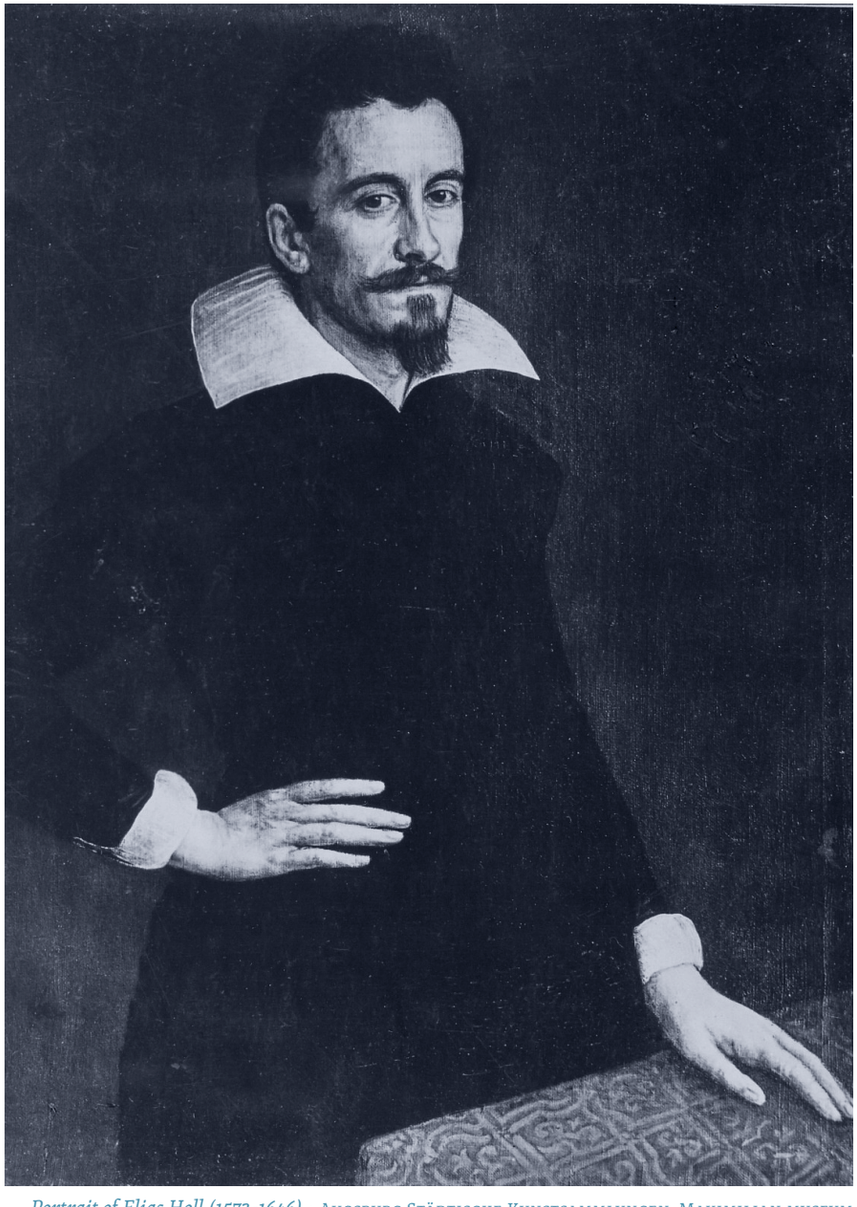
Cabinet maker Anton Häckel in his workshop, 1920.
Photograph by Hermann Krausse • Deutsche Fotothek

Gustav Wolf

EDUCATING CRAFTSMEN TODAY

A talk given before the Arts & Crafts Association for Breslau & Silesia and the Silesian Regional Association of the German Work Federation on February 4, 1928



Portrait of Elias Holl (1573-1646) • Augsburg Städtische Kunstsammlungen, Maximilian museum

When architect Gustav Wolf addressed his colleagues on February 4, 1928, he did so as the recently appointed Director of the Municipal Arts and Crafts School in Breslau. He used the opportunity to present his ideas regarding the education of young men and women as craftsmen, and to generate much needed support for the beleaguered institution he now had in his charge. Students subsequently typeset the text of his talk as a sample of their work for inclusion in the 1926-29 report of the school. It was just the kind of practical, real-world exercise he advocated.

One of the most famous architects in German history was Augsburg's master builder, Elias Holl. A biographer calls him nothing less than the "Master of the German Renaissance." From the personal history that Elias Holl himself wrote, two sentences are especially interesting to us today. After Holl recounts that his father, Hans Holl, as a master mason in and around Augsburg, had constructed a number of respectable buildings and how he himself had assisted his father in his craft, he tells us:

> *"Finally, as my father was constructing and finishing the shoe maker's workshop, he became ill and weak. After three weeks in a sorry state, God, our Lord, gently and blessedly relieved him of his suffering. He was 82 years old. Now my dear father was dead and lost to me, but there was still more to accomplish and improve on his building for the shoe maker. The masonry guild didn't want to allow this work to be assigned to me, an unmarried apprentice, especially since I had not passed my master's exam."*

We learn here then, that the 82-year-old father was active as a master mason up until three weeks before his death, that Elias Holl would very much have liked to finish the building that his father had begun and that the masonry guild objected on two grounds:

first, because he was only a masonry apprentice and had not yet passed his master's exam, and second, because he was a bachelor and had not yet made a woman from Augsburg his wife. At first Elias Holl wanted to try his luck roaming. But then, as he himself further related, the beautiful young lady, Maria Burckhart, banished all thought of itinerancy. He removed the two obstacles that stood in the way of his practicing his craft: first, he married Maria Burckhart, then he completed the works required for his master's certificate. Eight days after he became a master, he began his own practice with an apprentice, a man to mix the mortar and two boys. I recount this, in order to show how strictly a man, who later became one of the most famous architects, was nurtured and guided within the framework of the simple craft of masonry. The circumstances have changed a lot between then and today. If someone nowadays wants to grace a city with his buildings, it is no longer necessary that he lead one of the city's today perhaps even more numerous unmarried daughters to the altar.

More pertinent to our subject is that no one needs to "audition" for masonry or carpentry with master works any more. The architect's profession is separate from the builder's and design and execution are by and large divorced from each other. Perhaps we can characterize some differences between then and now in this way: an actual division between craft and art did not exist earlier. For everyone who wanted to create durable things of value, there was only one profession, the craft, and only one school, the studio. There, you learned to create things by making them yourself, with your own hands and tools and working materials. Built in, so to speak, to this way of working was also the exercise of designing or constructing an existing or even conceptual piece of work. Everyone, the talented and the untalented, learned how to carry out a work. Whoever showed a special skill for design and invention

rose from crafts to art. He perhaps soon reduced time spent building and in the workshop, in order to spend more time designing and inventing. We can, however, say that no one became an artist without first mastering a craft and that, also, comparatively many craftsmen have made their way up to becoming artists. Drawing and design emerged from craft and remained fundamentally bound to it. Today large and deep fissures divide craft and art. In earlier times, the disparate paths toward life's goal quite commonly passed through the field of handcrafts and only branched out further after the summit of the craft had been reached. Today, these paths almost never cross. Right from the beginning of adolescence, they go in all different directions. Those who have once gone into a craft, find it a bit difficult to rise to being an artist. On the other hand, many strive toward an artistic skill without having mastered the basics of a craft. Drawing has fundamentally gained in scope and will very often function completely independently of craft. Over the last two centuries, drawing has become overvalued, because it has been so closely linked to science. This historical, outmoded state of education might have advantages; It might save this one or that one a detour, but for us today, the disadvantages become more and more apparent. Disadvantages that go in two directions: for those who are active in craft and art and also for everyone else. That means damage for all works and the totality of our cultural life.

I will talk, first of all, about the harm to the young people, who enter a profession. Choosing a profession these days is often a pressing concern for parents and children. They know neither the demands of the individual professions nor enough about the latent skills of the youth in question. The premature and decisive divergence in educational opportunities only makes their concerns and difficulties that much greater. The following notion has taken hold:

The youth, who has no special skills, is only good enough to learn a craft; the youth who likes to tinker is suited to be an engineer; and someone, who likes to draw or paint, must become an artist. Let's now assume that the young person who loves to draw attends the academy immediately. On the day when this institution opens its gates to him, he already harbors the expectation, yes, a feeling of entitlement, that he is one of the chosen, not destined for the lower or middle orders, but intended exclusively for the higher tier in the realm of creative work. What is his fate, if later this expectation, this feeling of entitlement, is not fulfilled? Either he remains in the realm of artistic work without the true calling, which can only be given to him by God, and builds therefore his life on a, if not subjective, then indeed objective, lie. Or, he belatedly enters the realm of teachable creative work, of craft. But this entrance into craft is not joyful for him any longer. It looks like a reversal, yes, like a step backwards. A reversal like this will dash this expectation of, this unfortunate feeling of entitlement to, a supposedly "elevated" sphere of living. And it will do it in such a way that life's journey seems like a failure. The shame from the reversal is so great, that, in the vast, vast majority of cases, one would even rather increase the number of lower class artists, than acknowledge a mistake.

It is, however, not only damaging for young people that the hard division between craft and art has been allowed to stand and that so many educational institutions have been created for an artistic exercise that is foreign to the work and promotes drawing for its own sake. Above all, this has also done great harm to every facet of practical living.

We have, as everyone knows, an overproduction of so-called "fine" art of all kinds. Masses of paintings and copperplates and statues are painted, engraved and sculpted, which we can, indeed, enjoy seeing once, but that we neither need nor can pay for. Today,

Figurine maker Gustav Louis Otto in his Arnsfeld workshop, before 1915.
Photograph by Hermann Krausse • Deutsche Fotothek

we can even get into an argument about why the great museums and exhibitions of art actually exist at all. Were the artworks really brought into these public buildings, just because they could be enjoyed by only a few people within the confines of a private home, but within a museum they can benefit the entire public in perpetuity? Or must these houses of art only be created as an artificial valve for artwork that no one would otherwise be interested in? Things are now much too entangled and much too tragic to shrug them off with a bitter joke. But what interests us here, in any case, is the following statement of contradictory facts: on the one side a real superfluity of creative arts, without a healthy, natural, profitable opportunity to sell it; on the other side, the great masses of everyday commodities, our apartments, houses, cities and traffic facilities which are produced in offensively lifeless, tasteless and ugly ways. In a word they are un-artistic, yes, even downright hostile to art.

Someone might have the skeptical opinion that this unfortunate and antagonistic condition should just be relegated to the way of the world, which seems to be, yes, imperfect to start with, but that isn't entirely correct. We really don't have to surrender ourselves to the quaint misconception of the "good old days." Instead, we can dispassionately ascertain from historical events that in many ancient cultures the forms of the everyday objects were excellent in many ways. The majority of them were, at least, somewhat better than ours today. Even if, at the lowest cultural level of that time, they were without artistic merit, in other words, crude, they were still not hostile to art, not inappropriate to their usage, not tasteless and not so horrendously malformed like our kitsch and trash today. Yes, it is indeed so, that we generally consider as real culture only the time period which succeeded in consistently making the disorder and malformed expressions of simple daily life orderly

and well-formed. Craft has always been the foundation and fertile ground in such a culture, and art just one of the blossoms that grew from craft itself.

We would very much like to have something like this again and we ask ourselves, whether we wouldn't have more culture, if we could make less out of the business of art and the most out of the work of crafts.

We can look at the great realm of formative work, the work that is obviously a product of human hands, as if it were a two-storied house. The ground floor is meant for the work on all necessary and beneficial things, which have a clearly recognizable, useful purpose. The upper floor is, however, for work on things that have to do, not with our coarse and corporal needs and questions, but with our spiritual ones.—Long ago, our zeal and ambition to want to make something of beauty and value, have wrongly drifted to the upper floor, giving rise to overproduction of painting, sculpture and other luxuries, to the detriment of simple utilitarian objects. And so, our apartments, our houses and cities have become cold and misguided and the museums and exhibitions overloaded.

We need to try to correct this misplaced distribution of energy. Artistic effort must again be at home on both floors. Indeed, it will not bloom where we want it to, but only where its shoots find good soil. That indescribable something, that constitutes the true seed of artistic creativity, the discovery of a shape that is not yet tangible and known, but develops secretly and unconsciously out of an inner vision, bringing with it a strange penetrating urge to be made real, but then, once made real, also satisfies and pleases others. This artistic drive can never be taught. It cannot be cultivated; it can be only inborn and later encouraged.

In contrast to this, we know, to a certain extent, how proficiency in a craft can be fostered. This proficiency can be imparted very

well up to a certain point. And the good thing about all serious efforts in crafts is that because they take place in a space where art also generally has admittance, the ascension from a purely artisanal and reasonably thought-out accomplishment to a certain worthwhile form that is called artistic often happens unexpectedly and overnight.

For all these reasons, we should speak very little about art in all the schools that deal with formative work. We should make little claim to the exalted title of artist, but we should show all students how many of our day-to-day objects are waiting just to be made still better and still more efficient. An education, which leads in this direction with diligence and modesty seems to me to be a good artisanal education. Where art begins is not ours to decide; that is left to posterity.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, you may indeed object. If then, artisanal education and artisanal work are so useful and so good, why is there such an awful lot of these schools? Perhaps some of you might even ask, why such a lot of these schools are awful? Why don't we just let private workshops and masters handle artisanal education in its entirety and leave artistic development completely to chance? Today, there are enough people with the absolutely firm opinion that our cities and provinces would do well to spare themselves the expense of all these arts and craft schools and academies.

But the specialized school is not only right for the modern, ambitious craftsman, it is nowadays necessary if he wants to become professionally independent. With sheer specialized activity alone, a craftsman can only survive in the long term as a laborer, employee or clerk in a larger organization, in other words, dependent in the business sense. If he really wants to stand freely on his own two feet, he must have familiarity with and grasp of the

business environment and city in which he lives. Therefore, he must be taught business management, civics and law. It's obvious that these lessons cannot be given in the workshop, but are better taught collectively in school. It's the same thing with the history of the development of applied art, something every self-employed craftsman should have heard of and thought about once in his life.

And here it is also necessary to speak of drawing again. From a technical point of view, the artisanal professions still need diversified instruction and practice. At least once along the way, craftsmen will all surely come across the necessity to express themselves not only with words or works, but also with drawing. They must all more or less learn to put a concept down on paper, whether it be one from life or one that they imagine. It is not necessary to make these illustrations very realistic. Our arts and crafts schools often pursue the nature study much too much as an end in itself. The craftsman needs drawings only so far as to make himself under-

Typesetters at Krey and Sommerlad Design Studio, 1903 • Deutsche Fotothek

stood by his clients and his co-workers. In addition to this free-hand drawing, he must master technical drawing. He must be able to put down and illustrate spatial and physical relationships and other criteria two-dimensionally.

An understanding of surface area and surface apportionment must be bound to graphic skill. A very strong understanding for chromaticity and an ability to differentiate nuances of color belongs almost inextricably in the mix. Important above all is a certain ability to gauge and imagine something in a spatial and sculptural way; it is often hardly possible to develop things except through shaping or building. Where would the working craftsperson be, who didn't, to a certain extent, master a few ways of drawing or writing letter forms, beyond his personal handwriting?

Iron workshop in the Flader Factory, c. 1915 • Photograph by Hermann Krausse • Deutsche Fotothek

Whether it be the coppersmith, who teases letters out of resistant metal, the plasterer, who quickly imprints them in soft, fresh plaster, the porcelain painter, who adds them with a brush, or the sculptor, who engraves them in stone, all must in any case have a relationship to letter forms.

Even those who fundamentally prefer private lessons with a master cannot dispute the necessity of all that a school means for these auxiliary classes. It is the only way possible to bring the best teachers and the most students together in an economical, intensive, educational setting. We will ultimately agree about the value of the school for all these auxiliary techniques that in many ways go deep into the heart of what it means to be a proper craftsman. But reservations about schools, and a certain discomfort with them, do not target these sub-disciplines at all. Instead they take aim at the central issue, at the great, long-term question: whether the school can successfully teach the essence of being a craftsman, a true mastery of the work.

As every human endeavor has its imperfection, so is it that every school has the danger hanging over it, that it doesn't pay enough consideration to the hard and bitter demands of unfettered life on the outside, that it will be out of touch and pedantic in a bad sense. We looked this danger in the face long ago, however. For once, we don't want to do without the master's tuition, but instead look on it as the lowest step, where all learn what their strengths are. The crafts—or as it is most often called—the arts and crafts school is then an extension, meant for those who want to work towards a special independence. Moreover we have realized, that our schools were beginning to become too much schools for drawing and we have started to change them into professional schools. We have brought the workshop and the practical-minded master into the

school. In addition to the private workshop, focused on production, we have introduced the workshop intended to serve education. And only now does this adaptation of the school to the old master-apprentice system of the past connect and revivify all the auxiliary specialties that I've just spoken about. Making a drawing for a design or an estimate gets its true meaning and context only in practice in the workshop, by comparing what is reckoned with what is done. It is only with these teaching workshops that the craft school today is really in the position to expand the educational capacity of private instruction. The advantages of the school are obvious, if we take the present circumstances of most master craftsmen into consideration. The small business where the master himself does the work and, in the process, can give the apprentice tuition in all the aspects of the craft is no longer as common as in earlier times. The master himself is no longer as strongly involved with the actual work as with the commercial organization of his business. He can no longer give the apprentice as much personal attention as before. It is indeed an open secret that the apprentice in the private workshop sometimes, for more or less justifiable reasons, learns very little and instead becomes just cheap labor. In addition, these businesses are often highly specialized; only mass merchandise is produced here, only piece work there, and only goods for a very particular need somewhere else. The apprentice must become a specialist in many cases, and just at the time when his development should be the most varied, so that he can discover for himself the path that best suits his abilities. On the other hand, there are often enterprises so large that the inexperienced apprentice cannot see context at all. In addition, many places are forced to produce things that would not fit our definition of quality work. Also, very many workshops and businesses must work at a speed and with an approach that is probably good for the rapid produc-

Paul's blacksmith workshop, c. 1930 • Photograph by Hermann Krausse • Deutsche Fotothek

Milliners in Güstrow, 1921 • Photograph by Berthold Kegebein • Deutsche Fotothek

tion of goods, but not for intensive learning. Learning means that the apprentice is not always there just for the product; instead, sometimes the product, even the whole workshop, can be put in service of teaching and learning. We find, therefore, that the school can fill some of the gaps left by today's private master. Something else: there are some masters who practice their craft in an exemplary way, but cannot—as instructive as the silent example might be—impart enough to the students. And there are other masters, who are downright gifted in making young people understand the value of their work, and who impart the most precious thing by far that a person can discover in life: joy in the work, to work passionately and with a purpose. That is, at the moment, also a kind of organizing principle, that we can get these born master teachers

for the school, where they can be the most influential, because they can give their best to many young people year after year.

The importance of a well-organized arts and crafts school seems to me to have been proved emphatically enough. We should still think about one more special advantage here that arts and crafts schools have fortuitously developed. We operate in a time where we move toward a type of refined specialization. This has its merits, but also its considerable perils. And at the same time, the person who has a well-rounded education is and remains the ideal. Even if he has not mastered several adjacent crafts himself, he has, at least, knowledge and understanding of them.

It is something really sublime, that a large arts and crafts school can bring different professions close together in its extensive teaching workshops so that the youth with a thirst for knowledge has the opportunity to learn related and not-so-related crafts in addition to his own. And yes, that students from very different professions, when all goes well, will build nothing less than a community of craftsmen. Because I am an architect, it is very dear to my heart to emphasize these thoughts about the community of craftsmen. For it is the architect, more than anyone else, who must see to it that all the specialized professions contributing to building and shaping collaborate harmoniously! Every construction necessarily needs the interplay of the various forces. The carpenter succeeds the mason, followed by the roofer and plumber, the cabinet maker, glazier, locksmith, blacksmith and stuccoer, the oven installer, the landscaper and last but not least, the painter. This list of trades will become even longer if it also pertains to finishing the interior and furnishing it with everything that belongs in an apartment. Then we must include the weaver and basket maker, the furniture maker, the ceramist, the glass maker and glass painter and whatever else there is. Two further large subjects come under the purview of

Silesian ceramist at work, between 1925 and 1939 • Photograph by Paul W. John• Deutsche Fotothek

the arts and crafts schools: first, the graphic trades, like lettering artist, sign painter, woodcutter and etcher, book printer, lithographer and book binder, wallpaper designer and scene painter. And more, the garment trade with its fashion illustrators, tailors, dress makers and milliners. All of these professions help in some way to create the things that we see around us and there is really not one of them which should not include good training in aesthetics and not one of them, which could not produce proper artists in the true sense of the word in their respective field.

If I have expressed myself clearly enough so far, then you can already visualize a proper path for educating a craftsman: private master-teachers as the old, good elementary foundation, then the crafts school with all of its theoretical and graphic auxiliary specialties, but also with its workshops, in which education, not production, is the main goal, workshops of various kinds, gathered together under one single roof.

Now I have to once again speak of the danger of the detachment from real life that lurks in the school—the more mellifluous the name of the school, the greater the danger—and arises particularly easily in the applied arts. Excuse me please, if I say this in front of applied arts associations and in the Applied Arts Museum; I mean, of course, applied arts in a bad sense. Many people understand applied art as something that is not as arduous as crafts and also not as unprofitable as art. You sometimes hear that mothers are advised: Why not get your daughter into applied arts, it is really so easy! This daughter goes therefore into ceramics, but instead of choosing pottery, she unfortunately chooses applied arts. She probably doesn't want to make the pots, she only wants to paint and decorate them. She only wants to make designs. She remains clinging to the surface, in the truest sense of the words, instead of

piercing its essence. Such a superficial designer will very quickly become dull and unable to take wing, thereby losing freshness, health and naturalness. Such one-sided work also doesn't touch on what material and purpose demand. Things will be bad, if they are only made for the sake of designing and so that the people who design them can live from the fees they charge. The worst will be the things that are made, not in quest of a good form, but instead in quest of a form that is new and original at any price. The good basic shape of the door handle and the good shape of the chair have already been invented. That daughter, if she seriously wants to go into crafts, should be at the potter's wheel, where her fingers will have great difficulty to make any form at all, but where then, also, the joy in malleable materials will be awakened, where fingers become sensitive through honest work and where materials reward faithful work with unexpected inspiration.—That daughter belongs in the chemical laboratory, where she will work hard and do difficult calculations; and she belongs at the kiln. What we must never forget is that the blessing of this artisanal work lies in that it also brings healing for the inventive spirit and, indeed, stimulation at the same time. We cannot achieve pure artistic invention day in and day out, but we can work day after day in crafts, and its inestimable value lies exactly in healthy alternation. The school must therefore assign strict assignments. We can examine still more examples that show the blessings of rigorous assignments. So, for example, some schools suffer from overestimating the imagination of their students. They nurture this imagination like an anemic little plant that needs the greatest protection, just to keep it from suffering from its own free development. In reality, the healthy imagination does not want to be coddled at all. Instead, it demands downright difficult assignments to steel itself against opposition. Imagine with me, a cabinet maker apprentice

who attends one of these schools that are poorly run, according to my definition. This apprentice designs a clothes and linen cabinet on a whim, with unbridled imagination, but without knowing how many clothes or how much linen has to go into the cabinet. He doesn't know the space that the future cabinet should occupy. In a big city lumber yard, he can get whichever of the most expensive and least troublesome woods that his heart desires. He wants to be not just a craftsman, but also an applied artist. And so he sits down at a drafting table and draws, without giving a thought to purpose, space, a particular wood, a particular owner or a fixed budget. Now he racks his brain to make something special, without any limitations to indicate a specific path toward a cabinet shape. So he paints a picture, a façade of a cabinet, a painting of wood, an exhibition piece that is astounding at first glance, but would be downright disturbing over time in a quiet room because of its intrusive appearance. It has no special advantages in practice; it is even too shallow for clothes and too deep for linen and on top of it all, costs too much money. If we proceed in this manner, then the director of a trade school, who recently admonished many of our institutions is right. They are cultivating "art for exhibitions and showcases" and not efficient craft.

How different the process would be in a healthy system, if a rigorous assignment would be given! Take, for example, this would be the case: the wife of a well-to-do landowner shows the apprentice how she has to store her beautiful, clean clothes and linen behind a curtain, scattered in old, inadequate crates and cupboards. The apprentice must now examine this list of clothing and coats, these hats in various sizes, the pile of large and small bed and table linen and hand towels. He must accordingly devise a coherent arrangement for a giant cabinet without wasting space. The landowner's wife also shows him the room where the cabinet should be placed

and in which it should fit as if it had always been there. And finally, he will be shown the lumberyard on the property, where he finds boards from an old nut tree, which have a very beautiful grain, but are rather narrow. The apprentice has thus a clearly defined problem to solve, which will otherwise never happen again: he has to build a cabinet divided to suit specific contents, measured according to a given space, and constructed from certain boards. Finally he does this work for a person who has her own individual preferences and he does it for a limited price. If he can bring all this to a conclusion and the cabinet is a joy to the eye, then, I believe the apprentice is a master in his profession. Felicitous ideas about craft arise precisely out of the difficulty of the commission and from these ideas arise the exceptional, unique and surprising, in a word, the art, in the finished work! Therefore, assignments that impose the closest approximation to the real world outside in order to be true and useful in life are very important to the school.

Contemporary, middle class, everyday needs must be the yardstick for the overwhelming majority of the works that are made in teaching studios. The school will allow a deviation from the limited fields of activity that this yardstick creates, where it has educational value. That is in the maintenance of the traditions of an old and noble craft that, in today's economic environment, may perhaps only still find refuge in such a school. Thus, for example, a real mastery in iron smithing is hardly attainable in iron workshops that are necessarily geared toward industrial aims. The consummate achievements of glass blowing and glass decoration are in a tier, which perhaps, for the present, have exceeded the actual needs of the middle class and belong in the category of fine luxury. But we must carry on with excellence of artisanal practice, because very often the plainest of forms demands the highest artisanal execution, akin to that which can only be achieved when doing luxury work, where there are no more worrisome calculations to cripple the drive to make it as good as possible. But we must rigorously adhere to the idea that luxury assignments are only a small part of the work as a whole and that the betterment of goods to suit middle class needs constitutes its backbone. Indeed, schools must not be allowed to lose sight of the social value of their efforts, as has unfortunately happened to too many of them thus far.

Incidentally, the necessity of approximating educational assignments with true life is often not really grasped at all by those who should, indeed, know it much, much better than the schools: namely the crafts guilds themselves. The assignments in the master examinations also don't always encompass what would be demanded in the practice of a master. For example, a painters' guild, some time ago, wrote out the following conditions for a members-only contest in handling colors:

> *"You will decorate a surface. The wall surface is 3.40 m high and 5.20 m wide. The theme of the decoration is your choice. The point is only to show a new and pleasing technique for wall treatments."*

The assignment did not include the location of the wall, whether in the office of a slaughterhouse or the bedroom of an elegant woman, whether it was in a light or dim space. What kind of doors, windows and furniture were in the room was also not mentioned. Nothing truly good can come out of an assignment proposal like this. It's not only designing blind-folded, but in the dark too, if we want to give prizes for a "new and pleasing technique," instead of modestly and objectively struggling to find solutions to tasks that unfortunately remain unsolved every day. Mastery is shown through constraint!

Ladies and gentlemen, we have talked about the points where craft meets art and about the auxiliary skills that a school is better

equipped to teach than a private workshop. Then, about the school workshop, where theory and practice are put to the test, and about the prospect of a kind of multi-disciplinary educational institution as a model of a long-term community. And finally, about the practical assignments that must be given. I must, at least, touch on the great current problem faced by craft and industry. As I said before, the craftsman of today has to operate completely differently than the craftsman of once upon a time. Guilds can no longer guarantee him a secure existence. And, in addition, industry has now come on the scene and made the foundation of his life even more precarious. Industry and craft or machinery and craft have a very strange relationship with each other. Sometimes the machine is an aide that spares the master much tiresome work; sometimes, it is a formidable competitor that only makes life harder. Many of the hundreds and thousands of formerly self-employed masters have become foremen, employed by others. We are the first to experience this still incomplete, still unfinished transformation. Thus, it is still too early to judge what, if any, disadvantages come out of it for individuals as self-employed, ethical beings and, moreover, in what direction and to what degree, it is an impoverishment for one side or an enrichment for the other. Let us, rather, refrain from this argument and peel back the layers of what already very clearly stands before us today:

Hand-made work and machine-made products are, in themselves, neither good nor bad. Neither stands in inherent opposition to each other in the workplace. It is only the essence of craft that naturally expresses the indefinable personality and immediate feelings of the maker. In contrast to this, the industrially-made form tends to express the most basic commonality and gladly forgoes bringing personal and temporal emotions to the fore. For this reason, craft is very receptive to the diversity of ethnic and national

characteristics and values, while industry remains easily adaptable to supranational forms. How does that now affect the teaching of crafts? The crafts school is not an industrial school and should not become one. But we should not bury our heads in the sand and only direct educational facilities as if, for example, veneer-making machines hadn't been invented yet. At school, the craftsman must learn to appreciate machines as assistants and industry as a tremendously advantaged and competitive power. With that, I've probably said enough.

Another contemporary issue: women in crafts! It can really make the righteous old craftsman's blood boil to walk through a trade school now and see all those boyish haircuts, but on young women! For him, craft work is man's work. He fears, and often very rightly, that female students will bring a lot of foolishness and dilettantism to the work. However, the position of women in crafts cannot aptly be judged in such a one-sided manner. The output of a people is composed of apparel and habitation. Crafts dominate both areas. Just as male hands build houses and furniture, so do women's hands sew linens, embroider pillows and make clothes. There are therefore enough feminine crafts and these also deserve educational attention. If Bruno Taut was in a hurry to bring "women as creators" into the field of habitation (but maybe he wasn't all that serious about it), how much more can women as creators achieve in the field of apparel! You will therefore find it thoroughly justified that the Municipal Arts and Crafts School is setting up a class for making and ornamenting clothing. Then we can guide the stream of female ambition in the direction it can be best used, especially in a manufacturing city like Breslau.

Another word about the spirit that must permeate the school, if it should be productive. I have already mentioned that a certain rigor, that a great seriousness is necessary. But here, we also have

Studio party at the Dresden School of Applied Arts, between 1911 and 1915.
Photograph by Rudolf Kroll· Deutsche Fotothek

to realize that rigor and seriousness need to take a step back, so that young people can be won over and their enthusiasm and fire awakened. After the hard fighting during the world war, the Ostmark is barren, still hampered and extremely depressed. Young people, who will have to do the work, do not exactly lie in a bed of roses here. Especially young people in crafts, who come to us out of

family tradition, have already experienced poverty and victimization in their lives in many ways. We must take great care that the seriousness and rigor that the subject demands does not become an oppressive burden. That would be the worst injury of all and could sap all the strength that propels them upwards. The school is certainly not here for pleasure. But it should not be allowed to become, as Silesians, unfortunately, and maybe especially Breslauers, so easily become and for which they themselves have an apt expression: dull as dishwater.*

No, ladies and gentlemen, no one can do anything good, when they are as dull as dishwater. It might be very old-fashioned to quote Schiller, but I'm going to quote him nevertheless:

> *"Joy is the powerful mainspring of everlasting nature,*
> *Joy, oh, joy, drives the gears in the great clock of the world!"*

It must be possible to awaken in the student body both the joy of living and the joy of working: those joys found in original work, those joys in clean materials and excellent forms, on drawing the form out of the formless. Just as it is done by law in every cabinetmaker's, it can absolutely be done in every real workshop. We can awaken precisely those joys that the orderly and rhythmic collaboration of many people toward a common goal call forth.

And so that this will be possible, the city of Breslau must fulfill one more requirement for her crafts school, the only collective school of this kind in the whole province of Silesia. The crafts school has existed "temporarily" in dark, dirty and restricted circumstances for more than 25 years. There can be no joy in working there, either for the faculty or for the students. The building in which artisanal education should take place, must itself be a model of good, efficient work—modest, to be sure, but clear-cut, clean and light. We need it for our continuing work to be productive at all.

*In his *Schlesisches Wörterbuch* (Walter de Gruzter GmbH & Co. KG, 2020), Walter Mitzka defines *trübetimplig* as boring and sluggish.

Translated
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