



İ. Aslanoğlu



**BRUNO TAUT: MEISTER DES FARBIGEN BAUENS-  
BRUNO TAUT IN BERLIN, Anlässlich seines 125. Geburtstages /  
BRUNO TAUT: RENKLİ YAPILARIN USTASI BRUNO TAUT BERLİNDE,  
Bruno Taut'un 125. Doğum Yıldönümü Nedeniyle**

1. Text of the speech delivered by İnci Aslanoğlu on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition on Bruno Taut's work at the Exhibition Hall of the METU Library on April 15th, 2006 (open till the end of the month). Transcription by the Editor.

For previous articles on the work of Bruno Taut in the METU JFA, please see:

- Özkan, Suha (1975) Türk-Alman Dostluk Yurdu Öneri Yarışması / [Competition for the House of Friendship, 1916], *METU JFA*, v: 1, n: 2, Autumn 1975; 177-210.

- Aslanoğlu, İnci (1976) Dışavurumcu ve Uşçu Devirlerinde Bruno Taut (1880-1938) / [Expressionist and Rational Phases in Bruno Taut's Architectural Work], *METU JFA*, v: 2, n: 1, Spring 1976; 35-48.

This is the third time that I am attending an exhibition on Bruno Taut (1). The first one was in Berlin in 1980, on the occasion of his hundredth birthday. There I had the chance to meet with the son of Bruno Taut and his two daughters. The second exhibition accompanied by a seminar, was held at the Academy of Fine Arts in İstanbul, where Bruno Taut worked as a teacher. And this is the third time that I am here, and I am pleased to talk on a very renowned architect not only in Europe, and all over the world, but also in Turkey. Now Bruno Taut was a very well-known architect and a leader in Modern Movement during the first quarter of the twentieth century and he was also a very well-known architect in Turkey: In fact he has a very important place in Turkish architecture and its education, although he has stayed in Turkey limited only to the last two years of his life. Bruno Taut was a many-sided personality: he was a painter, an architect, a town-planner, a designer of objects of everyday use, a writer of manifestoes and books, and an educator. Before he left his country in

1932, we see that his architectural career can be seen in two distinct phases: we see him as an individualist, designing in the most extreme fantastic manners, whereas a decade later, in the 1920s, he was one of the leaders of the rationalist movement within the International Style.

Bruno Taut was born in 1880. In 1901, he was graduated from the Civil Technicians School in Königsberg, and between 1904 and 1906, he worked in the bureau of Theodor Fischer, who was a well-known German architect at the time in Germany. And between 1909 and 1910, he set up his bureau with Franz Hoffmann and his brother Max Taut. In 1910 he became a member of the Deutsche Werkbund. Between 1914 and 1922, he was seen within the utopic movement, through his projects in which he used coloured glass. Two books he wrote, displaying his fantastic schemes like the *Städtkrone* of 1917 and the *Alpine Architektur* of 1919. And we also see him during this spiritualistic phase or utopic phase involving himself in organisations such as the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst*, the *November Group* and the



*Glaserne Kette* or the *Glasschain Group*. These were the most emotional, courageous, daring and visionary years for Bruno Taut and we see him in a high state of individualism. One of the first works which was a turning point in his architectural life is a glass pavillion of 1914, which was designed in Köln for the Deutsche Werkbund Exposition. This small structure had new ideas for the future of architecture. First of all, in the use of new materials, like glass, iron, and concrete, and like a geodesic structure that he used for the dome of the Pavillion. In fact the Pavillion had a double shell dome of glass; the inner shell was completely of coloured glass, interior was furnished with coloured glass.

Now, in 1916, we see Taut coming in contact for the first time with Turkey; he came to İstanbul on the occasion of an international competition, the German-Turkish House of Friendship Competition, which was never realized because of the First World War. His proposal embodied ideas from his *Glass Architecture*, as well as the influences from the İstanbul mosques. Between 1919 and 1933, we see him as the organiser of a group of architects, under the name of the *Glaserne Kette*, or the *Glasschain* group of architects, visionary architects who also used glass as a medium to express their ideas in architecture, like Bruno Taut. Taut acted as a mediator between them and they kept in correspondence with one another through letters, these letters are



called the *Utopic Letters*, and they were later published in the magazine called *Frühlicht* by Bruno Taut. Taut in those early years of his Republic period used coloured glass in his fantastic schemes. He used coloured glass not only in his glass pavillion but in a project which was technologically impossible to built but was very imaginative: *Alpine Architecture*, in which he proposed to crown the summits of the Alpine mountains with crystal structures of coloured glass. At that time Taut was under the influence of the German poet Paul Scheerbach, and coloured glass, he believed depending upon Paul Scheerbach, had some spiritual movement and it brought happiness and drew out bad feelings. So colour had an important phase in his architecture later also. He used colour in fact in 1910s, as a period of coloured symbolism by Bruno Taut; he used colour because he believed that it would bring the joy of living, it had a social function more than aesthetic function, [it had] more than space forming function.

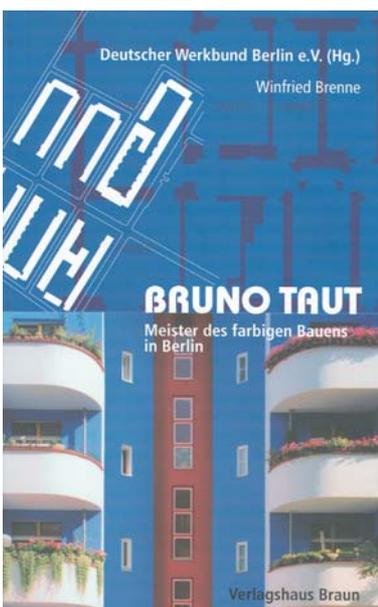
Bruno Taut became the city architect of Magdeburg between 1921 and 1924, and in 1922, we see a shift in his architectural understanding to 'real existence', to 'the actual problems' which required rationalistic solutions after the First World War. So this shift from the expressionism to rationalism can also be seen in a book he wrote in 1929, which is called 'Modern Architecture', in which he gave emphasis to functionalism, which is evidence also of his shift to rational side. In fact, he became one of the chief architects of GEHAG, a housing organisation where he worked between 1924 and 1932 in Berlin. He designed over 10000 [units] of social mass housing; these, not only houses themselves, but the overall design showing his qualities as a town-planner as well; he also worked on the landscaping of these mass houses. Most of them are fortunately standing and are in use. In 1927 we see Taut entering, participating to the *Weissenhoff Siedlung* in Stuttgart, organised by Deutsche Werkbund; it was almost a manifesto of Internationalism. So by that that we see that Taut was deeply involved in International Movement. In 1932 Taut left Berlin for Moscow, where he stayed around ten months, designing



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schools and hotels. He returned to Berlin early in 1933 but left for Switzerland and through a long journey reached Japan, where he stayed for three years, between 1933 and 1936. There he came in contact with an Oriental culture, the Japanese culture; he studied it, and while in Japan he wrote four books. So from 1932 on there was a big change in his life as an architect after leaving his country. After Japan, in October of 1936, he was invited to Turkey by the Government upon recommendation of Martin Wagner, who was another architect from the Weimar Republic, like Bruno Taut. Taut came in place of Hans Poelzig, who did not find the chance to come because he died a few months before in 1936. So Bruno Taut was appointed as the first Chairman in the Department of Architecture of the Academy of Fine Arts in İstanbul, and he started to work on November 17th of November, 1936. We also see him at the Head of Architectural Bureau of the Ministry of Education, which was carried over to the Academy just before Bruno Taut came, and he became the consultant of school designs in Turkey. In fact, he was an expert of school designs: back in his country earlier he designed schools according to the new pedagogical programs. We see Taut designing five schools in three different cities in Turkey. At the Academy of Fine Arts, he tried to make reforms, he tried to free architectural programs from staticity towards a more flexible

program, and, he for instance introduced new courses like a fore course for students and a summer course for the enthusiastic outsiders on architecture. He also introduced new topics for students to work on, like mass housing, social housing, which was never tackled before at the Academy.

Bruno Taut, in a short period of time, just two years, not only fulfilled many administrative and educational work but he also designed 24 projects, out of which eight were realized. Now among the projects that were realized and fulfilled, there are five schools, three in Ankara: one is the monumental Faculty of Letters of Ankara University. The building was started at the end of 1936, unfortunately it was not finished during his life time. After his death it was completed in 1940 by his colleagues Franz Hillinger and Hans Brimm. The building is a monumental one in its scale, in its general outlook. The front which runs parallel to the Boulevard is treated differently than the sides and the back: it is covered with 'Ankara stone' or an old Ottoman walling technique, stone-and-brick alternation, which Taut said was an experiment to reconcile a Turkish motif with the modernity of the building. Bruno Taut was also responsible for all the details; there was more than 300 details that were drawn under the guidance of Bruno Taut. He designed interior fixtures, lighting fixtures, even the rails of the staircases. The other two schools are the Cebeci Secondary School, which he designed with Franz Hillinger and the Atatürk Lycee, where he was collaborated with Asım Kömürcüoğlu, a Turkish architect. He has a fourth secondary school in Trabzon and a fifth one in İzmir, Cumhuriyet Institute for Girls, which was partly realized because of the Second World War. Among the other projects, we can cite his ownhouse he designed in Ortaköy İstanbul, overlooking the Bosphorus, on a very steep hill, it is like a small jewel, and it looks like the Japanese Pagoda but it has also influences from the traditional Turkish house. We also see him designing in the October of 1938, some commemorative structures for the 15th anniversary of the Republic. These structures, like the Triumphal Arches and so on, were designed by Taut together with Wilhelm Schütte and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. A few



From the exhibition.

months before his death, Bruno Taut was asked to prepare reports on how to restore the Green Tomb in Bursa, and the Mahmut Paşa Bedesten in Ankara. In fact he went to Bursa and came to Ankara to analyse the buildings, to study them, to prepare the reports. And here we see another aspect of Bruno Taut, a restorer of historic monuments. And, lastly, the last design of his was a catafalque for Atatürk, which he finished on the 15th of November, 1938. He designed it in one week, in a hotel room in Ankara, which he turned into an atelier.

Bruno Taut did many things during his short period of life-time. He also wrote a book, the *Architektur Lehre*, which was translated as *Mimari Bilgisi*, this is the original book published in 1938, which Bruno Taut wrote for the students. In fact it became a text-book for the students of architecture. This book is divided into sections like *Proportion, Construction, Technique, Function, Quality*, and so on. To him, *architecture was the art of proportioning*. And to him also, the best example to the art of proportioning can be seen in the Sinan mosques. In fact he admired Sinan, his works, and also the traditional Turkish houses, which he believed embodied everlasting qualities. Bruno Taut's architectural attitude in Turkey can be summarized in a word rationalist, as a rationalist. He did not use cubistic forms, because he thought that it was like a fashion, it would pass away. He also wanted to merge tradition with

modernity, but *tradition should be an inspiration*, he said, *and it should not be imitated*. If imitated, it would lead to a sort of national romanticism which eventually would lead to *kitsch*. And he has an interesting idea on national architecture also: he said that *any good architecture is national*, and to some extent he did not like Internationalism because it negated climatic differences; but for Taut, climate was an important factor in shaping architecture. Bruno Taut remained only for two years in Turkey, but he is well-known, well-remembered with respect. And everybody who knows him agree that he gave the students of architecture a sound architectural education. A student of his remembered him as a very refined gentleman and as a very knowledgeable person.

Thank you very much.

İnci ASLANOĞLU