

THE BAUHAUS-ARCHIVE

by Hans M. Wingler

The Bauhaus-archive was founded in Darmstadt in May 1960; it has been built up step by step since the summer of the same year, and it was opened officially in April 1961. So it is still in the early stages. At present, it has eight workrooms and exhibition rooms, not counting the storehouse. The room capacity will be increased when it is needed. I expect it to grow over the next few years to the size of a medium museum. The Bauhaus-archive is an institution based on private initiative, but to the greater part financed with public funds.

The Bauhaus-archive is a research institute devoting itself to the task of documenting and examining the history of the Bauhaus, including its prehistory all the way back to the middle of the 19th century and its influence up to the present. Of course, the method of historical analysis by which we proceed here, always leads to the question of the present value of the things and phenomena we examine : What do they mean to us today, what do we learn in dealing with them that we could apply to our present situation? At this point, the Bauhaus-archive becomes an instance of criticism supplementing the "Institute for New Technical Forms and the "Council for Form and Design", both of which are its close neighbours in Darmstadt on the Mathildenhöhe.

The field of interest of the Bauhaus-archive comprises architecture, handicraft, industrial design, art paedagogy, and the free and applied arts including marginal disciplines as long as there is a historical or a spiritual connection with the ideas the Bauhaus stood for. As the name itself indicates, the archive collects records, if possible the originals, but in many cases, of course, it will have to be content with copies and photos. Especially the library is built up under the larger aspect of the history and the development. At present, it is the neuralgic point of the Bauhaus-archive, but it will soon be first -class. A museum department will be attached to the archive in the narrow sense and to the library to illustrate the different stages of development since 1850 with the use of selected objects and of didactic graphs. At first, the museum part will be limited to two rooms, the "Staatliche Bauhaus in Weimar" and the "Bauhaus Dessau". Special exhibitions arranged for in our own rooms will make you acquainted with special topics such as lamps and textiles - and with the individual artists. The first special exhibition showed the paintings of the typographer Herbert Bayer who studied at the Bauhaus and lives

today in the United States. For the next few months, the programme provides for the paintings of Xanti Schawinsky (New York) and the architecture of Walter Gropius, etc. The exhibitions emphasize the idea of a synthesis, a universal unity of art also in the political sense.

In lectures some of which are to be included in a series of publications continuing the "Bauhaus books" of the twenties, prominent speakers from all over the world will give their view, above all, on problems of the liberal arts. The cardinal question asked repeatedly reads in a nutshell : Can the retrospective orientation of Historism be overcome or has it probably been overcome already? Who knows the answer to it? Looking at Louis Sullivan's buildings in Chicago of 1890 one would have liked to swear that a new creative era, free of all the burdens of historical knowledge, had begun, and yet the paroxysm of imitations of style was still waiting for us. Around 1900, there is an increasing number of symptoms for a dawning new era. Especially in Paris, there are young painters and groups of painters who create a revolutionary visual form of expression. There are the different strongholds of the "Jugendstil" - Glasgow, Brussels, Nancy, Vienna, Weimar, and finally Darmstadt, too, where thanks of the initiative of the Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig and a group of avant-gardist architects, sculptors, and painters a skyline grew on the Mathildenhöhe, a hill on the outskirts of the city, which materialized the idea of the unity of the arts under the primacy of architecture as it was later postulated by the Bauhaus. Thus Darmstadt seemed to be qualified in a special way as the location of the Bauhaus-archive, since Weimar and Dessau, both situated outside the territory of the Federal Republic, are ruled out.

Also none of the endeavours of the Bauhaus, neither the aesthetic ones nor the paedagogic or social ones, each one taken separately, are unique. They are on the contrary typical of their time, and they are connected with other phenomena such as the Dutch "Stijl". It is the synthesis of ideas which made the Bauhaus to be something unique and which gives it such splendour and symbolic power. This synthesis has been achieved here through the cooperation of architects and artists in spite of all individual differences and contrasts.

It goes without saying that a scientific institute like the Bauhaus-archive sponsors neither personal nor national interests, but that it sees its only purpose in the finding of objective facts and in the promotion of a better mutual understanding.