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Among the many images one receives during education, there are always some which are very concrete and precise which stay frozen on the retina, waiting to be seen for real. For many people, the turbine factory of AEG has been one of these. With this idea, I have wanted to establish the true proportions, in every sense of the term, of this model factory.

One could define the situation in Germany at the beginning of the century as a period of transformation toward a vertiginous industrialisation. We find arising not only outstanding buildings, but also ideological debates of great intensity.

The foundation of the *Deutscher Werkbund* in 1907, under the slogan 'fabric follows form' pointed toward the need for a close link between art and industry, while not ignoring the differences between them. Throughout the profound theoretical discussions over the search for models of action, appears the singular personality of Peter Behrens (1868-1940) who, without renouncing an academic training and an admiration for the figure of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, was able to confer an attitude which changed the dull artistic sense of an industrial site, inheriting the factory typologies of the nineteenth century, into a synthesis of architecture and technology.

The majority of his constructions and projects have a precise time and a place: the city of Berlin in the years between 1908 and 1915. This activity coincided with his position as art-

The AEG Turbinhalle in Berlin-Moabit (Peter Behrens, 1909)

istic consultant to AEG (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft) where, as well as moulding the corporate image, he was responsible for design and production, including the realisation of manufacturing complexes in the age of the great expansion of German industry.

The harmony between Behrens and the founder of AEG, Emil Rathenau (1837-1915) was strengthened by the *avant garde* will that they had to develop the products and the factories of the new century.

The various buildings commissioned by AEG fall into three categories: industrial buildings, residential districts, (frequently annexes to the production complexes), and administrative buildings. They aspired, however, to define a model of the city, with an overall typology and character. Under this plan were projected under-

ground railways (*S-Bahn*), raised metro stations (*S-Bahn/U-Bahn*), viaducts, bridges, grand exhibition halls, etc., all aimed toward creating the grand city (*die Grossstadt*).

In Berlin, AEG occupied large sites situated in four neighbourhoods of the city. The same scale permitted putting into practice a renewal of forms, all driven from the classical spirit, often expressing the disappearance of certain principles and the redefining of a new language, always making clear that the new typological values are based on a knowledge of the historical elements and of civil architecture.

The *Turbinenhalle* was planned and built in less than a year in collaboration with the engineer Karl Bernhard. This building, situated within the industrial complex of the turbine factory of Berlin-Moabit (*Turbinenfabrik*, 1908-1916), is a magnificent example of how architecture itself invests an industry with the new role which it had to have within the modern city, under the desire for renewal. For the first time, the factory was raised to the same monumental category as other representative public buildings. It opened, then, the horizons of modernity to industrial installations. Moreover, in the interval between the realisation of this project and the *Faguswerk* (1925) by Walter Gropius, an old collaborator of Behrens', a set of positions and professional directions were settled that would later consolidate into the Bauhaus.

