is like the rest of the show: many objects, little or no interpretation.

The Counter Space catalog includes wall text but not a checklist of the show or an extended essay on the history of kitchen design. Whimsical endpapers show 112 kitchen tools, including eggbeater, whisk, corkscrew, toaster, trivet, and peeler. In his foreword, Glenn D. Lowry, director of MoMA, boasts that the 1926 Frankfurt Kitchen is “the earliest work by a female architect in MoMA’s collection,” and he refers to the museum’s effort to recognize more women artists and designers, including the 2010 book, Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art, since Louise Bethune, the first female member of the AIA, opened her office in 1881, and MIT awarded architecture degrees to women beginning in 1890, MoMA has some catching up to do on acquisitions of work by women architects. This might also be said of the design collection—if curator Juliet Kinchin can acquire more resonant material, she will be able to follow Counter Space with a stronger analysis of architecture, technology, gender, and labor in the kitchen.

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Related Publication

Note

Paul Bonatz 1877–1956. Leben und Bauen zwischen Neckar und Bosporos
(Living and working between Neckar and Bosporos)
Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main
22 January–20 March 2011
Kunsthalle Tübingen
26 March–22 May 2011

“Paul Bonatz’s buildings are powerful but not violent,” reads the visitor at the beginning of the first large comprehensive exhibition of the work of this architect and pedagogue, held at the German Architecture Museum in Frankfurt. This quotation from Julius Posener, the architectural historian who became an exile from Hitler’s dictatorship, was the prelude for much further textual argumentation in the exhibit, intended to decouple Bonatz and his architecture from the frequently held suspicions of anarchism and totalitarianism. Because of the obvious monumentality of Bonatz’s designs, the curator felt compelled to develop an explanatory exhibition thesis, since in Germany every architectural historical assessment of a twentieth-century architect’s life must eventually measure its subject against the heroes of the New Building, who fled before the brown horde and with their modernist glory represented a better Germany to the rest of the world. Even as they lament its domination, this myth serves the exhibition organizers as they attempt to reclaim for Bonatz the characteristics of an internationally oriented anti-Nazi. He had scarcely begun “capitulating into the modern” as the wall copy put it—with his main train station in Stuttgart, in construction since 1914—before 1927, when the style of the New Building appeared on a hillside above the station in the bright Weissenhof Siedlung, with its buildings by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, J. J. P. Oud, and others.

Thus it was consistent for curator Wolfgang Voigt to award the Stuttgart main train station the central place in the exhibit, particularly as it was, at the time, the focus of a national political controversy because of its recent partial demolition (Figure 1). An impressively handcrafted model and large-format plans illustrating the evolution of the design conclusively conveyed how Bonatz, in modifying his successful competition design of 1911, had thrown overboard every historicist-academic aspect of the façade in favor of a modern solution. As finally realized, the building’s simple, homogenously rustication-sheathed volumes seem an effective concentration of pure elementary composition.

Bonatz was educated before World War I at the Technical University in Munich. Afterward, not least through the support of his teacher Theodor Fischer (1962–1938), he obtained major commissions for schools, city halls, and substantial bourgeois villas. During the Weimar Republic he achieved success in designing large, centrally located urban buildings, while ceding the field of housing estates—the central architectural task of the modernists—to other architects, including Fischer students Ernst May and Bruno Taut. In 1928 Henry-Russell Hitchcock numbered him, together with Auguste Perret and Frank Lloyd Wright, among

Figure 1 View of Paul Bonatz 1877–1956, model of Stuttgart railway station in foreground
(Courtesy Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt)
the New Traditionalists, those who dispensed with the stylistic citations of historicizing traditionalists and instead freely combined architectural elements and used new materials, without—like the New Pioneers fully abandoning historical references.

Bonatz’s commitment as an architect and as a teacher to find a path between tradition and modern was demonstrated when in 1918 he shifted the architecture school at the Technical University in Stuttgart from primarily lecture-oriented to practice-oriented education. He did not, however, adopt the free experimentation espoused by the rival Bauhaus, but tried to give students, more or less in the sense of the medieval craft workshop, direct contact with the design and construction process. This made explicit the thematic links to the adjacent engineering faculty, who were increasingly included in the architecture instruction. The engineers suggested to Bonatz an artistic approach to design, in which the technical product could be created as a “cultural work” with requisite attention paid to objective qualities of the landscape and with respect for tried and tested arrangements of the massing.

As an architect of locks and flood barriers related to the channeling of the Neckar River, he embodied this combination of engineering and architectural disciplines, and, in the highway bridges built during Hitler’s dictatorship, he found powerfully expressive solutions that balanced monumentality and elegance (Figure 2). The high, round arches, springing from tall abutments, are experienced as features of a distinctive formal language. Their use by Bonatz highlights how inventive Theodor Fischer had been with his first design for the Battle of the Nations Monument in Leipzig (1895), in which he introduced this architectural element as the dominant monumental motif. Bonatz designed variations upon this theme in the World War Memorial (1915) and later with the “Gate to the East” (1939), a stone hymn on high arches set against the scenery of the open skies. With the arches of his Limburg highway viaduct (1936–39) he finally, in his words, “achieved perfection,” in the way in which technical form worked optically in the context of the history and topography of the surroundings.

This exhibition and the editors of the accompanying catalogue must thus be thanked in particular for providing insights into the engineering work of this architect. While Paul Bonatz held fast in his civic architecture to classical formulas, and at the end, after his time in Turkey (1944–54), he appeared to be a fossil compared to the heroes of German postwar modernism, the place of Bonatz the technical builder among the greats of modern German architecture can no longer be denied.

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Figure 2  Paul Bonatz 1877–1966, model of Neckar River Barrage in foreground (Courtesy Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt)

Related Publication

Designing Tomorrow: America’s World’s Fairs of the 1930s
National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
2 October 2010–5 September 2011

The American world’s fairs of the Depression years were over-the-top, optimistic projects that made future-gazing a cultural staple. According to the fairs’ organizers and promoters, such looking ahead could bolster people’s sagging faith in the country’s economic and political systems. These fairs decanted a messy decade into neat packages of hope, dramatized the shape of things to come, and distorted or denied social reality to accommodate corporate America’s consumerist utopias.

Creating a museum exhibition decades later, out of such extravagantly hopeful projects, poses a robust intellectual challenge. How does one recreate the particular mood of the fairs in their historic times without overinvesting in their seductive messages? Balancing an “authentic” representation of past events with the unavoidable lessons of hindsight is a daunting task.

The exhibition at the National Building Museum titled Designing Tomorrow: America’s World’s Fairs of the 1930s deftly negotiated this challenge. It rendered momentarily irrelevant the question of whether or not one left the show with a deep and nuanced knowledge of 1930s America by presenting a visually pleasurable array of artifacts from six Depression-era fairs: the Century of Progress International Exposition, held in Chicago in 1933–34; the California Pacific International Exposition, staged in San Diego in 1935–36; the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas of 1936; the Great Lakes Exposition in Cleveland of 1936–37; the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco of 1939–40; and the New York World’s Fair of 1939–40. Bringing together original objects, drawings, posters, souvenirs, multimedia,