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Natalie Scholz

‘A Final Solution for Humanity?’

*Modern Design and the Ambivalence of Redemption
in Post-War West Germany*

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Abstract

During the Third Reich, a modern shape of everyday objects was propagated as realising a German nation defined as an organic and racial entity. What happened to this cultural nexus after 1945? Historical scholarship has emphasized above all that modern design went on to be successfully framed as a cultural good that redeemed West Germany from the Nazi past. This redeeming opposition between the political meanings of modern design before and after 1945, however, appears less clear-cut if one acknowledges the structure of denial in post-war discourses by focussing on the silences, omissions and discrepancies in various publications. Such an analysis exposes how the coding of modern design as ‘timeless’ together with its promotion in the context of the Marshall Plan made it possible to blur any historical understanding of how the underlying notions of everyday aesthetics had been intertwined with racially loaded ideas of the German people. This obscurity in the context of a not yet decolonized West facilitated the continuing influence of at least some aspects of modern design’s more troubling political legacies.

‘For the new houses one needed furniture, cutlery, vases, teacups. For them, too, the Bauhaus had found the definitive style-formula: [...] the good form. It was a late product of the enlightenment and as all enlightenment ideas a *final solution for humanity*. [...] It was said that more than an aesthetic solution depended on the ‘cleanliness’ of form. The ‘good form’ became an ethical category. Through it *our whole being should be healed*.’¹ [emphasis added]

In April 1961 in the cultural magazine *magnum* Karl Pawek reassesses the success of modern design and what he called the ‘Bauhaus myth’ in post-war West Germany with unusual

expressions. The ‘good form’ becomes a ‘final solution’ (‘Endlösung’) and is linked to a formulation that conjures up a slogan about German superiority (Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen) used during both the German Empire and Nazism. In the remainder of the article, Pawek, however, does not identify the Bauhaus in any way with National Socialism. Why, then, does the Nazi expression for the genocide of European Jewry appear in Pawek’s account? How can we grasp the contradiction between this choice of words and modern German design’s dominant political interpretation which was well established in 1961 and resonates until today? This interpretation regards West Germany’s iconic modern consumer objects as symbols of the Federal Republic’s economic success, her integration into a western international community as well as her new political form as a liberal democracy. Within this framework Pawek’s formulation appears nonsensical.

In recent years, scholarship has highlighted the extent to which the aesthetic shape of commodities became an important symbol of the new political, social and geographic order which was established in Europe with the onset of the Cold War.² Although modern design was presented in both West and, after 1953, East Germany as signalling a break with the Nazi past, the principles of functional simplicity developed by institutions such as the German Werkbund and the Bauhaus school had also been an essential aspect of Nazi efforts to reshape the physical world in accordance with their racial concept of the German *volk*.³ The dogma that simple, unadorned and therefore ‘timeless’ forms were the only proper way to furnish a truly German home was spread through many media during the Third Reich.⁴ Afterwards, the ‘good form’ became the central catchword for modern design in post-war West Germany. Not only many of the forms but also the main ideas behind them, however, were decades old. Different labels were used for this aesthetic project during the Third Reich such as ‘new German Wohnkultur,’ ‘modern interior design’ and also ‘good form’. The headline of an article from 1940 proclaimed the ‘Victory of the good form’ when presenting a furniture program of the Nazi organization Reichsheimstättenamt (Imperial Bureau of Homestead).⁵

The Nazi office Beauty of Labour, a section of the German Labour Front, recruited many former Werkbund members. Wilhelm Lotz, the former editor of the Werkbund magazine *Die Form*, became the principal editor of the Beauty of Labour’s periodical. Hermann Gretsch, a member of Werkbund’s executive committee since 1932, became head of the organization after Nazi officials had overtaken it in 1935 and stayed in this function until the Werkbund was dissolved in 1938. With his continuing responsibility for many major modern design exhibitions

during the Third Reich, Gretsch, who remained highly regarded in the post-war period (he died in 1950), was probably the most influential designer under National Socialism.⁶

This paper, however, does not focus on individual historical actors. Instead I propose to understand modern design as an element of culture whose meanings for a broader public exceed conscious intentions. The modern shape of everyday objects already became part and parcel of an influential view of national life long before the advent of National Socialism. These existing meanings were subsequently integrated into Nazi culture. Because the Nazis were keenly aware of the power of banal objects to create a self-evident presence of ideas about nation and race, materiality played an important role in their various projects.⁷ What happened to this cultural legacy after 1945?

In his 2004 book *The Authority of Everyday Objects* Paul Betts perceptively describes modern design's crucial importance in the post-war period as representing a 'prime sphere of mythmaking' which provided West Germany with a 'cultural proof of both rupture and renewal' and thereby acquired a morally redemptive political meaning.⁸ Betts and others have emphasized that modern design was successfully framed as a cultural good that distanced West Germany from the Nazi past and that was inextricably linked to the basic ideals of the post-war order in the West.⁹ This outspoken aspect of post-war modern design, however, had a double edge which only comes to the fore when the historical analysis is attentive to the presence and importance of implicit meanings hidden behind the apparent transparency of the post-war discourses.

As design historian Gert Selle asserts, historical relations between people and things create traditions of meaning which do not easily evaporate.¹⁰ A similar dream-world of modern interiors was interpreted both before and after 1945 as representing Germany's essence as a social and political entity. To better understand how and with what consequences 'the good form' was reintroduced after 1945 as a prime aesthetic marker of West Germany's body politic, I have tried to become curious about the nonsensical and the latent within a multitude of texts that co-produced the post-war meanings of modern design in a shared atmosphere of denial.¹¹ This entails taking seriously the silences, omissions and discrepancies in the discourse. It means paying equal attention to what is said and what is not, and to how meaning is created through the intermingling of both. It also requires systematically cutting across the 1945 moment by reading post-war material alongside texts from the Nazi period.

Pawek continued his 1961 *magnum* article by stating that 'Bauhaus' had become the 'Mekka' of a 'historical memory' that enabled the post-war 'healing power' of modern design.¹² This

not only illustrates how the catchword 'Bauhaus' had become a sacred stand-in for Germany's 'good' modern design tradition.¹³ It also highlights the cultural function of modern design to symbolically 'heal' the republic from its tainted past. By calling the Bauhaus tradition of the 'good form' a 'final solution for humanity', however, Pawek simultaneously disturbed the very idea of its 'healing power'. Pawek's uncanny remarks indicate that the post-war political imaginary attached to modern design was charged with a more complicated relationship to the Nazi past than scholarship has acknowledged so far. The coding of modern design as the redeeming shape of 'the new' made it possible to blur any clear historical understanding of how the same notions about everyday aesthetics had been intertwined with organicist, metaphysically and racially loaded ideas of the German people during the Third Reich. Following the traces of this obscuring character reveals a widespread, latent and at the same time disavowed knowledge about the ongoing entanglement of post-war modern design ideals with earlier ideas about national and racial purity. The post-war lure of the so-called 'timeless' modern consisted to a considerable extent in its inbuilt capacity to obscure its own history and to thereby continue certain aspects of its more troubling political legacy.

Re-narrating a German tradition (1946-1953)

In 1947, 37 members of the reconstituted Werkbund saw the necessity for a fundamental cultural renewal.¹⁴ This mission was summarized in five demands, the last of which reformulated a well-known dogma: 'For residential and public buildings, for furniture and appliances we seek the simple and the valid [...].' Founded in 1907, the Werkbund, was the most important German organization for the promotion of modern industrial design. After January 1933, the ideas it had developed strongly influenced many of the Third Reich's programs. The Werkbund quickly adapted to the new political context and jubilated in April 1933 that 'The great time of the Werkbund idea, the creative hour of the national form that conquers the world, has only just begun.'¹⁵ Theodor Heuss, secretary of the Werkbund and later the first president of the Federal Republic, conceded in June 1933 that the Werkbund's dedication to a 'German style' harmonized well with the Nazi movement.¹⁶ In spite of the closing of the Bauhaus school in 1933, the Third Reich hired and cooperated with many designers influenced by both Werkbund and Bauhaus in order to standardize the production of

consumer durables and to disseminate the idea of a timelessly good, simple and honest form as the true expression of the Volk.

Between 1945 and 1953, however, a very different story about 'Werkbund', 'Bauhaus', modern design and Nazism established itself in which the influence of modern design ideas had been sharply interrupted by the Nazi regime. The resulting narrative created a powerful fiction on the basis of a nebulous language and rhetorical manoeuvres that systematically distorted the historical record. National newspapers and high-brow cultural magazines nearly unanimously proclaimed the Werkbund and its aesthetic program as an essential ingredient for the reconstruction of Germany. It was challenging, however, to connect this view to a coherent long-term story. Many contradictory or opaque statements about the legacy of modern design's previous importance in Germany eventually created a collectively accepted myth, a new historical 'truth'.

In 1946 an article in the left leaning *Frankfurter Hefte* declared the historical moment to be 'the hour of the Werkbund' due to the principles of 'simple, useful, functional and also genuine' forms.¹⁷ The author added that 'nobody' would still adhere to 'the decorative and monumental style' and that it was 'the war' that 'has swept all that away' leaving the significance of the Third Reich in the sphere of ambiguity. In 1949, a Bavarian daily asserted that the war had 'paved the way for the endeavours to create a new Wohnkultur' because the lack of living space compelled people with 'dictatorial force' to find new solutions. In 1949, by contrast, 'the shop windows of furniture stores mirror the rejection of the immediate past and the reconnection with an earlier style epoch.'¹⁸ The recent promotion of the 'new Wohnkultur' thus ends up in a historical fog in which its 'immediate past' could refer equally to before, during and after the war.

In 1949, the first Werkbund exhibition after the war took place in Cologne (fig. 1). In the catalogue contributors employed different strategies to make Werkbund principles' influence during the Third Reich undiscernible.¹⁹ The North-Rhine-Westphalian Secretary of Commerce Erik Nölting stated that 'also in the past the harshness of times' enabled the emergence of 'new forms' for 'a simple but superior Wohnkultur'. It remained unclear if this 'past' referred to the Weimar Republic or the Third Reich. The architect Rudolf Schwarz even claimed that the Werkbund had been 'barred from its work for the last twelve years.' He spoke of how 'recently [...] the term 'Volk' was misused to offer inferior things [...] to the big masses for a low price' but did not specify if this 'recently' pointed to the Nazi years, the war years or the immediate post-war years of scarcity. The Werkbund by contrast, Schwarz continued, put

the human being at the centre, and this human was ‘something definitive, that is above the time, like the people lives through the times and remains true to itself.’²⁰ The designer Jupp Ernst also deplored the Werkbund’s recent history and referred to Wilhelm Wagenfeld’s designs for the glass factory in Lusatia (Lausitz) as a positive example from earlier times. Wagenfeld’s designs, however, continued to be mass produced during the Third Reich and were repeatedly showcased in major Nazi exhibitions.²¹

In the following years, similar conventions of speech can be found in many different publications, generating a fuzzy discourse and a nebulous historical chronology. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in particular dedicated many pages to the topic of modern design. In 1951, an article claimed that the Bauhaus had influenced the ‘anonymous consciousness of the public more than one is inclined to admit.’ In spite of this, the author postulates that there had been a ‘caesura’ in the past whose precise character and moment, however, remains vague while its outcome was clear: It ‘lead to military catastrophe and to the ruination of our cities.’²²

Another columnist narrated the Nazi past as a story about a deformed relationship to domestic materiality, glossing over not only the Nazi programs of home and work aesthetics but also the historical significance of Aryanization: ‘First the non-Aryans saved their furniture, then the Aryans, eventually (“we won’t surrender”) those masters who determined who was who.’²³ In this view, both Aryanizations and Allied bombings had played a similar historical role in exposing how a morally inferior relation to material objects dominated German culture during Nazism. The author deplores that the bombings failed to ‘redeem’ Germans from the general aberration of their taste: ‘We would have pleased all of the Atlantic world with it and we would have won a moral battle. Instead, people resort to a waned past that was so empty, so hollowed out that the whole noise of dictatorship found its place in it.’ By mere association the bad taste of bourgeois representation absorbs the whole moral burden of the Nazi past (‘noise of dictatorship’) which automatically clears the right taste of simple forms from any political doubt so that it can promise a true redemption of the lost war and an ethically purified form of global influence.

Behind the surface of this discourse hovers a strong identification of these well-educated middle-class writers with the promises embodied in the principles of modern design. What had happened to this identification during the Third Reich was clearly unspeakable. In 1953 Edith Nowak looked back on how the ‘new style’ had become an element of her and her generation’s self-conception: ‘Once upon a time’ she wrote

‘we young people, captured by the new style, believed someone could live as he liked and not as he must. [...] Then, the year 1933 arrived and we had other worries. Not much has remained, neither of the furniture nor of the dreams.’²⁴

The year 1933 marks a diversion of this dream to express oneself through the new style without, however, clarifying what this means and how it happened. She dreams of the ‘airy pieces of furniture’ that had been ‘companions of a good struggle, which we have lost shamefully.’ In the following paragraph the historical times flow into each other:

‘We felt as the spearheads of a good cause. Light and air into our lives, clear lines inside and outside, rather too much hygiene than too little, spiritually and physically, than dust and the burdens of a thousand years old tradition, whose nobility we loved, but whose embarrassing ready-made late form we ironized. No, we didn’t take them seriously, these fossils, until they rolled over us with the weight of mountains, with blood and soil, with Beiderwand and bunting and all the glory of a heroic age.’

The principles of the new forms are associated with both a material and a spiritual form of self-purification whose antagonist is indirectly linked to the ‘thousand years’ of the Third Reich. The terms ‘nobility’ and ‘ready-made’, however, rather belong to the mass-produced versions of a representative style that the Nazis themselves attacked. In the next sentence, pseudo-aristocratic kitsch and Nazi ‘blood and soil’ heroism are mixed together as antiquated ‘fossils’ of the past and placed in clear opposition to the ‘old dreams’ of a self and a world realized through ‘clear lines’.

These often incoherent attempts at historically positioning Werkbund’s good form contributed to a narrative which rigorously disavowed any enmeshment of the German modern design movement and its ideas with the Third Reich. Laying claim to Werkbund principles of simple, functional industrial forms for the shaping of the young Federal Republic was part of the pressing cultural challenge to work out which German traditions could be saved from the cultural ‘rubble’ left behind by the downfall of National Socialism. In the realm of architecture and industrial design the weight of the Nazi past was put on the monumental style of representative buildings, the idealization of rural forms, and, implicitly, even the Nazis’ aesthetic enemy: the historicist and decorative style of bourgeois architecture and interiors. In turn, Werkbund and Bauhaus aesthetics automatically appeared as inherently anti-fascist. This shift was the effect of various rhetorical strategies to dissociate the good modern form from the

Third Reich and associate bad historicism with it. This narrative produced an invented past in which National Socialism was per definition situated outside of an aesthetically and morally defined realm of the modern.

Germany's good form and its other

In order to better understand the ingredients of political thinking which were at stake in the post-war discourse on modern design it is necessary to revisit the intellectual origins of the good form. The historiography of German modern design has often reproduced dichotomies of 'reactionary' versus 'progressive' that make it difficult to capture the way in which Werkbund ideas were linked to a certain vision of the nation.²⁵ Joan Campbell's classic study *The German Werkbund* from 1979 already points to the Werkbund's 'deep-rooted nationalism of the pre-1914 years' which 'continued to reveal itself during the Weimar years.' She adds that in the late Weimar republic the Werkbund was 'ideologically much closer to the "German socialism" espoused by the Nazis than to any form of Marxism.'²⁶

Many voices in the turn of the century discourse on aesthetics and *Wohnkultur* articulated the aim of shaping national culture as 'an organic and aesthetic whole' by transforming public and private spaces according to the new ideas about good forms.²⁷ The simplicity of form was meant to elevate a self as part of a national collectivity. These principles, as Mark Jarzombek has argued, were the cornerstone of a discourse which made form 'the foundation on which rested the [...] legitimacy of the German nation.'²⁸ Modern design proponents mostly operated within the era's deep seated beliefs in the spiritual permanence, wholeness and supremacy of the German people. The inherent superiority and purity of the good German form was also meant to help conquer world markets and legitimate global dominance. Many Werkbund members actively supported the imperial project of a German *Weltpolitik* and connections between aesthetic ideals and racial notions were not unusual in the early Werkbund period.²⁹

The reverse side of these new beliefs about aesthetics was their 'confrontational stance vis-à-vis all opponents of harmony and order.'³⁰ As Katherine Pence has put it, German modernism 'aggressively' forged 'links between private households and the national community.'³¹ The Werkbund's internal differences on questions of style during the Weimar period did not affect shared assumptions about an organic national wholeness to be realized by promoting the good form of everyday objects.³² By the early 1930s a softened interpretation of

the pragmatic functionalism of *Neue Sachlichkeit* prevailed. Both the softened *Neue Sachlichkeit* and underlying beliefs about aesthetics and the nation then went on to shape Nazi policies and propaganda during the Third Reich. As a consequence, the excluded other, the ugly opposite of the good form, also gradually became the other of the Third Reich's racialized culture.

The discourse on modern design as it developed between 1936 and 1940 in the magazine *Innen-Dekoration* provides a glimpse on how Werkbund ideas were connected with and eventually morphed into a National Socialist worldview. It also illustrates how the aesthetic and moral enemy of the good form as embodiment of the nation gradually evolved into the aesthetic, moral *and* racial enemy of the Third Reich. For Hermann Gretsch, writing in 1936, Werkbund ideas were part of a development which necessarily lead to 'the only possible form of a state consciousness with a clear völkisch outline.'³³ In 1940 Wilhelm Michel claimed that, from the outset, the concept of 'modern Wohnkultur' had always aimed at 'the new social unanimity of the people.'³⁴

The ethical characteristic of the good form, its inherent quality to put the human being at its centre, was used after the war to postulate modern design's radical difference from Nazism.³⁵ This human quality, however, already played an equally important role during the Third Reich when it was systematically defined by its national and racial manifestation. 'Humanness' apprehended in this manner could develop best in spaces which were designed along the lines of the good form. Re-designing the home into 'a clear, a decent world' entailed the 'spiritual inner agreement between this spatial design with what the German worker represents today as a human being.'³⁶ The aestheticisation of the private home aimed at merging the individual identity of every German with the collective identity of the German *volk*. Objects of the home that conformed to a certain aesthetic standard were believed to silently manifest a new self-understanding. Imbued with the new idea of the people they radiated this idea back in turn.³⁷

In this manner, the good form proclaimed by the *Innen-Dekoration* gradually embodied a nazified idea of the German people which was strengthened by the magazine's many reports on Nazi initiatives to promote and disseminate 'new German Wohnkultur'. The excluded ugly side of the totalizing good form came to the surface more often once the regime became more aggressively expansionist. On the occasion of the exhibition 'German Living' in Leipzig in the summer of 1939 (fig. 2), Hermann Gretsch explained the 'aspiration to a healthy, natural Wohnkultur' by underlining that objects which one acquired for a long time should not 'have the spirit of the racially foreign addiction to sensation.'³⁸

Attempts to educate Germans' taste in interior decoration did not just affect the sphere of high-brow publications such as *Innen-Dekoration* but were part of much more widespread efforts, among them frequent exhibitions organized by Nazi institutions. By emphasizing that 'the fight against the ugly and artificial continues' the German Labor Front's organ *Arbeitertum* presented new quality labels in June 1939 that were meant to help consumers identify the right kind of interior decoration. *Arbeitertum* underlined the interrelation between the design of Germans' private homes and the national space of the new empire: 'The spatial culture of the German people will one day achieve a level which is in accordance with the national greatness of Germany.'³⁹

In this way the 'fight against the ugly' also became an inherent part of Germany's expansionism and the language in the *Innen-Dekoration* reflected this connection. In 1940 an article on an exhibition by the Reichsheimstättenamt linked the 'fight against falsity', which the Werkbund movement had started, to the ongoing war by claiming: 'Today we see this cultural upheaval achieve its final victory.'⁴⁰ The occasion of the triennial design exhibition in Milan in 1940 was used by the *Innen-Dekoration* to make a claim on German aesthetic leadership in the new Europe under German domination. While German troops occupied neighbouring countries and were busy 'Germanizing' the new territories in the East, Gretsch defined Germany's modern design solutions for small households as a signpost for the nation's endeavour to reshape Europe under its command.⁴¹ An article in the same number connected the ideal of beauty with the 'higher human form against everything which is beneath it' specifying that a 'European, when he talks about a higher human form, inevitably means the white race.'⁴² At the beginning of the war, the term *Wohnkultur* and its association with both cleanliness and simplicity of form had been racially charged to such an extent that it was used to legitimize the conquest of new 'living space' in the east and activated in the prosecution of Jews.⁴³

The 'good form' goes West

It is impossible to know the precise effects of being surrounded by Nazi language and visual culture for twelve years, regardless of one's own conscious political opinions before and after 1933. There are some indications that fascist culture shaped many people's self-evident perceptions.⁴⁴ But what happened to such effects after 1945?

In the case of the ‘good form’ state institutions successfully appropriated an existing tradition that comprised elements which proved to be compatible with the radicalized Nazi ideas of nation and race.⁴⁵ Most of the post-war advocates of the good form had lived through the Nazi years in Germany and had probably read magazines like the *Innen-Dekoration*. They had, passively or actively, taken part in a culture which invested an impressive amount of energy to conflate the nationalist Werkbund tradition and Nazi ideas about nation, military expansionism, and racial purification. The awkward rhetorical manoeuvres to dissociate the good form from National Socialism after the war reveal a peculiar logic if one acknowledges that the good form had been deeply inscribed into the culture of the Third Reich. In a way, there was nothing to disentangle. Given occupied Germany’s official opposition to the Third Reich, the only option was denial and a language which concealed that denial.

Under Allied press control, the *Innen-Dekoration* could already publish its first post-war number in 1946 with the new title *Architektur und Wohnform*. The Editor was Alexander Koch junior, son of the former editor. In the foreword to this first issue Hans Eckstein summarized the history of the magazine in connection with the modern design and architecture movement in Germany, claiming that these developments ‘experienced a violent disruption in 1933’. Architecture and design under Nazism consisted solely of ‘classicist monumental buildings’, ‘historicist Heimat style’ and ‘mass kitsch’. To underline Alexander Koch’s role in Germany’s tradition of ‘conscious modernity’ Eckstein quoted from the editor’s foreword to the 48th year of the magazine in which Koch saw the work of the *Innen-Dekoration* ‘flow into a today that is animated by new strengths.’ Eckstein did not mention the year in which the foreword was written: 1937. In the foreword to the 1938 volume Koch, who would die in January 1939, praised the Third Reich’s plans for residential construction and living spaces by summarizing the essential role of ‘form’ for the Nazi project: ‘This is how, piece by piece, the great achievement in form is put together, that the Third Reich has chosen as its task: the task of a total moulding of the German people [...]’.⁴⁶

In the following numbers of *Architektur und Wohnform* many articles reiterated the invented truth of modern design’s complete absence during Nazism while others presented furniture programs which were virtually identical to the Nazi programs the magazine had reported on before 1945.⁴⁷ A similar rewriting of Werkbund’s and modern design’s recent history also happened in the magazine *Baukunst und Werkform*, which was founded in 1946. In its first number, the editorial combined a praise for the Werkbund ideas with the reiterated lie that its work ‘was killed’ in 1933. The article lifted the ‘good form’ from any possible connection with

the political realm by stating that, in the deep crisis of Germany's breakdown, it should be promoted everywhere because the issue was 'not about taste' but about a moral expression of 'neatness and honesty.'⁴⁸

Given that the Nazi politicization of modern design was simply denied, it is not surprising that some ideas about the organic wholeness and superior morality of German national culture and its inherent exclusionism continued for a while to serve as a relevant reference frame. When, in the 1949 catalogue to the Werkbund exhibition, the human being at the centre of the modern aesthetic principles was defined as 'something definitive, that is above time, like the *Volk*' and when it was contrasted with 'a bad class of human being,' namely 'a human being without taste', the parameters of this frame appear to have been intact. When Jupp Ernst proclaimed modern design as the remedy that could prevent Germany from becoming a 'half-colonial raw material supplier' the logic derived from a thinking in which Germany's superior aesthetics had legitimated its claim to dominate – or colonize – culturally inferior peoples.⁴⁹

At the same time, the place ascribed to the Nazi regime within modern design's rigid moral dichotomy shifted radically after 1945. Presented as the enemy of modern design, National Socialism itself was situated outside the modern even if this meant contradicting or denying a huge area of historical reality. The good form's other was identified with Nazism precisely by sticking to the basic tenets of a Manichaeic thinking which had previously underpinned the design discourse of the Third Reich. Once this shift had established itself, the de-historicized purity and superior morality of the 'good form' could give shape to the Federal Republic's new version of moral and aesthetic superiority as a member of the post-war West.

Architektur und Wohnform saw the possibility of such an international repositioning early on. In 1946, Eckstein claimed that other countries had continued to develop what was 'violently disrupted' in Germany. The magazine's second post-war number, published in 1948, focused on modern designers and architects in Sweden and the US and the magazine would continue to give ample attention to other western countries. The first Werkbund exhibition after the war also followed this strategy by starting with a section on examples from the US, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and France.⁵⁰ An article on the exhibition called for German professionals to make use of the 'credit' that Werkbund and Bauhaus enjoyed abroad.⁵¹

While various writers in early post-war West Germany were busy dissociating modern design from its Nazi entanglement, US American actors began associating modern design with the West.⁵² The United States played a major role after the war in determining modern design's Western political framing by organizing Marshall plan sponsored exhibitions across Europe.⁵³

In West Germany the US State Department developed its most successful strategy to promote the blessings of a modern home shaped by modern design in cooperation with the Museum of Modern Art in New York. By 1952 it was an accepted truth that the Werkbund had been banned during the Third Reich.⁵⁴ Simultaneously ‘America’ and the idea of a post-war ‘West’ became an important component of German modern design’s new historical narrative.

As Greg Castillo has shown in his work, the 1952 exhibition ‘We are building a better life’ (fig. 3), played a particular role for the political interpretation of modern design in West Germany. The exhibition was the last and most successful of a series of exhibitions on the modern home organized since 1948 by the US State Department under the umbrella of the Marshall Plan. The aim was to convince visitors that productivity and free trade was the best solution for Europe’s economic problems as opposed to the socialist model of the East. In 1951, one of these exhibitions was realized in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art in New York and focused on American modern design household objects as ‘the culmination of pioneering German efforts such as [...] the work of the German Werkbund and the legacy of Bauhaus design.’⁵⁵

For the 1952 exhibition ‘We are building a better life’, the State Department used the focus on modern design in order to present a post-war Western version of the ideal home. Many commodities of the exhibited model house were manufactured in Germany, France and Italy.⁵⁶ A board declared:

‘The objects in this house are industrial products from many countries in the Atlantic community. Thanks to technology, rising productivity, economic cooperation and free enterprise, these objects are available to *our western civilization*.’ [emphasis added].

More than half a million visitors saw an exhibition that intertwined the idea of ‘the West’ with the idea of a recognizably modern aesthetics of everyday life. An official press release stated: ‘just as these items from the various countries combine to form a *homogenous whole*, so the nations themselves can combine to form a *homogenous community*’ [emphasis added].⁵⁷ The new narrative about the modern shape of the West under American leadership thus provided a framework that could absorb a German legacy whose enmeshment in Nazi culture had dropped from view. With the exhibition a new and decisively post-war context for modern design was introduced to the public under the guidance and with the official blessing of the major occupation power and new leader of the West, the USA.

Western aesthetic homogeneity

In *Baukunst und Werkform* Alfons Leidl rejoiced that the exhibition's political project of 'defending western culture' was a return to the dream of 'old Werkbund fighters'.⁵⁸ Leidl was not the only one pleased about the possibility to continue an old Werkbund dream in the framework of the West. The question is: what kind of dream are we talking about? Heinrich König's praise for the 'We are building a better life' exhibition in *Architektur und Wohnform* was quite sober, yet still emphasized the impression of homogeneity that emanated from the international furnishing of the 'ideal home'. He found 'the uniformly fresh and light spirit' which 'animates all these objects' especially gratifying and highlighted the 'big number of German products.'⁵⁹

In his introduction to the book *Die schöne Wohnung* (1952), architect Guido Harbers pointed to countries like Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and the US, which, next to Germany, also cultivated good principles of design 'in a new way, adapted to today's living needs.' Harbers added however, that a 'uniform society', which would adopt the attitude behind such principles, was 'still missing'. In the post-war context, such a hoped for 'uniform society' merged with the West. Harbers also referred to the Ramersdorf settlement in Munich as a model. He neither mentioned, however, that he himself had been responsible for Ramersdorf, nor that it was presented in 1934 as a 'model settlement' of the National Socialist regime.⁶⁰

The 1954 editorial of the magazine *magnum*'s first number echoed older Werkbund ideas in the way it reformulated a totalizing vision of society as an organic whole. An emphatic 'we' excluded everybody who did not embrace modern aesthetics. The editorial stated 'We embody a new historic type of human' and called anybody a 'misfit' who 'convulsively evades this development.'⁶¹ The aesthetic modern was established as a characteristic of the post-war western hemisphere and placed in stark contrast both to the Nazi past and to the communist regimes of the present. The images presented modern design and architecture from various western countries. The captions informed the readers about the objects' designers and their national origin, the juxtaposition of images informed them about the fact that they were looking at an aesthetically consistent appearance of the West.⁶²

On the occasion of the international architecture exhibition *Interbau* which took place in 1957 in Berlin, the local branch of the Werkbund published a book documenting the

exhibition's interior designs. The text claimed that, due the 'participation of 53 leading architects [...] from all over the world', the project was marked by 'a global harmony'. Extrapolating this 'world' from western European and US-American interior designers, the book hailed their work for establishing an organic relationship between the domestic space and 'the human being of today.'⁶³ Although reassuring readers that there was no intention to 'regulate' taste, the text deemed the 'dominance' of 'kitsch' in the commercial sphere highly dangerous, especially for the youth.⁶⁴ The stylistic homogeneity of the model interiors appeared like the dreamscape of an ideal social world without any deviation. What did not harmonize with these designed spaces was seen as a moral catastrophe in danger of falling outside the social itself.

Redeeming (white) modernity

The international character of modern design, propagated in the context of the Marshall plan, provided a framework, greenlighted by Germany's occupation powers, to reformulate on a supra-national level assumptions about the relationship between the aesthetics of everyday objects and an undisturbed social homogeneity that had previously been regarded as the proper form for the German nation and, more outspokenly during National Socialism, of the 'race', be it Aryan, Nordic or white. The manner in which post-war German design professionals and journalists since 1946 rewrote, misrepresented and effectively denied and disavowed modern design's history under National Socialism, turned the sphere of form once again into a redeeming force with which West Germany would be able to reconstruct itself after the lost war not only as a material, but also as a political, social and moral entity. Even more, the distortion and denial was the necessary condition for the 'good form' to acquire its redemptive meaning. There is irony in the fact that a Manichaeian significance similar to the post-war good form had previously featured in Nazi programs that referred to modern design as a cultural force for forging a racial community in a new, German dominated Europe. While an explicit language of race was absent from post-war West German discourses, the specific way in which modern design was reintroduced in the West German public arguably produced a complicated, ambivalent and opaque legacy.

By being successfully de-historicized and dissociated from its own pre-history, modern design became a myth that could create the phantasmagoria of a timeless, hermetical social

world without any proper entry-points for direct criticism. Early post-war discourses and the Marshall plan had cleared the path for modern design to be used in order to create a dream of social homogeneity suitable for the ‘economic miracle’. Modern design was not only promoted by the state through institutions like the German Design Council. In an increasingly commercialized public sphere consumers were told on a massive scale that decorating their apartments in the right ‘modern’ manner was a crucial way to realize their self and to belong to an implicitly national, and at times transnational, ‘we’.⁶⁵

In this way post-war West Germans were invited to embrace a modernity that stood in a self-evident opposition to *a* past. This rejected past, however, did not clearly overlap with Nazi culture. The idea of the post-war modern home resided in a foggy historical sphere which was called ‘timeless’. In this sphere pre-1945 dreams of cultural homogeneity could merge with the versions proclaimed in the context of the Marshall plan. As a result, a powerful myth established itself of a modern aesthetic order that represented a harmonious German world outside of history. Karl Pawek’s words, quoted at the beginning, may be read as pointing to his latent awareness of the fact that the supposed moral purity of the ‘good form’ concealed a morally ambivalent reality, to say the least. And Pawek should know. As many other journalists of the post-war era, he had not only lived through but also actively participated in Nazi culture.⁶⁶

On the basis of the above analysis it also becomes possible to begin noticing an implicit racial coding of post-war modernity. In a western context of a dominant ‘colonizing culture’ which only gradually began to show cracks due to decolonization, modern design’s meaning as the good form of the post-war West was seamlessly compatible with a worldview built on the assumption of white supremacy.⁶⁷ While the US promoted the modern home abroad, the imaginary and practice of modern homes in the growing American suburbs reflected the structural racial segregation that continued in new forms.⁶⁸ Against this background, it cannot be a surprise that Alexander Koch junior included an example from South Africa in his 1955 volume on international modern architecture and interior design. According to Koch, the South-African house could just as well be found in Germany, because ‘the ideas about modern dwelling and living are obviously shared by the progressive people in the whole world’ adding that ‘this thought produces much hope and somehow, in the subconscious, the believe in a further true-to-life organic development of our human community.’⁶⁹ That South Africa was ruled by a system called apartheid since 1948 which had generated international criticism did not produce any contradiction. It was obviously self-evident for Koch, and presumably for most

of the book's readers, that the 'human community' he spoke of so emphatically was supposed to be white.

¹ Karl Pawek, 'Wirklichkeit ist mehr als ein Mythos,' *magnum*, April 1961, 64.

² To name only a few titles from an extensive field of research: Penny Sparke, 'A Home for Everybody?' Design, Ideology and the Culture of the Home in Italy, 1945-1972' in Paul Greenhalgh (ed), *Modernism in Design*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), pp. 185-203; Freddie Floré and Mil de Kooning, 'The Representation of Modern Domesticity in the Belgian Section of the Brussels World's Fair of 1958' *Journal of Design History*, 16:4 (2003), pp. 319-340; Greg Barnhisel, 'Perspectives USA and the Cultural Cold War. Modernism in Services of the State', *Modernism / Modernity*, 14:4 (2007), pp. 729-754; David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (eds), *Cold War Modern Design 1945-1970* (London: V&A Publishing, 2008); Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (eds), *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008); Natalie Scholz and Milena Veenis, 'Cold War Modernism and Postwar German Homes. An East-West Comparison', in Peter Romijn et al. (eds), *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 155-180.

³ Winfried Nerdinger (ed), *Bauhaus-Moderne im Nationalsozialismus. Zwischen Anbiederung und Verfolgung* (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1993); Stefanie Schäfers, *Vom Werkbund zum Vierjahresplan. Die Ausstellung 'Schaffendes Volk', Düsseldorf 1937* (Düsseldorf: Droste-Verlag, 2001); Kathleen James-Chakraborty (ed), *Bauhaus-Culture. From Weimar to the Cold War* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Kathleen James-Chakraborty, 'Beyond Cold War Interpretations: Shaping a New Bauhaus Heritage', *New German Critique* 39 (2012), pp. 11-24; Michael Tymkiw, *Nazi Exhibition Design and Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

⁴ Joan Campbell, *The German Werkbund. The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 243-287; Sabine Weißler (ed), *Design in Deutschland 1933-45. Ästhetik und Organisation des Deutschen Werkbundes im 'Dritten Reich'* (Gießen: Anabas-Verlag, 1990); Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects. A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 23-72; Sabine Zentek, *Designer im Dritten Reich. Gute Formen sind eine Frage der richtigen Haltung* (Dortmund: Lelesken-Verlag, 2009); Michel Lingohr, 'Die letzte ideologische Bastion? Der nationalsozialistische Angriff auf den Haushalt', in: Museumsverband des Landes Brandenburg (ed), *Entnazifizierte Zone? Zum Umgang mit der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus in ostdeutschen Stadt- und Regionalmuseen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015), pp 93-110.

⁵ Ellie Tschauner, 'Zum Sieg der Guten Form. WK-Verband und Reichsheimstättenamt als Wegbereiter,' *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 5, 1940, pp. 152-153.

⁶ Campbell, *Der Deutsche Werkbund*, pp. 275-76; Weißler, 'Worum es geht', in: Weißler (ed), *Design in Deutschland 1933-45*, pp. 8-9; Dieter Högermann, 'Gretsch, Hermann', in: Andreas Beyer et al. ed., *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon – Internationale Künstlerdatenbank – Online*, De Gruyter. On Gretsch' influence under National Socialism see also Lingohr, 'Die letzte ideologische Bastion?' and Xenia Riemann, 'Die 'Gute Form' und ihr Inhalt. Über die Kontinuität des sachlichen deutschen Designs zwischen 1930 und 1960', *kritische berichte*, 1 (2006), pp. 52-62.

⁷ See also Nancy R. Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation. Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (Cambridge University Press 2007).

⁸ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 2, 3, 7.

⁹ Christopher Oestereich, ‚Gute Form‘ im Wiederaufbau. *Zur Geschichte der Produktgestaltung in Westdeutschland nach 1945* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2000); Paul Betts, ‚The Nierentisch Nemesis: Organic Design as West German Pop Culture,‘ *German History*, 19:2 (2001), pp. 185-217; Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*; Johannes Paulmann, ‚Representation without emulation. German cultural diplomacy in search of integration and self-assurance during the Adenauer era,‘ *German politics and society*, 25:2 (2007), pp. 168-200; Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front. The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Greg Castillo, ‚Making a Spectacle of Restraint. The Deutschland Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels Exposition,‘ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47:1 (2011), pp. 97-119.

¹⁰ See Selle, *Geschichte des Design in Deutschland* (Frankfurt/M.: Campus Verlag, 1984), 238-240 and 244.

¹¹ On denial in history see Catherine Hall and Daniel Pick, ‚Thinking about Denial,‘ *History Workshop Journal* 84:1 (2017), pp. 1-23.

¹² Pawek, ‚Wirklichkeit ist mehr als ein Mythos,‘ p. 64.

¹³ On how Bauhaus acquired its sacrosanct status in the early 1950s see Paul Betts, ‚The Bauhaus as Cold-War Legend. West German Modernism revisited,‘ *German Politics and Society* 14:2 (1996), pp. 75-100.

¹⁴ ‚Ein Aufruf des Deutschen Werkbundes,‘ *Die Gegenwart*, vol. 2, n. 7/8, March 1947, p. 24.

¹⁵ Quoted in Campbell, *Der Deutsche Werkbund*, 260.

¹⁶ Theodor Heuss, ‚Der Werkbund vor neuen Aufgaben,‘ *Vossische Zeitung*, 10 June 1933, p. 6.

¹⁷ ‚Die Stunde des Werkbundes,‘ *Frankfurter Hefte*, n. 2, Mai 1946, pp. 88-90.

¹⁸ ‚Was kostet die Einrichtung einer Zweieinhalb-Zimmer-Wohnung?,‘ *Mittelbayrische Zeitung*, n. 121, 19 October 1949, pp. 6-7.

¹⁹ *Werkbund-Ausstellung Neues Wohnen Deutsche Architektur seit 1945, Köln 1949, 14. Mai bis 3. Juli* (unpaginated).

²⁰ In 1952, Rudolf Schwarz would publish a polemical article which attacked the rigid functionalism of the Bauhaus and Gropius and associated it with Nazi aesthetics, unleashing a heated debate which ultimately helped to establish Bauhaus‘ sacred symbolical status in West Germany for decades to come, Betts, ‚The Bauhaus as Cold-War Legend,‘ and Winfried Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius. Architekt der Mdoerne 1884-1969* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2019), 332-335.

²¹ Zentek, *Designer im Dritten Reich*, pp. 291-316; Magdalena Droste, ‚Bauhaus-Designer zwischen Handwerk und Moderne,‘ in: Nerdinger (ed), *Bauhaus Moderne im Nationalsozialismus*, pp. 85-101; John Heskett, ‚Art and Design in Nazi Germany,‘ *History Workshop*, 6:1 (1978), pp. 139-153, 146; Riemann, ‚Die „Gute Form“ und ihr Inhalt,‘ p. 55 and Markus Eisen, ‚Wilhelm Wagenfeld und Hermann Gretsch,‘ in: Winfried Nerdinger (ed), *100 Jahre Deutscher Werkbund 1907-2007*, exhibition catalogue (Munich: Prestel, 2007), pp. 206-207.

²² R. B. ‚Die Wahrheit der Architektur. Von der Leipziger Bauausstellung zur Constructa, Hannover,‘ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 February 1951, p. 15.

²³ Harold Theile, ‚137 Wohngeräte wünschen Einheirat,‘ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 August 1951, p. 3.

²⁴ Edith Nowak, ‚Von alten Träumen und von neuen Möbeln,‘ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 March 1953, *Bilder und Zeiten*, p. 6.

²⁵ This point was made by Jennifer Jenkins, ‚The Werkbund Exhibition “The New Age” of 1932,‘ in: Geoff Eley, Jennifer Jenkins and Tracie Matysik (eds), *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar* (2016), pp. 283-300.

²⁶ Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, 231 and 234.

²⁷ Jennifer Jenkins, 'The Citizen at Home. *Wohnkultur* before World War I', in Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski (eds), *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Stanford/CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 95-107 (104).

²⁸ Mark Jarzombek, 'The „Kunstgewerbe“, the „Werkbund“, and the Aesthetics of Culture in the Wilhelmine Period', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (1994) 53:1, 7-19 (14-15, 11).

²⁹ Hardtwig, 'Kunst, liberaler Nationalismus und Weltpolitik. Der Deutsche Werkbund 1907 bis 1914', in Wolfgang Hardtwig (ed), *Nationalismus und Bürgerkultur in Deutschland 1500-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), pp. 246-273; John Maciuika, *Before the Bauhaus. Architecture, Politics and the German State, 1890-1920* (Cambridge UP, 2005), pp. 248-282; Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 353-356; Jarzombek, 'The "Kunstgewerbe", the "Werkbund", and the Aesthetics of Culture in the Wilhelmine Period,' pp. 13, 16 and 18.

³⁰ Jarzombek, 'The „Kunstgewerbe,‘ p. 16. In this passage, Jarzombek quotes Karl Schmidt, one of the creators of Werkbund.

³¹ Emphasizing these aspects does not make this cultural movement a *Sonderweg* phenomenon that necessarily lead to Nazism, but points to the potential of exclusion engrained in this, but also in other European country's aesthetic reform projects similarly influenced by essentialist ideas of the nation at the apex of European imperialism. Elise Marie Moentmann, 'The Search for French Identity in the Regions: National versus Local Visions of France in the 1930s', *French History*, 17:3 (2003), pp. 307-327. See also Anthony King, *Spaces of Global Cultures. Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 161-186.

³² Especially before 1933, the Nazi *Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur* attacked some ideas of the Werkbund using the catchword 'Kulturbolschewismus'. Later on, Nazi policy distanced itself from these accusations. Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, pp. 227-28.

³³ Hermann Gretsch, 'Kunst und Kunsthandwerk am Bau', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 6, 1936, 371-374 (372-73).

³⁴ Wilhelm Michel, 'Raumkunst im Lebensdienst', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 2, 1940, pp. 52-53 (53).

³⁵ Betts observes that 'West Germany's design culture insisted on grounding design in humanist morality, since this was certainly one ideology that the Nazis disdainfully trampled underfoot'. Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, p. 12.

³⁶ H. R., 'Haus und Hausrat in der Siedlung', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 6, 1937, 213-216 (216). See also 'Die Wohnweise und ihre kulturelle Grundlage', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 3, 1939, pp. 79-81.

³⁷ Wilhelm Michel, 'Wir und die Dinge', *Innendekoration*, n. 6, 1939, 135-36 (135).

³⁸ Hermann Gretsch, 'Deutsches Wohnen', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 7, 1939, 225-232 (228 and 232); see also 'Ausstellung „Deutsches Wohnen 1939“', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 7, 1939, 233-237. On the 'never ending stream of exhibitions' on arts and crafts as well as design during the Third Reich see Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *Art under Dictatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 131.

³⁹ 'Auf dem Weg zu einer neuen Wohnkultur. Stoffe mit dem Zeichen „DAF Haus und Heim“', *Arbeitertum*, 15 June 1939, p. 6.

⁴⁰ 'Deutscher Hausrat', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 5, 1940, 155-56 (155).

⁴¹ Hermann Gretsch, 'Deutschland auf der VII. Triennale in Mailand', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 7, 1940, 191-194 (194).

⁴² Wilhelm Michel, 'Gedanken über das Schöne', *Innen-Dekoration*, n. 7, 1940, 209-211 (210-11).

⁴³ 'Eindrücke aus dem Sowjetparadies. Die Sowjetbauten Zeugen der kommunistischen Gleichmacherei – Von einer Wohnkultur keine Spur – Menschen, die das Lachen verlernten', *Südostdeutsche Tageszeitung*, 14 August 1942, 5; 'Warschauer Steine erzählen. Die geschichtliche Vergangenheit – Truppen in Warschau – Glanz und Verfall – Das Ghetto eine schwere Belastung – Amerikanische Hochhäuser, niedrige Wohnkultur', *Banater Deutsche Zeitung*, 6

October 1939, 4; Michaela Kipp, ‚Grossreinemachen im Osten‘. *Feindbilder in deutschen Feldpostbriefen im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2014), 374.

⁴⁴ On the influence of Nazi design programs on everyday perceptions see Lehmann-Haupt, *Art under Dictatorship*, pp. 128-129 and Heinz Boberach (ed), *Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938-1945*, vol. 9 (Herrsching: Pawlak Verlag, 1984), pp. 3476-3479.

⁴⁵ Campbell even states that, ‘certain aspect of the Werkbund program secured greater government support in the Third Reich than they had commanded in the Weimar years.’ Campbell, *The German Werkbund*, p. 285.

⁴⁶ Alexander Koch, ‚Zum fünfzigsten Jahrestag‘, *Innen-Dekoration*, 1939 (editorial of the volume). ‚Alexander Koch‘, in *Deutsche Biographie*, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/ppn118967029.html> (25 August 2021).

⁴⁷ See for instance Richard Döcker, ‚Das verlorene Niveau‘, *Architektur und Wohnform*, n. 2, December 1949, p. 33 and E. Schirmer, ‚Möbel der Neuen Gemeinschaft für Wohnkultur‘, *Architektur und Wohnform*, n. 2, December 1949, pp. 46-50.

⁴⁸ ‚Anmerkungen zur Zeit‘, *Baukunst und Werkform*, n. 1, 1947, pp. 3-7.

⁴⁹ *Werkbund-Ausstellung Neues Wohnen*.

⁵⁰ Wera Meyer-Waldeck, ‚Werkbund-Ausstellung „Neues Wohnen“ Köln 1949‘, *Architektur und Wohnform*, n. 6, 1949, pp. 121-128.

⁵¹ Werner Witthaus, ‚Ein Bauhaus-Tapeten-Pavillon auf der dwb-Ausstellung in Köln‘, 129-132 (131 and 129).

⁵² This was probably influenced by a perception of Bauhaus in the US as expressing ‘basic American values such as freedom and democracy.’ See Gregor Langfeld, *German Art in New York. The Canonization of Modern Art 1904-1957*, translated by Steven Lindberg (Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 111-116 (116).

⁵³ Gay Macdonald, ‚Selling the American Dream. MoMA, Industrial Design and Post-War France‘, *Journal of Design History* 17:4 (2004), pp. 397-412; Gay McDonald, ‚The Modern American Home as Soft Power: Finland, MoMA and the “American Home 1953”‘, *Journal of Design History* 23:3 (2010), pp. 387-408; Gay McDonald, ‚The “advance” of American Postwar Design in Europe: MoMA and the Design for Use, USA Exhibition 1951-1953‘, *Design Issues* 24:2 (2008): pp. 15-27.

⁵⁴ “Werk und Zeit“. Neues vom Deutschen Werkbund‘, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 April 1952, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Castillo, ‚Domesticating the Cold War‘, pp. 261-288 (271-72).

⁵⁶ Castillo, ‚Domesticating the Cold War‘, p. 274.

⁵⁷ Quoted in: Greg Castillo, ‚East as True West. Redeeming Bourgeois Culture. From Socialist Realism to Ostalgie‘, in *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 9:4 (2008), 747-68 (752).

⁵⁸ Alfons Leitl, ‚Die Wohnkultur der Westlichen Völker‘, *Baukunst und Werkform*, n. 12, December 1952, pp. 39-41 (39 and 41). With an emphasis on the German part of the story similar to Leitl see Godo Remszhardt, ‚Neues Bauen in den USA‘, *Baukunst und Werkform*, July 1951, pp. 50-52.

⁵⁹ Heinrich König, ‚Ausstellung: “Wir bauen ein besseres Leben.“ Organisiert von der atlantischen Gemeinschaft auf dem Gebiet des Wohnbedarfs‘, *Architektur und Wohnform*, n. 3, February 1953, pp. 87-91.

⁶⁰ Guido Harbers, *Die schöne Wohnung* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 6th edition 1952), p. 5. Harbers, a Nazi party member, had been Munich’s officer for residential construction during the Third Reich. On Harbers and Ramersdorf see Ulrike Haerendel, *Kommunale Wohnungspolitik im Dritten Reich*, (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), especially pp. 71-79, 251-264, 429-30.

⁶¹ ‚Wieso modern‘, *magnum*, n. 1, 1953, pp. 25-26.

⁶² A slight Germanic emphasis found its way into the captions, too, by presenting Richard Neutra, an American citizen of Jewish Austrian descent, as ‘the Austrian architect in the USA’, *magnum*, n. 1, 1953, p. 7.

⁶³ Deutscher Werkbund Berlin (ed), *Wohnen in unserer Zeit. Wohnungsgestaltung der Interbau* (Darmstadt: Verlag Das Beispiel), pp. 2-3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

⁶⁵ This description is based on extensive research of magazines such as *Brigitte*, *Constanze* and also *Quick* and *Stern*. A few examples: ‘Wie modern sind wir eigentlich?’, *Brigitte*, n. 6, March 1954, pp. 4-6; ‘Warum denn so verschnörkelt?’, *Constanze*, n. 3, February, 1953, pp. 48-49; ‘Wunschhaus wurde Wirklichkeit,’ *Constanze*, n. 16, July 1954, pp. 90-91; ‘Bereits jede 3. Frau wünscht sich eine helle und moderne Wohnung’, Braun radio and tv set advertisement, *Brigitte*, n. 21, October 1955, p. 47. The big ad campaign of Musterring furniture exemplified this tendency particularly clearly, see e.g. ‘Wie lange sind sie schon verheiratet?’, Musterring advertisement, *Constanze*, n. 8, 4 April 1956, p. 83; ‘Der schönste Abend – der Feierabend,’ Musterring advertisement, *Quick*, n. 37, 14 September 1957, p. 39.

⁶⁶ Pawek had founded the right wing Austrian cultural magazine *die pause* in 1935 and had transformed it into a periodical with propagandist content during the Third Reich, before he became, in 1954, the co-founder and frequent contributor to the magazine *magnum*. See Margaarethe Szeless, *Die Kulturzeitschrift magnum. Photographische Befunde der Moderne* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2007), p. 9. See also Timm Starl, ‘Die Kehrseite der Geschichte. Karl Pawek: Priesterzögling, Zeitschriftengründer, NSDAP-Anwärter, Kriegsverbrecher, Psychopath, Ausstellungsmacher, Kulturpreisträger’, *Fotogeschichte*, 87 (2003), pp. 65-69.

⁶⁷ I borrow the term colonizing culture from Stuart Hall, see Stuart Hall, with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger. A Life Between Two Islands* (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 250. For a recent reflection on the interconnection of decolonization and post-fascism for post-war consumer myths in West Germany and other western countries see recently Natalie Scholz, ‘Ghosts and Miracles. The Volkswagen as Imperial Debris in Postwar West Germany’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 62:3 (2020), pp. 487-519, especially pp. 514-519.

⁶⁸ Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses. How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

⁶⁹ Alexander Koch, *Praktisch Bauen + schön Wohnen = glücklich Leben* (Stuttgart: Alexander Koch, 1955), p. 46.