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*Bauhäusler: A Case Study of
Two-Way Traffic across the Atlantic*

The model of German-American cultural relations which best fits the story of the German Bauhaus and its influence in America is that of an exchange of ideas which are then developed further in each country. I would like to suggest that a similar model is useful for studying German-American cultural relations in other contexts, including those involving events of an earlier period, and that this model is often more suitable than two other models which, though frequently invoked, are not always invoked consciously and explicitly.

The first of these other models is that of the German immigrant and his or her descendents, each generation more removed than the preceding one from direct contact with Germany. German culture plays a diminishing, if never entirely absent, role in each succeeding generation. Certainly this model can be useful and can yield much insight into American character. I would agree with Walt Whitman, who wrote as early as 1883, "To that composite American identity of the future, Spanish character will supply some of the most needed parts." Surely German ingredients are also part of that composite American identity, and it is worth remembering that only two European languages other than English have ever gained wide currency in the United States. Moreover, the recent in-depth study by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin of six generations of a German-American family provides a good example of an instance where this model serves well.¹

The second of these models is often used in describing the role of German, or Austro-German, high culture in the United States. While it could be argued that this model, with "Culture" flowing in one direction only, was never really useful, it is nonetheless both pervasive and persistent. And it does seem to fit neatly in the cases of those composers who were giants of the musical world and whose careers spanned the period which is precisely that of the maximum flow of German immigrants into America: Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, etc. There simply were no counterparts in America for

these composers, and the belated recognition, in Germany and elsewhere, of an isolated figure such as Charles Ives, is unlikely to change an established mind-set.

I would argue that even when dealing with high culture, the one-way model can get in the way. If Gustav Mahler's American experience is not usually regarded as crucial to his development as a composer, no one would make a similar argument in the case of the painter Emanuel Leutze, who was born in Schwäbisch Gmünd in 1816 and brought to the United States at age nine.² He is best known for a painting of a scene from American history: *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, of 1851 (Figure 1). If the Delaware appears a bit Rhenish, that is because Leutze made this painting in Germany, and it is a work that had political implications for post-1848 Germany as well as for the United States.³ In fact, Leutze worked for extended periods on both sides of the Atlantic, and he aided aspiring young artists from the United States who wished to study in Düsseldorf, as he himself had. He personally helped many of them get settled there, sometimes sharing his own studio. His continuing involvement in artistic affairs in Düsseldorf led him to become a founder of the *Künstlerverein Malkasten* there, an interesting precursor of Artists Equity in the United States.

There was even a bit of this two-way traffic in the career of Dankmar Adler, who was born near Eisenach in 1844 and arrived in the United States at age ten. He is best known for the firm, Adler and Sullivan, which he operated with his partner, the American-born architect Louis Sullivan.⁴ Highlights of Adler's career were the three theatres, one in Pueblo, Colorado, and two in Chicago, which he and Sullivan designed between 1886 and 1892. The largest of these, and the only one still standing, was the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago, now part of Roosevelt University. (The other Chicago theatre was to have been called the German Opera House, but the name was changed to Schiller Theatre.) The partners began work on the Auditorium in 1886, and it was formally opened in 1889. While design work was still in progress, Adler returned to Germany, where he carefully studied recently completed theatres. In designing the three American theatres, he incorporated what he had learned about the seating plans, the fire-proofing, the extensive use of electricity, the heating, the ventilation, and the stage mechanisms of the German theatres he had visited.⁵

Assisting the firm of Adler and Sullivan in the design of these three theatres was the young Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959). Although American-born, he was to become even more strongly involved with two-way traffic across the Atlantic than Adler had been. After leaving Adler and Sullivan, Wright went on to pioneer a type of dwelling known as the Prairie House, characterized by strong horizontal accents and roofs with wide overhangs, suited visually and climatically to the flat Illinois prairie. Good examples are two Illinois houses built just after the turn of the century: the Bradley house in Kankakee and the Willits house in Highland Park. Another hallmark of the Prairie House was the open planning of the interiors, as seen in the Bradley house (Figure 2).

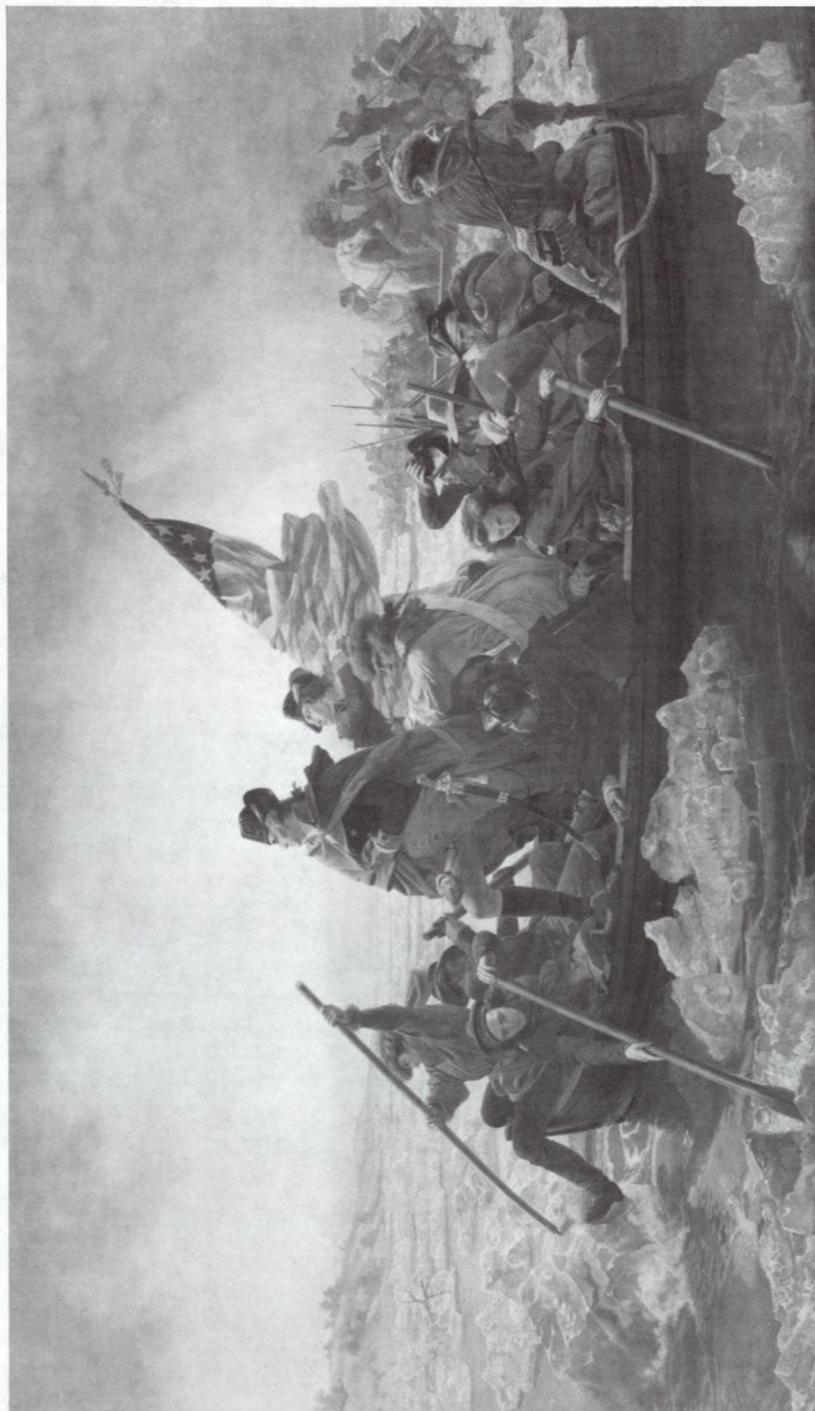


FIG. 1. Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, oil on canvas 1851, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897. (97.34). All rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

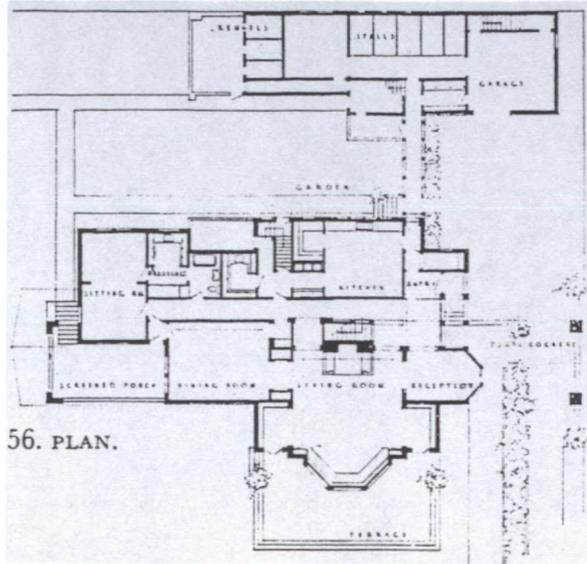


FIG. 2. Frank Lloyd Wright, Bradley house, Kankakee, Illinois, 1901, plan of ground floor.

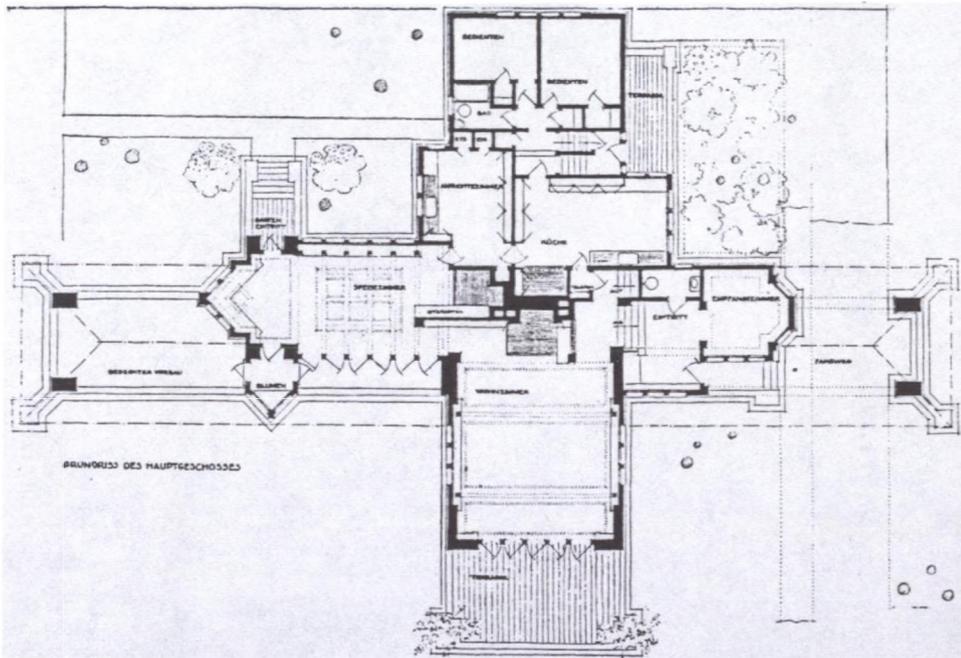


FIG. 3. Frank Lloyd Wright, Willits house, Highland Park, Illinois, 1900-1902.

Sometimes the open planning resulted in a pin-wheel configuration, as in the Willits house (Figure 3).

It should also be noted that extensive illustrations of these two houses appeared at an early date in German publications. Kuno Francke, German philosopher and critic, visited Chicago in 1908, while serving as visiting professor at Harvard University. Several long, stimulating conversations with Wright resulted, and, impressed with Wright and his architecture, Francke urged Ernst Wasmuth, the prestigious Berlin art-book publisher, to bring out two books which comprehensively documented Wright's work, using drawings and photographs.⁶ These appeared in 1910 and 1911.⁷ Nothing at all comparable was published in the United States until 1942.⁸

It would be impossible to exaggerate the impact these two books had in Germany. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the last director of the German Bauhaus, once recalled:

The more we were absorbed in the study of these creations, the greater became our admiration for his incomparable talent, the boldness of his conceptions and the independence of his thought and action. The dynamic impulse emanating from his work invigorated a whole generation.⁹

The influence of Wright's pin-wheel plans can be seen in a project prepared by Mies in 1923-24 for a brick country house (Figures 4 and 5). Wright's open planning also influenced one of Mies's finest executed works: the Tugendhat house in Brno, Czechoslovakia (Figure 6). But these "American" instincts got Mies into trouble with Chicago developer Herbert Greenwald, one of his most important patrons. The original floor layout Mies had in mind for the famed apartments at 860-880 Lake Shore Drive proved too "American" for the real estate specialist called in by Greenwald (Figures 7 and 8). These apartments, as built, had little to do with what Mies had wanted.¹⁰

A better marriage between the intentions of Mies and American circumstances came about in the erection of projecting I-beams emphasizing the vertical components of the window grid. Before assemblage, these projecting I-beams had been welded across flat steel slabs in four-window wide, two-story sections, after which they were lowered into place by derricks (Figure 9). The slabs in each of these sections were then welded to L-beams projecting from large H-beams embedded in fire-proofed piers. Following this, the projecting I-beams in each unit were welded to the projecting I-beams in adjacent units. Since even minor irregularities at these welded joints would have been significant when viewed upward because of the length of the perspective, Mies insisted on their erection on the buildings in the order in which they had been cut from the rolled lengths at the mill.¹¹ Thus the perfectionism of Mies was not inconsistent with the capabilities of American industry. But it is also worth noting that Mies was assisted by a veteran American apartment architect: Henry K. Holsman (1866-1959), of Holsman, Holsman, Klekamp and Taylor.¹²

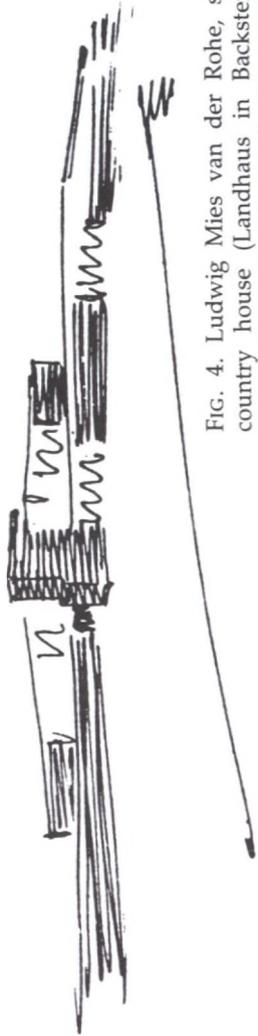


FIG. 4. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, sketch for a brick country house (Landhaus in Backstein), 1923-24, first shown in Berlin (Große Berliner Kunstausstellung, 31 May-1 September 1924).

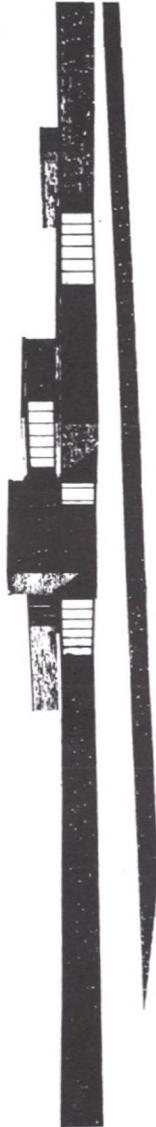


FIG. 5. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, sketch and plan for project illustrated in Figure 4, as shown in Mannheim, 25 October 1925-3 January 1926.



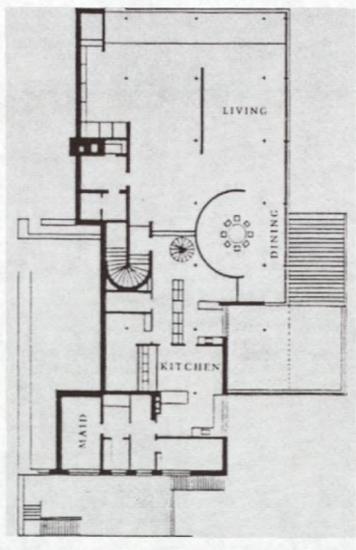


FIG. 6. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Tugendhat house, Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1930, plan of principal story.

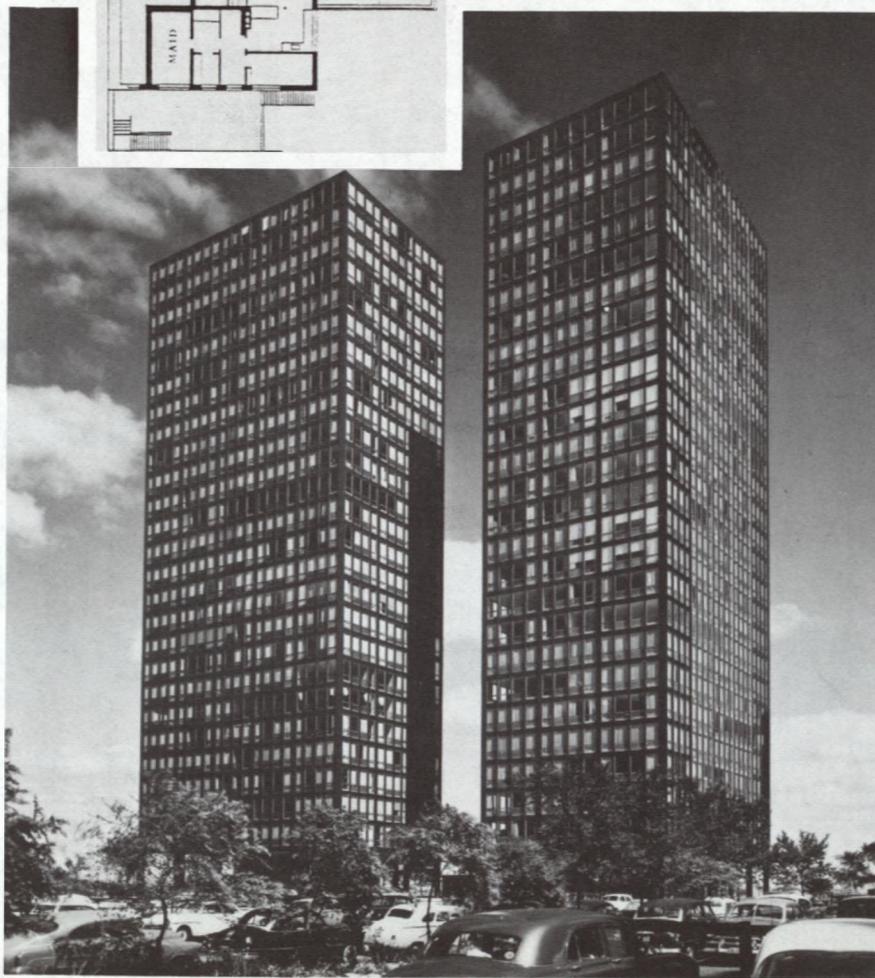


FIG. 7. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, apartment buildings at 860-880 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, completed 1951. Photo Hedrich-Blessing.

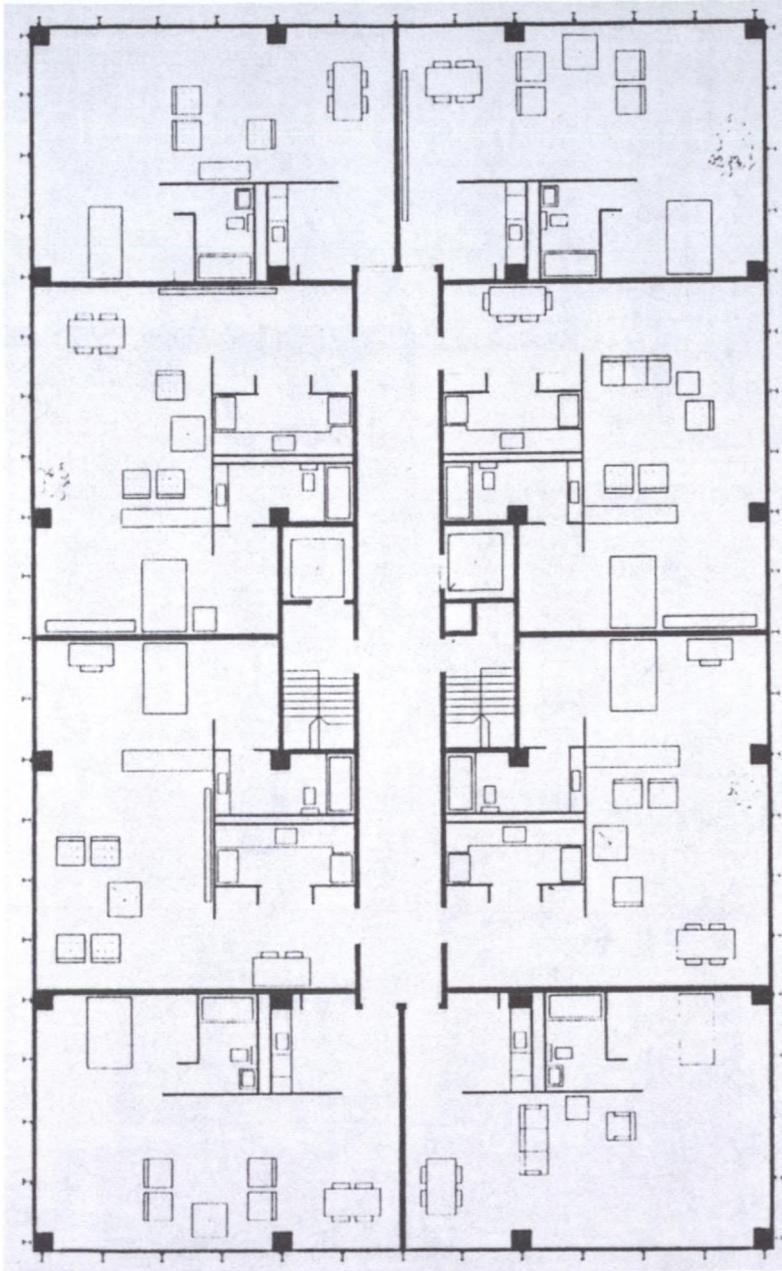


FIG. 8. Ludvig Mies van der Rohe, apartment building at 860 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, original plan of typical apartment floor.

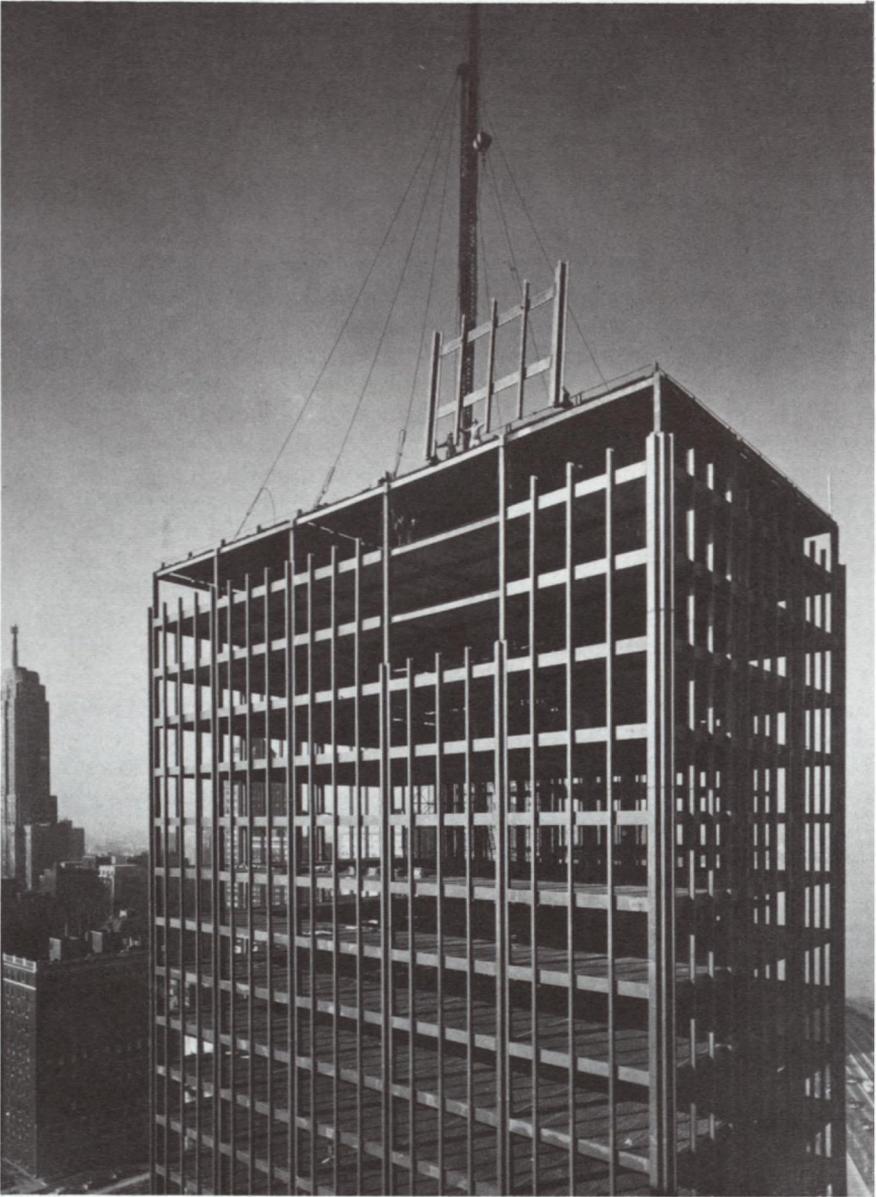


FIG. 9. The erection of projecting I-beams at the apartment buildings shown in Figure 7. Photo Hedrich-Blessing.

American industry on a smaller scale was able to supply a necessary ingredient for the lobby: Mies had wanted to use his famed Barcelona chairs and stools there. However, they had been out of production for many years by 1951 and had in any case been made only in Europe. But a Chicago workshop was able to produce enough chairs and stools to furnish the lobby.¹³

Another German architect influenced by Wright was Walter Gropius. A 1909 hotel-and-bank building in Mason City, Iowa (Figure 10), by Wright makes an interesting comparison with an exhibition building of 1914 in Cologne which Gropius designed with Adolf Meyer (Figure 11). Meyer once recalled that he and Gropius kept an open copy of one of the Wasmuth publications on their drawing board.¹⁴

Gropius was the founding director of the Bauhaus, serving from 1919 to 1928 in that post. After he moved the school from Weimar to Dessau in 1925, he designed a director's house, of which he was the first occupant. Shortly after moving to Harvard University in 1937, Gropius designed another house at Lincoln, Massachusetts, for himself. Not only is the house very different in appearance, it was also different in construction. As one way of becoming familiar with American building methods, Gropius built the house entirely out of items readily available from American building supply companies and hardware stores.¹⁵

For the Harvard campus, Gropius designed the Graduate Center, built in 1949-50, with his American firm, The Architects Collaborative, or TAC. When he began work on this project, he had been at Harvard for more than a decade, and was well aware of its long-standing tradition of deploying buildings in quadrangles; hence the double-quadrangle arrangement here (Figures 12 and 13). The resulting configuration was not really very similar to that of the Bauhaus in Dessau (Figure 14), which had been built from scratch on the edge of the city.

Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Gropius began work with his wife Ise, and with fellow *Bauhäusler* Herbert Bayer, on an exhibition for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, documenting his ten years as director of the German Bauhaus. This opened late in 1938; Wright was among those greeting Walter and Ise Gropius at the opening.

The exhibition also served as a more complete explanation of the importance of the Bauhaus than could have been done by merely showing the work of Gropius, Mies, or any other group of outstanding figures from the Bauhaus. It was the educational philosophy of the Bauhaus which was to be its most important contribution in the long run, and much of the exhibition documented student work which bore evidence of the student-centered educational program. Rather than trying to bring each student to a preconceived ideal result, as traditional education in art and architecture had sought to do, the Bauhaus had concentrated on stimulating and nurturing the creative powers of each individual student.

Further comment on the last point is called for, since the Bauhaus has entered the arena of popular culture. Thanks to Tom Wolfe's derisive commentary on the Bauhaus and the mass-produced adapta-

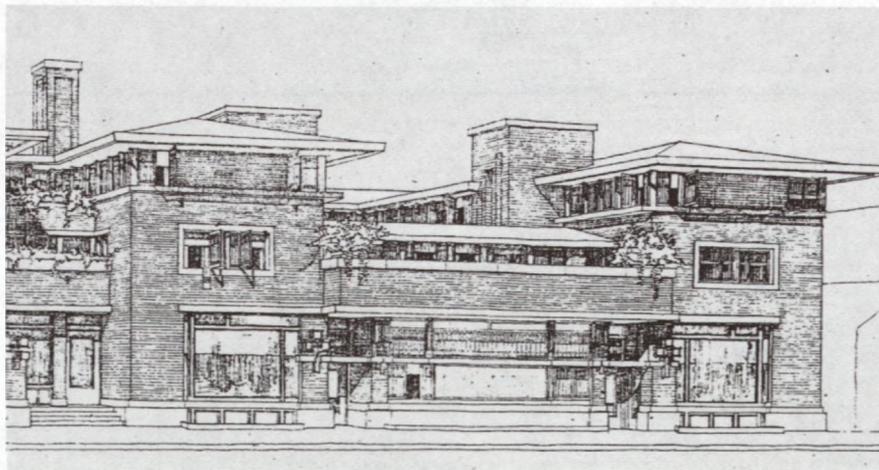


FIG. 10. Frank Lloyd Wright, detail of a Wasmuth rendering of a hotel-and-bank building in Mason City, Iowa, 1909.



FIG. 11. Gropius & Meyer, exhibition building, Cologne, 1914 (demolished), detail.

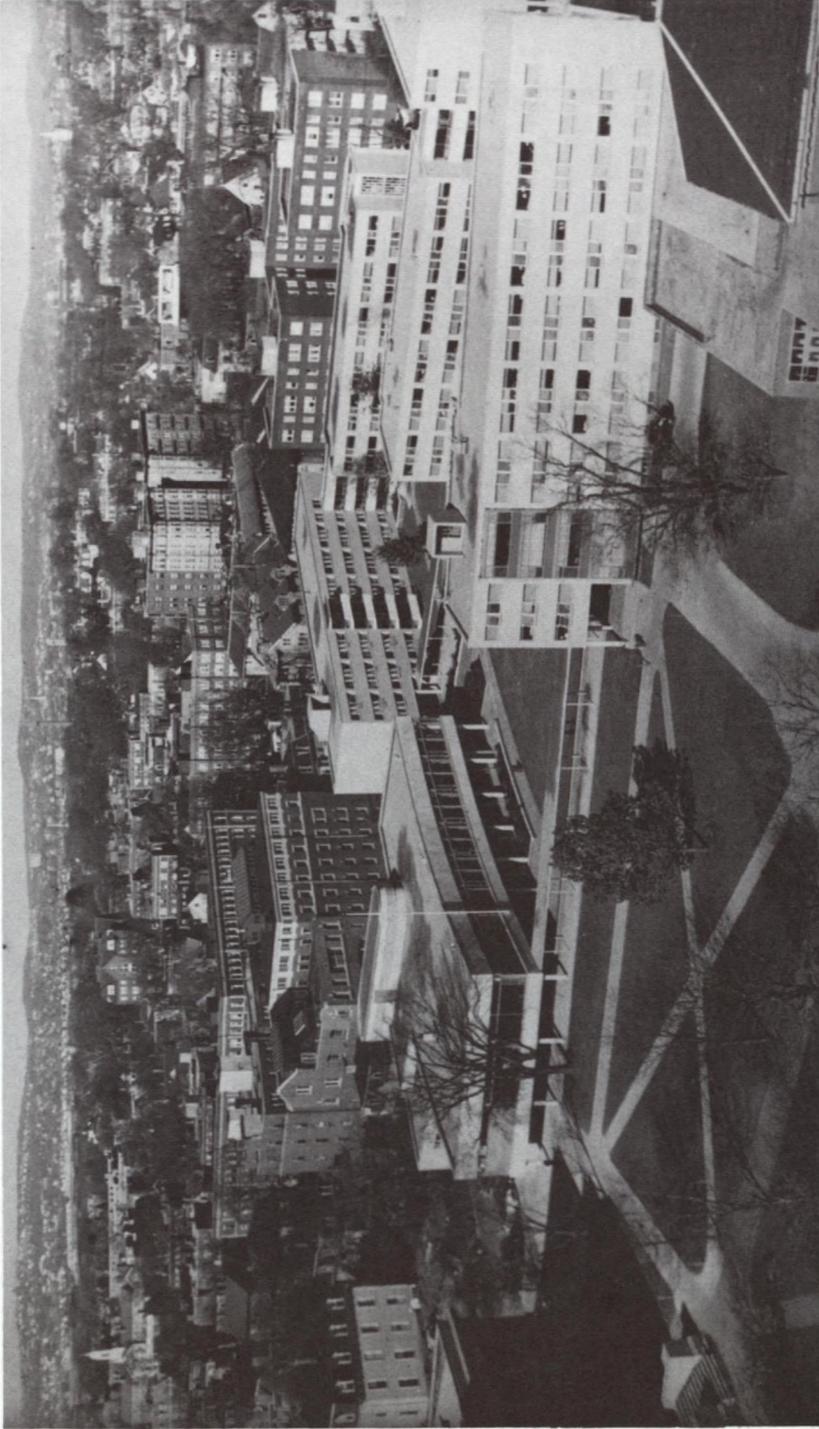


FIG. 13. Aerial photograph of buildings shown in Figure 12.

tions of Marcel Breuer's famed tubular-steel cantilever chairs, a general conception has arisen of a mythical Bauhaus, insisting on designs which did not stray from approved norms. I might add that this myth has been added to by a number of the apologists for the so-called "post-modern esthetic."¹⁶ Hence, it cannot be stressed too often that such exercises as the tactile chart (Figure 15), introduced as part of the *Vorkurs* or basic course at the Bauhaus, and continued by such American schools as the New Bauhaus in Chicago, were part of an open-ended attempt to avoid preconceived results. The students were asked to organize materials based on the sense of touch, and then draw (and sometimes photograph) the result. A similar approach was taken to photography. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, a teacher at the Bauhaus who later founded the New Bauhaus in Chicago, made a photo-collage, *Jealousy*, utilizing in an unexpected way a photograph of him made by his first wife, Lucia Moholy (Figure 16). Henry Holmes Smith, who taught photography at the New Bauhaus, made a photograph of discarded bait at nearby Lake Michigan (Figure 17), which he later used for his own collage, inspired by Moholy's work (Figure 18). Open-ended results of a different sort were achieved by New Bauhaus student Nathan Lerner, with his photographic study of an assemblage in an illuminated box (Figure 19), which inspired his sensitive and observant photograph, *Nuns on a Bridge* (Figure 20). In short, it is not too much to say that Bauhaus teaching methods shook up and opened up teaching practices at American schools of art, design, and architecture, and that Moholy's influence helped to loosen up American photography, and make it more creative, experimental, and open-ended.

Gropius could do little to document and interpret the history of the Bauhaus and its influence; he was preoccupied with his teaching and his work with TAC. In truth, little was done to supplement what was presented in the MOMA exhibition and the catalog which accompanied it, for many years. It was not until 1954, when the late Hans M. Wingler (1920-84), art historian, critic, curator, and archivist, became interested in the Bauhaus, that the era of modern Bauhaus scholarship began. Wingler's efforts provide the best example of two-way traffic, both figuratively and literally. Even early on he must have lost track of the number of round trips he made across the Atlantic.

Wingler had been earning his living as a lecturer and newspaper critic in Frankfurt am Main, when he was asked by Gebrüder Rasch, a wallpaper company, to write a book about the Bauhaus. The Rasch firm was interested in starting this project because they had begun producing wallpaper designs from the Bauhaus as early as the 1920s, and they still had some of these in production. Wingler agreed to write the book, but he did not at first realize the scope of the project he had begun. He made arrangements to travel to East Germany to visit Weimar and Dessau. With the help of Gropius, Wingler was invited by Harvard University to serve as research fellow in 1957 and again the following year.¹⁷ As a result of the contact with Gropius, then recently retired from the Harvard faculty but still active with TAC, Wingler became interested in the *amerikanische Nachfolge* of the Bauhaus, and he also decided that an

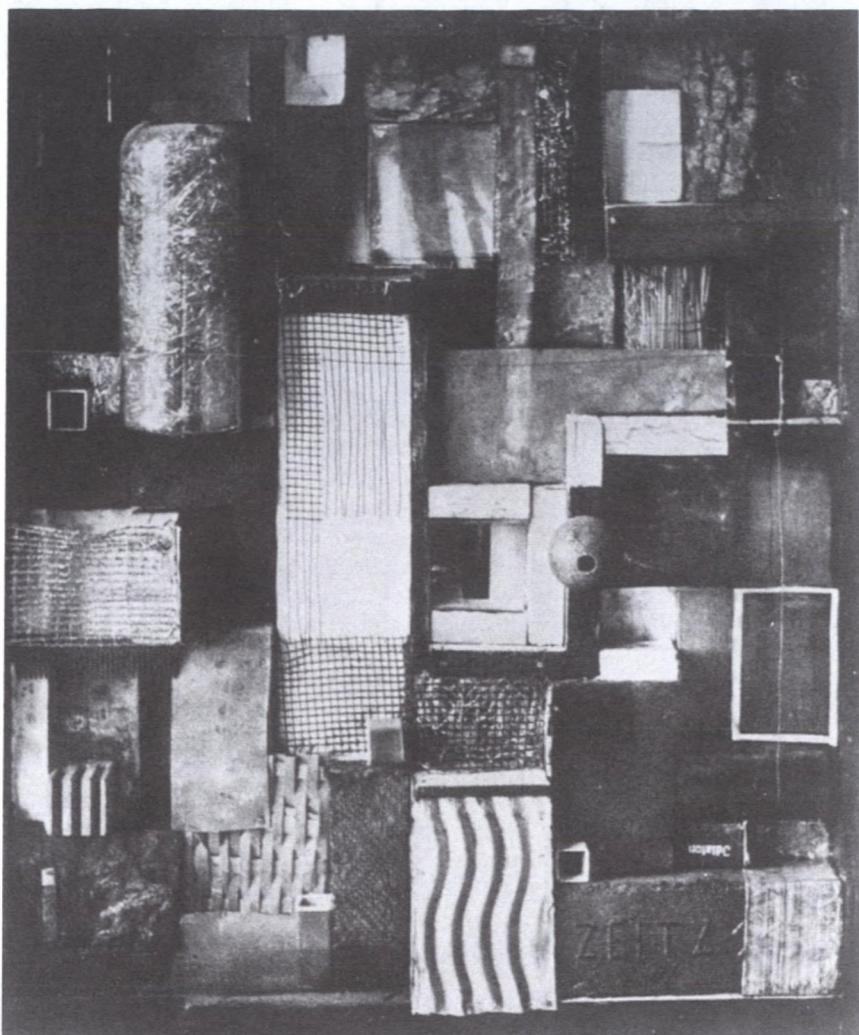


FIG. 15. Willi Dieckmann, tactile chart, made in class of Johannes Itten at the Bauhaus in Weimar, 1922.



FIG. 16. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, photo-collage, *Jealousy*, utilizing a photograph of him made by his first wife, Lucia Moholy, 1927.



FIG. 17. Henry Holmes Smith, *Discarded Bait*, photograph, 1938.

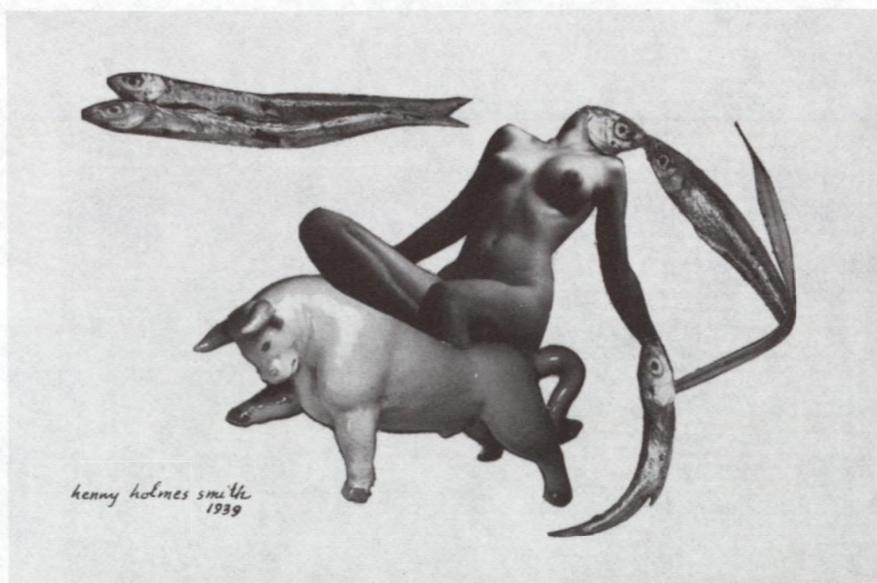


FIG. 18. Henry Holmes Smith, *Europa* photo-collage, 1939.

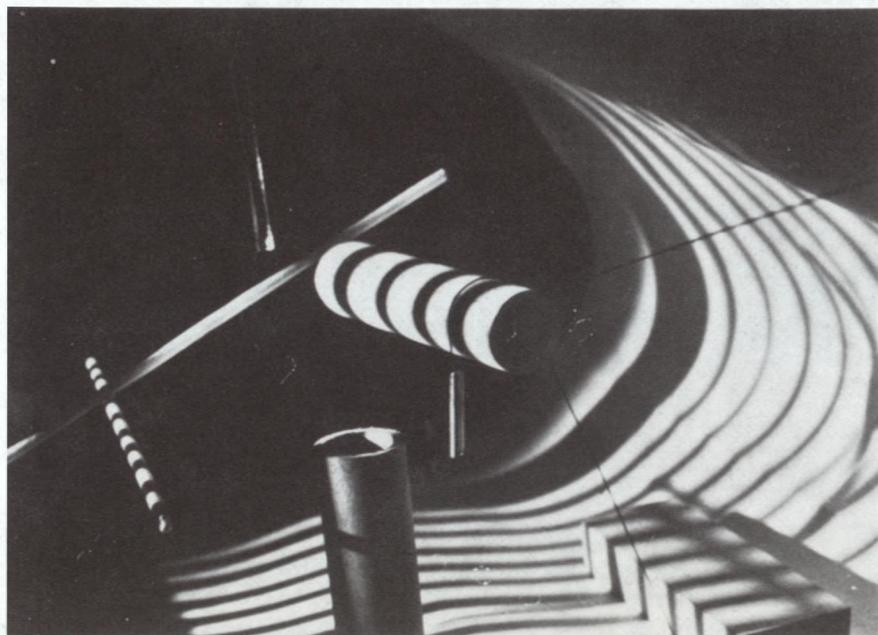


FIG. 19. Nathan Lerner, *Study in Light and Volume*, made with a light box, 1937.



FIG. 20. Nathan Lerner, *Nuns on a Bridge*, photograph, 1938.

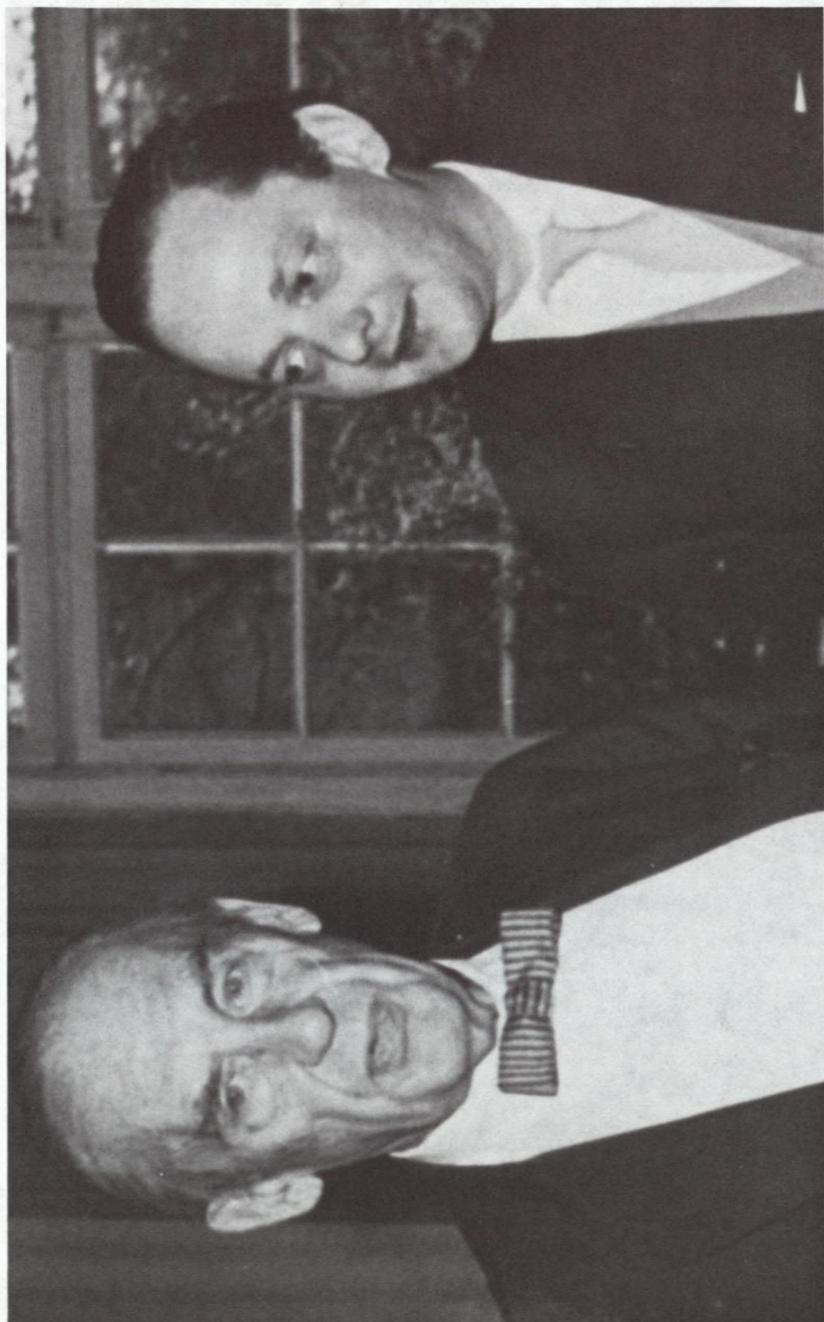


Fig. 21. Walter Gropius and Hans Wingler at the dedication of the Bauhaus-Archiv.



FIG. 22. G. Franziska Götz and Bettina Müller, poster for the exhibition, "50 Jahre New Bauhaus: Bauhaus-Nachfolge in Chicago," Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, 1987 (lithography: ORT, Berlin; printing: Ludwig Vogt, Berlin; original photograph, c. 1938, by William Keck).

archive specifically documenting the Bauhaus and its influence was necessary. This archive, which preceded the book for the Rasch firm, was founded in 1960 in the Ernst-Ludwig-Haus on the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt. Gropius, who had donated his personal archives for the project, was present at the official opening in 1961 (Figure 21).¹⁸

Wingler's book first appeared, in German, in 1962. An enlarged edition appeared in 1968 with a title reflecting expanded emphasis on American developments: *Das Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin und die Nachfolge in Chicago seit 1937*.¹⁹ The MIT Press brought out an edition in English in 1969,²⁰ and editions in Japanese, Italian and Spanish soon followed. An exhibition marking the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Bauhaus was seen in Stuttgart in 1969.²¹ Wingler helped to organize it, and as one result it was rich in related American material. It was later seen in other museums on three continents. Gropius had designed a building for the Bauhaus-Archiv in Darmstadt before his death in 1969. In 1971 the Bauhaus-Archiv moved to West Berlin, at the invitation of the Berlin Senate. The building which had been planned by Gropius was adapted by Alexander Cvijanovic of TAC for the new site and opened 1979.

As one legacy from Wingler, American material collected by him and his colleagues at the Bauhaus-Archiv now constitutes one of the most important archives of American material in Europe. Some of this material was gathered by Wingler personally on visits to the United States. An exhibition to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the New Bauhaus in Chicago was recently organized in Berlin. Without Wingler's pioneering efforts, such an exhibition would not have been feasible. It opened 7 November 1987 at the Bauhaus-Archiv with the title, "50 Jahre New Bauhaus: Bauhaus-Nachfolge in Chicago" (Figure 22).²²

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Notes

¹ A traveling exhibition, organized by Marjorie McClellan and George Talbot and presented by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, documenting six generations of the Krueger family, opened in Eagle, WI, 4 July 1982. *Six Generations Here*, a book based on the exhibition, is scheduled for publication in 1988.

² The best source of information on Leutze is Barbara S. Groseclose, *Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom Is the Only King* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975).

³ Groseclose, 36-41.

⁴ Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1935), 283-93 and passim; Paul E. Sprague, "Adler and Sullivan," in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: The Free Press, a division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), 1:34-35.

⁵ Morrison, *Sullivan*, 105-6; Roula Geraniotis, "Adler and Sullivan's Auditorium Theater and Its Relation to German Theater Design," *Abstracts of Papers Presented at the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, Minneapolis, April 25-29, 1984* (Philadelphia), unpagged; Lloyd C. Engelbrecht, "Adler & Sullivan's Pueblo

Opera House: City Status for a New Town in the Rockies," *Art Bulletin* 67, no. 2 (June 1985): 288.

⁶ Grant Carpenter Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First Golden Age* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958), 212.

⁷ Frank Lloyd Wright, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1910); Frank Lloyd Wright, *Ausgeführte Bauten* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth A.-G., 1911). The latter of these publications originally appeared in a slightly differing version as: "Frank Lloyd Wright, Chicago," *Architektur des XX. Jahrhunderts*, 8. Sonderheft (1911).

⁸ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1942).

⁹ Quoted in: William H. Jordy, "The Aftermath of the Bauhaus in America: Gropius, Mies and Breuer," in *The Intellectual Migration: America and Europe, 1930-1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 489.

¹⁰ William H. Jordy, *The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century, American Buildings and Their Architects*, vol. 4 (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), 250-51.

¹¹ Jordy, *The Impact of European Modernism*, 247-49.

¹² "Lake Shore Drive Apartments, Chicago," *Architects' Yearbook* 5 (1953): 162-69.

¹³ Sharon Darling, *Chicago Furniture: Art, Craft and Industry, 1833-1983* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 338-40.

¹⁴ Wolfgang Pehnt, "Gropius the Romantic," *Art Bulletin* 53, no. 3 (September 1971): 383 and note 25.

¹⁵ Winfried Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1985), 194-95.

¹⁶ The term "post-modern," a catch-phrase of the 1980s, has a history of its own; see, e.g., Joseph Hudnut, "The Post-Modern House," *Architectural Record* 97, no. 5 (May 1945): 70-75.

¹⁷ Interview with Heidi Wingler, widow of Hans M. Wingler, in Berlin, December 1985.

¹⁸ Hans M. Wingler, "Die Geschichte des Bauhaus-Archivs," in *Bauhaus Archiv-Museum: Sammlungs-Katalog (Auswahl): Architektur, Design, Malerei, Graphik, Kunstpädagogik*, ed. Hans M. Wingler (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1981), 295-98; Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1976), 572-73.

¹⁹ Hans M. Wingler, *Das Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin und die Nachfolge in Chicago seit 1937*, 2d ed. (Bramsche/Cologne: Verlag Gebr. Rasch & Co./M. DuMont Schauberg, 1968).

²⁰ Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969).

²¹ Wulf Herzogenrath, *50 Jahre Bauhaus* (Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein, 1968).

²² Peter Hahn and Lloyd C. Engelbrecht, ed. *50 Jahre New Bauhaus: Bauhaus-Nachfolge in Chicago* (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1987). Exhibition catalog, Bauhaus-Archiv.