

Lect 8: Bauhaus in & around Calcutta

I - Weimar

Founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar then Dessau

Internal conflicts. It is an almost medieval-mentality workshop study (decorative + fine arts). Speaks to medievalizing set of aspiration. International modernist style.

Design in Ikea has origins in Bauhaus

→ Kandinsky taught in Bauhaus, Paul Klee too

→ Johannes Itten (Farkentkyel) introduced its preliminary course:
emphasis, exploration of materials (elements of structure, painting & architecture)
break down into elements, then recombine in different forms

→ He also started his classes with yoga; conflict between utter rationality & appeal to eastern mysticism

→ Then László Moholy-Nagy, mobilize experiments towards language of painting
Light Space Modulator (photo); Z VIII (painting) inspired by El Lissitzky
(transparent, interlocking planes) (imagetic logic)
From architectural influence, and it corresponds to a certain position in exhibition.

II - Bauhaus in Calcutta

→ Exhibit in 1922. Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger, Itten
said to be an important moment

contradict that student: cubist painting dated for 1924

[exhibit as a momentary bringing together of objects in space, making a dialogue]

→ Raja Varma integrates (19th, and) Hindu iconography with ^{EU} naturalism
for an emerging school of modernism in Calcutta, too slavishly devoted to western / oil painting

→ Bengal School (Tagore, conscious return to water color)

Recognized that Bengal school & EU abstract had overlapping ideas

(Mitter)

* Dialogue (as Kandinsky looked at Indian painting) ⇒ conscious reject of naturalism
~~fragmentary~~ * fragmentary of planes, cubism, but to be
read differently than Picasso's experiment with African masks

... → catalogue for the exhibit was introduced by Stella Kramrisch
emphasizes what the Bauhaus & Begeal school have this common rejectⁿ of nationalism
as a lifeless scheme (it is just a series of conventⁿ, not universally superior to other forms
of org.-making)

Part III: Nationalism

→ Rabindranath Tagore with Albert Einstein
new understanding of the natⁿ

Arendt: problems on nation state but doesn't give alternative (only civil rights)
⇒ without the natⁿ state, we go back to the state of savages

Tagore: metaphor about gravel in shoe (state gives law & order) it is the
notion of force, police. They lead to certain problems, "gravel in your shoe"
but this uneven territory is a way to negotiate

The natⁿ is a destructive force: energies towards conflict with / oppression
of other people (it justifies itself with self-praise as to one's own
strength) ⇒ increased efficiency has few surprises human moral dimpt.

Nationalism as de-humanizing project

He refers to humanity as being adrifted to abstraction (moral degradation)

→ See Annex / Chapter III: abstract painting vocabulary. EU modernism

Diff. takes on nationalism (- response to colonialism, bad)

(- attempt to forge national art)

→ Rabindranath disagrees with "the nation" (dehumanizing force); its advancements come at
the expense of morality. His positⁿ is commopolitain (not appealing to the universal, a
shared community where you respect one another's differences & calling for tolerance and
respect) ⇒ (applicable as a personal ethic but hard to organize on the level of politics)

→ When India becomes independent (1947), the notion of nation is stronger

Part IV - Lahore via Paris

→ 1947 also corresponds to the partition of India into India, West Pakistan and East Pakistan
Before, this was the same country

→ Chughtai ("father of Pakistani modernism"), see 1930 & 1938

Means to get away from naturalism, works on quads (conscious decisions)

Amrita

→ Sher-Gil makes a conscious move back to oil painting; European naturalism gained in Paris (1932) then moves to Lahore (1935): Three Girls

She's been looking at Indian Cave Painting and Chughtai. Consciously looking to older forms from the continent yet holding on to the oil painting

Dies at 28 (failed abortion?). Vocabulary of naturalism reduced to a more elemental glatter, palette.

Her: Portrait as Tahitian (@ Gough Two Tahitian Women)

performing her self-exoticization, she's even standing in front of Japanese prints.

V. much like Frida Kahlo is doing: mobilize signs of culture

but opposed to how cultural femininity had been defined by male painters