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Tatiana Efrussi

Hannes Meyer: Soviet Architect

Life and Work in the USSR, 1930–1936

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Efrussi's "Hannes Meyer: Soviet Architect. Life and Work in the USSR, 1930-1936" constitutes a critical contribution to the Bauhaus literature. Efrussi mined the post-Soviet archive, uncovering important details about Meyer's projects for the USSR that had previously gone unnoticed. The resultant book fills in a major gap in our knowledge about Meyer's work in the 1930s and forces us to rethink our broader understanding of the Bauhaus project.

Prof. Dr. Angelina Lucento

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About the author

Dr. Tatiana Efrussi is an architecture and art historian as well as an artist. She was born in Moscow and is currently based in Paris. Since 2010, she has been researching the influence of political ideas on architectural practice and urban realities in both Soviet and German contexts in the 20th century. In 2011, she graduated from the Department of Art History of the Moscow State Lomonosov University with a paper on connections between Bauhaus and the USSR. As a researcher at the Museum of the Moscow Architectural Institute (MARKhI), she curated the exhibition 'Bauhaus in Moscow' in 2012. Her doctoral research dedicated to Hannes Meyer's life in the USSR during the early Stalinist period was supported by the Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Scholarship Fund. She defended her in 2020 at the Department of Architectural Theory and Design, University of Kassel in Germany. In parallel, Efrussi continued her art practice and studies and, in 2021, graduated from the Beaux-Arts de Paris school.

From 2018 to 2019, Efrussi collaborated with the 'Bauhaus Imaginista' project, initiated by Marion von Osten and Grant Watson. In 2019–2020, she worked as a research consultant for the traveling exhibition 'The City of Tomorrow', curated by Ruben Arevshatyan and Georg Schölhammer. Efrussi has published essays on topics including Hannes Meyer, the Bauhaus, Soviet architecture, and contemporary Russian urbanism in scholarly collections and magazines in Russia, Germany, and Switzerland.

HANNES MEYER: SOVIET ARCHITECT

Life and Work in the USSR, 1930–1936



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Summary

Swiss architect and urban planner, the second director of the Bauhaus Dessau, Hannes Meyer, spent about six years in the USSR—from 1930 to 1936. This book presents the first in-depth study of Hannes Meyer's activities during the years of early Stalinism. There is a global interest in this architect's legacy today, but his work can hardly be understood without a closer examination of the key chapter in his career.

This book is an attempt to challenge the usual Western-centered perspective and explore not only what Meyer could bring to the Soviet Union but also what he sought to learn there and how this interaction influenced his work and thinking. The somewhat provocative title underscores this thesis. A detailed reconstruction of his professional activities during this period was made possible through archival research in several countries (Russia, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) and field trips across Russia. In the end, the narrative offers a glimpse into the Soviet architectural context of the 1930s—networks, hierarchies, behavioral strategies, theories, and interpretations of major polemical concepts such as "proletarian architecture" and "socialist realism." Among the projects for "socialist cities," Meyer was commissioned to create the urban plan for the capital of the Jewish Autonomous Region in the USSR—Birobidzhan. The dedicated book chapter explores his involvement in the search for a distinct Soviet "Jewish style."

Hannes Meyer, the most controversial of the architects associated with the Bauhaus, was passionately involved in politics, and available documents indicate his desire to become a "Soviet architect" at all costs. The research allows us to view Meyer not only as a victim but also as an actor in the early Stalinist system based on violence.

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