

# Bruno Taut, “An Architectural Program” (1919)

## Abstract

---

The architect Bruno Taut (1880-1934), a committed pacifist, believed that a new architectural style could play a crucial role in the founding of a new, more humane society. During the Weimar Republic, he implemented his theory in several social housing projects characterized by rational design, the principle of social equality, communal openness, and direct access to sunlight and fresh air. In the wake of the November 1918/1919 Revolution, Taut was among the founders of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* [Working Council for the Arts], a loose association of progressive artists in the Weimar Republic modeled on the workers’ and soldiers’ councils that had played a decisive role in the success of the revolution. However, it disbanded as early as 1921, just three years after its founding. Here are some excerpts from Taut’s “Architectural Program,” which shows its revolutionary inspiration and was published by the *Arbeitsrat* in 1919.

## Source

---

Art—that is the thing, if it be there! Today such art does not exist. The disrupted tendencies can achieve a unity only under the auspices of a new art of building, in such a way that each separate discipline will contribute to it. At that point there will be no boundaries between the crafts, sculpture, and painting, all will be one: Architecture.

A building is the direct carrier of spiritual values, shaper of the sensibilities of the general public which slumbers today but will awake tomorrow. Only a total revolution in the realm of the spiritual can create this building; yet this revolution, this building, does not happen by itself. Both have to be sought—today’s architects must prepare the way for this edifice. Their efforts toward the future must be made possible and be supported by public funds. Therefore we propose:

I. Support and Concentration of Intellectual Resources among Architects.

a) The subsidizing of architectural ideas which, beyond the formal, strive for the concentration of all resources of the citizenry into the symbolic construction of a better future, which point out the cosmic character the religious basis of architecture—would-be Utopias. Making available public funds for such projects by means of scholarships to radically inclined architects. Funds for informational publications, for the construction of models, and:

b) Well-situated experimental grounds (in Berlin, for instance, the Tempelhofer Feld), on which architects could work out their ideas in the form of large models. Here, also, new structural effects, such as that of glass as a building material, should be tested, perfected, and shown to the public at large in the form of full-size temporary buildings or sections of such. Layman, woman, and child lead the architect further than would the cautious professional. Expenses to be met by using material melted down from monuments, from dismantled triumphal avenues, and so on, as well as by the aid of industries concerned with the experimental buildings. Workshops with colonies of craftsmen and artists on the experimental grounds.

c) Control over the distribution of funds should rest in the hands of a small council, half of it to be composed of creative architects, the other half of radically thinking laymen. If there is no unanimity, a layman is chosen to make the decision.

---

## II. Community Centers for the People.

a) Launching of vast community centers, not in the city, but in the open country alongside settlements, comprising groups of buildings for theater, music, hotels, and the like and crowned by a general cultural center. [...]

## III. Housing Developments.

a) Consistent supervision in such a fashion that one architect establishes the underlying and guiding principles, checking all projects and buildings against these, without hampering individual inspiration in the details. This architect should have veto power.

[...]

## IV. Other Buildings.

[...]

b) There should be no distinction between public and private buildings. So long as there exist free architects there should only be free architects. As long as there are no governmental master potters there is no need for governmental architects. Everybody can build public as well as private structures; commissions should be assigned as suggested in Ic or by competition—not an anonymous competition, but one in which the candidates are invited to participate and are awarded prizes by a council as suggested in Ic; no unpaid projects. [...] No majority decisions by the jury for the prize; if there is no agreement, each judge is individually responsible for his vote. The best would be one judge only. Final selection, perhaps, by plebiscite.

[...]

d) No titles or honors for architects, such as Doctor, Professor, Building Supervisor, Geheimer Rat, Wirklicher Rat, Excellency, etc.

e) In all these matters creativity should be given priority. Once an architect is commissioned he should not be subject to regimentation.

[...]

g) Only such architectural fraternities as thoroughly observe the principle of mutual cooperation are to be eligible for the council or are to be considered of good standing and to receive public recognition. They will also advise the building inspectors. Only mutual help can make an association productive and efficacious. This is more important than the number of votes, which is meaningless without social union. It excludes inartistic and, therefore, self-interested competition.

[...]

## VI. Architecture and the Other Arts.

[...]

c) Also, consequently, the introduction of architectural students to the creative “new art.” Only that architect is of importance who grasps the whole realm of art and who understands radical tendencies in painting and sculpture. Only he can help bring about a unity to the whole.

The architect’s greater importance in public life and his holding of more important offices and the like

---

will result automatically from the carrying through of this Program.

Source: Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich, *The Architecture of Fantasy*, translated and edited by C.C. Collins and George R. Collins. New York: Praeger, 1962, pp. 135–36; reprinted in Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism, Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 194–97.

Source of original German text: Bruno Taut, *Ein Architektur-Programm*. Berlin: Arbeitsrat für Kunst, 1919.

Recommended Citation: Bruno Taut, “An Architectural Program” (1919), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:document-4005>> [March 16, 2026].