

Gartenarchitektur und Moderne in Deutschland im frühen 20. Jahrhundert

Drei Beiträge

**Gartenarchitektur und Moderne in Deutschland
im frühen 20. Jahrhundert
– Drei Beiträge**

Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn

**The Avantgarde and Garden Architecture in Germany.
On a forgotten phenomenon of the Weimar period**

Ulrich Müller

Die Gartenkunst am Bauhaus

Peter Fibich

**Georg Pniower (1896 – 1960)
Ein Vertreter der Moderne**

Vorwort des Herausgebers

Das Zentrum für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur (CGL) wurde im Juni 2002 durch Beschluss des Senats der Universität Hannover als fachbereichsübergreifende Einrichtung der Universität ins Leben gerufen. Wichtigste Aufgaben des Forschungszentrums, das in dieser Form einzigartig in Deutschland ist, sind unter anderem die Forschung und Forschungsförderung in den Bereichen Geschichte der Gartenkunst und Gartendenkmalpflege, auf dem Gebiet zeitgenössischer Landschaftsarchitektur und an den Schnittstellen zwischen Landschaftsarchitektur, Städtebau und Architektur.

Darüber hinaus heißt es in der Ordnung des CGL zu den Aufgaben: „Neben der im engeren Sinne fachwissenschaftlichen und insbesondere der interdisziplinären Forschung widmet sich das CGL der Vermittlung der Forschungsergebnisse an die Öffentlichkeit durch Publikationen, Vortragsreihen, Ausstellungen etc.“.¹ Besondere Bedeutung bei der Vermittlung von Forschungsergebnissen an die Öffentlichkeit kommt der neu ins Leben gerufenen Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur, CGL-Studies, zu.

Die im Januar 2006 erschienenen Bände 1 und 2 der CGL-Studies sind Themen aus dem engeren Feld der Geschichte der Gartenkunst gewidmet. Inken Formann untersuchte in ihrer Dissertation „Vom Gartenlandt so den Conventualinnen gehört“ die Gartenkultur der norddeutschen Frauenklöster.² Bianca Rinaldis Studie *The „Chinese Garden in Good Taste“. Jesuits and Europe’s Knowledge of Chinese Flora and Art of the Garden in the 17th and 18th Centuries*³ diskutiert den Einfluss der in China im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert tätigen Jesuiten auf die europäische Gartenkunst.

Der Vermittlung von Forschungsergebnissen an die Öffentlichkeit dient aber auch die gelegentliche Publikation von Vorträgen und anderen Arbeiten in Form von Broschüren. Ein erstes Ergebnis war die Herausgabe der Kurzfassung einer Diplomarbeit unter dem Titel „Landschaftsarchitektur seit den 1970er Jahren am Beispiel der Arbeiten Richard Bödekers“, die maßgeblich auf der Grundlage von Archivmaterial verfasst werden konnte, das dem CGL durch den Landschaftsarchitekten Richard Bödeker zur Verfügung gestellt worden ist.⁴

¹ Ordnung des Zentrums für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur der Universität Hannover, hochschulöffentlich bekannt gemacht am 24. Juli 2002, zit. nach: Zentrum für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur (CGL), Bericht 2002, 2003, 2004, Hannover, 2004, S. 99

² Inken Formann, „Vom Gartenlandt so den Conventualinnen gehört“. Die Gartenkultur der evangelischen Frauenklöster und Damenstifte in Norddeutschland, CGL-Studies. Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur (CGL) der Universität Hannover, Band 1, Meidenbauer-Verlag, München, 2006

³ Bianca Rinaldi, *The „Chinese Garden in Good Taste“. Jesuits and Europe’s Knowledge of Chinese Flora and Art of the Garden in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, CGL-Studies. Schriftenreihe des Zentrums für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur (CGL) der Universität Hannover, Band 2, Meidenbauer-Verlag, München, 2006

⁴ Dominik Geilker, Saudi-Arabien. Landschaftsarchitektur seit den 1970er Jahren am Beispiel der Arbeiten Richard Bödekers, Zentrum für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur (Hg.), Hannover 2005. Die Broschüre wurde in einer deutschsprachigen und einer englischsprachigen Version aufgelegt. Die Diplomarbeit wurde durch D. Geilker am Institut für Landschaftsarchitektur der Universität Hannover, betreut von Prof. Dr. Udo Weilacher und vom Autor, erarbeitet.



Die hier vorliegende zweite Broschüre ist einem Themenkomplex gewidmet, dem in der jüngeren Geschichte der Landschaftsarchitektur national und international besondere Bedeutung zukommt – modernen und avantgardistischen Tendenzen bei der Gestaltung von Gärten. Drei Vorträge in den Vortragsreihen des CGL der vergangenen Jahre waren entsprechenden fachlichen Zusammenhängen gewidmet, so dass es nahe lag, diese in einer Broschüre zusammenzufassen und damit einer breiteren interessierten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Der Verfasser referierte im Juli 2003 zum Thema „Avantgarde und Gartenarchitektur in Deutschland im frühen 20. Jahrhundert“. Die Vorträge von PD Dr. Ulrich Müller, Friedrich Schiller-Universität Jena, „Die Gartenkunst am Bauhaus“ im Februar 2005, und von Dr. Peter Fibich, zu „Georg Pniower – ein Vertreter der Moderne“ im Januar 2005 wurden begleitend zu der Ausstellung „Georg Pniower [1896-1960], Landschaftsarchitekt der Moderne“ veranstaltet. Diese Aus-

stellung war von P. Fibich im Auftrag des CGL konzipiert worden. Sie konnte inzwischen nach der Eröffnung in den Räumen des CGL an der Universität Hannover auch an der Akademie der Künste in Berlin sowie bei der Stiftung Bauhaus in Dessau präsentiert werden. Fragen der Moderne in der Gartengestaltung soll auch in Zukunft besonderes Interesse am CGL gewidmet werden. Der Vorstand des CGL würde sich freuen, wenn die vorliegende Broschüre die Diskussion um diese Thematik und damit auch zukünftige Forschungen anregen könnte. Das diesbezügliche Forschungsdesiderat scheint uns sowohl in Bezug auf historische Entwicklungen in Deutschland wie auch auf einer internationalen Ebene noch erheblich zu sein.

Hannover, den 13. Januar 2006

Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn
(für den Vorstand des CGL)

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Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn

The Avantgarde and Garden Architecture in Germany. On a forgotten phenomenon of the Weimar period

Acknowledgements

In composing this article I wish to express my gratitude to Stephen Mansbach for his stimulating collaboration on a round table on ‚Avant-garde and Garden Design‘ organised in 1994 by the Center for the Advanced Study of Visual Arts (CASVA) of the National Gallery, Washington D.C. and Studies in Landscape Architecture, Dumbarton Oaks / Trustees for Harvard University.

Mic Hale I would like to thank for his excellent and sensitive translation of this article and for continuing a fruitful collaboration.

This paper is a slightly revised version of an article firstly published in *Centropa*. A journal of Central European architecture and related arts (May 2004). The May 2004 issue of *Centropa* was dedicated to central European landscape design and garden history in the 20th century with a special focus on modernism. A special thanks goes to Dr. Dora Wiebenson, the editor of *Centropa*, who not only invited Prof. Dr. Steven Mansbach and the author to guest-edit this issue but who also gave permission to re-publish this article.

This article addresses an aspect of the recent history of garden culture on which research has only just begun: avant-garde trends in garden design in Germany during the period of the Weimar Republic, and their eradication under National Socialism. Approaches to the avant-garde movement of the 1920s are of particular importance, showing as they do the variety of ideas on garden design that evolved in the brief period of the Weimar Republic and what dreadful consequences the rise of National Socialism had for garden architecture. The diversity of creative approaches was shattered and the continuance of only those design concepts which did not contradict the dominant ideological aims were permitted.¹

Avantgarde trends during the 1920s were preceded by heated debates about the future of garden design among garden architects, architects and artists. The stereotype application of the feudal landscape garden to the smaller bourgeois house garden in the second half of the nineteenth century was replaced by, for example, the concept of the garden as continuation of the house and as such consisting

¹ On the development of advanced concepts within garden architecture in Germany during the Imperial period, the Weimar Republic and its destruction under National Socialism see e.g. Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1887-1987, DGGL Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst und Landschaftspflege e.V. Ein Rückblick auf 100 Jahre DGGL. vol. 10. Berlin. 1987. pp. 27-58; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, „The Peculiar Garden‘ - The Advent and the Destruction of Modernism in German Garden Design,“ Robin Karson (ed.), *The Modern Garden in Europe and the United States*, Proceedings of the Garden Conservancy Symposium. New York. 1993, *Masters of American Garden Design III*. Cold Spring, N.Y., 1994. pp. 17-30.

of various garden rooms. That, consequently, lead to formal modes of garden design. After 1900 one can find in German garden design attempts to create a Jugendstil garden, to develop expressionist garden design,² or to introduce modern technology into the garden. Concepts of natural garden design also flourished in Germany, beginning in 1900 with a series of articles in *Die Gartenwelt* by landscape architect³ Willy Lange.⁴

In the 1920s then, about a decade after its beginning in architecture, some garden architects applied avant-garde ideas to garden design. The following investigation of relationships between avant-garde movements and garden design in Germany is not intended to imply that there was a broadly based avant-garde influence within garden architecture. In this respect there seem to have been more advanced developments in France, for example.⁵ Those avant-garde influences, however, that can be described in garden architecture under the Weimar Republic reflect remarkable attempts to transfer avant-garde ideas to a lexicon of landscape architec-

ture. They are closely interwoven with the conceptions of 'Neue Sachlichkeit' (new objectivity) school and with those of the 'Neues Bauen' architectural movement. This article makes no pretensions of offering a comprehensive discussion of the topic, being rather intended as a call to consider the issues further.

On the term 'avant-garde'

'Avant-garde' originates in military terminology as the forward parties of an army (in English, 'vanguard').⁶ It thus referred to those who were in the front rank, exploring what could be expected from the near future and where developments - in the military sense - could lead. It was only later that the term entered modern usage in the sense of 'pioneers or innovators in any art in a particular period'.⁷ Olinde Rodriguez, a pupil of the social utopian Saint-Simon, wrote a fictive dialogue in 1825 entitled "The Artist, the Scholar and the Industrialist." At that time Rodriguez could not have surmised how epochal his piece was to prove. In the dialogue he had the artist

² On expressionism in German garden architecture see Peter Fibich and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Garden Expressionism". Remarks on a Historical Debate, in: *Garden History. Journal of the Garden History Society*, 33 (2005), 1, 106-117

³ For a better understanding for an American audience I use in the following the term landscape architect. In Germany during the first half of the twentieth century this term was not in use but such terms as garden architect, garden artist and garden designer.

⁴ On natural garden design in Germany see Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn and Gert Gröning, "The ideology of the nature garden. Nationalistic trends in garden design in Germany during the early twentieth century," *Journal of Garden History*. vol. 12. 1992. no. 1. pp. 73-80. On developments in the early twentieth century in German garden architecture see also Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, "Germany," Candice Shoemaker (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Gardens. History and Design*. vol. 2. Chicago / London. 2001. 512-523. Regarding biographical information on German landscape architects mentioned in this paper see Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Grüne Biographien. Biographisches Handbuch der Landschaftsarchitektur in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*, Patzer Verlag, Berlin / Hannover, 1997

⁵ See in this connection Dorothée Imbert, *The Modernist Garden in France*. London. 1993.

⁶ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 7th edition

⁷ *ibid.*

say: „We artists will serve as the avant-garde. The influence of the artist is indisputably the most direct and swift. We possess every kind of weapon [...] We exercise an electrifying and triumphal influence. We speak to the imagination and emotions of the human race.”⁸

When applied to the landscape architecture of the early 20th century this quotation may sound exaggerated, but some avant-garde garden designs in Germany really did have an electrifying effect and spoke to the emotions of many garden architects – even if they appear to have provoked more feelings of revulsion than of anything else.

The avant-garde and architecture

Internationally, avant-garde ideas of art, architecture and town planning were depicted in numerous, nowadays mostly long-forgotten magazines such as ABC, with discussions of „Neues Bauen“. As a general characteristic of the avant-garde movement in art and architecture, one can discern a tendency to reject emotional relationships with nature and naturalistic forms of representation and creation. This may be a central reason why the avant-garde was never really anchored within garden architecture and why only scattered fragments of avant-garde garden designs from the 1920s are to be found.

Stephen Mansbach describes this attitude of the avant-garde to landscape architecture as follows: „The avant-garde of the early

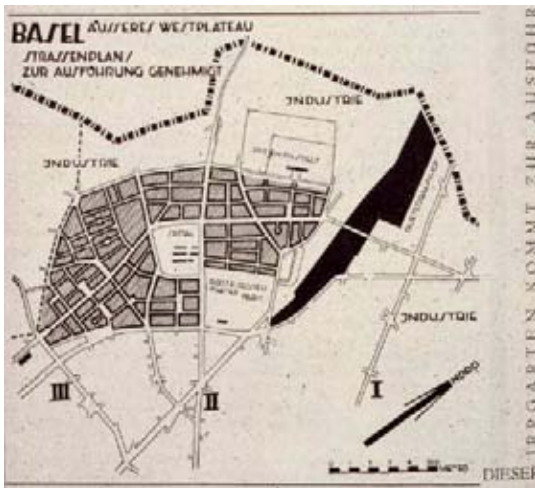
twentieth century took ‚nature‘ seriously. However, the artists‘ understanding of the concept, historical associations, and contemporary implications of ‚nature‘ led them to abjure its value for modern man and the ideated society, which they affirmed as rational, international, and deterministic. Indeed, visionary artists from Russia to Holland and well beyond recognised and rejected nature as inconsistent with their utopian project to ‚breed a new world‘ far different in character, richer in its rewards, and more consonant with what avant-garde understood as universal human aspirations. This rejection of nature by modernist artists, architects, and their theoretical apologists was absolute. It was reflected in the opposition of architecture to landscape; in the embrace of ‚non-natural‘ materials, colors, forms and methods, of ‚constructing‘; and ultimately in a comprehensive, if often contradictory, redefinition of the meaning, form, and use of ‚nature‘ for modern art and life. Within this avant-garde environment, then, garden design was necessarily suspect. Only when it renounced its history, abjured arbitrariness, and avoided emotion was it acceptable.”⁹

This attitude was expressed most clearly by members of the Italian Futurist movement. For them garden art -- contrary to architecture -- played no role at all, as has been discussed recently by Sonja Dümpelmann in her doctoral thesis on Italian garden architect Maria Theresa Parpagliolo Shephard.¹⁰

⁸ Quoted from Alois Martin Müller, *Letzte Truppenschau*, in the supplement to a reprint of *Die Kunstisten* 1914–1924, Hans Arp & El Lissitzky (eds.), Munich/Leipzig 1925. reprint Baden 1990.

⁹ Stephen A. Mansbach, introduction to the Round Table on „Avant-garde and Garden Design,“ CASVA, National Gallery, and Studies in Landscape, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C., February 1994. unpublished manuscript.

¹⁰ Sonja Dümpelmann, *Maria Teresa Parpagliolo Shephard (1903–1974). Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der Gartenkultur in Italien im 20. Jahrhundert*, doctoral thesis, University of Fine Arts Berlin. Berlin. 2002. p. 49f.



1 Bestandsplan des äußeren Westplateaus in Basel (ABC,)



2 Entwicklungskonzept für das äußere Westplateau (ABC,)

The futurists' rejection of an emotional attitude to nature became obvious in a 1924 manifesto by Fedele Azari. In 1915 the artists Giacomo Ballà and Fortunato Depero had promoted the creation of an „artificial landscape by a „futurist new construction of the universe.“ In 1924 Azari composed the manifesto „La flora futurista ed equivalenti plastici di odori artificiali.“ With his manifesto Azari „pleaded for the creation of artificial flowers with intense, shining, pure colours, dynamic forms, and with intense synthetic odor. The manifesto not only is a plea against the Jugendstil and any use of floral ornament, but also against any romantic mode of design, based on emotions, in the decorative arts.“¹¹

This attitude of the avant-garde to nature and the resultant relationship with gardens will be illustrated in what follows by examples taken from the ABC magazine. Published from 1924 to 1928, ABC focused explicitly on architecture and town planning – topics, then, which stand in direct relationship to open space forms such as gardens, roof terraces, parks and other amenities. In the issues of these years there is, however, an almost total absence of references to gardens and nature; garden design per se is not discussed.

What is probably the earliest mention of the term „garden“ in ABC carries a clear negative connotation: in issue 1, 1924, in which, under the title, „The Chaos in Urban Construction“ (Das Chaos im Städtebau) an approved street layout for the „äußere Westplateau“ development in Basel drew the comment: „This labyrinth, this mad garden, is to be built.“¹² The ‚labyrinthine‘ plan is juxtaposed in the same article with a design following functionally formal principles (Figs. 1 und 2).

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 49f.

¹² anon, „Das Chaos im Städtebau,“ ABC. no. 1. 1924.

A further example of a specific relationship to nature in ABC is the photograph of a dandelion seed head – probably the only picture of a truly natural object in the whole magazine (Fig. 3). It is presented with a brief text entitled „Gestalten = Form“ (arrangement = form). From the opening sentence it is clear that the plant is reduced to its technical dimensions and the optimal form with regard to its functional aspects: „A stem, round and hollow – the most robust cross-section – rising as high into the wind as its strength permits; topped by a sphere – the closest possible arrangement of many seeds placed densely in a cushion [...]. Form is the expression of a duty fulfilled, nothing but a means: impious, cruelly abandoned to disintegration, to transformation after its purpose has been fulfilled. Constant, and incomprehensible to us, is the shaping will; the form only reiterant – always in the service of the same duty, bound to the same materials.“¹³

In a later issue under the heading, „Modernes Bauen 1,“ the following assertions were made on modern building:

„Modern building replaces

1. the craft with the mechanical
2. the mood-governed, individualistic, with the collective and normalised
3. the serendipitous with the exact ...

In place of the charm of the chance and romance of old building methods, the exactly organised new building system will gain ascendancy.“¹⁴ Further: „Modern building will arrive at new systems; it follows the dictates of the economy. The architect addresses the task – untrammelled by the aesthetic tradition – disburdened of the striving for formal beauty – and provides the elemental, correct solution.“¹⁵



3 Pusteblume als technisches Objekt (ABC,)

¹³ ABC, no. 2. 1924.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

In an article from 1925, „Modernes Bauen 2,” the relationship between modern art and nature is defined: „Modern art will consciously make use of elements from nature; thus it will not act against nature. Creation is governed by two lines of movement, the vertical and the horizontal [...] Vertical and horizontal give architecture the right angle, that will always dominate the structure. These elemental basic laws will, in conjunction with a number of other rules, be brought to clear expression in the modern system of building.”¹⁶ The garden of architect Ernst May in Frankfurt at the Main river can perhaps be seen as expression of these ideas (Fig. 4).

Avant-garde trends in the design of gardens in Germany

These quotations from ABC also point to the design principles that determined the few examples of avant-garde designs of gardens in Germany. In what follows some examples of garden design will be presented that may be regarded as shaped by avant-garde ideas. Of the available examples by German landscape architects no real, extant gardens will be presented here, I can only discuss designs. Whether these examples were realised cannot for the moment be determined.¹⁷

A particularly interesting example is the „Sonderbarer Garten” (The Peculiar Garden) (Figs.

5 and 6) by Hans Friedrich Pohlentz.¹⁸ Pohlentz was among the most enthusiastically experimental garden designers of the Weimar period. In the early 1920s he worked in the Baumschule Späth practice in Berlin, was working in Hamburg two years later, moved to the Rothe company in Berlin and after 1926 was working as a garden architect in Berlin and Duisburg. In 1932 he moved to Switzerland and in 1934 to Italy.¹⁹ Pohlentz designed his „Sonderbarer Garten” for the „Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin” (unadjudicated art show) in 1925. Its very title was, as it were, part of the avant-garde manifesto, a provocation to some contemporary garden architects. The design itself clearly reflects avant-garde design principles as articulated in ABC in 1925: „In the modern design, deliberate, conscious organisation supersedes the role of natural adaptation [...] modern art will consciously help itself to elements taken from nature [...] The creation is governed by two directions of movement, the vertical and the horizontal [...] Vertical and horizontal give architecture the right angle, that will constantly dominate the structure.”

Pohlentz’s garden thus represents more of a rational construction than a romantic, naturalistic design. The shaping elements are cubic forms and colours. Plants appear no longer as individual trees, shrubs and flowers, but exclusively as space-creating forms and cubes.²⁰

¹⁶ „Modernes Bauen 2,” ABC. no. 3/4. 1925.

¹⁷ Art historian Ulrich Müller discussed in a recently published article fascinating examples of executed designs by, e.g., architect Walter Gropius and landscape architect Heinz Wichmann (see in more detail Ulrich Müller, „Der Garten des Hauses Auerbach,” *Die Gartenkunst*. vol. 11. 1999. no. 1.

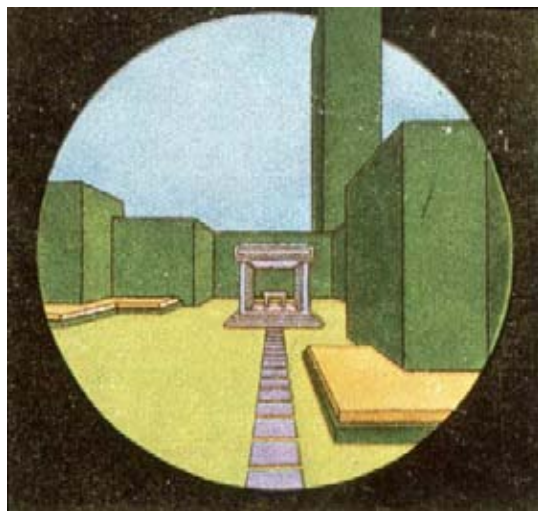
¹⁸ See also Gröning and Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1987. p. 41; Wolschke-Bulmahn 1994. pp. 17 & 20ff.

¹⁹ Cf. Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Grüne Biographien: Biographisches Handbuch zur Landschaftsarchitektur des 20. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*. Berlin/Hannover. 1997. p. 297.

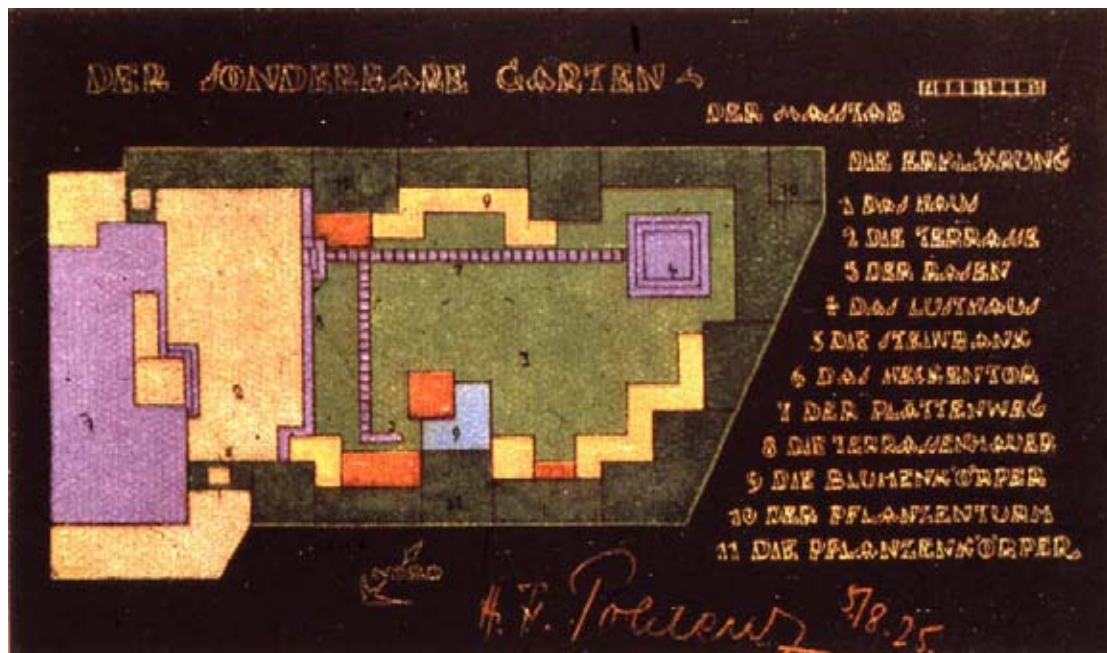
²⁰ Perhaps the ABC statement, „Modern art will consciously make use of elements from nature; thus it will not act against nature,” can be called, at least, partly into question. Because „not act against nature!” could also mean to let plants grow into their natural forms.



4 Garden of architect Ernst May in Frankfurt



6 „The Peculiar Garden,” design sketch by Hans Friedrich Pohlenz for the Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin 1925 (Die Gartenkunst, vol. 39, 1926)



5 „The Peculiar Garden,” plan by Hans Friedrich Pohlenz for the Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin 1925 (Die Gartenkunst, vol. 39, 1926)



7 „Kristallberg," a design sketch by Gustav Allinger (Gartenkunst, vol. 37, 1924)

Pohlentz's garden unmistakably reflects the same creative principles as numerous works of contemporary architecture, such as those by members of the Dutch „De Stijl" group like Theo van Doesburg and C. van Eesteren or the „Haus Schröder" in Utrecht by Gerrit Thomas Rietveld.

Some of the works entered in the 1925 „Juryfreie Kunstschau Berlin" were discussed the following year in the *Die Gartenkunst* magazine. The reviewer, Fritz Wilhelm Schönfeld, made clear the difficulties that he had with the „Sonderbarer Garten," and revealed a markedly ambivalent attitude to Pohlentz's design. He did not dismiss modern art per se, but set Pohlentz's work in a negative context by, completely unjustifiably, comparing it with Gustav Allinger's expressionistic experiment with a „Kristallberg" (Fig. 7). Schönfeld on Pohlentz: „When, in his work ‚Der Sonderbare Garten', he forms part of the earth in such a way that not many people can recognise the form as emerging from the organic, then we must attempt to get to the bottom of this idea. The expressionist period, nowadays regarded by many as behind us, has undoubtedly encouraged parallel creations to this garden. I assume that Allinger's ‚Kristallberg', with all its graphic failings, is really intended as no more than a lyrical paper bagatelle by an indubitably sure real creator. It is right and proper to dismiss the slogans of expressionism."²¹

Indeed, there were some expressionist trends in German garden design in the 1920s, such garden architects as Gustav Allinger and Georg Pniower may be mentioned in this context.

²¹ Fritz Wilhelm Schönfeld, „Kritische Betrachtungen über drei Hausgärten (Pohlentz – Hübötter – Valentien),“ *Die Gartenkunst*. no. 39. 1926, p. 36.

In conclusion, however, Schönfeld praises the „dignified impression“ made by Pohlenz's „Sonderbarer Garten,“ recognising it as a contribution to the quest for a garden that would coexist with the architecture of the „Neues Bauen“ movement as follows: „It is clear to me that there may not be any slackening in the attempt to give the Gropiushaus (i.e., the Bauhaus movement) a garden of its own to which it is fundamentally attuned. On the other hand, this garden suits this house and no other. It is a garden for those who love the Gropiushaus, and it gives these owners an idea of how they and their successors could bring a garden for this house to fulfilment. For this reason I do not brand this garden a degenerate child of the times, times in which many a soulless, irresponsible and bizarre creation is claimed as evidence of a new spirit.“²²

This last remark of Schönfeld heralds the National Socialist era under which many critics disqualified certain art as degenerate and whose critiques contributed to the destruction of works of art and the defamation and professional and social isolation of their creators. A further example that would indicate Pohlenz's familiarity with avant-garde design principles is his design for the „Wasserscheiben Brunnen“ (water disk fountain) shown in the *Die Gartenschönheit* magazine in 1927 (Fig. 8). Here, too, one finds the same playing with geometrical forms. A 1924 sculpture by Vantongerloo (Fig. 9) and Walter Flexel's „Farbige Lichtsäule II“ (coloured light column II) (Fig. 10) show astonishing similarities to Pohlenz's use of cubic forms and indicate that

he was closely associated with these avant-garde design trends.

As a model, Pohlenz had taken an old fountain in Meersburg on the Bodensee and translated it into a modern language of form. He described his design intentions as follows: „In Meersburg on the Bodensee there stands an old fountain; a female figure holds her arms outstretched at head height, and a sheet of water plays between her hands. The jets spring from her palms. I have used this motif, divested of its romanticism, in a fountain for the Bergisches Land.“²³

To disrobe garden design of romanticism was the avant-garde credo, and one of the main motives of a small group of garden designers in Germany to which the landscape architect Heinz Wichmann also belonged. Wichmann's significance for avantgarde trends in German garden design has long been overlooked.²⁴ Wichmann, as has been discussed by Müller, was affiliated with the Bauhaus in Weimar. In 1924 he wrote a memorandum in which he suggested to establish a garden design class at the Bauhaus. Leading representatives of the Bauhaus such as Walter Gropius, Wassily Kandinski, Paul Klee, and Oskar Schlemmer welcomed Wichmann's proposal, which, however, could not be realized.²⁵

In 1924 Wichmann described his design for a garden for a private house thus: „The garden presented here is an attempt to build a true house garden – a garden as extension of the house, that one builds like the house and that has grown organically with the house“²⁶ (Fig. 11).

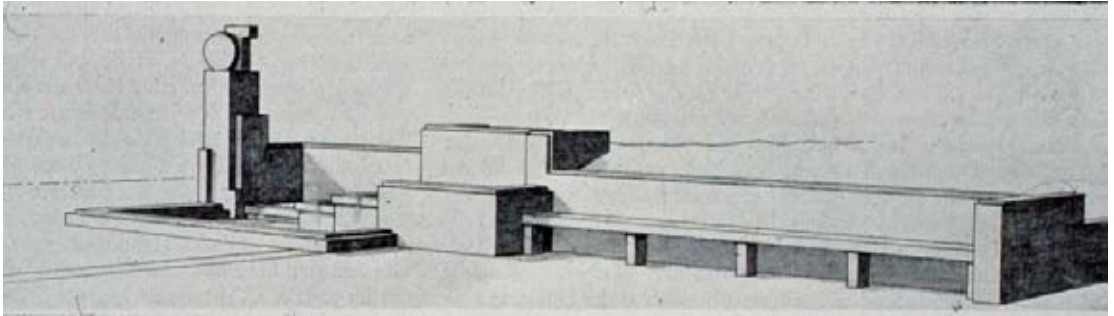
²² *ibid.*, p. 42.

²³ Cf. Hans Friedrich Pohlenz, „Ein Wasserscheiben-Brunnen,“ *Die Gartenschönheit*. no. 8. 1927. p. 159.

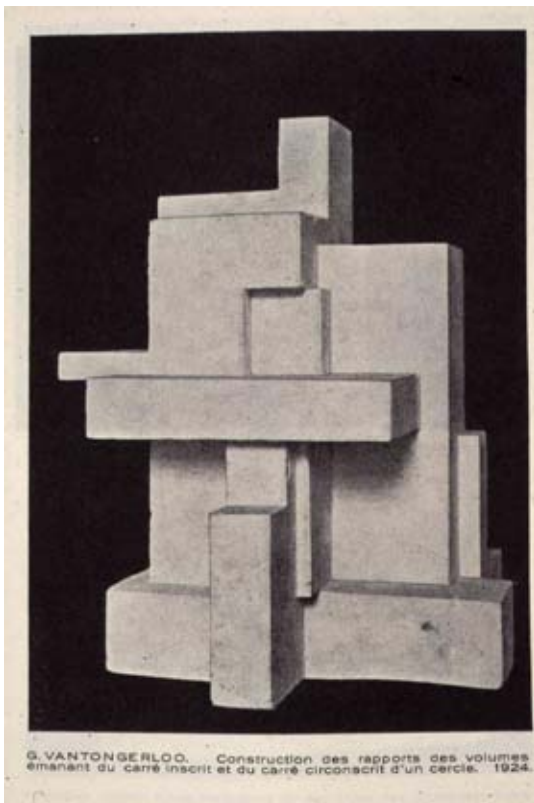
²⁴ See also Gröning / Wolschke-Bulmahn. 1997. p. 413f.

²⁵ Cf. Müller. 1999. p. 109.

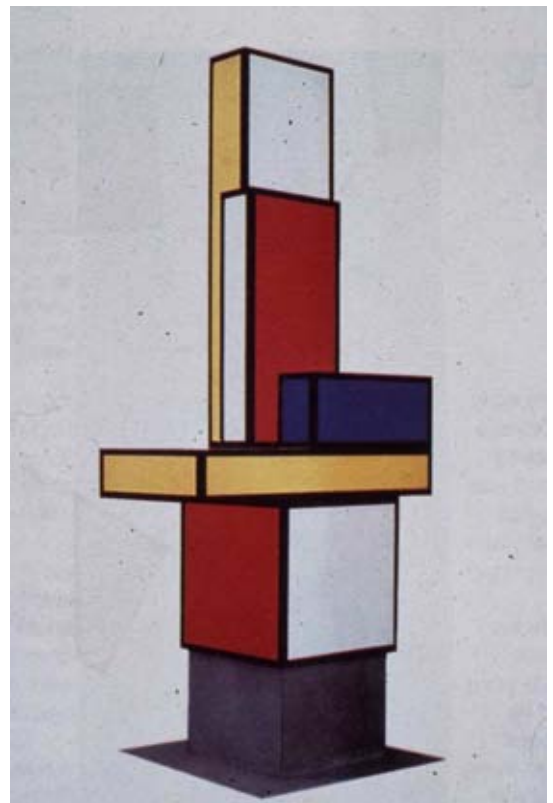
²⁶ Cf. Heinz Wichmann, „Ein Wohngarten,“ *Die Gartenschönheit*. no. 5. 1924. p. 169.



8 Hans Friedrich Pohlentz, „Wasserscheiben-Brunnen“ (water disk fountain) (Die Gartenschönheit, vol. 8, 1927)



9 Sculpture by George Vantongerloo (ABC, no. 2, 1926)



10 Farbige Leuchtsäule II (Coloured Light Column II) by Walter Dexel

Wichmann's explanatory notes to the „Heidegarten" (heath garden) (Fig. 12), one of the garden rooms in this design, clarify his anti-romanticist approach as set against traditional garden design, in that he expressly distances himself from the romanticist attitude to heath garden designs: „An abstract sculpture in the little garden ensures that the picture is not comparable to that of a sentimental interpretation of the heath garden idea."²⁷ A Heidegarten designed by the Späth firm in the 1930s (Fig. 13) may elucidate the differences between an avantgarde and a romantic interpretation of this garden motive.

Avantgarde garden designers juxtaposed the organic forms of gardens, which they criticised as romantic, with their often abundant vegetation arranged in a picturesque way with gardens designed in a formal, functional way. They avoided organic forms and arrangements of plants that could be interpreted as natural and could evoke sentimental feelings.

Such efforts to divest garden design of its romanticism, to offer a critique of sentimental heath gardens and juxtapose them with other interpretations of the heath garden idea were, in the heyday of the ‚Heideromantik' pastoral movement in literature and landscape painting, certainly avant-garde. The political resonance of garden design statements by Wichmann, Pohlenz and others should not be over-interpreted, but could in my estimation be understood as an attempt to deliberately address, by artistic means, the conservative and reactionary political tendencies in garden

architecture. In the National Socialist era, only the traditional ideas of gardens were to prevail.

A design by landscape architect Heinrich Schmitz for a philosopher's garden can also be placed in this category (Fig. 14). Schmitz described the brief from his client as follows: „Strictly ordered into the furthest corner, it was to be no ordinary domestic garden with all its little features. Soft contours were hated by the client; the lines thus are hard and severe. Despite this, the impression created by the entire grounds is ameliorated by the plantings, as the drawing technique indicates."²⁸ A similar interpretation of modern garden design to Pohlenz's can be described: plants are no longer recognisable as single trees, shrubs or flowers but essentially as masses, definers of space and cubes.

Avant-garde garden design in France

In France, avant-garde artists appear to have addressed the garden theme more intensively.²⁹ This can be deduced, for example, from the show gardens of G. Guevrekian and the concrete trees of Mallet Stevens (Fig. 15). Lastly, a garden planned by the French architect André Lurcat is presented here that is remarkable, less because of its design than because of the reactions it provoked in Germany, thus shedding light on the anti-modernist trends within garden architecture in Germany that eventually paved the way for National Socialism within the profession.

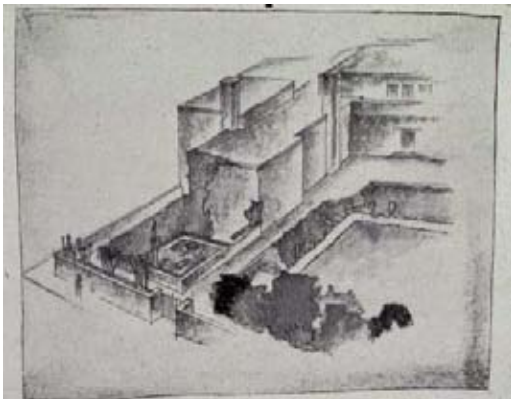
²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 171.

²⁸ Heinrich Schmitz, „Haus und Garten", *Die Gartenschönheit*, no. 8. 1927. p. 215.

²⁹ See in this connection Imbert, 1993.



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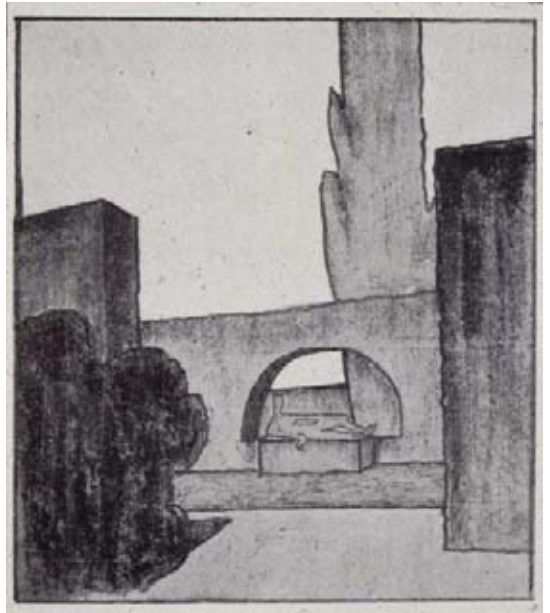


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- 11 Modern garden design by Heinz Wichmann (Die Gartenschönheit, vol. 5, 1924)
- 12 Design for a „Heidegarten“ (heather garden) by Heinz Wichmann (Die Gartenschönheit, vol. 5, 1924)
- 13 Traditional Heidegarten, designed by the Späth firm, Berlin, 1936
- 14 Modern garden designed by Heinrich Schmitz for an philosopher (Die Gartenschönheit, vol. 8, 1927, S. 215)
- 15 Concrete trees by Mallet Stevens
- 16 Garden designed by French architect André Lurcat (Die Gartenschönheit, vol. 11, 1930, no. 5, 89)
- 17 Garden designed by French architect André Lurcat (Die Gartenschönheit, vol. 11, 1930, no. 5, 89)

The characteristic quality of the Lurcat garden is the formal layout – its axial division by a watercourse and paths (Figs. 16 and 17). The garden was presented to the German readership of *Gartenschönheit* magazine in 1930. Just a short time after the appearance of the article, landscape architect Wilhelm Hübotter published his critique of Lurcat's garden in the form of a naturalist counter-design in *Gartenkunst* magazine (Fig. 18). The Lurcat garden may thus be seen as marking the beginning of the eradication a little later under National Socialism of all avant-garde tendencies in German garden design.

In Germany, apparently, the work of avant-garde French landscape architects and architects was seen by conservative German landscape architects as even more provocative than comparable designs by German colleagues. Landscape architect Otto Valentien passed the following comment on the Lurcat garden and a garden by Le Corbusier: „The consequences of both design principles remain alien to us; the result is an ‚un-garden‘, or rather either a piece of decoration or a formless assortment of plants and paths.“³⁰ Differing aesthetic ideas on the design of gardens can, of course, always be found, but to describe a garden as an „un-garden“, as Valentien did of Le Corbusier's and Lurcat's, signifies in the last analysis a disqualification of these representatives of modern trends in garden architecture that goes beyond discussion of the content.

Two years earlier, in 1928, Alwin Seifert had, similarly to Valentien, emphatically criticised avantgarde French garden design in a „garten-

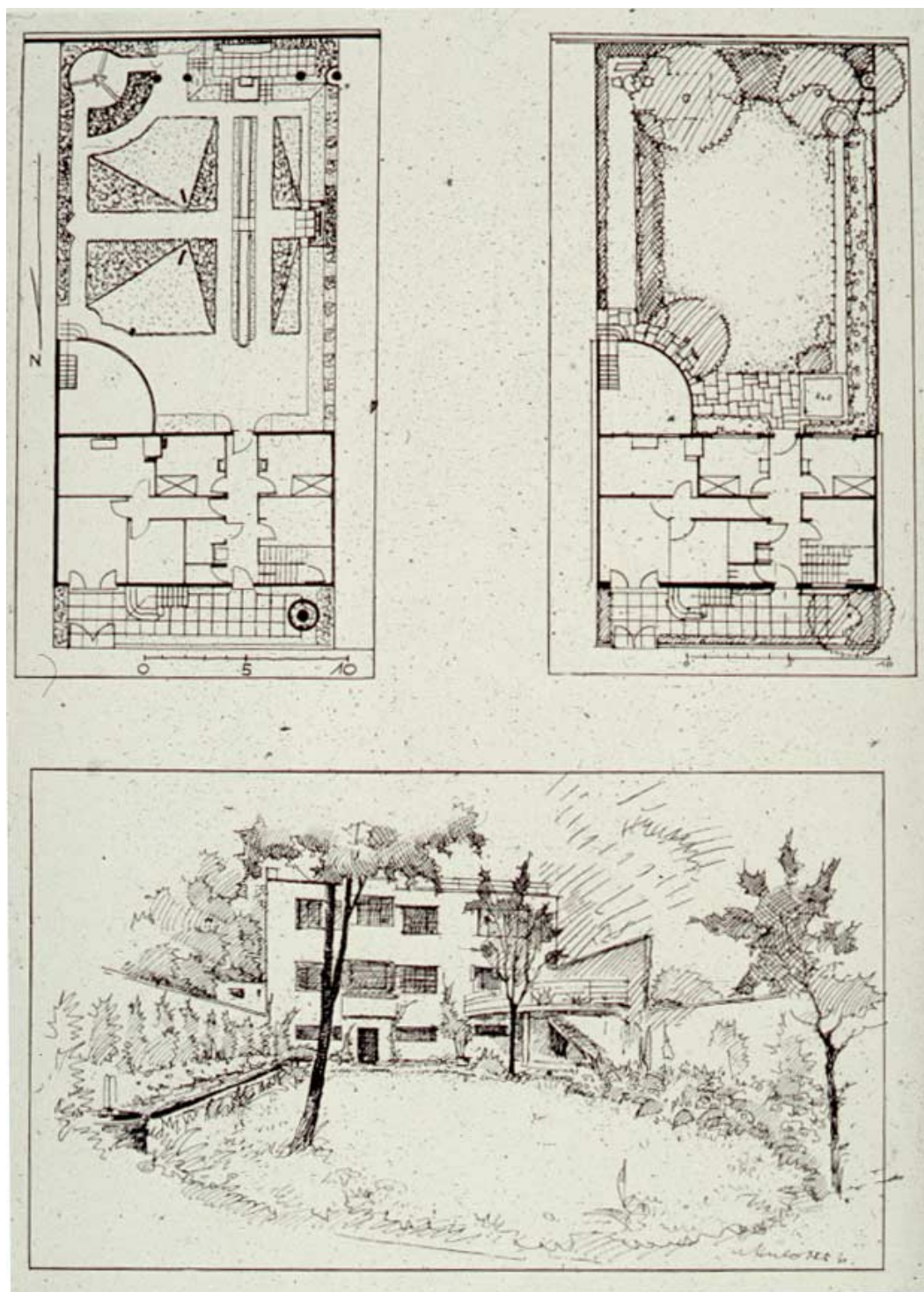
kritische Betrachtung“ (critical garden observations) of the Weißenhof housing estate in Stuttgart. After 1933 Seifert, a fanatic anti-Semite, became one of the leading garden architects of National Socialism. In his 1928 article he set avantgarde French garden design negatively against the modern trends in Germany: „Even so, all this is better than what is nowadays being created in Romanesque countries. One must come from France, where today still in public grounds the beds are enclosed in tree trunks of cast concrete, to adopt a position like Le Corbusier as the only one of the Weißenhof architects to have created the garden himself.“³¹

The end of experimentation in the garden arts

The design criticism from Hübotter of the Lurcat garden and the literary criticism of Valentien and Seifert on modern design movements in France illustrate the ideological shift that took root in Germany towards the end of the Weimar Republic and which helped the one-sided dissemination of ideas of garden design ‚rooted in the soil‘, of the use of so-called indigenous plants and building materials, to attain dominance. Many garden architects were not prepared to tolerate avant-garde and other design experiments and defamed them as degenerate, un-German or un-gardenlike. The aesthetic, functional and other qualities of these experiments are, at this juncture, of secondary importance. Some, nevertheless, could have offered stimuli for future garden designs. Ultimately, ideas on garden design

³⁰ Otto Valentien, „Neuzeitliche Gartengetaltung,“ *Die Gartenkunst*. 1930. p. 104.

³¹ Alwin Seifert, „Die Stuttgarter Weißenhof-Siedlung in gartenkritischer Betrachtung,“ *Die Gartenkunst*. no. 41. 1928. p. 59.



18 Plan of the Lurcat garden and of the counter design by Wilhelm Hübötter (top right) and sketch of the Hübötter garden (bottom) (Die Gartenkunst, 1930, p. 106)

as developed by Pohlenz, Pniower, Wichmann and others were disqualified and their systematic development brought to a halt. That with which they were confronted, by Hübötter, Seifert, Valentien and their ilk, was in its function and aesthetics not without its qualities. The dictatorship of taste as exercised a little later under the conditions created by the Nazi state brought about, however, a limitation to these and a few other design trends and principles.

Transfer of power to the National Socialists in January 1933 put an end to the lively experiments of the Weimar period, including those in garden architecture.³² To the creative disciplines the Nazi dictatorship meant not only the expulsion of ‚inconvenient‘ people from state office and the freelance professions and the ‚consolidation‘ of professional organisations but also an onslaught on experimental artistic expression forms. For example, the Bauhaus, the most innovative architectural school in Germany, was closed down. Numerous progressive artists and intellectuals left the country. The ‚Entartete Kunst‘ (depraved art) exhibition of 1937 singled out the Expressionists for particular defamation. In garden architecture there were equally vituperative attacks on the reform attempts of the 1920s. Numerous publications between 1933 and 1945 were little more than a categorical settling of accounts with efforts during the Weimar Republic to introduce artistic innovations in garden architecture. In 1936 the

dendrologist Camillo Schneider, for example, fulminated against Expressionism as irreconcilable with the fundamental idea of the garden: „When the mighty reorientation arrived, nowhere did it find the soil better prepared for its ideas than in gardening and garden design. More and more exertions were made to apprehend the living habitat of the garden, to reiterate the bond of ‚blood and soil‘. The garden as a living organism attuned to the rules of nature cannot sustain Expressionism, derived as it is from dry intellectualised reason.“³³

Josef Pertl, for many years a member of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei (NSDAP; National Socialist German Workers Party) and Director of Gardens in Berlin from 1935, ranted in 1937: „When zigzag became modern in post-war architecture, people made zigzags in garden design as well. The term ‚modern‘ has also been prevalent in garden design, and there must be an end to these times once and for all.“³⁴

With such words Pertl dragged designs such as for the Garten Buchthal by Eryk Pepinski into the area of ‚entartete Kunst‘ to endanger the occupations and the lives of such garden architects. Hans Hasler was another Nazi garden designer to vilify experimentation in the garden architecture of the 1920s. In his book *Deutsche Gartenkunst* he conducted a polemic on Expressionism: „This movement, diametrically opposed to Impressionism, is alien to healthy German sensibilities; it is the expres-

³² See also Gert Gröning and, Joachim Wolschke, ‚Zur Entwicklung und Unterdrückung freiraumplanerischer Ansätze der Weimarer Republik‘ in *Das Gartenamt* 34/6 (1985), pp. 443–457.

³³ Camillo Schneider, ‚Was lehrt Dresden den Gartenfreund? Kritische Anmerkungen für eine künftige Reichsgartenschau in *Die Gartenschönheit* 17/9 (1936), p. 196.

³⁴ Josef Pertl, ‚Weltanschauung und Gartenkunst, anlässlich der Jubiläumstagung in Düsseldorf am 4. Juli 1937‘ in *Die Gartenkunst* 50/10 (1937), p. 215.

sion of the artistic activity of the near eastern-oriental peoples. Its protagonists contend that they thereby seek to express inner spiritual experiences and thus justify altering the depicted form. [...] Henceforth the new era has put an end to all this hocus-pocus [...] German architecture is experiencing a Nordic revival through its best champions Speer, Todt, Troost and others [...] Willy Lange has initiated a parallel development with his works in word and deed.³⁵

Hans Hasler was well placed to propagate his ideas on garden design under National Socialism, being, among other roles, head of the garden art section at the Geisenheim teaching and research establishment for viticulture, fruit-growing and horticulture.³⁶ The Berlin garden designer F.C. Weigold, who was an SA member before 1933 and later an NSDAP official, fulminated in 1935 against the Modernists in garden architecture: „The Jewish mindset, which ridicules everything typically German, is still embedded in their subconscious.“³⁷

For considerations of garden design in Germany this signified a serious caesura that apparently had an influence on developments in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945, particularly in the pernicious lack of innovation and discussion of provocative and stimulating ideas in garden architecture and an artistic break that was to influence developments far into the era of the Federal Republic as well as the former German Demo-

cratic Republic. Landscape architect Georg Bela Pniower described the rise and destruction of avantgarde trends in German garden design in retrospective as professor in garden and landscape design at the Humboldt University in East Berlin. Pniower was one of the most progressive landscape architects in twentieth-century Germany. During the Weimar period he developed innovative concepts for garden design. During National Socialism he was persecuted by the NS-State as a member of the Social Democratic Party and as of being of so-called „half-Jewish“ origin. He had Berufsverbot and could not work until 1945. After liberation from National Socialism he became chair for garden and landscape design at the Humboldt University.

Pniower described in the 1950s the rise and destruction of avantgarde garden design in moving words in the following way: „In the period between the two wars all over the world creative forces were moving. That lead, after the horrors of the Gründerzeit [foundation time] and after the woolyness of the times before the wars, to a new development in style. This period of dawn had already left distinct and guiding marks in the arts. Almost at the same time developed on different continents and among different people the same endeavours. These promising revolutionary forces -- diffamed by the petty bourgeois as degeneration -- were stopped when Hitler started his campaign against culture and humankind. As the first master builder of

³⁵ Hans Hasler, *Deutsche Gartenkunst. Entwicklung, Form und Inhalt des deutschen Gartens* (Stuttgart: Ulmer-Verlag, 1939), p. 22 ff.

³⁶ Gröning, *Wolschke-Bulmahn, Grüne Biographien*, (1997), p. 131 ff.

³⁷ Weigold, Friedrich Cornelius, ‚Romantik im Garten‘ in *Die Gartenkunst* 48/4 (1935), p. 67.

the Reich, as he let call himself, he referred to the ancient Teutons and he let everybody petty bourgeois heart beat heavier when he let his Kulturkammer [Reich chamber for cultural affairs] announce the new Renaissance and finally went so far to appeal to Goethe, Mozart, Balthasar Neumann, the Bauhütten etc., ultimately to appeal to the ancient Greeks as witnesses of the grandeur of his ideas about culture. Our beautiful aged architectural monuments, which no modern architect of the Systemzeit [the time of the Weimar Republic] would have actually dared to touch upon, each farmer's garden, which pleased the heart of even the most decadent urbanite, each piece of untouched landscape, which the city dweller appreciated on his travels and in his love to nature, suddenly were declared to

witnesses to prove that everything modern, everything searching, every experiment on the path to a new and up-to-date design of our environment was barbarism, decadence, degeneration, in one word was of Jewish spirit."³⁸

This contribution should elucidate the rise of avant-garde trends in German garden design during the Weimar period and its destruction during and because of National Socialism. Important representatives of the avant-garde were suppressed by the National Socialist state; after 1945 they could not regain their influence. The impact of National Socialism on the development of garden design in two German states after 1945, e.g., due to the destruction of avant-garde trends in garden design, has yet to be investigated.

³⁸ Georg Bela Pniower, draft for a lecture on landscape design, n. d. (Archive of the Humboldt University Berlin, Ka4, Ma 8). I thank Peter Fibich for drawing my attention to this manuscript. The German original quotation runs as follows: „In der Zeit zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen regten sich in der ganzen Welt schöpferische Kräfte, die nach den Schrecken der Gründerzeit und nach der Verwaschenheit der Vorkriegszeiten zu neuer Stilentwicklung führten. Diese Zeit der Morgenröte hatte in der bildenden Kunst bereits deutliche und richtungsweisende Spuren hinterlassen. Fast gleichzeitig erstanden auf verschiedenen Kontinenten und bei ganz verschiedenen Völkern die gleichen Bestrebungen. Diese vielversprechenden, vom Spießertum als Entartung bezeichneten revolutionären Kräfte wurden gestoppt, als Hitler seinen Feldzug gegen Kultur und Menschheit begann. Als erster Baumeister des Reiches, wie er sich nennen ließ, bemühte er die alten Germanen und machte das Herz des Spießers höher schlagen, als er mittels seiner Kulturkammer die neue Renaissance verkünden ließ und schließlich so weit ging, auch Goethe, Mozart, Balthasar Neumann, die Bauhütten usw., schließlich die alten Griechen zu Zeugen [der] Erhabenheit seiner Kulturideen anzurufen. Unsere schönen alten Baudenkmäler, die kein moderner Architekt der Systemzeit wirklich anzutasten gewagt hätte, jeder Bauerngarten, der das Herz auch des dekadentesten Städters erfreute, jedes Stück unberührte Landschaft, die der Städter auf seinen Reisen und in seiner Liebe zur Natur schätzte, wurden nun plötzlich zu Zeugnissen dafür gemacht, dass alles Moderne, alles Sucherische, jedes Experiment auf dem Wege zu einer neuen zeitgemäßen Gartengestaltung unserer Umwelt Barbarei, Dekadenz, Entartung, mit einem Wort jüdischer Geist sei.“

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