

## Chapter 3: EXPRESSIONISM, RATIONALISM, CUBISM

### 3.1 EXPRESSIONISM, THE MOVEMENT

It is an **art movement** of early **20th century**. It is one of the two major tendencies that emerged in **Germany** after **World War I** (1914-1918); the other being **rationalism**.

After the war's horrible slaughter, some German architects grew less enchanted with the machine and sought a **design ideal** that would **express emotion** and the **essence of life**. The artist's subjective expression of **inner experiences** was emphasized; expressed through a **distorted rendition of reality**.

The expressionist **interlude** is seen as one of the main catalysts that sparked off new architecture. The phase produced some of the most brilliant **forms** of building.

#### 3.1.1 CHARACTERISTICS

- Based on **feelings** (the child) rather than **rational thought** (the adult)
- The artists displayed tendency to **distort reality** for an **emotional effect**
- Exhibited in many art forms; **painting, literature, film, architecture** and **music**
- Demand for completely new type of building and increasing knowledge of technology led by desire for exploration of **new shapes** and **solutions** to the old problems
- Investigation of new **materials** and **techniques** of construction
- **Bold colors, distorted forms, careless** in manner, **2-D** and without perspective
- Tendency to **discard rules** and conventions and obtain **freedom of self expression**
- Architects were influenced by the works of **Antoni Gaudi** who made attempts to express the contemporary art of the 2-D to **3-D** form in **architecture**
- Introduced **plastic interpretation** of mass to give a building its expression
- Striking use of **light**, natural and artificial, in a building and interplay with shadows
- Treated building more or less like a **sculpture**

#### 3.1.2 IMPACT ON ART

*The Scream* by **Edvard Munch** (1893)

*On White II* by **Wassily Kandinsky** (1923)

*The Starry Night* by **Vincent Van Gogh** (1889)

Painters such as **Matthias Grünewald** and **El Greco**

#### 3.1.3 IMPACT ON SCULPTURE

*The Kiss*(1886), *Thought, Balzac* (1893) by **August Rodin**

### 3.1.4 ARCHITECT and ARCHITECTURE

Expressionist architecture was an architectural movement in Europe during the first decades of the 20th century in parallel with the expressionist visual and performing arts that especially developed and dominated in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

**Form:** curved geometries, roofs often domes

**Material:** intention to unify the material in the building to make it monolithic. (Eg: Glass Pavilion)

#### A. **Bruno Taut (1880-1938)**

- Born in Königsberg, Germany in 1880
- Opened his own office in Berlin in 1910
- After the First World War, Taut's theories and designs marked him as a leader in architectural innovation
- His work essential part-use of colours

Work Description:

- **Glass Pavilion**, Cologne Werkbund Exhibition (1914)
- **Worpsweder Käseglocke** (1926)
- **Steel industries pavilion, Germany** (1913)

#### **Glass Pavilion**, Cologne Werkbund Exhibition (1914)

- Explored the possibilities of fantasy colored glass architecture.
- Set on a concrete plinth decorated with mosaic
- It comprised of fourteen-sided **prismatic dome** of colored glass, with glass block stairs.
- Obsession of glass as “glass chain” writings



Glass Pavilion<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionist\\_architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionist_architecture)

<sup>2</sup> [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/ed/Taut\\_Glass\\_Pavilion\\_exterior\\_1914.jpg/250px-Taut\\_Glass\\_Pavilion\\_exterior\\_1914.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/ed/Taut_Glass_Pavilion_exterior_1914.jpg/250px-Taut_Glass_Pavilion_exterior_1914.jpg)

### Worpsweder Käseglocke (1926)

- Unusual Igloo shape
- Popularly called as Cheese cover
- Organic form of nature and gave a feeling of protection
- Has a Chimney, different chambers led by winding stair and dormer windows



Worpsweder Käseglocke<sup>3</sup>

### B. **Erich Mendelsohn**

- Mendelsohn, Erich (German architect)
- Born in Allerstein, East Prussia
- Served as a German soldier in Russia during the First World War.
- Did a lot of sketches in expressionistic style.
- 1921- Built the "**Einstein Tower**" and got his breakthrough to the architectural avant-garde.

#### Work Description:

- 1919-1924, Einstein Tower, Potsdam, Germany
- 1921-1923, Berliner Tageblatt Building, Berlin
- 1921-1923, Herman and Company Hat Factory, Germany
- 1926, Schocken Department Store, Germany

### EINSTIEN TOWER, POTSDAM, GERMANY

- Started 1919- 1921 – Officially opened 1924.
- Built for **astronomer Freundlich** to support experiments and observations to validate Albert Einstein's relativity theory.



Einstein Tower<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup><https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c2/Kaeseglocke.jpg/240px-Kaeseglocke.jpg>

<sup>4</sup>[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/98/Babelsberg\\_Einsteinturm.jpg/170px-Babelsberg\\_Einsteinturm.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/98/Babelsberg_Einsteinturm.jpg/170px-Babelsberg_Einsteinturm.jpg)

- A key Expressionist building - curved, organic forms depart from all traditional expectations of what a tower should look like
- Plastic building, molded rather than built, without angles and with smooth rounded corners
- External effect obtained by surface rendering.
- Unification of nature with the speed and flux of modernity.

### **Schocken Department Store**, Stuttgart 1928

- Proclaiming its horizontality in its solid and windowed bands
- Two pivot points of the semi-cylinders, elongated along the sloping street to the left, and the other echoing it across the roof from the other side of the building.
- It was a strikingly modern design in what was then a traditional urban context. The sweeping horizontal lines, juxtaposed by a vertical semicircular all-glass projection.<sup>5</sup>



Schocken Department Store<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schocken\\_Department\\_Store,\\_Stuttgart](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schocken_Department_Store,_Stuttgart)

<sup>6</sup> [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fd/Bundesarchiv\\_Bild\\_102-07016%2C\\_Stuttgart%2C\\_Modernes\\_Warenhaus.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fd/Bundesarchiv_Bild_102-07016%2C_Stuttgart%2C_Modernes_Warenhaus.jpg)

### C. HANS POELZIG(1869-1936)

- A German architect, painter and set designer.
- Appointed as city architect of Dresden in 1916.
- Was also known for his distinctive 1919 interior redesign of the Berlin Grosses Schauspielhaus.
- Best-known building is the enormous and legendary I.G. Farben Building, completed in 1931<sup>7</sup>

#### Work Description:

- **Grosse Schauspielhaus,Berlin (1919)**  
A cavernous, domed space and had no balconies, which contributed to its vastness.  
Ceiling Illumination form as satellite constellation
- **Water Tower (1911)**
- I.G. Farben Building(1931)
- Poelzig Building at Goethe University, Frankfurt(1931)

### WATER TOWER, Posen (1911)

- It is a combination of heterogeneous function and a totally hallucinogenic industrial aesthetic.
- Designed 51.2 m tall
- Skin designed with much glazed patterns and masonry
- Interior had skeletal system
- Beneath water tower had an exhibit space designed



Water Tower, Posen<sup>8</sup>

Another example is **Gotheanum II**, Dornach,1928 by **Rudolf Steiner**

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans\\_Poelzig](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Poelzig)

<sup>8</sup> [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/03/Wie%C5%BCa\\_G%C3%B3rno%C5%9B%C4%85ska\\_w\\_Poznaniu.jpg/220px-Wie%C5%BCa\\_G%C3%B3rno%C5%9B%C4%85ska\\_w\\_Poznaniu.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/03/Wie%C5%BCa_G%C3%B3rno%C5%9B%C4%85ska_w_Poznaniu.jpg/220px-Wie%C5%BCa_G%C3%B3rno%C5%9B%C4%85ska_w_Poznaniu.jpg)

It is called as “spiritual high school”. It is dominated by curvilinear shapes, it is "melted and deformed” while it had symmetrical plan with concentric circles. Its effects can be seen in the works of **Peter Behrens, AEG Turbine Factory (1909)**

### 3.2 RATIONALISM

#### 3.2.1 THE MOVEMENT

This movement emerged as the **Neue Sachlichkeit** (new objectivity), the rationalist movement in **Germany**, parallel to the Expressionist movement. It grew out of a desire among painters for an art that directly addressed pressing **socio-political** problems, based on the idea that truth can best be discovered by **reason** and **factual** analysis, rather than faith, dogma or religious teaching.

#### 3.2.2 CHARACTERISTICS

Architects, in turn, sought to design buildings that would **improve** the **lives** of those living/working in them. They called for designs of great **clarity** that paid strict attention to **function** and made use of modern **materials** and **technologies**.

#### EXAMPLES

The **Van Nelle Factory (1927-1929)** in Rotterdam by Dutch architects **Johannes Brinckmann, Leendert van der Vlugt, and Mart Stam**.

It represented a rationalist building conceived as a set of **floating planes** and **interpenetrating volumes**.

A **glass curtain wall** along its length both enclosed and revealed the building’s **reinforced concrete** structure. It allowed for maximum penetration of light for the workers within.



Van Nelle Factory<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/10/Overzicht\\_-\\_Rotterdam\\_-\\_20349702\\_-\\_RCE.jpg/160px-Overzicht\\_-\\_Rotterdam\\_-\\_20349702\\_-\\_RCE.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/10/Overzicht_-_Rotterdam_-_20349702_-_RCE.jpg/160px-Overzicht_-_Rotterdam_-_20349702_-_RCE.jpg)

### 3.3 CUBISM

#### 3.3.1 THE MOVEMENT

It is an important, influential and an avant-garde art movement that revolutionized European painting and sculpture in the early 20th century.

**Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso**, residents of Paris, France are the movement's main innovators.

**French art critic Louis Vauxcelles first used the term "cubism", or "bizarre cubiques", after seeing a picture by Braque and describing it as 'full of little cubes'.**

**Cubism influenced artists of the time and gave rise to development of new trends in art like futurism, constructivism, vorticism and expressionism.**

In first phase it was termed as “**analytical cubism**” (1909 -1912), in which densely patterned near-monochrome surfaces of incomplete directional lines and modeled forms constantly play against one another. Here fragmented objects were placed into its composing parts **or facets**.<sup>10</sup>

**Eg. Woman with a guitar by artist Georges Braque (1913)**

The second phase “**Synthetic cubism**” was composed of distinct **superimposed** parts, **painted or pasted** onto the canvas and are characterized by **brighter colours**. Here, attempt was made to bring many **different objects** together to create **new forms**.

**Eg. Pablo Picasso, Three Musicians (1921), Museum of Modern Art**

#### 3.3.2 CHARACTERISTICS

Objects are **broken up, analyzed**, and **re-assembled** in an **abstracted** form Instead of rendering objects from a single fixed angle; the artist depicts the subject from multiple angles simultaneously as an attempt to present the subject in the most complete manner.

Often the **surfaces** of the facets/ planes **intersect** at angles that show no recognizable depth. The background and object/ figure **planes interpenetrate** creating the ambiguous **shallow** space.

Example: **Cubist House**, 1913, Prague, Czech Republic by Ar. Josef Chochol

Czech Cubists distinguish their work through the construction of sharp points, slicing planes, and crystalline shapes in their art works

References:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressionism>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubism>