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MORE THAN BAUHAUS

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE WHITE CITY TEL AVIV

edited by Regina Stephan

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THE
ARCHITECTURE
OF THE WHITE CITY
TEL AVIV

This book **"More than Bauhaus – The Architecture of the White City Tel Aviv"** concludes the German-Israeli-Austrian students workshop "Spring School Tel Aviv. 100 Years Bauhaus 1919-2019. International research and design project on site".

The first part of the Workshop took place in the Bauhaus Dessau in November 2018: Bauhaus Open Studios – Teaching Models – A Project of the Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau in Cooperation with Hochschule Mainz, University of Applied Sciences.

The second part of the workshop took place in and was strongly supported by the White City Center in Tel Aviv in March 2019.

The correspondent exhibition as well as the film of the same name by Frithjof Heinrich and Malte Röthig was first presented in Mainz. It will be shown in Braunschweig, Chemnitz, Dessau, Hannover, Innsbruck, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The Workshop was substantially subsidised by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community.

Edited by Regina Stephan

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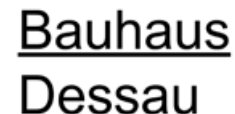
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FOREWORD

More than Bauhaus: The White City Tel Aviv

This year, 2019, marks one hundred years since the foundation of the Bauhaus. Germany has therefore taken the opportunity to celebrate this anniversary with partners across the world. The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) has pledged its support for a wholesale appreciation of the Bauhaus in its centenary year in the form of various projects. Among them, the project "More than Bauhaus: the Architecture of Tel Aviv's White City" can be singled out as a very special one indeed.

When the Bauhaus was founded in Weimar in 1919, a number of young pioneers from the worlds of architecture, art and culture came together to collaborate on the development of new principles for design and living. With its progressive structure, interdisciplinary approach and love of experimentation, the Bauhaus attracted international masters, such as Walter

Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Hannes Meyer, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Johannes Itten, László Moholy-Nagy and Oskar Schlemmer. Like hardly any other twentieth-century movement, the Bauhaus has had a lasting influence on architecture, design, urban planning and the art and crafts sector.

The Nazis banned the school in 1933 forcing many of its highly talented members and associates into exile in different parts of the world. Some of them immigrated to Palestine and worked as architects and urban planners, notably on the construction of the new city of Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv's White City is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site comprising around 4,000 buildings; as such it is the world's largest ensemble of modernist architecture and some of the buildings evince a pronounced Bauhaus influence in their overall design.

Many buildings today require refurbishment and restoration in keeping with the requirements of heritage conservation. The Federal Ministry is helping to fund the "Centre for the Conservation of Architectural Heritage in Tel Aviv's White City", which is due to open in September 2019 and will provide a focal point and concomitant network of expertise in support of conservation-minded building in the city. The project underlines the shared historical, architectural and cultural significance of the "White City" for both Germany and Israel alike. The focus of the German contribution is on the provision of technical expertise and strategies for heritage conservation.

The "White City Tel Aviv" initiative was also the springboard for the "Spring School Tel Aviv – 100 Years of the Bauhaus", the results and findings of which are compiled in this impressive catalogue. During 2018 and 2019, twenty-four

students from Mainz, Braunschweig, Innsbruck and Jerusalem worked together in two workshops in Dessau and Tel Aviv respectively, undertaking an extensive examination of Bauhaus buildings in terms of their conception and construction; in the process they became acquainted with different approaches to the task of identifying and surveying the building stock, as well as receiving an opportunity to try out their own ideas.

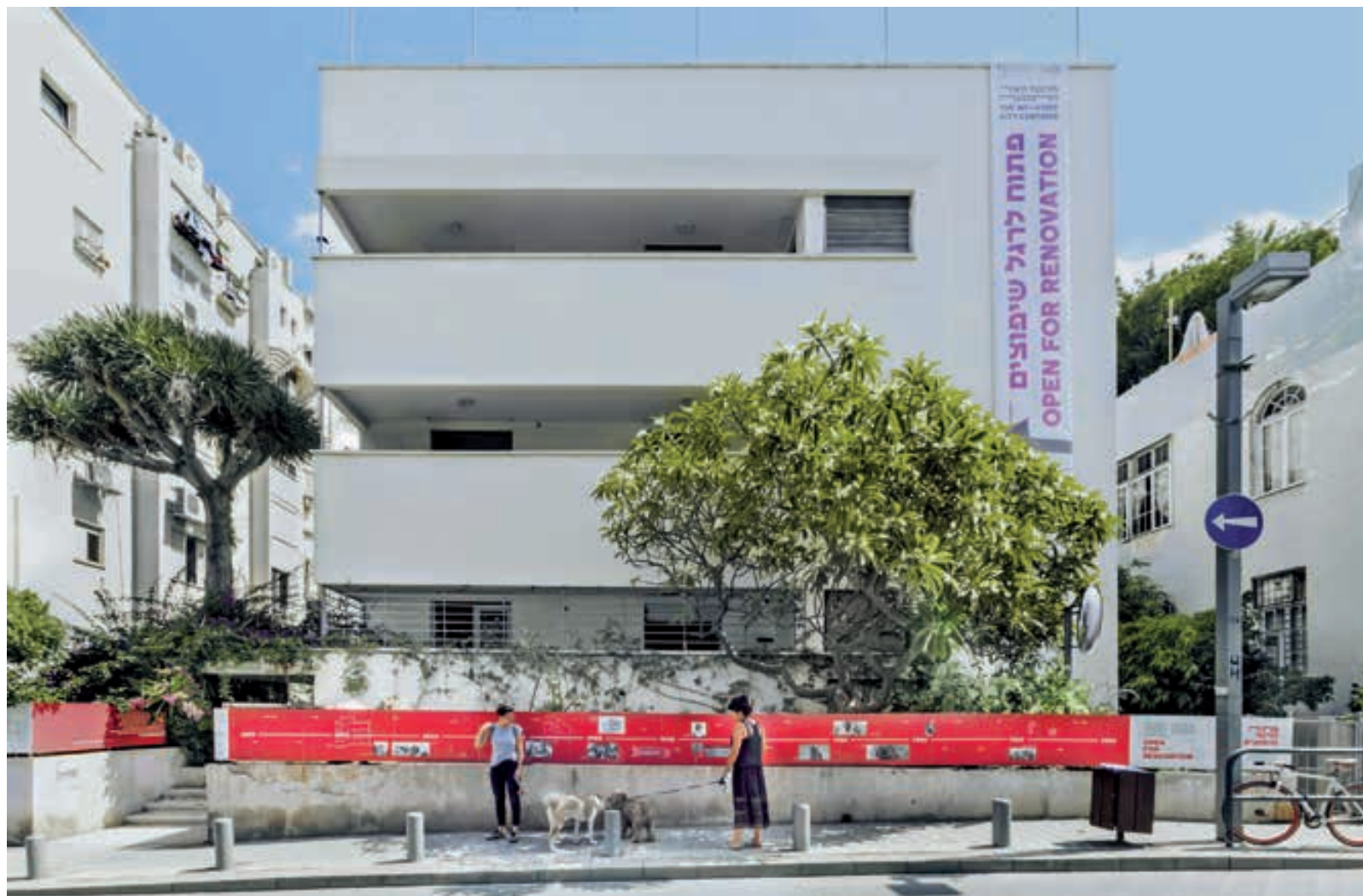
The main objective of the project was fourfold: to raise the awareness of the participants about the issue of conservation-minded treatment of these listed buildings, to discover similarities between and peculiarities of the different regions, to investigate the conflict arising from the needs and standards of modern living on the one hand, and heritage concerns on the other, and ultimately to formulate solutions.

I would like to congratulate everyone involved for the successful completion and overall outcome of the project. I hope that by promoting the project we have been able to contribute, in a small but meaningful way, to the ongoing care of our architectural and cultural heritage, to intercultural understanding in general and to the friendship between Germany and Israel.

Berlin, May 2019

Anne Katrin Bohle
State Secretary
Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community

(next page) The Liebling House in Tel Aviv, 2018, Photo: Yael Schmidt



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INTRODUCTION

Ultimately everything seems to come together almost of its own accord: assembling the team.

The project's inception dates back to 2011 when the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design hosted a symposium on Erich Mendelsohn in Jerusalem. From that point on, Shmuel Groag, Architect and Conservation Consultant in Tel Aviv teaching at the Bezalel, and Regina Stephan, art historian and professor at the University of Applied Sciences in Mainz, shared an ardent desire to stage a joint workshop in which the students from these partner universities of many years standing might collaborate. The topic is obvious: the architecture of the modern movement in Israel as it exists in West Jerusalem, but particularly in Tel Aviv. Time passes, and in the meantime Regina Stephan had been appointed to the German-Israeli Advisory Board in her capacity as an expert on behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) which is involved in establishing and designing a Heritage Centre for the White City in Tel Aviv: the Liebling House. It is geared in particular towards informing both

the general public about the White City's unique features and the experts about the structural and technical specifications of buildings in the International Style in Tel Aviv.

The idea of a joint German-Israeli student workshop met with tremendous support when Regina Stephan, in conjunction with Ulrich Knufinke, who was a visiting professor in the Institute of Architectural History at the University of Innsbruck at the time, presented their workshop concept in 2017: *Movements of Modernism – The Architecture of Tel Aviv and its International Background*. The first three of the team were now in position: Groag, Stephan and Knufinke.

The conference *100 Years of Planning and Building in Palestine and Israel (1918-2018)* staged by Klaus Tragbar in April 2018 under the aegis of the Research Institute in the University of Innsbruck's Faculty of Architecture, supplied the final members of the team: Klaus Tragbar, Katrin Kessler from the Bet Tfila Research Unit for Jewish Architecture at the TU Braunschweig and Vladimir Levin, the director of the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The concept of a joint workshop, begun in Innsbruck and further developed during a series of Skype conferences, led to the Director of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, Claudia Perren, also a member of the WCC Advisory Board, to suggest holding an open studio at the Bauhaus in Dessau to study original Bauhaus architecture in detail before the workshop in Tel Aviv and thus hone everyone's sensibilities for nuances in advance of the trip.

In the summer of 2018, the concept developed by Groag, Stephan, Knufinke, Tragbar, Kessler and Levin won over the support of Gunter Adler, Secretary of State responsible for the construction, housing and urban development sectors and who is now at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI). At his instigation, the two-part workshop and its documentation in the form of an exhibition, catalogue and documentary film was granted sustained and generous funding from the Ministry and the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) within the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR). All



Participants of the workshop in Tel Aviv on Bialik Square, march 2019, Photo: Klaus Tragbar

the participants – the students and lecturers – are most grateful for this support. Without this funding the concept could not have been realised in this form.

Half of the quota of twenty-four students – all of them at an advanced stage of their degrees – came from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design and the TU Braunschweig, the University of Innsbruck and Mainz University of Applied Sciences. Numerous experts introduced them to and informed them about the Bauhaus in Dessau and modernist architecture in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. All of the participants would like to thank the speakers and programme leaders most warmly:

Regina Bittner, Vincent Frank, Katja Klaus, Monika Markgraf, Werner Möller and especially Claudia Perren, Director of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, Director Shira Levy Benyemini and Programme Director Sharon Golan Yaron, WCC at the Liebling House, Tel Aviv, Zvi Efrat and Yuval Yaski of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, Jeremie Hoffmann, Head of the Conservation Department, Municipality of Tel Aviv, Micha Levin, Shenkar-Ramat Gan, Lilach Harel and Shira Sprecher, architects, Tel Aviv. Special thanks are due to Yehudith Kiryati, Shmuel Mestechkin's niece.

It was the ministry's idea and initiative to document the workshop in a film. With Frithjof

Heinrich and Malte Röthig two young documentary film-makers joined the team. Educated at the Hochschule Mainz they were supervised by Hartmut Jahn.

Timothy Connell from London translated and proofread the book.

One workshop has the habit of begetting another workshop. The largely intact, original built-in interior of an apartment in the Kiryati House, as well as the numerous unretrieved documents in the Municipal Archive of Tel Aviv, await detailed study.

We hope and intend to continue this extremely stimulating, exciting and productive examination of a shared architectural heritage in Germany and Israel. Indeed, there is still so much research to be undertaken in order to understand it better, and there is so much to study in order to conserve it for the future.

Mainz, May 2019

Regina Stephan

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METHODOLOGY

When faced with the task of converting or extending an existing building, an architect is not only concerned with the overall functional and constructional conditions of the task in hand, or indeed the intentions of his client, all of which challenge his creativity, but also with the existing physical structure his predecessors passed on to him. He will have to think about how he might define his approach to the existing structure: Should he conform and adopt the given architectural language?

Should he adopt individual motifs, but vary them to make his intervention stand out?

Does he develop his own architectural language, which then enters into a kind of dialogue with the existing building?

Or does he design something that is completely independent of or even at variance with the building that ultimately merely shares a physical connection?

Whichever approach he finally decides upon from the brief adumbration listed above, his decision must always be predicated upon careful analysis and thorough knowledge of the structure in question.

We took these basic considerations as an opportunity to expose students to such tasks within the framework of the "Spring School Tel Aviv – 100 Years of the Bauhaus 1919-2019" workshop. To this end, two buildings in Tel Aviv-Jaffa were selected, both designed by Bauhaus graduates whose work is of particular interest in 2019 as the Bauhaus celebrates its centenary: Shmuel Mestechkin's Kiryati House built between 1938 to 1940 in a prominent location on the corner of Rothschild Boulevard and Habima Square and Hans-Hermann (Chanan) Frenkel's blood bank built between 1953 and 1956.

Both buildings were carefully analysed and the parameters of the original designs studied, taking into consideration the historical context of the buildings, the architects' design concepts, the constructional and technical possibilities and materials available to them. Impressions of both buildings and their respective urban environments were recorded in hand-drawn sketches, structural surveys, photographs and verbal descriptions. The aim was to observe from close quarters, record and process artistically the actual situation in and around the building



Shmuel Mestechkin, Kiryati House, Tel Aviv, 1938-1940

in question. These first impressions were then presented, evaluated and critiqued. Visits to municipal offices in Tel Aviv followed and the relevant building regulations were retrieved, studied and evaluated.

On this basis, brief designs were drawn up in a concentrated workshop, during which the students examined the extent to which the buildings can be renovated in keeping with heritage conservation yet adapted for the needs of modern living. The differences between the conceptual approaches deployed at the

respective participating universities and colleges in dealing with historical buildings clearly emerged in the process.

But what also became apparent was the fact that the real and imminent threat of demolition of both Bauhaus alumni buildings is not only unnecessary and unsustainable, it also doesn't make sense as both buildings can, with a series of small, sometimes surprising measures, be adapted to suit the current situation they find themselves in, that is to say, to be fit for today's needs, demands and uses.

We would be delighted if we could persuade the owners and the general public about the importance of both buildings and their preservation. Because ultimately sensitive and considered treatment of existing building stock is still the most sustainable, economical and ecological of all available options.

And it preserves the history of a place for future generations.

Mainz, 5 May 2019

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Prof. Dr. Klaus Tragbar, Universität Innsbruck, Institute for Architectural Theory and History

Hans-Hermann (Chanan) Frenkel, Blood Bank, Jaffa, 1953–1956



MORE THAN BAUHAUS

OPEN STUDIO
AT THE BAUHAUS DESSAU
FOUNDATION

PRECURSORS AND CONTEMPORARIES OF THE BAUHAUS

The modern architecture that emerged during the Weimar period is inconceivable without precursors, indeed, pre-war architecture and ideas provided the rich and fertile soil upon which it could flourish. To name but a few: Joseph Maria Olbrich, Frank Lloyd Wright, Theodor Fischer, Peter Behrens, Henry van de Velde, Le Corbusier and Tony Garnier made crucial contributions to the New Building of the Weimar era.

In particular, the work of Joseph Maria Olbrich can be identified as the birth of modernism. Influenced by what he had seen during his studies in Sidi Bou Said, Olbrich transferred the cuboid, whitewashed architecture of North Africa to Europe and, with the construction of the Vienna Secession building in 1897-98, was the first to present a white cube and the suggestion of a flat roof. He was also the first to realise a new exhibition concept, namely at the exhibition of the Darmstadt Artists' Colony on the Mathildenhöhe in 1901 titled *Ein Dokument Deutscher Kunst* (A Document of German Art): permanently built, fully furnished dwellings, which could be inhabited after the exhibition had ended.

This so-called *Darmstädter Prinzip* (Darmstadt Principle) was subsequently revived in numerous exhibitions, such as at the *Weissenhofsiedlung* (Weissenhof estate) in Stuttgart in 1927 or at the Interbau in Berlin in 1957. Olbrich's wedding tower of 1908 is the first example of the use of horizontal ribbon windows that extend around the building's corners, as well as projecting single balconies, similar to those Walter Gropius used in 1926 at the Prellerhaus in Dessau.

Olbrich's ideas flourished at the Bauhaus in an altogether different way: he demanded in 1898: "We have to build a city, a whole city! ... at its centre, however ... a house of work, simultaneously a studio for artists and a workshop for craftsmen, where the artist always has the calming and orderly handcraft at his disposal, whereas the craftsman always has the liberating and purifying force of art, until they both grow into one person!" (1) The Bauhaus' inaugural manifesto published in 1919 states: "Architects, sculptors, painters – we must all return to craftsmanship! For there is no art such thing as an 'artist by profession'. There is no essential difference between the artist and the artisan ... so let

us create a new guild of craftsmen free from the divisive class distinctions that sought to build a lofty barrier between craftsmen and artists!" (2)

Olbrich's visions were thus revisited and woven into the core philosophy of the Bauhaus; indeed, the combination of school, studio and artists' houses in Dessau also has its precursor in the shape of Olbrich's artist colony at Darmstadt's Mathildenhöhe.

After the First World War in 1918 and as a result of the new, burgeoning political system of democracy and the concomitant importance ascribed to the needs of a broader swathe of the populace, the development of architecture in Germany comprised a series of many – at times – overlapping strands: it was at once expressionistic, organic, constructivist, industrialised, rooted in its native land.

Joseph Maria Olbrich,
Travel sketch Sidi Bou Said 1894, Kunstabibliothek Staatliche
Museen zu Berlin, Inv.Nr. Oz223kl_Bd4_27

