to meet here in a building largely created by Mendelsohn – it really adds to a first-hand experience. And we would like to thank the Berlin Chamber of Architects for their close cooperation as well as the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative, and especially ICOMOS Israel as a partner of this conference. (Eran Mordohovich and I had actually considered a joint welcome to underline our cooperation, but in the end, we simply found it more practical to speak one after the other.) Back to the venue: This former building of the German Metalworkers' Union was partly destroyed and renovated over time, but it is in very good condition and has many original details. So, when you're here in these rooms, you can more or less come into direct contact with Mendelsohn architecture, which is a reminder that this is not true of the overall work. Not long ago, the Schocken Villa in Jerusalem was threatened with destruction and other buildings like the Red Banner Textile Factory in St. Petersburg almost fell victim to neglect.

It is not only for this reason that there is an urgent need for a professional discussion about Erich Mendelsohn and the significance of his contribution to 20th century architecture here

in and around Berlin, but also in Israel, England, Poland and the United States. The names of these places stand for his far-reaching connections and influences, but also for his flight and work in exile – a topic that unfortunately continues to define the lives of many and is currently coming very close again and becoming ever more serious. These mentions are not intended to diminish the importance and influence of the architecture itself, but to make us aware of how topical these aspects of Mendelsohn's work are and what we are actually dealing with: The programme of the following two days offers many links that go beyond the idea of Erich Mendelsohn as a star architect whose work is still missing on the World Heritage List. It will allow us to reflect on Mendelsohn's architecture as the result of circumstances that were extraordinary but affected many, as the result of processes that included a multitude of influences and also many partners and people who were involved in the conception, design and realisation of the buildings in question. This includes an extraordinary woman, his companion Luise Mendelsohn, without whom the work and our idea of Erich Mendelsohn would not exist as it does.

Lectures on his spirituality, his work and his life in exile, as well as reflections on how he fits into the history of architecture, will encourage us to further complete the overall picture of the phenomenon that is Erich Mendelsohn, and help us to carefully assess how outstanding and universal this heritage is.

I look forward to this interdisciplinary and international conversation. And I wish you two wonderfully inspiring days of enriching insights and joyful discussion. Again, welcome and thank you all for joining us.

Dr. Tino Mager  
President of ICOMOS Germany

## Welcome by ICOMOS Israel

ICOMOS Israel, jointly with ICOMOS Germany, welcomes all participants and the audience taking part in this symposium, which marks the next step in the efforts of the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative to prepare the Erich Mendelsohn World Heritage serial and transboundary nomination.

I would like to extend my thanks to all who have taken part in organising this symposium and to our host, the Chamber of Architects Berlin.

The idea to nominate Erich Mendelsohn's sites and buildings has great importance for the future safeguarding of Mendelsohn's buildings in Israel. In Palestine, Erich Mendelsohn had Jewish and British clients who at the time were very prominent. He designed for these clients 13 buildings and sites, most of which became iconic for modern architecture in Israel and the world. His architecture and office had great influence on future Israeli architects and architecture.

This heritage has been under threat for many years. The case of the Schocken House in Jerusalem is a bitter reminder of the failure to protect even this iconic building and its gardens. Unfortunately, this building will not be included in any future nomination due to the massive loss of its urban context, its

state of conservation and the approved plans to change it radically in the future.

Such a case shows that there is a need to add an extra protective layer, which a nomination for the World Heritage List could serve. Considering that inscription on the World Heritage List depends on existing legal protection by the State Party, even the campaign to inscribe some of the buildings could already have a positive effect.

ICOMOS Israel, recognising the need to elaborate and protect 20th century heritage in general and Erich Mendelsohn's heritage in particular, considers its participation and leadership in this initiative very important. While recognising that we are at the beginning of a lengthy and complex process, we can already see signs of positive influence of this initiative on Mendelsohn's heritage in Israel.

On behalf of ICOMOS Israel, I wish all lecturers and participants every success and an interesting, constructive event for all.

Arch. Eran Mordohovich  
Chair of Board of Directors  
ICOMOS Israel



# Greetings by the German Commission for UNESCO

Dear Mr. Mager and Mr. Haspel (representing ICOMOS Germany),

Dear Mr. Mordohovich (representing ICOMOS Israel),

Dear Ms. Atrakchi (representing the Israel National Commission for UNESCO),

Dear Ms. Miller (representing the Getty Research Institute),

Dear Ms. Keilhacker: thank you very much for hosting this event today,

Dear Conference Speakers and Participants,

I am particularly pleased to join you today: This event not only pays tribute to Mendelsohn's extensive oeuvre, but also gives us the opportunity to continue our cooperation with ICOMOS Germany. And it is a great chance to build on our intensive, decades-long collaboration with the Israeli National Commission.

To build peace in the minds of men and women through cooperation in education, science and culture – the founding idea of UNESCO has once again been threatened by the terrible war going on right now in the Ukraine.

We are convinced that multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, remains the only way to achieve global peace, security and prosperity. International cooperation and solidarity have been essential in combating the pandemic over the last two years. And they are essential today to answer violence and war. I am convinced that demonstrating the strength of our partnerships and an unprecedented level of multilateral cooperation is the only answer to those who break international law and put peace, democracy and freedom at risk.

It is impressive how actively and continuously the State of Israel, despite its current non-membership in UNESCO, is committed to UNESCO values and goals. This is particularly evident in the maintenance of Israel's National Commission itself. In addition, Israel has continued its participation in various UNESCO conventions and its membership of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

A look back at the friendship between the German and the Israeli National Commissions shows: We share a particularly long and intensive history of cooperation in the fields of UNESCO Associated Schools, human rights education and peace education:

- Our cooperation goes back to the 1960s when first contacts between German and Israeli UNESCO Associated Schools were established. In 1963, a German group of students from one of our oldest ASPnet schools, the one in Hofgeismar, took part in a first visit to Israel. They had been invited by Israeli families.

- In the 1990s, the close cooperation between the Israeli and the German ASPnet led to three workshops with teachers and students in Nuremberg, Kfar Saba and Bethlehem.

- A great example of the vibrant activities in our network was the project of Canadian, Israeli and German schools between 2010 and 2012. It dealt with the future of Holocaust education and its outcome is still being discussed in the network.

- "We are all Global Citizens" was the latest project in which schools from Germany and Israel took part. The impressions and experiences gathered during the first Corona wave from schools all over the world were a great message for living together in solidarity across all borders.

Today we have come together to honour the impressive legacy of Mendelsohn – a brilliant architect who left his mark on three continents. Mendelsohn thus was a cosmopolitan par excellence. Furthermore, he was not only a pioneer in modern architecture who inspired with his long-curved facades all over the world. He also loved music and art and was a talented photographer. Therefore, it is very fitting that this conference itself is a great example of multilateral and transdisciplinary cooperation: It not only brings together excellent researchers from all over the world but includes also stakeholders from outside academia.

I thank everyone who has made it possible for this meeting to take place! Dear Mr. Mager and Mr. Haspel from ICOMOS Germany – I am pleased that we have extended our cooperation agreement to work in partnership until 2026!

The UNESCO family with its vivid networks all over the world is our greatest treasure in these challenging times of war and crises. I am looking forward to exchanging ideas on future cooperation to show the world how multilateralism and solidarity can be put into practice.

I am very pleased that the possibility of a German-Israeli meeting within the framework of a joint project in our school network will be on the agenda again. The student groups of Nadav Democratic School Modi'in and Max-Windmüller-Gymnasium in Emden will visit each other and get to know each other even better. They started their cooperation under the title "keep the memory alive!" in 2020 and have worked together virtually until now.

For the next two days I wish you a fruitful and inspiring meeting.

Dr. Roman Luckscheiter

Secretary General of the German Commission for UNESCO

# Greetings by the Israel National Commission for UNESCO

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

First, I would like to congratulate you for this important conference about Erich Mendelsohn's work for which you gather today and tomorrow and to apologize for not being able to join you. It is very important in these interesting times that this conference takes place in presence and that it will be followed by our good work together.

Let me say a few words about Erich Mendelsohn's work:

Although Erich Mendelsohn worked and lived in Israel (then Palestine under British Mandate) only for a few years (1936–1940), he influenced the architectural culture for the following decades. His work and sensitivity to the regional and vernacular were in many ways ahead of a whole generation. In fact, the biography of Erich Mendelsohn symbolises in several respects the history of the Jewish people in the first half of the 20th century. It took him to many countries, among them Israel, and resulted in an international collection of varied and iconic designs. It is a remarkable oeuvre, and we are proud that an important share of it is in our country.

There are twelve buildings designed by Mendelsohn in Israel; most of them became iconic in Israeli architecture and urban landscape. Mendelsohn worked and had social relations with prominent figures of the Zionist movement as well

as with the British mandate government. These dual relations were quite unique, just as his architecture, and forms an important part of the unbuilt heritage associated with Mendelsohn's story. His story, the buildings he designed, and his clients reflect in various aspects the history of the formation of Israel, and for this reason we believe it is important to elaborate his legacy.

Some of the twelve buildings were radically altered and lost their context or were quite deformed. Others are still intact and represent the design and technological innovation so typical of his work around the globe.

We hope that with this initiative, the international and local Israeli recognition of Erich Mendelsohn's mastery and contribution to modern world culture will increase and lead to a better protection of these masterpieces.

On behalf of the Israel National Commission for UNESCO I wish you all a very fruitful and elaborative conference and I wish to thank you very much for the opportunity to bring Mendelsohn's work to the floor of discussions of World Heritage. Thank you and enjoy your time together.

Dr. Dalit Atrakchi  
Secretary General  
Israel National Commission for UNESCO



## News from the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

Over the past two years, we at the Getty Research Institute (GRI) have devoted ourselves to many distinct projects, but among those projects are ones that engage many of our collections, as we seek to understand the acquisitions we have made in our short, 30-year or so history. We continue to build depth and breadth in the history of architecture, and no more so than in the history of architecture in Southern California, from the Case Study House projects of the immediate post-war period to the architectural models of Frank Gehry for Walt Disney Hall. In the second half of the 1980s, the GRI purchased key Mendelsohn materials. Our holdings include original notebooks with sketches in pencil and color pastels, vast correspondence, photographs, a few original drawings. A second purchase about five years ago comprises further original ar-

chitectural material, mostly related to the designer's practice in the United States of America, and a limited documentation about his work in Palestine. With the acquisition of these additional documents the GRI remains the only repository of Mendelsohn's work in North America.

I am grateful for this conference. The GRI fully supports the Mendelsohn Initiative for the serial nomination of a relevant group of his buildings to the World Heritage List, and we wish to highlight the fact that the archival collections – in Los Angeles as in Berlin – will represent the only robust and significant depository of his design thinking.

Prof. Dr. Mary Miller

Director, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles



# **Erich Mendelsohn's Legacy and World Heritage Qualities**

# Introductory Remarks of the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Among the modernist heroes listed in every encyclopaedia of 20th century world architecture, Erich Mendelsohn is one of the most important and internationally most influential architects. Yet his name and work are missing on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

With the Einstein Tower in Potsdam, Mendelsohn set an early signal for expressionist modernism, a monument for Einstein's Theory of Relativity. In the Weimar Republic, with his boldly curved buildings and dynamic building masses, he was one of the pioneers of streamlined architecture. His outstanding reputation led to commissions and invitations to lecture in many countries in Europe, Palestine and the USA. 1933 was a turnaround: all of a sudden, he had to leave his native country Germany, where he had celebrated greatest successes, and where he ran the largest architectural office. It was located in the Columbus House, which he himself had built shortly before on Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, the busiest square in Berlin and thus in Germany. He developed an extremely ingenious building design for it.

On the 31st of March 1933, twelve years of commuting between countries and offices started – from Berlin to Amsterdam to London and from there since 1934 back and forth to Jerusalem. In both cities he set up offices, which had to cope with the flood of orders he received. In Britain he was celebrated by the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), in the British Mandate of Palestine he received large commissions. When the German troops under *Generalleutnant* Rommel approached Palestine in 1941, he left and, after an adventurous journey several weeks around the Cape of Good Hope, reached New York in spring 1941, where, again, he was warmly welcomed by his fellow architects. Yet, his arrival in the USA was late, too late to gain a professorship like Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Hilberseimer, and other architects of the German Modern Movement in the American Exile. His solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, intended as a great prelude to the new phase of his life and work in the USA, had to close prematurely due to the USA's entry into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Years of great material restrictions followed. It was not until 1945 that he was able to build again, and he did not have

much time left. Unlike his earlier work in Europe and Palestine, he had to shift his focus towards synagogues and community centres, for which he had to undertake an incredible number of journeys through the huge country, which also exhausted him.

His early death in 1953 – at the age of only 66 – prevented him from building on earlier successes to the same extent. Unlike his fellow émigrés Gropius and Mies, he refused to set foot on German soil again until Germany faced up to its guilt over the Jews. After his death, he was almost forgotten in Germany – or was he deliberately disowned? Was he a thorn in the Germans' side?

Mendelsohn's works were intensively discussed in the architectural press of the Weimar years. In 1930 Mendelsohn himself published the first account of his work under the title *Das Gesamtschaffen eines Architekten* and, in 1932, the book *Neues Haus – neue Welt* about his own House am Rupenhorn. The first book about Mendelsohn by other authors was published as early as 1940 by Arnold Whittick, at a time when Mendelsohn had already left his first country of exile, Great Britain. Whittick had approached Mendelsohn with the idea of publishing a book in 1935, the year the sensational De La Warr Pavilion, Mendelsohn's masterpiece in Bexhill-on-Sea, opened. He described his motivation in the preface as follows: "The reason that I conceived the idea of writing this book at all was because Mendelsohn seemed to me to be, more than any other, the representative architect of the age – the era of industrialization, of the machine, of steel and concrete; because in his work one finds most conceiving expression of the fundamental characteristics of modern life. I use the wider term life rather than architecture because the principal feeling that accentuates his work has an application to all departments of life. In his work it is an aesthetic principle, but in a wider application is an important philosophy." To him, already in 1940 "His expression of the medium and of the purpose of his buildings constitutes some of the true achievements of a new architectural style which (...) will ultimately mark an epoch and will rank in retrospect with the great styles of the past."<sup>1</sup> With this first book on Mendelsohn, Whittick, in 1940, also published the first attempt to evaluate "the aesthetic value and significance of Mendelsohn's work"<sup>2</sup>



In 1953, Maria Federico Roggero wrote, in cooperation with Mendelsohn, the next attempt to classify his work under the title *Il contributo di Mendelsohn alla evoluzione dell'architettura moderna* (Mendelsohn's contribution to the evolution of modern architecture), followed in 1960 by Wolf von Eckardt's book *Erich Mendelsohn*, published almost simultaneously in English in the series "The Masters of World Architecture", edited by William Alex and published also in German (Große Meister der Architektur VIII) and Italian. Bruno Zevi's tremendous book *Erich Mendelsohn, Opera Completa*, published in 1970 in Italian, is the culmination of the early publications on Mendelsohn: prepared in cooperation with Mendelsohn's widow Luise, he published all the sketches and photographs in Mendelsohn's private archive. Therefore, up to today, the volume remains an important reference work, even if the quality of the illustrations is often poor and sketches at times are shown laterally or colour-reversed (microfilm photographs were used). More Italian books dedicated to Mendelsohn followed by Zevi, David Palterer and Cesare Stevan.

In Germany, Julius Posener, his former employee and the doyen of the writing of 20th century German architectural history, presented the first exhibition of his work in the Berlin Academy of Arts in 1968. He was the one who repeatedly pointed out Mendelsohn's importance, without, however, being able to achieve a broad effect. It was the acquisition of the Mendelsohn estate by the Kunstbibliothek in 1975 – generously given back to Berlin by Mendelsohn's widow Luise – that opened up completely new possibilities for research; and it took off accordingly: With Ita Heinze-Greenberg, Hans Rudolf Morgenthaler, Kathleen James-Chakraborty, Thilo Richter, Renate Palmer, Ann Grünberg and myself, several PhD students dedicated themselves to Mendelsohn's work from the 1980s onwards. In 1987, the Art Library showed an exhibition of his sketches (curated by Sigrid Achenbach). In the same year, Luise Mendelsohn's papers were bought by the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.

In 1998, Ita, Hans, Kathleen, Charlotte Benton and I worked together on the publication *Erich Mendelsohn, Gebaute Welten* (Erich Mendelsohn, Built Worlds), in which we made the results of our dissertations available to the public. The following year, under the title *Erich Mendelsohn – Dynamics and Function*, it served as the catalogue for the ifa exhibition (the German Institute for foreign cultural relations) of the same name. The exhibition, which I had the privilege of curating on behalf of ifa, toured with its beautiful models built by my students from the University of Stuttgart from 2000 onwards. Over 12 years it spread his work beyond the borders of Europe to over 30 presentation venues – among them, in 2004, again the Berlin Academy of Arts. Since 2000 several books have followed, among them a selection of his lectures and texts, and of the couple Erich and Luise, both by Ita Heinze-Greenberg and myself. Interestingly, three books – by Kathleen James, Walther C. Leedy and Michael Craig Palmer – deal with the synagogues and community centres that Mendelsohn was able to realise in the USA between 1945 and his death in 1953.

In 2014, the Art Library in Berlin and the GRI finally published the Erich and Luise Mendelsohn Correspondence online, scientifically commented by myself. For the first time, the intensive and very comprehensive epistolary dialogue of Erich and Luise Mendelsohn can be read, providing a wealth of information on works, contacts, networks, readings, political topics, philosophical reflections. The online publication thus replaces Oskar Beyer's important publication *Letters of an Architect* of 1961 (in German) and 1967 (in English), which is yet reduced in scope as it comprises only selected excerpts of Erich's letters.

Just this year the latest book by Michele Stavagna and Carsten Krohn came on the market. It gives an impressive oversight of his oeuvre in many new photographs and drawings of the floor plans.

And yet: while there are metres of books on the shelves about the other heroes of modernism, Mendelsohn should finally be given the place he deserves in architectural history:

First, because his architectural designs are *the* alternative to the placeless designs of the international style that made all the cities of the world look the same. Second, because he was a truly internationally working and thinking architect, a philosopher, and politically an extremely critical spirit.

These were the basic findings when Jörg Haspel and I launched presentations of his work as a kind of test balloon: first in February 2021 at the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt am Main as part of the event *Context, Contrast, Continuity: Built Heritage in Modern Metropolises* and then at ICOMOS Germany's International Day for Monuments and Sites in April 2021. The very positive response convinced us that we would find strong support for our attempt to place Mendelsohn's heritage at the centre of a transnational initiative. Hereafter we approached the relevant experts: the representatives of ICOMOS, UNESCO and monument authorities in the eight countries where Mendelsohn's buildings are located today: Germany, Poland, Russia, Norway, the Czech Republic, the UK, Israel and the USA, as well as the international community of Mendelsohn scholars. The response has been overwhelming: the group now includes almost 40 experts from all over the world. It is a truly transnational circle of scholars and experts pursuing a common goal in a friendly and very collegial atmosphere. The foundation, the discussions about the possible candidates for nomination and the OUV, the call for papers and the planning of the symposium have been extremely dynamic and have been developed exclusively digitally to date. The fact that we are meeting here today has to do with the enormous digitalisation boost from the Corona pandemic – at least a positive side effect! – but also with the courage of the Initiative Circle members and the Chamber of Architects Berlin-Brandenburg to plan a face-to-face meeting and hold it in a hybrid form.

Our "Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle", founded only a few months ago, aims to explore the universal role of Erich Mendelsohn's architectural work in the history of modernism and to assess its potential for World Heritage nomination. Our focus is on the more than 40 surviving buildings by Erich Mendelsohn. In all the buildings in eight different countries,

climates, landscapes and existing environments, Mendelsohn's authorship is unmistakable. We have already worked out that he has succeeded in realising buildings that are distinguished by the following characteristics:

- The functional dynamics that he had already formulated as a goal in the early 1920s – curved lines, oriels and balconies – but applied not as arbitrarily placed accessories but with a clear functional or urban-relevant reference;
- The precise adaptation to location and climate, view and vista;
- The innovation and high precision of the construction;
- The refinement of the details;
- The buildings are rooted to the place where they were erected – this marks a tremendous difference to other architects of the modern movement, whose buildings are placeless. Even though he, since 1933, lived the life of a nomad constantly on the move, his buildings respond to where they are.

Many questions still need to be answered:

- What is the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Mendelsohn's works, i.e. what distinguishes his architecture above all others and in comparison to them?
- Is it modernity, migration, spirituality?
- Or: a global architect in dialogue with sites and places around the world?
- Which UNESCO criteria best depict his work?
- Which buildings are in a state of conservation that allows nomination according to the strict criteria of authenticity and integrity?
- What role does his Jewishness play?
- And music?
- Who will ultimately combine the transnational efforts and carry out the application?

We received well over 40 abstracts on our call for papers that can help us answer these questions. We could not fit them all into the two Berlin-days. But we have passed them on to our dear colleagues from Israel, who have started planning the second part of the symposium at the Technion in Haifa in autumn 2022.

In Haifa we will also discuss the question of whether Mendelsohn's drawings, writings, lectures, models and photography at the Mendelsohn Archives in the Berlin Art Library and the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles should be nominated simultaneously for UNESCO's *Memory of the World* (MOW) programme established in 1992. We believe that in hardly any other architect's legacy there is such a strong connection and overlap between the different works of art. The MOW's "impetus came originally from a growing awareness of the parlous state of preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage in various parts of the world. War and social upheaval, as well as severe lack of resources, have worsened problems which have existed for centuries."<sup>3</sup> We are currently experiencing very painfully and once again, that, also in the

21st century, the danger of cultural heritage suffering irretrievable losses through war has not diminished.

By digitising the correspondence between Erich and Luise Mendelsohn and parts of his estate of drawings, the two archives in Berlin and Los Angeles have already taken the first important steps. Further steps are to follow in order to make Mendelsohn's significant contribution to the design and history of architecture accessible to everyone worldwide.

As you can see: We are only at the beginning. There is still a lot of work to do. It is my heart's desire that we continue to do this in this wonderful atmosphere of transnational collegiality and friendship.

I would like to conclude with sincere thanks to all the colleagues from the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle who have driven the process forward so intensively with us. It is a real pleasure to work with all of you and, in fact, it is one of the miracles of the Corona Pandemic that we were able to put this together in just a few months! Special thanks to Eran Mordohovich, President of ICOMOS Israel, and Inbal Ben Asher-Gitler, who have been very active with us in moving the project forward. Many thanks to the Chamber of Architects in Berlin, our generous hosts in this beautiful, 92-year-old Mendelsohn Building. It doesn't feel like being so old, does it? Indeed, already in this building Mendelsohn's architecture proves to be timeless, but not placeless. On the contrary: It fits perfectly on this plot of land and its original purpose: Doesn't the bay window look like a flag-bearer at the head of a union demonstration?

As for now, I am looking forward to the lectures and discussions of our symposium here in Berlin. Thank you once again for your attention, your coming to Berlin, your listening somewhere in the world, and your precious support.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Whittick, Preface to the first edition, in: Arnold Whittick, Eric Mendelsohn, second edition, London 1956, p. 7. The third edition was published in 1964. Whittick's book was published in Italian in Bologna 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 185–197.

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow>, consulted last on 18.3.22.

Moritz Wullen

## The Erich Mendelsohn System: the Architect's Estate in the Kunstbibliothek Berlin

In 1975, Luise Mendelsohn gave the Erich Mendelsohn archive to the Kunstbibliothek Berlin (Art Library Berlin). The generosity and conciliatory nature of this act of donation is still deeply moving: four decades earlier, a few months after the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor and the dissolution of the Reichstag, Erich Mendelsohn had left Germany and fled to England via Amsterdam. Had he remained in Germany, he, Luise and his family would probably not have survived the National Socialist regime of terror. Luise Mendelsohn's lines of 28 April 1975 show how moving it was for her to donate her archive to a museum institution in Germany: "After 42 years, on the very day we had to leave Berlin, the city where he began

his career in 1918, the city he loved and never saw again, his work, which was inseparable from his personality, is returning to Berlin".

For the Art Library, this act of reconciliation was an encounter with its own history: with the so-called "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" of 7 April 1933. Curt Glaser, director of the Art Library and a German citizen of Jewish faith, had been removed from office and forced into exile. In the 1920s, he had made the Art Library a platform of the avant-gardes, with numerous exhibitions, publications and displays, for which the architect Erich Mendelsohn had been an eminently important networker with his trendsetting formal language. The Art Library itself, as an



Fig. 1 Einstein Tower, Potsdam, sketch of a side view, 1919, pencil, yellow and white chalk on tracing paper, Inv.No.: Hdz. E.M. 142





Fig. 2 Tricot and Hosiery Factory Krasnoje Snamja, St. Petersburg, sketch of the energy station, 1925, charcoal, red chalk on paper, Inv.No.: Hdz. E.M. 478

institution, had also been among the targets of National Socialist terror: In July 1934, it had been forced to vacate its building in Prinz Albrecht Strasse next to the Gropius Building for the Gestapo.

However, the donation was not only an occasion to look back. It also offered the historical opportunity to resume the strong collection tradition of the Art Library, which had broken off in 1933 and had consistently expanded its primary source holdings on the history of architecture since its foundation in 1867. The focal points were the ornamental engraving collection, the architectural drawings of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, as well as individual sheets and collections of modernist architects such as Joseph Maria Olbrich, from whom more than 2500 drawings had been acquired in 1914. On this basis, a new dynamic unfolded through the donation of Luise Mendelsohn under the director Eckhart Berkenhagen: acquisitions followed on contemporary architecture and – here the acquisition of the estate of Heinrich Tessenow in 1978 deserves special mention – on the avant-gardes of the pre-war period. The acquisition in 1975 thus opened a new chapter in the history of the Art Library’s architecture collection.

The nucleus of the archive is Erich Mendelsohn’s estate of drawings, which includes approximately 2,700 sketches, design drawings, architectural drawings and furniture designs from all creative phases. The geographical spectrum almost fully represents the internationality of his oeuvre. To start with, there are the drawings for his projects in Europe, such as the Einstein Tower in Potsdam (Fig. 1) or the Columbus House at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, the hosiery factory “Krasnoje Snamja” in today’s St. Petersburg in Russia (Fig. 2), as well as for hotels, housing estates and department

store buildings in England. Another focus of the collection are the seven years of building activity in Palestine, which are also well documented by various drawings, including perspectives and floor plan variants for the private houses of Chaim Weizmann (Fig. 3) and Salman Schocken, as well as the gestural-expressive studies for a power station in Haifa (Fig. 4). Last but not least, the drawings and sketches from his time in the USA, which have a special visionary quality: for example, the urban planning utopias created for magazines, the studies for the synagogue and community centre B’nai Amoona (Fig. 5) in St. Louis, or the designs for a Holocaust memorial in Riverside Park in New York, which were never realised and were developed together with Mitzi Solomon Cunliffe. The digitisation of the entire collection has not yet been completed, but the already digitised holdings are accessible via the website “Collections Online” of the National Museums in Berlin.

Another key element of the archive is Erich Mendelsohn’s correspondence, especially his correspondence with his wife Luise, half of which (Erich’s letters) is in the Art Library, the other half (Luise’s letters) in the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. In 2011, the Art Library and the Getty Research Institute launched a transatlantic cooperation with the aim of reuniting the letters in a joint database. A total of 1410 letters by Erich and 1328 letters by Luise were completely digitised, transcribed and annotated for the digital Erich Mendelsohn Archive (EMA). In 2014, the project financed by the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation was successfully completed. Since then, this decades-long correspondence has been publicly accessible for the first time in the form of an online database. It begins in 1910, when Mendelsohn first met Luise Maas, and ends shortly before his death in July

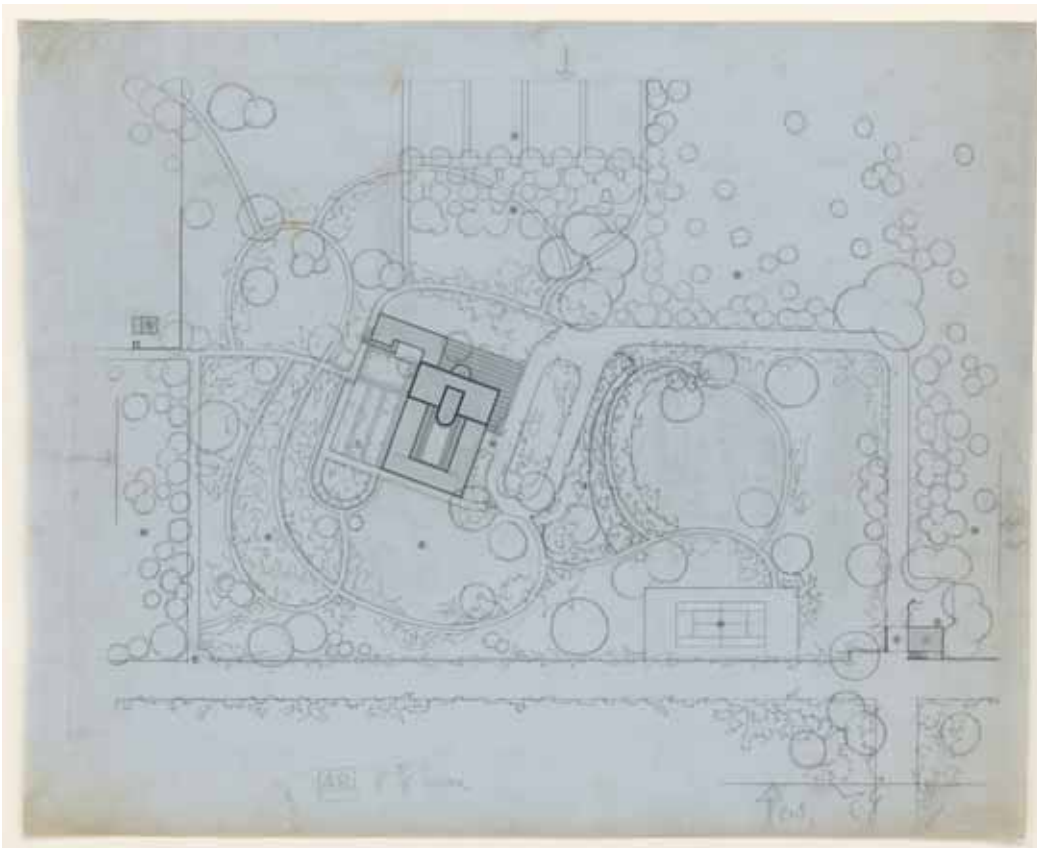


Fig. 3 Chaim Weizmann House, Rechovot, general plan, 1934, pen, ink, pencil on tracing paper, Inv.No.: Hdz. E.M. 4032

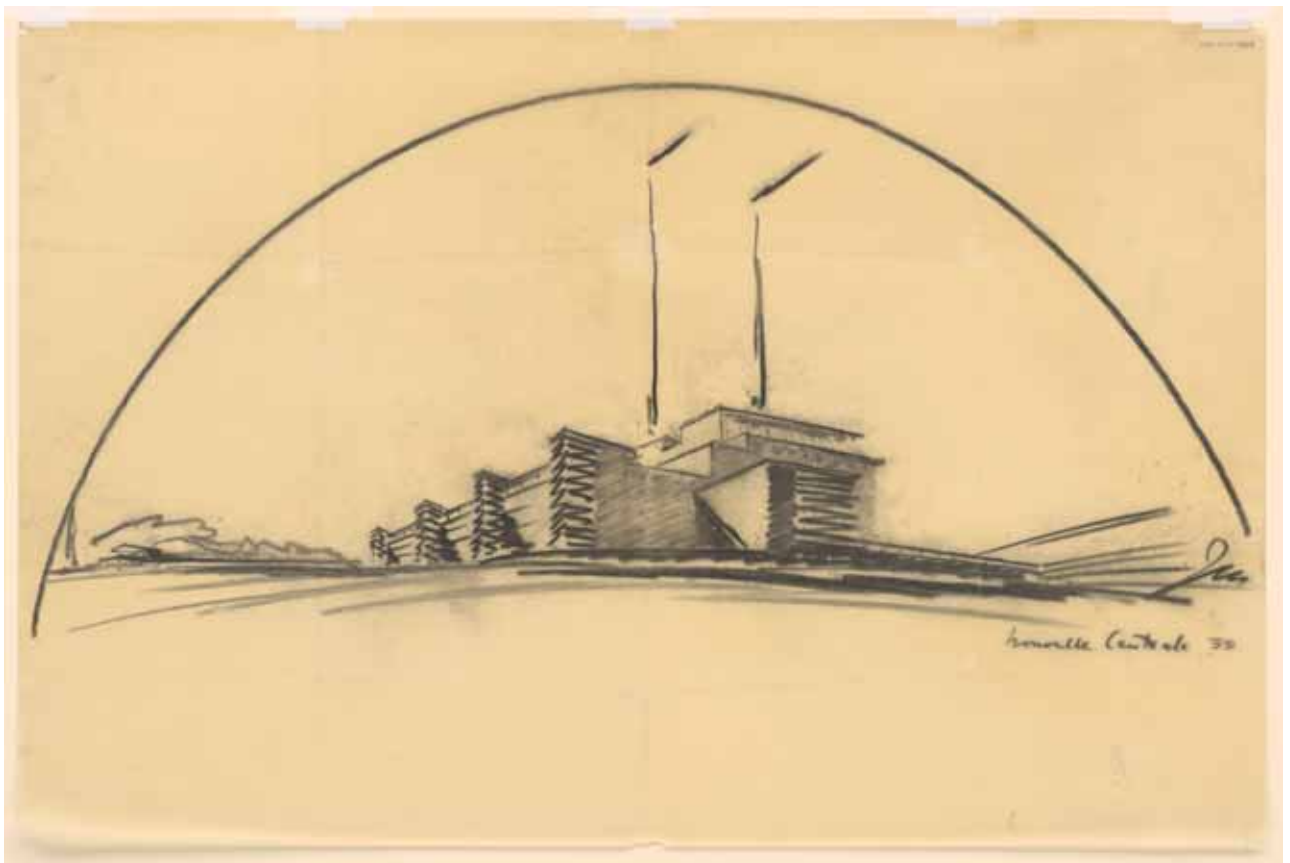


Fig. 4 Government Hospital, Haifa, sketch sheet with studies, 1935, pencil on paper, Inv.No.: Hdz. E.M. 4001

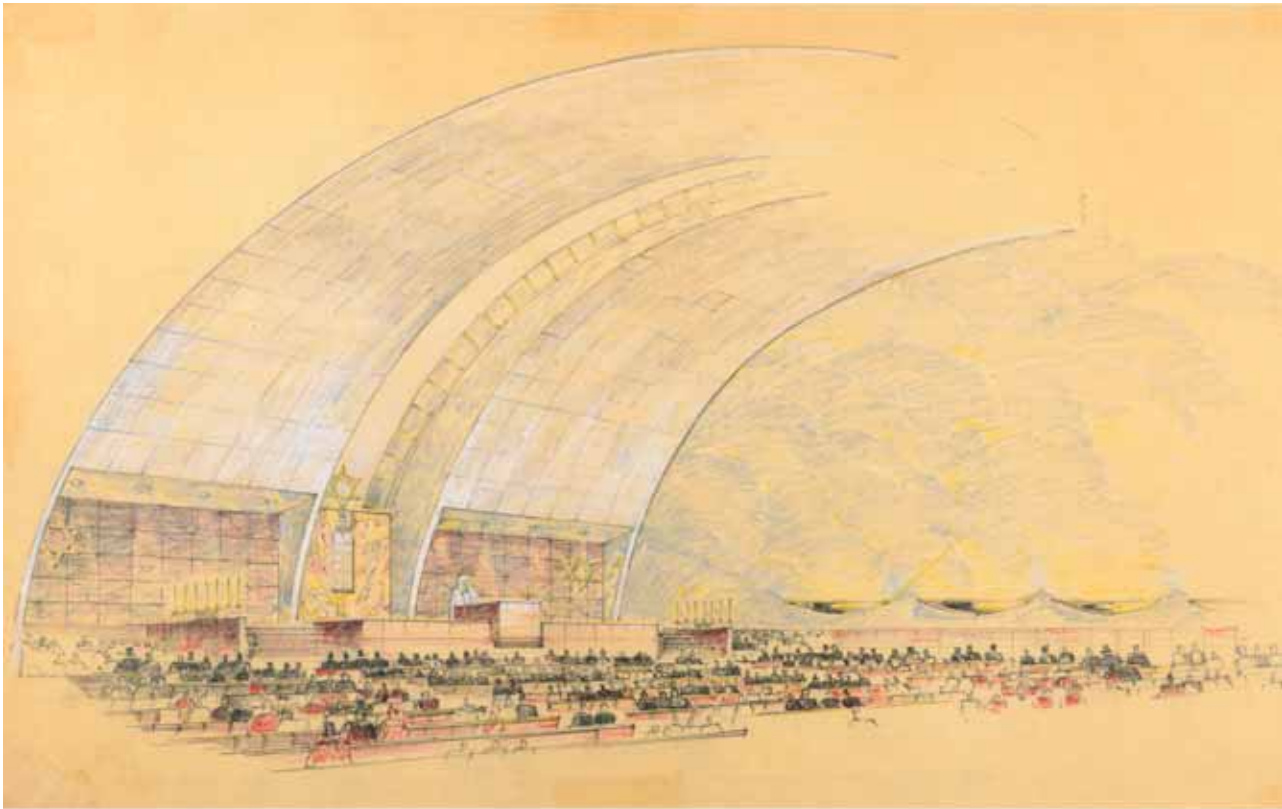


Fig. 5 Synagogue and Community Centre B'nai Amoona, St. Louis (Missouri), interior perspective of the synagogue looking southeast, 1946, pencil and coloured pencil on paper, Inv.No.: Hdz. E.M. 2051

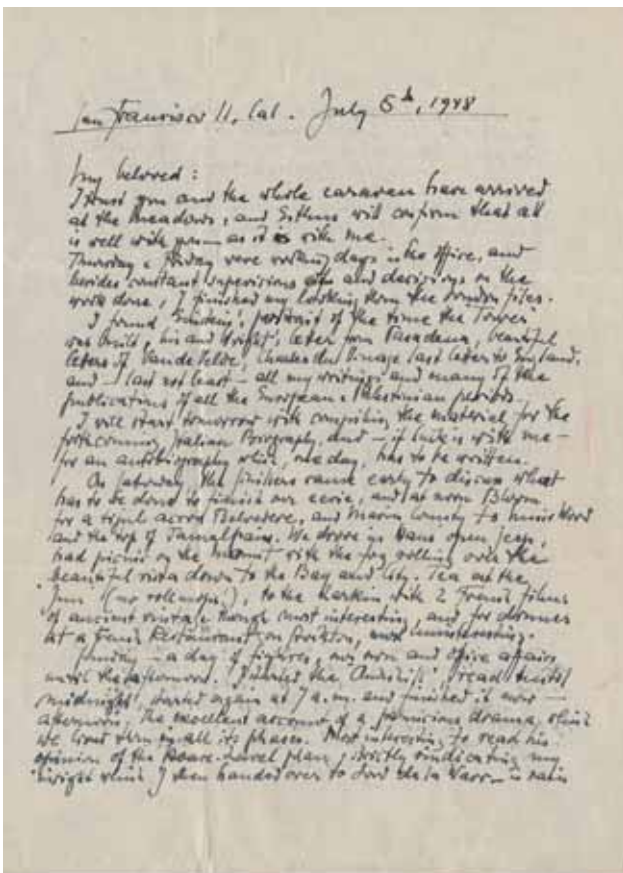


Fig. 6 Letter Erich Mendelsohn to Luise, July 6th 1948, Inv.No.: 14103831

1953 (Fig. 6). The letters provide a fascinating insight into the architect's world of ideas and working methods as well as into the lives of emigrated German Jews in England, the British Mandate territory of Palestine, and the USA. The indexing, digitisation and online publication of Erich Mendelsohn's other correspondence with the important minds of his time is still pending. They contain – like 'nuggets' – important clues to the initial stages, the course and the organisational aspects of building projects.

The third cornerstone of the Erich Mendelsohn Archive are the photographs that were either taken (Fig. 7) or commissioned by him. Particularly extensive are the holdings of photographs by Arthur Köster, who documented the architect's buildings as an employee of the Wasmuth publishing house since 1923 and as a direct contractor of the architect since 1926. A total of 485 photographs could be identified as works by Arthur Köster in the extensive photographic materials of the estate. These works were of key importance for the visual communication of Mendelsohn's architectural work in exhibitions, postcards, magazines and monographic publications. They are no less valuable today as a resource that makes it possible to determine the original condition of the buildings at the time of construction. Moreover, they reveal a lot about not only how Erich Mendelsohn saw his own work, but also how he wanted it to be perceived. The role that the photographic appearance of architectural art played for Mendelsohn is documented not least by his extensive collection of slides, also in the Art Library, with which he documented the architectural experiences of his numerous travels.





Fig. 7 Maimonides Hospital, San Francisco (California), photograph by Erich Mendelsohn, Inv.No.: EM10b138



Fig. 8 Model B'nai Amoona, Inv.No.: 1988\_023\_2\_AM



Fig. 9 Model Maimonides Hospital, Inv.No.: 1988\_023\_5\_AM

Finally, a small collection of seven three-dimensional design models of projects in the USA should also be mentioned. There is one model each for the synagogues and community centres in Grand Rapids (Michigan) and Dallas (Texas), for the B'nai Amoona Synagogue (Fig. 8) in St. Louis (Missouri), for the Maimonides Hospital (Fig. 9) in San Francisco (California) and for the never realised project at Riverside Park in New York of the memorial to the six million Jews murdered by the National Socialists. The community centre at Mount Zion in St. Paul (Minnesota) is documented with two models. In addition, there are two models produced for exhibition purposes after Erich Mendelsohn's death for the Villa Weizmann and (in XXL format) for the WOGA buildings on Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. The objects, which are particularly fragile due to the variety of materials used, were elaborately restored in 2011 and provide an authentic picture of the visualisation strategies of Erich Mendelsohn's office.

The drawings, correspondence, models, photographs and other manuscripts and visual materials preserved in the Mendelsohn Archive represent a communication system in which the built architecture is only one expression among others. The historical value only arises from the reciprocal relationship of the visual, textual and architectural artefacts to one another. Erich Mendelsohn was absolutely aware of this system quality of architecture. He by no means thought only in terms of the finished house, solidified in concrete. On the contrary: for him, architecture was a process-based art whose interconnectedness with music, literature, the sciences and visual media constantly opens up new creative

horizons for the human mind. An initiative that has set itself the goal of permanently preserving his architectural work in its overall context for posterity should always keep the holistic quality of this "Mendelsohn system" in mind. The dovetailing of the initiative with the research and mediation of the archival holdings of the Art Library and likewise of the Getty Research Institute is therefore very much to be desired – both in terms of the conception and implementation, as well as the successful public mediation of such an ambitious project.

The vision could be a reinvention of the historic "Erich Mendelsohn System" as a hybrid communication and interaction platform for the 21st century. In it, the material buildings scattered across three continents would function as portals from which people can virtually expand their physical architectural experience on site – firstly by adding the contemporary, cultural and social-historical contexts generated from research and the archives, and secondly by bringing the visitors together with researchers and architecture enthusiasts in culturally different environments around the world. The itinerary of Erich Mendelsohn as it is materialised in the buildings would thus become the blueprint of a transnational network in which the stories of modernity could be negotiated in a culturally diverse way, independent of the still dominant national perspectives. Erich Mendelsohn himself would certainly have been enthusiastic about this idea.

## Credits

Figs. 1–9: Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

## Maristella Casciato

# News from the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles Erich and Luise Mendelsohn Collections: Germany, Palestine, and the United States

I wish to offer a synopsis of the documents that form the Erich and Luise Mendelsohn collections at the Getty Research Institute (GRI). These grew through diverse purchases and donations in the course of approximately 30 years, from the mid-1980s to 2018.

The initial corpus of documents to be purchased (dated from 1985 to 1993) belonged to the estate of Esther Mendelsohn Joseph. Esther was Erich's and Luise's only daughter, born in Berlin in 1916, during World War I. At that time, during the war, Erich was away fighting in the trenches, and Luise took her baby to the Swiss countryside so that she could offer her a peaceful environment and better food. As Esther grew up, she developed more affinities with her father Erich than with her mother, and she continued to receive his encouragement through the years. She left Germany earlier than her parents; she married, divorced, and lived in London. Eventually, she rejoined her parents in San Francisco, where she remarried and resided until 2004.



Fig. 1 Photo portrait of Erich and Luise Mendelsohn, c. 1925, photographer unknown

Her parents had fled Germany in March 1933 and reached London via Amsterdam. At that time, Erich was 45 years old. In 1938, the couple received British passports and citizenship. Esther was very active in the promotion of Erich's memory and legacy after Louise died in 1980. The documents Esther transferred to the GRI are organized in eleven series, held in 43 boxes. The collection comprises transcripts or originals of Luise's correspondence to Erich (from 1910 to 1953), in which she reflects on her husband's architectural aesthetics and his political development. Luise had always been very committed to Erich's architectural interests and ensured the social recognition he received through his work. She also played the cello, frequently participating in a quartet which sometimes included Albert Einstein on violin. Soon after Erich's death, she managed to give a large part of his archive, including the letters Erich wrote to her, to the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin.

The Erich and Luise Mendelsohn Papers held at the GRI also include Luise's travel diaries, diverse sets of manuscripts of her still unpublished autobiography, biographical notes on her husband, sketchbooks, photographs of family life, a small set of architectural drawings, audiotapes of lectures, and a few plans by Erich's students. The archive's subjects and contributors represent a unique spectrum of European intelligentsia and beyond, embodying the dialogue on architectural modernism. Erich exchanged ideas with his peers, ranging from members of the avant-garde such as Feininger, Kandinsky, and El Lissitzky, to design colleagues such as Le Corbusier, Gropius, Neutra, Wijdeveld, Wright, to architectural historians and critics such as Munford, Pevsner, Posener, and Zevi, to name a few.

Among the photographs are a few taken by Alfred Bernheim, a renowned photographer, who started practicing in Düsseldorf before he relocated his business to Berlin. He was commissioned to photograph a few of Mendelsohn's buildings. In 1934, following Hitler's rise to power, Bernheim and his family emigrated to Palestine, which, as active Zionists, they had visited often. In Jerusalem, Alfred's daughter Charlotte (Lotte) married Hans Schiller, whom she had met years earlier in Berlin.

Hans Schiller was born in Breslau in 1917. In 1934 he also emigrated to Palestine due to concerns over his involvement

in Polish resistance activities. He began his collaboration with Mendelsohn in 1938. Under Mendelsohn's mentorship, he was licensed as an architect by the British Mandate Government in 1940.

In 1941 the Mendelsohns fled from Jerusalem to the United States. Eventually, they moved to San Francisco in 1945; the Schiller family followed shortly afterwards and settled in Mill Valley. It is worth mentioning that in 1946 Erich and Luise gained American citizenship which prompted them to Americanize their first names: Erich became Eric and Luise became Louise. The firm Eric Mendelsohn Architect was established in San Francisco in 1947. After gaining the American citizenship, Eric received his license to practice architecture in California. The office was located at 627 Commercial Street. In addition to Mendelsohn as head, the firm's team included Hans Schiller, who had previously worked with him in Palestine, and Michael Gallis, who attained the status of associate in 1950. The firm was dissolved after Mendelsohn's death in 1953.

Peter Schiller, Hans' son, donated his father's archives to the GRI in 2018. The collection comprises drawings, correspondence, photographs, manuscripts, books, ephemera, and other reference materials pertaining to Hans Schiller's work with the architect Erich Mendelsohn, first in Jerusalem and later in California. The collection includes approximately 55 original drawings; some of them are Mendelsohn's sketches for Jewish temples. The layout of the book *Il contributo di Mendelsohn all'evoluzione dell'architettura moderna* (1952), written by Mario Federico Roggero, at the time a young Italian architectural historian from Turin, is enriched with Mendelsohn's sketches of his buildings. This publication may be considered a visual autobiography of the architect.

Mendelsohn deeply regretted that he was not able to build the monument to the six million Jews who died in concentration camps, which was to be built in New York (1951–52). He also regretted that his design for the Emanu-El Community Center in Dallas, Texas (1951) was never executed. His three favorite buildings were the B'nai Amoona Community Center in St. Louis, Missouri (1946–50) with its "points and counterpoints", the Community Center in Cleveland, Ohio (1946–52) with its great dome representing the night sky, and the Maimonides Hospital in San Francisco (1946–50).

Michael Gallis, another Jewish emigrant around Mendelsohn, was born in 1909 into a merchant family in Russian Siberia. Misha Alexander Haimovitch's birthplace is listed as Mukden (the Manchurian name of Shenyang, now in China), where the family had established its business headquarters. Soon after emigrating to the US in 1924, Misha assumed the Americanized first name Michael, and went by the name Michael Haimovitch. As he explained, both Russian and Jewish names invoked prejudice and discrimination during the 1920s. As these prejudices only increased in the 1930s, by 1932 he had also dropped the Haimovitch name and used his middle name as a surname, becoming Michael Alexander. The final name change came in 1936 when he took his mother's maiden name, Gallis. In 1929 he entered the University of Oregon in Eugene as an architecture major. Under the direction of Dean

W. R. B. Wilcox, the school was among the first to embrace modernism, and had discarded the Beaux Arts system still prevailing in the USA. Gallis received his degree in 1940, on the eve of World War II. He was involved in every project the Mendelsohn office completed in the US between 1948 and 1953.

The collection Gallis's son donated to the GRI in 2017 includes documentation of the research laboratory for the Atomic Energy Commission at the University of California, Berkeley. The project, dated 1952, was defined by the very specific needs of a structure suitable for the handling and containment of radioactive material. The archive includes preliminary drawings, initial sketches, perspectival studies and final conceptual design sketches. The drawings, traced in pencil and colored graphite on transparent paper, display Mendelsohn's characteristic graphic style. The Berkeley Laboratory was one of the last projects in the Mendelsohn office, completed after Mendelsohn's death by Michael Gallis.

To conclude the family stories, as exemplified by the GRI archives, I would like to mention Gerald Davis. Davis was a Jewish-British architect, who was introduced to Mendelsohn via Hermann Schocken, who lived in Seattle. Hermann was the brother of Salman Schocken, the German Jewish businessman, co-founder of the Schocken department store chain, who commissioned Mendelsohn with several buildings. The archive of Gerald, which comprises photos and a manuscript about the years he collaborated with Mendelsohn, is in the process of being acquired by the GRI.

## Credits

Figs. 1–3: Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, courtesy of Daria Joseph



Fig. 2 Erich Mendelsohn (front row, first left) surveying a building site in Jerusalem, c. 1937, photographer unknown





Fig. 3 Visiting Frank Lloyd Wright (in the center) at Taliesin West, Arizona, 1947: Erich Mendelsohn (on the right), Richard Neutra (on the left)

# Transnational Serial Nominations: Mapping of Attributes and Values Conveying the OUV of a Nominated Property

The nomination of serial transnational properties and their inscription in the World Heritage List have steadily increased in recent years. Germany alone is involved in ten international serial World Heritage sites, leading the list of countries with the most transboundary properties. To ensure the protection and preservation of these sites for future generations, the German component parts work closely with their counterparts in 23 other State Parties to the World Heritage Convention. These include eight out of nine of Germany's direct neighbours as well as nations in Eastern and Southern Europe, South America and Asia. In doing so, Germany contributes to the system of shared responsibility and international cooperation, which is at the heart of the Convention. Indeed, independently of common nominations and inscribed properties, World Heritage sites in Germany should increase efforts to provide unselfish support for States Parties that are underrepresented on the World Heritage List and further participate in the German World Heritage Foundation set up by the World Heritage property *Old Towns of Stralsund and Wismar* for this purpose. In this same spirit, ICOMOS Germany could organize an event to seek and develop the possibilities and perspectives of international cooperation in the World Heritage context – regardless of any more or less concrete nomination intentions that may be already under way.

The requirements for serial nominations are set out in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention together with those for the nomination process including extensions, manageability and values. The Guidelines' latest version of 31 July 2021 includes the respective paragraphs as follows:

### Nominated transboundary properties

134. A nominated property may be located:
- on the territory of a single State Party, or
  - on the territory of all concerned States Parties having adjacent borders (nominated transboundary property).
135. Wherever possible, nomination dossiers of transboundary sites should be prepared (see Annex 2B) and submitted by States Parties jointly in conformity with Ar-

ticle 11.3 of the Convention. The States Parties concerned shall establish a joint management committee or similar body to oversee the management of the whole nominated transboundary property.

136. Extensions to an existing World Heritage property located in one State Party may be proposed to become a transboundary property, with the consent of the State Party on the territory of which the existing World Heritage property is located.

### Nominated serial properties

137. Nominated serial property includes two or more component parts related by clearly defined links:
- Component parts should reflect cultural, social or functional links over time that provide, where relevant, landscape, ecological, evolutionary or habitat connectivity.
  - Each component part should contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property as a whole in a substantial, scientific, readily defined and discernible way, and may include, inter alia, intangible attributes. The resulting Outstanding Universal Value should be easily understood and communicated.
  - Consistently, and in order to avoid an excessive fragmentation of component parts, the process of nomination of the property, including the selection of the component parts, should take fully into account the overall manageability and coherence of the nominated property (see Paragraph 114).

and provided the series as a whole – and not necessarily its individual component parts – is of Outstanding Universal Value.

138. A serial nominated property may occur:
- on the territory of a single State Party (nominated serial national property); or
  - within the territory of different States Parties, which need not be contiguous and is nominated with the consent of all States Parties concerned (nominated serial transnational property).

138bis. The States Parties concerned shall establish a joint management committee or similar body to oversee the management of the whole of a nominated serial transnational property (see Paragraph 114). Extension to an existing World Heritage property located in one State Party may be proposed to become a transnational property, with the consent of the State Party on the territory of which the existing World Heritage property is located.

139. States Parties planning a group of transnational serial nomination dossiers linked by the same unifying cultural and/or natural concept and phased over different cycles are encouraged to prepare an agreed nomination strategy before their official submission, in order to inform the Committee of their intentions and to ensure better planning. In such cases, the nomination strategy should be discussed at the Preliminary Assessment stage and annexed to the subsequent nomination dossiers.

Good approaches to the selection of attributes and to the justification of values and criteria of architectural masterpieces and landmark buildings to be nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List can be found in the nomination dossier of the World Heritage site “The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier – an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement” (World Heritage since 2016, dossier no. 1321rev, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1321/>, consulted on 6 September 2022). In the course of the application process, a table was developed that reflects why and how each object from Le Corbusier’s œuvre was selected [Fig. 1]. It is the first example of identifying and listing attributes that justify the criteria and convey the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as a whole for a serial transcontinental property. In the course of the lengthy process, the series, which originally consisted of 22 component parts, was reduced to 17 sites. The format sets out concisely and precisely the relation between criteria and attributes and how the attributes of each component contribute to the OUV. The proposed criteria (ii) and (vi) are backed by four key attributes (A-D) and diversified by 13 further attributes; they are predominantly assigned to material, but also to intangible values conveying the OUV. Since the World Heritage Committee decided to also recognize criterion (i) this table does not perfectly harmonize with the textual version of the final statement; it is nevertheless a good example of the methodological mapping of attributes.

Attribute mapping is therefore a prerequisite for:

- drafting a statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) as the mission statement for the application process,
- elaborating a successful nomination dossier, including an internal comparative analysis in the case of a serial nomination and a mandatory external comparative analysis,

- managing a property through indicating what is needed to be maintained in order to sustain the Outstanding Universal Value,
- elaborating a management plan,
- conducting a Heritage Impact Assessment in order to effectively evaluate the impact of potential development projects on the Outstanding Universal Value.

Except for attributes related to authenticity, the term “attribute” has yet only been defined outside the Operational Guidelines, i.e. in the questionnaire for the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting (2018–2024, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/prcycle3/>, consulted on 6 September 2022). It explains the concept as follows: “Attributes can be physical qualities or fabric, or the relationships between them. Attributes can also be processes impacting on physical qualities, such as natural or agricultural processes, social arrangements or cultural practices that have shaped distinctive landscapes. For natural properties, they can include landscape features, habitats, aspects of environmental quality (such as intactness, high/pristine environmental quality), scale and naturalness of habitats, and size and viability of wildlife populations.” As a guiding principle, the OUV should ideally focus on approximately five key attributes and the nomination file should, roughly speaking, map no more than 15. Such concentration helps to avoid over-detailed presentations of attributes running the risk of losing focus on the essentials.

The World Heritage Convention is a property-based convention, which means that the physical attributes of a site have to express Outstanding Universal Value. Therefore, the principal challenge when defining the OUV is to identify, map and ensure the protection in particular of those physical attributes that justify the selection of at least one of the justification criteria (i) – (x). Moreover, the conditions of authenticity need to be considered. In this context it should be noted that there is a decisive difference between the criteria for cultural and natural heritage: whereas the cultural criteria refer to *attributes* and *values*, the natural criteria define *types* of heritage. Moreover, the *Operational Guidelines* stipulate concrete tangible and intangible attributes only for the conditions of *authenticity*, i.e. for cultural sites, as they list form and design, material and substance, traditions, techniques and management systems, location and setting, language and other forms of intangible heritage, and spirit and feeling. Last but not least, the conditions of *integrity* measure the whole- and intactness of a natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes.

On a general note, experts preparing World Heritage nominations should keep in mind that, thus far, only the best of the best, and never the complete œuvre of an architect has been inscribed. One should also bear in mind that, according to the Convention, only monuments, ensembles and sites can be recognized, but not movable heritage such as archives, collections and architectural legacies. When considering the nomination of buildings designed by Erich Mendelsohn, the first steps would be to select those properties that are believed to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value and to draft a provisional statement of Outstanding Universal Value accordingly.

## Outstanding Universal Value, criteria and attributes

**Name of the Property:**
*The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier – an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement.*

COMPONENT PARTS OF THE SERIAL NOMINATION In chronological order	CRITERION ii "How the buildings collectively had an exceptional global influence"			CRITERION vi "How the buildings reflect ideas"		
	Important interchange of human values over a span of time: Le Corbusier introduced new architectural and urban concepts which influenced the architectural discourse of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century worldwide. The transnational serial nomination is a built manifest of these new approaches and architectural concepts.			Intellectually or tangibly, Le Corbusier's work is strongly connected to the Modern Movement.		
	Attribute A An exceptional interchange of ideas in a global context. Global influence in the development of architecture, planning and their social concepts.			Attribute B Inventing a new aesthetic approach and a new architectural language, including the use of light, colour and space.		
	Outstanding global influence as a "masterpiece"	Strong influence and relation with a part of the world	Crystallization of ideas that had an exceptional global influence: prototype	Plastic innovation	Five Points of a New Architecture	Spatial innovation
1 – Maisons La Roche et Jeanneret, Paris, France, 1923		Worldwide influence, due to publications	The first expression of <i>Purism</i> in architecture	First use of purist polychrome in the interior and the exterior	First use of the <i>Five Points</i> before being published	Introduction of the concept of <i>Promenade architecturale</i>
2 – Petite villa au bord du lac Léman, Corseaux, Suisse, 1923			The archetype of the 'minimal house'			Ergonomic and functionalist conception of space
3 – Cité Frugès Pessac, France, 1924	Worker's houses designed as works of art		Attempt at Taylorism and industrialisation	Use of purist polychrome at an urban level		Spatial innovations in minimal spaces
4 – Maison Guiette Anvers, Belgique, 1926		Le Corbusier's first commission abroad, based on the <i>Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau</i>		Purism: sculptural approach of space		Promenade architecturale, or 4 <sup>th</sup> dimension of space
5 – Maisons de la Weissenhof-Siedlung, Stuttgart, Allemagne, 1927	Iconic images of a new residential architecture	Located in the Weissenhof-Siedlung in Stuttgart, where the confrontation between modernity and tradition culminates, observed by the whole world	First application of the theoretical model of the <i>Maison Citrohan</i>		First publication of the <i>Five points</i>	Flexible and modular spaces
6 – Villa Savoye et loge du jardinier, Poissy, France, 1928	The absolute Icon of Modern Movement		Manifesto, based on the <i>Five points</i>	Masterpiece of Purism. Sculptural design of the roof-terrace	Principles of the <i>Five points</i> applied at an extremely high level	Ramps, <i>architectural promenade</i> , solar roof-terrace

Fig. 1 Parts of the table "Outstanding Universal Value, criteria and attributes" reflecting the correlation of the criteria and attributes in a systematic way.



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Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, version of 31 July 2021, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/> (consulted last on 28.8.23)

## Credits

Fig. 1: The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an outstanding contribution to the Modern Movement (2015), p. 198.



# The Impact of Spirituality on Mendelsohn's Œuvre

## Ulrich Knufinke

# Erich Mendelsohn's Jewish Cemetery Complex in Königsberg (Kaliningrad): Cemetery Buildings as a Contribution to the Development of Architecture with Jewish Connotations in the Weimar Republic

Erich Mendelsohn's Jewish cemetery in Königsberg (today Kaliningrad, Russia) from 1927–29 has received comparatively little attention to date – presumably for several reasons: Königsberg is not in the focus of modern architecture research, the building task “Jewish cemetery” is typical “minority architecture”, and the building was destroyed in the so-called Reichspogromnacht in November 1938.<sup>1</sup> Thus, this paper aims to describe the project against the background of the history of modern “Jewish” architecture (i.e. architecture with a Jewish connotation), to which it made an important contribution.

The Königsberg cemetery was Mendelsohn's second project of this rather special architectural genre.<sup>2</sup> In 1911, the mourning hall and the tahara house in his hometown of Allenstein (today Olsztyn, Poland) were the first buildings he was ever able to realize<sup>3</sup> – but it was certainly not these buildings that prompted the Jewish community in Königsberg to commission Berlin's best-known avant-garde Jewish architect to design their new cemetery. Family connections of his wife Luise in Königsberg, however, may have played an important role.<sup>4</sup> After Allenstein, the Königsberg cemetery was one of only two other projects that Mendelsohn realized for a Jewish community in Germany, the second being the Jewish youth

home in Essen from 1932.<sup>5</sup> For 1912 it is documented that he made a competition entry for the synagogue in Augsburg.<sup>6</sup> As far as is known, however, he did not take part in the competitions for large synagogues and other cemetery projects of Jewish communities, which were announced between 1918 and 1933. Only once he was able to design a synagogue room, namely the one in the lodge building of the Bnai Brith in Tilsit.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently, the Königsberg synagogue community was already thinking about building a new cemetery before the First World War. In the correspondence with his wife Luise, who was related to the wealthy and respected Königsberg family Magnus, such a project is mentioned in 1914: Luise wanted to lobby community rabbi Vogelstein for a commission to her husband.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear whether Mendelsohn's sketches for a “Totenstadt” (“city of the dead”) and a “Krematorium” (“crematorium”), dated 1914, were created in connection with Luise's activities, but a certain relationship to the project realized later is unmistakable.<sup>9</sup>

In the correspondence between Luise and Erich, the “Leichenhalle” (“mortuary”) appears again in 1920, when Luise again turned to relatives and acquaintances in Königsberg.<sup>10</sup> The community was apparently looking for a suit-

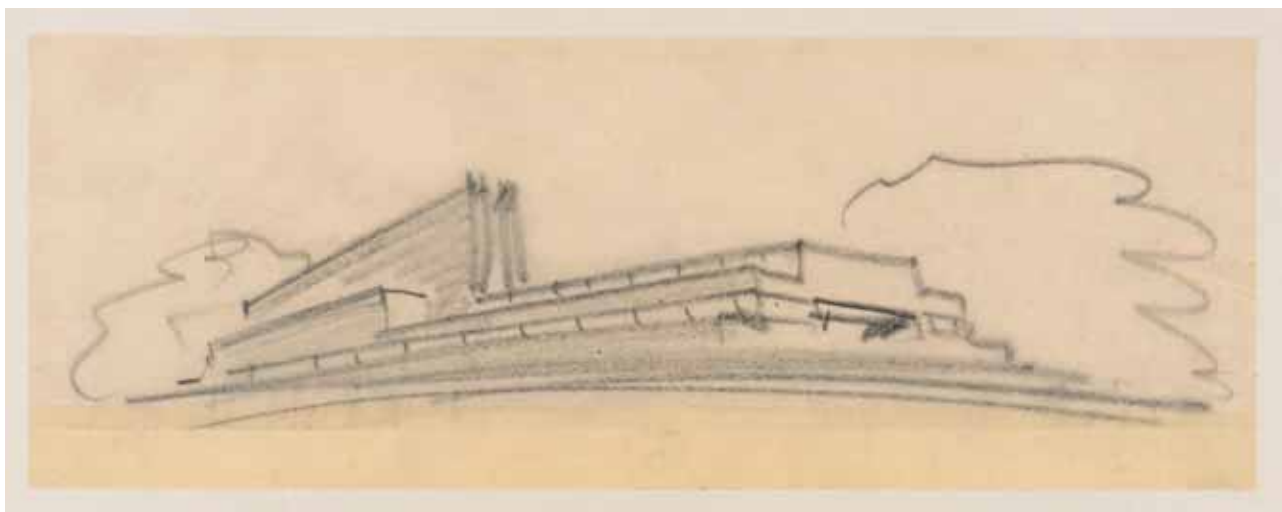


Fig. 1 Erich Mendelsohn, sketch of the Königsberg Jewish cemetery building, exterior, c. 1927



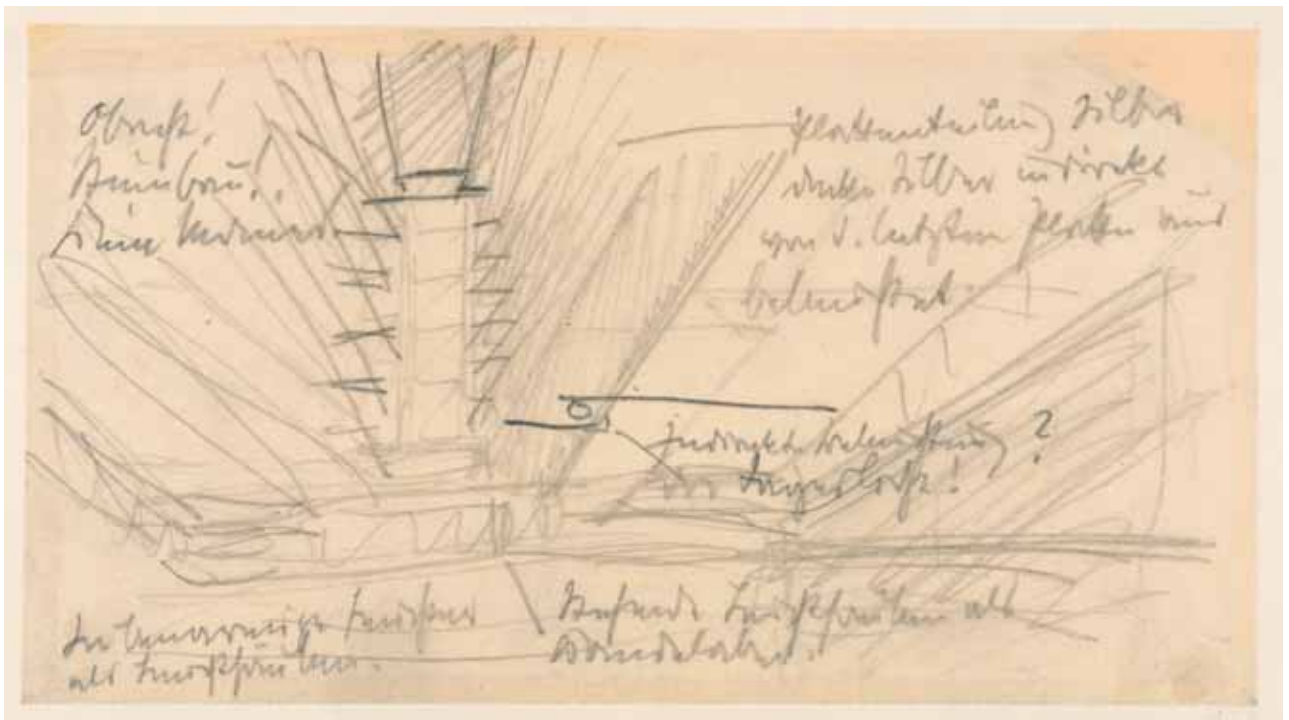


Fig. 2 Erich Mendelsohn, sketch of the Königsberg Jewish cemetery building, interior, c. 1927

able building plot at that time.<sup>11</sup> It is not yet clear how and when the building contract was signed; in any case, the cemetery and its buildings were constructed between 1927 and 1929.

So far, we know little about the design and construction process: Five perspective sketches for the mourning hall in Königsberg have survived in the Berlin Kunstbibliothek, which are probably to be dated to 1927 (Figs. 1, 2).<sup>12</sup> We also know of a detailed presentation model. Scaled design and construction drawings are not known at present. Mendelsohn published a plan of the entire complex, a photo of the model by Arthur Köster (1890–1965), and four photos in his book *Das Gesamtchaffen des Architekten* of 1930 (Figs. 3, 4, 5, and 6).<sup>13</sup> The Hungarian-born photographer Martin Munkácsi (1896–1963), who worked in Berlin during the Weimar Republic, was persecuted as a Jew and emigrated to the USA in 1934. He published another photo showing the cemetery from the street side as early as 1929 in a photo series about modern Königsberg in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*.<sup>14</sup> Since only the model photo of the cemetery explicitly appears in Köster's catalog raisonné,<sup>15</sup> while Munkácsi's photo appears in another contemporary article as well as another photo that is also reproduced in Mendelsohn's *Gesamtchaffen*,<sup>16</sup> it can be assumed that the exterior and interior photos were all taken by Munkácsi.

On the basis of these sources the cemetery complex can be described quite well: A forecourt, accompanied on the side by the apartment and administrative building with a flower store, sets the cemetery apart from the street. A gate in a low wall forms the entrance. From here, a central path leads to the mourning hall at the other end of the burial ground, which is divided into small fields by geometrically cut hedges. The hillside location allows the elongated cemetery building,

which is composed of several cubes, to develop a certain monumental effect. The dynamic contrast of the low, enclosing wings with their cantilevered roofs emphasizing the horizontal and the towering hall is already laid out in the known sketches as a dominant design idea. Many formal elements typical of Mendelsohn at this time can be found in the buildings, but the clear symmetry of the complex perhaps goes back to his early, sketchy designs of 1914.

The functions of the individual rooms can only be determined on the basis of the publication of 1930 and by means of comparisons. The mourning hall called "Friedhofsgebäude" was a multi-part structure: elongated, flat wing buildings enclosed an inner courtyard called "Totenhof" ("court of the dead") and continued to the right and left of the structure of the mourning hall. The wings on either side of the courtyard served as "ritual mortuary rooms". Here, traditionally separated by gender, apparently the so-called tahara took place, the ritual washing and preparation of the corpses for burial. It may be assumed that in both wings there was a room with a washstand required for the tahara, and probably also rooms that members of the funeral societies could use.

The mourners crossed the courtyard and entered through double doors into a foyer. Surprisingly, one did not enter the funeral hall along the central axis, but through doors leading into the low side aisles to the right and left of the central nave. One passed a podium with the place for the coffin, a sermon lectern, and side parapets with candlesticks, and had to turn around to look back at the podium. Opposite, on the east side, of which no photos survive, the floor plan shows another entrance, here in the center, and toilets on the right and left.

It is noteworthy that this part of the structure is set off from the mourning hall by a double wall. Possibly this is due to a

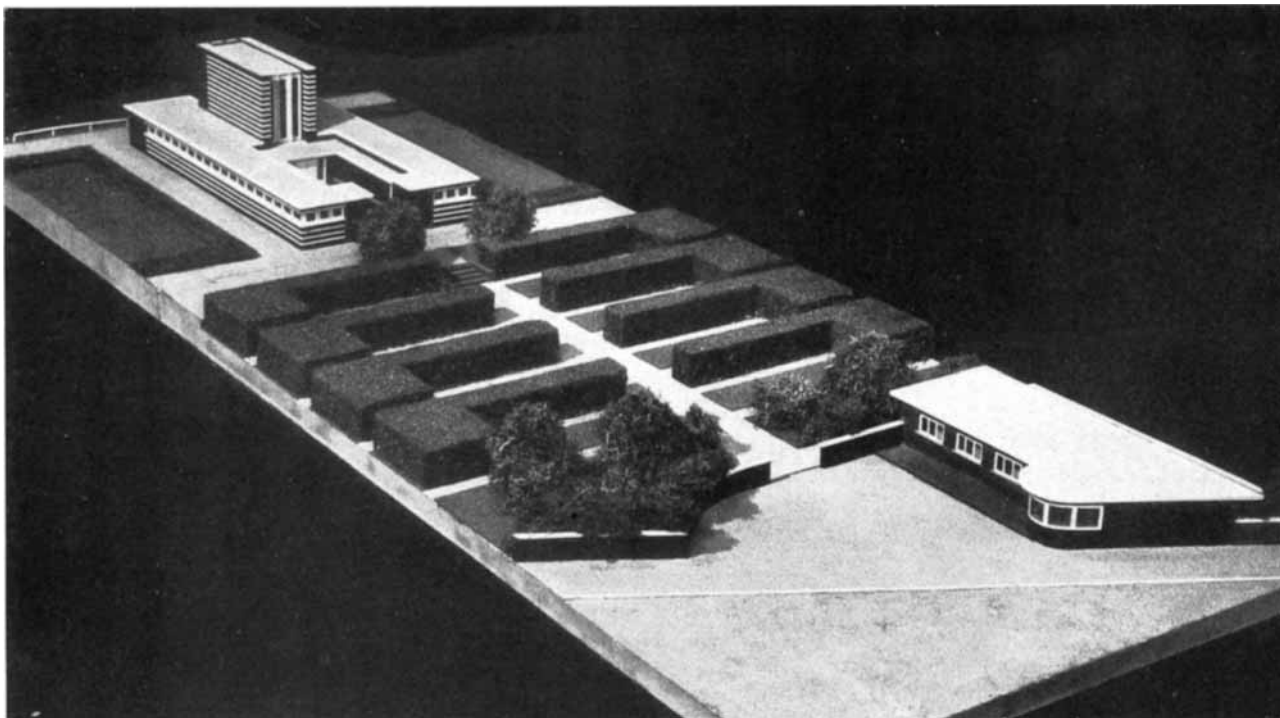


Fig. 3 Jewish cemetery in Königsberg/ Kaliningrad: model of the complex

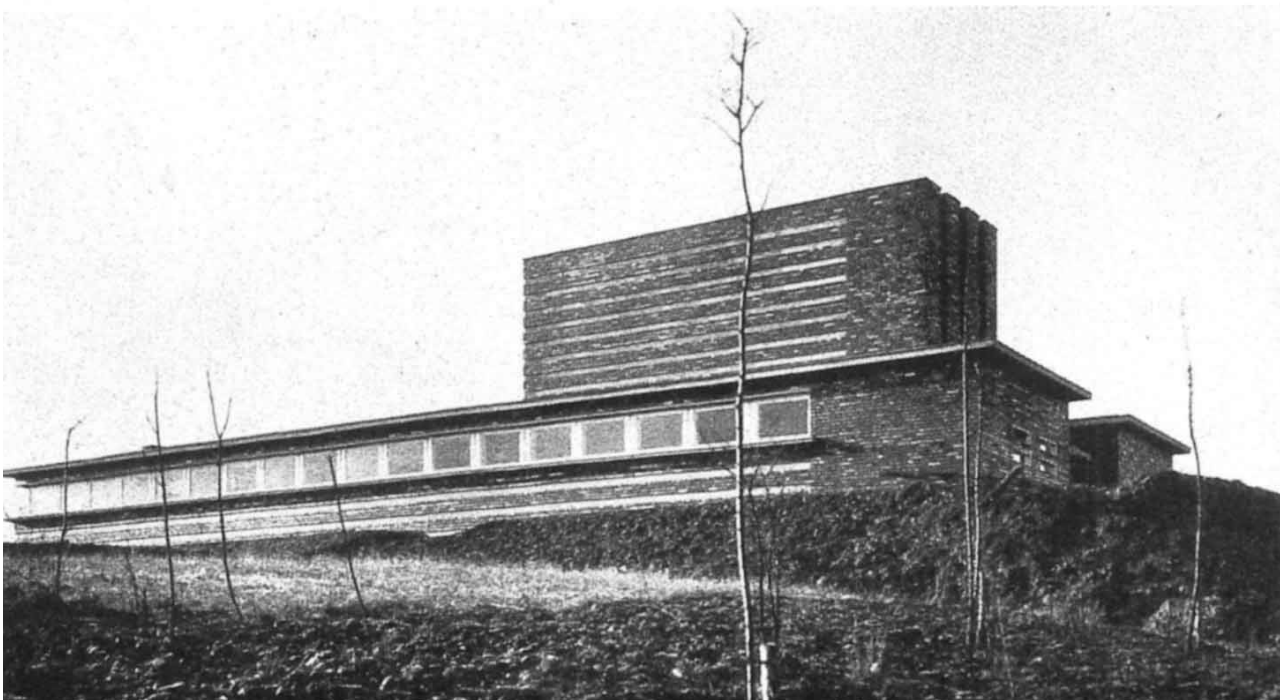


Fig. 4 Jewish cemetery in Königsberg/ Kaliningrad, exterior

religious regulation according to which the descendants of the priests of the Jerusalem Temple, the “kohanim”, are not allowed to be under the same roof with corpses for reasons of ritual purity. Nevertheless, to allow “kohanim” to participate in mourning ceremonies, rooms are occasionally added to the mourning halls in such a way that they can be separated from the hall where the corpse is kept. The double wall, strange at first sight, could indicate such a separation and would prove that the Jewish community and its architect were

well aware of the traditional religious regulations and wanted to strictly observe them.

In other respects, the construction of the mourning hall is remarkable: the central nave walls, divided horizontally into wide, bluish-white and narrow, deep-brown strips, ran from the entrance to the rear without supports. This allowed the entire width of the room to be used without obstructing the view, without sacrificing the dynamic and at the same time sacralizing effect of a basilica-like cross-section. Con-





veloped into a task for architects. Prior to this, there had been simple functional buildings for the tahara, and simple guard's dwellings in several Jewish cemeteries. An architectural design was not sought for the buildings located away from the settlements.

The first cemeteries designed as architecture and park by well-known architects date to the first third of the 19th century, the time when the so-called bourgeoisification of the Jews began and legal equality was gradually achieved. The complex in Frankfurt / Main, designed by Friedrich Rumpf and garden architect Sebastian Rinz, opened in 1828 and is one of the early examples.<sup>20</sup> Similar to later Königsberg, one enters a forecourt, which was accompanied by the rooms for the tahara. The neoclassical formal language enhances the architecture of the Jewish cemetery and puts it on an equal footing, albeit on a smaller scale, with the adjacent Christian cemetery of the same time.

Later in the 19th century, the mourning hall, which did not exist in traditional cemeteries, became the dominant element of Jewish cemetery architecture. An influential project was already created by the Jewish architect Edwin Oppler in Hanover, opened in 1864.<sup>21</sup> The mourning hall, designed in Romanesque-Gothic forms understood as "German style", forms a threshold between the space of the dead and that of the living.

cemetery architecture, both in terms of the size of the overall complex and the differentiation of the buildings.<sup>24</sup> As in Frankfurt or Hanover – and unlike later in Königsberg – the ensemble of cemetery buildings forms a threshold between the forecourt and the large burial ground. The mourning hall is modelled on central churches of the Renaissance. The design as a quasi-sacred building – analogous to the chapels of Christian cemeteries – reached a new quality.

Around 1900, the architecture of Jewish cemeteries – as well as synagogues – gradually turned away from explicitly historicising forms. Mendelsohn's Allenstein mourning hall is an example of this, as is the mourning hall in Celle by Otto Haesler (1910), the cemetery building in Worms-Hochheim by Georg Metzler (1911), or the one in Braunschweig by Georg Lübke (1914).<sup>25</sup>

During the period of the Weimar Republic, a few smaller and a few larger Jewish cemeteries were once again built. They form the closer context of the Königsberg cemetery. After a planning process of several years, a new cemetery in Leipzig was inaugurated in 1928, designed by Wilhelm Haller (1884–1956).<sup>26</sup> The cemetery buildings were destroyed in 1938–39. The layout of the buildings is based on the Berlin model and fits stylistically with the "jagged Expressionism" popular in Leipzig at the time (Fig. 7).

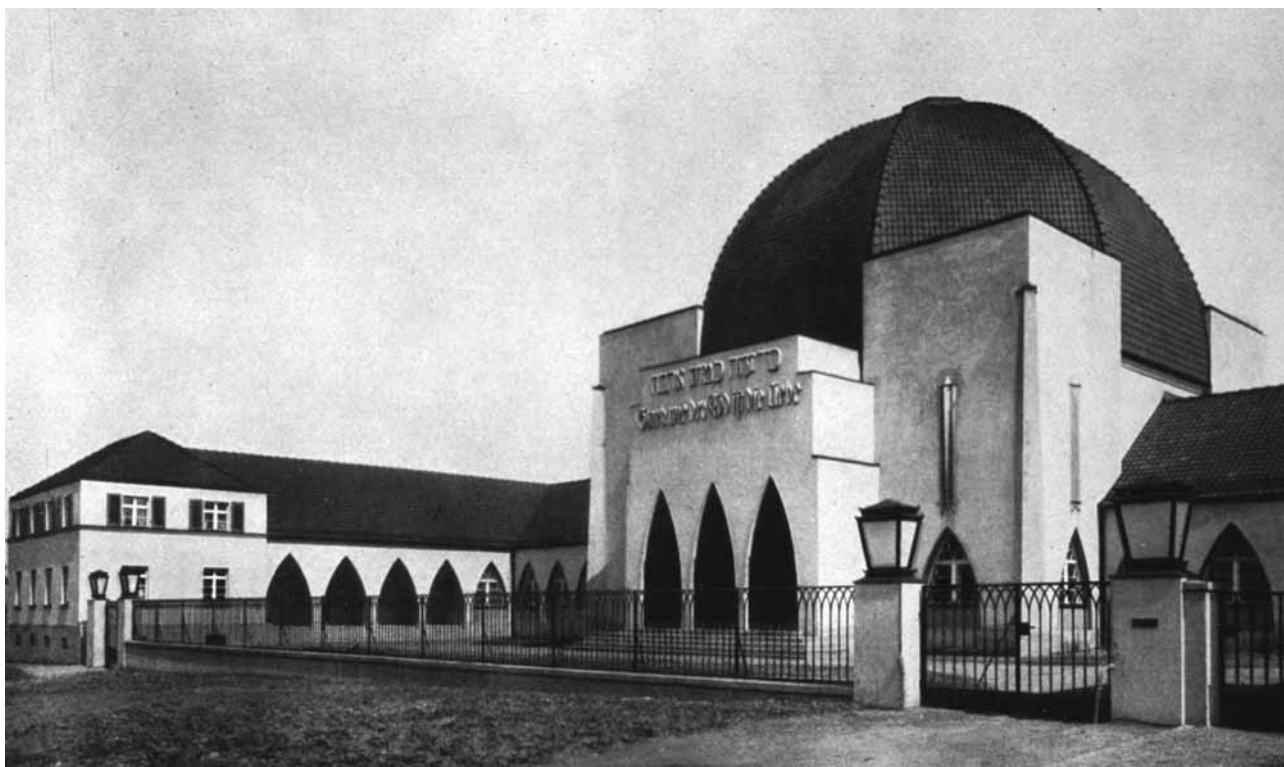


Fig. 7 Jewish cemetery in Leipzig, Delitzscher Straße, architect Wilhelm Haller, 1928

Functionally and spatially similar, but in a different style, is the mourning hall in Mainz by Eduard Kreyssig from 1881.<sup>22</sup> The Moorish-inspired forms were often used for Jewish buildings at that time to distinguish them from Christian ones.<sup>23</sup> The Jewish cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee, completed in 1880, is of particular importance for the history of Jewish

Haller's interpretation of his design was published on the occasion of the opening: "It means a weakness when, for example, the Jew in Germany builds his places of worship in Moorish forms and persuades himself that they are Jewish because they were used for a time in certain areas."<sup>27</sup> Haller thus opposes Historicism and provides a "formula" for the

development of a genuinely Jewish architecture or art: “Art is a product of several factors: of time (it must not be a copy of earlier centuries), of place (it must be down-to-earth, must not stand alien in its surroundings), of tradition (which must not be completely denied, as in Art Nouveau, but must nevertheless participate only underground), and of individuality (the practicing artist must possess it). [...] A purely Jewish art can therefore only arise in Palestine.”<sup>28</sup> Haller thus gives a cultural-Zionist answer to the question of Jewish architecture – like Mendelsohn, he was already interested in the developments in Palestine in the 1920s.

The largest Jewish cemetery complex of the Weimar Republic period was built in Frankfurt am Main until 1929 (Fig. 8), designed by Fritz Nathan (1891–1960). Monumental austerity characterizes the dark red brick architecture.<sup>29</sup> Nathan commented on his design in two articles: “The outer appearance of the portal, the enclosure and the buildings should achieve a consecrated monumentality.”<sup>30</sup> “Generations will be buried here, and the forms and customs in which this burial takes place and the mourning manifests itself will remain the same, as they have remained unchanged for centuries. It is in this sense that this temple of mourning, Jewish mourning, is created in all its serious sobriety.”<sup>31</sup>

Like Mendelsohn, Haller, who emigrated to Palestine in 1933, and Nathan, who started a new career in the United States after his emigration in 1938, were active in the Jewish community as members of Jewish congregations and associations. They too found their clients almost exclusively in Jewish circles.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the projects and buildings of Jewish communities were also of interest to general architectural journals and were part of architectural exhibitions of the time. In 1930, Curt Horn, in an article for the journal *Kunst und Kirche*, classified the Königsberg mourning hall among the successful examples of a general new sacral architecture.<sup>33</sup> In 1930, the same magazine published the article “Jüdische Kultbauten” by Karl Schwarz, who wrote: “In our days, Jewish cult building is undergoing the same transformations toward factually emphasized and unostentatiously dignified design as the cult buildings of the other denominations.”<sup>34</sup> Jewish buildings were included in the discourse of modern sacred architecture.

As can be seen in the interpretive contributions of Mendelsohn, Haller, and Nathan in different perspectives, the Jewish architects certainly saw their works in the context of this “new sacrality” (analogous with “Neues Bauen” / “New Building” and “Neue Sachlichkeit” / “New Objectivity”), which wanted to break away from the traditional canon. For Jewish buildings, this had to be an ambiguous term: On the one hand, the “genuinely Jewish” (das “eigenartig Jüdische”<sup>35</sup>) was to be defined in contrast to the Christian majority and in return to ideas and concepts with Jewish connotations, but on the other hand, it was also necessary to counter the anti-Semitic prejudice of “foreignness”.<sup>36</sup> Mendelsohn’s reference to the landscape as the starting point of his design may therefore reflect both: His personal

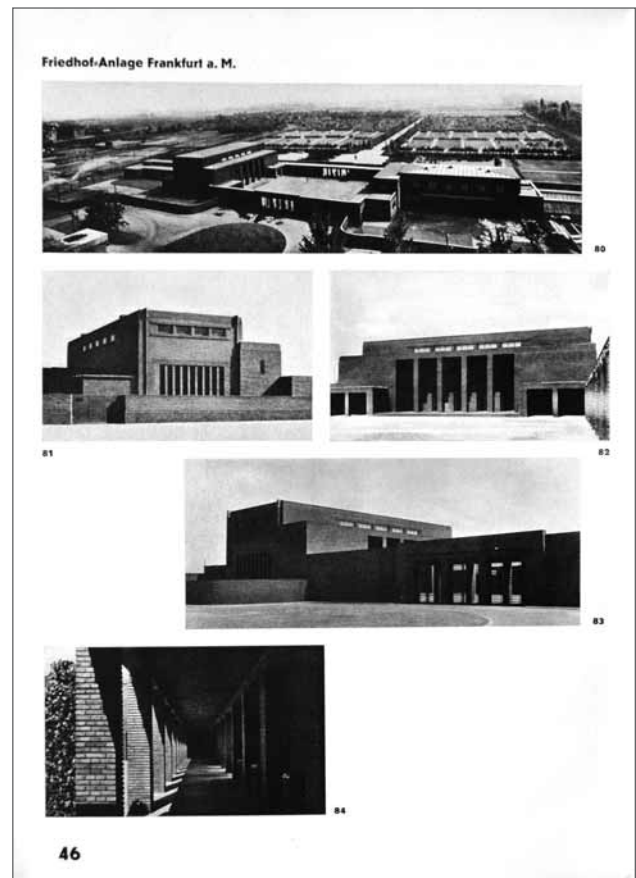


Fig. 8 Jewish cemetery in Frankfurt/Main, Eckenheimer Landstraße, architect Fritz Nathan, 1929

attachment to the East Prussian landscape, but also the intention to characterize the Jewish building as “down-to-earth”, as part of the landscape – and thus the Jewish community as part of society.

Mendelsohn’s Königsberg mourning hall found a certain formal successor at the Jewish cemetery in Essen-Huttrop.<sup>37</sup> The cemetery building was erected there after plans by Hermann Finger in 1931 – at about the same time, planning began for the Jewish youth center in the city by Mendelsohn, opened in 1932 and destroyed in 1938.

The influence of the Königsberg design on Mendelsohn’s own work, for example on his synagogue projects for Palestine and his Jewish community centers and synagogues in the USA, cannot be discussed further here. What is striking, however, is how he still took up the concept of the quasi-three-nave hall again in his last realized building, the Mount Zion Synagogue in St. Paul, Minnesota (1950–54).<sup>38</sup> That he was further interested in an “abstract sacralization” of space is obvious – here the Königsberg mourning hall offered him a rare opportunity for realization.

The beginning of the National Socialist rule very soon limited the building activity of Jewish communities. The Königsberg mourning hall was destroyed down to its foundation walls in the course of the Reichspogromnacht in 1938, and the cemetery has been largely devastated to this day. Only the entrance building and parts of the wall still exist.<sup>39</sup>

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Fig. 3: Photo: Arthur Köster, in: Erich Mendelsohn, Das Gesamtschaffen des Architekten, Berlin 1930, p. 171

Fig. 4: In: Erich Mendelsohn, Das Gesamtschaffen des Architekten, Berlin 1930, p. 170

Figs. 5, 6: Photo: Martin Munkacsy, 1929, in: Erich Mendelsohn, Das Gesamtschaffen des Architekten, Berlin 1930, pp. 172f.

Fig. 7: Photo after: Max Reimann, Wilhelm Haller, Berlin, Leipzig, Wien 1930, p. 6

Fig. 8: Photo after: Hans Herkommer (ed.), Kirchliche Kunst der Gegenwart, Stuttgart 1930, p. 46

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Zevi, Mendelsohn, 1999, pp. 128–129; James, *Berliner Bauten*, 1998, pp. 172–177; see also Czeczot, *Mendelsohns Weg*, 2010, pp. 36–43.
- <sup>2</sup> On Jewish cemetery architecture see Knufinke, *Bauwerke*, 2007; Petzet and Haspel (eds.), 2011; and Klein, *Metropolitan Jewish Cemeteries*, 2018.
- <sup>3</sup> Zevi, Mendelsohn, 1999, p. 6.
- <sup>4</sup> On the Mendelsohns and East Prussia see Leiserowitz, *Ślady Ericha Mendelsohna*, 2016, pp. 9–24. The author thanks Prof. Leiserowitz, Warsaw, for her help.
- <sup>5</sup> Knufinke, *Mendelsohns Projekte im Rheinland*, 2018, pp. 128–131 (German), pp. 136–140 (English).
- <sup>6</sup> Letter from Erich Mendelsohn to Luise, Munich, June 9, 1912, EMA Virtuelles Erich Mendelsohn Archiv (visited September 3, 2022). The synagogue was erected after a design by Fritz Nathan and Heinrich between 1914 and 1917; see Schönhagen (ed.), *Augsburger Synagoge*, 2010.
- <sup>7</sup> See James, *Berliner Bauten*, 1998, pp. 172–174.
- <sup>8</sup> Letters from Luise Mendelsohn to Erich, Königsberg, March 20 and 24, 1914 (EMA). On the history of the Königsberg Jewish community see Schüler-Springorum, *Die jüdische Minderheit*, 1996; the cemetery is not mentioned there.
- <sup>9</sup> Zevi, Mendelsohn, 1999, pp. 14f., there dated 1914.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter from Luise Mendelsohn to Erich, Gilgenburg, June 3, 1920 (EMA).
- <sup>11</sup> Letter from Erich Mendelsohn to Luise, Charlottenburg, June 5, 1920 (EMA).
- <sup>12</sup> Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Ident. Nr. Hdz E.M. 124; 125; 126, 127,1; 127, 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Mendelsohn, *Das Gesamttschaffen*, 1930, pp. 170–173.
- <sup>14</sup> P. Sc., *Die Entwicklung*, 1929, p. 2276.
- <sup>15</sup> On Köster see: Förster, *Masse braucht Licht*, 2008; on the photo of the model see pp. 331, 385, and 390.
- <sup>16</sup> Horn, *Das praktische Ergebnis*, 1929/30, p. 89 (the name of the photographer is not mentioned).
- <sup>17</sup> A photo of a detail of the window is published in: Lotz, *Mosaik und Glasmalerei*, 1930, p. 569.
- <sup>18</sup> On Großberg see e.g.: Fehlmann (ed.), *Carl Großberg*, 1994.
- <sup>19</sup> Quotation taken from Leiserowitz, *Ślady Ericha Mendelsohna*, 2016, pp. 8–9, there quoted from *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung*, August 12, 1929.
- <sup>20</sup> Knufinke, *Bauwerke*, 2007, pp. 136–138.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167–175.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197–199.
- <sup>23</sup> On the discourse on an appropriate “style” for Jewish buildings in the German speaking countries see Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen in Deutschland*, 1981.
- <sup>24</sup> Knufinke, *Bauwerke*, 2007, pp. 216–219.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245–252.
- <sup>26</sup> On Haller see Hocquél (ed.), *Wilhelm Ze’ev Haller*, 2019; Knufinke, *Wilhelm Zeev Haller*, 2006, pp. 129–176.
- <sup>27</sup> Haller, *Friedhöfe*, 1928, p. 163.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163–164.
- <sup>29</sup> Knufinke, *Bauwerke*, 2007, pp. 291–297; on Nathan see Schenk and Behrmann, *Fritz Nathan*, 2015.
- <sup>30</sup> Nathan, *Israelitischer Friedhof*, 1930, p. 1784.
- <sup>31</sup> Nathan, *Baubeschreibung*, 1929, p. 70.
- <sup>32</sup> On the importance of a professional network for Jewish émigré architects see e.g. Knufinke, *Ausbildungs- und Karrierewege*, 2019, pp. 117–126.
- <sup>33</sup> Horn, *Das praktische Ergebnis*, 1929/30.
- <sup>34</sup> Schwarz, *Jüdische Kultbauten*, 1930, p. 89.
- <sup>35</sup> Gurlitt, *Kirchen*, 1906, p. 147.
- <sup>36</sup> Knufinke, *Zur „Entdeckung“*, 2010, pp. 597–622.
- <sup>37</sup> Knufinke, *Bauwerke*, 2007, pp. 289f.
- <sup>38</sup> See e.g. Zevi, Mendelsohn, 1999, pp. 370–383.
- <sup>39</sup> See a photo from the 1970s in Czeczot, *Mendelsohns Weg*, 2010, p. 42; Krohn and Stavagna, *Erich Mendelsohn*, 2022, p. 102.





## Alona Nitzan-Shiftan

# From Berlin to Jerusalem: Erich Mendelsohn, Martin Buber, and the Jewish Encounter with a Rotating World

Like most German Zionists of his generation, Erich Mendelsohn was deeply touched by Martin Buber's *Three speeches on Judaism* that he sent his spouse Luise in 1914, admitting that "it contains (...) the strict confession of my Jewishness (...). And indeed, exactly as the mixture Buber attempts to realize."<sup>1</sup> This mixture pertains to *religion, art, and politics*, and in his own world, *to Judaism, architecture, and Zionism*, or more broadly, *supranationalism*.

Unlike his late architecture in the USA, Mendelsohn's major buildings in Weimar Germany and Mandate Palestine were not commissioned for spiritual activity. Nevertheless, he was deeply interested in spirituality as the essence of his creative process. In this paper I wish to demonstrate the connections between Mendelsohn's Jewish faith, Oriental identity, situated modern architecture and supranational politics that led him to reject "international architecture" in Berlin and embrace Arab architecture in Jerusalem. The spiritual thinker he followed throughout this itinerary remained Martin Buber.

### Berlin

The perception of modernity as a rupture was deeply rooted in German intellectual culture. Louis Dumont argues that unlike the French, for whom the enlightened individual was a socio-political concept, for the German the journey through modernity was an internal-spiritual domain, originating in Luther's reformation.<sup>2</sup> The concept of *Bildung* was accordingly central to modern German culture, seeking unity between the development and cultivation of the self *and* the organic modern community.

The tension between *culture*, associated with community, and *civilization*, affiliated with society, shaped the rise of modernism in Germany. It was a tension between materiality, organicism and continuity of traditional ways of life as opposed to form, abstraction, formalism, and industrial repetition.<sup>3</sup> Until World War I architects believed in their capacity to "culturize" civilization and harness the machine and industrial modes of production to advance aesthetic architectural perception, geared toward a new order – universal, abstract, and devoid of spiritual and national overloads.<sup>4</sup> But the Great War, its aftermath, and the rise of various nationalisms

dimmed this utopian quest to infuse the machine age with cultural fervor.

According to Alan Colquhoun, the reform of German art was tied to questions of national identity from the very start and kept underlining much of mature abstract modernism as well.<sup>5</sup> But how did it affect the modernism of Germany's national other, the Jew, and in our case, Erich Mendelsohn? Young Jewish intellectuals were interested in Zionism as an alternative response to the modern condition and the nationalism it



Fig. 1 Erich Mendelsohn, Schocken Department Store, Stuttgart (1926–1928), aerial view

provoked. Buber was so instrumental for them because he articulated the existential challenges of the modern condition as a cultural and spiritual frontier. The seminal lectures that he delivered between 1909 and 1911 portrayed the Jew as a forerunner of life in a state of separation and alienation from the forces of reality.<sup>6</sup> If the crisis of modernity is a state of exile of modern man from the authenticity of his life, then for the Jew, Buber argues, this is a long-lived experience: “He [the Jew] has not merely discerned the world’s anxiety, he has suffered it.”<sup>7</sup>

Architectural historians consistently decipher the response of architecture to the rift modernity has opened in urban life, referring to multiple attitudes ranging from reconstruction to silence.<sup>8</sup> Buber, who was active in the avant-garde circles of Munich at the time Mendelsohn studied there, crafted for the Jew a unique position vis-à-vis this modern rift. The Jew, he argues, “experiences it in his innermost self, as the duality of the I.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, he continues, it is also “within his power to be as well the bearer of the world’s unification.”<sup>10</sup> We will turn soon to the way the Jew as an artist operates through this state of being. What is important for us now is the message running through Buber’s early lectures – he portrayed the Jew as the agent of reconciliation with modernity.

I propose that this is exactly the role Mendelsohn took upon himself as an architect. Moreover, his self-proclaimed mission demands of him, as we shall see in his writing, the most dynamic experience of modernity, an intense engagement, a sincere sensual embrace. I would like to extend this proposition to the quality of Jewish identity that Buber inspired. In a seminal essay Paul Mendes-Flohr describes the allure of the Orient in turn-of-the-century Germany that ran through the avant-garde circles and enlivened the intellectual circles of both Buber and Mendelsohn.<sup>11</sup> In German culture, unlike in contemporary British and French colonial cultures, the Orient writ large was a source of inspiration and desire that posed a counterpart to “the ruthless hegemony of Reason, and its superficial, mechanistic view of reality.”<sup>12</sup> By turning the derogative identification of the Jew as Oriental into a virtue, Buber offered a sizable group of German Jews, and architects among them, an elusive cypher for authentic expression, for *in-situ* architecture that would pose an alternative to what they perceived as a utilitarian, instrumental architecture, surrendering to standardized modes of production.<sup>13</sup> It means that the identification as oriental did not pertain only to the work Mendelsohn conducted in Palestine; rather, he perceived it as a virtue that demanded of him a dynamic engagement with the situation he encountered.

In a lecture Mendelsohn delivered in 1923, he argued for the moral campus of the architect. His view was: “Only considering all aspects of life, with the facts of the whole of reality in mind, can a single form be articulated without running the risk of shortsightedness and narcissism. We face reality energetically and are therefore forced to cope with its entirety.”<sup>14</sup>

I suggest unpacking this statement by turning to Louis Hammer’s pervasive account on the relevance of Buber’s philosophy to aesthetics. If one sees the artist through Buber’s teaching, Hammer argues, one finds “that man who has a peculiar way of *remaining faithful to what meets him in the*

*world.*”<sup>15</sup> Note that the focus is not on the artist who confronts the world, who brings his self to bear on reality, but rather, for Buber the artist is the one who is capable of a genuine meeting with that which exist out there, he is the one who encounters, absorbs and processes anew every aspect of a given reality in any specific moment.

According to Hammer, when the artist meets a given condition “[h]e seeks its ‘form’ in a creation or image. He answers the demand which this form makes on him to be made into a work.”<sup>16</sup> The origin of an architectural design, in our case, is necessarily rooted in what the architect meets, whether it is in the modern metropolis, the shores of Britain, the desert of Palestine, or alternatively, in the US, the presence of the Pacific Ocean. Since the ‘form’ of each place is fundamentally different, and since it is that specific form that demands of the architect to become a building, the architectural response must be faithful to the specificities of the site that meets the architect. This is the reason Mendelsohn was so vehemently opposed to the notion of an “international architecture” as it was articulated by the Bauhaus masters in the famous 1923 exhibition that carried this name, and this is why he mocked the architects in Tel Aviv who copied his designs for the metropolis of Berlin into a calm Garden City on the shore of the Mediterranean.

Hammer explains not only the peculiar way the artist meets reality, but the aesthetic realization of this encounter: “The artist, *qua* artist, perceives the world as figuration, as determinate form that can be brought to the fullness of a completed work. The artist elicits the work of art from the spheres of the senses or language. He helps bring to completeness what is prefigured in the sense world (...).”<sup>17</sup> The perception of the world as figuration, as a form that makes a demand on the artist to become a work, recalls Louis Kahn’s thinking of form as a spatial idea, as figuring a spatial form of teaching or faith before it is realized as architecture. While Kahn was preoccupied primarily with institutions of human conduct, Mendelsohn’s work in Berlin focused on deciphering the form of the overwhelming modern metropolis.

In the same 1923 lecture on “The International Consensus on the New Architectural Concept” Mendelsohn describes the connection between sensual experience and architectural form. He believes that: “Contemporary man, in the excitement of his fast life, can only find balance in the stress free horizontal. *Only by breaking through the will to reality* [italics added] can he master his restlessness, only through the most complete rapidity can he overcome his haste. Then the rotating earth will stand still!”<sup>18</sup>

In this statement Mendelsohn seeks the form of life in the modern city and figures the contemporariness of urban phenomena “in the stress free horizontal.” The horizontal is the equilibrium, and one can reach such equilibrium “only by breaking through the will to reality.” This powerful statement does not describe the city as an external entity observed by the artist. Mendelsohn describes instead an intense tension between rapidity and rest, between rotation and stillness as a visceral experience (Fig. 1). “Breaking through the will to reality” is the capacity to embrace the extremities of modern life in the city as “the duality of the I”, to seek a form which is like the sea, an entity that figures the tension between ebb and flow. In



Fig. 2 Erich Mendelsohn, sketch of Hadassah University Medical Center, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem, exterior perspective, 1935

this statement it seems as if Mendelsohn has taken upon himself to act in light of Buber's teaching (according to Hammer's interpretation): "The demand placed on [the artist] is to realize the full possibilities of form within a given sphere. By doing this he helps bring man into genuine relation with what exist alongside him and over against him in the world."<sup>19</sup>

In Mendelsohn's words, he, the architect, helps bring "contemporary man" into a genuine relation with the "fast life" and "rotating earth" of the city. His reconciling deed is to figure the different spatial dimensions of *the horizontal* and its relation to earth and sky, dark and light, street and motion,

crowds and solitude. I suggest that Mendelsohn considered the actual deed, the engaged action, the immersion in an ever-changing world, as the consummation of his confessed Jewishness, "indeed, exactly as the mixture Buber attempts to realize."

## Jerusalem

We have seen that for Buber, and for Mendelsohn after him, the concept of the Orient stood for a Jewish identity, a mode of action, and a political alternative. The meeting of this Jew



qua Oriental with modernity remained faithful to *culture* as a necessary counterpart to *civilization*. German Jewish architects who emigrated to Palestine fostered ties between German and Zionist cultures and their related Orientalisms. They carefully studied and feverishly imagined Orient was a resource in their journey to find themselves as individuals and Zionists. Unlike political Zionists who wished to solve the predicament of *Jews* in a modern antisemitic world, they wished to revive *Judaism* as a national and spiritual culture, and therefore endorsed the political ideology of Cultural Zionism.<sup>20</sup> Ahad Ha'am, the father of Cultural Zionism, asked Jews to return to Zion, to revitalize their national and spiritual roots in Jerusalem, and from there to shed light onto all nations.<sup>21</sup> The momentous bond he envisioned between Jews and their ancient land was further developed by Buber, who envisioned the dawn of a new era in the Orient, one that would counter the modern crisis in the West.

The flattening of the world was a prime concern for Buber who maintained that *people* is an organic concept, *nation* is its form, and *nationalism* is an empty shell that constantly produces similar gestures: waving flags, singing anthems, and firing gun salutes.<sup>22</sup> Against this uniformity Buber advocated supra-national world order, maintaining the core culture of each people to enrich all nations. In Palestine, Buber rejected the regional partition to nation-states, and rallied instead, together with the Covenant of Peace group, a multi-ethnic political solution for post-Mandate Palestine.<sup>23</sup>

For Buber this was not only a solution to political tension, but rather a required cultural marriage between East and West that would lead to an Asiatic Renaissance for the mutual benefit of humanity.<sup>24</sup> "For this world-historical mission," he suggests in his lectures, "Europe has at its disposal a mediating people that has acquired all the wisdom and all the skills

of the Occident without losing its original Oriental Character, a people called to link Orient and Occident in fruitful reciprocity."<sup>25</sup> Instead of denigrating Jews as Oriental, Buber treated this feature of their identity as a virtue, assigning for Jews the role of a global avant-garde.

The ramifications of adopting this credo were grave. In Berlin Mendelsohn took upon himself to reconcile contemporary man with the rotating earth of the modern city that swunged technology, production, finance, and politics at an ever-increasing speed. In Palestine he was already disillusioned with the prospect of harnessing the forces of a deceptive progress in the West. The deeper his frustration, the greater his ambition. In his 1940 pamphlet "Palestine and the World of Tomorrow" he continues endorsing Buber's cultural Zionism,<sup>26</sup> returning in due course to the ideas he cited in 1914 when he sent Luise Buber's *Three Speeches on Judaism*.

These ideas motivated Mendelsohn's work in Palestine. As the most prominent architect practicing in Palestine, perhaps to this day, he meshed during his years in Jerusalem (1934–1941) his strict objection to the notion of "international architecture" with a similarly passionate rejection of its political implications. The Zionism he desired, he professes, "will go beyond our own country, beyond Europe, and will bless all nations. I am not at all talking about pro-internationalism. Internationalism means the nationless aestheticism of a decaying world. Super-nationalism, however, maintains national borders and delimitations as a requirement, yet frees humanity. Only this act can create a comprehensive culture (...)"<sup>27</sup> Mendelsohn based his ambition to create the architectural paragon of the Asiatic revival that Buber advocated on the precedent of the Greek Acropolis. Jerusalem and Athens are small, he argued, but both carry the potential for pivotal impact on world culture.<sup>28</sup> Since this impact intended to eclipse



Fig. 3 Erich Mendelsohn, Hadassah University Medical Center, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem, architectural model, 1935

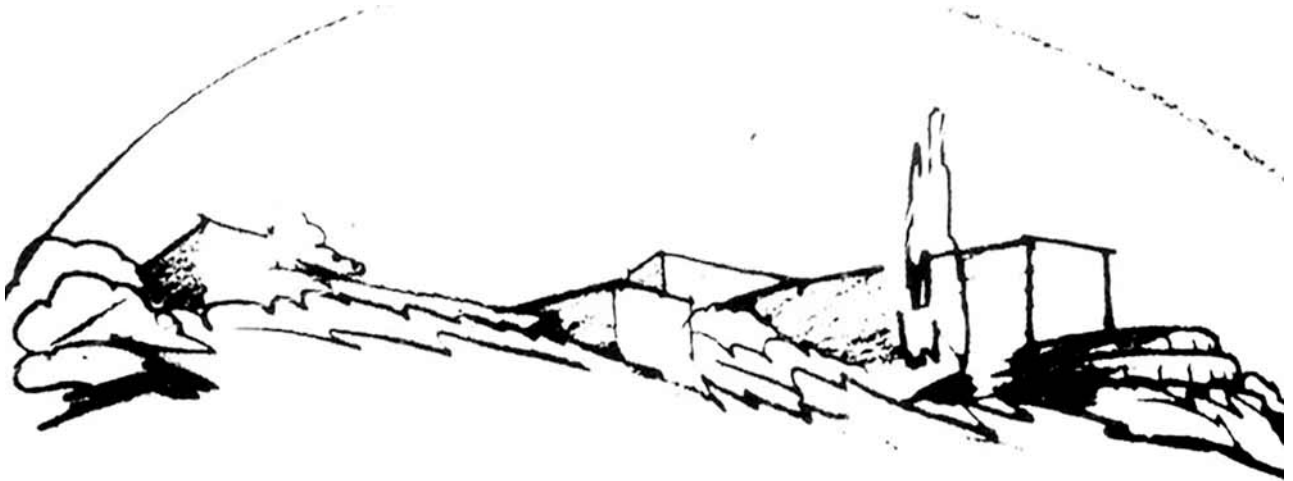


Fig. 4 Sketch of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, Jerusalem (1936–1938)

the declining West, Mendelsohn warmly embraced Buber’s reversed Orientalism that as we saw was prevalent in fin-de-siècle German avant-garde. Like Buber, he believed the Jew, as an Oriental person, is experienced in negotiating spirit and material. Once planting the Western seeds of modern technology in the virtuous land of Jerusalem, he envisioned a new type of modern architecture would carry cultural merits yet unknown.<sup>29</sup> His ambition was thus to architecturally effectuate the gist of Ahad Ha’am’s cultural Zionism: “to shed light onto the nations” (Fig. 2).

Although the volume of buildings that Mendelsohn was able to erect in the second half of the 1930s is outstanding compared to other modernists of his time, his attempt to realize his cultural Zionism *in situ* was short-lived, cut by yet another political exile in 1941 when Rommel’s forces neared Palestine.<sup>30</sup> Today, the scrutiny of his built work in Palestine, under repeated revisions and extensions, is arduous. It is not easy to detect the depth of his architectural propositions for what was then a scarcely built Palestine, particularly because the open landscapes he met were central to his architecture. We will nevertheless look briefly into one project to start grasping the merit of his work.

The Hadassah Hospital complex (1936–1938) exemplifies Mendelsohn’s Orientalist negotiation between East and West; between traditional typologies and modern form and technology.<sup>31</sup> The complex is composed of several elongated rectangular volumes laid perpendicularly to the north-south watershed running between the Mediterranean hills and the Judea desert. The facades of the long building are intentionally flat. The required stone that the British demanded for all building facades in Jerusalem’s historical core is clad around these volumes like a tight skin. The layout of the cut stone in vertical slabs reveals its non-structural enveloping function. The openings are carefully measured, modest in size to the south and deeply cut into the built volume in the north. Small or large, they are all cut out as if with a sharp knife, never interfering with the flatness of the cubic form. The planes of each box meet each other along a continuous, uninterrupted line that emphasizes the platonic

shape of the right-angled volume. Similarly, the opaque surface that always meets the ground fosters the notion of pure volumes emerging from the ground as complete organic shapes (Fig. 3).

The serenity of the elongated modern volumes stands in opposition to Mendelsohn’s freehand sketches. The latter reveal his fascination with enclosed courtyards, particularly of isolated khans, on the one hand, and the typology of the vernacular village – the built cubes that harmoniously descend the slope of the Judean hills on the other (Figs. 4 and 5). Mendelsohn resolved this seeming contradiction by introducing slim built connectors between the elongated volumes. These dividers, at times glazed at the bottom, circumscribe semi-closed courtyards that provide intimacy without betraying the grand and sweepingly restrained gesture of his venture into the desert (Figs. 6 and 7).

In a similar fashion to his immersive experience in Berlin, his active engagement with Jerusalem and the Judean desert aimed to reconcile extremities—European forms and tech-

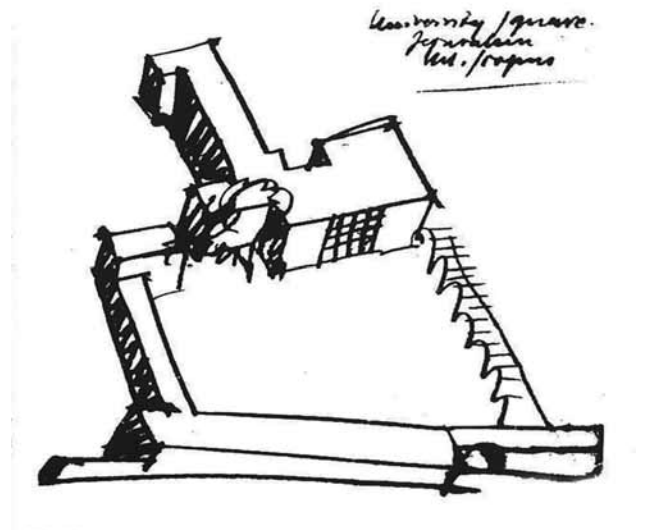


Fig. 5 Sketch of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, Jerusalem (1936–1938)



Fig. 6 Courtyard at the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, Jerusalem (1936–1938)

nologies and local typologies of Arab architecture, modern medicine and Oriental symbolism, open landscapes, clear horizon, and arid climate of the desert with the charged views of the Old City, its human density and Mediterranean climate. Both in Berlin and in Palestine his ideology was defeated by emerging nationalisms that alienated him from their political elites and dominant architectural discourses.

### Consistent philosophy through repeated exiles

In this short paper I argued for the continuities between Mendelsohn's work in different geo-political contexts by following his inspiration by Martin Buber's teachings and the ties he fostered between Judaism, art, and politics. From this perspective, Mendelsohn's Jewishness and espousal of Oriental identity did not pertain only to his work in Palestine but rather paved a constitutive path for his modernist architectural ideology. The remarkable difference between Zionist and British Orientalism was rooted in German versus British cultures. The British commitment to Palestinian building tradition emanated from their self-appointment as custodians of ancient crafts and modes of spatial expression, a notion that married British Orientalism with the Arts and Crafts movement. Mendelsohn, by contrast, considered the Semitic bond as a requirement for the Orient's new world order, and his reversed Orientalism therefore mitigated Arab and European merits. His ideology was therefore neither compatible with the socialist "new architecture" of Labor Zionism nor with British paternalist Orientalism.

Mendelsohn's insistence to meet every place on its own spatial and temporal terms, and to foresee an innovative future that neither negates the present nor articulates a modern canon, style or epic monument of an age or a nation made both his architecture and its ideology less attractive in an age of grand narratives that fueled political conflicts. He deprived nationalists from the capacity to forge a sense of possession over a body of work that would build a sense of identity vis-à-vis political frontiers. He was similarly ineffective in creating a school, in providing a menu for architectural modernism that would ease the efforts of his followers. In fact, he did the opposite – he ridiculed the imitation of his architecture that echoed architectural forms without accounting to the spirit they convey.

One may argue that his interdisciplinarity and supranationalism foresaw the critique of the modern movement at a time when it was still building up its political and professional hegemony. There is a host of concerns we identify with post-World-War-Two architectural culture that preoccupied Mendelsohn in the interwar period, including regional expression, situated architecture, material expressiveness, urban complicity, and more. His inherent suspicion toward any form of chauvinist nationalism as well as the global network he labored to weave during the interwar period, render his architectural ideology more compatible with the global culture that postdated his death. Perhaps Mendelsohn can be best "known for buildings and writings that embrace the energy of modernity."<sup>32</sup> That this exposé was chosen by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to describe Rem Koolhaas suggests how relevant the heritage of Mendelsohn's modernism is today.

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## Notes

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Fig. 7 The hall at the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, Jerusalem (1936–1938)





Kathleen James-Chakraborty

## Spiritual Heritage: Mendelsohn's Late Synagogues in the US

It is very easy when considering the architecture of Erich Mendelsohn to focus upon the Expressionist who drew fanciful sketches during World War I and tried to build the Einstein Tower in the same spirit, or on interwar Europe's most imaginative commercial architect, whose streamlined curves were copied around the world. Less often remembered, at least outside Israel, is the man who commuted from London to a windmill in Jerusalem, from which he tried to design the kind of buildings he thought appropriate to a Jewish homeland. Even less well known, including in the very communities in which they stand, is the architect of four of the most impressive and influential synagogues in the history of architecture in the United States.

Before I turn to why they should be remembered, I would like to speculate about why they have been forgotten. There are several reasons for this. Mendelsohn, widely viewed in the 1920s as the German expert on American architecture, to which he traveled in 1924, returned to the United States in 1941, where an exhibit on his work opened at New York's Museum of Modern Art just days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor turned everyone's attention instead to war. While Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe had already settled into prestigious teaching positions, Mendelsohn, who was in the 1920s and early thirties better known in the United States than either former director of the Bauhaus, struggled to find his place. One reason for this was indeed that fame, which identified him with forms that were no longer new. Then, he tried to assimilate, placing his bet on what proved to be the wrong horse. Already in 1924, he had befriended Lewis Mumford. In 1945, he moved to San Francisco to establish an office in the orbit of William Wurster, the man who was, after Frank Lloyd Wright, widely viewed, not least by Mumford, as the country's most progressive architect. By the end of the forties, however, Wurster's star would be eclipsed, not only by Mies and Gropius, but by those, beginning with Marcel Breuer, who had studied with Gropius at the Bauhaus and at Harvard. Meanwhile, Mendelsohn's success in establishing a national practice – he seemed always to be in the air years before the idea of a jet set was invented – also diminished his impact. There remains no community, except San Francisco, in which one could view more than one of the major works he did manage to complete

in the late 1940s and early 1950s. And even there one can find only two, the nearly immediately badly altered Maimonides Hospital and the Russell House. Finally, he died too soon, already in 1953, sixteen years before Gropius and Mies, and before the impact of his late work had had a chance to be fully absorbed.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, if one belonged to the many increasingly prosperous postwar Jewish families in the United States moving from the center city to the suburbs and returning to the synagogue as the focus of post-Holocaust Conservative or Reform observance, Mendelsohn was everywhere. In addition to his four synagogues outside St. Louis and Cleveland and in Grand Rapids and St. Paul, he submitted designs for commissions in Dallas, Baltimore, and Washington.<sup>2</sup> As the most celebrated Jewish architect of the first half of the twentieth century, and a refugee from Nazi Germany who was also a committed Zionist, he was uniquely positioned to garner such commissions. There is no evidence that he was more interested in designing synagogues than department stores or office buildings, the bread and butter of his German work, or continuing the specialization in hospital architecture he had developed while living in Mandate Palestine. But it was Jewish congregations coming to terms with the new responsibility of American Jewry for the global Jewish community and with increasing prosperity that did not always equate with complete social acceptance who proved most willing to give him the opportunity to build.

Several factors came together here. First, the building boom of the 1920s meant that most downtowns in the United States already had all the office space they needed; only at the end of the 1950s would new office towers begin to sprout up again in impressive numbers. Second, the focus of retail development was shifting to the suburbs, where Victor Gruen, an Austrian Jewish émigré, would soon dominate the design of enclosed shopping malls.<sup>3</sup> But that same suburban growth also created demands for new religious structures, and to no religious group was making the right new impression more important during these years than to middle and upper middle-class Jews. Many only a generation or two removed from poverty, they still faced considerable discrimination regarding exactly where they could buy houses, but unlike Black Americans, they easily qualified for mortgages.<sup>4</sup> None of Mendel-





Fig. 1 Temple Ohabei Shalom, Blackhall, Clapp, and Whittemore, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1925, photo by John Phelan

sohn's synagogues were located, however, in entirely new neighborhoods. Instead, they were built in places that had prospered already during the interwar years and thus communicated a welcome sense of stability.

During the interwar years many American Jews had drifted away from the practice of a faith that they often associated with the old-fashioned customs of the old country. Already in the nineteenth century, Reform Judaism offered the most assimilated American Jews, many of the immigrants from Germany, a modern way of practicing their faith. By the 1920s conservative Judaism, which often appealed to those who had emigrated from further east, specialized in creating community centers, where social activities accompanied religious worship. Orthodoxy was on the wane. The shock of the Holocaust, which eradicated a third of the world's Jews, coupled with pride in the establishment of the state of Israel, spurred a revival of identification with the faith, and a sense of responsibility for its global welfare, that by the 1950s sent many Jews in the United States back to the synagogue on more than high holy days. Parents who no longer spoke Yiddish at home, dropped their children off at Saturday school to learn Hebrew and to socialize with other Jewish children, in the hopes that they would not marry outside the faith. And at a time when

many American clubs would not admit them, no matter how much money they had made, the synagogue's social halls provided what would today be described as a safe space, in which one could also network with those who shared similar aspirations and were increasingly achieving them.<sup>5</sup>

Already between the wars, Conservative congregations had led the creation of synagogues that doubled as community centers. Most of these buildings, like many major interwar Reform synagogues, were built in a vaguely Byzantine style that replaced the so-called Moorish (meaning Islamic, but often specifically inspired by Spanish examples such as the Great Mosque of Cordoba) and neoclassical buildings sponsored by wealthy reform congregations around the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fig. 1).<sup>6</sup>

After 1945, however, historicist references were beginning to appear passé. Especially among the well-educated Jews alert to new developments in the visual arts present in most Conservative and Reform congregations, there was increasing support for modern architecture and design.<sup>7</sup>

Mendelsohn's first break came in St. Louis, where he was commissioned to build the new B'nai Amoona (Fig. 2). This Conservative synagogue, led by the well-established Abraham Halpern, was moving west out of the city, although exactly how far west was a matter of considerable discussion. In the end, Mendelsohn's building was constructed in University City, a near-in suburb; the congregation moved further out in 1985.<sup>8</sup> The Center of Creative Arts, now one of the most successful community arts organizations in the United States, was founded in an effort to find a new use for the building, which has since gained two major extensions.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most striking things about B'nai Amoona, and one which survives intact today, is Mendelsohn's approach to the site. On the one hand he wanted a dramatic gesture that would be clearly visible from a major boulevard several blocks away. The great sweep of the arch over the sanctuary provided this. On the other, he treated the complex in a surprisingly urbanistic manner. The two facades bounding the corner site both emphatically meet the street, even as he pushed the sanctuary back to the interior of the site. Classrooms and offices defined a small interior courtyard, but



Fig. 1 B'nai Amoona, Erich Mendelsohn, University City, Missouri, 1950, photo by Michael Craig Palmer



Fig. 3 Park Synagogue, Erich Mendelsohn, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 1953, photo by Michael Craig Palmer

the most important aspect of the plan was the way in which Mendelsohn placed the social hall in front of the sanctuary, from which it was separated by a folding wall that could be opened to accommodate the larger attendance that marked High Holy Days. Mendelsohn was very proud of this much imitated feature, although he had not actually invented it. B'nai Amoona garnered an enormous amount of national attention, including from the Jewish and architectural communities.<sup>10</sup> Although, like almost all ambitious commissions completed during these years, it cost more than expected, the congregation had every reason to be extremely proud of the result. Moreover, the involvement of Halpern, a leading figure in the national Conservative movement, ensured that it garnered the respect of other rabbis.

One of these men was Armond Cohen, the young rabbi at Park Synagogue in Cleveland Heights. The sanctuary of its new building was actually completed before B'nai Amoona, although design work began a year later in 1946 (Fig. 3). Park Synagogue, the largest of Mendelsohn's synagogues, is particularly important for its plan and its dome.<sup>11</sup> These features tie it back to a key German precedent, the synagogue completed in 1913 in Essen, a city that boomed in the early twentieth century due to the presence of the Krupp family's steelworks (Fig. 4). Designed by the local architect Edmund Körner, this building was one of the largest and the most stylistically up-to-date synagogue erected in Germany right before World War I; nothing so ambitious in terms of scale has been built for Germany's Jewish community since.<sup>12</sup> Mendelsohn knew the building well as in the early 1930s he was busy building the congregation's new youth center, which was, unlike the synagogue, destroyed in *Reichspogromnacht* (*Kristallnacht*).<sup>13</sup> While the synagogue is situated downtown, the youth center

was on the other side of the main rail line, close to prominent new churches by Otto Bartning and Dominikus Böhm, the two leading German reformers of Protestant and Catholic church architecture respectively, and men whom Mendelsohn admired.<sup>14</sup>

Park synagogue, with its triangular plan and its large dome, modernizes the Essen structure, but the dome also references the neo-Byzantine architecture, complete with dome, that was the preferred choice of style for those interwar Reform and Conservative congregations in the United States that could afford it. These include Cleveland's own Tifereth-Israel, recently reborn as the Milton and Tamar Maltz Performing Arts Center.



Fig. 4 Old Synagogue, Edmund Körner, Essen, Germany, 1913, photo by Tuxyso





Fig. 5 Temple Emanuel, Erich Mendelsohn, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954, photo by Michael Craig Palmer

By contrast, Temple Emmanuel is Mendelsohn's most modest temple (Fig. 5). Built for one of the country's oldest reform congregations, it is in Grand Rapids, a city that was at the time, as it had been for nearly a century, the center of the American furniture-making industry. The porte-cochère is an interesting touch. Not only does it offer protection from harsh winters, but it communicates that this is a reform synagogue to which congregants may drive at a time when many Conservative and almost all Orthodox Jews would have been reluctant to do so on the Sabbath. Here, instead of putting the social hall behind the entrance to the religious space, as he did in his other three synagogues, Mendelsohn placed it alongside the space used for regular worship. A folding partition wall ran on a track down the center of the space, shown here in use on both sides as a synagogue. Whereas Park Synagogue showed Mendelsohn referencing the German past, Temple Emmanuel's butterfly roof exhibits his interest in contemporary American architecture, particularly the houses of fellow émigré Marcel Breuer, who was of Hungarian Jewish origin.

In St. Paul, as in St. Louis, Mendelsohn's patron was an extremely distinguished rabbi, in this case the German-born Gunther Plaut, who went on, after moving to Toronto in 1961, to become one of the leading figures in Reform Judaism.<sup>15</sup> Although completed posthumously, this is the most complex of Mendelsohn's American synagogue designs, featuring the most compelling composition and the highest level of detailing in the construction (Fig. 6).<sup>16</sup> Here Mendelsohn reprised to some degree his cemetery chapel in his wife's native city of Königsberg, built in 1927 and destroyed in *Reichspogromnacht*.

From the boulevard, where it keeps company with other major religious and institutional buildings, to the still white light illuminating the chapel on a bright winter day, this is a building surprisingly rooted in the upper Midwest, considering how far its architect had traveled to get to this point. The finely balanced response to the speed of contemporary automobile traffic on the one hand and the need to provide a sense of sanctuary and permanence to a community recently ravished by the Holocaust on the other, is at its most subtle here. It remains the beating heart of Minnesota's Jewish community.

Mount Zion should also be understood as standing in dialogue with Eliel Saarinen's recently finished Christ Church Lutheran just across the Mississippi in Minneapolis (Fig. 7). Taken together, these two suburban structures represent the apex of mid-century modern American religious architecture, while sharing an understatement characteristic of the Twin Cities. Both houses of worship convey a sense of intimacy and of uplift and feature a sensitive combination of both natural and artificial light in a region in which many residents are of Scandinavian origin. Composed and confident, Mendelsohn hit his American stride in St. Paul and in the Russell House in San Francisco. In both, he crafted a powerful synthesis of motifs he had invented in Germany overlaid onto a rigorous attention to place. Mount Zion is also the most carefully crafted of his American synagogues, without the decoration ever shading towards kitsch.

Mendelsohn's impact lingered. Frank Lloyd Wright drew in Beth Shalom, his only synagogue, upon a preliminary design for peaked volumes over the sanctuary and chapel that Mendelsohn's Mount Zion clients had found too flashy (Fig. 8). By the



Fig. 6 Mount Zion, Erich Mendelsohn, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1954, photo by Michael Craig Palmer



Fig. 7 Christ Lutheran Church, Eliel and Eero Saarinen, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1949, photo by Carol M. Highsmith



Fig. 8 Beth Shalom Congregation, Frank Lloyd Wright, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, 1959, photo by Carol M. Highsmith

end of the 1950s, the arches Mendelsohn projected in his unbuilt design for Baltimore reappeared in the work of Max Abramovitz, Minoru Yamasaki and others. Eero Saarinen revived the plasticity of Mendelsohn's early sketches in his airports for New York and Washington. Less dramatic and less prominently sited than his Schocken stores or Berlin office buildings, Mendelsohn's late synagogues nonetheless remain, like most mid-century religious buildings, on the margins of histories of modernism that emphasized the degree to which its unadorned forms developed out of and served specifically new functions. At a time when histories of American architecture increasingly acknowledge rather than ignore the impact of racial and religious minorities, they merit renewed attention as expressions in the face of unfathomable tragedy of the resilience and optimism of both their architect and the community he served.

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## Notes

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# Life and Work in Exile



Jörg Stabenow

## From Westend to Rehavia: Erich Mendelsohn's Houses as Milestones of a Cosmopolitan Career

The idea to propose the work of Erich Mendelsohn for a transnational world heritage nomination seems quite natural. The physical presence of his buildings extends from San Francisco to Saint Petersburg. In the first half of the 20th century, there are not many architects with an equally international production as Mendelsohn. One of them is Le Corbusier, part of whose oeuvre has been listed as a transnational world heritage since 2015. The case of Le Corbusier begs the question



Fig. 1 Boardinghouse, Berlin-Westend, Kastanienallee 32, August Endell, 1908, street and garden facades



Fig. 2 Luise and Esther Mendelsohn in loggia window of their domicile in Berlin-Westend, Kastanienallee 32, mid-1920s

if a Mendelsohn nomination would be just another serial property commemorating the practice of a famous modern architect – or would there be anything more special about it? In other words, are there distinctive traits that differentiate the internationality of Erich Mendelsohn from, for instance, the international activity of Le Corbusier? In terms of international success, indeed, during the 1920s and 30s, Mendelsohn was second only to Le Corbusier. But, in his case, internationality means more than just a successful transboundary activity. The term involves also Mendelsohn's personal experience as an émigré architect, which in turn is reflected in his architectural practice.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the wording of the call for papers to the Erich Mendelsohn Symposium 2022, which asked for contributions exploring the architect's "cosmopolitan approach to modernity", seems very appropriate.

The buildings in which Mendelsohn's cosmopolitan career finds its clearest expression are the houses where he lived with his family. The following essay investigates the architect's residential history, or at least its two most significant stages, his house Am Rupenhorn in Berlin's Westend and the windmill in Rehavia he rented during his Jerusalem period. Before a closer inspection of these two buildings, it seems worthwhile to have a short look at the house where Mendelsohn spent the longest part of his Berlin period, the years from 1919 to 1930: a boardinghouse in Kastanienallee 32 designed in 1908 by the architect August Endell.<sup>2</sup>

### Durable makeshift

In this building, the Mendelsohns – Erich, his wife Luise and their daughter Esther – rented one and later three rooms adjacent to one another on the first floor (Figs. 1, 2). Their domicile was not a real flat but a guesthouse with a room service and probably also with the possibility to have prepared meals.<sup>3</sup> The house is a free-standing structure oriented transversely to the street with its main facade looking south. It has three storeys, including a sunken ground floor, with a projecting hipped roof and gabled dormers. The angles of the building are articulated by slender brick lesenes, the rest of the surface is rendered. Architecturally, it is a sober design with elements of contemporary regionalism, in line with progressive residential building of the day. Individualizing traits are the zigzag-

ging movement of the dormers or the characteristic struts underpinning the roof overhang on the rear facade.

The three rooms occupied by the Mendelsohn family are clearly discernible in the ground plan of the first floor (Fig. 3). The biggest room that lies on the short side of the building facing the street was used as a music and living room.<sup>4</sup> Towards the garden, it was accompanied by two spacious loggias. The second room, likewise facing the garden, was Esther Mendelsohn's, the third space served as a bedroom. The rooms were differentiated by varying color schemes and further personalized by their specially designed furniture. As far as can be understood from the plan, bathroom and kitchen were shared with other residents on the floor.

It is noteworthy that for such a long period the architect did without a house of his own or at least a proper apartment. It seems that the provisional character of such an accommodation was to some extent welcome to him. And if staying in a boardinghouse can be considered as a statement, it would signify a certain distance toward the place where he worked and lived.

At the same time, Mendelsohn would not have stayed in Kastanienallee for so many years if he had not considered it a suitable location. This means that he must have appreciated it as a piece of architecture.<sup>5</sup> August Endell, the architect of the house, had been one of the most prominent exponents of Art Nouveau in Germany.<sup>6</sup> Mendelsohn repeatedly expressed his sympathy for two renowned Art Nouveau architects, Joseph Maria Olbrich and Henry van de Velde,<sup>7</sup> but it seems that he never mentioned Endell. Anyway, he must have noted the artistic approach to architecture that informed the design of his boardinghouse. Presumably it was this specific quality that offered him a way of identifying with the house.

### A house with a message

In stark contrast with the provisional character of his former domicile, in 1928–30 Mendelsohn undertook the realization of his own single-family residence. This house is perhaps the most iconic of all architects' residences built in Germany during the first half of the 20th century.<sup>8</sup> To underscore the impact of the house, in 1932 Mendelsohn published his book *Neues Haus – neue Welt* as a detailed photographic presentation of the property, accompanied by a text specifically written for that purpose by the French painter Amedée Ozenfant.<sup>9</sup> Mendelsohn's house is situated in Berlin's Westend area like the former boardinghouse, on a narrow strip of land descending towards the shore of lake Stößensee. The house is organized transversely towards the plot, dividing the front-lawn from the landscaped garden on its back (Fig. 4). The cubic form of the flat-roofed, rendered building comprises a large entrance hall, a dining room and a music room on the ground floor, the architect's studio, a guest room and two rooms for his wife and his daughter on the upper floor (Fig. 5). In the captions of his publication, Mendelsohn compares the private area of the first floor to a small hotel:<sup>10</sup> the reference to his previous residence is here quite obvious.

Going down to the ground floor, by contrast, we find the more representative rooms of a typical upper middle-class

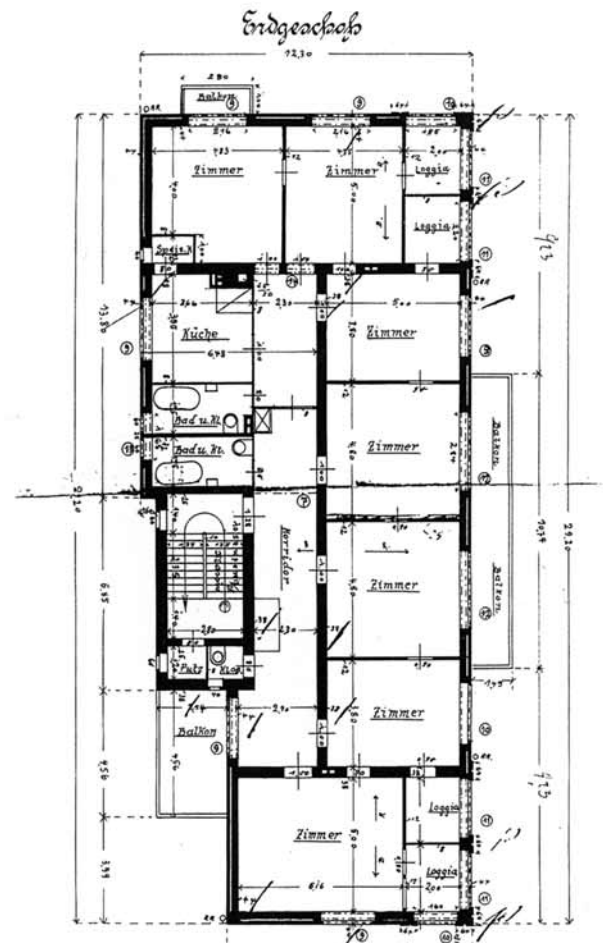


Fig. 3 Boardinghouse, Berlin-Westend, Kastanienallee 32, August Endell, 1908, plan of first floor

home, most prominently the music room, which can be considered the programmatic center of the house (Fig. 6).<sup>11</sup> Elements of its furnishing were a living room suite designed by Mendelsohn himself, a grand piano, a painting by Amedée Ozenfant and a bronze relief by Ewald Mataré. A wall cabinet contained the string instruments of Luise Mendelsohn, who was a cellist, and her fellow musicians. Thus, the main room of the house became a place of encounter between architecture and music, with supporting roles for painting and sculpture. Evidently, the intention is to link architecture to the higher sphere of the arts, freeing it from its dependence on functions and necessities. Like the music room, the entire house is conceived as a total work of art where no detail evades the control of the architect.

The comforts of contemporary domestic technology are used everywhere but remain strictly hidden from the eye. The most striking examples are the drop slide windows of the hall and the music room, with its mechanism in the basement. The architect's house thereby conveys a quite explicit anti-functional message.<sup>12</sup> In the book, this message is further developed by Ozenfant, who had been a close companion of Le Corbusier at the time when the Swiss architect developed the concept of *machine à habiter* or *living machine*. Ozenfant had later turned to another position that favoured art over technology. Involving Ozenfant in his project, it seems that Mendelsohn indirectly confronted Le Corbusier as the most





Fig. 4 Mendelsohn House, Berlin-Westend, Am Rupenhorn 6, Erich Mendelsohn, 1928–30, street façade

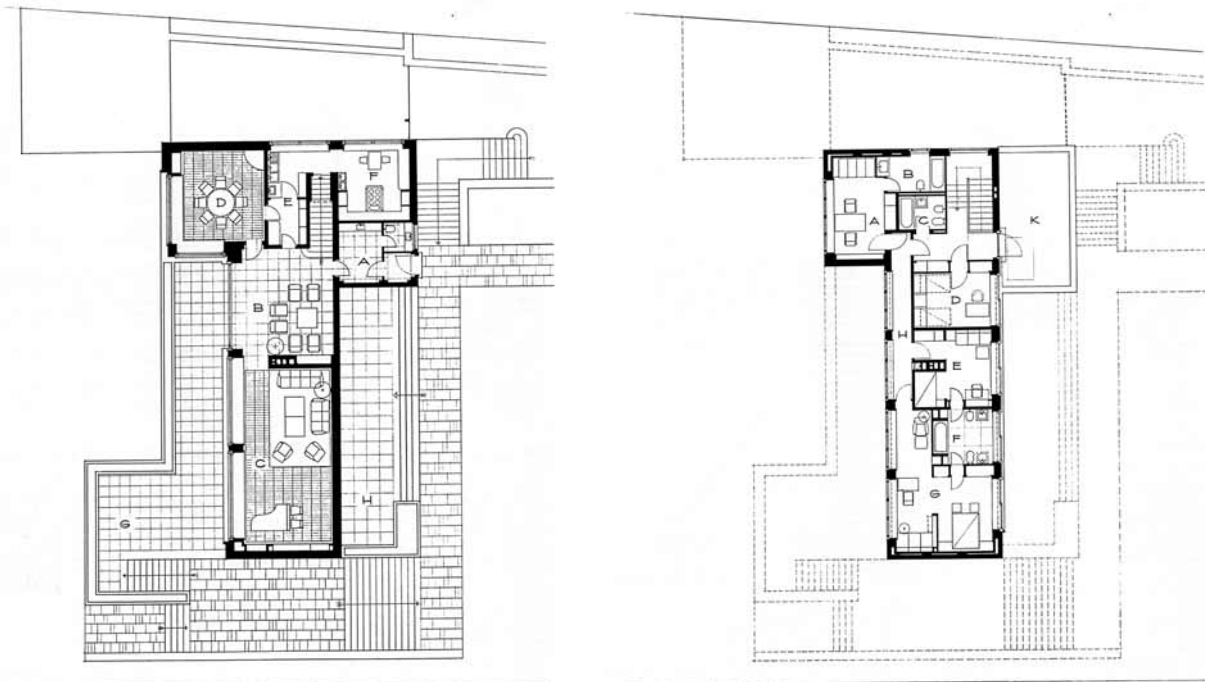


Fig. 5 Mendelsohn House, Berlin-Westend, Am Rupenhorn 6, Erich Mendelsohn, 1928–30, plans of ground and first floor

visible exponent of a technology-oriented tendency in international modernism. The programmatic intention of Mendelsohn's house becomes even clearer when we consider that likewise in 1930 and at a short distance, on the opposite side of the street, the Luckhardt brothers completed a couple of mansions in a decidedly Corbusean manner.<sup>13</sup> In sum, the exceptional position of this house in modern architectural history is based not only on its formal quality and coherence, but even more on its programmatic validity.

### In dialogue with place

The Mendelsohns were to live in their new house for not more than three years. In March 1933, two months after the Nazis seized power, they decided to emigrate, first to Amsterdam, then to London. From there, Erich Mendelsohn expanded his field of work to Palestine, and as early as 1935 he was able to take up residence in Jerusalem. His new quarters were quite unusual: he rented a former windmill as his office and family home in the western suburb of Rehavia (Fig. 7).<sup>14</sup>

The information about the history of the mill is only fragmentary. It is said to have been commissioned in the 1850s by the Greek Orthodox Church in order to supply Christian pilgrims with bread.<sup>15</sup> It may be assumed, however, that the building was erected by local Arab builders – Luise Mendelsohn in her memoirs spoke of an “Arab” mill.<sup>16</sup> Built of

rough-hewn quarry stone, the mill rises above a square sub-structure that housed Mendelsohn's office. At the next highest level, a transverse rectangular structure is placed in front of the octagonal, conical body of the mill itself, which was stripped of its sails at the time. The kitchen and bathroom were located in domed rooms of the structure in front; the mill housed, one above the other, the living area, sleeping area and Mendelsohn's studio.

How can the choice of such an extraordinary dwelling place be interpreted? Certainly, the windmill was a place with a considerable staging potential. The object of the staging seems to be the person of the architect. If Mendelsohn's house in Berlin could be understood as an assertive statement on the art of architecture, the windmill stages the architect himself who is presented as the inhabitant of a kind of ivory tower. The top level is reserved for the master of the house: here the architect receives his inspirations, which are then converted into buildable plans by the staff in the ground floor office. It is hard to imagine a more effective way of representing the architect's role as artist.

At the same time, the tower may have served Mendelsohn as a means of distancing himself from the contemporary architecture of the Jewish immigrants that was increasingly oriented towards international modernism, for which the immediate surroundings offer some discreet examples.<sup>17</sup> By choosing the mill, declared to be “Arab”, Mendelsohn seems instead to be opting for a dialogue with the traditions of the



Fig. 6 Mendelsohn House, Berlin-Westend, Am Rupenhorn 6, Erich Mendelsohn, 1928–30, music room





Fig. 7 Windmill, Jerusalem-Rehavia, Ramban Street 8, photo: Rudi Weissenstein, 1937

country. With this in mind, it was quite logical that he used the flat domes of the mill, one of the distinguishing features of the regional architecture, in his own designs as well.<sup>18</sup> In this perspective, the windmill stands also for Mendelsohn's architectural project, which aimed at a synthesis between Western modernism and a region shaped by the Orient.<sup>19</sup> Beyond such architecture-related considerations we might ask, if Mendelsohn's choice to live in the windmill also reveals anything about his condition as immigrant.<sup>20</sup> Certainly, for him and his family the windmill must have served as a strong anchor, which gave stability to their residence in the country and symbolized their sense of belonging, also in accordance with Mendelsohn's Zionist convictions. The strength of their identification with the building is revealed for instance by its use as a motif on a Christmas card – here represented with sails which actually were not in place (Fig. 8).<sup>21</sup> Yet another reading is offered by Luise Mendelsohn who writes in her memoirs that living in the mill sometimes felt like living in the Einstein Tower.<sup>22</sup> Following this suggestion, the Jerusalem home becomes the medium of an autobiographical back-reference, reminding of Mendelsohn's early masterpiece. In reverse perspective, the mill could be interpreted as the implementation of a theme that had for a long time been an integral part of Mendelsohn's oeuvre. In the

new location, Mendelsohn refers precisely to what he can already recognize as being inherently his "own".

Finally, a short look at the status of the windmill today (Fig. 9). After an intense struggle for the preservation of the mill, in the 1980s the structure was incorporated in a small shopping center.<sup>23</sup> Thereby, the substructure has been considerably extended, while the upper levels and the windmill itself externally remain unchanged. The extensions were executed using the same stone and quality of workmanship. The internal distribution of the mill has been largely preserved. A characteristic reframing has been implemented by the restitution of the windmill sails. That way, emphasis has been shifted back from a tower-like structure to the original function of the building.

### The windmill as an argument

What does all this imply for our reflections on the possibility of a world heritage nomination? There is no doubt that the Rupenhorn mansion would be a prominent component of any proposal, as it can be considered a programmatic core of Mendelsohn's Berlin period. But how can we cope with the windmill? Is it conceivable to consider it part of a world heritage proposal? At first sight, the idea might seem eccentric,

since we are not dealing with a product from Mendelsohn's drawing board, but with an adopted building. Even so, I would like to make the case for having a second look. How might the significance of this property influence a nomination proposal?

Primarily, the windmill would stand for the issue of migration, for which it is testimony and which it embodies. A variety of aspects connected to this issue would be addressed – the appropriation of a new place, the involvement with its culture and traditions, the definition of what is one's own in relation to a new homeland, the expression of distance and belonging. All these items are closely related to Mendelsohn's architectural biography and should be reflected in the nomination. More specifically, the property exemplifies Mendelsohn's approach to the issue of internationality in modern architecture. In his work, Mendelsohn aims at a regional foundation of international modernism. From that point of view, the windmill represents his search for a relationship between architecture and place. In this context, it is worth remembering that the windmill dates back to a period before the modern aliya and therefore embodies the region in a broader historical sense.

As opposed to these considerations, it would not be convincing to argue that the windmill should be included in a proposal for purely biographical reasons. The simple fact that a famous person spent part of his lifetime in this building wouldn't qualify it for a world heritage nomination. Instead, the importance of the site is based on its meaningfulness for the work and thinking of the architect.

In this sense it would be helpful to see if the windmill, as an adoptive work which occupies a central position in the architectural cosmos of Erich Mendelsohn, can be included in a nomination. Even if this should not be viable, the windmill can certainly serve as a strong argument promoting the nomination proposal.

## Postscript

In late 2021, the municipal planning authority approved a new extension project to convert the site into a hotel.<sup>24</sup> In light of the mill's history, this might well seem a congenial use. The project would imply, however, the addition of one and a half storeys to the rear of the existing shopping center. As a result, the annex would visually block the windmill; not the best way for a monument to demonstrate Erich Mendelsohn's involvement with his adopted hometown, Jerusalem.



Fig. 8 Christmas card of the Mendelsohn family



Fig. 9 Windmill, Jerusalem-Rehavia, Ramban Street 8, screenshot from Google Street View



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## Credits

- Fig. 1: Bröcker, Moeller, Salge (eds.), August Endell, 2012, p. 373.
- Fig. 2: Bröcker, Moeller, Salge (eds.), August Endell, 2012, p. 242.
- Fig. 3: Los Angeles, The Getty Research Institute, Special Collections, Erich and Luise Mendelsohn papers, 880406.
- Fig. 4: Mendelsohn, Neues Haus, 1932, n.p.
- Fig. 5: Mendelsohn, Neues Haus, 1932, n.p.
- Fig. 6: Mendelsohn, Neues Haus, 1932, n.p.
- Fig. 7: Rudi Weissenstein, The PhotoHouse, Tel Aviv.
- Fig. 8: Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan (eds.), Luise und Erich Mendelsohn, 2004, p. 122.
- Fig. 9: Screenshot from Google Street View (25.02.2022).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Significant publications on architecture and migration in the 20th century include Nicolai, *Architektur und Exil*, 2003; Schätzke, *Deutsche Architekten*, 2013; Schätzke, *Transatlantische Moderne*, 2015; Dogramaci, Schätzke (eds.), *A House of One's Own*, 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> On the house in Kastanienallee, commissioned and run as *Pension Westend* by Hedwig Müller, see Bröcker, *Individuelle Landhäuser*, 2012, pp. 240–242; Bröcker, *Salge*, *Werkverzeichnis*, 2012, pp. 372–373.
- <sup>3</sup> The building was equipped with a dumbwaiter; Bröcker, *Individuelle Landhäuser*, 2012, p. 242. In her memoirs, Luise Mendelsohn underlined that no domestic work had to be done; Mendelsohn, *My Life*, n.d., quoted in Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan (eds.), *Luise und Erich Mendelsohn*, 2004, p. 75.
- <sup>4</sup> The most detailed description of the apartment is given by Mendelsohn, *My Life*, n.d., quoted in Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan (eds.), *Luise und Erich Mendelsohn*, 2004, p. 75–76.
- <sup>5</sup> Luise Mendelsohn expresses her and Erich's esteem of their home when reporting on her encounter with its architect in 1924; Mendelsohn, *My Life*, n.d., quoted in Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan, *Luise und Erich Mendelsohn*, 2004, p. 89.
- <sup>6</sup> See the monograph Bröcker, Moeller, Salge (eds.), *August Endell*, 2012.
- <sup>7</sup> Mendelsohn, *Das Problem*, 1919, pp. 13–14; Mendelsohn, *Die internationale Übereinstimmung*, 1923, p. 29; Mendelsohn, *Der schöpferische Sinn der Krise*, 1932, pp. 31–32.
- <sup>8</sup> On Mendelsohn's house Am Rupenhorn, see Heinze-Greenberg, *Das Haus Am Rupenhorn*, 1998; Heinze-Greenberg, *Oft fürchte ich*, 1998; Stabenow, *Architekten wohnen*, 2000, pp. 133–157.
- <sup>9</sup> Mendelsohn, *Neues Haus*, 1932. See Stabenow, *Das Buch zum Haus*, 2014, pp. 192–196.
- <sup>10</sup> "The upper floor is a small hotel. Smallest measurements. Everybody independent, every room with bath, telephone and individual arrangements." Mendelsohn, *Neues Haus*, 1932.
- <sup>11</sup> Stabenow, *Architekten wohnen*, 2000, pp. 170–171; see also Stabenow, *Selbstporträt*, 2018, pp. 155–157.
- <sup>12</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this aspect, see Stabenow, *Architekten wohnen*, 2000, pp. 167–168.
- <sup>13</sup> The exact location is Am Rupenhorn 24 and 25. Nowitzky, Hans und Wassili Luckhardt, 1992, pp. 46–49, 219–224.
- <sup>14</sup> The location is Ramban Street 8. Heinze-Greenberg, *Ich bin ein freier Bauer*, 1998, pp. 252–254; Stabenow, *Architekten wohnen*, 2000, p. 183; Hoffman, *Till We Have Built Jerusalem*, 2016, pp. 40–43, 310. For personal accounts of life and work in the windmill, see Mendelsohn, *My Life*, n.d., pp. 130–134; Posener, *Fast so alt*, 1990, pp. 234–237; Goldenzweig, *Die Zeit bei Luise und Erich Mendelsohn*, 2004; Epstein, *Erinnerungen*, 2006.
- <sup>15</sup> Kroyanker, *Jerusalem Architecture*, 1994, p. 139.
- <sup>16</sup> Mendelsohn, *My Life*, n.d., p. 131.
- <sup>17</sup> Among them are Ussishkin House (Richard Kauffmann, 1931), Abcarius House (Dov and Rafael Ben Dor, 1934) and Bonem House (Leopold Krakauer, 1935); cf. Knufinke, *Bauhaus: Jerusalem*, 2012, pp. 126–129, 146–149, 166–169.
- <sup>18</sup> Most prominently in the Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus (1934–1939).
- <sup>19</sup> See Heinze-Greenberg, *Ich bin ein freier Bauer*, 1998, pp. 243–245; Nitzan-Shiftan, *Contested Zionism*, 1996, pp. 161–173.
- <sup>20</sup> On the following, Stabenow, *Milestones*, 2019, pp. 25–27.
- <sup>21</sup> Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan (eds.), *Luise und Erich Mendelsohn*, 2004, p. 122.
- <sup>22</sup> Mendelsohn, *My Life*, n.d., p. 131.
- <sup>23</sup> The architects in charge were Jaacov Alon and Amazia Aaronson. Kind information by Eran Mordohovich.
- <sup>24</sup> The planner of the conversion is Amazia Aaronson. For information about the recent planning developments, I am grateful to Eran Mordohovich.



## Erich Mendelsohn: Place, Identity and Exile

### Introduction

Erich Mendelsohn's work and his lasting Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) must be framed based on his construction as a figure within a more complex socio-political and historical narrative. Erich Mendelsohn's evolving relationship with modernity and his own situation within the greater context of the German Jewish diaspora forms a significant part of his historical and cultural legacy, particularly when framed as the figure of the German Jewish artist in exile. This central narrative should shape the overall rationale and criteria for Erich Mendelsohn's serial inclusion on the World Heritage List while simultaneously enshrining his invaluable role in the history and evolution of modern architecture as it spread across the globe that similar figures and subjects shared with him.

Recent publications hold the position that Mendelsohn's work, while unable to crystallize a national Jewish style, was deeply rooted in an ideological position tied to his figuration as a subject.<sup>1</sup> In considering Mendelsohn's work in dialogue with the notion of German Jewish exile, issues such as place, belonging and identity are included in the active deconstruction of the universal modern paradigm, while providing a richer understanding of a more nuanced and subjective modernity. Methods to achieve these kinds of broader readings can be seen in the work of human geographers (Harvey, Soja, et. al.), socio-spatial theorists (Le Febvre, Massey, et. al.), and Indigenous scholars (Land, Smith, et. al.). Considering Erich Mendelsohn's distinct trans-national oeuvre requires a more sensitive and contextual application of OUV dependent upon such methods and methodological frameworks, which must differ from those taken up in Le Corbusier's very conventional nomination.

Erich Mendelsohn's contributions to the field of architecture have had many nuanced lasting repercussions, and his contributions could be framed as being in service of defining the modern department store as a type, expanding the Streamline Moderne architectural style, shaping the architectural language of the state of Israel, defining how Judaism and modern architecture in the United States became intertwined after the war and as a method to understand the global spread and transformation of Bauhaus methods globally. Each of these

arguments is valid, but framing Mendelsohn's work as an oeuvre must also tell a uniquely Jewish story about how exile, diaspora, place and modernity would be conjoined within a greater shared narrative while deconstructing the dominant narrative of universal modernity.

### UNESCO and representation

This project is particularly timely since the UNESCO World Heritage listing process has been actively undergoing reform and reconsideration in light of more timely critiques based in post-colonialism, anti-racism and other key social movements, which seek broader recognition and even reconciliation. A rejuvenated World Heritage list is slowly taking shape that extends the limits of Empire, rejects Eurocentrism and reckons with equity and difference in a productive way, while actively embracing other conceptual ontologies than Western universalism, while delaminating colonial notions ranging like property.

Deconstructing colonial and settler-colonial imaginaries might be seen as methods to correct and repair UNESCO's stored path. Recent nominations, such as Asmara, a modern African city<sup>2</sup>, are able to not just represent previously neglected landmarks, but actively provoke discussions about colonialism and post-colonial structures at play. For example, "intangible cultural heritage"<sup>3</sup> is having a positive effect on the re-framing of heritage, just as is the inclusion of modern architecture. The intangible culture designation was intended to recognize practices, events and traditions that are not tied to conventional physical sites but are still a unique part of a country's heritage and similarly rely on narratives of place. Since 2008, when the programme started, UNESCO has designated some 451 intangible cultural entities in the world. Among them are place-making techniques in Normandy, the summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees and folk dances in Brittany. The ability of this reframing to embrace narratives and cultures outside of European gaze can be seen in the World Heritage listing of Kabuki theatre in Japan, the manufacture of batik cloth in Indonesia and the pre-Inca tradition in Peru of specialized judges who determine water rights. While this UNESCO designation has occasionally drawn criticism because of vagueness of the term and because some say it is used to

promote tourism and consumption rather than to encourage the study and preservation of local traditions and practices,<sup>4</sup> the outcomes have been paradigm shifting and productive.

### Narratives and particularity

While Mendelsohn's work may lack the singular authoritative stylistic consistency of many of his modern peers, his trans-national and episodic oeuvre in exile represents a cohesive complete body of work of another kind whose outstanding universal value lies in the artifacts produced as well as Mendelsohn's narrative that can be seen to have contributed to the shape of the modern movement as a global movement forged by others. Recognizing such an expanded intangible value produces a form of *particularity* that would foreground Mendelsohn's inclusion on the World Heritage List as a non-universal character whose work expresses an adaptability to context(s), rather than an absolute universal vision.

In my previous research, interviews conducted with UNESCO officials in Paris, New York and Toronto yielded a commonly expressed desire for more research around expanding the definition of OUV.<sup>5</sup> Inasmuch, the goal of preserving Mendelsohn's work as a byproduct of a collective movement of German Jewish artists and architects into a state of exile abroad and its overall impact on the shaping of modern architecture, specifically, should be the primary objective of the Mendelsohn nomination. In that sense, Erich Mendelsohn cannot just be framed as yet another modern architectural "genius," whose masterpieces demonstrate modernity's universal impact on others, as was the clearly-stated case with Le Corbusier's nomination.

### Diaspora as context

Positioning Erich Mendelsohn's oeuvre of groundbreaking work within the framework of UNESCO's World Heritage List as a trans-national serial nomination demands a more complex historical and geographical analysis of how the intertwining of both *diaspora* and *place* are not just a condition of Mendelsohn's state of exile, but rather, an intertwined greater context that would shape Mendelsohn's architectural career, his work's outstanding universal value and prompt a revisit of the particularities of the German Jewish diaspora as a context.

For example, as Amos Elon explains in his description of the Schocken Library, "In designing the Schocken Library Mendelsohn drew his inspiration from the open landscape surrounding the city, a vista of bare mountaintops and the soft contours of solitary Arab villages still perched on the hills in 1935, fitting perfectly into the landscape and so pleasing to the eye, if only from a distance. Mendelsohn also designed all the details within the building, elegant steel banisters and door handles, bookshelves in blond lemon wood, tables, chairs, umbrella racks, and Bauhaus-inspired washrooms and mezuzahs. The library, with its delicate, pristine lines, walls chiselled in rosy Jerusalem stone, and elliptical glass-enclosed staircases and windows, is perhaps the most memorable modern building in the city."<sup>6</sup>

### Mendelsohn's figuration

Erich Mendelsohn became forever associated with Expressionism as he developed his style and method of working at the Bauhaus, which would be highly experimental, deeply personal and easily recognizable. The resulting *image* of how most of us have come to know Mendelsohn as a figure is embedded within these sketches, despite a lengthy and productive and highly influential trans-national architectural career that needs to be recognized as such. Mendelsohn's most iconic building remains the Einstein Tower in Potsdam, which exemplifies his approach, yet forecloses a better understanding of his full impact and trajectory on the global spread of modern architecture as much more than a universalizing technological (and colonizing) set of occurrences. Less widely known, but perhaps much more significant, are the numerous products of Mendelsohn's thriving practice in Berlin, which produced a great number of iconic department stores and other commercial structures that would become associated with Streamline Moderne design, help shape the modern city and have lasting impact on the evolution of modern architecture as a representation of context and place.

Mendelsohn, like so many who had thrived in Germany during the Weimar Republic, was Jewish, and as a result, spent the bulk of his life in exile to survive. His life in exile produced artifacts in the UK, Israel (as one of the founding architects to establish a style of architecture for the emergent Zionist state), and the United States, where he would design a number of synagogues and other buildings while holding a faculty appointment at the University of California at Berkeley. His best-known buildings in the United States include the Maimonides Hospital in San Francisco and a number of Jewish Community centres and synagogues in the Midwest. These projects are all significant and tell a compelling part of the complete Mendelsohn story, when seen in context of a career spent in exile and in a state of adaptation.

### Outstanding Universal Value

Modern architecture is a very particular art, one whose particularity lies in its attachment to values that are *universal* in nature. Values, such as abstraction, placelessness and universality shape the modern idiom, but can also be seen to be exclusive and often a-contextual, which presents a paradox when considering modern architecture as heritage. Mark Jarzombek writes: "Preservation is an instrument of modernity; stated differently, it is the means by which we define ourselves as moderns."<sup>7</sup> Following Jarzombek's postulation, it is useful to think of UNESCO as a global institution that has been specifically charged with instituting and administering programs meant to encourage cooperative and coordinated action by member states in education, science, and the arts, but which now includes architectural heritage and modern architecture as a universally standard reaction to a world in flux. This is too limited.

Each UNESCO World Heritage nomination dossier usually must have a regional or locally situated meaning or geographical grounding in place to be specific enough to matter,

which can then be translated as also having a *universal* value while following UNESCO's World Heritage criteria as a metric, thus further perpetuating the paradox inherent in modern heritage. By opening-up and reframing OUV to be more contextual, less centred on individual *genius* and more open to individual voices, reframing modernity more inclusively, using such ideas as multiple modernisms can productively give voice to previously silenced (non-universal) voices as a methodology of reform. For example, the Bauhaus was framed not only a singular masterwork in the history of architecture and design, but also a "testament to the history of ideas of the twentieth century."

## Le Corbusier's foreclosing presence

Today, when we read the official UNESCO press release for the Le Corbusier World Heritage listing, we can see the way that Le Corbusier's OUV was framed and nuanced as the results of an evolving message and process: "Chosen from the work of Le Corbusier, the seventeen sites comprising this transnational serial property are spread over seven countries and are a testimonial to the invention of a new architectural language that made a break with the past. They were built over a period of a half-century, in the course of what Le Corbusier described as "patient research."<sup>8</sup>

The question that haunts this process is how to treat Le Corbusier's landmark serial UNESCO nomination as a (potentially limiting) precedent. While it seems beyond obvious that the Le Corbusier case should serve as the most useful, relevant, and recent precedent for the Mendelsohn case, I argue that this may be a dangerous notion that may carry with it unnecessary limitations while homogenizing Mendelsohn's particular contribution, which may, in turn, foreclose opportunities to further expand and deconstruct OUV in the future. For nearly two decades, the political power behind Corbu's nomination was fueled by the French government and the well-organized and highly influential leadership of the *Fondation Le Corbusier*. However, despite being rejected in 2006, re-nominated in 2009 and rejected once again, the desire to include Le Corbusier's oeuvre on the World Heritage List continued. The reason was that there was a strong will to enshrine Le Corbusier as a valuable vehicle for national and cultural identity.

## Mendelsohn's Judaism, exceptionality and absence

While there are many dedicated scholars who have devoted their scholarly research to Mendelsohn's life and work, the dominant narrative has tended to neglect Mendelsohn as an equally contributing figure in the evolution and maturity of modern architecture. Notable examples of those telling Mendelsohn's story include Bruno Zevi's foundational study of Mendelsohn (1970), Arnold Whittick and Wolf von Eckhardt (1956), and by more contemporary scholars such as Stephan, Benton and Heinze-Greenberg (1999), James-Chakraborty (2000, 1997) and Nitzan-Shiftan (2017, 1996). Telling such a particular story requires seeking out excep-

tionality rather than universality as a strategy, which would require re-evaluating key modern ideologies such as universality itself, while abandoning seeking out *genius* as a World Heritage criterion within individual works of art. Given this re-evaluation, another argument for enshrining Mendelsohn's work as an oeuvre becomes evident.

Despite this own exceptionality, Mendelsohn is noticeably absent in the Pantheon of modern masters as reproduced through modern architectural history texts and in the canonization of the modern masters, despite his influence and impact on the evolution of modern architecture as witnessed in places like Berlin, Jerusalem and in small towns in the American Midwest where his synagogues have brought the lessons of the Bauhaus to the prairies. Mendelsohn's Jewishness, therefore, must be a significant part of this nomination. It would be neglectful to simply take his work at face value and not include his story as a German Jew in a state of exile as a means to position his work within a canon that remains overwhelmingly insular. While it remains debatable, and even dangerous to even consider if there is, or is not, a Jewish modern architecture at all,<sup>9</sup> it is not debatable that the generation of Jewish architects that came after the modern masters would transform the profession itself and also change the role of diasporic Jews in reshaping a post-modern and often highly critical reaction to the modern canon.

The number of architects who emerged from the same milieu as Mendelsohn, including Breuer, Neutra, Schindler and others, mostly refrained from drawing upon their Jewish identities, for multiple reasons, but were united in a common attachment to shaping the modern movement, mainly "because modernism had rebelled against a historicist tradition that few Jews had a vested interest in preserving."<sup>10</sup> In Mendelsohn's case, "...he unwaveringly championed the new against the old, espoused democracy over nationalism, and remained fiercely loyal to his embattled Jewish-German community." Moreover, "...in Palestine it was precisely the national instinct, which provoked Jewish immigrants to gather as an ethnic and linguistic community, that led architects and ideologists alike to embrace modern architecture as the appropriate expressions of Zionism. They clung to its attributes of progress as well to its lack of identity with forms associated with European nations."<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

Mendelsohn adapted modern architecture's innovations and technologies to reflect a very personal understanding within a universally expanded definition of place, belonging and culture. This approach positioned him apart from mainstream architectural figures and the modern masters simultaneously. Mendelsohn's unique consideration of cultural tradition and an adaptability to place shaped an oeuvre that lacked the universal singularity of vision and focus of his modern master peers, but in turn made Mendelsohn's work more particular and more valuable as a method to see how modernity would transcend the liminality of place, but not deny context. Erich Mendelsohn's contribution to the development of modern Israeli architecture is as distinct as his contribution to the evo-



lution of the modern department store and postwar synagogue. However, it is a challenge to see these contributions as components of a collective oeuvre stylistically, formally and even ideologically, but this is what is needed so importantly in enshrining Mendelsohn's master oeuvre of trans-national work.

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## Ita Heinze-Greenberg

### Erich Mendelsohn: Architecture and Exile

The escape suitcase is the utensil of strained life situations: It is an enclosed shelter, almost an architectural devise for the migrant's personal belongings. The better arranged its interior space, the more room it offers for objects to be transported from the old into the new, from the own into the foreign: the winter coat, rainwear, toiletries, pyjamas, nostalgic items ... old family photo albums, mementos, favorite books from the beloved library. Seated on the valise, reading offers a very own and temporary clandestine refuge... rest on an uncertain journey. The suitcase is the migrant's hold. A piece of home on the move. Filled with items from his or her past, it is the vehicle of identity. It contains the very something that is saved beyond bare life.

What Luise and Erich Mendelsohn packed into the suitcases, with which they left Germany on the night train to Amsterdam on March 31, 1933, has not been handed down. Yet, we know

that Erich Mendelsohn carried with him the extra-soft 6B pencil, which he pulled out of his jacket pocket when a colleague at Amsterdam Centraal station asked him what he was doing there: "I have just moved my office from Berlin to Amsterdam," was his reply.<sup>1</sup> Luise Mendelsohn had already deposited her precious cello – in wise foresight – in a bank safe in Zurich. 10 days earlier, on March 21, 1933 the Mendelsohns had celebrated Erich's 46th birthday with the usual "Bachanal", the name they gave to the chamber concerts in honor of his anniversary, which fell on the date of Johann Sebastian Bach's birthday and on the beginning of spring. Friends would arrive early afternoon and in changing line-up the Brandenburg Concertos, the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin, the Cello Suites were played (Fig. 1). Interrupted only by a light dinner and drinks, music was played until the early morning hours. At the last birthday party the cheerful,



Fig. 1 House concert on the terrace of Erich and Luise Mendelsohn's own house Am Rupenhorn, early 1930s; Luise Mendelsohn on cello

uplifting mood of the previous years did not want to set in.<sup>2</sup> Outside, in Potsdam, another celebration was taking place at the same time: Reich President von Hindenburg and Reich Chancellor Hitler met in the Garrison Church. Their symbolic handshake of reconciliation strengthened Hitler’s myth as the people’s chancellor. Less than two weeks later, on April 1, the so-called “defensive boycott” against Jewish citizens took place. Luise and Erich Mendelsohn left Germany the evening before. Forever (Fig. 2).

He who builds wishes to stay – a phrase that is often quoted today at the inauguration of new Jewish building projects. Mendelsohn’s own house stood at the end of his successful career in Germany, as its crowning achievement. Yet, he harbored profound distrust towards Germany as a safe place to live: “We as Jews,” he wrote, “are used to looking at the appearance of our fatherland through binoculars.”<sup>3</sup> He kept this attitude towards his later homelands as well. A certain distance guarantees a sharper focus, he maintained. Under precarious conditions a firm home might prove to be a burden and block the free view. The ability to constantly take up new positions, to change location, to swift perspective, to be able to react immediately to new situations – that gave him security.

Shortly after moving in, Mendelsohn packed the house between two book covers. With illustrations by Arthur Köster, Berlin’s best architectural photographer, and accompanying texts in German, English and French, he thus opened his house to an international audience. In an increasingly constricted, anti-semitic environment, the publication became a documentation for the culture of a Jewish elite that would soon cease to exist in Germany and German occupied Europe. In book form, the house overcame its material ties to place and time. Detached from the processes of change it turned into a permanent, always available aesthetic and social testimony. And what’s more: Mendelsohn thus brought his show-piece of ideal dwelling into a size that fitted into the emi-

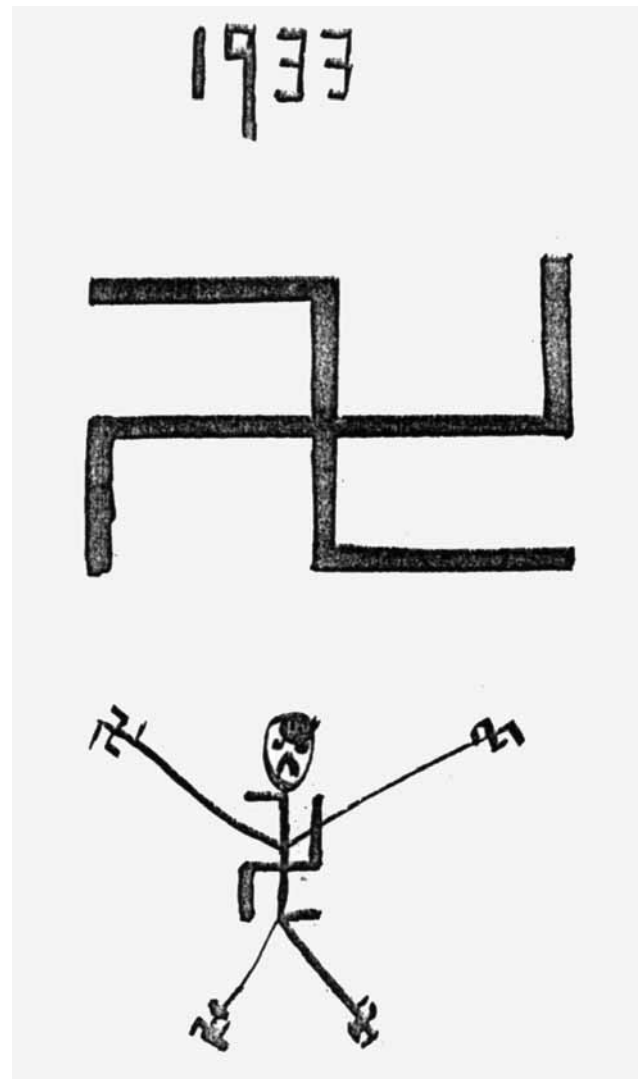


Fig. 2 Luise Mendelsohn, illustration to the poem “Adolf comes with great strides” for daughter Esther, 1933



Figs. 3 and 4 Cover and book page of Erich Mendelsohn’s Neues Haus – Neue Welt [New House – New World], 1932



grant's suitcase: the home – portable, the static condition of the house turned into a dynamic device (Figs. 3, 4).

House and Book relate to Architecture and Exile. THE Book of the Jews – the Torah, the written Hebrew Bible – is a product of exile. It came into being during the Babylonian Captivity in the 6th century B.C. The Book of Books replaced the House of Houses, i.e. Solomon's Temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Heinrich Heine described the Torah as the "portative fatherland" of the Jews: "A book is their fatherland, their possession, their ruler, their fortune and their misfortune. They live in the brands of this book, here they exercise their citizenship, here they cannot be chased away, [...]"<sup>4</sup> Many Jewish authors from Baruch Spinoza to Heinrich Heine to Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, who experienced outsidership and/or expulsion, commented on the important function of the book – be it the Bible, secular literature or their own writing – in the borderline experience of exile.

Architecture and exile are central notions that make up Erich Mendelsohn's biography. They seem fundamentally antagonistic: architecture stands for a static immobile state, exile for a restless mobile condition. As an architect, Mendelsohn was qua definitionem engaged with the production of human habitat, with humanizing space by creating homes in the sense of *Heimat*. In contrast, Mendelsohn's life was marked by exclusion and departure, by multiple migrations, by the frequent loss of his own home. His paths were repeatedly detracted by political currents, to which he reacted like a

seismograph. Looking back, he wrote: "Ubi bene, ibi patria is not an opportunistic saying. For that, migrations from country to country are too arduous and energy-sapping. But it is the only solution for a man who loves freedom when confronted with the pestilence of tyranny"<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of his life, Mendelsohn may have seen in his curriculum vitae the cliché of the eternally wandering Jew: Germany – England – Palestine – America; four countries on three different continents and three different nationalities in the course of 66 years.

Although the term exile seems clear in its meaning as enforced displacement, yet it turns out to be rather ambivalent and – depending on the view point – subjected to different, sometimes controversial application. From the perspective of today's German historiography and cultural studies the emigrés' places of habitat outside Germany after their forced exodus are categorically determined as exile. Behind this approach stands the intention to bring German-born Jews – at least nominally – back "home" and thus to finally end their exile. These efforts are to be understood within the framework of *Wiedergutmachung* [reparations] and show various gradations between personal remorse and political correctness. Any other approach to the matter seems – from a contemporary German perspective – impassable, as it might imply on-going expulsion and thus subliminal continued support for Nazi ideology. Well-intentioned, this approach occasionally overlooks the self-understanding and will of the expellees. Mendelsohn, for example, vehemently opposed appropriation from the German side; he decidedly rejected the reintegration into the German architectural discourse after the Second World War. However, shortly before his death he accepted a proposal by his old friend, the art historian Oskar Beyer for a retrospective in Berlin, which was eventually opened 16 years later in 1968 at the Akademie der Künste by Julius Posener in the presence of Mendelsohn's widow.<sup>6</sup> Few years later Louise Mendelsohn sold her late husband's estate, which she had initially wanted to give to Israel, to the Berlin Art Library. By that time – in the mid-1970s – this act was interpreted as Mendelsohn's coming home.

From a Zionist perspective, the use of the term exile is altogether different. It is categorically not applied to the Land of Israel. Regardless of circumstances or motivation, whether out of conviction or of necessity, the Jewish immigrant to the Promised Land is not considered a refugee, but a returnee. He comes home after 2000 years of diaspora. By contrast, every place of Jewish residence outside the land of Israel in another country, including Germany, is called *Galut* – the Hebrew word for exile, respectively diaspora. Here, too, little consideration is given to the divergent attitudes and sensitivities of individual refugees. Writers in particular were often unable to find their new home in Hebrew and felt their existence in the land of Israel very much as an exile. When Mendelsohn left Jerusalem for New York in 1941 due to a complex mix of reasons, he was considered a deserter in Israel for decades. Moreover, he had presumed to leave behind a highly critical pamphlet on the situation in Palestine, denouncing Zionist policies in the country as chauvinistic.<sup>7</sup>

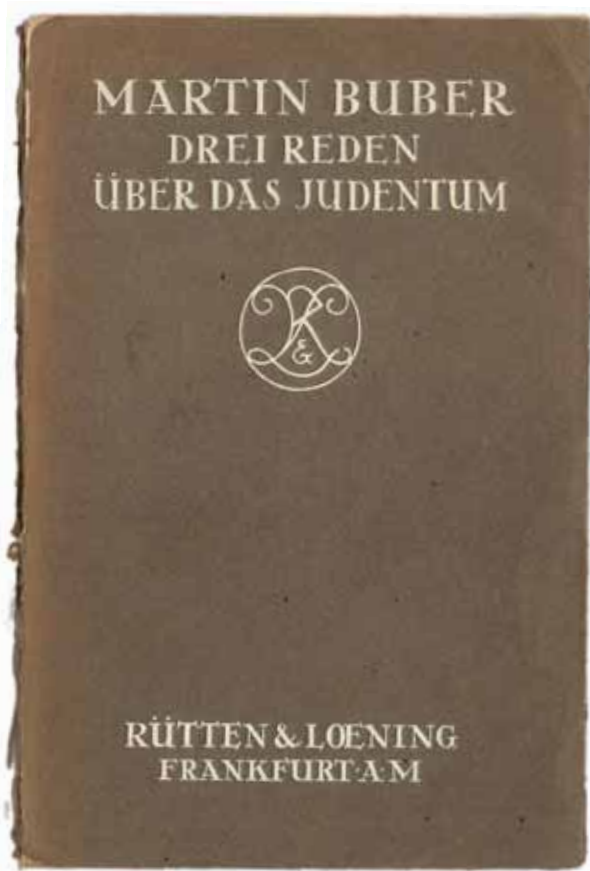


Fig. 5 Cover of Martin Buber's *Drei Reden über das Judentum* [Three Speeches on Judaism], 1911

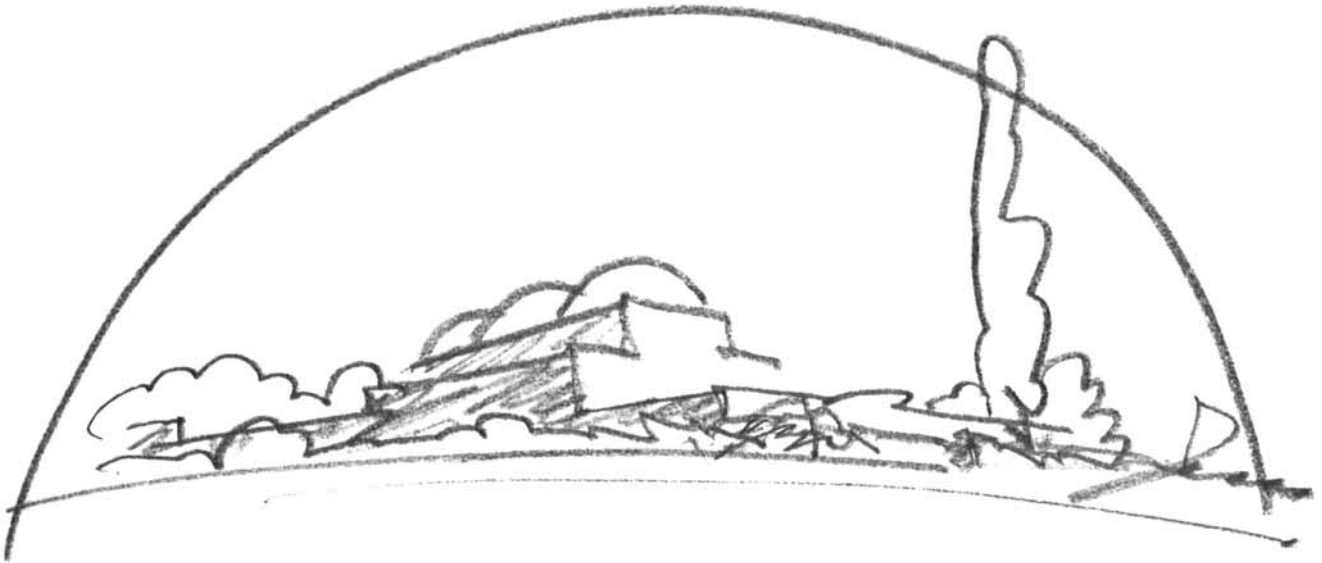


Fig. 6 Visionary synagogue sketch by Erich Mendelsohn, 1934

However, Mendelsohn's reception in Israel has fundamentally changed in the last three decades towards a more balanced critical approach.

The perspective of German Jewish immigrants to America was described by Hannah Arendt in her famous essay "We refugees".<sup>8</sup> She observed their common rejection of the term exile for their status and instead the pretence of voluntary immigration. She analysed it as a survival strategy of uprooted people in order to demonstrate solidarity and the will to integrate in the new country. The attempt to build a permanent home in a new place must reject the term exile, because it resonates with the hope of returning. For all we know, the Mendelsohns largely fit the picture drawn by Arendt.

It is probably right to say, that without Hitler's assumption of power the majority of German Jews would never have left their country of birth, which they commonly considered – at least up until 1933 – as their homeland. Yet, only a small percentage of the Jews who emigrated or fled, felt the desire to return to Germany after the fall of the Third Reich. Both applies to Mendelsohn. All his wanderings from one country to another were without a return ticket. The reasons for his multiple emigrations and the respective choice of destinations are complex. They range from concrete threats to economic hardships, from a critical stance against political chauvinism to profound alienation, from the welcomed chance for a fresh start to the utopian promises of new worlds.

Unlike Bertolt Brecht, for example, Mendelsohn did not consider the countries of his residence as waiting rooms. After leaving Germany, his country of birth was no longer a point of reference for Mendelsohn. Both in England, but especially in Palestine and the USA, he approached the process of becoming familiar and native through gathering in-depth insight of the geographical, climatic, cultural and social conditions on site – mainly through intensive travel. In Palestine he sent his newly employed assistant Julius Posener – a new immi-

grant like himself – on tour through the country before starting work in his office.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after arriving in the US Eric and Louise Mendelsohn crossed the American continent by private car. They used a simple foldable tent for their overnight stays to connect – as Mendelsohn emphasized – to the country's nature by direct contact to its soil.<sup>10</sup> His approach was phenomenological: comprehension was through perception of the place. The impressions and insights Mendelsohn thus gained through intensive observation and physical experience had a direct impact on his architecture. They were in line with what one may call a critical regionalism *avant la lettre*.

Mendelsohn's history is after all strongly related to his Jewishness. He was not an avid synagogue-goer though, but a synagogue-builder – in both the factual and metaphorical sense. By deliberately declaring the dynamic – the elastic principle, as he called it – to be the key concept of his building and life constructions, Mendelsohn united both concepts – dwelling and wandering, home and exile. His architecture, which he understood – especially in his early visionary designs – to be essentially of Jewish origin, can be seen as a synthesis of space and time, or as the temporalization of space. Here, as well as in the approach of transforming dualistic systems into a synthesis, thinkers such as Martin Buber or Bruno Zevi recognized fundamental features of Judaism. In this respect, Mendelsohn's buildings represent a materialization of Jewish experience and Hebrew thought.

Bruno Zevi, who published extensively on Mendelsohn since 1954 and edited his *Opera Completa* in 1971, has repeatedly referred to Mendelsohn's deep rooting in the Jewish diasporic relationship with time.<sup>11</sup> For the Roman architectural historian Mendelsohn was the revolutionary of modernism par excellence, whose only dogma was change and motion. In his functional-dynamic architecture, Zevi saw the materialization of Hebrew thought, the core of which

he considered to be the temporalization of space. Zevi summarized his multiple references towards the subject in a published lecture of 1974 under the title: “Ebraismo e concezione spazio-temporale dell’arte” [Hebraism and the concept of space-time in art].<sup>12</sup>

A second thinker, who referred to the space-time concept in Judaism – yet from a different perspective – was Martin Buber, who was an early important influence on Mendelsohn. The young architect read and commented on Buber’s *Drei Reden über das Judentum* [Three Speeches on Judaism], while at the Eastern front of WWI (Fig. 5).<sup>13</sup> In Buber’s interpretation of Judaism, which declared the creative act rather than the passive faith imperative, Mendelsohn found his self-understanding as a Jew and as an artist. Buber, whose major works focused on the philosophy of dialogue, saw the architect’s task in humanizing space. He regarded the experience of the cosmos’ endlessness, which reflects God’s infinity, as essentially unbearable to mankind, as “cruel and awesome”.<sup>14</sup> In order to cope with the world in which man has been placed, he must create his own limited space. By doing so, man overwrites the terrifying endlessness of God’s space with his own creations, “in order to give it a spirit of friendliness”.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the other arts, Buber conceived architecture as an invasion of space itself, which can only be experienced by passing through it, i.e. by the user’s and the spectator’s own movement. The bows, in which Mendelsohn often placed his sketched buildings may be understood as a “humanization of space” in the Buberian sense. It is an indication of an almost religious integration into the divine cosmos, which Mendelsohn met with respectful humility: “Cover your head so that the blessing of God may rest upon you,” says the Talmud (Fig. 6).<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his life, Mendelsohn remained a wanderer between the worlds. Ultimately, he preferred this state to a fixed existence. If one were to place him somewhere at home, the ship on the high seas – an image closely associated with emigration – provides an anchor. The sea, to which he wrote numerous hymns, was his element, his realm. The eternally flowing principle of the waves symbolizes the dynamics of his architecture as well as the restlessness of his life. In his last will and testament, he decreed that his ashes be given to the sea, a wish that was granted by his wife Louise. Mendelsohn’s first letter to her in August 1910 was a unique hymn to the sea: “Only in movement lies endless stimulus.”<sup>17</sup>

## Credits

Figs. 1, 3, 4, 5: Collection Ita Heinze-Greenberg

Fig. 2: Eric and Louise Mendelsohn Papers, Getty Research Institute

Fig. 6: Erich Mendelsohn Archiv, Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz

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# International Influence on and through Mendelsohn's Work

# The Reception of Mendelsohn and his Work in Britain

One dominant theme in the study of British architecture between 1918 and 1939 is the development of the Modern Movement in a country often portrayed as indifferent or hostile to it. At the beginning of this period, the two countries seen chiefly as sources for Modernist ideas were France and Germany, followed by the Netherlands. Interest in France was focussed on the École des Beaux-Arts and despite the award of the Royal Gold Medal in Architecture to P. J. H. Cuypers in 1897, his Gothic work had ceased to be of interest. There was a climate of ignorance and antipathy towards Germany, evidenced in a review of the German Section of the Turin Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in 1902 which criticised “an impression of richness, not always refined” and “a certain barbaric crudity of design.” While condemning France for the irrational decoration of *Art Nouveau*, this reviewer was neither over-patriotic nor xenophobic, finding the English section “a painful disappointment”, and praising Austria and Hungary as the best.<sup>1</sup> More outspoken was the architect E. W. Hudson, who considered that “even ‘l’Art nouveau’ is Doric simplicity compared with a great deal of modern Teutonic design.”<sup>2</sup> Charles Follen McKim received the Royal Gold Medal in 1903 and Jean-Louis Pascal in 1914, jointly representing the Franco-American focus of the time in Britain. Meanwhile, the German turn towards classicism in these years seems hardly to have been noticed in the magazines. Change came on the eve of war, with the visit of a select but influential English group, one of whom was the architect Cecil Brewer, to the Deutsche Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, and their subsequent founding of an equivalent body, the Design and Industries Association in 1915.<sup>3</sup>

It is well recognised that by the early 1920s, Weimar Germany became an attractive destination for British tourists with a progressive mentality, combined in some cases with a taste for sexual adventure.<sup>4</sup> This awakening interest spilled into architecture, and an architect, Gordon Holt (b. 1889), writing a travelogue of a German visit in 1923, opened by saying “For reasons not altogether unjustified, it has been the fashion in certain quarters to asperse Teutonic culture.” Theories of racial character dominated his judgement, but in contrast to the supposed “Latin” qualities dominant in England, Northern qualities were seen as a valuable counterpart, “both daring and unsophisticated”. In modern German architecture, Holt

found “ableness, fearlessness and – let us say the word – downright beauty”, although he used the new term “Expressionist” to warn against “monstrosities, so self-conscious and so precipitated, they do, here and there, show very original and potent minds”.<sup>5</sup>

The word and concept of Expressionism were popularised by the critic Herman George Scheffauer (1876–1927), born in San Francisco to German émigré parents. He aimed to become a writer, although he also studied art and architecture, and had a job in an architectural office in his native city. While living in London in 1915, his German name and a visit from a detective to his house caused Scheffauer and his wife to travel via Amsterdam to Berlin, where he remained until his death in 1927, and was therefore well-placed to act as a cultural conduit for architecture between Germany and the English-speaking world.

Scheffauer’s relevance here is that he was the first English-language writer to promote Mendelsohn’s work. After visiting Mendelsohn’s exhibition of drawings at the Paul Cassirer Gallery in Berlin in 1919 he published an article on it in the American Modernist journal, *The Dial*, in 1921.<sup>6</sup> His name appears only once in Mendelsohn’s correspondence with his wife, in 1922, in connection with the English edition of *Erich Mendelsohn, Bauten und Skizzen* of 1923 as *Erich Mendelsohn: Structures and Sketches*, published in London by Ernest Benn in 1924. This book was preceded by Scheffauer’s article on Mendelsohn in the *Architectural Review* in May 1923, becoming the first available descriptions in English of the man and his work. The article was one of a series by Scheffauer also covering Bruno Taut, Walter Gropius and Hans Poelzig.<sup>7</sup> This was an exceptional series for any English architectural magazine in terms of subject and date, and apart from the 1926 coverage of Peter Behrens’ house New Ways, Northampton, the discussion of German modernism in this journal lay fallow for at least five years afterwards.<sup>8</sup> Poelzig was the only one of architects covered in the *Architectural Review* series to have any substantial amount of work to show at this date, and in Mendelsohn’s case apart from his sketches and models, there was only the Einstein Tower, but while there was no further discussion of the other three for some years following, Mendelsohn assumed the role of representative for German Modern architecture in the English

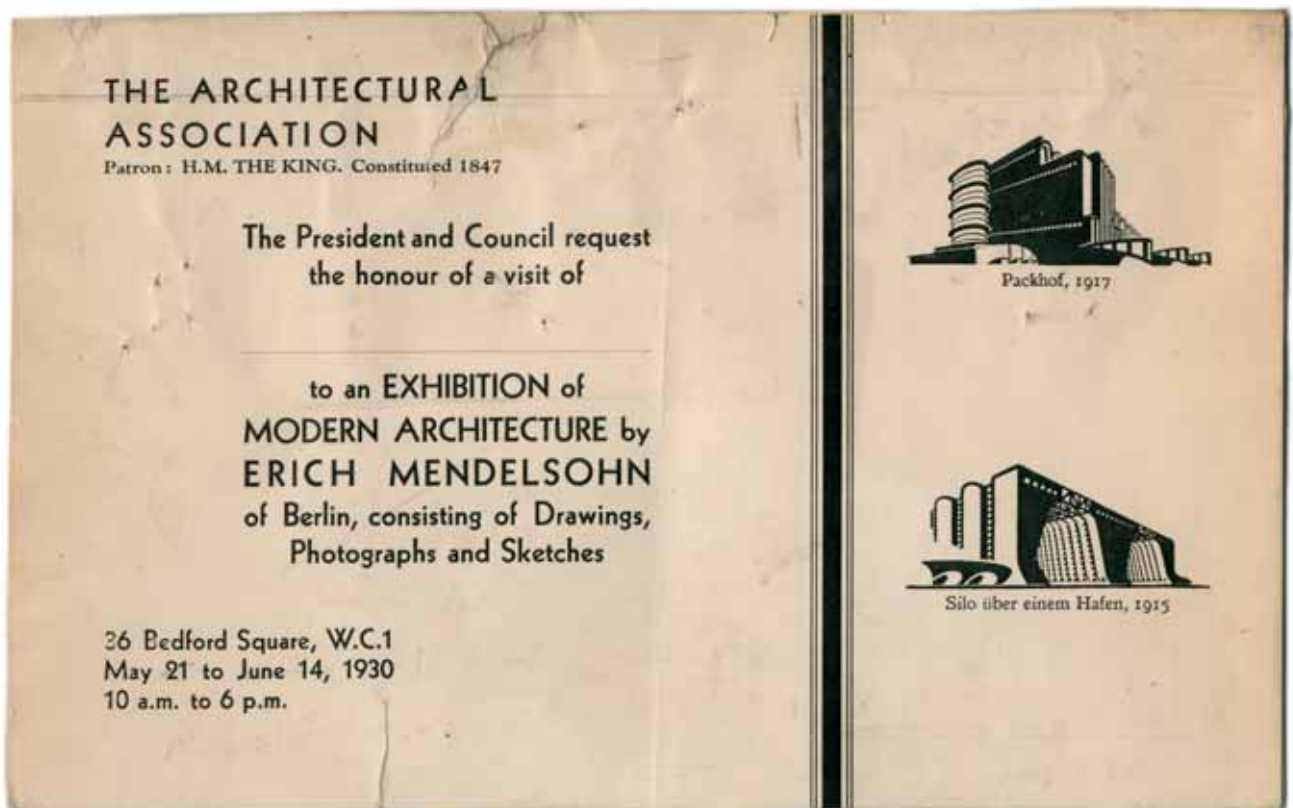


Fig. 1 Invitation to the exhibition of Mendelsohn's Drawings, Photographs and Sketches, 1930

mind, initially on the strength of this one untypical building. Scheffauer reasserted this dominance in his book of 1924, *The Vision in the German Arts*, also published by Benn, which devoted its chapter "Activistic Architecture" to Mendelsohn alone.

One immediate consequence of this coverage was the inclusion in 1924 of two examples of Mendelsohn's work in the textbook *The Principles of Architectural Composition* by Howard Morley Robertson, Principal of the Architectural Association. The first of these, almost inevitably, was the Einstein Tower, which appears as a line-drawn illustration in the chapter on "Contrast in Form and Mass", sharing the page with a building by Piet Kramer. The text refers to buildings showing "an effort to grapple with pure form and mould it into architectural shapes", while warning, in relation to the Potsdam tower, that trying to turn hard and resistant material into "forms suitable to clay modelling" can only be achieved "at the cost of fantastic difficulty and expense".<sup>9</sup> The Berliner Tageblatt building was also included, with the criticism of "suffering from over-emphasis and coarseness of handling".<sup>10</sup> Mendelsohn made more impact in Robertson's book than Wright and Le Corbusier, who were only represented in the book by uncharacteristically symmetrical plans. Robertson returned to Mendelsohn when reviewing Scheffauer's translation of the 1923 book, two years after publication. He took Mendelsohn as a representative both of Modernism and of a continuity from Gothic. This interpretation could be traced back to Wilhelm Worringer's *Formprobleme der Gotik* (1912) with its basis in the theory of *Einfühlung*, which, although not translated until 1927, could have been absorbed by

Robertson via a summary in T. E. Hulme's posthumous collection of writings, *Speculations* (1924),<sup>11</sup> where an unprejudiced observer might find "the same dominant principle of daring, vigour, and engineering skill, and the same keynote of 'dynamics' – forces expressed in action and restrained in actual physical equilibrium." As Robertson concluded, "the main difference lies perhaps in the spiritual and mystical atmosphere of Gothic as opposed to the material and sometimes coldly intellectual expression of Mendelsohn's buildings."<sup>12</sup> This shows an inability to reconcile two unfamiliar qualities, taking the term "dynamics" from Scheffauer and contrasting it with "intellectualism", perhaps meant to denote anything unfamiliar to English eyes.

Robertson emerged as a moderate progressive through these years, and one of the few to make thorough investigations of new European buildings.<sup>13</sup> Mendelsohn became for him a stick with which to beat more conservative colleagues, but more frequently, Mendelsohn's work was used by commentators to discredit the poorly-understood Modern Movement as a whole.<sup>14</sup> To give one example, the Irish architect Manning Robertson, no relation of Howard Robertson, who published a survey *Laymen and the New Architecture* in 1925, while in theory sympathetic to change, inevitably picked out the Einstein Tower as "shouting its symbolical message with assertive incoherence", rising from its base "resembling a crazy concrete battleship".<sup>15</sup> In *Modernismus*, 1934, the best-remembered book of anti-Modernist criticism, Reginald Blomfield similarly compared "that notorious observatory at Potsdam" to "the gun-turret of some nightmare battleship, with the lower part of it shaped like a ram, and windows designed to



resemble the embrasures of eight-inch guns.”<sup>16</sup> Blomfield added a footnote expressing sympathy for Mendelsohn’s plight as a political exile, while criticising the Schocken Store at Chemnitz for having “about as much design in it as a dust-bin”, and regretting the adoption of exaggerated horizontality in recent English work.<sup>17</sup>

By 1929, Howard Robertson’s view of Mendelsohn had become more favourable, writing in the *Architect and Building News* in 1929 on “Dynamics in German Street Architecture”, opening with a photograph of “the amazing corner of Enrich (sic) Mendelsohn’s ‘Haus Mosse’” in Berlin, and the paragraph, “There is no country, Holland not excepted, where the modern architecture exhibits to the degree found in Germany that peculiar quality which, in the scale of human emotions, is labelled ‘excitement’.”<sup>18</sup> Later in the year, Robertson wrote about the Universum Cinema, with almost mystical enthusiasm, a quality conspicuously absent, however, from Robertson’s own designs with his partner, John Murray Easton.

It might have been on a visit to research this article that Robertson met Mendelsohn and invited him to put on an exhibition of his work at the Architectural Association and give two lectures, one for the students and one for the members, on 19 May 1930 (Fig. 1). London on this occasion seems to have embraced him wholeheartedly – not only through its more progressive architects but more widely through the media. *The Observer* heralded his arrival, with all seats for his lectures booked, “To create such interest amongst his professional colleagues in this country, who are apparently suspicious of the modern movement, is in itself revealing, and it is certainly something of an accomplishment (...) whether one agrees with the modern movement or not, one must admit that the work of Mendelsohn is vital and interesting.” The anonymous critic noted how the work had changed since the Einstein Tower and Luckenwalde hat factory, to become “singularly free from affectation, whilst his latest creations have that simple and convincing beauty characteristic of all great works of art. ... [with] such sweet reasonableness of conception that even the most firmly entrenched conservative in architecture cannot resist its appeal.”<sup>19</sup>

Mendelsohn’s lecture text for the Architectural Association, “The Laws of Modern Architecture” was apparently based on one he had given in New York in 1927, with a translation probably made by his wife, Luise, who had a good command of English. The typescript includes markings for emphasis and pacing. While the text might not have represented his most recent thinking, it would have been novel to most of the audience.

Robertson introduced the lecture by saying that “Mr Mendelsohn comes to London at the invitation of the Association, in response to a desire, widespread among its members, to meet and hear one of the men who by his own creative ability has placed himself in the front ranks of the profession in his own country.”<sup>20</sup>

Speaking on behalf of “the new architecture” as a whole rather than from a personal position, Mendelsohn appealed to “the preeminent sense of law and order, the instinctive

fairness proverbial of the English [that] enables you to recognise the value of ideas even when you do not share them.”<sup>21</sup> After the lecture an argument began between the progressive editor of the new monthly magazine, *Building*, F. E. Towndrow, and a well-known architectural writer of more conservative inclination, A. Trystan Edwards. This kept Mendelsohn in view as the chief representative of Modern architecture for English readers.<sup>22</sup>

Three days later, on 22 May, Mendelsohn spoke at a dinner of the Architecture Club at the Savoy Hotel, with the title “The Architecture of Concrete”.<sup>23</sup> The Club, founded in 1922, was intended to draw influential people into the field of architecture. One of those present was the MP and former diplomat Harold Nicolson, who broadcast about the occasion with a printed version appearing in the BBC’s *Listener* magazine, describing Mendelsohn as “the man who more than any other has revolutionised modern methods of construction.”<sup>24</sup> Nicolson spoke German fluently and had served as a diplomat in Berlin from 1928 to 1929, so would have been familiar with new architecture there. He reported his after-dinner conversation with Mendelsohn on the contrast between German earnestness and English frivolity.

By 1930, compared with 1924, English readers had access to a much wider range of translated texts, home-grown commentaries and photographic images of Modern architecture. These included Le Corbusier’s *Towards a New Architecture* (1927) and *The City of Tomorrow* (1929), and Bruno Taut’s *Modern Architecture* (1929). Le Corbusier and Mendelsohn seem to have been linked in the forefront of the public mind, but Corbusier did not visit England until 1935, and refused to speak in English. Gropius was still relatively unknown until his visit in 1934, prior to his emigration, which also took place in the context of an exhibition and lecture.

Over the course of 1931 and 1932, however, the *Architectural Review*, *Architects’ Journal* and *Architect and Building News* published articles on the Metal Workers’ Building, The Columbushaus, the Schocken Store in Chemnitz and Mendelsohn’s Haus am Rupenhorn.<sup>25</sup> These showed a character obviously very different to that of the earlier buildings and projects, and one that came closer to English ideas of propriety. The way that Mendelsohn’s models for department stores were the starting point for the Peter Jones shop in Chelsea, begun in 1934, shows the affinity, although the original horizontal emphasis of the elevations was altered to vertical.

Peter Jones was the work of a team of architects in which the client’s representative was Charles Reilly, recently retired after thirty years as head of the Liverpool University School of Architecture, and an advocate of Mendelsohn’s work after meeting him during the London visit in 1930. Reilly invited Mendelsohn to lecture in Liverpool on a subsequent visit in 1933, an event that received much publicity, and was the point at which Mendelsohn’s offer of five-year British citizenship, which Reilly was instrumental in obtaining, was announced. The convergence of Mendelsohn with English preferences in Modern architecture involved two trajectories. It is clear that the articulate architectural public as well as those within the profession and the critics moved towards him, but he also moved towards them in the way that his work developed,

especially the last buildings in Germany before he was forced to seek refuge in London. The interest was technical as well as aesthetic, and in the *Architects' Journal*, the steel frame of the Metalworkers' Building was illustrated as an example to berate the conservatism of the London Building Acts.

In October 1933, an announcement was published that Mendelsohn would be moving to London, followed shortly by the announcement of his partnership with Serge Chermayeff. This connection operated in several ways. In March 1931, Chermayeff had travelled to Germany with Wells Coates and Coates's patron for his first building, the entrepreneur Jack Pritchard. They had visited Erich and Luise Mendelsohn at their new house, and Chermayeff had stationed himself at the foot of the staircase of the Metalworkers' Building, telling an audience at Mendelsohn's lecture in Liverpool in November 1933, "I stayed upon it for two hours (...) to see whether it had the same effect upon ordinary people using it, and I saw that everybody threw his chest out and danced up it. So I think the staircase solved an economic difficulty too."<sup>26</sup>



**Fig. 2** Erich Mendelsohn in the garden of Chermayeff's house, London, with an unidentified companion

During 1932, Chermayeff had joined with Mendelsohn, T. H. Wijdeveld and Amedée Ozenfant in the group projecting the European Academy of the Mediterranean, with several meetings held at Chermayeff's London house (Fig. 2). He was attempting to raise money in England through his social contacts, but apparently without success. This abortive project would, however, have further familiarised Mendelsohn with a wider English professional circle, including the artist and typographer Eric Gill who was nominated as one of the teachers for the academy and attended the meetings.

The story is now at the point where it might be thought to begin. The practice of Mendelsohn and Chermayeff got off to the best possible start when their design for a new entertainment pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea was awarded first prize in the competition, announced early in 1934 and completed at the end of 1935, amid widespread acclaim. Mendelsohn remained a presence in England until his official emigration to the USA in 1940, but he was in Palestine for long periods, and made fewer public appearances than Gropius who arrived a year later, in October 1934, benefitting from a more active group of supporters.

During the 1930s and in the long term, the taste-makers of British architecture favoured the more austere effect and

greater dedication to scientific method associated, rightly or wrongly, with Gropius, rather than the romanticism associated with Mendelsohn, and despite much else that has changed, this order of preference has apparently not yet been reversed.

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Frank Yerbury: *Itinerant Cameraman, Architectural Photographs 1920–35*, London 1987.

## Credits

Fig. 1: Architectural Association Archives, London

Fig. 2: Author’s collection

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Scott, *First International Exhibition*, 1902, pp. 486–7.
- <sup>2</sup> Hudson, *German Technical High Schools*, 1903, p. 505.
- <sup>3</sup> Among other accounts of these events, see Powers, *Bauhaus Goes West*, 2019, Chapter One.
- <sup>4</sup> See Seymour, *Noble Endeavours*, 2013 and Colliini, *Absent Minds*, 2006.
- <sup>5</sup> Holt, *Architectural Travel* 4, 8 August 1923, p. 196.
- <sup>6</sup> Scheffauer, *Dynamic Architecture*, March 1921, pp. 324–8.
- <sup>7</sup> Scheffauer, *Erich Mendelsohn*, 1923, pp. 155–9.
- <sup>8</sup> *Silhouette*, *New Ways*, November 1926, pp. 178–9.
- <sup>9</sup> Robertson, *Principles*, 1924, p. 42.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

- <sup>11</sup> Hulme, *Speculations*, 1924, pp. 86–90.
- <sup>12</sup> Robertson, *Recent Books*, January 1925, p. 57.
- <sup>13</sup> See Frank Yerbury, 1987 and *Travels in Modern Architecture*, 1989.
- <sup>14</sup> Robertson, *Laymen*, 1925, p. 74.
- <sup>15</sup> Blomfield, *Modernismus*, 1934, pp. 53–4.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53–5.
- <sup>18</sup> Robertson, *Erich Mendelsohn*, 16 May 1930, p. 629.
- <sup>19</sup> Dr Erich Mendelsohn, 18 May 1930, p. 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Typescript held in Mendelsohn archive, Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup> See the series “The New Religion” of 1930. The December issue also contained letters from Arthur J. Davis, Robert Cromie, Laurence Gotch, James Hembrow, and R. A. Duncan, up to p. 539. Further letters from Bartle Cox, Joseph Emberton, E. Berry Webber, E. Kaufmann (Frankfurt) and W. A. Eden were published in the January 1931 issue.
- <sup>23</sup> Summaries of both lecture texts were published in *Architect and Building News*, 23 May, 1930, pp. 670–2 and in *The Builder*, 23 May, 1930, pp. 994–5 and 30 May 1930, p. 1036.
- <sup>24</sup> Nicolson, *People and Things*, 28 May 1930, p. 955.
- <sup>25</sup> Robertson, *Architecture of Tension*, December 1929, pp.702–7; *House of the Metal Workers’ Union*, 29 January 1932, pp. 169–71; *Erich Mendelsohn at Home*, 13 May 1932, pp. 240–2. Josef Umlauf contributed articles to the *Architects’ Journal* on Mendelsohn’s house (Book review 16 March, 1932, pp. 379–80) and article on the Schocken Store, Chemnitz, Supplement 5 October 1932, three pages, unpaginated. The *Columbushaus* was published in *Architectural Review*, 1 February, 1933, pp. 57–63.
- <sup>26</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1933.



## Patxi Eguiluz and Carlos Copertone

### Berlin – Madrid – Bilbao

Long before Erich Mendelsohn had his own corpus of built architecture, his drawings had already made a huge impact, both in Germany and beyond. *Col sporcar si trova* (i.e. “by messing about, one discovers”), as Piranesi said about the act of drawing, and indeed Mendelsohn’s astute early sketches soon turned him into a proto-influencer. We shall now try to analyse briefly his influence in Spain.

Though he had not yet constructed any building, Erich Mendelsohn began to make a name for himself as an architect, following an exhibition of his drawings at the Paul Cassirer gallery in Berlin in 1919. The architecture in these initial sketches is not based on any physical reality or specific commission, but rather on an abstraction of desire. Nevertheless, the works’ profound materiality elevates them far beyond simple two-dimensionality: they are imbued with great freedom of form and a strong sense of movement.

Decades later, the Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid would rise to prominence in exactly the same way. In the 1970s, Hadid became the leading exponent of another kind of new architecture (this time, deconstructivism). As with Mendelsohn, her breakthrough was largely due to the impact of her early architectural drawings; yet, she would not actually construct anything until many years later (to be exact, her first building was the Fire Station in Weil am Rhein in 1990).

The influence of Mendelsohn’s sketches soon reached Spain. In 1924, the first journal of Spanish architecture (*Arquitectura*) published an article<sup>1</sup> about Mendelsohn, but not about his built work. Instead, it focused on his sketches, the ones that offered a glimpse at a new way of doing things. Even though they were utopian projects, Spanish critics saw his work as “architecture of the future”. Alongside two of his drawings, the text stated:

“With regard to Mendelsohn’s work, if future critics overlook the tentative, rougher ideas, common to all processes of innovation (...) they will thus be left with the pleasant task of analysing the rare personality that comes through in his designs. The sketches all share an apparent ‘yearning for space’ that, according to him, must take precedence in all architectural creation, even over the relationship between ‘limit and infinity, logic and feeling’.”

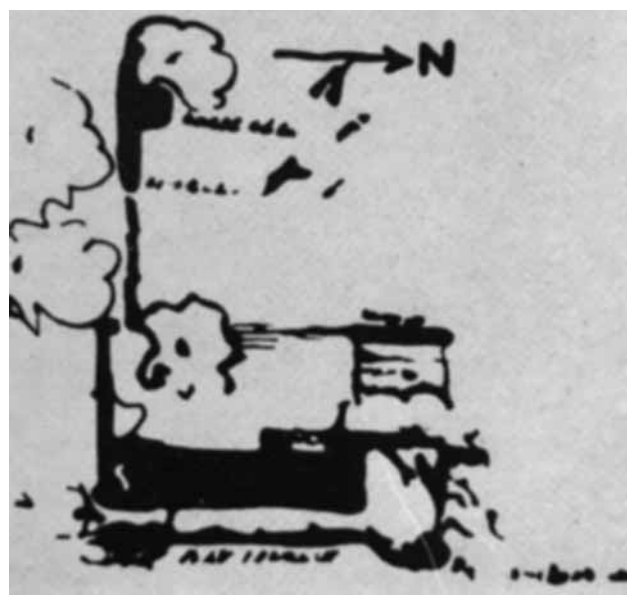


Fig. 1 Only remaining rough sketch of the unbuilt house for the Duke and Duchess of Alba in the Sierra de Guadarrama, Spain

By that time, Mendelsohn had already designed and built some of his most important works, including Mossehaus, the renovation of Rudolf Mosse’s printing press and newspaper offices in Berlin (1921–23). For this project, Mendelsohn left the original structure intact, apart from the damaged corner entrance: he replaced this section with a surprisingly modern body, which then extended around the old structure. He strongly accentuated the corner by adding bold horizontal elements, mirrored by a further horizontal dynamic that wrapped around the upper floors of the building. The use of long strips and sculpted features along the window sections gave it a futuristic look, particularly when compared to the more classical neighbouring buildings. It was, perhaps, the first example of a rationalist building pieced together with expressionistic forms.

In the gradual process of his own formal refinement, Mendelsohn began to curb his initial expressionistic urges and excesses. Even so, his projects still retained certain stylistic features that gave them a real sense of movement, and they greatly enriched the urban environment (which, at the time, was being taken over by the new way to get around, i.e. the



Fig. 2 Edificio Carrión, Luis Martínez-Feduchi and Vicente Eced, Gran Vía, Madrid, 1931



Fig. 3 Cine Barceló by Luis Gutiérrez Soto, Madrid, 1930

car and the speed that came with it). Setting curved elements against horizontal lines created theatrical, dynamic effects, elongating the buildings in perspective. Their volumes were broken up by circular and semi-cylindrical forms, each one like an axis that could shift the visual direction. Mendelsohn had managed to create his own unique expressive language, one that was highly distinctive amid the prevailing functionalist architecture of the day.

In 1929, Mendelsohn's presence and reputation in Spain was further enhanced when he gave two lectures, in Madrid and Bilbao.<sup>2</sup> In addition, more articles were published about him, showcasing his work to the country. Another issue of *Arquitectura* that same year<sup>3</sup> featured his Universum Cinema in Berlin, and it described the huge impact that the building had made.

Mendelsohn's lectures in Madrid and Bilbao, in November 1929, were about, firstly, the experiences he had recounted in *Russland, Europa, Amerika: Ein architektonischer Querschnitt*, published earlier that year. In that book, he argued that the continent of Europe and its cities needed to find a rightful place of their own, caught as they were between the two mighty world powers of the time. In the prologue, he began by pointing out that his book was not meant to be political, but that, nevertheless, politics and economics were the living foundations of his architecture.

Secondly, in the lectures, Mendelsohn spoke about his career up to that point. In a review of these talks, one article noted

that "it was interesting to see how his fantastical sketches gradually turned into rational structure and a whole series of bodies and volumes, factories, housing and urban estates of admirable cohesion". It added that "Mendelsohn is celebrated due to his talent for handling space. His most impactful buildings stand out for their bold *chiaroscuro* that comes from the way he deals, so skilfully, with masses in space."<sup>4</sup>

Articles like this one, along with the two lectures, had a profound effect on Spain's subsequent urban architecture. In Madrid and Bilbao, numerous buildings thereafter were clearly influenced by the emergence of this new, highly expressive architectural language. Without Mendelsohn, so-called *Spanish Expressionist Rationalism* would never have come into being. Following the lectures, Mendelsohn received two commissions for work in Spain. He was asked to design a student residence for Madrid's Ciudad Universitaria campus; however, ultimately, it never went ahead. He was also tasked with building a house for the Duke and Duchess of Alba in the Sierra de Guadarrama, but this project was cancelled too, due to the sudden, untimely death of the Duchess in 1934. The building plans were deposited at the Palacio de Liria; yet they were destroyed when the palace was bombed in the Spanish Civil War. We were particularly interested in this unbuilt house, and the only remaining rough sketch of it (Fig. 1), because it is strongly reminiscent of the design for his own home in Berlin (albeit adapted to suit the needs of the Alba family).



Fig. 4 Residential building at Fernández de los Ríos 53, by Luis Gutiérrez Soto, 1930



Fig. 5 Residential building at Vallehermoso 58–60, by Ángel Laciana García, 1934

In Madrid, among the many buildings influenced by Mendelsohn, there are two outstanding examples of superb architecture, both of which engage with their urban surroundings in an emphatic and iconic way. Just as Mendelsohn's own buildings always responded so masterfully to the conditions imposed by the city, as well as the new ways of moving around it, these new flagship constructions in Madrid can only really be understood when taking into account their specific urban settings. Unlike Le Corbusier-style rationalism, which imposed a new, uniform model that sought to overhaul the European city (such as the Plan Voisin for Paris), Mendelsohn wanted to modify the city from within. Thus, he took his sites' immediate contexts into account, in order to improve the whole surrounding space. In 1931, Luis Martínez-Feduchi and Vicente Eced, right on Madrid's famous Gran Vía, used a rounded edge with horizontal strips to resolve a corner space, thus creating one of the most emblematic buildings of this new architecture in Spain: the Edificio Carrión (Fig. 2). It was clearly influenced by the aerodynamics of Mendelsohn's Mossehaus, and the way it dealt with the corner, though this building also had another very Mendelsohnian feature: it was to be an advertising hoard (as with the Schocken Department Store in Stuttgart or the Galeries Lafayette in Berlin, both from 1928). It was in a location with heavy traffic, so it needed to be visually striking in order to grab the attention. The building became popular in Spain thanks to its huge neon logo of a drinks company. At this point, it is important to mention Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, who, decades later in their book *Learning from Las Vegas*, stated that "the graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape".

Not far from the Edificio Carrión, and in that same year, Luis Gutiérrez Soto built the Cine Barceló, another corner building (Fig. 3). It is notable for the way it combines naval imagery and a façade structure with horizontal strips and gaps.

There are many other examples of residential architecture like this in Madrid, built around the same time, such as:

- Residential building at Fernández de los Ríos 53, by Luis Gutiérrez Soto, 1930 (Fig. 4).

- Residential building at Vallehermoso 58–60, by Ángel Laciana García, 1934 (Fig. 5).
- Residential building at Benito Gutiérrez 33, by Ángel Laciana García, 1934 (Fig. 6).
- Residential building at Pintor Rosales 50–52, by Ángel Laciana García, 1935 (Fig. 7).

A great many buildings went up in Madrid during this period, but the outbreak of the Civil War brought an abrupt end to the influence of this new kind of architecture. It had even been used in the construction of "cheap housing" (term used to describe the smaller houses permitted following a change in the law), resulting in one of Spain's most significant rationalist urban estates, namely the Colonia Parque-Residencia (and the nearby Colonia El Viso) by Rafael Bergamín and Luis Blanco-Soler, built in 1931–32 (Fig. 8). For many years, it was known as the architects' estate, since various professionals lived there (including Fernando García Mercadal, Fernando Salvador Carreras and Rafael Bergamín himself), as well as many other intellectuals who loved this new way of interacting with the world.

Over the years, more and more Spanish publications featured Mendelsohn's new projects. In 1932, the magazine *A.C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, published by GATEPAC (i.e. the Group of Spanish Artists and Technicians for the Progress of Spanish Architecture), described their visit to Mendelsohn's Columbushaus in Berlin, when it was mid-construction.<sup>5</sup> The piece included an impression of the final building, the floor plans, as well as images of the work-in-progress and construction details. A later article<sup>6</sup> compared this project with one in Barcelona from that same year: the load-bearing wall in the Barcelona building was 120 centimetres thick, whereas, at the Columbushaus, it was just 25 centimetres. The article highlighted the loss of space in the Barcelona building, due to the walls taking up far more of the available terrain: the writer lamented the fact that "this is still being repeated in other new buildings in the year 1932". Mendelsohn and his architecture were seen as a prime example of a new approach to architecture, one that should be implemented for various reasons — in this particular case, his build-





Fig. 6 Residential building at Benito Gutiérrez 33, by Ángel Laciana García, 1934



Fig. 7 Residential building at Pintor Rosales 50–52, by Ángel Laciana García, 1935

ing offered as much usable floorspace as possible, as permitted by the new structural solutions available.

In Bilbao, which was growing exponentially at that time (bolstered by the up-and-coming, powerful naval and steelworks industry), these new forms could be seen all over the emerging suburban developments.

The influence of Mendelsohn's 1929 lecture at the Hotel Carlton in Bilbao (the city's leading hotel of the era) was soon noticeable. There, in Bilbao, several of the city's iconic buildings were constructed soon thereafter, on significant corners of the city's blocks. One such example is La Equitativa (1934) by Manuel Ignacio Galíndez Zabala (Fig. 9). This building hosts a mixed programme of offices and living spaces, and each of these uses has a distinct formal volumetric solution, even though, together, they still make sense as a whole. The offices, in the mezzanine space, have their own body which is set slightly forward from the rest of the structure, and there is a continuous, wrap-around window that is clearly indebted to Mendelsohn's designs for the offices at the Universum complex.

This new *style* was particularly prevalent in Bilbao's peripheral residential projects: it can be seen in Tomás Bilbao's residential buildings at Ripa 6 (1933) and Alameda Urquijo 60–62–64 (1934) (Fig. 10), and in Rafael Fontán's residential building at Ercilla 43 (1943) (Fig. 11). They are all of a somewhat stark composition, based on horizontal lines contrasting with curved elements, and they are undeniably Mendelsohnian in their make-up.

In Bilbao, unlike what happened in Madrid, this new way of understanding architecture did not come to a complete halt

when the Civil War broke out. Another iconic building in Bilbao, the Garaje San Mamés (Fig. 12), was designed in 1941 and completed in 1945 (at the height of the post-war period in Spain, which, elsewhere in the country, brought about a return to a more classical style of architecture). Perhaps because its main use was linked to vehicles (the building combined a car park and housing), the architect José María Sainz Aguirre emphasises the corner with a very Mendelsohnesque aerodynamic curve, deftly merging the two streets. This transition is further asserted by a turret, with decorative details that also recall the German master's work. The first two floors, with their completely glazed horizontal bays, as well as the use of typography to define the building's function within the city setting, are proof of the ongoing influence in Bilbao (and in



Fig. 8 Colonia El Viso by Rafael Bergamín and Luis Blanco-Soler, Madrid, 1931



Fig. 9 La Equitativa by Manuel Ignacio Galíndez Zabala, Bilbao, 1934



Fig. 11 Ercilla 43 by Rafael Fontán, Bilbao, 1943



Fig. 10 Alameda Urquijo 60-62-64 by Tomás Bilbao, Bilbao, 1934



Fig. 12 Garaje San Mamés by José María Sainz Aguirre, Bilbao, 1945

the whole of Spain) of an architect who, years earlier, had been forced to flee his own country and continent.

The propagation of Mendelsohn-inspired forms in these two Spanish cities illustrates the sheer impact of the lectures in Madrid and Bilbao, and how they inspired many Spanish architects of the day. The repercussions went beyond what we might call merely formal cliché, without taking anything away from the powerful communicative effect that comes from repeating forms: this trend highlights how Erich Mendelsohn changed 20th-century urbanism and architecture, both in terms of urban morphology and how architecture could adapt to the new city context.

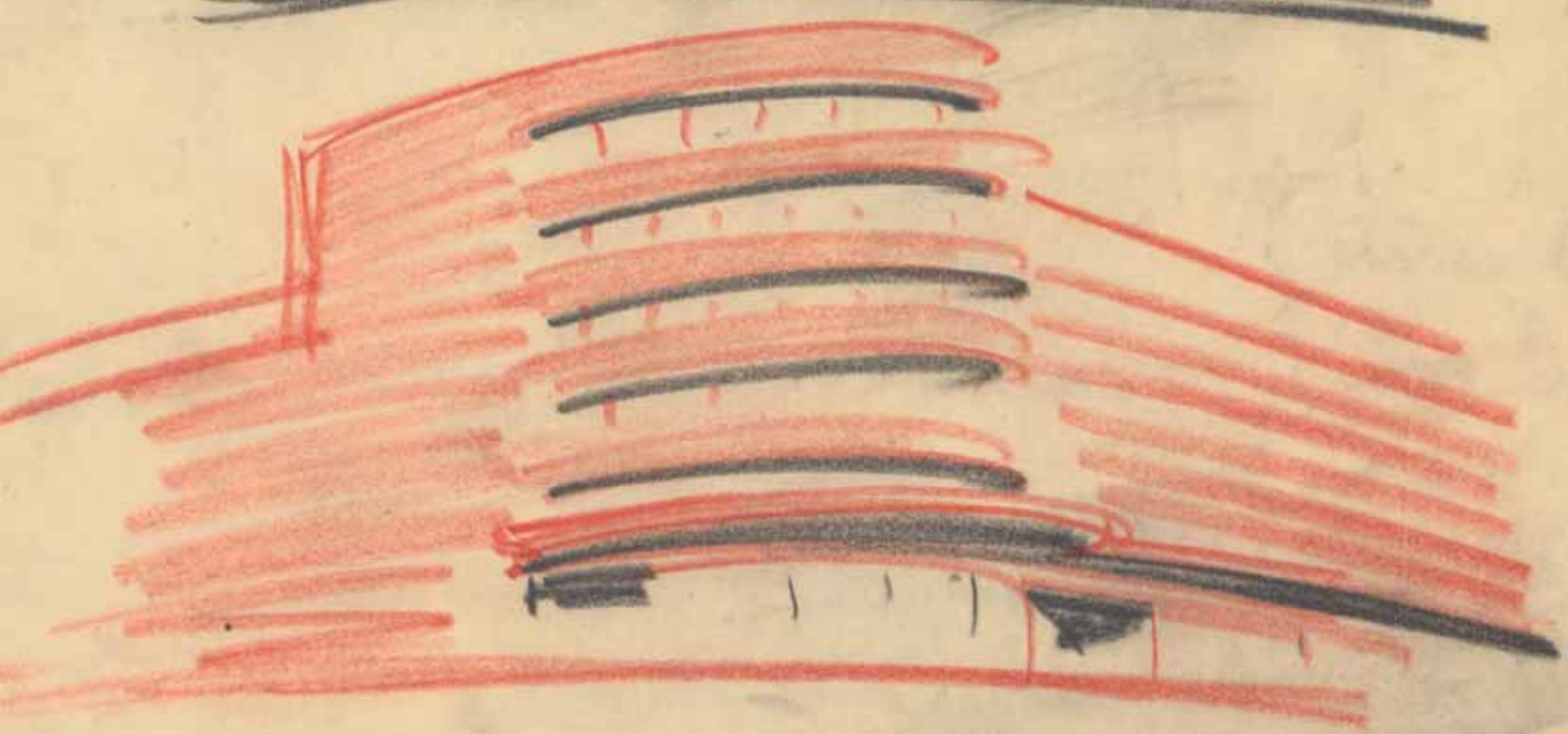
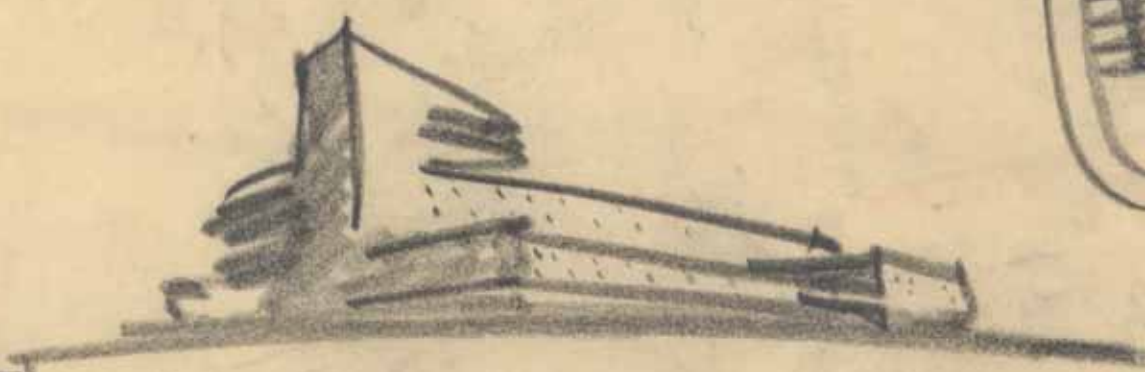
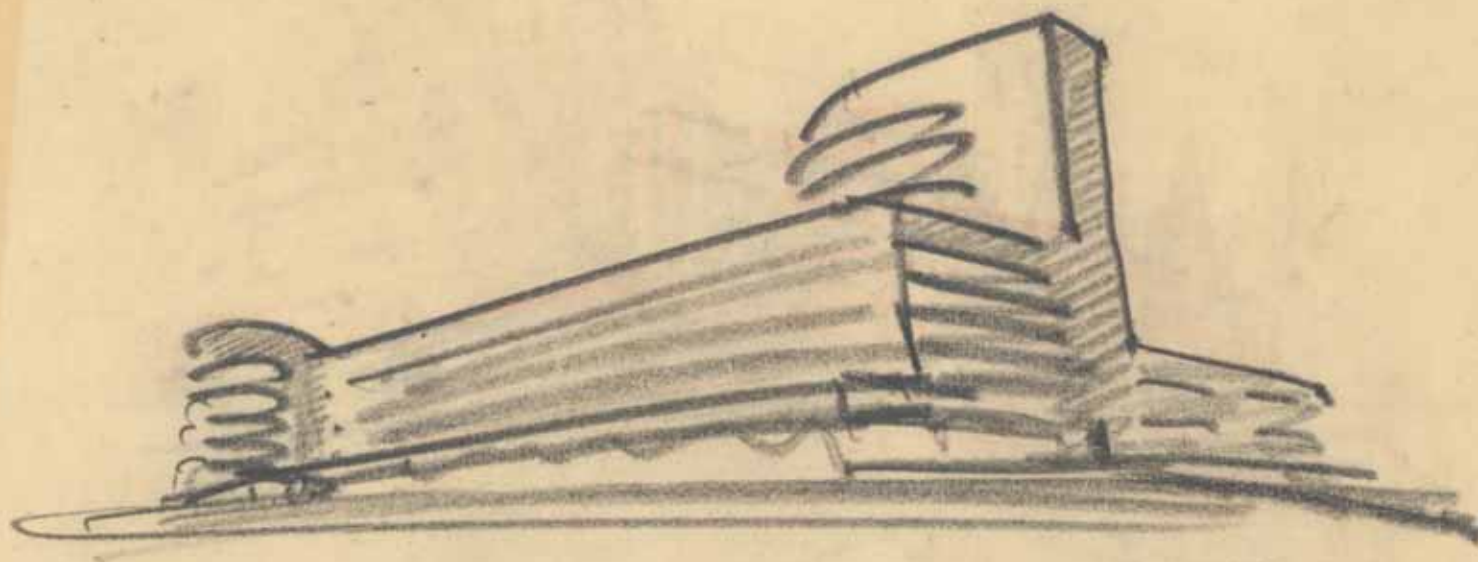
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Fig. 1: Archives of Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid  
Figs. 2–12: Patxi Eguíluz and Carlos Copertone

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> L. Blanco Soler, “Erich Mendelsohn”, in: *Arquitectura*, N° 67 (1924), pp. 318–319.
- <sup>2</sup> “NOTICIAS. España: Erich Mendelsohn en Madrid”, in: *Arquitectura*, N° 127 (1929), pp. 437–438.
- <sup>3</sup> “El cine Universum en Berlín”, in: *Arquitectura*, N° 118 (1929), pp. 67–68.
- <sup>4</sup> “Crónica e información. Conferencias sobre arquitectura moderna”, in: *La Construcción Moderna*, N° 22 (1929), p. 348.
- <sup>5</sup> “Columbus Haus”, in: *A.C. Documentos de actividad contemporánea*, N° 5 (1932), pp. 33–35.







Marco Silvestri

## On the Global Impact of Erich Mendelsohn's Architecture. Sergio Larraín's Oberpaur Building in Santiago and the Beginnings of Modernist Architecture in Chile

The growing mining sector in Chile – saltpetre and copper extraction emerged in the country at the end of the 19th century – led to an economic boom and to the construction of new cities and production lines.<sup>1</sup> In 1927, Carlos Ibañez del Campo was elected as the new president of Chile. One of his and his successor Alessandri Palma's main goals was the extensive modernisation of the country. Special attention was given to the cities of Santiago, Viña del Mar and Valparaíso in the form of measures in support of urban development, beautification and infrastructure. All these cities had experienced immense population growth since 1900.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the effect of earthquakes as a driver of innovation in Chile is an important factor (Valparaíso 1906, Talca 1928 and Chillán 1939): it led to the use of adobe

being abandoned and to the implementation of new building regulations.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of architectural styles, Beaux Arts architecture dominated in Chile at the turn of the century and far into the 1920s. But the development of architecture towards modernity is also connected to progress in industrialization.<sup>4</sup> The Central Market in Santiago, the first metal architecture in the country, was built in 1868 and the first cement plant, El Melón, was established in Viña del Mar in 1912.<sup>5</sup> One of the earliest buildings using reinforced concrete was erected in Santiago by Alberto Cruz Montt in 1910.<sup>6</sup> Some historicist buildings, like the Biblioteca Nacional in Santiago, already featured an iron and glass dome.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the first institutions for architectural training had been established (Universidad de



Fig. 1 Santiago de Chile, Edificio Oberpaur

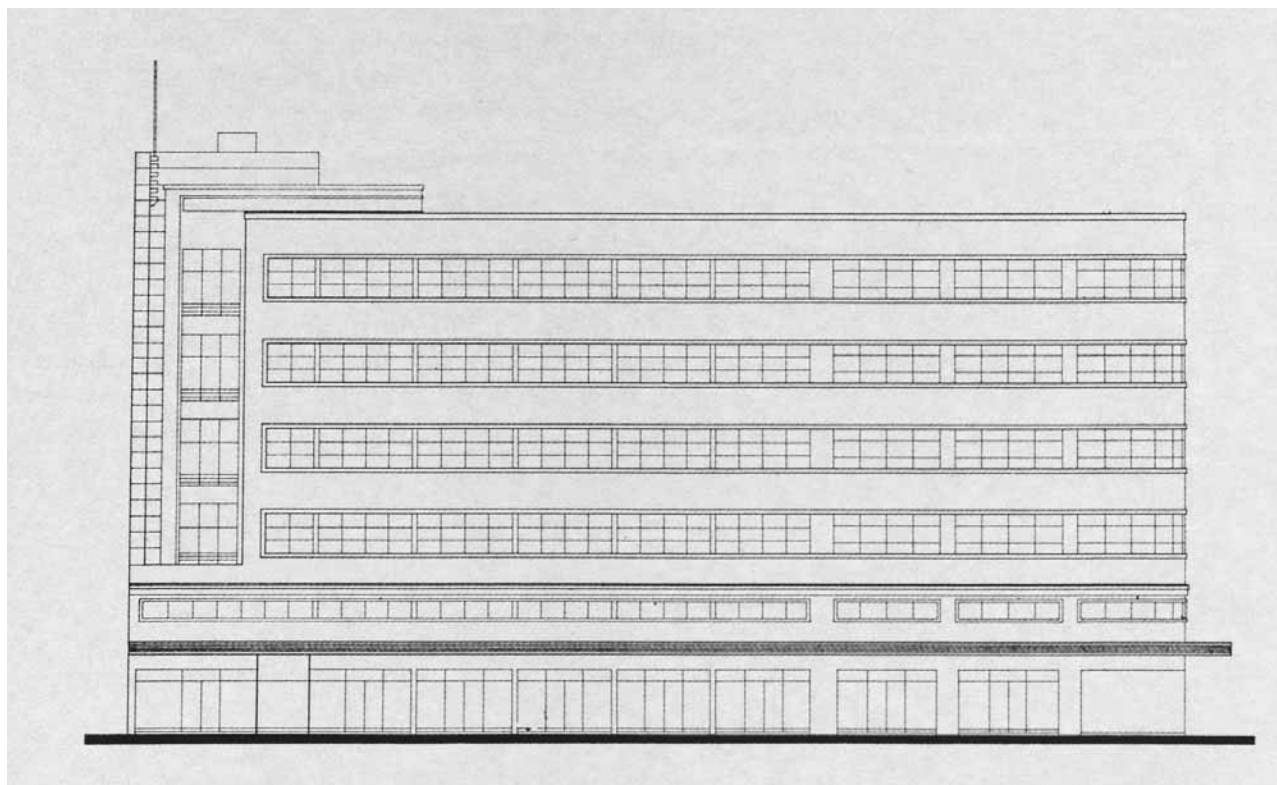


Fig 2 Santiago de Chile, Edificio Oberpaur, elevation

Chile, 1849, and Universidad Católica, 1894). The education offered was influenced by architects who had travelled to the US and Europe. They brought back new ideas and experiences and incorporated new methods and subjects into their teaching.<sup>8</sup> In the 1920s, architectural education supported by immigrant architects<sup>9</sup> had developed and reached an international standard at both state and Catholic universities. Now, new architectural forms were also entering the country.<sup>10</sup> Even though much energy has been spent in recent years on researching topics related to the history of 20th century architecture in Chile, there are still many areas that require further study.<sup>11</sup>

Against this background of departures, an iconic building emerged in Santiago in 1929 that set the tone for a new architecture in the country. The Edificio Oberpaur was designed by the young architect Sergio Larraín who worked here together with his older cousin Jorge Arteaga (Fig. 1). Larraín was later to be appointed professor and dean of the faculty of architecture at the Universidad Católica. Throughout his teaching career, he continued to be interested in new methods of architectural education — in 1952, for example, he invited Josef Albers to teach a course and implement his teaching methods.<sup>12</sup> In his architectural practice, Larraín collaborated with numerous architects such as Emilio Duhart and Jorge Swinburn, designing countless important buildings in his country, including the Edificio Plaza Bello, the Edificio de Plaza de Armas, the Colegio del Verbo Divino and the Dos Caracoles. He was an influential local politician and founder of the Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino — in short, he can be considered one of the seminal promoters and agents of modernist architecture in Chile.<sup>13</sup> The Oberpaur became the most discussed new building project in Chile and is re-

garded as the building that introduced new design principles to the country.<sup>14</sup> Scholars throughout Latin America and beyond understood that the iconic building adopted the style of Mendelsohn's department store architecture<sup>15</sup> or, in more general terms, was influenced by German expressionism.<sup>16</sup> However, no in-depth analysis of the reasons or the conditions that enabled such a borrowing here or in other architectural works in Chile has yet been carried out.

With this paper, I want to explore the traces of Mendelsohn's architecture in the Chilean modernist movement when it first developed in the 1930s. What role did the Oberpaur and its architect play in this context? In course of the ongoing initiative preparing the nomination of Mendelsohn's work for inscription on the World Heritage List, such an analysis may contribute to the definition of the outstanding universal value (OUV) of Mendelsohn's architecture.<sup>17</sup>

In 1929, having finished his studies, Sergio Larraín joined the office of his cousin Jorge Arteaga, who was already well established in the construction industry. That same year, Arteaga was commissioned by the Banco Hipotecario to build a warehouse for the German immigrant Richard Oberpaur.<sup>18</sup> According to Boza Díaz, even though the contract was with Arteaga, the design was entirely Larraín's.<sup>19</sup> The edifice was built in two phases. The first consisted of an almost square block, which, in the early 1940s, was extended into a longitudinal structure.<sup>20</sup> It comprises five floors on a corner plot in the best city centre location at the intersection Calle Huerfanos and Estado. The corner of the building is curved, while the two sides are enclosed by staircases. These interrupt the window bands that structure the facade and create a dominant horizontal accent. The ground floor is entirely fitted out with shop windows and features three en-

trance doors: two at the sides and the main one at the round corner. The ground level also features a projecting cornice and a mezzanine floor (Fig. 2, 3). The four floors above consist of window bands which surround the entire structure. A flat roof tops the building and is surmounted only by the recessed staircases. The appearance of the building caused a scandal in the country with the architect finding himself being insulted in the street.<sup>21</sup>

Besides all these stylistic innovations, the Oberpaur also introduced some technical innovations to the country. The layout is open plan — made possible by pillars and beams — and is interrupted only by 1.2-metre-wide columns supporting continuous steel beams (Fig. 4). Some of the beams had been directly imported from Germany.<sup>22</sup> Larraín also introduced an escalator, one of the first in Chile.<sup>23</sup> The vertical structure of the pillars was hidden behind the window line, thus accentuating the horizontal look of the building.<sup>24</sup> The facade consists of alternating reinforced concrete parapets and strips of windows, a method that enabled this design to be used for the first time in a seismically sensitive region like Santiago.<sup>25</sup> Considering the use of this technique was still in its early phase, it was surprisingly well managed by Larraín.<sup>26</sup> What was new about the architecture was the unprecedented size of the windows made possible by steel window frames.<sup>27</sup> These were so impressive that a manufacturer of solid steel windows chose them as a prime example for advertising their products.<sup>28</sup>

From a stylistic and formal point of view, the similarities with many Mendelsohnian warehouse designs are striking (Fig. 5). Larraín picks up on the canopy above the ground floor which extends all around the facade. Working with a corner site, he also rounds the corner to integrate the building into the urban environment. He structures the facade horizontally with contrasting black window frames — reminiscent of the Rudolf Petersdorff department stores in Breslau



Fig. 3 Santiago de Chile, Edificio Oberpaur, cornice and staircase

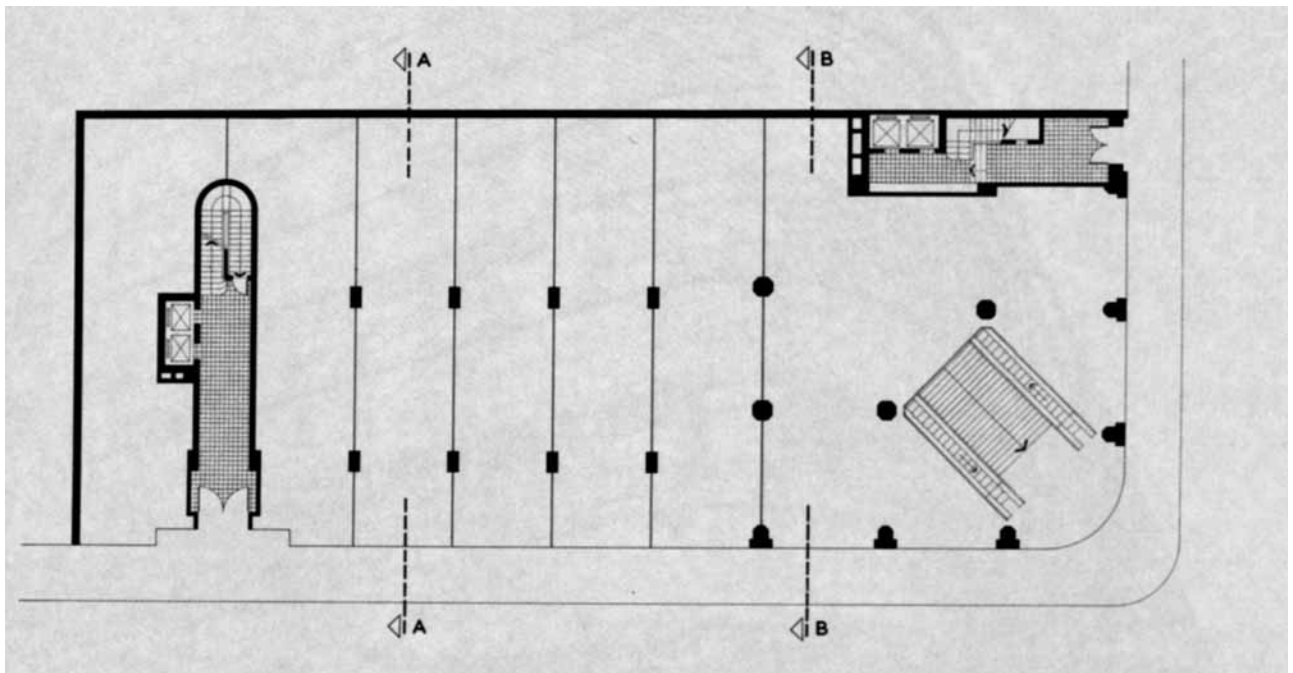


Fig. 4 Santiago de Chile, Edificio Oberpaur, floor plan



— and only interrupts this orientation with the vertical stairwells. These, in turn, extend above the roof line of the main building and step back slightly. The resulting dynamism is created by the tension between horizontal alignments, a certain verticality and carefully placed setbacks. Both Mendelsohn and Larraín also completely dispensed with ornamental decoration.<sup>29</sup>

But there are also technical similarities to the Kaufhaus Schocken. The Schocken was one of the first large steel skeleton buildings in Germany. In addition, Mendelsohn relocated the staircases to the back and sides of the building, with light entering through the window bands. This stood in stark contrast to existing department stores' buildings.<sup>30</sup> All these innovations can be found in the Oberpaur, including large shop windows on the ground floor, rooms brightly lit from window bands, a flat roof, a lack of inner courtyards and staircases positioned on the side. Larraín also used similar technical facilities such as escalators and lifts.<sup>31</sup>

In May 1928, one year before construction on the Oberpaur started, Larraín toured Europe for his honeymoon. First, he visited Le Corbusier and spent some time at his office in Paris, then the newly-weds headed to Germany, travelling to Berlin and later to Dessau to visit the Bauhaus. Having heard about the importance of the Weißenhofsiedlung, Larraín decided to visit Stuttgart as well.<sup>32</sup> He found a bustling modernist city with several innovative building projects in progress. One was the so-called “Tagblatturm”, one of the first tower blocks in Germany built with reinforced concrete; another was the Kaufhaus Schocken. The Schocken must have been finished when Larraín visited Stuttgart sometime in the autumn of 1928.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, that same year Richard Oberpaur, who commissioned the Edificio Oberpaur, had emigrated to Chile from Ludwigsburg, a small town near Stuttgart where his family owned a successful warehouse. It is plausible that Oberpaur had heard of the



Fig. 5 Stuttgart, Kaufhaus Schocken

project in Stuttgart and had a similar building in mind for the new branch of his company in booming Santiago. Mendelsohn's well-known expertise in this field and his other activities in this area (for example his 1929 lecture, *Das neuzeitliche Geschäftshaus*) might have inspired Larraín and Oberpaur to look at these developments.

Considering Larraín's architectural formation and vision, it is clear that he rejected historicist architecture.<sup>34</sup> His formation, at first more or less autodidactic, started early. He was 14 years old when his family moved to Paris and later Switzerland. In Paris, he received private lessons and began to engage deeply with art and architecture.<sup>35</sup> Through his brother, he was in contact with Vicente Huidobro, a Chilean poet who collaborated with Amedée Ozenfant, and Le Corbusier in the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*. Larraín became an avid reader of *L'Esprit* and Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture*. But he rejected Le Corbusier's architectural style, which he considered inhuman and repulsive, devoid of life and loaded with too much architectural theory. At the same time, he sympathised with Le Corbusier's approach, which was directed against contemporary architecture.<sup>36</sup> Larraín's objection to both historicist architecture and formalism is reminiscent of Mendelsohn's approach. In an early letter, Mendelsohn stated: “As a student ... I rebelled against the then prevailing teaching of historical styles”<sup>37</sup> and he rejected the concept of Le Corbusier's “Unité d'Habitation”. His own theory of architecture connected function and dynamic force, resulting in an architecture that cannot be decoupled from emotional and artistic expression.<sup>38</sup>

Back in Chile 1921, Larraín studied at the Universidad Pontifical Católica, and although change was already in the air,<sup>39</sup> his architectural education was still mainly based on historicist architecture and Julien Guadet's *Éléments et théorie de l'architecture*. He completed his studies in 1928 with a thesis on planning a new railway station (Fig. 6). The plans, which were published in the magazine *Arquitectura y arte decorativo*, already showed some relationship to art deco and expressionism.<sup>40</sup> While Larraín was pursuing a career as an architect, his interest in integrating new forms and analysing contemporary architecture led to him being appointed as professor of art history at the Catholic University of Santiago in 1931 at the young age of 26. There, he was entrusted with the teaching of architects.<sup>41</sup>

Besides his personal experiences, we also know that as a student Larraín had subscribed to magazines like *De Stijl*, *Moderne Bauformen*, *L'Architecture Vivante* and the *Cahiers d'Art*.<sup>42</sup> In a 1927 issue of *Moderne Bauformen*, for instance, Ludwig Hilberseimer published his essay *Internationale Baukunst*. This included the Herpich commercial building in Berlin and the textile factory in Saint Petersburg. Issues from 1928 contained Hugo Häring's essay *Neues Bauen*,<sup>43</sup> dedicating a whole three pages to Mendelsohn's architecture alone, featuring his department store buildings, the Duisburg Cohen and Epstein warehouse, the Deukonhaus in Berlin and the Petersdorff office building in Breslau (Fig. 7).<sup>44</sup> But contemporary architectural journals in Chile were printing illustrations of Mendelsohn's work, too. Gustavo Casali, in his 1929 article *La arquitectura moderna o viva* published in



Fig. 6 Sergio Larraín, Una Estación de Ferrocarril, draft

the journal *Arquitectura y arte decorativa* (the exact same issue that featured Larraín's thesis) contained a picture of the Petersdorff warehouse in Wroclaw in a discussion of modern architecture in Germany (Fig. 8). Casli underlines the possibilities created by reinforced concrete construction such as enabling better management of light and air.<sup>45</sup> In a 1934 issue of *Revista de Arquitectura* analysing the work of different architects, Hans Steineder was referred to as being like Le Corbusier in terms of logic and like Mendelsohn and Behrens with regard to sentiment. Clearly, it was assumed that the reader had knowledge of the works of Le Corbusier, Mendelsohn and Behrens.<sup>46</sup> And as we see in a 1941 article on the modernisation of Santiago in the magazine *Arquitectura y Urbanismo*, Larraín's contemporaries considered his architecture to be distinctly "German".<sup>47</sup>

In the period from 1931 to 1934, Larraín was given the opportunity to further work on his architectural ideas in Arteaga's office. He realised some residential projects near the old city centre.<sup>48</sup> The slightly curved façade of the "Edificio Santa Lucía", aligned with the street and with the upper floors stepped back, is reminiscent of buildings by Mendelsohn from roughly the same period, such as the Schocken department store in Chemnitz or the Columbus House (Fig. 9).<sup>49</sup> The Edificio Merced continues this development.<sup>50</sup> The curved facade aligns perfectly with the street and the shape of the horizontally arranged windows is emphasised by the striking lintels and sills. The round windows break the horizontality of the building and provide contrast due to their vertical orientation (Fig. 10).

These innovations driven by Larraín and the increasing internationalisation of the dissemination of architectural knowledge and education had a direct effect on architectural developments in Chile. In 1936, the state of Chile appointed Marcelo Delgin Samson to build a new Correo Principal in Valparaíso (Fig. 11). The post office is clearly a successor to Larraín's Oberpaur. The structure consists of a reinforced concrete frame with an open floor plan and lifts ordered from Germany.<sup>51</sup> For Valparaíso, the Correo marked a new start and more buildings in a similar style followed, for example the Edificio de Rentas Cooperativa Vitalica built by Alfredo Vargas Stoller in 1937. In Concepción, too, after the earthquake of 1939, countless new buildings were erected



Fig. 7 Examples of Mendelsohn's architecture in architectural journals of the time

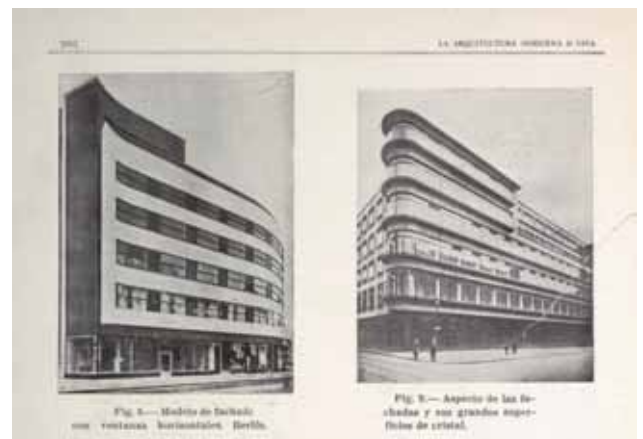


Fig. 8 Mendelsohn's architecture in Casali's essay on modern architecture

in this style using the same technique.<sup>52</sup> In the late 1930s, Santiago's architecture was full of edifices that were reminiscent of Larraín and, possibly, directly influenced by Mendelsohn. Examples include the Clínica Santa María built by Eduardo Costabal Zegers and Andrés Garafulic Yancovic in 1937<sup>53</sup> and, also in 1937, a building designed by the architects Santiago José Carles y Guillermo Kaulen and located at the Plaza de la Constitución.<sup>54</sup> Especially the latter is rem-





Fig. 9 Santiago de Chile, Edificio Santa Lucia, Sergio Larraín, sketch of the facade and situation today

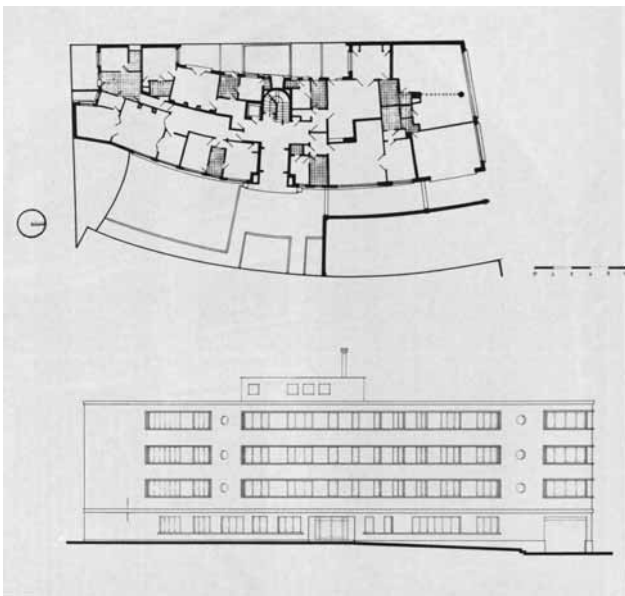


Fig. 10 Santiago de Chile, Edificio Merced, floor plan and elevation

inherent of Mendelsohn's early work and recalls his brilliant solution of how to treat the problematic corner of the Mosse House in Berlin.

There can be no doubt that Mendelsohn's architecture had some influence in Chile. His buildings were depicted in numerous specialist journals and his formal language featured extensively in the architecture of Valparaiso and Santiago.

Sergio Larraín acted as one of the most important transmitters, setting the first important signal with his Oberpaur which in turn influenced several other architects. The combination of technical innovation (e.g. reinforced concrete), structural innovation (e.g. open floor plans) and formal innovation (e.g. dynamic facades) was widely adopted and can be attributed to a certain awareness of Mendelsohn's work.

I would like to return to the initial question about how this investigation may contribute to the formulation of the OUV of Mendelsohn's work. The World Heritage List has been the target of a great deal of criticism. Since 1972, mainly sites in the Global North have been inscribed while the Global South has remained largely underrepresented. For this reason and exactly 20 years following the adoption of the Convention, the World Heritage Committee tried to widen the focus by introducing the aspect of cultural landscapes in 1992. In 1994, a new strategy was established to obtain a "Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List."<sup>55</sup> Neither of these changes proved to be very successful<sup>56</sup> and in 2002, the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee emphasised the need "to identify and fill the major gaps in the World Heritage List"<sup>57</sup> and to integrate more intangible aspects.<sup>58</sup> Today, only 12,65 percent of all of the inscribed properties are located in Latin America while 47.23 percent are in Europe and North America.<sup>59</sup>

One important transnational inscription in our realm was "The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier", which includes his work in India and Buenos Aires. Eric Nay pointed out that in the end, it is not Corbusier's work that was "enshrined" in the world heritage list but his influence, manifesting and canonising a master student relationship between the Global North and the Global South.<sup>60</sup> A brief look at some major publications about modern architecture reveals Latin America only warrants a mention in the context of the relationship between Le Corbusier and his projects, e.g. in Chile, or in relation to Oscar Niemeyer's work.<sup>61</sup> To break up this canon and to integrate the complex and rich modernist movement of the Global South, we should consider seeing Mendelsohn's architecture as an important part of an architectural discourse that does not follow the same dynamic as the discourse around Le Corbusier. Mendelsohn himself wasn't a theorist<sup>62</sup> nor did he plan projects in European ex-colonies. Instead, he himself was a refugee, expelled from his own country. But he was widely recognized and his architecture was incorporated in a non-normative debate about modern architecture. He was influential right from the start, first in Germany<sup>63</sup> and Spain,<sup>64</sup> later, as we have seen, also in Chile as well as in Argentina,<sup>65</sup> Bolivia,<sup>66</sup> Uruguay<sup>67</sup> and throughout South America. We know he was extremely critical of the adoption of his formal language in Tel Aviv,<sup>68</sup> but this is not the point here. His work was received in the context of a conscious but also an unconscious taking up. This makes Mendelsohn's work a source of inspiration of international importance. The thematization of this aspect and the significance of his architecture and its undogmatic amalgamation into major building projects throughout Latin America provide a point of departure which allows us to seriously consider how to integrate immaterial and global aspects in formulating Mendelsohn's OUV.





Fig. 11 Valparaíso, Edificio del Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio (Edificio del Ex Correo)

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- Fig. 6: in: *Arquitectura y arte decorativo 1* (1929), p. 286
- Fig. 7: in: **Hilberseimer**, *Internationale Neue Baukunst*, 1927, p. 332; **Häring**, *Neues Bauen*, 1928, p. 337
- Fig. 8: in: **Casali**, *La arquitectura moderna o Viva*, 1929, p. 266
- Fig. 9: Photo by Carlos **Figueroa Rojas**, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>; in: **Boza Díaz**, Sergio Larraín GM, 1990, p. 78
- Fig. 10: in: **Boza Díaz**, Sergio Larraín GM, 1990, p. 86
- Fig. 11: Photo by Carlos **Figueroa**, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> **Garcés Feliú**, *Las ciudades del salitre*, 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> **Quiero**, *Modernización autoritaria*, 1995, pp. 103–104.
- <sup>3</sup> **Aguirre González**, *Para una historia*, 2008, p. 15.
- <sup>4</sup> **Eliash Díaz**, **Moreno Guerrero**, *Arquitectura y modernidad*, 1989, pp. 25–26.
- <sup>5</sup> **Aguirre González**, *arquitectura moderna*, 2012, p. 32.
- <sup>6</sup> **Palmer Trias**, *arquitectura metálica en Chile*, 1970, p. 24.
- <sup>7</sup> **Eliash Díaz**, **Moreno Guerrero**, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, p. 50.
- <sup>8</sup> **Aguirre González**, *Para una historia*, 2008, pp. 12–14.
- <sup>9</sup> such as Emilio **Jequier**, José **Forteza** and Alberto **Siegel**
- <sup>10</sup> **Luciano Kulczewsky**, **Ricardo González Cortés**, **Miguel Dávila** and **Ricardo Larraín Bravo**, for example, used architectural design based on Art Nouveau and Art Deco. **Eliash Díaz**, **Moreno Guerrero**, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, pp. 19–24.
- <sup>11</sup> **Aguirre González**, *Para una historia*, 2008, p. 17.
- <sup>12</sup> **Larraín**, *Historia de una vocacion*, 1990, p. 36.
- <sup>13</sup> **Larraín**, *Historia de una vocacion*, 1990.
- <sup>14</sup> **Eliash Díaz**, **Moreno Guerrero**, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, p. 33; **Boldrini**, *Guía de arquitectura*, 2000, p. 38; **Pavez R.**, **Sahady V.**, *A propósito de un edificio*, 2004, p. 10.
- <sup>15</sup> **Carranza, Lara**, *Modern Architecture*, 2014, p. 59; **Campos Gajardo**, **Juan Martínez Gutiérrez**, 2015, pp. 185–186; **Lehmann**, *Modernidad y contextualidad*, 2012, p. 75.
- <sup>16</sup> **Eliash Díaz**, **Moreno Guerrero**, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, p. 48.
- <sup>17</sup> ICOMOS Germany organized, on 21 and 22 March 2022, the **Erich Mendelsohn Symposium “Positioning: Erich Mendelsohn and the Built Heritage of the 20th Century”** in Berlin, [https://www.icomos.de/erich-mendelsohn-symposium\\_a\\_197.html](https://www.icomos.de/erich-mendelsohn-symposium_a_197.html) (consulted last on 21.9.23)
- <sup>18</sup> My observations in the following are based on the evaluation of the available literature. My initial contact with the National Archives as well as the archives of the Universidad Católica did not yield any new results; an in-depth evaluation of the archival records on site as well as the contemporary architectural journals that have not been

- digitised and are not available in Europe is still pending as much as a detailed construction survey of the structures investigated in this article. Regarding the whereabouts of Richard Oberpaur, I have been in contact with the City Archives of Landshut, his hometown in Germany, the Chilean National Archives and the company itself, but unfortunately there do not appear to be any traces of Oberpaur neither.
- <sup>19</sup> Boza Díaz, Sergio Larraín GM, 1990, p. 72.
- <sup>20</sup> Téllez Tavera, *Imágenes de modernidad*, 2016, p. 305.
- <sup>21</sup> “Un espanto! A mí me insultaban en la calle, en serio, me insultaban en la calle. Que era un horror, que era vergüenza, me decían: ‘con la tradición que tú tienes, de haber tenido una buena educación, de haber estado en Europa, que traigas estas cosas espantosas aquí, de maquinismo’”, Eliash Díaz., Entrevista a Sergio Larraín García-Moreno, 2008, p. 53.
- <sup>22</sup> Campos Gajardo, Juan Martínez Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 73.
- <sup>23</sup> Boza Díaz, Sergio Larraín GM, 1990, p. 72. Until 1950, all steel for Chile had to be imported from the USA or Europe, as there were no production facilities in the country, Palmer Trias, *arquitectura metálica*, 1971, p. 13.
- <sup>24</sup> Eliash Díaz, Moreno Guerrero, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, p. 33.
- <sup>25</sup> Campos Gajardo, Juan Martínez Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 172.
- <sup>26</sup> Pavez R., Sahady V., *A propósito*, 2004, p. 10.
- <sup>27</sup> Aguirre González, *arquitectura moderna*, 2012, p. 179.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 2012, p. 192.
- <sup>29</sup> A direct copy of the Peterdorff building in Wrocław was also considered by Osvaldo Cáceres because Larraín had not only implemented the general dynamics and the window bands, but also the handling of the interior, see Cáceres González, *La arquitectura de Chile independiente*, 2007, pp. 119–120.
- <sup>30</sup> Stephan, *Studien zu Waren- und Geschäftshäusern*, 1992, p. 122.
- <sup>31</sup> Stephan, *Studien zu Waren- und Geschäftshäusern*, 1992, pp. 201–203.
- <sup>32</sup> Larraín, *Historia de una vocación*, 1990, pp. 29–30.
- <sup>33</sup> Stephan, *Studien zu Waren- und Geschäftshäusern*, 1992, pp. 114–115.
- <sup>34</sup> “Jorge, [...] tú haces una arquitectura estereotipada y muerta, hay que hacer una arquitectura viva, yo quiero hacer arquitectura viva”, Eliash Díaz, Entrevista a Sergio Larraín García-Moreno, 2008, p. 53.
- <sup>35</sup> Sergio Larraín entered school in a German college in Santiago de Chile run by German priests, Larraín, *Historia de una vocación*, 1990, pp. 21–25.
- <sup>36</sup> “en estas casas era como meterse dentro de un teorema de Euclides, uno miraba y decía: bueno en realidad está todo en orden, está todo bien hecho, pero no me conmovía verdaderamente. No encontraba en eso poesía.”, Eliash Díaz, Entrevista a Sergio Larraín García-Moreno, 2008, pp. 50–51.
- <sup>37</sup> „Als Student [...] rebellierte ich gegen die damals vorherrschende Lehre historischer Stilrichtungen“, cf. Morgenthaler, „Wie sollen wir der Kunst gegenüber Laien sein?“, 2003, p. 10.
- <sup>38</sup> Stephan, *Studien zu Waren- und Geschäftshäusern*, 1992, pp. 232–233.
- <sup>39</sup> Eliash Díaz, Entrevista a Sergio Larraín García-Moreno, 2008, p. 52.
- <sup>40</sup> Larraín GM, *Una Estación*, 1929.
- <sup>41</sup> Larraín, *Historia de una vocación*, 1990, p. 30.
- <sup>42</sup> Eliash Díaz, Entrevista a Sergio Larraín García-Moreno, 2008, p. 51.
- <sup>43</sup> Hilberseimer, *Internationale Neue Baukunst*, 1927, pp. 332–333.
- <sup>44</sup> Häring, *Neues Bauen*, 1928, pp. 336–338.
- <sup>45</sup> Casali, *arquitectura moderna*, 1929, p. 265.
- <sup>46</sup> Vera Manríquez, *El contrapunto*, 2018, p. 39.
- <sup>47</sup> Lehmann, *Modernidad y contextualidad*, 2012, p. 95.
- <sup>48</sup> Boza Díaz, Sergio Larraín GM, 1990, p. 61.
- <sup>49</sup> Stephan, *Studien zu Waren- und Geschäftshäusern*, 1992, p. 235.
- <sup>50</sup> Boza Díaz, Sergio Larraín GM, 1990, pp. 84–87.
- <sup>51</sup> Campos Gajardo, Juan Martínez Gutiérrez, 2015, pp. 178–179.
- <sup>52</sup> Eliash Díaz, Moreno Guerrero, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, pp. 50.
- <sup>53</sup> Strabucchi, *Cien años de arquitectura*, 1994, p. 74.
- <sup>54</sup> Eliash Díaz, Moreno Guerrero, *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile*, 1989, p. 50.
- <sup>55</sup> UNESCO, *Global Strategy*, 2021.
- <sup>56</sup> Brumann, Gfeller, *Cultural landscapes*, 2022.
- <sup>57</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, 2021, pp. 21–25.
- <sup>58</sup> Nay, *Canonizing Le Corbusier*, 2018, p. 54.
- <sup>59</sup> UNESCO, *World Heritage List Statistics*, 2022.
- <sup>60</sup> Nay, *Canonizing Le Corbusier*, 2018, pp. 76.
- <sup>61</sup> Curtis, *Modern architecture*, 1983, p. 204; Frampton, *Modern architecture*, 1982, pp. 218–228.
- <sup>62</sup> His project of an Académie Européenne Méditerranée failed, cf. Heinze-Greenberg, „Das Mittelmeer als Vater“, 1998, pp. 217–223. And even though he became visible early on with essays and lectures, especially the pictures and plans of his projects became prominent, not his theory, cf. Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan (eds.), *Erich Mendelsohn*, 2000.
- <sup>63</sup> Kirschke, *Kirschke, Colour and Light*, 2022.
- <sup>64</sup> See the contribution of Patxi Eguiluz and Carlos Copertone in this publication at hand.
- <sup>65</sup> Larrañaga, López Martínez, *Petrina, Arquitectura moderna en Buenos Aires*, 2017.
- <sup>66</sup> See the Edificio Krull in La Paz, Mesa, *Gisbert, Monumentos de Bolivia*, 2002, p. 312.
- <sup>67</sup> See the Palacio Lapido in Montevideo, Artucio, *Montevideo*, 1971, p. 19.
- <sup>68</sup> Heinze-Greenberg, „Ich bin ein freier Bauer“, 1998, pp. 243–244.





# Mendelsohn's Placement in Architectural History

Sergey Gorbatenko

## Erich Mendelsohn's Early Industrial Architecture – the Luckenwalde Hat Factory (Germany) and the Red Banner Cloth Factory in St. Petersburg/Leningrad (Russia)

The factory complexes of Erich Mendelsohn have not yet been the subject of a special comparative study. At the same time, most researchers draw parallels between the Hat Factory in Luckenwalde (Germany, 1921–1923) and the Red Banner textile factory in Leningrad (USSR, 1925–1929, 1938–1950s). This is primarily due to historical circumstances: in August 1925, the architect presented the factory in Luckenwalde to a Soviet delegation, which, impressed by the building, ordered a similar factory for Leningrad.<sup>1</sup> One of the clauses of the contract specifically stipulated the creation of an efficient modern ventilation system.<sup>2</sup> It should be understood (although it is not directly stated) that it had to be similar to the exhaust hood arranged over the dye workshop in Luckenwalde, and, accordingly, have a similar architecture.

Most of all, the high exhaust “hood” of the dyehouse, which dominates the composition of the German factory, attracts the attention of researchers. A fact also owing to the author of the project himself: “The appointment did not go to a pure architect,” he writes, “but to Mendelsohn as the builder of the famous dyehouse in Luckenwalde...”<sup>3</sup> The function of the dye shop, clearly expressed in this element, is sometimes subjected to semantic reading: the dunes of the Curonian Spit are called the source, and most often just the image of a hat with a high crown.<sup>4</sup> Julius Posener, who visited Mendelsohn's workshop in 1925 during the design phase of the Red Banner, tells of a model “in which the dye building of the Luckenwalde factory was repeated three times.”<sup>5</sup>

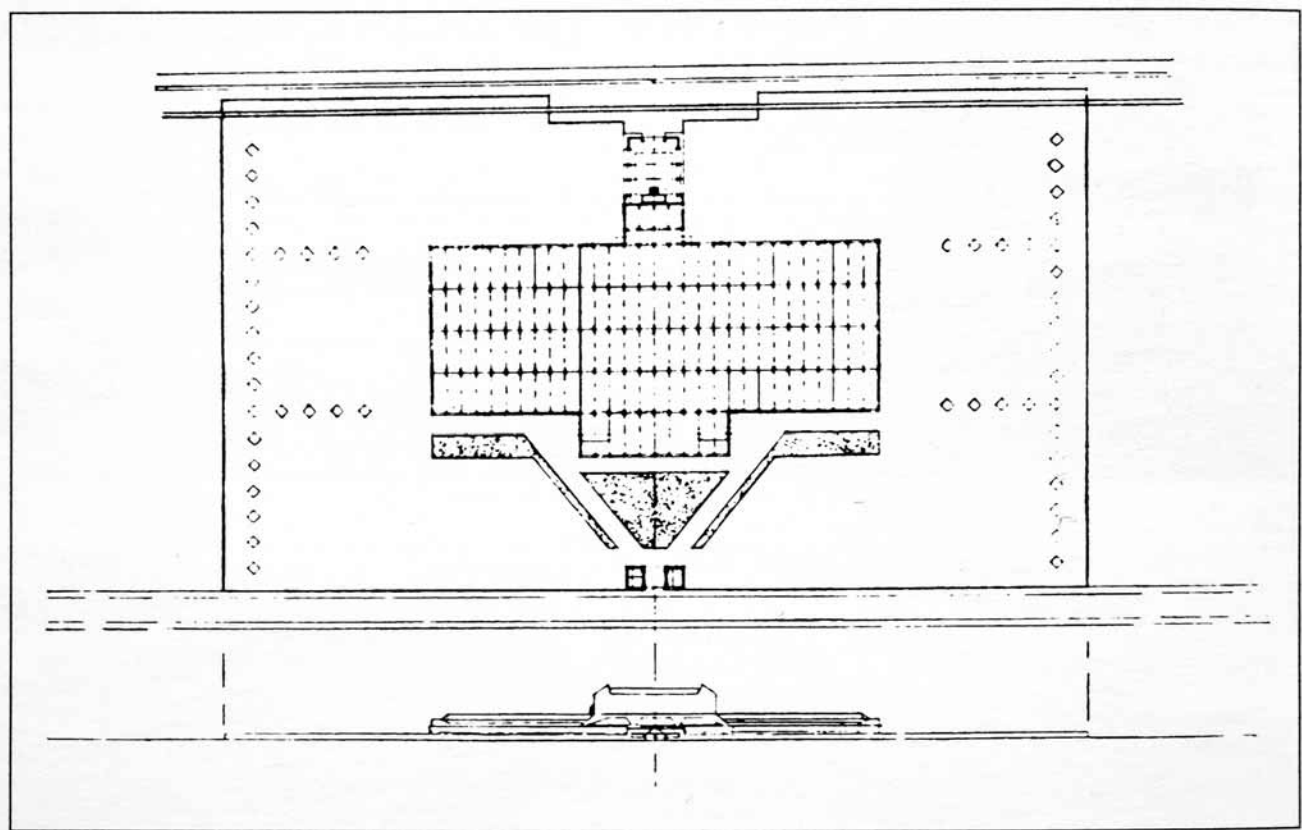


Fig. 1 Erich Mendelsohn, master plan for the Hat Factory in Luckenwalde







Fig. 3 Panorama of the Hat Factory in Luckenwalde, around 1930

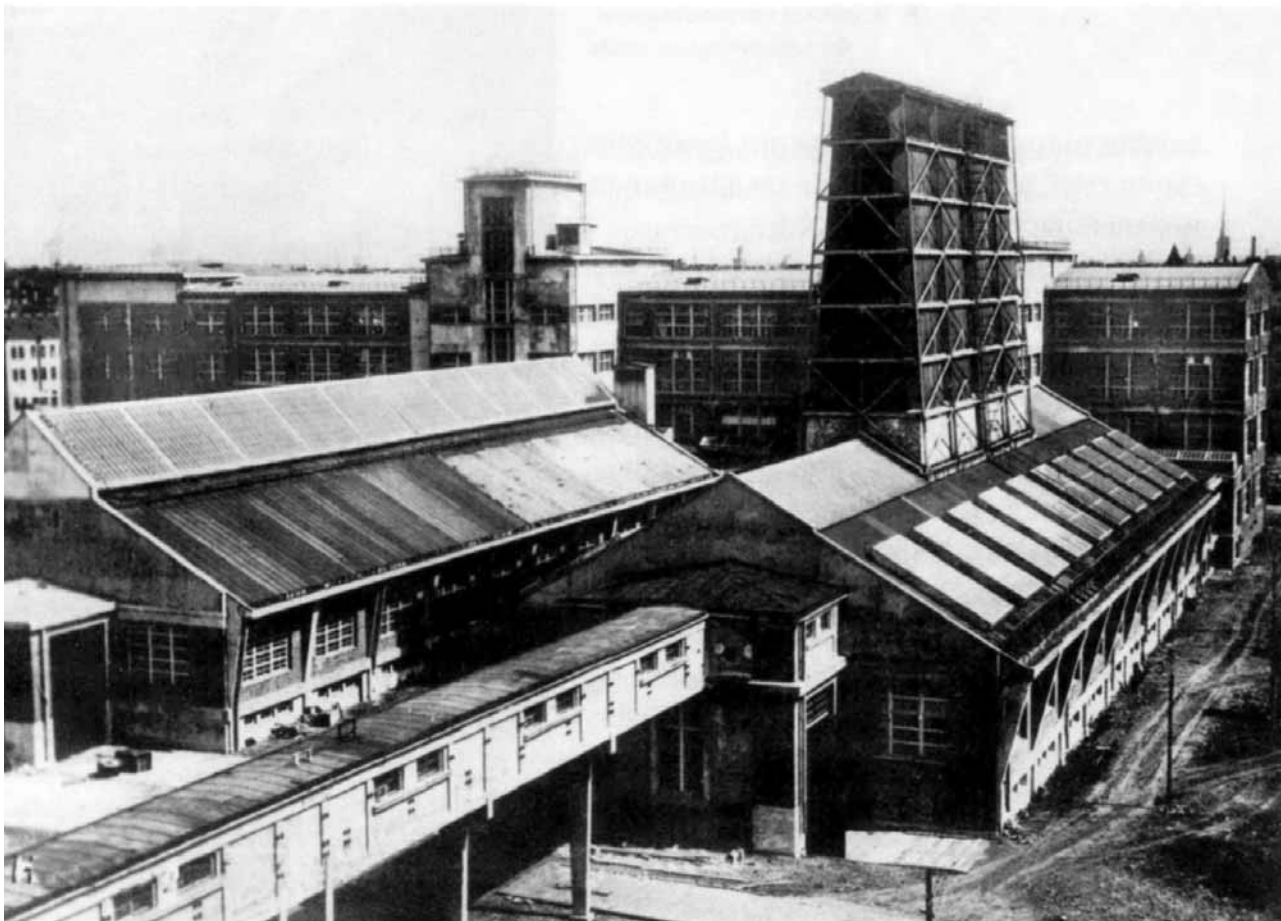


Fig. 4 Panorama of the Red Banner factory in Leningrad (bleaching, dyeing and main building, view from the power station), around 1930

In Leningrad, dynamism prevails in the composition owing to the trapezoidal configuration of the site and, accordingly, the asymmetry of the master plan (Fig. 2). There are several dominant traits: first of all, the famous power station “pulling production along with it” (“steam locomotive”, “dreadnought”, “fist”), then the unrealized clock tower vertical and, finally, the internal “triad” of the dyeing and bleaching shops, which were supposed to complete the roof-hoods as direct

analogies of Luckenwalde. Researchers highlight that the dynamic image of the “Red Banner”, in contrast to the emphasized expression of Luckenwalde, is based on a carefully calculated functional organization of factory processes.<sup>9</sup> So, for example, in Leningrad, the architect sought to apply a unique spatial solution to the organization of the production processes on two levels (which, in our opinion, was due to both the differentiation of functions and the danger of floods

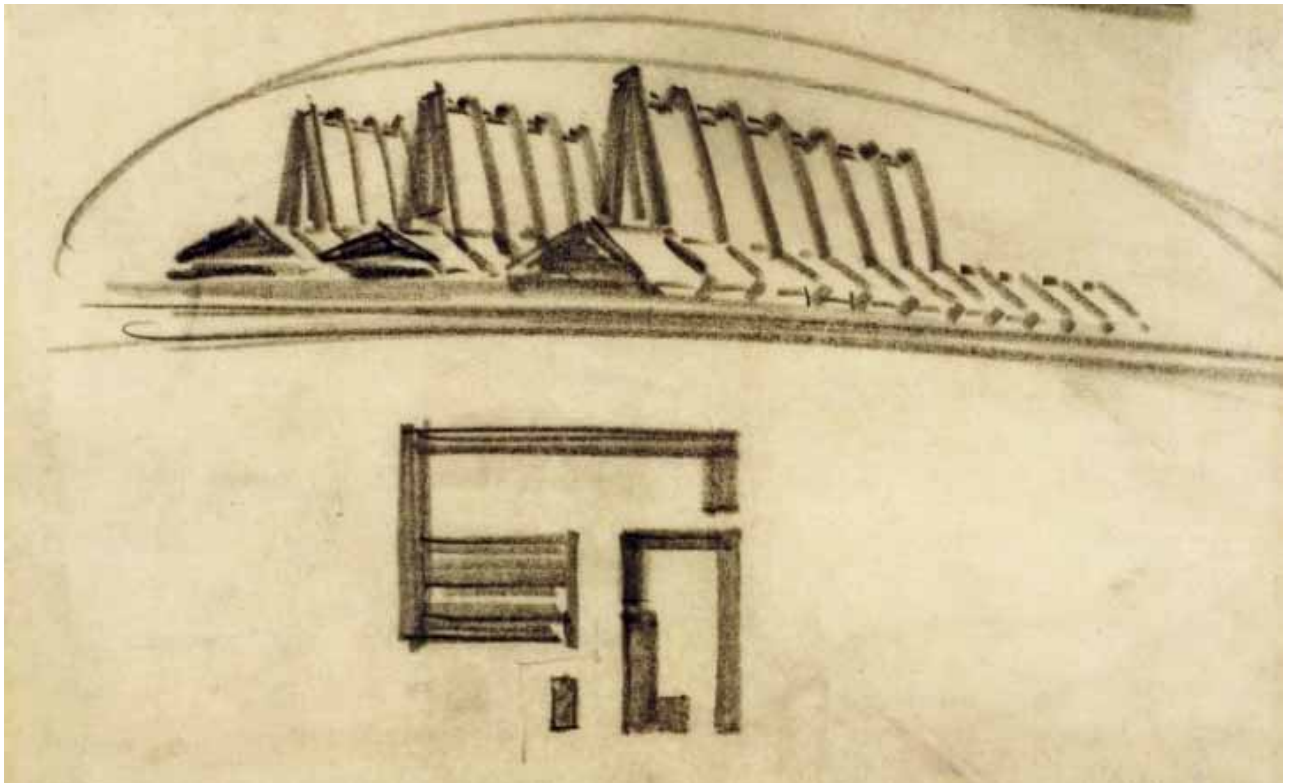


Fig. 5 Erich Mendelsohn, "triad" of the bleaching and dyeing shops of the Red Banner factory, sketch, 1925

as the catastrophic Leningrad flood of 1924 was still on everyone's mind).

There is nothing like it in Luckenwalde. The main view of the Hat Factory complex is straight, along the main axis, through the entrance, behind which the space of the courtyard opens, completed by the dominance of the dyehouse. The value of the power station, the final element of the composition, is small. Visually, it is perceived mainly in the long term or from close, side points (especially now, in the absence of a chimney). The "rear" location of the station is explained by the presence of a railway on this side, which provided coal and raw materials for production (Fig. 3).

The main view of the Leningrad factory is a diagonal one, from a street intersection, to a power station "pulling" forward, which decisively dominates the ensemble. In this respect, its role is directly opposite to that station of Luckenwalde.

Another distinguishing feature of the Leningrad factory is the vast coal yard. Until recently, it played the role of a general spatial "pool", a kind of *cour d'honneur*. The main components of the factory were turned into this space. In the courtyard, closed on the eastern side by a powerful extended "barrier" of the main building, bleaching and dyeing shops dominated, which were supposed to complete the three "Luckenwalde" exhaust hoods. However, in practice, only one ventilation hood was implemented in a smaller way, and not in concrete, but in wood, reinforced with an external steel frame (Fig. 4) – and eliminated later on.

The refusal to fully implement the high-rise accents of this triad, one of the indispensable components of Mendelsohn's architectural concept, was perhaps the main blow to the author's pride of the master. As Irina Grigorieva notes, he in-

cluded a digital code of "three" in the composition of the Leningrad factory: "tripleness becomes a design motif that repeats throughout the complex."<sup>10</sup> This was most clearly expressed in the architecture of the bleaching and dyeing complex as Mendelsohn repeatedly and carefully worked out this motif in his sketches, varying it in conjunction with the solution of functional problems (Fig. 5).

Not only the sharp silhouettes of the hoods reflect the relationship between the projects of the two factories of Mendelsohn. Dynamic "oblique" elements give special expressiveness to the volumes of both complexes. In Leningrad, these are the "reverse buttresses" of the roof overhanging consoles of the bleaching and dyeing shops, which largely determine the architecture (in Luckenwalde they are also present in the corners of the main shop block).

The constructions of the Luckenwalde production shops and the Leningrad "triad" are also similar to each other: these are reinforced concrete arches, reminiscent of Gothic vaults, combined with wood and glass.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the huge space of the production halls in Luckenwalde is divided into four naves plus the high nave of the dyehouse, at the Leningrad factory, the interior spaces of the bleaching and dyeing shops are two-aisled, with a central row of pillars. The skylight windows, along with the wide openings of the lower tier, perfectly illuminate the interiors in both cases.

There are further noteworthy parallels in the fate of both factories. The ensemble in Luckenwalde was almost wholly completed yet suffered only a decade later, when it was adapted to the needs of military production. In Leningrad, only the first stage of construction was completed between 1926 and 1928. The second stage was realized in the 1930s



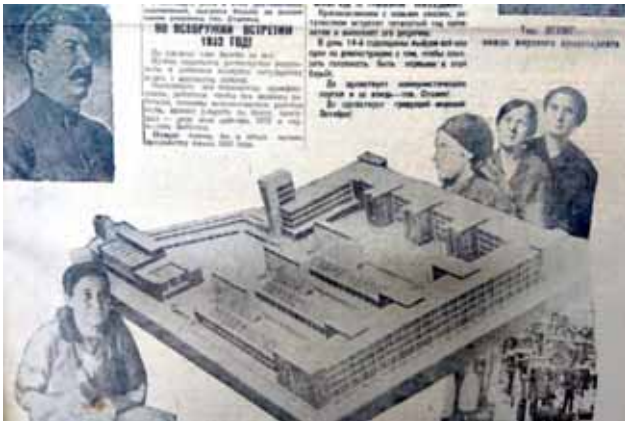


Fig. 6 "This will be our factory by the end of the five-year plan", Red Banner model by Erich Mendelsohn



Fig. 8 Bleaching, dyeing and main buildings of the Red Banner factory, 2022



Fig. 7 Power station of the Red Banner factory, 2022

and 1950s, based on the concept of Mendelsohn, but without any of his participation (Fig. 6).

Deviations from the project, due to technological weakness and the lack of qualified builders in Soviet Russia, as well as bureaucratic pressure and attacks by Soviet colleagues, forced Mendelsohn to abandon architectural supervision of construction, and thence to recognize only the authorship of the initially approved version.<sup>12</sup> As early as July 31st, 1926, he wrote to his wife, comparing the situation with what he had experienced several years earlier in Luckenwalde: "Construction has begun and is spoiled. I am trying my best to correct this situation. Not easy. Because of the (...) narrowness of provincial views – I can only do half of the many things I have in mind. I remember Luckenwalde – there is a lot in common in the size of the territory and saturation of buildings, but I must take into account the

wishes of numerous special departments, which, with all their vanity in red ink, amend the best work in the world (...)"<sup>13</sup>

Mendelsohn reflected his views on Russia, its people and social system in his philosophical and political essays, written after he encountered the bureaucratic system and technological backwardness of Soviet Russia, which were surprisingly combined with the state ideology of building the "only just" social society. The views expressed in these statements are permeated with deep pessimism.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, what is happening to the Krasnoye Znamya factory before our eyes today, after almost 100 years, confirms the bleak conclusions of the architect. The monument of world importance is consistently exposed to the aggression of business and corrupt "experts". And the state, which possessed until recently colossal economic resources, has not



Fig. 9 Dyeing and production workshops, power station (in the background) of the Hat Factory in Luckenwalde, 2017

found opportunities and means for the factory's restoration and new use. Only the facades of the most famous building, the Power Station, have been restored, the rest of the buildings are abandoned and are being gradually destroyed (Figs. 7 and 8).

In 2016–2017, the inner space of the courtyard of the Red Banner factory was practically destroyed as the buildings of a new residential building invaded it. Thus, the importance of the dominant parts has decreased considerably as the views on both the power station and the dyeing and bleaching complex have suffered. Now the views of the factory on this side are open mainly from the windows of residential apartments, or from the parking lot located in the courtyard. The integrity of the ensemble of the factory is lost, and hopes for its inclusion in the World Heritage List have crumbled.

Today, the "Red Banner" is further threatened by a radical reconstruction project. Through the joint machinations of the protection authorities and their associated biased experts, the elements of the second stage of construction – important examples of the joint Soviet-German heritage – have been excluded from the lists of protected historical objects and, henceforward, must be reconstructed with architectural changes.<sup>15</sup>

The fate of the factory in Luckenwalde, based on the state of its architecture, seems similar – but only at first glance. Here, by 2011, the central part of the ensemble was restored – a complex of workshops and a dyehouse with its high roofhood. The power station and the checkpoint remain in a dilapidated state, and the object is used for new purposes only to a very small extent (Figs. 9 and 10). Yet, tours and meetings are organized in the main building of the dyehouse and contribute to the promotion of the monument. In general, the object is mothballed. The search for an investor continues to revive it for good.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 10 Production shop and power station of the Hat Factory in Luckenwalde, 2022

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## Credits

Fig. 1: Zevi, Erich Mendelsohn, 1999.

Fig. 2: Mendelsohn, Gesamtschaffen, 1930.

Fig. 3: Drachenberg, Baugeschichte, 1999.

Fig. 4: <https://pastvu.com/p/138006>

Fig. 5: Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.

Fig. 6: Factory newspaper "The Voice of the Workwoman", November 6, 1931.

Figs. 7, 8, 9, 10: Photos S. Gorbatenko.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Heinze-Greenberg, Stephan (eds.), Luise und Erich Mendelsohn, 2004, p. 90.
- <sup>2</sup> Grigorieva, Erich Mendelsohns Wirken, 2003, p. 104.
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# Erich Mendelsohn and Expressionism: a Historiographical Issue

In the interwar period, Mendelsohn's building assignments were valued by the modern European and American professional circles and the architectural press. Nevertheless, his exile in 1933, the architect's displacements, and the silence of the first modern architecture's narratives regarding his work, such as Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* in consecutive editions, or Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement. From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Fig. 1), including the fate of his first major retrospective at MOMA, were traumatic for the architect who died in the United States in 1953. However, after 1945, historians of different generations and agendas have sought to respond to the crises of the discipline by recovering the German architect's trajectory.

This essay presents one of those inflection points between the mid-1950s and 1960s, focusing on the English architecture circles around the *Architectural Review* (AR) and the leading personality of Nikolaus Pevsner, as well as the second generation of English revisionists, represented by Pevsner's pupil Reyner Banham.

Among the significant historiographical restoration initiatives for Mendelsohn was the "almost" *mea culpa* presented by Pevsner in his introduction to the English edition of Mendel-

sohn's correspondence (1967) (Fig. 2), compiled and first published in German by the architect's friend Oskar Beyer (1961) (Fig. 3). In response to postwar design developments by architects such as Oscar Niemeyer or Le Corbusier, the German art historian admitted the need to revise the structure and elaboration of his *Pioneers* and to rehabilitate not only Mendelsohn's work but the "twentieth-century style convulsions":

"The whole of my *Pioneers* could be rewritten now and will no doubt soon be rewritten by someone of this new Generation to which modern design means the very opposite of what it meant to me. The pedigree in my book goes from William Morris' theory (...). It then goes on to the Werkbund, to Loos and Gropius and Perret and Garnier, and to the Chicago skyscrapers and Frank Lloyd Wright because they all established the rational, bold, cubic style of the twentieth century. The book stops in 1914, for I took it for granted that (...) the style which Americans call the International Modern, was established and would spread everywhere and remain unchallenged ever after. But it has been challenged, and Ronchamp and Scharoun's Philharmonie in Berlin are in complete opposition to it (...) So, the history which I expect will be

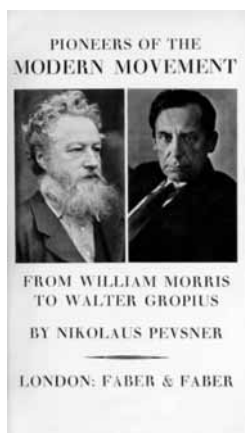


Fig. 1 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement. From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, London, first edition 1936



Fig. 2 Oskar Beyer (ed.), *Eric Mendelsohn, Letters of an Architect*, New York 1967



Fig. 3 Oskar Beyer (ed.), *Erich Mendelsohn, Briefe eines Architekten*, Munich 1961



Fig. 4 Reyner Banham, Mendelsohn, in: *Architectural Review*, vol. 116, n° 692, August 1954, pp. 85–93

written would start from the unquestioning self-expression of Victorian architects (...), would call Art Nouveau a first climax, with Gaudí, as the climax of the climax, would regret the rationalism of my Pioneers and go straight on to the second climax, the Expressionism of 1917–1923, i.e., the Amsterdam School, and indeed Mendelsohn’s Einstein Tower and also Steiner’s Goetheanum (...).”<sup>1</sup>

Pevsner’s statement should be understood in the context of the exiled scholar’s ascendancy in the English architectural circles between the 1950s and early 1960s through his writings, the BBC conferences, and his lasting presence on the editorial committee of the AR. Indeed, Pevsner helped transform the AR into a pluralist magazine, which since the 1940s supported a “humanized” modernism<sup>2</sup> that acknowledged both the vernacular roots of architecture<sup>3</sup> and the picturesque, which represented the architecture’s functional tradition supported by Pevsner, as well as the architectural movements of the first decades of the 20th century endorsed by the “new generation” of scholars such as Reyner Banham, Pevsner’s former doctoral student. Indeed, Pevsner was a sought-after advisor for academics interested in working on cosmopolitan themes concerning European and American architectural history between the 19th and 20th centuries. Some of them, like Banham himself, spread their research topics and methodologies beyond the continent, thus reaching the American academies. Banham joined the AR’s editorial staff as early as 1952, promoting such actors and movements as Gaudí, the Italian Futurists, the German Expressionists, and Erich Mendelsohn whom he identified amid the “zones of silence.” Banham’s revisionism began in the 1940s and matured during the 1950s under Pevsner’s guidance at the Courtauld Institute of Arts. In an article published by the AR in 1954 shortly after Mendelsohn’s death (Fig. 4) Banham criticized the Italian art historian Bruno Zevi for reaffirming Mendelsohn’s myth by insisting and using the Expressionist aesthetic as an instrument of his own struggle against rationalism. Unlikely, Banham was interested in identifying Mendelsohn’s archi-

tectural dialogues with his European and American contemporaries to trace the vicissitudes of German Expressionism. In this sense, the German architect was instrumental in Banham’s revisionist historical approach, which sought to rewrite history and enlighten the “‘enriched experience’ that a ‘variety of (...) aesthetics’ can offer”<sup>4</sup> – a goal that could be explained by his acquaintance with German refugees like Arthur Korn, Walter Segal, and Erno Goldfinger, who had experienced Expressionism during the interwar period.

In 1959, in the same year that he presented his doctorate published later as *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1970) (Fig. 5), Banham reflected on the rewriting of the modern movement’s history:

“Why (...) do we have to re-write the history of the Modern Movement? Not because that history is wrong; simply because it is less than lifesize. The official history of the Modern Movement, as laid out in the late Twenties and codified in the Thirties, is a view through the marrow-hole of a dry bone – the view is only possible because the living matter of architecture, the myths and symbols, the personalities have been left out. The choice of a skeletal history of the movement with all the Futurists, Romantics, Expressionists, Elementarists and pure aesthetes omitted, though it is most fully expressed in Giedion’s *Bauen in Frankreich*, is not to be laid to Giedion’s charge, for it was the choice of the movement as a whole. Quite suddenly modern architects decided to cut off half their grandparents without a farthing.”<sup>5</sup>

In this context, one might agree that Banham’s research contributed to Pevsner’s re-examination of the expressions previously noted as “fantastical rantings”.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, as shown by more recent research, Pevsner’s revision was still anchored in his interwar reasonings, particularly in the article *Kunst und Staat* (1934) published by the conservative and nationalist Protestant newspaper *Der Türmer*.<sup>7</sup> In his second postwar writings, the art historian suggested similarities between German Expressionism, described as a transi-

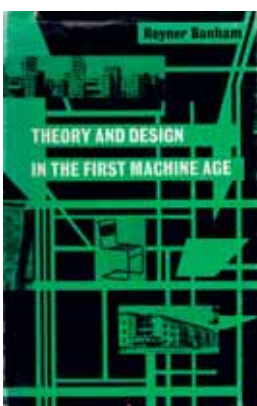


Fig. 5 Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, New York 1970



Fig. 6 Nikolai Pevsner, *Mendelsohn by Himself*, in: *Architectural Review*, vol. 131, no. 784, 1962, pp. 161–163



Fig. 7 Adolf Behne, *Der moderne Zweckbau*, Munich 1926



Fig. 8 Ulrich Conrads, Hans Sperlich, *Phantastische Architektur*, Stuttgart 1960

tional style “from the world of liberalism to the new world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>8</sup> and the second postwar contemporary crisis in which belief in functionalism was replaced by the architect’s individual expression and a quest for easier originality through “borrowings from sources of the past not yet familiar from past borrowers”, exemplified by Art Nouveau or Expressionism.<sup>9</sup> All at once, Pevsner resumed the *Sachlichkeit* defenders’ argument against Expressionism and Mendelsohn’s work to reaffirm the individual’s social responsibility and his role in the expression of the collective unconscious – the *Kunstwollen* of the period – as opposed to the personal creative force. In the review of the German edition of Mendelsohn’s correspondence published by the AR in 1962 (Fig. 6) Pevsner described the architect as an individualist alongside Kandinsky and Picasso, suggesting that his drawings were void of any functional purpose.<sup>10</sup>

However, on the contrary, Mendelsohn’s correspondence, published writings, and lectures testify to his early belief in architecture as part of a collective effort instead of an individual expression,<sup>11</sup> an assumption shared with Adolf Behne, the author of *Der moderne Zweckbau* (1926) (Fig. 7). Unlike Pevsner, Behne defined individualism as follows: “(...) absolute individualism is the ultimate driving force behind consistent functionalism (...) as a creator works he [the human being] works from the whole to the individual or from the individual to the whole!”<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Mendelsohn shared with his friend Theo van Doesburg, the editor of *De Stijl*, and Adolf Behne the same awareness regarding the right balance between form and function, which he described as a relation between dynamics and function.<sup>13</sup> Confronting *Sachlichkeit* architects such as Mies, they defended the double function of the building, or, as expressed by Doesburg, “function from the perspective of practice; proportionality, from the perspective of art.”<sup>14</sup>

The postwar impact achieved by Giedion, Sert, and Leger’s manifesto *Nine Points on Monumentality* (1943)<sup>15</sup> may indicate the vitality of Mendelsohn’s and his circle of friends’ formulations in the interwar period regarding the awareness

of the unity formed by building and landscape or urban environment. Likewise, in his last article published by the *Architectural Forum* (1953), Mendelsohn recognized affinities between his imaginary architectures from the 1910s and the works of some contemporary architects, based on what he defined as elastic continuity.<sup>16</sup>

## Expressionism as a theme for modern architecture revisionists

1957 marked the 30th anniversary of the English edition of Le Corbusier’s *Towards a New Architecture* (1927). Years before, art historian John Summerson had predicted this period as one of architectural crisis and change. Effectively, inside AR, the decade’s end urged a new disciplinary approach. The debates promoted under Banham’s direction throughout the 1960s addressed the impact of science on architectural practice, the nature of the profession itself, and the study of history. In 1959, attentive to the “zones of silence”, Banham introduced Paul Scheerbarth and his *Gläserne Architektur* (1914) to the magazine’s readers.<sup>17</sup> The following year, his analysis of Auguste Perret’s ascendancy over the modern European architecture to the detriment of Peter Behrens<sup>18</sup> followed Jürgen Joedicke’s research on Hugo Häring, in which the German scholar suggested continuities between the building ensemble of Gut Garkau and contemporary Brutalist architecture.<sup>19</sup>

Banham’s revisionism found echoes in Germany. In 1960, Ulrich Conrads and Hans Sperlich published their collection of original texts and iconographic documents (Fig. 8), including the Crystal Chain Letters [Die gläserne Kette] rescued by Wenzel Hablik and compiled with the support of former participants and witnesses of the interwar debates such as Wassili Luckhardt, Hans Scharoun and Max Taut. The translations of the book endorsed the revisionist zeitgeist in the milieu of architectural historians on the continent and across the ocean, and opened the space for a series of publications and exhibitions dedicated to the critical production of architects, artists, and intellectuals that in one way or another were connected to Taut’s *Gläserne Kette*.

Nevertheless, as expressed by Bruno Zevi, Mendelsohn’s return to Berlin was late. His rediscovery was made possible only in 1968 by the exhibition *Erich Mendelsohn 1887–1953 – Ideen Bauten Projekte* (Fig. 9), curated by Julius Posener, an intermediary figure between German and English academic circles who had met Mendelsohn in the 1930s, worked in his Berlin and Jerusalem offices, and would soon publish his monography on Hans Poelzig.

Despite the German studies, Dennis Sharp’s doctoral research, published as *Modern Architecture and Expressionism* (1966) (Fig. 10) became the reference book on Expressionism in architecture between the 1960s and 1970s. It presented a comprehensive study and bibliographic survey on the critical and theoretical debates of the first half of the century. Sharp identified Expressionism as a “quiet zone”, echoing Banham. And resuming the 1920s argument concerning “individualism”, he suggested that the period’s visionary production was that of the “hesitant child”. Concerning Mendelsohn’s



Fig. 9 Julius Posener, Peter Pfankuch, Erich Mendelsohn: Ausstellung in der Akademie der Künste, 1968

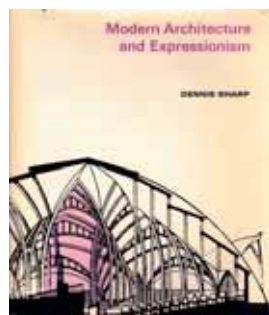


Fig. 10 Dennis Sharp, *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, New York 1966



oeuvre, the architectural historian described it as a unique contribution to modern architecture that defied classification and hence could be identified as “Mendelsohnism”.

Under the influence of Arthur Korn, Sharp recognized Expressionism as a genuine contribution to the history of ideas and forms and continued to work on the topic, translating Paul Scheerbart’s *Glass Architecture* and Bruno Taut’s *Alpine architecture*, as well as taking part in an Open University course on Expressionism with Charlotte Benton and Tim Benton.

The subjects of European architectural historiography crossed the ocean. Seeking to expand the frontiers of canonical modernism, in 1973, George Collins’ advisee Rosemarie Haag Bletter defended her doctoral thesis *Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart’s Vision: Utopian Aspects of German Expressionist Architecture*. Bletter would continue to work in the field with important contributions.

## Conclusion

In recent decades there have been a number of publications dealing with the life and work of Erich Mendelsohn. This re-discovery can be understood in the multi-disciplinarity of cultural transfer studies. The complex personality of the German architect of Jewish descent and the troubled itinerary of his exile<sup>20</sup> emphasize, as Zevi once felt, the question of dialogue and cultural exchange, one of the main topics of contemporary architectural historiography, about which Mendelsohn himself prophesied in 1932, urging intercultural dialogue as a path to transform the world, a compelling message in these days: “In the world to come, nations will retain their uniqueness, but they will be consolidated into an international community, for the new problems will affect all nations equally.”<sup>21</sup>

Despite the frustration with modern architectural criticism that accompanied his exile, Erich Mendelsohn retained a clear awareness of the cultural atmosphere and the internal dynamics of this criticism, as evidenced by his outburst in 1937:

“For 30 years, I haven’t cured myself of the ‘criticism’ of my work – and I don’t intend to cure myself until the last of them (...) I hate those publications that start with Adam and Eve and end with “dernier cri” (...) like “From Morris to Gropius” (...) [that] fatally falsify history and mislead the interested public. History corrects itself, but the ‘public’ lives too briefly to absorb these corrections. My work will be able to impose itself or not. I place it at the discretion of that historical process that eliminates everything foreign to its normal state of health (...)”<sup>22</sup>

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## Wim de Wit and Daniel P. Gregory

# Bay Region Modern Meets Mendelsohn

Of Eric Mendelsohn's late oeuvre — that is: the American work designed and executed between 1945 and 1953 — his buildings in San Francisco's Bay Region are the least well known. This may seem surprising, as the work produced in this area is so much closer to the famous structures Mendelsohn had built during his European years than the austere, harder to appreciate architecture that he had created in Palestine in the 1930s. One could say that in 1945 he picked up where he had left off in the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea (1934-35), for example, where he had given his building an expressive vitality through curved balconies, bay windows, and tubular steel railings. The relative obscurity of Mendelsohn's Northern California buildings is, however, less of a surprise when one takes into consideration that the German-American architect had trouble finding work in and around his new city of residence; indeed, the famous buildings of this period, his synagogues and related halls for assembly, were all designed and built for Jewish communities outside California.<sup>1</sup>

Eric Mendelsohn was probably already known before the Second World War to those architects of Northern California who were interested in European modernism, but they really got to know him during the war when in April 1942 he gave a series of three lectures at Berkeley's School of Architecture. Published in 1944,<sup>2</sup> these presentations gave the architect an opportunity to explain to an American audience why he rejected the rational, geometric method of the functionalists' machine-inspired design and promoted instead a philosophy that combined intellect and imagination in all fields of architectural and urban design. It is not known how the Berkeley faculty and students responded to the three lectures, but they must have reacted positively as 5 years later he was offered a teaching position in the School of Architecture.

While the 1942 lectures formally introduced Mendelsohn's thinking to the larger community of architects and interested lay people in Northern California, a lecture given, again at Berkeley, 11 years later could be seen as his architectural testament, a summary of his architectural philosophy. This address, presented a few months before he died on September 15, 1953, may very well have been the last lecture he ever gave. It was a response to Berkeley's Charles M. and Martha Hitchcock Lectures given in 1952 by Joseph Hudnut, the dean of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard. Troubled

by Hudnut's rationalist ideas, Mendelsohn directed a large part of his speech against him, without ever mentioning the Hitchcock lecturer by name; he instead called him the "honorable man from Boston." He also called him a "converted contemporary" who did not have real principles in architecture; he had only intellect, that is intellect without imagination. He claimed that architects should "place an ear on the chest of people" and thus find a form that is expressive of their age, adding in a somewhat esoteric vein that "the man of original vision knows that the crest and valley of the wave is the life force of the pounding sea." What he meant to convey is that an architectural expression of a community's inner life results in an effect similar to that of the waves in the ocean; or, just as the rolling waves are the life force of the sea, so the curves in Mendelsohn's architecture express the life force of the buildings.<sup>3</sup>

At this point, the speaker introduced his Berkeley audience to the concept of elasticity in architecture, a structural innovation that, according to Mendelsohn, had become possible thanks to a better understanding of the true nature and strength of concrete and steel, which with a minimum of material allowed builders to introduce the same kind of elasticity that one can find in Nature and thereby create a truly organic architecture. He even put forward the concept of "elastic continuity," implying that what he, inspired by Nature, had envisioned in his sketches of the early 1920s which were then believed to be purely imaginary, was thirty years later picked up by architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Pier Luigi Nervi, and Oscar Niemeyer. Without saying as much, Mendelsohn presented himself as the father of a new movement, a movement that valued imagination over matter and that built upon ideas envisioned, if not articulated, in his own early drawings.

It was in this period between 1942 and 1953, that Mendelsohn worked in San Francisco and interacted with the architectural community of the Bay Area. Mendelsohn loved the city of San Francisco, but his reception there was something of a disappointment to him. Having been treated in Berlin, London and Palestine as one of the great masters of modern architecture, in San Francisco he was appreciated but the red carpet was never laid out for him. Hans Schiller, Mendelsohn's assistant in Palestine and California, spoke extensively in his oral history about the feeling of the Mendelsohns that Eric



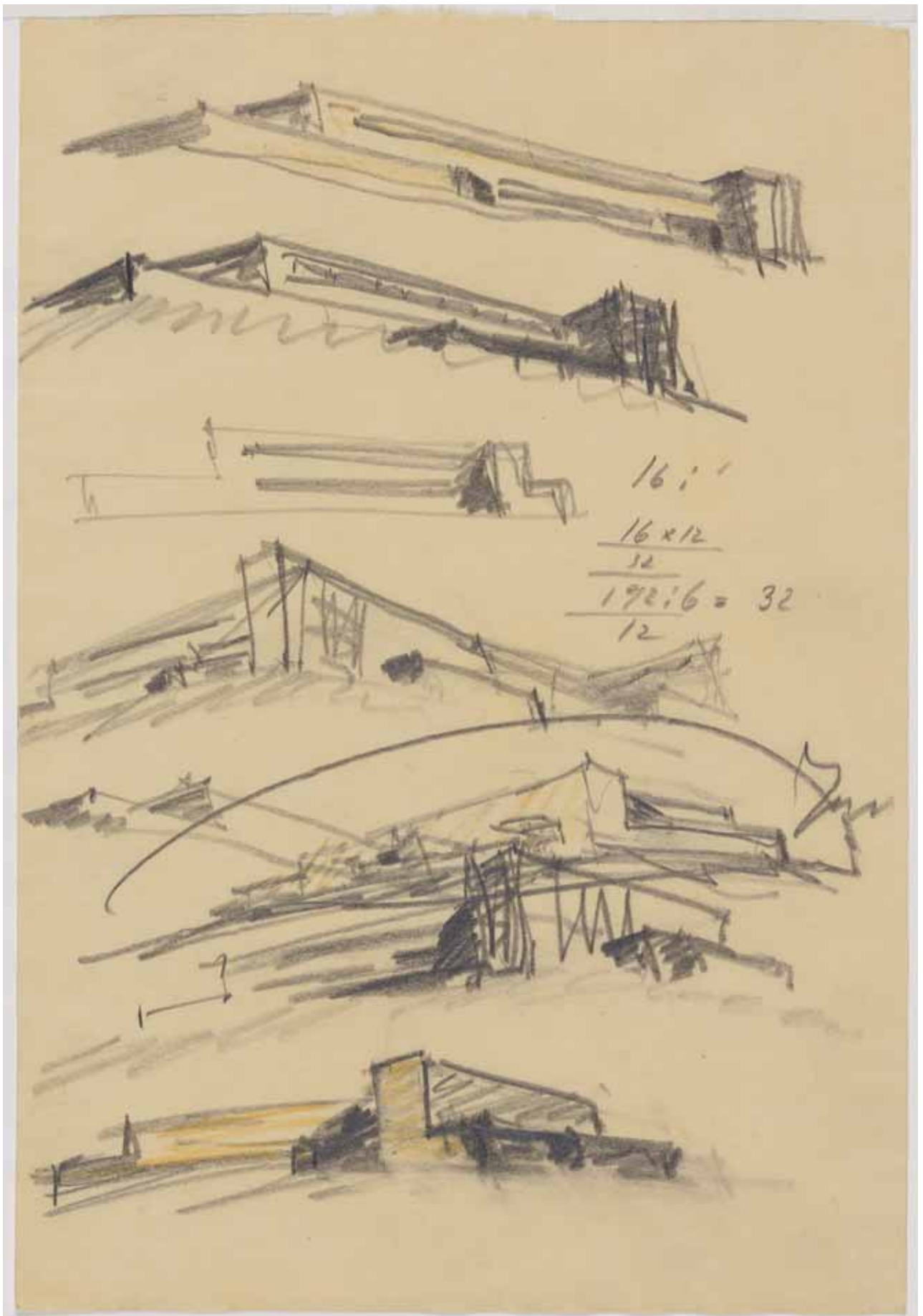


Fig. 1 Eric Mendelsohn, Atomic Energy Commission Laboratory, Berkeley, California, 1952, pencil and color pencil on paper



Fig. 2 William Wurster, Gregory Farmhouse, Scotts Valley, California, entrance wall beside tower lookout, 1928

did not receive sufficient recognition from either the American Institute of Architects or the local architects.<sup>4</sup> Louise even said: “As a whole, San Francisco had no understanding at all of architecture.”<sup>5</sup> One cannot help but think that Mendelsohn’s often cryptic, expressionist design philosophy, which must have sounded outdated after World War II, also contributed to Eric and Louise’s sense of being outsiders. Yet, there definitely were Bay-Region architects who appreciated Mendelsohn’s teachings and especially his drawings. Mendelsohn’s greatest California champion and colleague (the respect was mutual) turned out to be San Francisco architect William Wurster (1895–1973), whose practice extended from the late 1920s through the 1960s. After a decade of award-winning work, and then a year of graduate study in urban planning at Harvard in 1943, Wurster was appointed Dean of Ar-

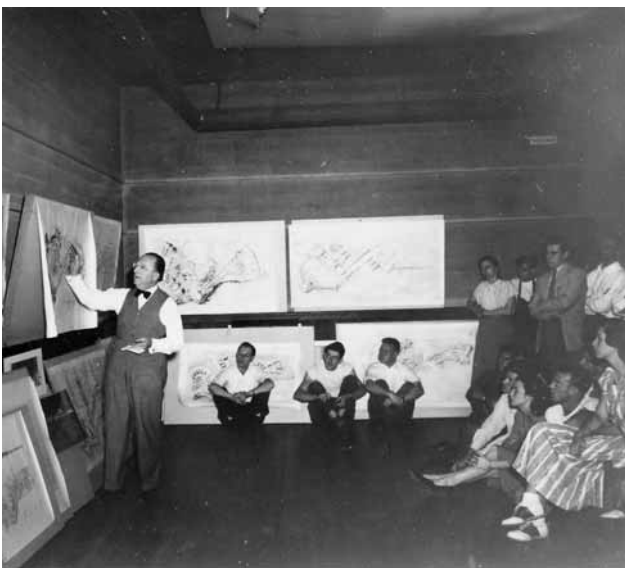


Fig. 3 Eric Mendelsohn, teaching at UC Berkeley Department of Architecture, ca 1946

chitecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1944 to 1950) where he got to know a wide range of prominent architects in Boston and New York, including the German emigrés Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and Eric Mendelsohn. He even arranged to have Alvar Aalto design MIT’s Baker House (1949). Wurster became Dean of Architecture at Berkeley in 1950 and eventually co-founder, with his wife, public housing advocate Catherine Bauer, of UC Berkeley’s College of Environmental Design. By the mid-1940s, Wurster and Mendelsohn were already good friends. In 1944 Mendelsohn joined Gropius in writing letters nominating Wurster as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.<sup>6</sup> And as Mendelsohn wrote in a letter to his wife Louise in 1950: “Bill Wurster most friendly and understanding cannot raise my salary because of his budget. However, he will see Sproul [Robert Gordon Sproul, the University president] and see to it that I get the commission for a Campus Building. He implored me to stay on as, he said, the School cannot go on without me.”<sup>7</sup>

That promised Berkeley project turned out to be the Atomic Energy Committee Research Building (1952, now known as: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) on the crest of the hill behind the university proper, for which he drew several evocative massing studies. A plain brick building with horizontal rows of windows, it was completed after Mendelsohn’s death and is the least well known of his buildings because of the highly classified nature of the research inside the building. (Fig. 1)

Wurster’s own architecture was very different from Mendelsohn’s. His most famous early works include the Gregory Farmhouse (1927) in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of San Francisco, where a white unornamented vertical board exterior, stockade-like wall and entry gate, and sheer water tower-with-lookout put a fresh face on vernacular ranch forms. (Fig. 2) The more overtly contemporary and volumetric glass-and-redwood Dearborn Clark beach house (1937) at Aptos used symmetrical



transparent wings to shield from the wind and frame the sun-deck and beach ramp, like a sort of “machine for ocean bathing” and sunning out of the wind. At Wurster’s Schuckl Canning Company headquarters, Sunnyvale (1942), the strong horizontal lines of ribbon windows and repeating cantilevered sunshades combine with the sheer wood siding to make a building that was both regional and modern.

These projects won design awards and found wide publication in architectural journals and shelter magazines. The work combined simple materials – usually redwood boards or shingles, plywood, concrete block – with elegant proportions, extensive porches, and abundant natural light to make designs that celebrated California living. They were often both modest and memorable but confusing to some viewers who could not get past the plainness and the plywood.

Wurster summed up best the Bay Region’s version of a contemporary functionalist approach: “I like to work on direct, honest solutions, avoiding exotic materials, using indigenous things so that there is no affectation and the best is obtained for the money.” It was a Modernism derived from simplicity.<sup>8</sup> Thanks to the support of Wurster and his predecessor,<sup>9</sup> Mendelsohn held an important position on the Berkeley faculty. Although his influence was not so strong that he acquired any direct followers, faculty and students were very aware of his work. For example, Vernon DeMars was a young teacher at Berkeley during the early 1950s. His career extended into the 1990s and he was part of the team that designed the University’s Sproul Plaza (1962) – of Free Speech Movement fame – and the Brutalist concrete Bauer Wurster Hall, housing the new College of Environmental Design (1964). When reminiscing about teaching at Berkeley in the 1950s, he noted Wurster’s interest in showing students a variety of architectural points of view, as a way to promote discussion, not dogma. He then added: “Even though he wouldn’t do the Mendelsohn type of thing himself” [that is, design vividly expressive monuments], “he admired the man for his accomplishments...”<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 3).

Architect Joseph Esherick was another young colleague on the Berkeley faculty at this time. A University of Pennsylvania Architecture School graduate, his early California work appeared contemporary but regional in its response to urban and rural settings. His early houses, like one for the winemaking Gallo family in the state’s Central Valley from 1946, found inspiration in the area’s agricultural vernacular while maximizing daylight and outdoor connections. His firm would go on to design the concrete-and-glass Monterey Bay Aquarium (1984), which takes the simple gable-roofed forms of cannery architecture from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – for which the area had become famous – and reworks it into a grand new marine life-viewing machine. Gables extend, open up, and carve away as wings and terraces thrust over and into the rocky shoreline.

Esherick would be chairman of Berkeley’s Department of Architecture from 1977 to 1981. Looking back, he felt that from 1947 onwards Mendelsohn’s teaching seemed an extension of his sketching technique, as if he was trying to “get the students to put off any kind of commitment. Everything was looked at from the outside,” just as Mendelsohn himself had done for decades in all his drawings—looking at a building from below, and adding a curved line to indicate the sky.<sup>11</sup>

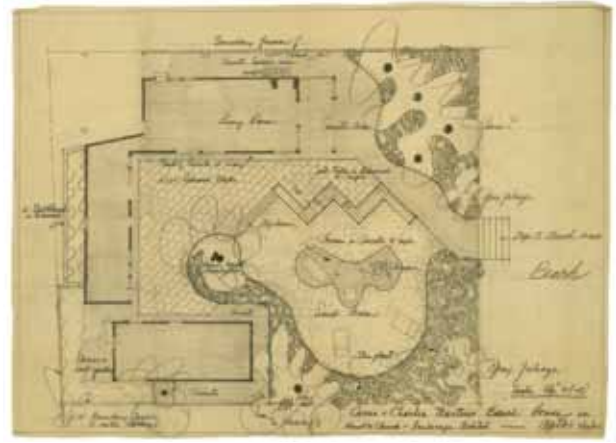


Fig. 4 Thomas Church, Martin beach garden plan, Aptos, California, 1947–1948, pencil on paper



Fig. 5 Thomas Church, Donnell Garden, Sonoma, California, 1948

Another faculty member who mentioned Mendelsohn’s drawings was the Danish architect Vilhelm Wohlert who, despite teaching at Berkeley for no more than a year (1951), developed an admiration for the German-American architect. In a short memoir about his time at Berkeley, Wohlert wrote of Mendelsohn’s drafting style and teaching method. He recalled that Mendelsohn was famous for his assignment to design “a city on the moon,” a project so fantasy-oriented that “the entries were beyond the possibility of judgement.”<sup>12</sup>

While Wohlert’s quote might make us wonder what the students learned from the renowned architect, Chuck Davis, a Mendelsohn student who would become one of Joseph Esherick’s partners and be very involved in the design of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, voiced the general reaction that his teacher Mendelsohn “was a very exciting guy to listen to...” simply because “he understood modernism as it was formed in Germany.” In other words, for the Northern California design community, Mendelsohn personified a direct link to the original European architectural avant-garde, and for the students he reigned as the most famous architect on the faculty.<sup>13</sup>

Mendelsohn also got to know landscape architect Thomas Church, whose practice paralleled Wurster’s. Church helped promote the idea of the garden as an extension or continuation of a home’s living space – a true outdoor room – not just a spot for ornamental planting. Church helped homeowners take advantage of California’s benign climate by making the



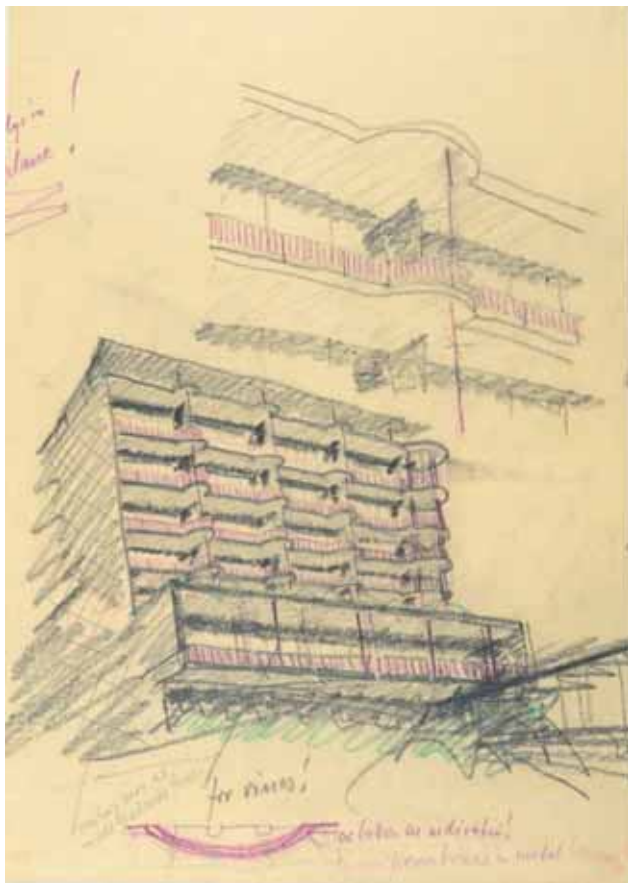


Fig. 6 Eric Mendelsohn, Maimonides Hospital, San Francisco, California, c. 1945, pencil and color pencil on paper



Fig. 7 Eric Mendelsohn, Maimonides Hospital, San Francisco, California, c. 1945, balconies

garden a place to lounge and play and have meals. His book *Gardens Are for People*,<sup>14</sup> influenced the shape of suburban gardens everywhere. It quickly became a bible to homeowners, with practical, engaging, and occasionally wry advice on making the most of outdoor space.

Like Wurster, Church took a contemporary and functionalist approach that was also artful, as in the Kirkham garden in San Francisco (1948), with its simple sweeping line to separate planting from patio. His Martin beach garden at Aptos, California (1948) (Fig. 4), turns a deck into a seating area with built-in benches zig-zagging toward the sea beside a sand plot with edging that resembles a deftly thrown lariat. His most famous garden, designed for Dewey and Jean Donnell at Sonoma (1948), was widely published on magazine and book covers.

Its deck with trees rising through it, the curvilinear pool, and the swim-through island sculpture by Adaline Kent together form a dreamlike modern arcadia that echoes the meandering lines of marshes at the edge of the distant Bay. (Fig. 5) The pool's very fluid lines could well have been inspired by one of the leaders of European Modernism, Alvar Aalto – his celebrated Savoy vase, for example – with which Church was very well known after a trip he took with Wurster to Helsinki in 1937, when Aalto took them to see his newly completed Savoy Grill.<sup>15</sup>

While we do not know if Mendelsohn knew the Donnell Garden, he would have appreciated it as an example of his “elastic continuity” in landscape design. We do know that Mendelsohn

appreciated Church's work in general, as they collaborated on the architect's first realized building in the city of San Francisco: the Maimonides Hospital for Chronically Ill Patients (1945–50) in the Lower Pacific Heights neighborhood. Built on a narrow lot, the hospital seems to be squeezed in between its two side-walls that, except for a central slit of windows on the west wall, are completely blank. The result is that all attention is directed towards the front façade, which, while appearing compressed, also used to read as extremely lively, that is until 1952 when, without Mendelsohn's approval, a major change in both the use of glass in the façade and the depth of the balconies on each floor completely altered the building's character. Fortunately, there are sketches and photographs of the building (Figs. 6, 7), taken soon after its completion, that show the importance of the originally deep balconies and especially of the curves in the railings, which on a functional level create more space on the balconies at those spots where the building's columns protrude from the façade. But these curves also have a higher design value. They create a rhythm on the façade of contraction and expansion, as if to give expression to the heart beat of the building. They are the elements that bring the building to life. The Haas Russell Residence (1950–1951), a house in the Pacific Heights neighborhood, is Mendelsohn's second San Francisco project. With one wing of the L-shaped house lifted off the ground and featuring a large circular volume projecting from the corner of the master bedroom, the house gives the inhabitants the feeling that they are floating above the San Francisco Bay as if they are part of the natural environment (Fig. 8).

A few blocks away, also in 1951, Joseph Esherick designed a house for another member of the Haas family, Rhoda Haas Goldman. A comparison is instructive. The Goldman house is simpler but no less elegant: like the Russell house it is an L-shaped, two-story box with the main living spaces oriented toward the great Bay view and the side garden. Esherick's approach is functionally modern, outdoor-oriented, and understated at the same time – a hallmark of Bay Region Modernism; Mendelsohn's design, on the other hand, is modern, organically expressive, and even dramatic. Architectural historian Sally Woodbridge wrote in her book *Bay Area Houses*, that Mendelsohn's Russell Residence "...clearly shows the marriage of the Bay Region with the International Style."<sup>16</sup> The juxtaposition of the Russell House and Esherick's Goldman house confirms the aptness of this remark. Mendelsohn's last two Bay-Area buildings are laboratories and much more moderate than his Hospital or Russell House. One of them, the AEC Laboratories at Berkeley (1952–1953), has already been discussed. The other is the Varian Associates Laboratories (1951–1953) in Palo Alto, CA. Designed for the Varian Brothers, inventors of the klystron tube, an instrument designed to amplify radio waves into microwaves, which could generate the power for particle accelerators, Varian Laboratories – a simple, multi-winged structure – was the first building in the Stanford Research Park and thus stands at the beginning of the development of Silicon Valley as well as the history of the computer. Like the AEC Research Laboratories at Berkeley, the Varian Laboratories were completed after Mendelsohn's death and show many details that were probably not designed by the original architect, but were created by the designer who continued the work on this job, Michael Gallis (Fig. 9).

These two laboratories, because of the self-effacing appearance of the realized structures, seem to suggest an anti-climactic ending to a great career. However, both were built at the beginning of scientific developments that for better or worse dominated the history not only of the Bay Area's Silicon Valley, but of the second half of the 20th century as a whole: nuclear energy and the computer. Instead of being dead-end streets, these structures led to the design of entirely new building types. Mendelsohn has never received sufficient recognition for this important role. And yet, the respect he enjoyed from his California colleagues was real. For in the end, the Bay Region Modernist, William Wurster, delivered the eulogy for Mendelsohn, one of the original representatives of the International Style, and praised him for his vitality and knowledge of the "greater needs of the spirit of man".<sup>17</sup> The two strands of Modernism had converged.

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Fig. 8 Eric Mendelsohn, Haas-Russell Residence, San Francisco, California, 1950–1951



Fig. 9 Eric Mendelsohn and Michael Gallis, Varian Associates Laboratories, Palo Alto, California, 1951–1953

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Fig. 7: Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, E.M. 10b150.  
Fig. 8: Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, E.M. 12a54, photo: Hans J. Schiller, courtesy: Daria Joseph, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles  
Fig. 9: Photo: Wim de Wit

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Zevi, Erich Mendelsohn, 1997. The architect designed ten buildings for San Francisco; only four were built.
- <sup>2</sup> Mendelsohn, Three Lectures, 1944.
- <sup>3</sup> Mendelsohn, Two Views, 1953.
- <sup>4</sup> Chall, Glaser, and Riess, Hans Schiller, 1993, pp. 311–314.
- <sup>5</sup> Mendelsohn, Louise, “The Last Creative Season,” in ZEVI, Erich Mendelsohn, 1997, p. 277.
- <sup>6</sup> Mendelsohn, Letter to A.I.A., 9 August 1944.
- <sup>7</sup> Mendelsohn, Letter to Luise, 17 May 1950, p. 004\_tb-01\_v.
- <sup>8</sup> Anon., Architectural Forum, May 1936, p. 36.
- <sup>9</sup> Warren C. Perry (1937–1950).
- <sup>10</sup> Riess, Oral History DeMars, 1992, p. 424.
- <sup>11</sup> Riess, Oral History Esherick, 1996, p. 296.
- <sup>12</sup> Vilhelm Wohlert in: Lowell a.o., Design on the Edge, 2009, p. 270.
- <sup>13</sup> Davis in: Idem, p. 257.
- <sup>14</sup> Church, Gardens Are for People, 1955.
- <sup>15</sup> Thomas Church and his wife Betsy became the San Francisco agents for Aalto furniture after it was shown at the Golden Gate Exposition in 1939.
- <sup>16</sup> Woodbridge, Bay Area, 1976, p. 359.
- <sup>17</sup> Architectural Record, November 1953, p. 9.



Emily Pugh

## In the Shadow of Expressionism: Erich Mendelsohn's Postwar Reception in the US

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, the extensive and far-reaching influence of Erich Mendelsohn was in evidence in many parts of the world. It was apparent, for example, in the curvilinear, horizontally-oriented forms of the parking garage at the corner of the Hermann Wunderlich's Kaufhof department store building in Cologne (1956–57) and in the spatially complex, arcing forms of Frei Otto's novel design for the German pavilion at the Expo 67 in Montreal.<sup>1</sup> One could detect the influence of Mendelsohn's expressive, formally inventive style outside of the German context in these decades as well, in the Opera House slowly taking shape in Sydney (Jørn Utzon, 1959–73) and in TWA's jet-age terminal at Idlewild Airport in New York (Eero Saarinen, 1959–62, Fig. 2).

Yet, even though Mendelsohn's aesthetic and overall approach clearly had a global impact on post-World War II architecture, critical appraisal of Mendelsohn's career was at a relative low point in these same decades. It is a considerable irony, for example, that in 1960, at the very moment Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal was rising in New York, Mendelsohn's Schocken Department Store in Stuttgart (1924–26, Fig. 1) was demolished. What explains this incongruity between Mendelsohn's influence and his reception? While there is no one factor that alone explains it, it is my contention that the perception of Mendelsohn as an Expressionist architect — first and foremost — played a significant role in his marginalization within architectural histories of modernism written in the United States and Western Europe, particularly from the late 1950s. The case of his reception in the US is of particular interest both because it is an important origin point for the idea of Mendelsohn as an Expressionist architect and because of the significant role his ideas played in shaping the American built environment from the 1930s onward.

Appreciation for Mendelsohn's work in the US rose quickly and steadily following his introduction to the American architectural public via the 1929 Contempora exhibit in New York.<sup>2</sup> He was quickly recognized as one of the most important figures in the burgeoning modern architectural movement, the subject of glowing articles in major American architecture journals. In an article from 1930 titled "Creative Architecture of Erich Mendelsohn," for example, author Paul Lester Wiener writes "His inventions and innovations are inspired by a great revolutionary force, by vision, intuition and struc-

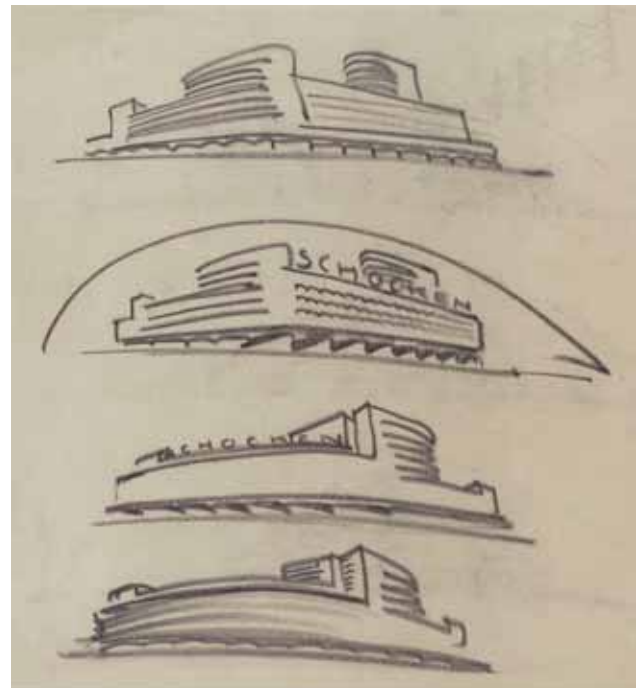


Fig. 1 Erich Mendelsohn, Schocken Department Store, Stuttgart, four sketches, 1926, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, HdZ E.M. 151

tural logic. His work seems to point the way which architectural development will pursue in the future." In Mendelsohn's architecture, argues Wiener, "we are face to face with a new conception, a new philosophy of the feeling for space — that sublimated sense that all great architects possess."<sup>3</sup>

Many of the critical appraisals of Mendelsohn's architecture, from the 1930s through the 1950s in the US, focused in particular on his use of modern materials, cutting-edge construction techniques, and novel aesthetics. "His break with the past is definite and clear," writes Wiener in *Architectural Forum*. "His creations determine their own forms out of the nature of modern building materials, out of function, use and expediency." The author of a press release for the 1942 retrospective of Mendelsohn at New York's Museum of Modern Art or MoMA, seems to have agreed and notes the architect's "great interest in concrete and steel construction and his sense of monumentality."<sup>4</sup>

Expressionism is mentioned in such critiques but does not figure prominently. When it is mentioned, Expressionism is usually cited only as an early influence on Mendelsohn, one aspect of a multi-faceted career. In the 1942 MoMA press release, for example, his sketches are described as “an important document of the Expressionist movement in architecture.” “But,” its author notes, “the sculptural streamline curves of the Einstein Tower and the early drawings give way in his mature work to a style more essentially architectural in character.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise in books on Mendelsohn authored by British historian Arnold Whittick, and by German historian Wolf von Eckhardt (Fig. 3), published in the US in 1956 and 1960 respectively, Expressionism is mentioned only as a first, if important phase of a long career. Von Eckhardt mentions the word only once in his monograph, in describing “a new movement in painting and the other arts – expressionism,” that was in vogue during Mendelsohn’s time as an architecture student in Munich. The architect’s 1921 trip to the Netherlands, argues von Eckhardt, was “more decisive for the shape of Mendelsohn’s architecture.”<sup>6</sup> Whittick similarly writes that the decline of the Expressionist movement coincided with the end of the architect’s time at university, insisting that, as a result, Mendelsohn “came too late really to be a part of it” although “its influence on him is undoubtedly strong, and is apparent in his early sketches.”<sup>7</sup>

Overall, assessments of Mendelsohn in the US before the late 1950s regard him not as an Expressionist specifically or exclusively, but as a quintessential *modern* architect. In, for example, a piece on Mendelsohn published in *Architectural Forum* in 1955 (Fig. 4), following his death, the author declares that he had “influenced the course of twentieth-century architecture more than most of his colleagues,” describing him as a man who “lived and died an explorer in modern architecture.” Far from reading his work as reflective of any single style or movement, the article’s author characterizes Mendelsohn’s work as vital and ever-evolving: “He went through artistic periods as defined as Picasso’s (...) In the fifties in America he was still developing. He scorned to be content with the blankly efficient techniques of the industrial modern style he had helped develop in the twenties. He wanted lyric grace.”<sup>8</sup>

Mendelsohn’s presence in American architectural discourse faded markedly after his death in 1953. It is only from this point, that is about the late 1950s, that the arc of Mendelsohn’s reception in the US began to shift and to bend along the same fraught course as that of architectural Expressionism. To understand the reception of Expressionism in the US in the 1950s, one has to go back to the 1930s and the influential *Modern Architecture—International Exhibition* held at New York’s MoMA in 1932. The exhibition’s curators Henry Rus-



Fig. 2 Eero Saarinen, John F. Kennedy (originally Idlewild) Airport, New York, 1956–62, interior, photo by Balthazar Korab

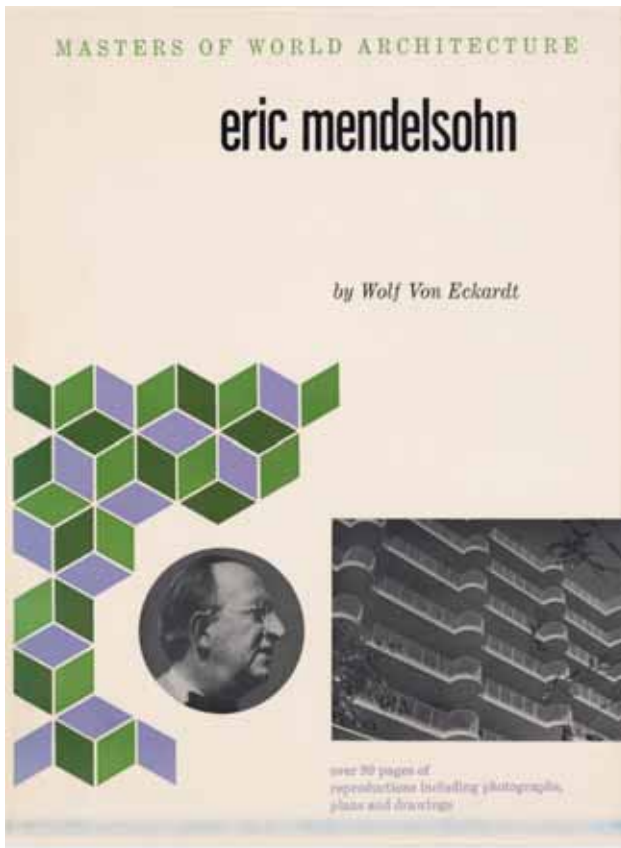


Fig. 3 Cover image, Wolf von Eckhardt, Erich Mendelsohn (New York: George Braziller), 1960, photo by James Gott



Fig. 4 Title page, The Last Work of a Great Architect, Architectural Forum (February 1955), p. 106, photo by James Gott

sell-Hitchcock and Philip Johnson famously disparaged Expressionist designs, dismissing them as over-wrought and utopian, mere “extravagant fantasies.” Expressionist architects, argues Johnson in the exhibition catalogue, “indulged in arbitrary curves, zig-zags and fantastic decoration, breaking down all formal discipline, traditional or structural.”<sup>9</sup> This view of Expressionism was echoed by critic and historian Siegfried Giedion who in his book *Space, Time and Architecture*, originally published in 1941, dismisses the movement as “Faustean outbursts against an inimical world,” before concluding that “the expressionist influence could not be a healthy one or perform any service for architecture.”<sup>10</sup> The image that resulted from such critiques was that of a visionary, irrational, and impractical architecture, the opposite of what was called rationalist or “functionalist” architecture, which was linked with qualities like the embrace of modern materials and with architects like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Neither Hitchcock, Johnson, nor Giedion were the first to repudiate Expressionism; moreover, they were not the only ones to do so. As historian Rosemarie Haag Bletter has argued, even many figures closely allied with the movement attempted from the 1930s to distance themselves from Expressionism or even to “cover up the fact that they had been involved with a subsequently unfashionable movement.”<sup>11</sup> What is noteworthy about the accounts of Johnson, Hitchcock, and Giedion vis-à-vis Mendelsohn’s US reception, is first, that they labeled the architect specifically as an Expressionist. In the MoMA exhibition catalogue for example, Johnson claims that the indulgences of Expressionism were “best ex-

emplified in the work of Hans Poelzig, Otto Bartning and Erich Mendelsohn, executed between the end of the War and 1924.” In *Space, Time and Architecture* as well, Giedion makes this link, albeit implicitly, with his derisive mention in relation to Expressionism of “concrete towers as flaccid as jellyfish,” a clear reference to the Einstein Tower.<sup>12</sup> The fact that, aside from the descriptions of Mendelsohn as an Expressionist, these accounts largely ignored the architect’s other work only served to foreground the association. These critiques by Hitchcock, Johnson, and Giedion are significant, second, because of their incredible influence. These interpretations cast long shadows into the postwar and across the reception of architectural Expressionism and of modernism more generally in the US. Their biases help to explain why the Expressionist movement and architects associated with it received comparatively scant attention from American historians and critics over the course of the 1940s and 50s and even into the 1960s. Indeed, Expressionist architecture was not merely ignored by critics in the US and elsewhere in these years, but maligned. By 1967, Reyner Banham would write in the *New York Review of Books* that Expressionism had “come to rank as a sinister aberration that had to be trampled down whenever it reappeared.”<sup>13</sup> Yet there was, at this exact moment, a push to reassess Expressionism and reinsert it into the history of modern architecture. Banham’s declaration, for example, appeared in his review of the first postwar book on the topic, British historian Dennis Sharp’s *Modern Architecture and Expressionism* of 1966 (Fig. 10, p. 103). Banham himself had included Ex-



pressionism in his 1960 overview of modernism, titled *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*. These and other histories did not necessarily represent a reappraisal of the critical positions of figures like Hitchcock and Johnson, however; instead, these histories largely affirmed interpretations of Expressionism as irrational and unbuildable. Moreover, histories like Sharp's presented the movement as a short-lived side branch from the main trunk of modernism, a "romantic trend" that blossomed in the early years of modernism but had "failed to develop."<sup>14</sup> As Rosemarie Haag Bletter would later write of this 1960s revival, "as soon as Expressionism was raised from oblivion, it was consigned to a new grave."<sup>15</sup>

It is in the context of this revival of Expressionism that Mendelsohn comes to be labeled by critics and historians as primarily an Expressionist architect. By the mid-1960s, coverage of his oeuvre had become confined largely to the first phase of his career and in particular to his early sketches, and above all, the Einstein Tower. In focusing so narrowly on this early work, these critiques created the impression, or even stated explicitly, that this period marked the height of his career, when he created his most important work. This idea was reinforced when, although figures like Banham or Sharp note that Mendelsohn moved on from or "abandoned" Expressionism, they did not discuss examples from the rest of his career in any detail.<sup>16</sup> Some critiques take this idea further and argue that, like Expressionism itself, Mendelsohn did not develop as an architect beyond the 1910s or 20s. In a review of a 1969 show of his early drawings, for example, *New York Times* critic Ada Louise Huxtable comments that Mendelsohn "settled on his style in 1914."<sup>17</sup> The idea that Mendelsohn's architectural growth had become fixed at such an early stage is in distinct contrast to the characterization of the architect that appeared for example in *Architectural Forum* in 1955, in which he is said to have had a multi-phased career that was moreover "still developing" when he died.

From the late 1950s as well, when work from any period in Mendelsohn's career was discussed, it was often read through the lens of Expressionism. Consider a small news item from a 1962 issue of *Architectural Forum*, in which the author describes Mendelsohn's Schocken Department store building, using terms evocative of assessments like Sharp's, as "romantic" and "early-modern."<sup>18</sup> Such critiques acknowledged the architect's influence and importance, however, they implicitly or even explicitly located both in the distant past.

This discourse had a cumulative effect, gradually pushing Mendelsohn into the background of modern architectural history over the course of the subsequent decades. By 1988, *New York Times* architecture critic Paul Goldberger would describe Mendelsohn as "one of those architects whose name everyone knows — well, let's say everyone who follows the world of architecture knows — but about whom no one ever seems to know very much. (...) History has relegated him to what can best be thought of as a supporting role in the great drama of 20th-century modernism."<sup>19</sup>

Certainly, Expressionism was an important and lasting influence on Mendelsohn. However, one could say the very same thing about Walter Gropius or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, both of whom were likewise deeply influenced by expres-

sionist ideas not only in the 1910s and 1920s but throughout their careers. This fact begs the question: why did critics writing in the 1950s and 60s largely ignore or downplay the Expressionist tendencies in the work of Gropius and Mies, yet when it came to Mendelsohn, these tendencies were all they could see?

Among other factors, I would argue that the example of Mendelsohn's postwar reception illustrates the limitations of an American architectural discourse that understood modernism in strict terms of either expressionism or functionalism. Architects, that is, were defined as belonging to one of these two categories, which were furthermore understood as discrete and mutual exclusive. As a result, the complex relationship between these two tendencies was obscured.

This binary conceptualization is a particularly insufficient one for understanding the work of Mendelsohn, an architect who, as many critics noted, did not fit neatly into either category. In *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, for example, Banham acknowledges that Mendelsohn "never describe[d] himself by the epithet most commonly coupled with his name and work: Expressionist."<sup>20</sup> At the 1962 Modern Architecture Symposium at Columbia University, a convening of the leaders of the American architectural establishment organized to discuss "the origin and applicability of the terms 'functionalism' and 'expressionism'," the group had difficulty placing Mendelsohn within this framework. In the session on Expressionism held the afternoon of May 5, James Marston Fitch asks: "Is Mendelsohn on record as calling himself expressionist in his sketches of 'ideal' buildings during the 1910s?," a comment to which Hitchcock replies "Mendelsohn never felt himself a member of the functionalist camp." Historian George R. Collins declares: "He seemed to be straddling" before quoting at length from Mendelsohn's 1923 lecture on "Dynamics and Function."<sup>21</sup>

The difficulty of locating Mendelsohn within the dominant narratives of architectural modernism continues to dog historians. In his 2017 survey text *A New History of Modern Architecture*, for example, author Colin Davies writes that "Historians often include the German architect Erich Mendelsohn in the category 'Expressionist' for the negative reason that he does not easily fit anywhere else."<sup>22</sup>

The continuing influence of this binary division of modernism in the "expressionist" and "functionalist" camps is, I would argue, a key reason why Mendelsohn's role in shaping modern architecture remains under-appreciated. There is an important study to be written, for example, on the nature and extent of Mendelsohn's influence on the evolution of the American built environment from the 1930s through the 1960s. Certainly, he had a profound impact on the designer Norman Bel Geddes, who developed his signature streamlined aesthetic after encountering the work of Mendelsohn, whom he met in 1924.<sup>23</sup> Through works like the General Motors pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair (Fig. 5), Bel Geddes shaped American architecture and design for decades.<sup>24</sup>

Bel Geddes, in turn, was an important influence on Eero Saarinen, who worked in Bel Geddes' office on the General Motors pavilion project. It is Saarinen who, perhaps more so than any other American architect, seems to be the standard



Fig. 5 Norman Bel Geddes, et al., General Motors Pavilion, 1939 New York World's Fair, ca. 1939 (people waiting in line for the Futurama ride), photo by Wurts Bros

bearer of Mendelsohn's work in the US, although the relationship between the two has not been fully explored. In fact, contemporary critics often took pains to distance Saarinen's work from that of Mendelsohn. In his 1962 book on Saarinen, for example, author Allan Temko makes a point of linking him with the functionalist camp of modernism. To Saarinen, argues Temko, Mendelsohn's "elastic" forms were "merely histrionic formalism." "A superficial formal comparison of Mendelsohn's sensuous vaults and pylons with Saarinen's can thus be misleading," insists Temko, continuing "The real antecedent for Saarinen's expressionism is found at the furthest opposite extreme of the Modernist movement," before naming Le Corbusier instead as a primary influence on Saarinen.<sup>25</sup> Rupert Spade similarly downplays Mendelsohn's influence on Saarinen in a lavishly illustrated 1971 book, in

which Spade writes that the TWA Terminal in New York was "one of the most expressionistic structures to be completed in the twentieth century — closely resembling in theme the architecture of Rudolf Steiner and Erich Mendelsohn, but far exceeding either in both scale and excitement."<sup>26</sup>

The examples of Bel Geddes and Saarinen demonstrate another reason, besides the label of Expressionist, that Mendelsohn's critics have too often relegated him to a secondary role within the history of modernism: the extent of his influence has itself been cited as an explanation for the lack of regard his work received in the US. As Lewis Mumford wrote in his "Sky Line" column for the *New Yorker* in 1942, "Mendelsohn's fame as an architect has been somewhat obscured by his success (...) critics have tended to assume that anyone who made headway as easily as Mendelsohn among

industrialists and other wealthy clients must be a trifle impure in his aesthetics.”<sup>27</sup> This notion persisted into the postwar period. In 1969, Ada Louise Huxtable similarly noted that “It has been fashionable to look down on Mendelsohn’s obvious style and too easy and early success.”<sup>28</sup>

Whether marginalized as a result of being labeled an Expressionist or because his style was widely imitated, a full assessment of Mendelsohn’s entire career and his far-reaching influence seems long overdue.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, a more nuanced and thorough analysis of “Expressionism,” particularly in relation to “functionalism” would seem a necessary step in developing histories of modern architecture that can properly accommodate the full scope of Mendelsohn’s architectural approach and his influence. Perhaps what is needed is to revive the kind of incisive critiques that his work received in the US in the 1930s, 40s, and early 50s, those that could account for Mendelsohn’s creative imagination and expressive forms, as well as his mastery of modern materials and construction. Such an approach is exemplified by for example, Lewis Mumford’s astute assessment, included in the same 1942 column: “Mendelsohn’s positive talent ranks high (...) He has assimilated the innovations and avoided the extravagances of his contemporaries; what is even more important, he has exercised his own fantasy with restraint, with self-discipline, with respect for the conditions of construction and the needs and purposes of his clients.”<sup>30</sup>

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- Fig. 2: Dietmar Kratz CC BY-NC-SA
- Figs. 3, 4: James Gott
- Fig. 5: Museum of New York, MN117686

## Notes

- Architectural historian Sean Keller cites Mendelsohn’s influence on Otto and Expo 67 in *Automatic Architecture, Motivating form after Modernism*, Chicago 2017, pp. 124-125
- See “Contempora Exhibition of Art and Industry at the Art Center,” 1929, p. 570. In fact, Mendelsohn had already been introduced to the American public more generally, the opening of the Einstein Tower having been widely covered in the US press. See for example N.N., *Brooklyn Citizen*, 1921, p. 8; *The Ulysses Dispatch*, (Nebraska), 1921, p. 2; *Concord Transcript* (California), 1921, p. 3.
- Wiener**, *Creative Architecture*, 1930, p. 611.
- Ibid*, p. 612; MoMA, *Noted Architect of Europe*, press release, 1942, p. 1.
- Ibid*, p. 1–2.
- von **Eckhardt**, *Erich Mendelsohn*, 1960, p. 17.
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- <sup>8</sup> The Last Work of a Great Architect, in: *Architectural Forum*, February 1955, p. 107.
- <sup>9</sup> **Johnson**, Historical Note, 1932, p. 20.
- <sup>10</sup> **Giedion**, *Space, Time*, 1941, p. 482. The movement was omitted altogether in **Nikolaus Pevsner**'s influential 1936 history, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*.
- <sup>11</sup> **Bletter**, *Expressionism*, 1983, p. 108.
- <sup>12</sup> **Johnson**, Historical Note, p. 20; **Giedion**, *Space, Time*, 1941, p. 482.
- <sup>13</sup> **Banham**, *This Property*, 1967, p. 30.
- <sup>14</sup> **Sharp**, *Modern Architecture*, 1966, p. 168.
- <sup>15</sup> **Bletter**, *Expressionism*, 1983, p. 110.
- <sup>16</sup> In *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, **Banham** calls the Einstein Tower "the canonical building of Expressionist architecture" before remarking that "[Mendelsohn] himself abandoned this style almost immediately." **Banham**, *Theory and Design*, 1960, p. 173.
- <sup>17</sup> **Huxtable**, *Souvenirs of a New Age*, 1969.
- <sup>18</sup> Mendelsohn to Mediocrity, in: *Architectural Forum*, August 1962, p. 9.
- <sup>19</sup> **Goldberger**, *Mendelsohn's Lyrical Vision*, 1988.
- <sup>20</sup> **Banham**, *Theory and Design*, 1960, p. 181.
- <sup>21</sup> **Bletter**, **Ockman**, **Eklund** and **Later** (eds.), *The Modern Architecture Symposia*, 2015, p. 116.
- <sup>22</sup> **Davies**, *A New History*, 2018, p. 77.
- <sup>23</sup> The influence of Mendelsohn on **Bel Geddes** has been documented by several design historians, including **Albrecht**, Introduction, 2012; **Maffei**, *Bel Geddes*, 2018, p. 50; **Meikle**, 'A Few Years Ahead', 2012, p. 117; idem, *Twentieth Century Limited*, 2001, p. 49. Meikle's book *Twentieth Century Limited* also addresses the broader influence of Mendelsohn on the American design more generally in the 1930s and 40s.
- <sup>24</sup> See **Albrecht**, Introduction, 2012; **Meikle**, 'A Few Years Ahead', 2012, p. 130f.
- <sup>25</sup> **Temko**, *Eero Saarinen*, 1962, p. 34.
- <sup>26</sup> **Spade**, *Eero Saarinen*, 1971, p. 122.
- <sup>27</sup> **Mumford**, *Sky Line*, 1942, p. 52.
- <sup>28</sup> **Huxtable**, *Souvenirs of a New Age*, 1969.
- <sup>29</sup> Of course, there do already exist important assessments of Erich Mendelsohn's work, as in **Bruno Zevi**, *Erich Mendelsohn: The Complete Works*, Basel 1999 and in **Kathleen James-Chakraborty**, *Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism*, New York 1997, to name two.
- <sup>30</sup> **Mumford**, *ibid.*



# **Looking Ahead – Recommendations and Closing Remarks**



# Seizing Opportunities for a Joint International Venture in the Spirit of UNESCO

We can state an increase in the number of World Heritage transnational serial nomination projects in recent times. It reflects a trend towards growing international cooperation, and, as a matter of fact, our project at hand honouring the globe-spanning international oeuvre of Architect Erich Mendelsohn pays tribute to the growing recognition of our community, in a unique and remarkable way.

In particular owing to the fact that more than one country is behind the project, we can be confident that it has good chances to succeed and – if continued in the same good and productive spirit we have witnessed here – soon reach inscription in the World Heritage List. Indeed, the international character of this initiative is close to the goals and philosophy of UNESCO. A particular challenge, of course, is the careful identification and definition of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), which is at the heart of any nomination process as it alone justifies the inscription of a site in the World Heritage List.

An example of a successful collaboration on a transnational serial project is the inscription of buildings by the Swiss architect Le Corbusier, even if the process was a long one. Let us retain some core assets: it is important to make a convincing selection of elements of a project. This selection also implies the group of contributing States Parties to the Convention. The fact that India was on board in the second attempt to apply for the World Heritage nomination of Le Corbusier's work may have been an advantage - beyond the fact that his Indian building plays a special role in his work and could therefore not be missing.

Besides the nomination project of Erich Mendelsohn's oeuvre in the World Heritage List, some pursue the idea to include the architect's archive in the UNESCO "Memory of the World" Programme. As you know, the Erich Mendelsohn Archive (EMA) is held in parts at the Art Library in Berlin and at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. In fact, here, both institutions - now that the USA has returned to UNESCO – would be eligible candidates to submit such ap-

plication. Contrary to procedures of a Convention under international law, several parties can jointly submit a nomination. They may thus agree amongst each other who takes the lead. There was an interesting precedent to our case: the inclusion of Oscar Niemeyer's archives in the "Memory of the World" programme in 2013. However, the German National Commission for UNESCO advises against this, citing experts, as the regulations have changed in the meantime. Moreover, in Niemeyer's case, the inscription was justified by the fact that the archive contained numerous unrealized projects and bared a treasure of unique knowledge. Therefore, today, only one or more documents should be submitted, each of which should bear global significance in its own right. The chance of success would thus increase. It seems to me though that also the EMA counts a number of unrealized projects. In any case, the advice of the the German Commission for UNESCO should be examined carefully.

In the end, it will also be necessary to decide who will submit the application. The other member states involved will then sit in the dinghy - as we did in the case of Le Corbusier. Although Le Corbusier was born in Switzerland, France played a decisive role at the time – and not to the detriment of the project.

In the case of Erich Mendelsohn, Germany would be an eligible applicant in principle. An alternative candidate could be Israel, but the State Party is yet hesitant for understandable reasons. After all, any other participating State Party to the Convention could also take over this role to lead the process. However, it seems that in particular Poland with its long-standing and thorough experience in World Heritage nomination processes has a great potential to spearhead this international project.

Michael Worbs (1950–2023)

Former Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany and Chair of the Executive Board of UNESCO

# Erich Mendelsohn's Documentary Collections and the UNESCO "Memory of the World" Programme

The documentary estate of Erich Mendelsohn is collected and digitised by the Berlin Art Library, Germany, and the Los Angeles Getty Research Institute, USA. With the Erich Mendelsohn Archive (EMA)<sup>1</sup>, both institutions grant online access to numerous photographs, drawings, and letters of Mendelsohn. Amongst them are, for example, sketches of the *Einsteinturm* in Potsdam, Germany, which was built between 1920 and 1922. The vast array of his inheritance is further represented by nature drawings inspiring his design of buildings like the *Hutfabrik* in Luckenwalde or by *musical sketches*, which also significantly influenced his creative work. However, the core of Mendelsohn's estate is made up by the written correspondence between him and his wife Luise. More than 3,500 letters testify to personal views of the culturally and socially engaged couple on the personal and political situation of their lifetime.

Since 1992, UNESCO's *Memory of the World* (MoW) programme aims to preserve iconic documents symbolising cultural or social turning points in mankind's history. Such documentary heritage includes valuable books, handwritings, musical scores, photographs, video or audio recordings. Currently, the UNESCO MoW register comprises 427 documents from all over the world, like the Warsaw Ghetto Archives, the earliest existent written version of the Koran, or a Korean early print of the essentials of Zen Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Besides preservation, the overall mission of the programme is making documentary heritage accessible in order to prevent it from being forgotten or destroyed and to raise awareness on its global significance.<sup>3</sup> On a biannual basis, two national and an unlimited number of multinational nomination files may be submitted to the MoW Secretariat per state. Based on the recommendation of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) UNESCO's Executive Board decides on their inclusion in the international register.

One goal of the Erich Mendelsohn Symposium is to explore the potentials of his documentary estate convened in the EMA for an inscription in the MoW register. Beyond doubt, the collection contains interesting historic witnesses which reflect the scientific, political, as well as cultural and artistic developments – in short – the *zeitgeist* of the first half of the 20th Century. However, are these documents as ground-breaking and unique as the Nebra Sky Disc? Do they have international impact like Grimm's Fairy Tales? Do they testify of political watershed events like the Two-Plus-Four-Treaty?

In general, it is not impossible to include whole archives or estates of single human beings into the MoW register. How-

ever, such entries remain the exception rather than the rule. One reason might be that vast collections of documents are often inconsistent with the programme's central criterion of *uniqueness*. As a tendency, a nomination may be more successful if it refers to a singular, selected, very special document with a specific meaning. Such a document usually represents a social or political movement, the beginning of an epoch or a ground-breaking discovery or invention. For example, the estate of Martin Luther had been reduced to his early writings in order to increase the chances for a successful inclusion into the MoW register. The selected documents exemplify how handwritten manuscripts developed to printed works, which significantly contributed to the proliferation of the Reformation movement all over Europe and the whole world. Thus, they represent the influence written documents may have on the development of societies as well as on the belief and the political action of people.<sup>4</sup>

Optionally, it could be examined whether selected documents of several worldwide renowned architects of the 20th century, including Mendelsohn, may be compiled to one MoW nomination dossier. This way, iconic works of several individuals could be united multilaterally under a thematic umbrella, thereby reflecting the character of UNESCO's work in an ideal way. Independently of pushing forward a MoW inscription, it is worthwhile to consider alternatives which may likewise widen public access to Mendelsohn's estate and raise awareness on the significance of his work. In this spirit, the EMA and ICOMOS' Mendelsohn Symposium are the right steps into a promising direction.

Marlen Meissner

German National Commission for UNESCO

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> EMA - Erich Mendelsohn Archiv, Der Briefwechsel von Erich und Luise Mendelsohn 1910-1953, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstbibliothek, Berlin 2022, <http://ema.smb.museum/de/home> (consulted last on 28.8.23)
- <sup>2</sup> UNESCO, Memory of the World Register, (2022), <https://webarchive.unesco.org/web/20220315085406/https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow/register> (consulted last on 28.8.23)
- <sup>3</sup> UNESCO, Memory of the World Register. Programme Objectives, 2022, <https://webarchive.unesco.org/web/20220315131131/https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow> (consulted last on 28.8.23)
- <sup>4</sup> Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, UNESCO-Weltdokumentenerbe Frühe Schriften der Reformationsbewegung initiiert von Martin Luther. Meilensteine der Reformation, 2022, <https://www.unesco.de/mow-reformation> (consulted last on 28.8.23)

## Mind the Gaps and Focus on the Built Works Themselves

There can be no doubt that Erich Mendelsohn was a brilliant and highly creative architect who designed a number of fascinating buildings, some of which are well preserved and well looked after. It is therefore understandable that there is an initiative working towards the inscription of a group of his works on the World Heritage List. However, it appears to be my somewhat unenviable role to point out that this worthy ambition may well meet with some difficulties if one looks at UNESCO's and the World Heritage Committee's guidelines and procedures.

In paragraphs 54 and 55, the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention state the Committee's aim "to establish a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List" and refer to the "Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List (that) is designed to identify and fill the major gaps in the World Heritage List". As the 2005 ICOMOS report *Filling the Gaps* pointed out, sites of the 20th century were severely under-represented in the List.

To some extent, this lack of 20th-century places on the List has been corrected since. But when people try to imagine which kind of places might stand for the heritage of the 20th century, which heritage places of the era might be considered to be of outstanding universal value, they tend to come up with the works of prominent architects, of which there are of course a very great number. What is more, people tend to favour a biographical approach; they understand World Heritage status as providing ultimate accolade for the oeuvre of a great man (they are always men). Whilst it is usually impossible to list the complete oeuvre of an architect, the instrument of serial nomination has been used to inscribe representative works by Le Corbusier and by Frank Lloyd Wright, to name but the most recent examples. Furthermore, it is well known that similar serial nominations of the works of other prominent architects are being prepared by a variety of state parties.

In other words, whilst the scarcity of 20th-century places on the List has been corrected to some extent as far as sheer numbers are concerned, there is a danger that we may head towards another problem, another imbalance. To put it bluntly, the 20th century covers so many topics and fields that it should be represented by many more and different sites – not just by great architectural works designed by prominent modernist architects. The *Twentieth-Century Historic Thematic Framework*<sup>1</sup> published in 2021 by the Getty Conservation Institute provides a valuable overview of the different fields and topics representative of the long twentieth century.

What does all this mean for Mendelsohn and for the chances to see his achievements represented on the List? It should certainly mean that a straightforward biographical approach – there is a great architect, a man of outstanding creative genius, and the body of his works should be listed – will probably be hampered by many difficulties. But the works themselves, taken and understood as physical sources for the extraordinary and unique circumstances in which they were created, the political and social context as well as the significance of Mendelsohn's Jewishness for his life and work: all these aspects, taken together with the artistic achievements, might well provide a basis and argument that could then lead to a nomination document.

Leo Schmidt

Former Vice President, ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage

### Note

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications\\_resources/pdf\\_publications/twentieth\\_century\\_historic\\_thematic\\_framework.html](https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/twentieth_century_historic_thematic_framework.html) (consulted last on 15.8.23)



## Getting a Foot in the Open Door – Narrative Paths to a Tentative List

The Erich Mendelsohn Circle, the group of experts and researchers of Mendelsohn heritage and World Heritage issues, must now rise to the challenge of formulating and elaborating narratives and outstanding universal values. Our next goal is to get a foot into the open door... i.e. to add at least one or more sites to a tentative list of at least one of the potential states parties.

We have heard in the last days about the possibilities and the much-done research that already exists on Mendelsohn and his oeuvre. We have also heard about the challenges and questions that such a nomination presents. To start the official procedure, we have identified the potential for the Erich Mendelsohn heritage to be included in the Israeli tentative list. The centralized structure of the UNESCO mechanism in Israel allows a rather simplified straightforward process. To do this, we must summarize the uniqueness and universality of Mendelsohn's work in a concise, self-explanatory text that will convey the values attributed to Mendelsohn's works and

influence. We need to communicate our initiative to the potential owners and managers of the sites as well as to the local authorities; in the case of Israel, these are the municipalities of Jerusalem and Rehovot.

Prior to this symposium, preliminary narratives were discussed by the Erich Mendelsohn circle. These tentative narratives indeed aim to demonstrate the innovative and global character of Erich Mendelsohn's works and their connections to his personal biography as a reflection of world history in the first half of the 20th century.

The continuation of the discussions and the formulation of the OUV need to take into consideration the current tendencies of the World Heritage committee and the need to appeal to and convince a broader public of decision makers that ultimately will evaluate and consider this future nomination.

Arch. Eran Mordohovich  
Chair of Board of Directors, ICOMOS Israel

# The Mendelsohn Cosmos – Promoting Democracy and Communities

These last two days have been very informative and helpful. Especially the information about the procedures of a nomination given by the representatives of UNESCO and ICOMOS were very important. They have given us very relevant hints how to proceed.

The conference showed very clearly that in Mendelsohn's case we are dealing with an extremely complex oeuvre, consisting of the buildings and everything connected with them (sketches, drawings, building files, office structure, assistants, engineers and clients), but also an extensive written archive consisting of lecture manuscripts, essays and books, as well as a comprehensive correspondence with family, colleagues, clients, and people of contemporary history. Finally, not to be forgotten are the large stocks of photographs of the buildings, the slides with which he illustrated his lectures. In the course of the conference, all of this was described as the *Mendelsohn Cosmos* or *Mendelsohn Universe*.

It has become clear, however, that for our nomination of selected buildings, the holdings of the two archives in which Mendelsohn's estate is preserved (Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles) form the pool of knowledge from which we draw without this becoming part of the application. The *Memory of the World* programme, for which a separate application would have to be prepared, would be a good choice for this.

For the nomination of selected buildings by Erich Mendelsohn, the state of conservation is what counts first and foremost, and the selection needs to fill a gap in UNESCO's World Heritage List. For this gap a narrative has to be elaborated. In my view, two themes have emerged for this:

The enormous ability to design a building in artistic drawings and transfer them into a real building that breathes the spirit of the first sketch. No other architect has ever done this.

Mendelsohn built for a democratic society, for the community:

- Science grew in the first half of the 20th century;
- Cinema directed 1,800 pairs of eyes to the screen;
- Factories produced products for the masses;
- Department stores sold mass products;
- The Metal Workers' Union fought for the rights of all metal workers in Germany;
- The seaside resort in Bexhill offered entertainment for everybody;
- His American synagogues were planned as homes for the Jewish communities.

We will now continue the work in our Mendelsohn Initiative Circle and define the Outstanding Universal Value next. On this basis, we will then select the buildings that prove the OUV.

I would like to thank all speakers and discussants for their extremely valuable contributions, which have moved us forward, inspired us and motivated us to continue the work of our Initiative and to work towards a nomination. There is still a long way to go, but in the meantime a procedure has emerged that will lead us to the goal.

Regina Stephan  
ICOMOS Germany, Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle

## Tools to Reach the Next Level

Developing a transnational serial nomination is a challenging task both conceptually and organizationally. The inclusion of Erich Mendelsohn's heritage on the World Heritage List requires a proper justification – a narrative that proves those aspects of his work that can be considered a heritage of humanity. There are already several inscriptions linked to the names of famous architects on the World Heritage List. The way these nominations were prepared, their structure and the way they were justified may hold valuable guidance for the work on Erich Mendelsohn's legacy.

When it comes to genius and influential architects, a property composed of a number of buildings has to be considered. It is important to recall the particularity of a serial property in the context of the requirements valid for all nominations. First, they all need to have *Outstanding Universal Value* from the point of view of history, art or science, meaning “significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity” according to the *Operational Guidelines* for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, paragraph 49. They, second, need to be in a sufficiently state of conservation meeting the requirements of integrity and authenticity and, third, have an efficient management system to guarantee their safeguarding. In addition, serial property needs to prove that all component parts are related to each other by clearly defined links:

- *Component parts should reflect cultural, social or functional links over time that provide, where relevant, landscape, ecological, evolutionary or habitat connectivity.*
- *Each component part should contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property as a whole in a substantial, scientific, readily defined and discernible way, and may include, inter alia, intangible attributes. The resulting Outstanding Universal Value should be easily understood and communicated.*
- *Consistently, and in order to avoid an excessive fragmentation of component parts, the process of nomination of the property, including the selection of the component parts, should take fully into account the overall manage-*

*ability and coherence of the nominated property* (Operational Guidelines, paragraph 137).

Developing a nomination requires cooperation of many partners. Setting up the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative (EMI) and the organization of an international conference on the architect's legacy in the context of a potential World Heritage listing is a great start and should be continued. Nevertheless, at this stage, it may be wise to look for organizational solutions that will help to establish a framework and coordination mechanisms for the application process. Such structure would also support the management of the different heritage places as a unity, aptly responding to one of the requirements for nominated serial properties.

Many important hints were given by the experts gathered at the conference. The experience and knowledge on World Heritage of both – institutions and individuals – provide the opportunity to prepare an effective nomination strategy. Participation and involvement of scholars specializing in history of architecture and Erich Mendelsohn as well as his heritage is essential to prepare the concept, narrative, and justification for World Heritage listing. With no doubts, there is already a good amount of knowledge, skills, and experience within the EMI. It should be noted that Erich Mendelsohn is not yet well known beyond the professional circles. Popularization of his work should be one of the main goals in the coming years. Being probably the most effective way to reach general audience, a dedicated website or profile on social media would help to raise awareness and to build support for protection of Erich Mendelsohn's heritage and its inscription on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage nomination process, whether successful or not, always benefits public awareness of heritage sites. Therefore, the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative should be continued. Already after visiting several buildings and listening to a series of presentations introducing his achievements, there is not much doubt that the legacy of his talent should be recognized for its common importance for humanity.

Katarzyna Piotrowska  
World Heritage Expert, Department of Culture and National Heritage in the Krakow Municipality



## The Way Forward

As this conference is coming to an end, it is my honour to follow Prof Haspel's kind invitation to come up with some strategic remarks that may guide our initiative in the coming weeks and months – of course always in the light of the World Heritage system. Let me therefore state three points, which I find particularly important for the follow-up of this conference:

My first point concerns the general approach we should find to Erich Mendelsohn's oeuvre. During these two days, we have learned a lot about his personality, his relations, friends, views and legacy - through a unique treasure of his letters, writings and drawings. Yet, at this point of our project, we should step back for a while, put personal proximity aside, and seek more distance in order to obtain the universal perspective required for a World Heritage nomination file. In fact, we should set the focus merely on his architectural work. Of course, the personal level plays in and feeds into our overall understanding of his work, yet, it should clearly move into the background for the time being.

Second, in terms of the working process we need to start with formulating the OUV. After all, this is the only element that counts for the inscription on the World Heritage List. Indeed, we should focus on the values – and the appropriate criteria they fit to. Moreover, the project needs a reference group to develop the comparative study. Without these two elements it is practically impossible to select actual buildings.

Indeed, the starting point of this initiative should be the formulation of the OUV, then work on the other requirements may follow, including the selection of the appropriate buildings and definition of how they link to the OUV. Only then we can check authenticity, integrity, management and so on. Practically, this means the creation of two groups working in parallel:

- a. a rather small editorial group to formulate on 3-4 max pages the OUV draft
- b. a second group of experts to prepare the comparative study, meaning to publish a study describing Mendelsohn's work in the context of the whole epoch. This is another document required for the nomination file.

The results of both groups should then be compared and aligned to harmonize as documents part of the nomination file.

Third most important point for a smooth forthcoming of the project is the need to decide which countries are best suited to help promoting this nomination. After all, all business and negotiations need to be done on the State Party's level requiring certain operational conditions and communication skills.

In conclusion, it would be of great help to the project to look into these three points soon after this conference.

Bogusław Szmygin  
ICOMOS Poland, President

# Annex

# Conference Programme

## Monday, 21 March 2022

### 9:00 – 10:00 Opening Session: Welcome and Greetings by Hosts, Organisers, Supporters

Moderation: Jörg Haspel, Germany

*ICOMOS Germany, Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle*

Theresa Keilhacker

*Chamber of Architects Berlin, President*

Tino Mager

*ICOMOS Germany, President*

Eran Mordohovich

*ICOMOS Israel, President*

Roman Luckscheiter

*German National Commission for UNESCO (DUK)*

*Secretary General (online)*

Mary Miller

*Getty Research Institute Los Angeles, Director (online)*

Regina Stephan

*Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle, ICOMOS Germany*

### Introductory Remarks on Behalf of the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle

### 10:00 – 12:00 Session 1: World Heritage

Session Chair: Katarzyna Piotrowska, Poland

*World Heritage Expert*

Birgitta Ringbeck, Germany

*Federal Foreign Office, Ministerial Counsellor,*

*Coordination of UNESCO World Heritage*

### Transnational Nominations: Mapping of Attributes and Values Conveying the OUV of a Nominated Property

Bogusław Szmygin, Poland

*ICOMOS International Scientific Committee (ISC) on Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration*

**UNESCO Transnational Serial World Heritage**

**Nominations – Rules, Advantages, Challenges**

Moritz Wullen, Germany

*Kunstabibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*

### The Mendelsohn System

Maristella Casciato, USA

*Getty Research Institute Los Angeles*

### Eric and Louise Mendelsohn Papers, Germany and the United States

### 13:00 – 15:00 Session 2: The Impact of Spirituality on Mendelsohn's Œuvre

Session Chair: Tino Mager, Germany

*President Icomos Germany*

Ulrich Knufinke, Germany

*Lower Saxony State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments / Technical University of Braunschweig (online)*

### Erich Mendelsohn's Jewish Cemetery Complex in Königsberg (Kaliningrad): Cemetery Buildings as a Contribution to the Development of Architecture with Jewish Connotations in the Weimar Republic

Alona Nitzan Shiftan, Israel

*Technion Haifa, Avie and Sarah Arenson Built Heritage Research Center*

### Zionism in Practice: Erich Mendelsohn from Berlin to Jerusalem

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, Ireland / USA

*University College Dublin (online)*

### Spiritual Heritage – Mendelsohn's Late Synagogue Architecture in the US

### 15:30 – 17:30 Session 3: Life and Work in Exile

Session Chair: Christoph Rauhut, Germany

*State Conservator Berlin / ICOMOS Germany*

Jörg Stabenow, Germany

*Philipps-University Marburg (online)*

### From Westend to Rehavia, Erich Mendelsohn's Houses as Milestones of a Cosmopolitan Career

Eric Nay, Canada

*OCAD University in Toronto*

### Exploring Erich Mendelsohn's Oeuvre as a Narrative of Place and Diaspora

Ita Heinze-Greenberg, Germany

*Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (GTA)*

### Erich Mendelsohn: Architecture and Exile

### 20:00 Evening Event

Welcome: Ayhan Ayrimmaz, Germany

*Vice President Chamber Of Architects / ICOMOS Germany*

### Movie night on the occasion of Mendelsohn's 135th birthday – screening of the documentary film "Mendelsohn's Incessant Visions" (Israel, 2011) followed by a discussion with its director Duki Dror

Location: Klick Kino, Windscheidstraße 19, 10627 Berlin



## Tuesday, 22 March 2022

### 9:00 – 10:00 Morning Event

**Guided tour of the former Metal Workers' Union House (IG Metall Haus) by the Berlin Chamber of Architects and the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle**

### 10:00 – 12:00 Session 4: International Influence on and through Mendelsohn's Work

Session Chair: Andrea Jütten, Germany  
*Docomomo Germany*

Alan Powers, UK  
*University of Kent (online)*

**Erich Mendelsohn and the Reception of Modernism in England, 1920–1933**

Patxi Eguiluz & Carlos Copertone, Spain  
*architectural critics, curators and researchers*

**Berlin – Madrid – Bilbao**

Marco Silvestri, Germany  
*University of Paderborn*

**On the Global Impact of Erich Mendelsohn's Architecture. Sergio Larrain's Oberpaur Building in Santiago and Modern Architecture in Chile**

### 13:00 – 15:00 Session 5: Mendelsohn's Placement in Architectural History

Session Chair: Eran Mordohovich, Israel  
*President ICOMOS Israel/Technion Haifa*

Anat Falbel, Brazil  
*European Architectural History Network*

**Erich Mendelsohn: the Crisis of the Modern Movement and Historiographical Criticism**

Wim De Wit & Daniel Gregory, USA  
*architectural historians, curators and editors (online)*

**Bay Region Modern Meets Mendelsohn**

Emily Pugh, USA  
*Getty Research Institute*

**In the Shadow of Expressionism: Erich Mendelsohn's Architecture in the 1950s and 1960s**

### 15:30 – 16:30 Closing Panel Discussion

Moderation: Michael Worbs  
*UNESCO Ambassador (Ret.) of The Federal Republic of Germany*

Panellist: Marlen Meißner (*German National Commission for UNESCO*); Birgitta Ringbeck (*German Federal Foreign Office*); Eran Mordohovich (*Technion Haifa / ICOMOS Israel*); Leo Schmidt (*ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage*); Regina Stephan (*ICOMOS Germany, Erich Mendelsohn Initiative Circle*)

### 16:30 – 17:00 Recap, Outlook and Thanks

# Curricula Vitae

## Maristella Casciato

is an architect and architectural historian. She is Senior Curator and *Head of Architecture Special Collections* at the *Getty Research Institute* in Los Angeles (2016-to present). She has been responsible for major acquisitions, such as the *Frank Gehry Papers*, 1954–1988, Lebbeus Woods’ drawings for “A-City”, and Erich Mendelsohn’s projects of the American years. Previously, she was a professor for Architecture at the University of Bologna, Italy. She was granted a *Mellon Senior* fellowship (2010), a.o. and taught history of architecture in many academic programs in the United States, and lectured extensively in Europe and beyond. She has curated exhibitions at the *Getty Research Institute*, including *Bauhaus Beginnings* (2019), and *The Metropolis in Latin America, 1830–1930* (2017), and most recently the digital exhibition *Sculpting Harmony* at [gehry.getty.edu](http://gehry.getty.edu). Recent publications include *The Metropolis in Latin America, 1830–1930*, co-edited with Idurre Alonso (GRI Publications, 2021), *Rethinking Global Modernism. Architectural Historiography and the Postcolonial*, co-edited with Vikram Prakash (Routledge, 2021); the facsimile reprint of the *Album Punjab 1951*, a notebook by Le Corbusier (2024).

## Carlos Copertone

(Cáceres, Spain, 1973) completed his PhD at the University of Extremadura, specialising in urbanism. He edits books on art and architecture at Caniche Editorial, and has curated and developed several exhibitions, programmes, and projects. Copertone has lectured extensively, both in Spain and internationally.

Recent exhibitions, talks and publications of Eguiluz and Copertone include *Poured Architecture: Sergio Prego on Miguel Fisac* (Graham Foundation, Chicago, 2020) on the late Spanish architect Miguel Fisac and the contemporary work of the Basque-born, Brooklyn-based artist Sergio Prego, the talk *Contadas obras: VILLA MENDELSON* (CA2M/Centro de Arte 2 de Mayo, in Madrid, 2020), and the book *Artist’s Book* with Ignasi Aballí, for the Spanish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, as part of the project *Correction* (2022).

## Patxi Eguiluz

(Orduña, Spain, 1972) is an architect, curator, researcher and critic, focused on construction and urbanism. He edits books on art and architecture at Caniche Editorial and has curated and developed several exhibitions and projects at various institutions, across Spain and abroad.

## Anat Falbel

received her PhD in Architecture and Urbanism from the University of São Paulo in 2003, with the thesis *Lucjan Korngold: the Trajectory of an Immigrant Architect*, which deals with the subject of emigrated architects between the 1940s and 1960s in the city of São Paulo. She was a Canadian Center of Architecture visiting scholar (2013). Presently she

is one of the organizers of the Urban Representation EAHN Interest Group and editorial member of the *Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale, Urbaine et Paysagère*. In 2011 she curated the exhibition *Exile and Modernity: The Space of the Foreigner in the City of Sao Paulo* and in 2013 *Vagabond Stars: Memories of the Jewish Theater in Brazil*. Among many articles on the topics of immigrant professionals and cultural transfer between Europe and the Americas, she published *Lucjan Korngold arquiteto* and edited the volumes *Bruno Zevi Architettura e Judaismo: Mendelsohn*, and Joseph Rykwert’s *The House of Adam in Paradise, The Idea of the City* and *The Dancing Column*.

## Sergey Gorbatenko

studied at St Petersburg’s Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (Academia of Arts, Russia). He has worked within the Committee for the State Inspection and Protection of Historic Monuments of St Petersburg (KGIOP). His writings include more than 170 publications, including ten books. He is a member of ICOMOS Russia and a founding member and former chairman of the St Petersburg regional branch of ICOMOS Russia, and an expert member of ICOMOS CIVVIH.

## Daniel P. Gregory

an architectural historian and longtime magazine and website editor, is the author of *Cliff May and the Modern Ranch House* (Rizzoli 2008), *The New Farm: Contemporary Rural Architecture* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2020), and numerous essays about California architecture. He graduated from Yale, received his Ph. D. in architecture from UC Berkeley, and lives in the Bay Area.

## Ita Heinze-Greenberg

is an architectural historian and professor emerita of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zürich, where she was assigned to the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) from 2012 to 2019. She earned her doctorate from the University of Bonn with a thesis on Erich Mendelsohn’s buildings in Mandate Palestine. Subsequently, she held research and teaching positions at various institutions, including the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Technion in Haifa (1984–1998), the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem (1993), the University of Augsburg (1999), the Delft University of Technology (2004–2005) and the Technical University of Munich (2008–2012). Her numerous publications concentrate on 19th and 20th century architecture with foci on nation building, identity construction, migration studies, and on the work of Erich Mendelsohn.

## Kathleen James-Chakraborty

is professor of Art History at University College Dublin. In 2021–2022 she was an Ailsa Mellon Bruce Senior Fellow at

the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Her books include *Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism* (Cambridge 1997), *Architecture since 1400* (Minnesota 2014), and *Modernism as Memory: Building Identity in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Minnesota 2018). James-Chakraborty holds an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council for a project entitled: *Expanding Agency: Women, Race, and the Global Dissemination of Modern Architecture*.

### Ulrich Knufinke

is an architectural historian and monument conservator. He works at the Lower Saxony State Office for Monuments Preservation and is scientific director of the Bet Tfila - Research Unit for Jewish Architecture (Technische Universität Braunschweig). Mendelsohn's projects in Allenstein and Königsberg already played a role in his dissertation *Bauwerke jüdischer Friedhöfe in Deutschland* (Buildings of Jewish Cemeteries in Germany), Petersberg 2007. As a grant holder at the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Knufinke investigated modernist buildings in Jerusalem (cf. *Bauhaus Jerusalem*, Tel Aviv 2012), including Mendelsohn's projects influential in Palestine. His post-doctoral thesis (Stuttgart, 2014) summarizes some of the architect's contributions to the history of Jewish architecture. Knufinke has taught at the Universities of Potsdam and Innsbruck and currently teaches at TU Braunschweig. He is a member of the Koldewey Society, the Association of German Art Historians, and of ICOMOS Germany.

### Marlen Meissner

is head of the department Heritage, Nature, Society at the German Commission for UNESCO in Bonn. She studied Cultural Studies and Anglistics (M.A.) at Leipzig University and the University of Teesside, Middlesbrough (UK), as well as Instrumental and Vocal Performance and Teaching (B.A.) at Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg. She holds a PhD in Heritage Studies.

### Eran Mordohovich

Architect trained at the Technion in Haifa, holds a master's degree in conservation (University of Leuven, Belgium, 2005). He has worked as an architect on various architectural, urban design and conservation projects in Israel and Belgium for over 25 years. Currently, he is the architect in charge of the Northern Region at the Israeli Antiquities Authority. Since 2010, he has been teaching architecture and preservation at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion, Haifa. He joined the ICOMOS Israel board in 2015 and has been chairing it since 2018.

### Eric Nay

is an Associate Professor at the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto, Canada. He holds professional degrees in architecture (B.Arch Kentucky and M.Arch Cornell) as well as an interdisciplinary PhD in social sciences, education and the humanities (Toronto). He has practiced ar-

chitecture and design in offices in New York City, Chicago and California. Nay has also held multiple teaching, research and leadership positions at the post-secondary level in North America, Europe, Asia and in the Middle East. He teaches across a range of disciplines including environmental design, the history and theory of architecture and design and human geography.

### Alona Nitzan-Shiftan

is a professor at the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning. She chairs the architecture programme and heads the Avie and Sarah Arenson Built Heritage Research Center. She has published widely with research and professional interests ranging from history and theory of 20th-century and contemporary architecture, Post-World War II architectural culture, politics of architecture, Israeli architectures in history, cultural heritage and architectural historiography. She is an active member of the Erich Mendelsohn Initiative for the preparation of a World Heritage nomination file.

### Katarzyna Piotrowska

Deputy director of the Department of Culture at the City of Krakow, holds a doctoral degree in architecture and urban planning of the Kraków University of Technology, and an M.A. in landscape architecture of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences.

After the Centre for the Protection of Historic Landscapes in Warsaw, she joined the National Institute of Cultural Heritage where she was also responsible for the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. In her position she headed the Polish Centre for World Heritage (2015–2020) and represented Poland during its term of office in the World Heritage Committee. Her experience in the protection and management of cultural heritage allowed her to successfully lead the nomination process of the World Heritage properties *Tarnowskie Góry Lead-Silver-Zinc Mine and its Underground Water Management System* and the *Krzemionki Prehistoric Striped Flint Mining Region*.

Piotrowska is a member of ICOMOS and cooperates with ICCROM in various initiatives. As a member in several national and international expert teams, she has brought forth a number of studies and publications in the field of heritage conservation and management.

### Alan Powers

Senior Lecturer at the London School of Architecture and at the School of Architecture and Planning of the University of Kent. Powers is a specialist in 1930s Modernism in Britain, as conservationist, teacher and historian. He published a major monograph on Serge Chermayeff in 2001 and visited the three Mendelsohn and Chermayeff buildings in England on several occasions. Wider research looks into the context of Modernism in relation to German influences in his book *Bauhaus Goes West* (2019). He is an active member of the Twentieth Century Society, editing its journal and monograph series, and is also engaged with Docomomo International and Docomomo UK (Register for the period 1920–1945). He was part of the Eng-



lish Heritage Post-War Listing Advisory Committee (1992–2002). Further memberships in different functions include the Society of Antiquaries, Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, Honorary Fellow, RIBA.

### **Emily Pugh**

is a Principal Research Specialist at the Getty Research Institute and a specialist in digital art history and postwar architectural history in Germany and the US. Her book on architecture and urban development in Cold War Berlin was published in 2014 as *Architecture, Politics, and Identity in Divided Berlin*. She has received funding for her research from the Center for Architecture Theory Criticism History at the University of Queensland, Australia, and the Foundation for Landscape Studies, New York. Pugh is currently at work on a second book, focused on architectural criticism on US television in the 1950s and 1960s.

### **Birgitta Ringbeck**

graduated in History of Art, Archaeology and Ethnology in Münster, Rom and Bonn. Until 2022, she headed the World Heritage coordinating body in the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and was the cultural expert in the German Delegation to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. In this function she was a member of multiple bodies, including the World Heritage Committee, the Council of ICCROM, the German Commission for UNESCO, the German World Heritage Foundation, ICOMOS and ICOM. She lectures on World Heritage and World Heritage Management and has published on architectural history, monument conservation and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

### **Leo Schmidt**

studied History of Art, Classical Archaeology and History at the universities of Freiburg and Munich.

He was a historic buildings investigator for the State Conservation Office of Baden-Württemberg and then became Professor for Architectural Conservation at the Brandenburg University of Technology (BTU) in Cottbus where he taught for 25 years until his retirement in 2020.

Leo has worked on 18th-century British country houses, but also on difficult heritage of the 20th century such as the Berlin Wall. He is vice president of ICOMOS' International Scientific Committee on 20th-Century Heritage and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

### **Marco Silvestri**

studied Art History and Philosophy at the University of Stuttgart, Germany. After working as a freelance art historian at museums and galleries, he joined the Chair of Material and Intangible Cultural Heritage at the University of Paderborn, Germany as a research assistant in 2013. From 2014 to 2016, he coordinated the BMBF-funded research study project "Weser Sandstone – as a global cultural asset". Research took him for several months to Spain, Peru and Bolivia. Following a predoctoral fellow of the German Gerda Henkel Foundation in 2018/19, he pursued his studies on urban planning of mining towns in the early modern period in Peru and

Germany and earned a doctorate in Art History in 2021. His research interests include urban planning and architectural theory, architectural cultural exchange, Bauhüttenwesen and 19th century architecture. He has further published articles on urban planning and mining towns, architectural and reconstruction history of the 17th and 19th centuries, and on artist migration between Spain and Peru/Mexico.

### **Jörg Stabenow**

1994 PhD in art history, University of Hamburg. 1995–1998 curator, Monument Preservation Office, Dresden. 1998–2000 research fellow and 2000–2004 academic assistant, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Florence, Italy. 2007 habilitation in art history, University of Augsburg. 2010 visiting professor of art history, University of Tübingen. 2012–2013 academic assistant, Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, Italy. 2013–2015 Visiting Professor of Theory and History of Modern Architecture, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. 2015–2017 Professor of History and Theory of Architecture, Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts. From 2017 Professor of Art History, Philipps University of Marburg.

### **Regina Stephan**

is a professor of Architectural History at Mainz University of Applied Sciences. A focus of her research and publications lies on the life and work of Erich Mendelsohn. She has written and (co-)edited several major publications on Mendelsohn, including: *Eric Mendelsohn – Architect 1887-1953* (1999), *Luise und Erich Mendelsohn – Eine Partnerschaft für die Kunst* (2004), *Erich Mendelsohn – Wesen Werk Wirkung* (2006). She led the scholarly edition of the correspondence of Erich and Luise Mendelsohn in the digital Erich Mendelsohn Archive project (EMA) in 2014 (<http://ema.smb.museum/>), a cooperation between the Berlin Art Library, and the Getty Research Institute. Stephan further curated exhibitions, including the touring exhibition "Erich Mendelsohn – Dynamics and Function" (1999–2013), by the German Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa), and one on the architect and designer Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867–1908) in Darmstadt and at the Museum Leopold, Vienna.

Stephan represented the Federal Building Ministry in the Advisory Board for the White City Centre in the Max Liebling House in Tel Aviv, and in the commission "Continuity, Discontinuity – National Building and Planning Policy 1933 to 1945". She also participated in the Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt Advisory Board supporting the city's preparations for the World Heritage nomination file (inscription in the World Heritage List in 2021). She is a member of ICOMOS Germany and the German Werkbund.

### **Bogusław Szmygin**

of Lublin University of Technology, heads the Built Heritage Department and is Dean of the Faculty for Civil Engineering and Architecture.

He specialized in the protection and conservation of architectural monuments, including theory of conservation, revitalization of historical towns, protection of historical ruins and in the area of World Heritage conservation and is the au-

thor and editor of a number of scientific publications in this area of expertise. He has also organized numerous scientific conferences and programmes, developed educational programmes and has written screenplays for educational films. President of ICOMOS Poland and of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee of Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration (TheoPhilos), Szmygin was a member of the Polish Delegation of the World Heritage Committee (2015, 2017) and is part of the Scientific Committee of Architecture and Urbanism of the Polish Academy of Science.

### **Wim de Wit**

is an independent architectural historian and curator. He studied architectural history in the Netherlands and has held positions as curator of architecture in Amsterdam, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Stanford. In those capacities, he organized exhibitions and wrote accompanying catalogs on a variety of subjects, including the Amsterdam School (1975 and 1983), Louis Sullivan (1986), Bernard Rudofsky (2007–2008), Los Angeles, 1940–1990 (2013), and Design for the Corporate World (2017).

### **Michael Worbs †**

(Ulm, 14 September 1950 – Berlin, 16 December 2023)

Was a German diplomat. Among other, he served as Ambassador to Kuwait and as Consul General in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). From 2012 to 2017 he worked at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), first as Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Germany and later as Representative of Germany to the Executive Board. From 2015 to 2017 he chaired the Executive Board of UNESCO. He also held a stint in the private sector, working as Director of External Affairs and Public Policy at Daimler-Chrysler. He held a PhD from the Technical University Berlin.

### **Moritz Wullen**

is the director of the Kunstbibliothek der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (Art Library – National Museums in Berlin), home to the Mendelsohn estate since 1975. In co-operation with the Getty Research Institute, he and Regina Stephan created a single digital window on the extensive Mendelsohn papers held in Berlin und Los Angeles. The digital Erich Mendelsohn Archive (EMA) concentrates on the decade-long correspondence between Erich Mendelsohn and his wife Luise and presents over 2700 letters in digitised form along with transcriptions and annotations. The project was funded by the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation.

As the director of the Art Library Wullen manages a network of manifold interdisciplinary research and digitization projects on the history of architecture, design, fashion, photography and media. He also heads the project *Leni Riefenstahl Estate* developing collaborative and post-colonial strategies to publish the artist's bequest kept in the Kunstbibliothek Berlin, the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek. Furthermore, he curated exhibitions with a focus on the history of arts, sciences and ideas, including: *Mythos Babylon* (2008), *The Arts of the Enlightenment* (2012), *The Piranesi Principle* (2021) and *UFO 1665: The Air Battle of Stralsund*.





