"Ideas that may be of benefit to your own country." Two German women architects and the American Cultural Exchange Program during the early post-war years

Kerstin Renz

This chapter recounts the history of two female architects who, together with a group of women from the American occupied zone of West Germany, visited the United States within the framework of the US Cultural Exchange Program in 1951-52.[1]

What was this trip about? After 1945, following a resolution handed down by the allied forces, Germany was subjected to comprehensive re-education policies that were built upon three pillars: Democracy, Demilitarization and Denazification. In the eastern zone of occupation, professionals in the building industry became involved in an intensive exchange with Moscow.[2] In the western zones of occupation, different exchange programs that were organized by the High Commissioner of Germany (HICOG) and financed by the United States Department of State became effective tools to steer the re-education efforts.[3] The study trips took place between 1949 and 1955 and were to give participants an authentic impression of society and culture

1 This chapter is based on interviews carried out by the author with Dorothee Keuerleber (January 2012) and Maria-Verena Gieselmann-Fischer (October 2010) in addition to Renz (2017), 229–241 and Renz (2015). If not otherwise stated, information is taken from the diary entries of Keuerleber (private archive) and the written memoirs of Gieselmann-Fischer (saai | Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau am Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT), Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann; hereafter cited as Gieselmann-Fischer (2013)). The author would like to thank Dorothee Keuerleber for her attentive critique of this text (August 2020).

2 Castillo (2004), 10, 17 with additional literature from the 1990s.

3 Concerning the basic literature about this program: Latzin (2005), Renz (2015).

in the United States. In addition to the three "Ds," long term foreign policy goals, specifically the alignment of the Federal Republic of Germany with the West, lent impetus to the program. Upon their return home, the recipients of these scholarships and travel grants were to assume a leading role as *experts* in the democratic rebuilding of West Germany. In addition to university professors, civil servants or union members, architects and urban planners also took part in the exchange program.[4] The American occupation authorities considered them to be ideal participants because their work presented opportunities to implement democratic procedures such as the introduction of public participation in federal and communal development projects.[5]

Notable participants included: the Stuttgart architect and university professor Günter Wilhelm, who played an important role in the reform of educational facilities in the Federal Republic of Germany and was a member of the committee on school buildings of the UIA (Union International des Architectes) and the UNESCO; Otto Apel who, as an employed architect of the American occupation authorities, designed housing estates and built US consulates in West Germany in partnership with the American firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM); and Sep Ruf, the designer of the elegant *Kanzlerbungalow* (chancellor's bungalow), the residence and reception building of the West German federal chancellor in Bonn. Among this group of professionals, there were also female participants.[6] From the *Technical Hochschule* (TH or technical university) in Stuttgart, the architecture student Dorothee Keuerleber (1924-) came forward, and from Karlsruhe, the architect Maria-Verena Fischer (1925-2013) who had just received her degree from the *Technical Hochschule* there.[7]

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4 In 1950, in collaboration with the US occupation authorities (HICOG), the Department of City and Regional Planning of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA offered an apprenticeship program for young architects. Students from universities in Munich, Stuttgart and Karlsruhe participated. See: Castillo (2004).

5 Castillo (2004), 13.

6 A few women architects took part in these and similar exchanges, notably Nina Kessler, Berlin (late 1950s); Wera Meyer-Waldeck, Bonn (1953); Brigitte D'Ortschy and Brigitte Feyerabendt (married Eiermann), Munich (1950). The professional travels of women architects collectively have not been investigated in depth. For D'Ortschy and Feyerabendt see: Castillo (2004).

7 Maria-Verena Fischer's photo album, diverse documents pertaining to the trip to the United States and the memories of Maria-Verena Fischer-Gieselmann (Typescript 2013) are

Concerning the transatlantic exchange of information about architecture, recent German scholarship has concentrated on the period from the late 1950s to the end of the 1960s and has focused almost exclusively on masculine protagonists.[8] Against the backdrop of the post-war construction boom, West German architects like Egon Eiermann, Friedrich Wilhelm Kraemer, Walter Henn or Paul Schneider-Esleben could afford to make privately financed study trips to the USA or were courted and invited by American companies as future partners of the building industry. Frequently the context was that of an exclusive "men's tour group" [9] within a business trip. So far, so much is known. In the case of Fischer and Keuerleber, the initial situation was different. Both understood the offer of a travel stipend to visit the United States as an opportunity to become acquainted with the renowned architecture of North America, which previously they had only encountered in publications and, at least temporarily, to escape from the atmosphere of narrowness and confinement permeating everyday life in the post-war years. Particularly for educated, professional women, there were few substantial career opportunities. At the time when they applied to the program, Keuerleber was preparing to make her final diploma examination and Fischer, whose academic title was a Diploma Engineer in architecture, was working at her first job as an employee in an architect's office and—totally in keeping with a traditional understanding of gender roles—was designing the interior furnishings for the *Amerika Haus* in Heidelberg.[10] In their applications, both women indicated that they were interested in urban planning and educational facilities, of which there was an immense need in post-war Germany. In doing so, they were predestined for the travel program. Like all recipients of the stipendium, they signed a document which obligated them to return to Germany after the trip. In the fall of 1951, they boarded an airplane in Frankfurt-am-Main that was headed to New York, the starting point of a three-month long excursion through the United States. According to documentation at the

contained in the architect's papers at the saai (see note 1). The diary kept by Dorothee Keuerleber during her trip through the USA is in private possession.

8 Wilhelm (2008).

9 Ibid, 125.

10 After completing her diploma project under Egon Eiermann, she was employed in the office of Lange & Mitzlaff in Mannheim. Gieselmann-Fischer (2013), 51 (see footnote 1).

United States Consulate, they did not travel in a special program for architects, but as "Experts for Women's Affairs." [11] (Figure 1)

Fischer, a quiet, reserved person, recalled the first meeting with her travel companion, Dorothee Keuerleber, who she described as the self-confident and extroverted daughter of an architecture professor from Stuttgart.[12] Despite their differences they became a good team. Although they traveled with a group of women experts, early on they more or less opted out of the official program, which made a priority of visiting local women's organizations. In her diary, Fischer noted that their chaperone from the US Department of State requested they make suggestions about what they would like to visit. The two young women went to the Musuem of Modern Art in New York, obtained a list of modern American architecture and showed it to the chaperone. While the latter was delighted to see their initiative and originality, the two women were satisfied that they would not be spending their time with "Women's Affairs" issues.[13] The destinations of the women's group included New York, Washington, Madison, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit and Chicago, and then on to Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Los Angeles in the west, with New Orleans on the way back as the last city. The route resembled those completed by numerous German experts under the aegis of the Cultural Exchange Program.[14] Yet as their interests differed from the main women's group, Keuerleber and Fischer were frequently on their own.

Both women faithfully documented their trip. Keuerleber was a passionate writer and kept a detailed diary, Fischer wrote less but photographed a good deal and made two photo albums with the material that she collected. These albums give an insight into her view of the United States. Fischer pasted pictures of a slum and a new housing estate by Walter Gropius/TAC (The Architects Collaborative) on the same page: the optimistic project by her professional colleagues next to an urban district with profound social problems like poverty and racism. The massive disparities between urban, suburban and rural areas certainly made a deep impression upon the young architects.

11 Herein lies the difference between these two young women and the scholarship recipients who Castillo documents.

12 Gieselmann-Fischer (2013), 57 (See footnote 1).

13 Ibid.

14 Compare Meier (1953). This booklet recounts a trip with the identical itinerary.

Figure 1: "First snapshot in Washington." From the USA photo album of Maria-Verena Fischer. Dorothee Keuerleber (left) and Maria-Verena Fischer (right). Source: Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann/saai | Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau am Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT).

Like all the recipients of travel grants, the women first took part in a so-called "Training Course in Democracy"[15] in Washington before they embarked on their trip. They had great expectations for the new architecture in the United States. Both knew about the legendary avant-garde architects, many of whom now were living there, but they had little knowledge of vernacular buildings. Keuerleber was enthusiastic about Mies van der Rohe, Fischer had a penchant for the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. She later described her encounter with Wright's buildings, among others the Unitarian Church in Salt Lake City, Utah, the Taliesin Ateliers in Scottsdale, Arizona and the Johnson Wax Company in Racine, Wisconsin, as an inspirational

15 Castillo (2004), 12.

experience.[16] While in California, Keuerleber enthusiastically discovered the work of Charles and Ray Eames. They made visits to architects' offices and faculties of architecture, including Walter Gropius at Harvard and TAC in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the famous skyscraper architect Pietro Belluschi at MIT, also in Cambridge; Mies van der Rohe at IIT in Chicago; and, finally, Erich Mendelsohn in San Francisco and Richard Neutra in Los Angeles. The framework of the Women's Affairs Program notwithstanding, Keuerleber and Fischer never mentioned being introduced to practicing women architects in the United States who could have served as role models.[17] Meanwhile, when in contact with their contemporaries, American architecture students repeatedly asked them about the Bauhaus and their personal opinion of it. For both women, this was a surprise and they reacted to the queries with helplessness.[18] Educated in the 1940s at two highly respected, academically rigorous and tradition-oriented institutions, they did not value the influence of the Bauhaus to the same degree as their contemporaries in the USA, who had been introduced to the second generation of Bauhaus pedagogy at Black Mountain College in North Carolina and the Harvard Graduate School of Design in Cambridge.

With the destroyed cities at home in mind, both women joined local excursions for selected participants to inspect new urban planning projects.[19] Their visits to residential complexes by local housing authorities in large cities like Chicago, Detroit or New York made them aware of the goals of "low-cost housing" and radical "slum clearance" in addition to the dilemma of real estate speculation. Nevertheless, neither woman mentioned the overt racism in American society and the gentrification resulting from such radical urban planning projects when they made notes about these experiences. Trained as architects, they only discerned the absence of the precepts of modern build-

16 Gieselmann-Fischer (2013), 58 (see footnote 1).

17 Women architects received widespread attention for the first time in the USA in two issues of *Architectural Record* in 1948. Only two practitioners in this publication—Marie Frommer and Elsa Gidoni, both of whom had trained and practiced in Germany and went into exile in the late 1930s—had realized public or commercial architecture. In contrast, most women who were featured in this publication had trained in the USA and designed residential buildings.

18 Renz (2017), 238.

19 Castillo describes similar excursions in connection with the Chapel Hill Program for West German architecture students. See, Castillo (2004), 14–15.

ing, namely "light, air and sun," when considering the height and density of these structures. Fisher noted in her diary that a concern for solar orientation was ignored when the Farragut Houses, a sprawling public housing project in the New York Borough of Brooklyn, was conceived.[20] Nevertheless, she observed that the public outdoor areas provided occupants with a modestly welcoming environment. (Figure 2) Keuerleber felt the design of the residential towers with cruciform plans was typical for social housing yet was well executed in materials such as brick and steel crossbar fenestration.

At their request, visits to schools and sports facilities were a key component of the travel program. The architects were more impressed with the atmosphere in the schools than the architecture, and both enjoyed observing the relaxed and unencumbered social interactions among the students. They were amazed at the size and layout of the schools that included: classrooms with natural illumination on two sides and moveable furniture; halls for sport and public events that were furnished with up-to-date equipment; libraries; and generously dimensioned entrance lobbies where the students could gather. Such spaces and amenities were extremely rare in Germany at that time. When inspecting some progressive schools, they were surprised to encounter the widespread use of lightweight, easily assembled construction just as much as the preference of American municipalities for the pavilion school type, which relied on exterior circulation to access some rooms in the southern states. Over the course of their trip, both women developed a more critical opinion of the typical American school, and the commentary in their diaries became more caustic. Even when confronted with modern icons, their sharp appraisals did not cease. Fischer's own photographs of the Bell Experimental School designed by Richard Neutra in California are sober commentaries, and the contrast to the elaborately staged images by the acclaimed architectural photographer, Julius Shulman, of the same building could not be greater. (Figure 3)

20 The Farragut Houses, some buildings rising to a height of 14 stories, was a model residential complex built by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). During the construction phase, visitors, especially city planners and architects, toured the site. In 1952 the new inhabitants moved into the first blocks.

Figure 2: Farragut Houses in Brooklyn, New York, photograph by Maria-Verena Fischer, 1951. Source: Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann/saai | Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau am Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT).

An interview conducted by a journalist from the *Wisconsin State Journal*, a local newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin, with the two women shows the extent to which the exchange program was dictated by the prevailing political conditions of the Cold War. The journalist coaxed Fischer to comment on the political situation in West Germany. Later, she noted with some indignation that certain statements were not authorized by her. The interview stated, that according to Fischer, West Germans lived with the fear that the "Russians" could invade upon short notice, and that refugees from Soviet-occupied East Germany were causing disruption, competition for jobs and widespread anxiety, conditions which could bring about an embrace of communism.[21] (Figure 4) Here, not simply the intended re-education, but more

21 Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann, saai |KIT. The newspaper article is undated. Gieselmann-Fischer (2013), 58 (see footnote 1).

importantly the instrumentalization of the participants in support of the political propaganda of the USA, was blatantly obvious.

Keuerleber was the first to return to Germany in order to complete her final project and receive her diploma from the TH Stuttgart.[22] Fischer travelled the final stretch alone. In the State of Tennessee, a highly charged stop on the study tour awaited her: Together with a women's group, she visited the city of Oak Ridge, also known as the Atomic City or the Secret City.[23] Oak Ridge was presented to the group as the vanguard of cost efficient and quickly constructed educational and residential architecture. During the Second World War, as part of the secret armament program, the Manhattan Project, the city was a restricted military area. The residents worked on developing the atom bomb which was dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945. On behalf of the American government, the Chicago-based architectural firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) acted as the general contractor for the urban and landscape design and also planned the residential and public buildings. John O. Merrill (1896-1975), a partner in the firm, directed the project on site. Here Fischer observed a city that, between 1942 and 1945, was erected for approximately 75,000 inhabitants and seemingly arose from the ground overnight. Numerous temporary barracks that were used for housing were in evidence, indicating the haste of this endeavor. The enclosed "secret" city contained ten schools, seven cinemas and theaters, 17 restaurants and cafés, 13 supermarkets and one library.[24] In the residential areas, Merrill organized the planning around "Neighborhood Units" where traffic-reduced, residential estates are clustered around schools and day care centers. Fischer photographed the prefabricated, lightweight houses for workers as well as the homes for the executive staff that were built using masonry. Although social segregation and racial separation were the unspoken tenets that informed the design of the city, she did not comment upon them. The architecture of the high school, designed by Merrill and for use by white students exclusively, deeply impressed her; upon her return to Germany she published an image of it in an exhibition catalogue about new

22 Chief examiner was Rolf Gutbrod (1910-1999), one of the prominent architects in West Germany.

23 For further reading, see Olwell (2004).

24 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oak_Ridge,_Tennessee, accessed on September 25, 2020.

Figure 3: An icon of modern school architecture? Bell Experimental School by Richard Neutra, 1935. Photograph by Maria-Verena Fischer, 1951. Source: Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann/saai | Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau am Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT).

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2 German Architects Visit Madison to Learn of America 'Face to Face'

By JOHN NEWHOUSE
(State Journal Staff Writer)

Two woman architects from Germany wish that more Germans could come to this country to learn to know the people.

"You can read about a people, but you cannot know them from books," said Dorothee Keuerleber, of Stuttgart, in Madison on a tour of the United States arranged by the Woman's Bureau of the Department of Labor.

"Meeting them, face to face, is one of the best ways of preventing bad feelings between nations."

With her is Maria Fischer, of Karlsruhe, who knows about bad feelings between nations.

"We live with the knowlege that, in five hours, the Russians could overrun our city, and come into our home," she said.

Life in Western Germany is becoming increasingly difficult, she said, because of the large number of refugees who come into that zone from the Russian occupied zone.

Two German architects are visiting Madison as the guests of the Madison League of Women Voters, studying architecture and getting ideas to take back to Germany.

At the left above is Maria Fischer, and at the right, Dorothee Keuerleber, in a picture take in The Wisconsin State Journal newsroom Tuesday. —State Journal Staff photo

Figure 4: "Two German Architects visit Madison to learn of America 'Face to Face'," Wisconsin State Journal, 1951; Maria-Verena Fischer (left), Dorothee Keuerleber (right). Source: Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann/saai | Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau am Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT).

school buildings.[25] Furthermore, Oak Ridge permitted unions to organize, and they called for improved working conditions and healthcare while women's organizations lobbied for pay equity (equal pay for equal work) and—as a special demand—social housing.[26] Like the City of Greenbelt, Maryland, Oak Ridge was presented to visiting groups from West Germany as an ideal example of comprehensive new town planning employing prefabricated housing and financed by public-private partnerships. Fischer's time at Oak Ridge clearly demonstrates that only five years after the end of the Second World War, a young German woman architect was able to visit the city which originally had been constructed to destroy her home country. The Cold War had shifted the positions of the adversaries.

Upon her return to Germany, the US Consulate in Stuttgart politely but emphatically requested Fischer to write a report and evaluate the trip. The form letter from the consulate reminded her that: "You were chosen as one of the persons who would not only personally benefit from a visit to a foreign land, but who would also do his or her share in contributing work and ideas that may be of benefit to your own country."[27]

The last part of this statement, "of benefit to your own country," is worth noting. From the perspective of a US authority and in light of the demographic situation post-war Germany, this expectation regarding the future professional and political situation of a woman and an architect may have seemed obvious, but prevailing attitudes about gender only complicated this imperative. In the postwar years, although women made up the majority of the adult population in East and West Germany, the extent to which they could realize their career ambitions relied to a certain degree upon where they resided. In the Soviet Zone of Occupation (SBZ), which became the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949, the integration of women into professional life was systematically promoted and architects typically worked in collective, state-run offices. In a few instances, those who were acceptable to the Communist Party could rise to leading positions in these offices or at

25 Fischer (1953), 57. Fischer organized the publication and accompanying exhibition with her father, the architect Alfred Fischer. The catalogue appeared only under his name (!). See also footnote 31 in this chapter.

26 Olwell (2004), 83.

27 saai | KIT, Collection of Maria-Verena Gieselmann.

a university.[28] In the Federal Republic of Germany, women architects often worked as employees in the civil service or were self-employed; they rarely rose to positions of power. Due to the more difficult working conditions and the economic and personal risks associated with becoming an architect, the professional challenges were much greater for women in the west. This was the experience of Maria-Verena Fischer. Looking back upon her USA trip, she recalled it as a time of great personal autonomy and lacking in restraints, an experience that shaped her future life.[29]

Around 1952, she applied for immigration to the United States and the American authorities granted her request.[30] Fischer, however, abandoned this plan and directed a "one-woman" architecture office in Karlsruhe from 1952 to 1957. In compliance with the stipulations of her American study trip, she made an effort to publicize what she had learned, especially regarding educational facilities. In 1953, together with her father Alfred Fischer, an architect and member of the municipal building authority, she produced the catalogue *Neue Wege im Schulbau* (New paths in school architecture) which supplemented the 1951 exhibition *Das neue Schulhaus* (The new school).[31] (Figure 5) It contained a cross-section of exemplary educational facilities from Scandinavia, Switzerland and the USA.

The Americanization of the West German Building industry during the post-war years and the economic miracle did come into being, as the Cold War re-education nurtured close political and economic partnerships. But what happened to the two women who received travel grants to the USA? For Maria-Verena Fischer, the most direct benefit was the design of the primary school in the rural village of Pfinztal-Berghausen, completed in 1953. (Figure 6) Here she applied the knowledge that she acquired during her USA sojourn, designing a school with three wings on a large site. It has a spacious lobby with niches for reading and classrooms that were lit from two sides and have direct access to the outdoors. Like an American community center, the building can be used for diverse public activities when school is not in session. Fischer subsequently received commissions for schools, residential buildings, and

28 Droste/Huning (2017).

29 Gieselmann-Fischer (2013), 59.

30 Ibid. 60.

31 The eponymous exhibition opened in 1951 at the Orangerie in Karlsruhe.

remodeling projects.[32] She was a successful, independent practitioner until 1957 when she married the aspiring architect and future university professor, Reinhard Gieselmann (1925-2013). Henceforth she subordinated her own interests to the success of her husband.[33] Although the pair officially worked collaboratively, she assumed a traditional role for this time and cared for their two children. Maria-Verena Gieselmann, or Verena Gieselmann-Fischer, as she called herself shortly before her death, passed away in Karlsruhe in 2013.[34]

After the USA trip, Dorothee Keuerleber worked in different architectural offices, specializing in schools and sports facilities. She remained an independent, professional woman who lived alone with her son and never revealed the name of her offspring's father—in the 1950s and the 1960s, this was a small scandal.[35] From 1969 to 1974 she directed the school architecture information center of South Württemberg and, until her retirement, was employed in the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Culture and Sport. Together with her colleagues (the overwhelming majority of whom were men), she undertook further study excursions to the USA. For Keuerleber, the American educational facilities were not models to be imitated, but rather examples to lend orientation. An American-inspired appreciation for grass-roots processes and a fierce support for women's equality has accompanied Dorothee Keuerleber throughout her long life and up to the present day. In 1981 she was the co-founder of the task force for women architects at the Chamber of Architects in Baden-Württemberg and, most recently, took part in the protests against the partial demolition of the Stuttgart Main Train Station to accommodate the vast transportation project Stuttgart [20]21.[36]

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32 Her architecture office in Karlsruhe was located at the Stephanienstrasse 31. Other projects include: single family house in Grötzingen; workshop in Bulach; bicycle store in the Kaiserstrasse, Karlsruhe; primary school in Bammental (1954-1955); and the Wüstenrot housing estate und dormitory tower in Karlsruhe-Weststadt (together with Alfred Fischer und Reinhard Gieselmann)(1957).

33 Gieselmann-Fischer (2013), 63 (see footnote 1).

34 For further information about Gieselmann, see, Kabierske (ed.) (2006); saai | KIT, Collection Reinhard Gieselmann.

35 Interview with D. Keuerleber in January 2012.

36 Widespread protests against the destruction of a section of the monumental Stuttgart Main Train station, constructed between 1914 and 1928 by the architect Paul Bonatz, have taken place. Part of the station was demolished to create an underground train station.

Figure 5: New perspectives: Das neue Schulhaus (The new school), 1951. Source: Fotostiftung Schweiz, Bernhard Moosbrugger Papers.

Figure 6: A large garden and light-filled interiors: Primary school by Maria-Verena Fischer in Pfinztal-Berghausen, 1954. Source: Collection Maria-Verena Gieselmann/saai | Archiv für Architektur und Ingenieurbau am Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT).

The post-war trip of the two young women architects within the framework of the Cultural Affairs Program reveals a chapter of German-American cultural and economic transfer during the Cold War years. After 1945, the USA was intent on influencing the planning and construction methods of the West German building industry, and the Cultural Exchange Program was part of these efforts. Yet their trip was related to other concerns of the time, notably the growing fears of excessive communist influence during the McCarthy Era. In reaction to Soviet pressure on German women's organizations in the SBZ, in 1948 the Americans created the Women's Affairs Section within their military administration (OMGUS or Office of Military Government of the United States) to foster civic education, equal rights and the political engagement of women in the western part of Germany.[37] However, the American administrators did not focus on women in architecture. In the United States, woman architects in the 1950s were not well known, were few in number and faced rampant misogyny in the workforce.[38]

Dorothee Keuerleber and Maria-Verena Fischer were exceptional personalities in the post-war years in West Germany. Both enjoyed favorable starting conditions. After the Second World War, Keuerleber's father, Hugo Keuerleber, an advocate of modern architecture, reformed the architectural curriculum at the *Technische Hochschule* in Stuttgart and, as dean, was a unifying figure at this extremely polarized faculty.[39] A representative of *Neues Bauen*, Alfred Fischer supervised the construction of the seminal Dammerstock Housing Estate in Karlsruhe in 1928/29. In the post-war years, he was an influential civil servant and later became a university professor at the *Technische Hochschule* in Karlsruhe. These two daughters of architects could thank their liberal and progressive families who enabled them to receive a

37 Schissler (2001), 849.

38 In the USA, women were only admitted to most leading architecture schools, such as Columbia, Yale and Harvard, in the 1940s. Nonetheless it is worth noting that the well-known American office TAC (The Architects Collaborative), founded by Walter Gropius and seven recent graduates of leading American architecture schools, did have two women partners (Sarah P. Harkness and Jean B. Fletcher). For the situation at Yale: https://www.architecture.yale.edu/about-the-school/yale-architecture-women, accessed on Sept. 27, 2020; For the situation of women architects in corporate practice: https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/01/nyregion/an-architect-whose-work-stood-out-even-if-she-did nt.html?hp=&_r=2&, accessed on Sept. 27, 2020.

39 See, Schmidt (2004).

university education and supported their professional interests. Yet the main reason for their American journey as stated by their host nation, namely "to be of benefit to one's own country," was not a primary concern to them. They belonged to a generation shaped by armed conflict and the immediate post-war years, experiences which had thoroughly eviscerated such national sentiments. Nevertheless, the journey to the United States was revelatory for both Keuerleber and Fischer. Afterwards they were emboldened to pursue careers in the masculine-dominated profession of architecture. During a period that offered women mostly reactionary notions for how they should lead their lives, the story of their trip and its aftermath is a powerful one.

Translated by Mary Pepchinski

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