

## WEIMAR – « MODEL HOUSE AM HORN » RESTORATION PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST BUILDING OF THE BAUHAUS IN WEIMAR

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Weimar, a small city with 60.000 residents in the heart of Germany, is the historical central of the German classical period of literature. In view of its universal importance, this cultural heritage, closely connected with the name of Goethe, Germany's greatest poet, has been included in the World Cultural Heritage List along with 11 of Weimar's buildings. These comprise the living and working quarters of the classical poets, the city church, and three palaces with their surrounding parks.



After the German classical era, the city of Weimar was time and again the focal point of the German and European elite. In 1902 the Dutch painter and architect Henry van de Velde came to Weimar and founded an art and an applied arts school. With these schools and their "art nouveau" buildings, Weimar's tradition as an educational centre for architecture and applied arts was established.

As early as the year 1919, the architect Walter Gropius joined the two schools together and created the "Staatliches Bauhaus". This new idea sought to unite all handicraft disciplines under the leadership of architecture: building as a true "Gesamtkunstwerk", a complete work of art. The more realistic aim of the comprehensive design and shaping of the living environment later replaced this ambitious social-utopian ideal.

As a living expression of this idea, the "Haus Am Horn" came into being in 1923 as an experimental house for an exhibition. It is the first and only architectural manifestation of the Bauhaus in Weimar and, together with the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau, has been designated a World Cultural Heritage Site since 1996.

The house was designed by the painter and Bauhaus master Georg Muche. It was built in four weeks, making intensive use of new buildings materials and constructions. The "Haus Am Horn" was the prototype for a model residential development that aimed at providing a new, modern way of life by accommodating the needs of its residents.

The settlement, however, was never built.

The square living room, with its raised ceiling, lies in the centre of the ground plan, and all the other rooms are grouped around it. It forms a clear geometrical cube in as pure a form as possible, and can only be experienced when, as in a classical centrally planned building, the surrounding rooms are walked through. Thus it can be understood as a symbol for the centre of the house, where the family life of

modern people can unfold as best as possible. Building form and facades are clearly ordered geometrically; they express elementary forms that for the most part create symmetry.

The question of form, however, cannot only be explained with reference to these formal and aesthetic considerations: it is also closely tied to practical design problems. Thus the ground plan is a well-thought-out functional organism that fits into both determinate squares. An inevitable functional logic forms the basis for the group of surrounding rooms: kitchen, dining and children's rooms, wife's room, bath and husband's room, work and guest rooms. From a modern perspective several positive features, such as the skilful arrangement of the kitchen, stand alongside several disadvantages, including usability of the rooms and the lack of an opening into the spacious garden.

The professional planning and construction work was managed by the private construction office of Gropius himself, who as director secured the necessary vote from the Bauhaus. Its special achievement was to raise the issue of modern housing construction and handle it convincingly with new building materials and technical means. This is most impressively seen in the cavity wall construction made of lightweight concrete panels, where energy is saved through the use of high-grade insulation, and in the iron-stone ceiling made of hollow blocks.

The living space is artistically designed to the very last

