

Gray

Thus far, there has been no genuine comprehensive historiographical account of Zionist, and Israeli architecture. However, between the lines of the few works of documentation, research and interpretation that have been written, emerges a simple and effective chronology that distinguishes between/makes the distinction between the *Eclectic Period*, dating from 1900 to 1920, the *White Period* of the 1930s and 1940s and the *Gray Period*, of the 50s and 60s (post-67 architecture in Israel remains unspoken of and in many respects, despicable).

The term *Eclectic Period* describes the beginnings of petit-bourgeois caprice, which manifested itself through the tendency to decorate and stylize the building's envelope. This adolescent period produced exceptional hybrids of oriental motifs, biblical allegories, and Eastern-European neo-classical taste. Today, remnants of this period are preserved as testimonies of preliminary attempts to fabricate a mother tongue.

The *White Period* is a figure of speech describing the immigration of abstract Modernisms from Europe to the Land of Israel and their unprecedented dissemination amid the various sectors of the Jewish Diaspora in Palestine. This period underwent a short process of canonization and under the insignia "Bauhaus", became the indigenous classic. It was sentenced – through academic, and museological apparati, as well as municipal plastering ordinance – to eternal Faustian youth.

The *Gray Period* is a deriding term referring to the generic body of "state architecture" ("enlisted architecture", etc.), appearing at the very moment of sovereignty and extending throughout the hegemony of the welfare-state culture in Israel. This period produced, as it were, raw, exposed, serialized, "buildings without qualities". These buildings, constituting the critical mass of built fabric in Israel, are today condemned to overall flattening and considered no more than real-estate redevelopment potentialities.

Such a tendency to ‘white-wash’ one period and dissolve the other is by no means local or uncommon. In fact, it is in this manner that the history of architecture has been laid out until recent decades, by authoritative scholars and critics who took upon themselves the pedagogical mission to describe amplitudes of progress and decline and to define hierarchical structures of knowledge. Organizing architecture diachronically, containing it within the elastic confines of periods-movements-styles-typologies-monographies, and offering unconfused orientation through the mapped routes of history, the benefits of this approach are evident. However, it is customarily intolerant towards that which strays from schematic outlines and does not support the central plot; those parallel, contradictory, unruly, practices, those that weaken the teleological argument and obscure the readability of the times. A “period” is therefore always the denial of difference by means of alternating terms and definitions, which become, with time, synonymous, until the totallogical blur becomes common knowledge. Thus, *The Modern Movement*, *The International Style*, *Bauhaus*, and *New Objectivity* (Neue Sachlichkeit) – merge to a semantic lump, smoothly morphing the official with the avant-garde, the bourgeois with the proletarian, leftism with rightism, positivism with nihilism, aestheticism with pragmatism, the minimal with the simple.

So-called Bauhaus

In Israel, terminological slippages hold a special charm, be they foreign or local, pre-determined or retroactive. They flood the local architectural discourse with transparent terms and common truths, which create a coded plane of intentions and actions and constitute – hereby the subtext – a profound homology between Zionism whatsoever and modernity-modernization-Modernism, whatsoever. The equation is bilateral but single-loaded: the Zionist Movement is supposedly the laboratory/the battlefield of modern architecture. Modern architecture is demonstrably the natural/fashionable look of the Zionist body. From both directions one must read: revolution, progress, efficiency, positivism, cosmopolitanism.

Such rhetorics are not entirely baseless. Indeed the phenomenal propagation and comfortable domestication of modern architecture within both urban and rural settlements in Mandate Israel of the 30s and 40s, are unprecedented. After all, during the first half of the twentieth century, modern architecture presented and represented itself mainly as *intellectual work*, according to the Marxist idiom, and retained its status as a marginal practice. As a building routine it was but a critical epi-phenomenon, producing some building prototypes, model housing, or exemplary showcase neighborhoods; certainly not White Cities, utopian communities, compulsory Bauhaus or Corbusien paradigms, and a compulsive decontextualization (or de-levantinization) mechanism, as was the case in Mandate Israel.

- I. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the candid homology of Zionism and Modernism is never much more than an optical imaginary of a dislocated community. The *White Period* appears to be haunted by habits and gestures of the eclectic past, as well as first stains of grayness to come.

The persistence of the past first: Modern Architecture in Israel, that which was refined by the local culture-industry as “Bauhaus”, is a rather random collection of derivative rumors, symptoms and motifs, transposed from diverse, often contradictory sources, only few of which may be ascribed directly to the Bauhaus School, while others manifestly drew from its adversaries. Whichever were the sources of origin and their simulacra, there was certainly no local articulated avant-garde to speak of in Israel of the 30s. In many respects, Bauhaus was received as the latest trend, or yet another pastiche of the Eclectic Period - as was recounted in the biographies of those local Neo-Classical and Orientalist architects who had been active throughout the 20s and were re-born as modernists in the 30s. As today’s official custodian of Bauhaus buildings in Tel-Aviv, Niza Metzger–Smuk, analyzed in her book Houses of the Sand: “A group of structures with ‘theatrical scenery elevations’ is the most common [in the 30s]. ... The local public often referred to these structures with derision and mocked their façadeism

claiming it is by all means traditional architecture camouflaged with motifs, materials and references of the Modern Movement.”

Within the framework of such culture of masquerade, we are not to assume a simple continuity between the Eclectic Architecture of the 20s and the White Architecture of the 30s. Significant changes and novelties of the 30s should be pointed out: the scope of building was enormously widened and building volumes largely increased; building skeletons of columns and beams gradually replaced the system of retaining walls, to release the ground floor, the building envelope and the interior partitions; family homes became family properties and investment opportunities (i.e., apartment buildings for rent); the typical apartment changed entirely from being a cluster of same-sized rooms (4 by 4sqm., on average) to an organic layout ,as was promised in realty adds, of designated spaces organized according to daily (living room, kitchen, terraces) and nightly functions (bedrooms and bathrooms); special adjustments to local climactic conditions, especially those concerning suitable shading and ventilation became habitual in any planning scheme. These were truly innovative since they could not rely upon imported models of European apartments and dictated a new plasticity to the buildings. In general, it may be stated that until the end of the 20s, the architectural skill was enacted mostly in the decoration of the envelope, while starting from the early 30s, new expertise of interior space-making and exterior volumetric design redefined the architectural practice. This paradigmatic change is not specific to Israel, only that here it was deferred and truly abrupt.

The 1930s also saw a birth of architectural discourse: young architects who returned from various European schools, some after having worked in leading offices, established a discussion group, began a professional and distinguished periodical, took control of positions of influence in the “Union of Engineers and Architects”, dictated the procedure of planning competitions, brought about modifications of urban guidelines, and began to realize building prototypes of what was to be promoted as The New Architecture.

Nevertheless, the changes and developments of the 30s were by and large, semantic and self-referential, changes of and within the architectural language, a transition from one dictum to another that only marginally reflected new programs, changing conditions of production and consumption and advancing building technologies. Essentially, the architectural object remained as it had been: free-standing, particular (one of a kind) and reflexive; and the architect as well, maintained his traditional status: maker of unique objects, craftsman of the ultimate cohesion of parts and details, artist of wholeness (Gesamtkunstwerk) and the first Hebrew town expanded rapidly and gained in legal and cultural status (until 1925 Tel-Aviv had, in fact, been a suburb of Jaffo, rising to the status of city only in 1934), while the urban mold remain unchanged, still parceled into small single-homes lots of 400 to 500 squared meters.

By the end of the 30s, 75% of the workers population, who had immigrated to the Land of Israel with the second and third Aliyot, lived in cities under harsh living conditions, high rental fees, and excluded from the civic apparatus (only landlords could vote in municipal elections) – and the “Bauhaus Style” remained indifferent. The “Geddes Master Plan” for Tel-Aviv (1925-29) and its various annexes and revisions that followed, did not bring about any significant change to the situation. On the contrary; the visionary outlook of this Master Plan, re-enacting Garden City ideas, only embedded the suburban, freestanding, single-family pattern of the originary Little Tel-Aviv. To a certain extent, the anti-monumental taste of the 30s and the new, porous planning regulations of the Garden City (buildings retracted from the plotlines and elevated on pilotis, gardens fashioned under and around the buildings - hypothetically also on top - forging an absence of commercial ground floors and continuous street elevation) hindered the potential materialization of a traditional street and exacerbated the formal and functional weaknesses of the public space

Thus, modernism in the Land of Israel, during the 30s and 40s, had no revolutionary platform. Despite all innovations, it was neo-conservative in spirit. This was the profound difference

between modernism in the Land of Israel and that of Europe during the 1910s and 20s: In Europe, the thematic, programmatic and stylistic architectural developments were reactions – at times utterly pragmatic and at times metaphoric – to ongoing processes of industrialization and mechanization, to the acceleration of capitalism, to the new social (de)stratification, to the growing densification and deteriorating living standards within the big city, and perhaps above all, to the personal psycho-physical need to adapt to the precipitately changing dimensions of time and space. To the Land of Israel, Modernism had arrived as already a spoken language, a ready-made repertoire of guiding principles, professional conventions and aesthetic dogmas. For the local architects, Bauhaus, Le Corbusier, De Stijl, Expressionism, Cubism or Constructivism, were but a reservoir of signs and representational techniques accelerating the spread of a New Vernacular.

Only in the Land of Israel, for example, did Le Corbusier's *Five Points of New Architecture* become both habit (bottom-up) and actual (top-down) regulation in the planning of apartment buildings, especially in Tel-Aviv but also in Haifa and in Jerusalem. (One must bear in mind that Le Corbusier's *Five Points* refer to rural or suburban domestic architecture). On the other hand, Le Corbusier's radical urbanism of the time never had an impression in Israel, nor did his rhetorical models of the *Domino* or the *Citrohan*, etc.,).

Indeed, in retrospect, Modernist Architecture in the Land of Israel is a *Flying Camel*, an eccentric levantine mirage. It appeared “of the Sand” and dispersed like sand - in a pre-industrial setting, in a pre-capitalist society, in a pre-metropolitan culture- without apparent cause, without articulated rhetorics, without a clear agenda, without relevant means., certainly without what could be generically referred to as the *modern condition* that generated the radical architectural practices of early 20th Century Europe. This was a Modernism that came about not in a place of modernity and modernization, but in their place; An architecture that was to devise the missing context, to exhibit simulacra of a revolution that never was, to recall processes of mechanization-elementarization-modulization,-serialization which occurred elsewhere, and to construct not the

city itself but the New Bourgeoisie of the fourth and fifth waves of immigration, by transporting their unconcessionable beliefs and longings of cosmopolitanism, by fabricating a cosmopolitan, supposedly dislocated, demonstratively a un-authentic, non-Heimat, anti-orientalist, mise-en-scène.

It is widely held that the easy reception of modernist symptoms in the Land of Israel, was due to the lack of local architectural tradition and to the emergency conditions that dictated fast and efficient building methods for a growing population. These accounts are hardly satisfying. With respect to the first argument: there may have been no culturally rooted architecture in Israel, but there certainly was a distinct and rather stylized one, apparent in both indigenous-Arab and in colonialist British buildings (entirely apart from Continental Modernism). Regarding the second argument, as was claimed above, Modernist Architecture had little to do with any procedural or construction efficiency: the building and its parts remained unique and un-submissive to reproduction. (It should be noted that from amongst the various labels associated with Israeli Modernism, one key term remained remarkably missing: Functionalism).

It seems, therefore, that a more psycho-historic explanation is called for: Modernist Architecture was naturalized so smoothly and befitted so comfortably, precisely because it arrived late – dislodged, de-contextualized, disarmed of ideology and politics, emptied of regionalist obligations, free national revivalist symbols, prêt-a-porte; an architecture that allowed the overwriting of the “Genius Loci” and the exorcism of the local genie of separatism and provincialism haunting the European immigrants of the fourth and fifth Aliyot. If any critical or even negational attitude is to be identified in this architecture (defining features of any practice deserving of the title “Modernist”, let alone “Avant-Garde-ist”) Should any negativity, criticism or opposition, be identified within this architecture, it is indeed a civic, liberal, entrepreneurial, petit-bourgeois, often bohemian resistance to the acquired and dictated taste of the newly-invented working class, of the strengthening hegemony of Socialist Zionism, of the pioneering, agrarian, anti-urban propaganda machine – a resistance that recalls, more than anything else, the spirit of Theodore Herzl’s a-priori *The Jewish State (Der Judenstadt)*.

Architectural Scholar, Richard Ingersoll writes that the “International Style” in the Land of Israel allowed the Jewish Immigrants to maintain cultural neutrality. A cultural, neutral, oxymoronic diagnosis, such as this shifts the discussion away from its core enquiries: what are, in general, the patterns of migration and domestication of architectural trends? What is, in this particular case, the elliptic trajectory of the “International Style”, which claims, as is well known, a Mediterranean scene of origin, charged with the polemics of Left and Right avant-garde movements, finally ejaculates unto the a Mediterranean beach in an unprecedented outburst of albino replicas soaked in yearnings for (European) motherlands and father figures. How then does the obsessive culturalism of the *White Architecture* work to neutralize Levantine exoticism, to abstract the Arab vernacular, and with the same resolve, to castrate the ethos of proletarian Zionism and prepare against the grain, a groundwork for urban life?

Bauhaus

So far, the interpretation of Modernism in Israel has dwelled, on the eclectic, derivative, white-washed and evidently non-ideological stance, withholding any discussion of “gray” stains. Quantitatively, these stains were certainly not predominant in the 30s and 40s, but it is only through their inspection that one could find a direct association between political position, social program and the vicissitudes of architectural practice. Moreover, as will be argued below, these stains of grayness are the only relevant basis to reconstruct the foundations of the architecture of statehood in Sovereign Israel.

In order to begin the discourse on “gray” matter, one need return to the Bauhaus itself. This School - “the decantation chamber, the refinery, of the European avant-gardes”, as it was eulogized by Manfredo Tafuri – was not one. During its short life, it was presided over by three directors - Walter Gropius (1919-1927), Hannes Meyer (1927-1930) and Mies Van Der Rohe (1930-1933)- and accordingly saturated with altering weltanschauungen. For our purpose, the difference between the Bauhaus of Gropius and that of Meyer, is key, and the one that left

formative marks on Israeli Architecture. It should be pointed out that the internal changes within the Bauhaus were not merely a matter of Academic style or methodology, but an actual shift between opposing paradigms: a shift that finally signaled the rhetorical disengagement of Modern Architecture from the classic-humanist tradition and its willingness to lose aesthetic grounds and loosen the drive for disciplinary autonomy.

The Bauhaus of Gropius was professedly an anti-academic school of arts and crafts, an institution based on a concoction of German Idealism, English Romanticism, Medieval Mysticism and a known measure of Brave New World fictions. The School's curriculum during that phase was based on studies of form and technique and through self-expression practices in workshops taught by leading artists of various proficiencies (Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lionel Feininger, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, Marcel Broderer, Hans Belmer, Josef Albers, and more). The School's pedagogic revolved around the slogan: "prosperous union of art and technology". The word Union acutely assumes the dynamic wholeness of *Aufhebung*, connoting Gropius' intentions to suture the torn fabric of Bourgeois culture by retreating to the integrative paradigm of *Gesamtkunstwerk*; to bridge over the ever gaping *âbime* between art and life, work and work of art, aesthetics and politics, by articulating mediating processes between the mechanical and the manual; to propose a common ground for the various dialects of *avant-garde*, castrating their polemic, provocative, anti-art lingo; and finally, to preserve – this is the Bauhaus *raison-d'être* according to Gropius - the autonomy of art and the artist's traditional image as an authoritative source of meanings. Architecture, in such an amalgamated agenda, does not require a separate educational program nor special courses. It is held as the ultimate synthesis of all creative aptitudes; the spiritual and material, a Union House of art and technology.

With the appointment of Hannes Meyer to director, the original institution was, in fact, "dismantled". Gropius and several dominant teachers had left. Oscar Schliemer wrote: "The Bauhaus was now directed towards architecture, industrial production and the intellectual aspect of technology. The painters are tolerated as a necessary bad." Moholy-Nagy, amongst those

who had left, was even more acerbic: “When the making of an object becomes a specialization and work, a profession, the educational process loses all of its vitality. [...] I can no longer bare the growing tendency towards professional specialization in the workshops. My field will be that of building school and man.” The apprehensions of the former staff soon proved foresightful: with Meyer’s appointment, a special program for architecture studies (or, to be precise, a “Department for Building”, Bauabteilung) was first opened, headed by Ludwig Hilbersheimer with the backup of a new squadron of experts in the fields of urban planning, engineering, and architectural theory. Artists indeed became tolerated appendices; formalist and pseudo-scientific introductory courses were replaced with professional seminars of building systems, construction methods, and housing schemes; master classes became workshops, which were now termed “collaborative cells” or “design brigades”.

Meyer claimed that “the Bauhaus in Dassau is not an artistic phenomenon but a social one”. He objected to the process of recruiting the gifted and demanded that the school distance itself as much as possible from “a university of design that made a constructivist problem of each cup of tea.” In place of the academic distance maintained before between form and research and concrete production techniques or real market forces, Meyer dictated a standardization of design and laid out a marketing strategy for the distribution of workshop products. The Bauhaus underwent a swift process of proletarianization and politization (that finally brought about Meyer’s removal as director). The former humanistic attitude of the preceding staff, worshipping personal creativity, aesthetic intuition, process mystique and object fetishism was subject to a cold-blooded procedure of de-mystification. Meyer led straight to the bottoms of innegotiable rationalism, leveling any aesthetic elevation and denying personal pathos – towards a mundane, material and technical praxis soliciting itself as an organizing social force; an architecture, perhaps an art, that would be no more than the index of their collaborative systems of production and consumption.

New Objectivity (Posthumanism)

Architectural discourse of the last decades has demonstrated considerable efforts to shift the center of gravity from the relentless preoccupation with the object to a parallel scrutiny of the subject, constructed by architectures.. A notable example of such an effort is Michael Hays' research, *Modernism and the posthumanist subject: the architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer*. Hays theorizes a posthumanist turn at the stronghold of Modernist Architecture - with Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer, architects customarily labeled as the rigorous representatives of The New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), as the protagonists.(). According to Hays, the posthumanist turn was a positivist reaction to the aggravating psychological fragmentation of the individual in the technologized environment. This reaction was expressed in the attempt to replace aesthetic or humanistic practices with production that sacrifices the creative persona in favor of a generic definition of modern existence. The scaffolds of such a definition are the notions of repetition, seriality, reproduction, banality and mass distribution.

Hays compares between Le Corbusier the Humanist – who maintains the distinction of pragmatic engineer and the poetic architect – and Meyer the Posthumanist – who demands a radical revolution in the very definition of the architect's trade, as was implied in his of 1929 competition entry for the Petersschule design in Basel: "The new building is a prefabricated unit for site assembly and, as such, an industrial product and a work of specialists: economists, statisticians, hygienists, climatologists, industrial engineers, standards experts, heat engineers ... and the architect? He was an artist and has become a specialist in organization."

According to Hays, Meyer's is not a strict instrumental positivism, but a polemic thriving towards a productive void, or zero degree architecture. Such a condition is supposed to expose the material and moral commitments of architecture to mass society and market economy. Therefore, while the Humanism of Le Corbusier, Gropius or Erich Mendelsohn, in its unremitting efforts to fill in space between Us and the World, always finds ways to convert Things to form,

names, meanings and totems, the Posthumanism of Meyer and Hilberseimer, in its efforts to articulate, or even formulate, a new socio-professional contract, increases the crude materiality of architectural components, diminishing the creative process into a series of procedures, and finally creates an architecture of absence: absence of surplus finishing, absence of subtleties and subtexts, absence of emotional depth, absence of a stable meaning.

Despite the aforementioned, Meyer never really abandoned formal research. His work was by no means limited to an automatic- writing of a political ideology nor to procedural transliteration of data. (noticably the Petersschule project with its exaggerated suspended structures, is as flighty as the best of Futurist, Constructivist or Expressionist visions). It was Hilberseimer, the “non-charismatic teacher”, as his Bauhaus students testified, who dared the destitutes of the most elementary urban and architectural cells; of endless repetition without climax, direction or signature; of an ultimate posthumanist distopia, which was to become, following the Second World War, a building manual for the massive reconstruction project of both closed and open societies.

White Ground, Gray Figures

In returning to Israel of the 1930s and to the *Bauhaus Style* in Tel-Aviv or to the *Bauhaus on the Carmel*, one may ask what is indicated by these titles; the fulfillment of a humanist, aestheticist tradition or the signs of a posthumanist, socialist ethos? Generally speaking, Bauhaus or any of its synonyms, is always a shorthand for the proliferation of buildings fashioned after various Modernist styles and decors. But what of the direct affiliation to the original institution through its students who settled in Israel? What architecture did the Bauhauslers build in Israel and to what extent did they influence the national project to come?

According to art historian and authority on Bauhaus, Michael Levin, nineteen architects, artists and artisans who had been active in Israel in the 30s, had studied in various of the Bauhaus

departments. However, as indicated by Levin, only three of them directly and profoundly influenced local architecture: Munio Gitai-Weinraub, Shmuel Miestechkin and Arie Sharon.

It is therefore appropriate to examine the body of work of each of these architects and to assess their local influence. But before doing so, one may consider the common in their biographies: the three of them are of a leftist background and participated under the patronage of the left wing institution in their later years (although they observed a formidably bourgeois life-style). They all studied in the later Bauhaus, when it was already under the influence of Meyer-Hilberseimer, and later, Mies Van Der Rohe; they all built throughout their career, a great deal more than had their renowned teachers: hundreds of housing units, tens of public buildings, regional and urban master plans, many kibbutz communities and their various buildings; the three of them acted mostly within the outlines of the pre-state Histadrut apparatus and were later recruited to the public works of the National Building Project. The three of them comprise the link between the older, European-born generation of architects, and the new Tzabar (Israeli-born) generation.

Munio Gitai-Weinraub began his studies at the Bauhaus in 1930. His first semester there was Meyer's last as director. The Bauhaus was "infested" with political leftist activism at that time. Meyer refused to discipline his activist students and due to external pressure of the rising right wing in Dessau, he was fired. Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe was appointed director in his place and decided to expel five foreign students who had demonstrated against the firing of Meyer, amongst whom was Gitai-Weinraub. Concurrently, Mies hired Gitai-Weinraub to work in his Berlin office and after one year, made it possible for him to return to the Bauhaus, when his curriculum tended towards that of a Technische Hochschule format. Gitai-Weinraub attended the Bauhaus until 1933, at which time the school was transferred from Dessau to Berlin. In 1934, after a long waiting period in Zurich and work in Hafli-Mozer-Steiger, he arrived in Israel and settled in so-called Red Haifa, the urban stronghold of the Zionist labor movement. Between 1937 and 1959, he worked as Al Mansfield's partner and following the break-up of the partnership, he continued to work on his own. In 1948, he joined the planning department

established by Arie Sharon in the labor ministry, and as head of the architecture department participated in the making of the National Master Plan for a year and a half. Between the years of 1943 and 1970, he taught at the Faculty of Architecture at the Technion. Throughout his professional career, he planned over three hundred projects, amongst which are included neighborhoods, housing developments, kibbutz', factories, public institutions and memorial sites.

Gitai-Weinraub is the quintessential representative of Materialist Architecture in Israel. From amongst the Modernists active in Israel, few dared to seek out the degrees of rigor and austerity that he cast upon himself whether in designing a piece of furniture, a public building, or an entire neighborhood. It is possible to identify in his work a successful meeting of Meyer's social ethics, Hilberseimer's research of the basic dwelling cell, and Mies Van Der Rohe's material and structural reductivism. However, unlike the revolutionary stance and the rhetorical hyperboles that distinguish the works of his teachers,, Gitai-Weinraub's architecture was always minor, moderate , sparing not only in form but also in the superfluous appropriation of theory, ideology or criticism. Although he affiliated himself with the hegemonic labor movement and planned for the various Histadrut institutions, he refused to join the party as a member, and on no account would imagine himself doing Marxist architecture, as Meyer had. His principal approach in answer to the question of accommodation and mass housing was no different than that of Hilberseimer. But he maintained that efficiency does not emanate from nor dictate diagramatism, but rather underscores the call for good design, an issue he raises in his piece "The Neighborhood Street: Its Planning and Image":

"When the war ends, mass construction – with limited resources – will be necessary. This condition will force us to construct buildings as simply as possible and search for new building types. There is nothing wrong with such a necessity when it leads to simplicity, but boring monotony should be avoided. [...] The design's aim should always be to unite and not separate. It would be wise to plan larger buildings in various places."

The tectonic consciousness of Gitai-Weinraub concerning the structural form and detailing of the building, follows the builder - ethic of Mies Van Der Rohe (and removes him from the camp of local architects); however, he was never tempted into Miesian eccentricities – to the semantic exhibitionism of building details, to the compulsive smoothing of finishing materials, the technological sublimation of the architectural object. “If an architect can design proper joints,” noted Gitai-Weinraub in 1958, “he would also be able to create a proper building. There is no need for him to spend all of his time of the final product; if he can cover all the corners in his memory and can achieve good craftsmanship, then he should be satisfied with this as a departure point.”

Gitai-Weinraub was an aesthete even in creating minimum existence flats, a grocery in a worker’s neighborhood, a cooling factory, showers in a kibbutz, or an institute for the blind. For him, aesthetics was not an issue of style or personal expression, but an articulation of professional discipline and an aspiration for the achievement of harmony on all levels: interior unison between the project’s elements, an organic absorption of the building into its surroundings, an imprint of the cultural and social context upon the object’s physiognomy. Each case and its encasement, each project and its Genius, every process is aimed at establishing a norm and refining a type, each caprice is a threat to the architectural practice:

“Through each stage of the design process an architect should remember his intentions. He should remain in touch with the imprinted character of his special building. Otherwise its plan will end up being capricious and random. He should discipline the building and let the building discipline him. Imagining is a process of reduction and selection; thus, in case of uncertainty, an architect should take away elements. [...] Although logic is not the force of creation, it is practically the factor that reinforces harmony. Therefore, anything that cannot be subjected to this harmonization process, anything causing carelessness, annihilates architecture.”

Such a reductive reasoning guided the transition from the *small plans* of the suburban worker's communities planned by Gitai-Weinraub and Mansfield in Haifa and its vicinity before statehood, to the housing developments they constructed during the 50s. As Gitai-Weinraub had anticipated, the war and its consequences created an urgent need for mass building and new housing prototypes. This new scale was not perceived as a limitation but rather as an opportunity for the materialization of a continuous urban environment and for a new experimentation with surface compositions. The elongated block (Zielenbau-type or "type M", in Gitai-Weinraub-Mansfield lexicon) is preferred on flat or moderate topographies, and was applied in the suburbs of Kiriyat Yam (1952-55), Kiriyat Eliyahu (1954) and Kiriyat Schprintzak (1956). A distinctive development for the hilly conditions of Ramat-Hadar ("Type T" as inspired from Le Corbusier's "Unite d'Habitation" in Marseilles) connected four elongated blocks into one complex, only half of which is above street level (1959-63).

Meyer and Hilberseimer, the protagonists of "The New Objectivity", provoked an intellectual turn, asking to entirely release the architectural practice from the habit of Humanist-Formalist discourse. Two decades later, when mass industrialized building was no longer a theoretical issue, their student, Gitai-Weinraub, pointed out the need to resort to architecture of sensual perception:

"When a building is large it is easier to locate its rhythmic lines, whose integration or opposition creates all architectural compositions. In a large building the rhythm of details repeats itself – in a Classical building the rhythm of columns, in a Modern building the exposed construction and the repetition of windows – whereas a small neighborhood house constitutes a cell, and cannot be divided into additional architectural components. [...] Why do longer buildings, approximately fifteen meters long and four meters tall, affect us so pleasantly and better than short buildings do? The pleasant optical impressions are probably those that allow our eyes to slide along a building's body for some time."

Shmuel Miestechkin, a citizen of Tel-Aviv his entire life, spent most of his career as the leading architect of the agrarian Kibbutz Ha'Arzi Organization. Although he acted almost solely in the framework of political mechanisms, his self-perception was never that of the institution's messenger, but rather as a **Collective's Architect**. Throughout his fifty years of professional activity he planned dozens of dining halls (always the heart and the emblem of kibbutz life), "palaces of culture", gymnasiums, education institutions, theaters, and housing units in the kibbutz, as well as various works outside the kibbutz

The amateur, pre-Bauhaus experience of Miestechkin, includes construction of wooden towers for youth movement camps, and later on the erection of *Choma U'Migdal* colonies –the most forging initiation rite, for a future architect-engineer, one could think of. As Miestechkin -the "No'ar Ha'oved" (working youth) – testified, he had had no prospect of being accepted to the Technion in Haifa and thus tried his luck at the less Academic entrance examinations of the Bauhaus. Confronted by Josef Albers at the entrance examination, Miestechkin demonstrated resourcefulness when he unstitched a tent-cloth and wove a rope of its strings. Albers was pronounced his appreciation of the candidate "differentiate between *structura* and *factura*". This adolescent memory is imprinted upon all of Miestechkin's work in Israel. Each of his projects deals with the metamorphosis of a material idea into architectural form; each building reinvents a structural problem and offers an object to explain it; each dining hall looks different and functions differently, even if the program is entirely identical.

The need to propose clear patterns and stable typologies for a communal society was never interpreted by Miestechkin as a serial work, but always only as an open study, always case specific, always contextual, creating an accumulation of readings and possible solutions in the persevering process of refinement. Miestechkin was interested in the kibbutz as a social and environmental phenomenon, as a radically new formation, as an opportunity for architecture, as a unique program without precedence that could survive only through personal and highly polemic creativity. It seems that this was also his attitude towards design trends and

professional conventions; in a period when most local architects conform, Miestechkin does not “understand” style, does not obey organizational norms, and is not satisfied by self-evident technological solutions.

The collection of uniquely shaped buildings that he planned for the Givat Ram and the Seminar HaKibbutzim Campuses demonstrates his reservations towards the productions of prototypes given to mass production and distribution and his ambition to erect authoritative archetypes. Miestechkin says about his work on the Givat Ram Swimming Pool:

“What is interesting in the building is the roof covering it. The idea is to project the section of the pool’s floor onto the ceiling. The accepted section of a pool is to have a deep end allowing diving and a shallow end for standing in. This gave me the idea to begin the ceiling above the shallow end, two and a half meters above the water, and where the water is deep, where the diving board is located, to give six meters of height above the water. Thus the roof of the swimming pool was given the shape of a diagonal line. I did not want to complete it with the result of a flat, diagonal roof – not in form nor in construction – and decided to create two archs – the one next to the diving board high, and in front of it, the other, low, at the shallow end – and on them to cast a concrete cylinder roof.”

These decisions do not result in formal and structural eccentricity – rather, with rhetoric, almost illustrative, exaggeration, they demonstrate the movement trajectory (from springing to diving) and the experience of swimming towards the horizon, staged by the amplified lines of perspective.

Miestechkin’s archetype does not develop only from within, from the building’s section, from the interpretation of the given program, from the embodiment of the structura in the factura and the textura, but also (and mostly in his later works) from outside, from the physical environment, and from the cultural climate. Marked examples of Miestechkin’s attempts to contain in his buildings

the unique features of the site and to mold a local architecture – differentiated from the nationalist brutalism of the Tzabar generation but also exempt from the orientalist predispositions of the softer regionalists – are to be found in his youth hostel and museum of Neve Zohar on the coast of the Dead Sea, built of crude and smoothed stone and shaped in monolithic figures as well as in his buildings of the staff housing in the S'deh Boker Desert Research Center, designed according to principles of climatic sustainability and self-sufficiency.

The plasticity, the material sensuality and the typological particularity of Miestechkin's works stretch the paradigm Modern Architecture and the mold Institutional Architecture in the formative years of the statehood, to their possible limits. In retrospect, perhaps it is precisely this borderline attitude that endows his works with freshness and coherence that dared to articulate the possibility of a specifically Israeli Modern Architecture.

Arieh Sharon is the leading apparachik of the architecture of statehood in Israel. There is no other architect who influenced so greatly the nation's mold, and it is doubtful that one may be able to find another architect of this influence in any other nation. Sharon arrived at the Bauhaus in the summer of 1926 directly from the kibbutz of the Shomer Hatzayir movement in Gan Shmuel, where he had been responsible for both the construction and the beehive sectors. From the construction works he gained practical experience in concrete molds and in basic methods of prefabricated production, helping him later to establish his status as a skilled builder at the Bauhaus.

In his autobiographical book Kibbutz + Bauhaus, Sharon writes that he decided to go to study in order to recuperate knowledge in theory and in technology, and especially in order "to know about socio-architectural perceptions with regards to general planning issues." Due to his practical experience in building, Sharon was appointed in charge of maintenance of the staff buildings planned by Walter Gropius in the Bauhaus grounds (those which became the noble models of White Architecture), and learned to recognize from up-close the problems of the

building's details and the shortcomings of the insulation methods and the installation systems of these buildings "of clean design", as he referred to them. From this insider position, he also chanced to see behind the scenes of the power struggles between the school's staff, ending with Gropius' leaving, the appointment of Meyer to director, and the election of new teachers – according to Sharon's testimony, "all of them shared a more pragmatic attitude towards design [of Meyer] and opposed the quasi-formalistic former Bauhaus ideas."

The direct and pragmatic architecture of Hannes Meyer and his partner, Hans Wittwer, are admiringly described by Sharon: "Their finest design was the project of the League of Nations Building, which received one of the prizes [of the competition], an extremely significant and construction-true project, by far more avant-garde than all the other projects including even Corbu's brilliant proposal.." The comparison to Le Corbusier is supposed to indicate a radical leap, a transition from the aesthetics and rhetorics of the machine to a practice that demands a deviation from the boundaries and codes of aesthetic judgment, as could be inferred from Sharon quoting Meyer: "Our League of Nations Building symbolizes nothing. As an organic building, it expresses unfeignedly the intention to be a building for work and cooperation as a deliberately contrived work of man, it stands in legitimate contrast to nature. This building is neither beautiful nor ugly; it asks to be evaluated as a structural invention."

The lessons of architecture at the new Bauhaus were based upon concrete projects that the teachers were involved in. The workshop in which Sharon worked was recruited for preparation of working drawings for the competition of the Bundesschule des ADGB (the education center of the German Trade Unions) to which Meyer was invited to participate together with Bruno Taut, Erich Mendelsohn, and others.

The project of Meyer and his students was based upon a program that imagined a community of 120 students, divided into smaller "communes" of ten students in each. Members of the "commune" were to live together on the same floor and to practice in the same workshops. The

dining hall, the gymnasium and the lecture halls were to be the shared meeting places of the entire community. This program was translated a scheme of smaller, non-hierarchical architectural units, connected through roofed passageways, and connecting the public spaces located at the edges of the project. Sharon testified of the strict restrictions placed upon the students who prepared the proposal: “Basically, we were even not allowed to draw elevations, which were supposed to be only a logical sequel of the windows functional sizes and relationships.” Such a dry recollection could be well taken as succinct articulation of The New Objectivity – an architecture that fills the space between program and diagram as it were without any mediation. “The organization of the building,” stated Meyer, “is only the plastic translation of its socio-pedagogic functions, [...] a direct printout of the functional diagram.”

Meyer was awarded first prize in the competition and the commission to build the project. This was his first significant public building, and he hoped that through it, he would promote his ideas. With the termination of his studies, Meyer invited Sharon to be the architect in charge of the project, and for two years (1929-31) he inspected the building process and functioned as Meyer’s building office manager. The instructions Sharon received from Meyer, peeled off the paradigm of White Architecture with no sentiments: “The execution has to be effected in a truly purist way, without using any plaster or other ‘camouflage’. Bricks, concrete, wood, steel, plywood, and asbestos had to keep the natural color and texture [...] All the pipes and fixtures had to be exposed: this applied to the water, heating, rain, sewage pipes, the electric installation pipes and even the chimneys.” These instructions immortalize Meyer’s Bundesschule des ADGB not only quintessential sample of The New Objectivity, but also as a preliminary model, fully ripened, of the New Brutalism as articulated after the war by Alison and Peter Smithson, Reyner Banham, and others.

Arieh Sharon was now positioned at the apex of European avant-garde, but Germany was closing up on him, as was the case with other outspoken Modernists. For Meyer, the obvious choice was the Soviet Union, to where he immigrated and from where he (and Mart Stam)

invited the former students, Sharon and Gitai-Weinraub, to participate in the building of the industrial city, Magnitogorsk. Sharon deliberated between the Soviet Union and Israel: “Professionally, their offers were very attractive, but emotionally I felt I had to return, if not to the kibbutz life, at least to Palestine, to bring there the message of contemporary trends in architecture and planning.”

To the eyes of the had-been-kibbutznik coming from Berlin, Tel –Aviv appears now as a desolate and provincial Eastern European shtetl. On the much hailed Geddes Master Plan of the city, Sharon commented with sarcasm (“a town planning scheme was prepared by the famous planner-scientist, Sir Patrick Geddes, along the ideological guidelines of the first Tel-Aviv settlers, as re-interpreted by an Englishman”) and saw in the vision of a peaceful Garden City for 40 thousand citizens, a misconception that would constrain the development of the city.

In 1933, Sharon participated in the competition for the design of the Histadrut pavilion in the International Levant Fair in Tel-Aviv, and won. This incident was the birth of the brave bond between himself and the labor movement, the Histadrut institutions and state mechanisms, which was to last throughout his entire professional career.

The Levant Fair was the showcase of the native Modernism, an Architecture Museum of sorts, in the spirit of the World Exhibitions of the second half of the 19th Century and the “Bauausstellungen” (in Stuttgart and in Berlin) of the early decades of the 20th Century. Arie Elhanani, chief architect of the 1934 fair, selected the finest of local architects to plan the pavilions (amongst them Richard Kaufman, Josef Neufeld and Genia Auerbuch) and dictated a white- light- stream- lined architecture. From period photographs of the Levant Fair, a distinctive rhetorical dichotomy shows itself, a hilarious double-speech that could reach such caricature clarity only in a purely representational site: the pavilions are white outside, red inside; the envelope is refined, abstract, “neutral”, petit-bourgeois - the interior is revolutionary, figurative,

social-realist, according to the propaganda manuals of Bolshevik graphics, photography and installation art.

Amidst the pavilions on the fair grounds, Sharon's are unique in that they diminish the disparity between architecture and interior design, and do so out of sincere unanimity with the client (the Histadrut, he had said, is not only an organization protecting worker's rights, but an institution encompassing all of life's economic, social and cultural dimensions in Israel). From amongst all the devout Modernists designing in the fair, Sharon was the only one who attempted to formulate Fair Architecture – provisory, open, modular, easily dismantled and reassembled: four parallel and repetitive structures, differing in length and in height, designed like truncated triangles and made of wooden beams with walls of jute fabric. The jute was dyed in colors symbolic of the subjects: red for the professional union, blue for the urban cooperatives, green for the worker's settlement and orange for the citrus industry.

In retrospect, Sharon wrote of the Histadrut Pavilions at the Levant Fair that they represent one of the first local attempts to express ideas through contemporary form. One may go further and pronounce them as the most outstanding constructivist project built in Israel (so long as the "Choma U'Migdal" settlements are not considered in the architectural account), a singular attempt – not many followed – to elevate on avant-garde currents. Above the pavilions, however, hovers Walter Benjamin's cloud: is this the utmost politicization of the aesthetic – a manifested critical position vis-à-vis processes of production and consumption as well as the institutions of art and architecture, expressed through radical form? - or the more benign aestheticization of the political, a total submission to the propaganda machine of the labor movement, a mere new party line look? The answer, it seems, is obvious: Sharon's project maintains no critical distance or polemic expression. The dynamic form and light construction remain as scenery for the Histadrut mechanism, a sign of days to come.

What was then the “message of contemporary trends in architecture and planning” that Sharon sought to bring to Palestine? For him, progressive architecture is, first and foremost, a rational commitment to the question of mass housing. He began to propagate his opinions in this field during discussions in the Hugg, an architect's club he had established with Ze'ev Rechter, Dov Karmi and other leading architects, in architecture competitions and in articles he published in the periodical “Habyanian Ba'Mizrah Hakarov” (*The Building in the Near East*). In the August 1935 issue of the periodical, appeared his article “Minimum Apartment in Cooperative Housing”. Reading between the lines, one may understand that as well as promoting the progress he led with his friends from the Hugg, Sharon also managed inside battles against the tendency to over-design and self-expression: “Walls broken by redundant angles and dents, only burden the apartment and create, as proclaimed by many, uncomfortable living conditions that go against reality's demands. One must therefore compose a restricted number of rooms according to their functions and not create an exclusive modernist structure of individualistic spatiality.”

Modernity and not Modernism, efficiency and not morphology – that was the message that Sharon brought with him from the Bauhaus of Meyer and Hilberseimer. The alphabet of his architecture is the Hebrew conversion of the ABC that Meyer detailed, four years earlier, in his article “On Marxist Architecture”. Although devoid of a manifesto's flauntings, Sharon's text deserves full attention because it is the first prescription of what would constitute , in less than a decade, the dictum of Israeli National Architecture:

- A. A simple and evident construction of the building volumes, befitting the clarity and simplicity of the organizing plan. Continuous bearing walls, a continual interior construction, and avoidance of internal and external corners that are common in Tel-Aviv.
- B. A design of uniform apartment types with doors, windows and other details according to equal modules - enables a progressive execution, a repetitive process and thus fast work, though this is possible only with the distancing of

the apartment owners, whose intervention in the adaptation of the plan was common, and has been until now, in cooperative buildings in Israel.

- C. A good and orderly organization of the building site and the work process, are based upon preceding experiments in serial buildings abroad..
- D. On the other hand, I do not place too much importance on the new building materials that have been flooding the building market in Israel lately, especially from the point of view of lowering building costs. [...]

Although the problem of the minimum apartment seems simple and easy for the amateurs and experts alike, it is due to this simplicity that it proves difficult in reality. Therefore the problem cannot be solved at once, by a more or less ingenious idea, but through systematic and analytical work with research of all the relevant conditions, and through the creation of experimental buildings to better the minimum apartment typologies each time.

Sharon's opportunity to realize these principles came from the "Center for the Worker's Neighborhoods" in Tel-Aviv, a Histadrut body which was established at the end of the 20s so as to respond to the needs of the urban workers living in dire housing distress with high rent, with the underlying strategy of creating leftist strongholds in the heart of the Bourgeoisie.

The question of accommodation was a central link in the tightening of the socio-political contract between the Histadrut and her members. The intent of converting the worker from a tenant to a home-owner (not a landowner however; the land remains the property of the institutions, and later of the state) and a permanent member of the organization (only those with a membership card could acquire an apartment), was meant to assure his long-term stability and commitment. The system: in place of paying rent, the worker was to deposit mortgage payments to the "Center of Worker's Neighborhoods" with convenient reimbursement. The "Center" was to be responsible for organizing workers in unions and cooperatives, for the allocation of land to new neighborhoods, for the attainment of funds for the purchase of land and for financing building, for

the supervision along the building, for the wholesale purchase of building materials and for the responsibility to organize the entirety of commercial, cultural and educational services in the neighborhood.

Two paradigms of Socialist Architecture were developed by the "Center": The first – Labor-Towns (as they were called) in the city's periphery, on cheap land, for workers on low income. These were planned as a network of single-family houses, with half a dunam (five-hundred meters squared) farm allotments, for the augmentation of the worker's income. This typology was perceived as an intermediate phase of the worker's life, an initiation to his arrival at an agricultural settlement, as was hoped for by the official settling policy.

The second paradigm – Cooperative Worker's Housing in a compound of apartment buildings built on expensive land in proximity to the center of the city, for the more established worker who was not in need of further income or agricultural training, and who was content with a well-groomed garden. The compound was equipped with a variety of services, which promised the desired measure of inclusiveness and exclusiveness as well as a codex of rules and regulations that ensured the proper maintenance of the public facilities and the ideological homogeneity of the original community- (it was forbidden, for instance, to rent out an apartment or a portion of one without the authorization of the neighborhood's board).

Between 1931 and 1936 twenty Cooperative Worker's Housing units were built in Tel-Aviv (13 of which were planned by Arie Sharon) on four different sites. The planners of these housing projects were chosen through competitions. The planning process was carried out in collaboration with the boards of residents and with the close supervision of the Center's representatives, who had previously traveled, according to Sharon, to learn about different types of cooperative housing in Sweden, Germany and Austria. Although the Cooperative Worker's Housing projects make up a small portion (393 housing units in all) of the building in Tel-Aviv during the 30s, they represent an entirely new perception regarding the organization of urban

space. Their revolutionary proposition is an alternative model for the existing system of parceling: in place of small plots, intended for buildings of four to six apartments and distanced from one another creating unusable left-over open spaces - The Cooperative Worker's Housing "residences" were based on the adjoining of plots and the construction of perimeter or parallel blocks around a large courtyard, shielded from the street. The architect, Niza Metzger-Smuk summarizes the reasoning behind the choice of this way of building:

- The buildings were built like walls around a wide interior garden, which symbolized the cooperative social life. In the basement level, all of which were turned towards the garden, were the social functions: the grocery, the laundrette, the medical clinic, the reading room, the kindergarden, etc. The interior courtyard also symbolized the importance of working the garden and the bond with the soil.
- From both physical and social perspectives, the internalized structure was a declaration of segregation from bourgeois city life. The Cooperative Worker's Housing projects were later nicknamed the "laborer's fortresses": the large building block, prominent in the urban fabric, demonstrated the power of a homogenous society possessing self-organizational capacity.
- Construction around a courtyard enabled to maximize the distance between the buildings: in this way, similar light and aeration conditions were provided for all of the residents.

From this description, the problematics of utopian thought and action surface to expose phenomenal paradoxality: the aspiration for a cooperative society, egalitarian and perfectly planned, is bounded to create a mechanism of a differentiation, isolation and homogenization. Although the Cooperative Worker's Housing projects are the first continuous urban blocks in Tel-Aviv, they do not offer a model of new urbanism, but function as artificial transplants in the body of the city, a hybridization of sorts between Charles Fourier's Fallansteries – cooperative blocks, designed to enable the worker's communities cope with the hardships of dwelling in the rapidly

industrializing city – and the kibbutz, a rural settlement compensating for the distance from the city by means of creating an Arcadian enclosure. Already with the first pioneering experiments of the Cooperative Worker's Housing projects, the socialist, populist and posthumanist architecture in Israel is revealed as an institutionalized apparatus to guarantee sectorialism, exclusivity, hegemony, political nepotism and indoctrination.

With the establishment of the state, already during the war, the Architect of the Apparatus was invited to leave the laboratory and to expand the controlled experiment he managed for the “intensive and all-embracing development of the entire land, to penetrate all of its corners”. Mordechai Ben-Tov, Minister of Labor and Housing in the transitory government – a leftist socialist according to Sharon – appointed him head of the Planning Department, which was, at first, subordinate to the Labor Office and later (from 1949), to the Prime Minister's Office, that is to say, directly under Ben Gurion. Sharon became the National Architect and recruited (as Meyer had wanted to and as he himself had seen in the Planning Division of the London Municipality) “a brigade of planners” – a team of eighty architects, urban planners, engineers, sociologists and economists, which within a year, grew to one-hundred and seventy members – for the Master Plan which was to divide the land into 24 districts, dictate a strategy of population dispersal, lay a web of roads and communication infrastructure, allocate open spaces for national parks and begin the actual process of planning dozens of new towns and hundreds of new rural settlements.

This unprecedented plan – known as the “Sharon Plan” – is described in detail in the chapter entitled *Mold*. For now it may suffice to underline the “Gray Connection” between the worker's Utopia of the 1930s and the architecture of the “Welfare-State”. The same hand, the same social idea and the same progressive modernism, fabricated the pre-state cooperative housing and the housing developments of the 50s, only that once it is within the framework and ethos of the limited in size, though symbolically amplified, pioneering action – and once it is already an automatic printing of a modus and a module across the entire land; once it is an effort to

establish differentiated strongholds amidst existing economic, cultural and urban bourgeois infrastructure – and once it is a project of marking new strategic points on an erased map and erecting new communities and landscapes *ad nihilo*; once the empowering congregation of ideological Comrades, an architecture for and amongst Members – and once the patronizing projection of a doctrine upon an indistinctive public of newcomers - Others who did not partake in the founding enterprise and will never appropriate the codes and rhetorics of the socialist circles; once a revolutionary, “posthumanist” closure of solidarity, assuming greater propriety and more property – and once a national project under duress, a “melting pot” deliberately striving to produce a new brand of “posthuman” citizens, generic figures without a background against a backdrop of erased landscape and serial buildings. The Architecture of New Objectivity finally brings home the epitome of resolving difference and conflict by denying them. If the Imaginary of the state is constructed around the idea of Return, its Object is an ongoing build-up of the Repressed.

Such critique may be too cold and distant. After all, from our historical vantage point, subsequent to more than three decades of creative releases and a complete promiscuity of the Modernist ethos, the “White Architecture” of the 30s and 40s is an emotionally moving relic of a national revivalist movement, asking to identify itself through images of proletarian elitism and elitist proletarianism – while the “Gray Architecture” of the 50s and 60s is a solid skeleton of a mass building project, historically unprecedented in its relative scope, its political circumstances and its rate of growth.