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| Scharoun, Hans Bernhard Henry (1893-1972) |
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| Born in Bremen and raised in Bremerhaven, Hans Bernhard Henry Scharoun was a German architect and major proponent of expressionist and organic architecture. He studied for several years at the Technical University of Berlin, but his studies were interrupted by the beginning of WWI in 1914. Following WWI, Scharoun worked on reconstruction in East Prussia and as a freelance architect. Prior to the Second World War, Scharoun’s building activity covered East Prussia, Wroclaw (Breslau), and Berlin; after 1945 he continued his work in West Germany. In the revolutionary atmosphere following WWI, Scharoun became a member of the short-lived expressionist group Gläserne Kette (Glass Chain). In 1926 he joined the architectural association Der Ring (The Ring), which promoted Neues Bauen (New Building), and was engaged with private and public housing projects until 1933. During the Second World War Scharoun remained in Germany, working on only a few residential commissions. The Soviet military government made him city architect of Berlin in 1945-46, after which he accepted a professorship at the Technical University Berlin. Scharoun had a prolific later building career, beginning in the mid-1950s; however, it was cut short by his death on November 25 1972, in Berlin. |
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The Soviet military government made him city architect of Berlin in 1945-46, after which he accepted a professorship at the Technical University Berlin. Scharoun had a prolific later building career, beginning in the mid-1950s; however, it was cut short by his death on November 25 1972, in Berlin.  [File: Scharoun .jpg]  Figure 1 Hans Scharoun  Source: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_OeB6J0ROTlY/TO1GF7iBTdI/AAAAAAAAABw/-qgX9ls_x64/s1600/scharoun2.jpg>  Scharoun was a part of the general expressionist trend in Germany during the 1920s, producing many drawings and watercolours of dynamically formed buildings of utopian character, including drawings produced for the Hygiene Museum competition in Dresden (1920). The crystalline forms of the museum drawings and of several other sketches reflect Scharoun’s relation to the group Gläserne Kette. The designs of the competition entries for an office building in the Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, and for the stock exchange in Königsberg (1921-22) tend more strongly to organic shapes, displaying a vertical and horizontal dynamism that express the circulation within the buildings. These designs relect Scharoun’s connection to Hugo Häring’s ideas of ‘organic building’ and of an ‘organic functionalism’, according to which the building, understood like a second skin or organ, is developed from inside out while avoiding the use of right angles.  The years 1926-33 are known as the ‘white period’ and reflect the inspiration of nautical motifs. Despite the motifs being a common feature of the machine aesthetics and modern housing design of the 1920s, they might also be traced back, in Scharoun’s case, to his youth in Bremerhaven. Following the trend set by the Neues Bauen, Sharoun’s designs became more objective; nonetheless, Scharoun preserved an expressive language. Several housing projects prove his interest in the creation of homogeneous dwelling-cells and in the mediation between individual and community. The Hostel for Singles and Newly Married Couples at the Werkbund exhibition in Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland; 1928-29), and two single-family house at the Weissenhof exhibition Die Wohnung (The Dwelling) and in Löbau, Saxony (1927/1933), stand out as particular examples of this interest.  [File: Schmink.jpg]  Figure 2 Schminke House, Löbau, Saxony (1933)  Source: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cc/Haus_Schminke_L%C3%B6bau.JPG>  In contrast to many German avant-garde architects, Scharoun stayed in Germany during the Nazi period, during which he completed 20 single-family houses, including the house Baensch in Berlin (1934-35). These projects had inconspicuous exteriors, but interior designs that reflected progressive concepts of ‘organic building’ with overlapping dwelling processes and a ‘middle room’ for community life. In the years 1939-45 Scharoun did not build, instead returning to his expressionist beginnings with around 100 drawings of architectural visions.  In the decades after 1945 Scharoun preserved his expressionist, dynamic, anti-cubic style in projects and was commissioned to build schools, theatres, mass housing, and other public engagements, thus mediating some of the expressionist heritage from the pre-war to the post-war era. His ‘middle room’ concept, developed in the 1930s, persisted as well, and was expanded in his celebrated Berlin Philharmonic (1956-63) into the concept ‘music in the centre.’  [File: Berlin Philharmonic.jpg]  Figure 3 Berlin Philarmonic, Berlin, Germany (1956-63)  Source: <http://c1038.r38.cf3.rackcdn.com/group2/building15211/media/02cyfxv.jpg>   List of Works: Single-family house, Weissenhof exhibition Die Wohnung (the Dwelling), Stuttgart (1927)  Hostel for Singles and Newly Married Couples, Werkbund exhibition, Breslau (1928-29)  Schminke House, Löbau, Saxony (1933)  Baensch House, Berlin (1934-35)  Romeo & Julia, high rise apartments, Stuttgart-Zuffenhause (1954–59)  Berlin Philarmonic, Berlin (1956-63)  Institutes of the faculty for architecture of the Technical University, Berlin (1962–70)  Embassy for the Federal Republic of Germany, Brasilia (1964–71)  State Library, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Berlin (1964–78)  City Theatre, Wolfsburg (1965–73)  German Maritime Museum, Bremerhaven (1970–75) |
| Further reading:  (Frampton)  (Kruft)  (Kähler)  (Magnano and Schneider)  (Pehnt)  (Syring and Kirschenmann) |