JOAN CAMPBELL

The German Werkbund

The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts

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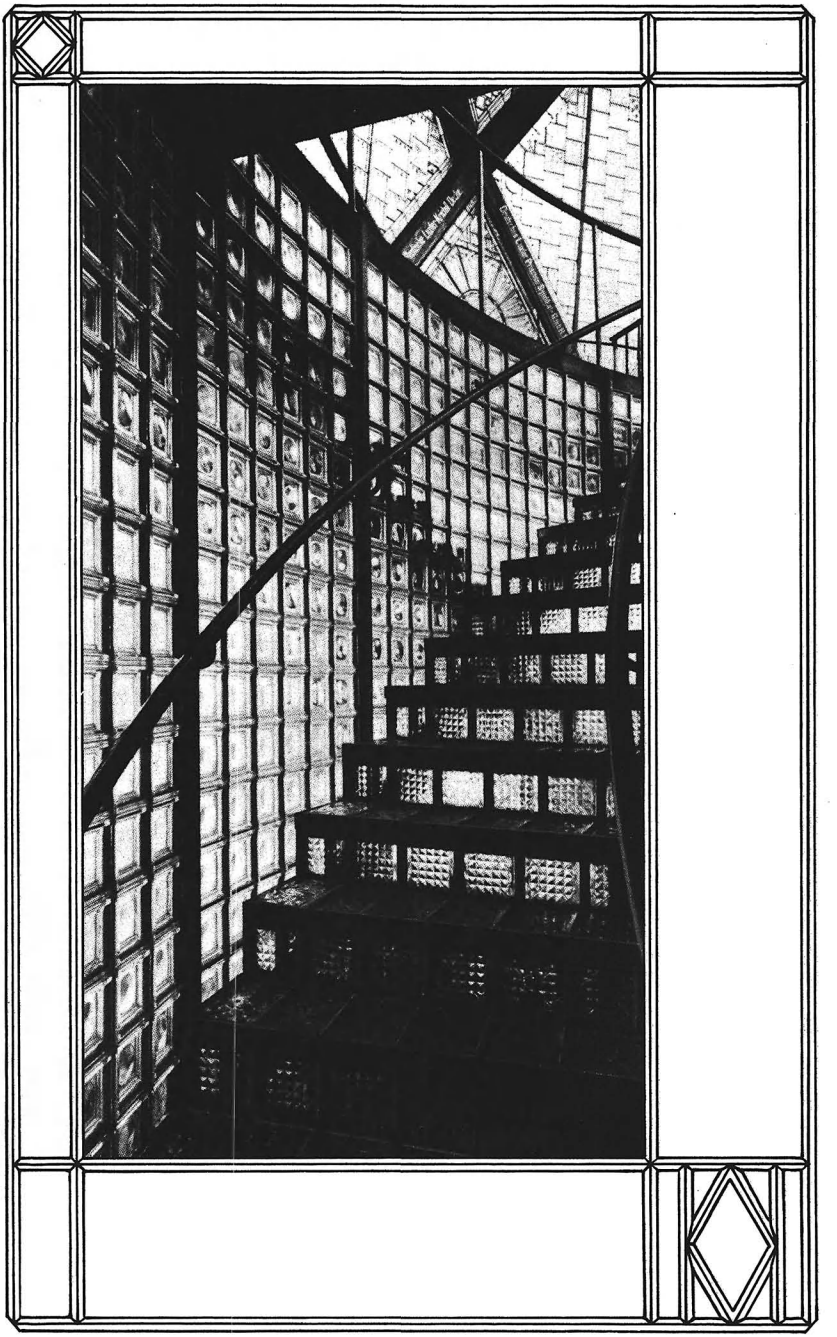
THE GERMAN WERKBUND



THE GERMAN WERKBUND

The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts

BY JOAN CAMPBELL

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To my husband

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ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BASK	Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste, Munich (Riezler papers)
Bauhaus	Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin (Gropius papers)
BDA	Bund deutscher Architekten
BDC	Berlin Document Center, Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, personnel files
DWB	Deutscher Werkbund, as author
DWB-J	Deutscher Werkbund Jahrbuch
DWB-M	Deutscher Werkbund Mitteilungen
GerN	Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg (Riemerschmid papers)
KEO	Karl-Ernst-Osthaus Archiv, Hagen
LC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Mies van der Rohe papers)
RdbK	Reichskammer der bildenden Künste
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects, London
WB	Werkbund-Archiv, Berlin
WD	Werkbund-Archiv, Düsseldorf

THE GERMAN WERKBUND

INTRODUCTION

THE GERMAN WERKBUND was formed in 1907, in response to a widespread feeling that the rapid industrialization and modernization of Germany posed a threat to the national culture. Unlike similar associations spawned by the Arts and Crafts reform movement, however, the Werkbund rejected the backward-looking handicraft romanticism of most English and Continental cultural critics, and refused to indulge in the cultural pessimism increasingly fashionable in intellectual circles.[1] Instead of yielding to "cultural despair," its founders set out to prove that an organization dedicated to raising the standard of German work in the applied arts through cooperation with progressive elements in industry could restore dignity to labor and at the same time produce a harmonious national style in tune with the spirit of the modern age. The Werkbund pioneers addressed themselves to the task of bridging the gulf between art and industry, and worked to realize their vision of a Germany in which the machine, directed by the nation's best artists, would revitalize the applied arts "from the sofa cushion to urban planning."[2]

The Werkbund, which at the beginning hoped to render itself redundant within ten years, never realized the aims of its founders. Its efforts neither banished the specter of alienation from the world of work nor converted a significant segment of industry to the ideal of quality and good

[1] On the response of the intellectuals, see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Garden City, N.Y., 1965).

[2] This much-repeated phrase was probably coined by the architect Herman Muthesius. See his "Wo stehen wir?" *Jahrbuch des deutschen Werkbundes* (1912), p. 16 [hereafter *DWB-J*].

design. Nevertheless, the ability and determination of its members enabled the association to establish itself on a national scale by 1914, to survive the demise of the Second Reich, and to reach new heights of activity and influence under the Weimar Republic.

Between 1919 and 1930, the Werkbund–led by such pioneers of the modern movement as Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe of the Bauhaus–became one of Germany's most significant cultural institutions. With a series of outstanding international exhibitions to its credit, most notably Cologne 1914 and Stuttgart-Weissenhof 1927, it exerted an influence that extended beyond Germany's borders. Its example inspired the creation of similar groups in other countries, and its contributions to the development of 20th century architecture and design won for it a permanent place in histories of the modern movement.[3] Yet during this same period, the Werkbund's links with the artistic avant-garde and with the liberal-democratic political tradition of Friedrich Naumann and Theodor Heuss (both prominent Werkbund members) brought the association under increasing attack from the National Socialists and their conservative allies, who denounced it as an agent of "cultural bolshevism." Weakened by the Depression, which intensified splits within its ranks, the Werkbund's fate was sealed by the collapse of the Republic in 1933. The efforts of its leaders to come to terms with Germany's new rulers after Hitler came to power proved vain. Absorbed into the corporate structure of the National Socialist state, the Werkbund in 1934 ceased to exist as a private association. Some Werkbund ideas–and men–succeeded in finding a place within the Third Reich, but it was only after the Second World War that the Werkbund, reconstituted, embarked on the most recent chapter of its history.[4]

[3] E.g., Leonardo Benevolo, *History of Modern Architecture* (2 vols., London, 1971); and Herwin Schaefer, *The Roots of Modern Design* (London, 1970).

[4] See Wend Fischer, *Zwischen Kunst und Industrie: Der Deutsche*

Although my purpose is to tell the story of the Werkbund from the foundation of the association to its destruction in 1934, I have placed special emphasis on the Weimar period. The Werkbund's development between 1918 and 1933 has been relatively neglected by earlier writers, mostly art historians, who have tended to concentrate on the association's seminal role before 1914, while during the Weimar years they have focused attention on the Bauhaus, that brilliant offspring of the Werkbund that even in the 1920's had eclipsed its progenitor in the public eye.[5] In my view, the impressive achievements of the early Werkbund and the deserved interest evoked by the Bauhaus are not sufficient reasons to neglect the contributions of the Weimar Werkbund to the cause of modern architecture and design. Moreover, because the Werkbund was one of the few national cultural institutions to survive from the Second Reich into the Third, examination of its ideals and programs can illuminate both the extraordinary flowering of the modern spirit commonly designated as "Weimar Culture" and the intellectual-cultural origins of National Socialism.

Although the Werkbund's significance has been recognized by historians of art and art education, few students of German society and culture in their broader aspect have given it more than passing mention.[6] Yet the ideas and ideals it represented constitute a fascinating chapter in German intellectual history. The Werkbund brought together university professors with craftsmen, fine artists with industrialists, designers with politicians, and so offers an unusual opportunity to examine the interaction between elements of the German elite that are often studied in

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Werkbund (Munich, 1975), pp. 397-591 [hereafter *Deutsche Werkbund*], for a documented account of Werkbund activities since 1947.

[5] On the Bauhaus, see especially Hans Maria Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

[6] Stern, *Cultural Despair*, refers to the Werkbund on pp. 221-22; it is mentioned in a paragraph on the visual arts in the Second Reich, by Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany, 1840-1945* (New York, 1969), p. 405.

isolation. By focusing on the efforts of the Werkbund and its leading members to come to terms with the modern age, one can learn much about the forces that have shaped 20th century Germany, as well as illuminate the more general relationship between intellectual, artistic, social, and political change. Finally, the Werkbund deserves attention because it raised fundamental questions about art and society. Over the years, it constituted a forum for the debate of issues that are still alive today: how to restore joy in work in the context of industrial society, to forge a link between high and popular culture in a democracy, and to redefine the role of the handicrafts in a machine age. Werkbund discussions on these and similar topics were generally inconclusive and often couched in terms that now seem dated, but they undoubtedly repay analysis and will therefore play as large a role in my presentation as the group's actual achievements.

The story of the Werkbund to its dissolution under the National Socialists has been briefly told several times.[7] Only one person, Theodor Heuss, contemplated writing a full-scale history of the organization along the lines attempted here. Heuss, who was to become the first president of the German Federal Republic, had been associated with the Werkbund from its early years and remained loyal to its ideals until his death in 1963. After World War II, he encouraged the revival of the association, and during his presidency he had a part in creating the *Rat für Formgebung*, a council for industrial design based on Werkbund principles.[8] During the Hitler years, Heuss wrote

[7] Most recently by G. B. von Hartmann and Wend Fischer, in Fischer, *Deutsche Werkbund*, pp. 15-21. See also Hans Eckstein, "Idee und Geschichte des Deutschen Werkbundes 1907-1957" [hereafter "Idee"] in Hans Eckstein, ed., *50 Jahre Deutscher Werkbund* (Frankfurt, 1958), pp. 7-18; and Julius Posener, "Der Deutsche Werkbund," *Werk und Zeit Texte*, supplement to *Werk und Zeit*, No. 5 (May 1970).

[8] See Heuss's address to the Werkbund in 1952, "Was ist Qualität?" in Theodor Heuss, *Die Grossen Reden: Der Humanist* (Tübingen, 1965), pp. 49-93. Heuss's connection with the Werkbund is briefly recounted in Hans-Heinrich Welchert, *Theodor Heuss: Ein Lebensbild* (Bonn, 1953), pp. 29-36.

biographies of three men who played important roles in the Werkbund: Friedrich Naumann, the politician; Robert Bosch, a prominent Württemberg industrialist; and the architect Hans Poelzig.[9] His intimacy with these and other leading Werkbund personalities, his long connection with the organization, and his belief in its fundamental goals would have made Heuss the ideal historian of the group. Unfortunately, he abandoned the project after the destruction of the Werkbund archives in an air raid in 1944 obliterated what he regarded as essential documentation.[10]

The destruction of the Werkbund files undoubtedly created a gap in the sources that no amount of diligent searching can fill. Nevertheless, much has been done since 1947 to make good the loss, particularly by the *Werkbund-Archiv*, founded in 1971 in Berlin, whose main purpose is to make Werkbund documents readily accessible to scholars and others interested in problems of design.[11] I myself have been able to locate a mass of Werkbund publications of the period 1907-1934, ranging from yearbooks and exhibition catalogues to membership lists and publicity brochures. Various archives and the papers of former members yielded minutes of internal meetings. I have also drawn on published and unpublished letters, diaries, and autobiographical accounts by Werkbund members and their contemporaries, as well as on newspapers and periodicals of the period. Finally, interviews and correspondence with a few survivors have provided vivid glimpses into the past. The available material thus constitutes a large body of documentary evidence, on which I have

[9] *Friedrich Naumann: Der Mann, Das Werk, Die Zeit* (2nd rev. ed., Stuttgart, 1949); *Robert Bosch: Leben und Leistung* (Stuttgart, 1946); *Hans Poelzig: Bauten und Entwürfe: Das Lebensbild eines deutschen Baumeisters* (3rd ed., Tübingen, 1955).

[10] See Theodor Heuss, *Erinnerungen, 1905-1933* (Tübingen, 1963), pp. 106-107; and Heuss, "Notizen und Exkurse zur Geschichte des Deutschen Werkbundes" in Eckstein, *50 Jahre Deutscher Werkbund*, pp. 19-26 [hereafter "Notizen"].

[11] Cf. the first yearbook of the Werkbund-Archiv (Berlin, 1972), with a foreword by Julius Posener and introduction by Diethart Kerbs, the director of the Archive.

based what is essentially a collective biography of the Werkbund. As an outside observer, it is probably impossible for me to convey the full flavor of the association, characterized as it was by the clash of outstanding personalities; but I hope that the perspective lent by distance has enabled me fairly to place the Werkbund in its historical context, and to do justice both to its ideals and its achievements.

CHAPTER I

The Founding of the Werkbund

THE FOUNDING meeting of the *Deutsche Werkbund*, held in Munich on October 5 and 6, 1907, brought together about one hundred prominent artists, industrialists, and art lovers. Convened in response to an appeal by twelve individual artists and twelve manufacturers, it represented a novel approach to one of the problems that engaged the attention of educated Germans at the time, namely how to reforge the links between designer and producer, between art and industry, that had been broken in the course of the nation's recent spectacular economic development. The fact that both artists and entrepreneurs attended the convention raised hopes that the Werkbund would succeed in its aim of injecting a much-needed artistic and ethical element into German economic life. When the meeting, chaired by a director of a ceramics factory, J. J. Scharvogel, chose a professor of architecture, Theodor Fischer, as the society's first president, it gave symbolic expression to the spirit that the new association planned to foster.[1]

The keynote speech was given by Fritz Schumacher, professor of architecture at the *Technische Hochschule* in Dresden. Schumacher stated the Werkbund's objective: to

[1] Eckstein, "Idee," p. 10; Heinrich Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst: Eine Untersuchung über Geschichte und Theorie der modernen Kunstgewerbebewegung* (Jena, 1909), pp. 290-92; Peter Bruckmann, "Die Gründung des Deutschen Werkbundes 6 Oktober 1907," *Die Form*, VII, No. 10 (1932), 297-99; and an unsigned essay, "Zur Gründungsgeschichte des Deutschen Werkbundes," *Die Form*, VII, No. 11 (1932), 329-31.

reform the German arts and crafts through a genuine rapprochement between artists and producers. Although he deplored the destruction of the artistic culture associated with a preindustrial past, he stressed that the progress of industrialization and mechanization was irresistible, and that the Werkbund must strive to counter the excessive materialism and rationalism that were its by-products without sacrificing the positive benefits of modernity. If practically-minded artists and idealistic entrepreneurs could work in concert, the result would be the "reconquest of a harmonious culture" that would represent a new cultural synthesis in tune with the realities of contemporary life.[2]

The immediate task before the new association would be to improve the design and quality of German consumer goods. Schumacher made it quite clear, however, that the Werkbund was not created merely to appease the sensibilities of aesthetes offended by the sheer ugliness of current products. Nor was its purpose to increase the profits of participating firms. Instead, Schumacher sought to enlist the moral and patriotic sentiments of his auditors in support of the ideal of quality, arguing that quality work would both strengthen the nation's competitive position in the markets of the world and foster social peace at home.

While the aims of the Werkbund, as expounded by Schumacher, closely paralleled those of the German Arts and Crafts movement which had already spawned numerous lay and specialist societies, the men gathered at Munich believed that a new organization was needed to implement reforms more effectively. By drawing together an aristocracy of creativity and talent from all parts of Germany, the Werkbund hoped it would be in a unique position to encourage the healthy development of the most

[2] Fritz Schumacher, "Die Wiedereroberung harmonischer Kultur," *Kunstwart*, XXI (Jan. 1908), 135-38. Portions of the text were reprinted in *Die Form*, VII, No. 11 (1932), 331-32, and are reproduced by Fischer, *Deutsche Werkbund*, pp. 32-34.

advanced tendencies of the day. Yet it would be wrong to note the progressive aspirations of the Werkbund's founders without acknowledging that their purpose was essentially a conservative one, namely to restore the lost moral and aesthetic unity of German culture. This ambivalence was reflected at the Munich convention, where romantic nostalgia for a lost world combined with determination to meet contemporary needs; and it remained a feature of the Werkbund during the next twenty-six years of its independent existence.[3]

To understand the origins of the Werkbund, one must look beyond the events of October 1907. This is in part because the new society represented the culmination of a movement for artistic and intellectual reform dating from the 19th century,[4] but also because of the three individuals who can most justly be described as its founding fathers—Hermann Muthesius, Friedrich Naumann, and Henry van de Velde—only Naumann actually attended the Munich meeting. These three men, coming from very different backgrounds, agreed in their fundamental purposes, but each held distinctive views on matters of policy and organization. Their ideas and ideals deserve analysis because they helped to set the Werkbund on its course. At the same time, examination of the motives that led each of them to support the Werkbund sheds light on those features of the contemporary situation which contributed most to the association's creation and initial success.

[3] The romanticism of the Werkbund founders is illustrated by reminiscences of Richard Riemerschmid and Fritz Schumacher in "Zur Gründungsgeschichte des Deutschen Werkbundes," *Die Form*, VII, No. 11 (1932), 331. Apparently, for example, it had originally been suggested that the founding convention be held in the Katherinenkirche in Nürnberg because of its association with Wagner's *Meistersinger*, and so with the medieval crafts tradition.

[4] For the Werkbund as culmination of a decade of reform rather than the harbinger of a new era, see Joseph August Lux, *Das neue Kunstgewerbe in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1908). A signatory of the appeal that led to the Werkbund founding, Lux held a fundamentally conservative view of its purpose. For a comprehensive survey of the German Arts and Crafts reform movement before 1907, Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst*.

The man most frequently cited as *the* father of the Werkbund was Hermann Muthesius, who, in 1907, was a civil servant in the Prussian Ministry of Trade.[5] Born in Thuringia in 1861, the son of a mason, Muthesius learned his father's trade, went on to *Realgymnasium* in Leipzig, and completed his architectural training at the *Technische Hochschule* in Berlin. While still a student, he was sent to Japan by a private firm, but in 1893 he returned to Germany and began his career in the Prussian civil service as government architect in the design office of the Prussian Ministry of Public Works. The turning point in his career came in 1896 when he secured an appointment as architectural attaché at the German embassy in London, filling a position apparently created in response to the Kaiser's personal wishes.[6] Between 1896 and his return to Germany in 1903, Muthesius reported regularly on advances in English architecture, crafts, and industrial design, with a view toward adapting the best features of the English experience to German circumstances. He cultivated close contacts with the leaders of the English Arts and Crafts movement, and acquainted himself with contemporary British architecture and art education. The fruit of his diligence, in addition to his official reports, was an influential three-volume publication on the English home, which appeared after his return to Germany.[7]

[5] Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London, 1960), p. 69 [hereafter *First Machine Age*]; Julius Posener, *Anfänge des Funktionalismus: Von Arts and Crafts zum Deutschen Werkbund* (Berlin, 1964), p. 111. Unlike Banham and Posener, Stern (*Cultural Despair*, p. 221) lists Muthesius as just one of several founders, along with Friedrich Naumann, Eugen Diederichs, Ferdinand Avenarius, and Alfred Lichtwark. In fact, neither Avenarius nor Lichtwark played a direct part, and Diederichs' role was also peripheral. Cf. Gerhard Kratzsch, *Kunstwart und Dürerbund: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gebildeten im Zeitalter des Imperialismus* (Göttingen, 1969), p. 217, n. 65.

[6] Posener, *Anfänge des Funktionalismus*, pp. 109-11; Karl Scheffler, *Die fetten und die mageren Jahre* (Munich, 1948), p. 42.

[7] Hermann Muthesius, *Das englische Haus* (3 vols., Berlin, 1904). On Muthesius as a transmitter of the English tradition to Germany, see Julius Posener, "Hermann Muthesius," *Architects' Yearbook*, No.

In 1904, Muthesius, now in the Prussian Ministry of Trade in Berlin, resumed his architectural practice, building villas in the "English style" for the wealthy bourgeois of the capital.[8] In his official capacity, he applied the lessons learned in England by promoting a reform of the arts and crafts schools. He also used his influence to secure the appointment of first-class designers to key positions: Peter Behrens at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf, Hans Poelzig at the Breslau Academy, and Bruno Paul at the Berlin School of Applied Arts.[9]

Muthesius' appointment to the first chair of the applied arts at the Berlin Commercial University (*Handelshochschule*) in the spring of 1907 gave him additional authority to further the cause of reform. However, his inaugural lecture, in which he set out the basic principles of his program for the arts and crafts, aroused a storm of protest from conservative elements in the German art industries, and produced an appeal to the Kaiser for his immediate dismissal. This step by the *Fachverband für die wirtschaftlichen Interessen des Kunstgewerbes* (Trade Association to Further the Economic Interests of the Art Industries) failed to overthrow Muthesius. Instead, it precipitated a confrontation between progressive and traditionalist factions within the *Fachverband* at its annual meeting in Düsseldorf in June 1907, led to secession of the pro-Muthesius firms, and culminated in the formation of the Werkbund.[10]

Muthesius' *Handelshochschule* speech introduced many

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10 (1962), pp. 45-61; and "Muthesius in England" in Julius Posener, *From Schinkel to the Bauhaus* (London, 1972), pp. 17-23.

[8] Julius Posener, "Muthesius als Architekt," *Werkbund-Archiv*, 1 (1972), 55-79.

[9] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present* (Cambridge, England, 1940), p. 267. Paul's appointment may not have been directly due to Muthesius, but it certainly corresponded to his wishes.

[10] Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst*, p. 285; Eckstein, "Idee," pp. 7-8; Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (3rd ed., Harmondsworth, 1960), p. 35.

themes that were subsequently incorporated into the Werkbund program. Commenting on a recent applied arts exhibition at Dresden, Muthesius welcomed the increased respect shown for the innate character of materials, the emphasis on functional and constructional design criteria, and the decline in nostalgic sentimentality, artificiality, and excessive ornamentation. Nevertheless, he recognized that the reformers still faced tremendous obstacles. The consuming public, corrupted by social snobbery, sudden wealth, and the ready availability of "luxury" goods cheaply made by machine, would have to be won back to the old ideals of simplicity, purity, and quality. At the same time, producers would have to develop a new sense of cultural responsibility, based on the recognition that men are molded by the objects that surround them. Once manufacturers were made aware that by producing cheap imitations and fashionable novelties they were damaging the national character through pollution of the visual environment, Muthesius believed they would abjure their evil ways and address themselves to their proper task of creating a modern German home whose honest simplicity would beneficially influence the character of its inhabitants.

To Muthesius it seemed evident that the reform movement that had begun in the sphere of interior design would lead on to the development of new concepts in architecture and eventually would affect all the arts. Moreover, discounting the doubts of many manufacturers and dealers regarding the marketability of the new designs, he proclaimed his faith in their eventual victory, citing the commercial success already attained by the *Dresdner Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst* to prove his point. Here was evidence that an enterprise that enthusiastically adopted the quality ideal would gain a competitive advantage over its more conservative rivals. By ceasing to produce shoddy goods, Muthesius argued, industry would not only be acting morally but would reap great profits. At the same time, it would enable the Reich to redeem its

reputation on the world market. Instead of seeking desperately—and ineffectually—to adapt their designs to foreign tastes and predilections, German producers, building on the achievements demonstrated at the German section of the St. Louis exhibition of 1904, might one day dictate good taste to the world, while enriching themselves. The rewards of a change of heart seemed plain: profits, power, and freedom from the stylistic tyranny of the French, then still dominant in the realm of fashion and design.[11]

Thus in 1907 Muthesius set forth a number of ideas that regularly reappeared in Werkbund propaganda. Typically Muthesian features included the stress on good taste and quality as virtues in themselves, and the determination to mobilize economic, ethical, and patriotic sentiments in support of fundamentally aesthetic reforms. The speech also revealed Muthesius' distrust of the artistic individualism that at Dresden had still obscured the emerging functionalist trend. For he felt certain that the style of the future would not be the product of isolated genius self-consciously striving to create new forms, but would develop out of the efforts of many individuals working in a new spirit to utilize available artistic, technical, and economic ideas in the design and production of consumer goods.[12]

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Muthesius firmly believed that German culture could and would be saved. This basic optimism enabled him to throw himself without reserve into the fight for converts, while his faith in the power of organization made him a wholehearted advocate of the Werkbund idea. By its very existence, the

[11] Muthesius' speech, "Die Bedeutung des Kunstgewerbes," is reproduced in Posener, *Anfänge des Funktionalismus*, pp. 176-91. On the St. Louis exhibition, which Muthesius attended as an official observer for the German government, *ibid.*, p. 111; and Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst*, p. 282.

[12] Both Hans Poelzig and Fritz Schumacher concurred in Muthesius' judgment of the Dresden exhibition. See *Das Deutsche Kunstgewerbe 1906*. Exhibition Catalogue (Munich, 1906).

Werkbund would testify to the strength of the reform impulse and create the positive climate of opinion needed for success. Because Muthesius knew that controversy surrounding his person might jeopardize the new organization, he stayed away from the Munich meeting. But as soon as the Werkbund was established, he openly identified himself with it.[13] Elected vice-president, he devoted his energies to expanding the Werkbund's influence, provided it with useful government contacts, and to a great extent succeeded in imposing his views on the association in the period to 1914. His home in Berlin served as a meeting place for men connected with the reform movement in art and industry; and the social gatherings over which he presided there helped to strengthen the Werkbund by creating a sense of community among individuals who often had little in common beyond their desire to further its goals.[14]

Although Muthesius' presence in Berlin gave the Werkbund a valuable foothold in the nation's capital, that city could not claim to be the birthplace of the new society. Vienna, Munich, and particularly Dresden all have a better right to that distinction, in view of their outstanding contributions to the arts and crafts. Moreover, rather than Muthesius, the Prussian civil servant, it was the politician Friedrich Naumann who devised the organizational structure that for the first time gave national unity to the reform movement. On the eve of the Werkbund's birth, Naumann, a former Protestant pastor and supporter of Adolph Stöcker's Christian Socialism, had already won a national reputation as a liberal politician with strong social views. Founder of the short-lived National-Social party (1896-1903), Naumann had acquired disciples in all parts of the country, and in 1907 he successfully contested a

[13] Eckstein, "Idee," p. 10. Muthesius had originally been scheduled to address the meeting jointly with Schumacher.

[14] Heuss, *Erinnerungen*, p. 111. According to Heuss, Muthesius at home managed to relax his otherwise bureaucratic manner and to create an atmosphere conducive to good fellowship, a gift he consciously exploited to further his aims.

Reichstag seat for the left liberals in the South German city of Heilbronn.[15]

To understand what attracted Naumann to the Werkbund cause, one must first of all take into account his strong artistic leanings. He drew with enthusiasm and considerable skill, and contributed frequent exhibition reports and other essays on aesthetic topics to *Die Hilfe*.[16] An early advocate of the need to discover new forms suited to the modern age, he repeatedly gave forceful expression to his faith in the possibility of revivifying German culture in the age of the machine.[17] His belief in the social and political significance of aesthetic questions drew him into the Werkbund orbit, and in turn enabled him to bring into the organization people who would have committed themselves neither to a political party nor to any purely artistic movement.[18]

Naumann addressed the Munich convention and helped to write the Werkbund's constitution adopted at the first annual meeting in 1908. He also produced its initial propaganda pamphlet, *Deutsche Gewerbekunst*, which identified the Werkbund with a wide range of social and national goals.[19] According to this brochure, the Werkbund, by propagating the principle of quality, would raise the value of labor, improve the worker's status, increase his joy in work, and thus reverse the trend to proletariani-

[15] See Heuss, *Naumann*, pp. 87-245; Dieter Düding, *Der Nationalsoziale Verein 1896-1903* (Munich, 1972); and Werner Conze, "Friedrich Naumann, Grundlage und Ansatz seiner Politik in der nationalsozialen Zeit (1895-1903)," in Walther Hubatsch, ed., *Schicksalswege deutscher Vergangenheit* (Düsseldorf, 1950), pp. 355-87.

[16] Naumann had founded *Die Hilfe* in 1894, as the organ of the progressive wing of the Christian-Social movement. On his artistic capacities and interests, see Heuss, *Naumann*, pp. 217-22; and Heinz Ladendorf, "Nachwort," in Friedrich Naumann, *Werke*, VI, Aesthetische Schriften (Cologne, 1964), 603-18.

[17] E.g., "Die Kunst im Zeitalter der Maschine" (1904), in Naumann, *Werke*, VI, 186-201.

[18] Conze, "Friedrich Naumann," p. 377.

[19] "Deutsche Gewerbekunst" (1908), in Naumann, *Werke*, VI, 254-89.

zation hitherto associated with the advance of capitalism. Moreover, quality work would help to shape a culture based on respect for the creative power of the individual personality, while improving the competitive position of German exports. Comparing the Werkbund to the Navy League, of which he was an ardent supporter, Naumann argued that just as the League encouraged Germany to demand a larger role in world politics, so the Werkbund should work to extend Germany's economic power. Unlike the Navy League, however, the Werkbund was to remain independent of official guidance or subsidies, for Naumann was convinced that it would be most effective as a purely private association, acting on its own initiative to further the nation's cultural and economic growth.[20]

It was at the Dresden Arts and Crafts exhibition of 1906 that Naumann helped to lay the foundations for the Werkbund. The exhibition itself had been organized by one of Naumann's political disciples, Fritz Schumacher, who enthusiastically subscribed to his program of freeing the German worker from the trammels of Marxist dogma, winning him over to the national ideal, and reawakening his religious impulses.[21] While attending the exhibition, at which he delivered an address and which he later reviewed for *Die Hilfe*,[22] Naumann developed the organizational blueprint for the Werkbund in conversation with

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 284-86. Although Naumann began as a Christian Socialist, by 1907 he had become an economic liberal, intent to keep the state out of industrial life. By 1917, he had once more revised his views, advocating "a peacetime economic system in which the cartels would become semipublic bodies charged with broad fiscal and regulatory functions under the general supervision of the State." Ralph H. Bowen, *German Theories of the Corporative State* (New York, 1947), p. 190; and Editor's introduction, Naumann, *Werke*, III, xi-xxxii.

[21] Fritz Schumacher, *Stufen des Lebens: Erinnerungen eines Baumeisters* (Stuttgart, 1935), pp. 212 and 256. Schumacher's allegiance did not extend to aesthetics; he rejected Naumann's dogmatic functionalism.

[22] See "Kunst und Industrie" and "Kunstgewerbe und Sozialpolitik," Naumann, *Werke*, VI, 433-51. Naumann's Dresden speech was published in the exhibition catalogue, *Das Deutsche Kunstgewerbe 1906*.

another of his adherents, Karl Schmidt-Hellerau of the *Dresdner Werkstätten.* Schmidt, son of an artisan family, had spent a year in England following his apprenticeship. The furniture workshop that he established on his return to Dresden in 1898 soon grew into a sizable enterprise employing many of Germany's leading designers and craftsmen and exploiting the most advanced machine technology to produce relatively inexpensive quality goods for mass consumption.[23] A carpenter by trade, Schmidt, under Naumann's influence, had abandoned some of the traditionalism often associated with his craft. In particular, he responded to Naumann's modification of the English Arts and Crafts philosophy, which stressed the need to restore the dignity of labor in alliance with–rather than in opposition to–the machine. Inspired by Naumann's social idealism, Schmidt initiated an ambitious apprentice training program within the *Werkstätten*; built a new community, the *Gartenstadt Hellerau*, to house its workers; and generally turned his firm into a model enterprise.[24] Thus the Werkbund was only one fruit of a continuing association between Naumann and Schmidt, who, despite very different educational and professional backgrounds, shared the desire to create a strong, stable, and harmonious social order.

In 1906, both Naumann and Schmidt felt that, to prevent dissipation of the gains made by the Dresden exhibition, it would be necessary to create a national organization capable of nurturing the progressive forces it had released. Developing an idea apparently originated by Muthesius and Theodor Fischer, they agreed that the first

[23] Friedrich Naumann, "Der Deutsche Gewerbestil," *Illustrierte Zeitung* (1914), Werkbund supplement, p. 23; Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst*, pp. 286-89; Heuss, *Naumann*, p. 223; Heuss, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 111-12; Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, pp. 34-35.

[24] Schumacher, *Stufen des Lebens*, p. 262; Heuss, *Naumann*, p. 225. The *Gartenstadt Hellerau* was one of a number of garden cities inspired by Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1898). Four Werkbund notables (Schumacher, Muthesius, Fischer, and Adolf Hildebrand) constituted the architectural committee, and most of the plans were the work of Richard Riemerschmid of Munich. Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, p. 176.

prerequisite was to find a man who could devote himself solely to this task. Naumann thereupon proposed Wolf Dohrn, a young man of excellent education and recognized ability who at twenty-eight had not yet found his calling. Son of the famous zoologist Anton Dohrn and fellow student of Theodor Heuss in Lujo Brentano's economics seminar at Munich, Dohrn had become a supporter of Naumann during the electoral campaign of 1903.[25] He responded with enthusiasm to Naumann's suggestion that he organize a new arts and crafts society and, in order to prepare himself, decided to take up a craft. Under the guidance of Karl Schmidt, he trained as a carpenter and soon became Schmidt's collaborator in the *Werkstätten*, acting as spokesman for the firm at the Düsseldorf meeting of June 1907, when the *Dresdner Werkstätten* seceded from the Arts and Crafts Association in protest against its attack on Muthesius.[26] A few months later, Dohrn became the Werkbund's first executive director, a post he held until 1910 when he withdrew, against the wishes of his many friends within the association, to devote himself to Schmidt's Hellerau garden city development and to his own pet project–the Jacques-Dalcroze school of modern dance.[27] Thus, thanks to the mediating role of Friedrich Naumann, Dresden became the first headquarters of the new association, although much of its inspiration had come from Berlin, and the society was formally incorporated in Munich, the home of its president, Theodor Fischer.

In addition to his following in Dresden, Naumann had

[25] Theodor Heuss claimed that it was he who first suggested Dohrn as the right man for the job. See his *Erinnerungen*, pp. 109-11 and *Naumann*, p. 223.

[26] Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst*, p. 290.

[27] Dohrn's enthusiasm for Dalcroze and eurythmics was resented by some of his Werkbund friends as a pointless diversion of his energies. Cf. Heuss, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 113-14; and Schumacher, *Stufen des Lebens*, p. 163. Dohrn died in 1913, in a mountaineering accident, without having fulfilled the great hopes placed in him by Naumann. Heuss, Obituary, *März*, VIII, No. 1 (1914), 279; Heuss, "Notizen," p. 21.

other disciples in the Werkbund, of whom Peter Bruckmann, the silverware manufacturer from Heilbronn in Württemberg, was perhaps the most important. An enthusiastic political supporter of Naumann, Bruckmann, who had led the progressive industrialists at the June 1907 Düsseldorf meeting, became one of the Werkbund's principal figures, acting as president or vice-president almost continuously from 1909 until 1932.[28] Another friend and admirer of Naumann's among the Werkbund pioneers was Eugen Diederichs, an innovative typographer, printer, and publisher, whose firm was one of the Werkbund's original sponsors. From 1912 to 1914, Diederichs published the Werkbund yearbooks as part of a list that included the first German edition of Ruskin, Ebenezer Howard's book on the garden city, and numerous other literary, artistic, and philosophical works related to Werkbund concerns.[29] A spokesman for the quasi-mystical reform movement to which he gave the name "New Romanticism," Diederichs "set the revitalization of Germany through ideology in opposition to the principle of organization."[30] In other words, like many intellectuals of the day, he rejected Naumann's belief in the possibility of reform through political action even while subscribing to his basic cultural and social program.[31]

Naumann agreed with Muthesius on methods and objectives, but seems to have been more successful than the latter in persuading others of the need for concerted effort

[28] Bruckmann's significance for the pre-1914 Werkbund was summed up on the occasion of his resignation from the presidency in 1919, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Werkbundes* 1919/4, p. 136 [hereafter *DWB-M*]. See also Ernst Jäckh, *Der Goldene Pflug: Lebensernte eines Weltbürgers* (Stuttgart, 1954), p. 90.

[29] 60 *Jahre: Ein Almanach*, Eugen Diederichs Verlag (Düsseldorf, 1956), pp. 189-237; Eugen Diederichs, *Aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig, 1938), p. 54.

[30] George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (London, 1970), pp. 52-63 and *passim*.

[31] Eugen Diederichs, *Selbstzeugnisse und Briefe von Zeitgenossen* (Düsseldorf, 1967), pp. 215 and 217. Diederichs represents an instance of Naumann's failure to politicize the *Bildungsbürgertum*, noted by Conze, "Friedrich Naumann," p. 377.

in the cause of cultural reform. In addition, it was he who elaborated the notion of "quality work" in economic and social terms, supplying the platform that held the Werkbund together before 1914. Naumann must therefore be regarded as one of the men most responsible both for the organization of the Werkbund and its early success.

Despite the crucial roles of Muthesius and Naumann, no account of the Werkbund's origins would be complete without mention of Henry van de Velde. A Belgian by birth, van de Velde had come to Germany in the 1890's and quickly moved into the first rank of the nation's designers. Like many leading Werkbund decorators and architects, he began life as a painter but soon, inspired by the work and social vision of John Ruskin and William Morris, applied his innovative talent to the decorative arts. One of the creators of the *Art Nouveau* or *Jugendstil*, which transformed the visual environment around the turn of the century, van de Velde influenced the German Arts and Crafts movement both through his work and his theoretical pronouncements on art, the machine, and society.[32] In his *Kunstgewerbliche Laienpredigten*, he insisted that art and architecture must be put in the service of society in order to create a nobler environment for contemporary man.[33] Van de Velde regarded himself as a socialist in the tradition of Morris, a radical reformer of the modern social order. Rejecting the l'art pour l'art philosophy of the late 19th century, he turned his back as well on the artistic conventions of the past, and set out to create a new ornament and style appropriate to the machine age.[34]

[32] His impact on Germany is treated in Karl-Heinz Hüter, *Henry van de Velde: Sein Werk bis zum Ende seiner Tätigkeit in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1967). See also van de Velde's selected essays, *Zum neuen Stil*, ed. J. Curjel (Munich, 1955).

[33] 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1902).

[34] The sources and nature of van de Velde's social views are discussed by Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts* (New York, 1970), Ch. 12. Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, pp. 27-29, and Walter Curt Behrendt, *Der Kampf um den Stil in*

Van de Velde also initiated important reforms in the field of art education. As early as 1894 he advocated that classes in the applied and decorative arts should be incorporated into the curriculum of the art academies, which hitherto had mostly confined themselves to turning out large numbers of easel painters and sculptors. When he was appointed to head the Weimar Art Academy in 1902, van de Velde introduced craft training and fostered cooperation between the students and local artisans and manufacturers. His aim–like that of the Werkbund later–was to end the social isolation of the artist and to raise the aesthetic quality of both craft and machine production.[35] Not surprisingly, it appeared to van de Velde, in retrospect, that the founders of the Werkbund merely acted as spokesmen for a program that he had originated. Claiming to be the "spiritual father" of the new association, he insisted in his autobiography that Peter Bruckmann, Theodor Fischer, and Richard Riemerschmid were the men who really started the Werkbund and that all three owed their creative and ethical ideals to him. He mentioned neither Muthesius nor Naumann and failed to acknowledge the possibility that others might have evolved "his" ideas independently.[36]

It is easy to show that van de Velde's claims were exaggerated. Many of his views on art and society, the role of the machine, the relationship between the pure and applied arts, were common property by 1907. Moreover, his "new style," far from reflecting fundamental modern

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Kunstgewerbe und in der Architektur (Stuttgart, 1920), pp. 46-50, deal with van de Velde's stylistic utopianism.

35 On van de Velde's educational work, see his *Geschichte meines Lebens* (Munich, 1962), pp. 210-11; Nikolaus Pevsner, "Post-War Tendencies in German Art Schools," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, LXXXIV (1936), 250; and Edwin Redslob, *Von Weimar nach Europa* (Berlin, 1972), pp. 44-51.

36 van de Velde, *Geschichte meines Lebens*, pp. 320-21. By contrast, Waentig, *Wirtschaft und Kunst*, does not mention van de Velde at all in connection with the Werkbund, and Eckstein, "Idee," also omits him from the list of Werkbund founders.

values, revealed an unrestrained individualism, seldom went beyond the level of ornament, and soon appeared dated. Finally, whereas van de Velde spoke and wrote of the need to serve a wide public through the machine production of quality goods, in practice his designs tended to involve costly handwork and therefore met the needs only of the wealthy few.[37]

What nevertheless made van de Velde a significant figure in the early Werkbund is simply the fact that an artist of his caliber publicly espoused the cause of the new association. The Werkbund only became possible because a number of leading artists shared the desire to reform German aesthetic culture and recognized that this entailed cooperation with progressive elements in the crafts and industry.[38] While it is misleading to speak of the Werkbund as originating with the artists, it is certainly true that without the support of men like van de Velde it could neither have come into existence nor continued to function.

Although it claimed to represent a new type of association, the Werkbund from the start realized that it was part of a larger movement for cultural reform that had already created a variety of superficially similar associations.[39] Of these probably the most significant was the the *Dürerbund* founded in 1902 by Ferdinand Avenarius. Editor of

[37] Schaefer, *Roots of Modern Design*, pp. 164-65. Schumacher, *Stufen des Lebens*, p. 192, perceptively characterized van de Velde as a socialist in theory but an individualist in practice. The rapid replacement of the *Jugendstil* by a functional neoclassicism is noted by Behrendt, *Kampf um den Stil*, pp. 74-87; Ludwig Grote, "Funktionalismus und Stil," in Grote, ed., *Historismus und bildende Kunst* (Munich, 1965), p. 62; and Benevolo, *History of Modern Architecture*, II, 385.

[38] Naumann, "Deutsche Gewerbekunst," pp. 265-69, and Behrendt, *Kampf um den Stil*, pp. 92-93, both noted the diversity of artistic views represented within the Werkbund, and the sense of common purpose that nevertheless enabled rival artists to cooperate.

[39] Both Schumacher, in his address to the founding convention, and Naumann, in "Deutsche Gewerbekunst," made an effort to analyze existing associations in order to establish the Werkbund's raison d'être.