

Structure and Expression at Gut Garkau: Hugo Häring's Artisanal Vision

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Abstract

Between 1922 and 1926, Hugo Häring designed and built part of the Gut Garkau agricultural complex, located on the southern shore of Lake Pönitzer See. This work is a clear example of functionalist expressionism with vernacular influences, inspired by ideas of Hans Poelzig and later developed by Bruno Taut and Erich Mendelsohn. Häring claimed that the form of the building should come from its function, without imposing preconceived forms, similar to how a living organism functions. When designing the farm, he analyzed in detail the agricultural culture, including daily tasks, the movement of animals and the distribution of industrial machinery, adapting the architecture to these needs. Its architectural expression responds to functional demands, using materials and structures that dialogued with the natural environment. From his project, the barn, stable and an annex building were built around 1924, while other proposals for the horse stable and pigsty remained on paper. The barn, the most prominent part, features an arched roof in the form of a light vault, with a wooden structure formed by a three-dimensional mesh of diamonds, based on the Zollinger system. The study seeks to show how Häring achieved a clear formal expression that reflects the function for which the building was conceived.

Keywords: structure, Gut Garkau, Hugo Häring, functionality, drawing.

Introduction

In May 1922 Hugo Häring wrote in a letter: "an enthusiastic customer has indicated that he needs a farm". This is what Otto Birtner did, a farmer who had learnt about Häring's project for the *Friedrichstraße* skyscraper published by the critic Adolf Behne in the *Hochhaus Heft* supplement of the magazine *Wendungen* in May 1923, was impressed by the architect's work. Birtner owned land in the village of Garkau on the southern shore of Lake Pönitzer See (Ostholstein, Germany) and was the promoter of the well-known Gut Garkau Farm, Häring's masterpiece. The project began in 1922 with a initial sketch of the extension of the preexisting house and concluded in 1926 with the project for the hostel building: Strohhaus-Pferde-Schweinestall. Finally, only the stable, the barn and annex of Häring's original project

were built, in 1924. The rest of the projects for the house and the connection piece between the stable and the barn were never materialized. In Garkau, the author proposed a reformulation of architecture based on his formal theories, seeking to make it emerge in a naturally happen from the specific functions of each space, being intimately linked to structural system.

State of the art

Since the end of the twentieth century, researches on Häring's work have been nourished by new contributions, which are mainly focused on the analysis of his

conception processes, as we can appreciate *Impegno nella Ricerca organica* [Bucciarelli 1980]; and others, such as *Il segreto della forma: storia e teoria der Neue beuen / Hugo Häring* [Polano 1984], which delve, among other issues, into the theories that nourish philosophically and formally his work. Critics such as Kenneth Frampton and Reyner Banham, in their respective books, *Critical History of Modern Architecture* [Frampton, 1987] and *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* [Banham, 1985], also devote specific texts to Gut Garkau's Farm.

In addition, in 2025, 25 years after the last exhibition dedicated to the architect at the Berlin Academy of Arts, the focus has been placed again on his legacy through the realization of the exhibition *Hugo Häring: the world is not yet quite finished*, [Bihr, Schirren 2025] which, in addition to exploring the origins of his pretige, shows models, sketches and drawings by the architect. Despite the diversity of approaches –projectual, philosophical, social, etc.– through which Häring's legacy has been deepened, compared to other masters, there is a certain gap in the analysis of his drawings. Hence, in this article, we have considered it as an opportunity to investigate Gut Garkau project from the architect's own drawings.

Objectives

The Gut Garkau project is regarded as Hugo Häring's masterpiece and, as such, has been approached from different perspectives. The aim of this study is to reveal, through the architect's archive drawings and complementary diagrams by the authors, the different structural systems that Häring designed to construct the diverse parts of the complex, considering them as a response to the functions. The aim is to reveal this rich interaction between use and structure, one of the most powerful associations in the field of architecture.

Methodological note

The research was based on consultation of the project documentation preserved and digitalized in the archives of the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin, which is publicly accessible through its online repository and has been previously cataloged. Unlike other case studies in which the documentation is unpublished or

unprocessed, in this case the material was available in digital format, which allowed for a systematic and orderly review. This documentary corpus, consisting mainly of plans, sketches and writings related to the Gut Garkau project, has been supplemented by an exhaustive bibliographic review, covering both general studies on Hugo Häring's work and specific research and analysis focusing on this farm.

The methodological strategy adopted was based on the contrast between these two approaches: on the one hand, the direct examination of primary sources from the archive; on the other, the critical analysis of interpretations already present in the academic literature. This dialogue between documentary materials and theoretical frameworks has made it possible to identify convergences and discrepancies regarding the conception, development and execution of the project, as well as to detect possible interpretative gaps. The process has culminated in the preparation of a study that coherently integrates both approaches, thus providing a structured vision that serves as the basis for the analysis and conclusions presented in this work.

Theoretical foundations

In relation to expressionism, functionalism and the historical importance of Gut Garkau's project (fig. 1), Rayner Banham states that the pre-World War I works of Hans Poelzig and the non-classicist works of Peter Behrens, influenced by the English *Arts & Crafts* movement, led to an current of sculptural constructive forms that, after 1918, it was developed in Mendelsohn's early projects and reached its climax with the Gut Garkau farm of Hugo Häring (1922-1924). Unlike Nikolaus Pevsner, who in *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936, 1960) proposed a historical alternation between expressionism and functionalism and relegated the former to the realm of "pure subjectivity", Banham recognized the existence of a productive link between the two currents. According to Pevsner, "while functionalism was supposed to be objective, scientific and anonymous, expressionism only represented personal expression" [Banham 1979, p. 30] a position that, as Banham points out, contributed, along with that of critics, such as Sigfried Giedion, to relegate the expressive-functional tradition as a mere romantic exercise.

In contrast, Peter Blundell Jones points out that “ironically, Scharoun and Häring were better functionalists than Gropius or Mies van der Rohe” [Blundell Jones 1999, p. 9], while Wolfgang Pehnt states that “Häring thought of form and function with more depth and logic than any other architect of the new style”, [Pehnt 1999, p. 23] highlighting his realism in not assuming an automatic harmony between expression and function. This position was clearly reflected in *Wege zur Form* (1925), where Häring proposed that the expression should not be placed before or subordinate to the function, but that it should be reconciled with it, seeking a morphology “that expresses the efficient fulfillment of its function” [Häring 1925, as cited in Joedicke 1960, p. 318] and that, as in nature, “is the result of a coordination of many parts” [Häring 1951 as cited in Joedicke 1960, p. 318] for the benefit of the whole. It was Häring himself who distinguished two stages in the design process: *Organwerk*, which consists of helping objects to find their correct shape based on changing requirements, and *Gestaltwerk*, in which they find an adequate architectural expression. It recognizes the value of vernacular forms originated by functional needs and combines traditional techniques and materials with contemporary resources, which, it

gives it a much wider expressive variety. His organic vision, influenced by William Morris, William Lethaby and by his teacher Theodor Fischer, assumes that specific geographical and cultural conditions can shape architectural form, so that the building “grows organically from the inside out” [Fischer 1927, as quoted in Nerdinger, Gottardo 1990, p. 17] and respects, as Wright would say, “what grows from the nature of things” [Wright 1954, p.18].

The Gut Garkau farm

The architectural complex

Häring designed the Gut Garkau agricultural complex (Klinberg, Schleswig-Holstein, 1922-1925) materializing the theories proposed that same year in his essay *Wege zur Form* [Pizza 2002, pp. 199-201] [1], which was illustrated with drawings of the farm under the title *Funktionelles Bauen: Gut Garkau, das Viehhaus* (Functional building: Gut Garkau). Häring arranged the building pieces carefully integrated with the vegetation on the west shore of the small Pönitzer See Lake. He took advantage of the irregular and sinuous perimeter of the plot to naturally place the many elements that define the farm

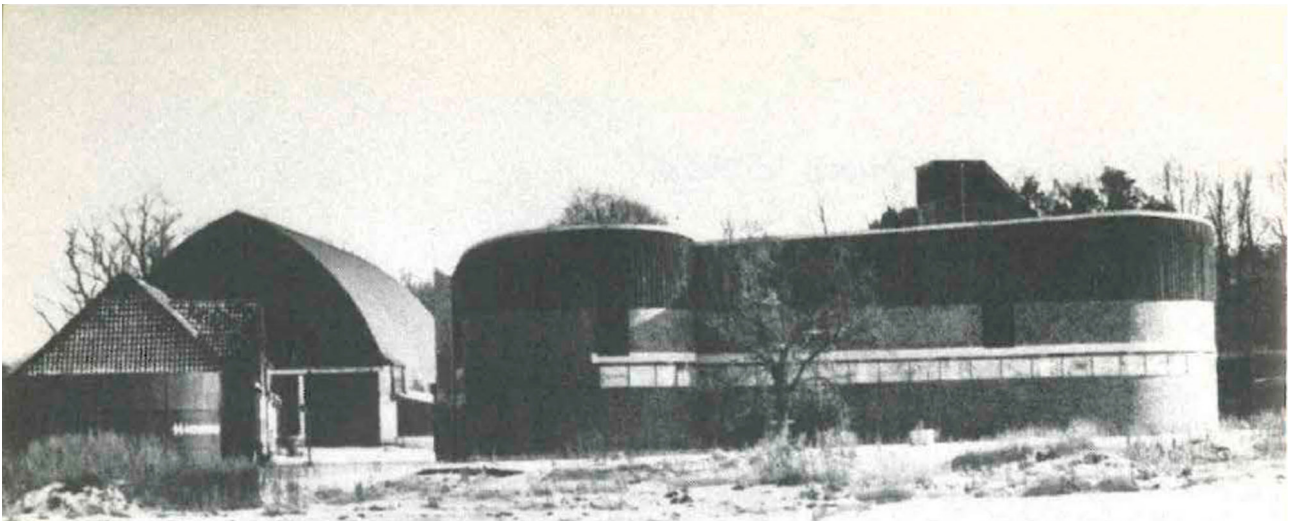


Fig. 1. Photograph from the north, on the left the barn and on the right the stable [Bucciarelli 1980, p. 44].

(a stable for cows, another for horses and pigs, a barn, a chicken coop, the farmer's offices and main home, as well as several buildings for machinery). Häring abandoned the traditional system of aligning spaces around a central axis in favor of a formal principle that simplifies the necessary manipulations and the distribution of movements of animals and workers to manifest themselves in an organic space [Behrendt 1924, pp. 347-352]. Between 1923 and 1924 Häring made three proposals for Gut Garkau's set, as coherent variations of the same idea. From the third proposal, the one finally built, we have the drawings of 1924: the axonometry, the elevations-sections and the general plan preserved and classified in the Baunkunstarchiv archive of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

As can be seen in the site plan (fig. 2), the various agricultural buildings are enclosed around a trapezoidal corral with its own access, located to the north of the

plot, and are separated from the main house and offices, at the southern end of the farm, by a more representative courtyard with its own access and views of the lake. In the delicate axonometry drawn by Häring (fig. 3), we can see how the clear contours delimiting the different parts that appeared in the general plan are transformed into a complex organism made up of multiple volumes that are closely related to each other. The variety of forms and scales of the different parts express Häring's concern not only for the interrelationships between the buildings, but also with the outdoor spaces they form. The buildings facing the interior of the courtyard do not reveal their full height; Häring proposes a more domestic scale for the interior, adjusted to the human dimension. The connections between the buildings via working porches, linking the different entrances and exits for the animals, as well as the careful layout of the vehicle entrances for loading

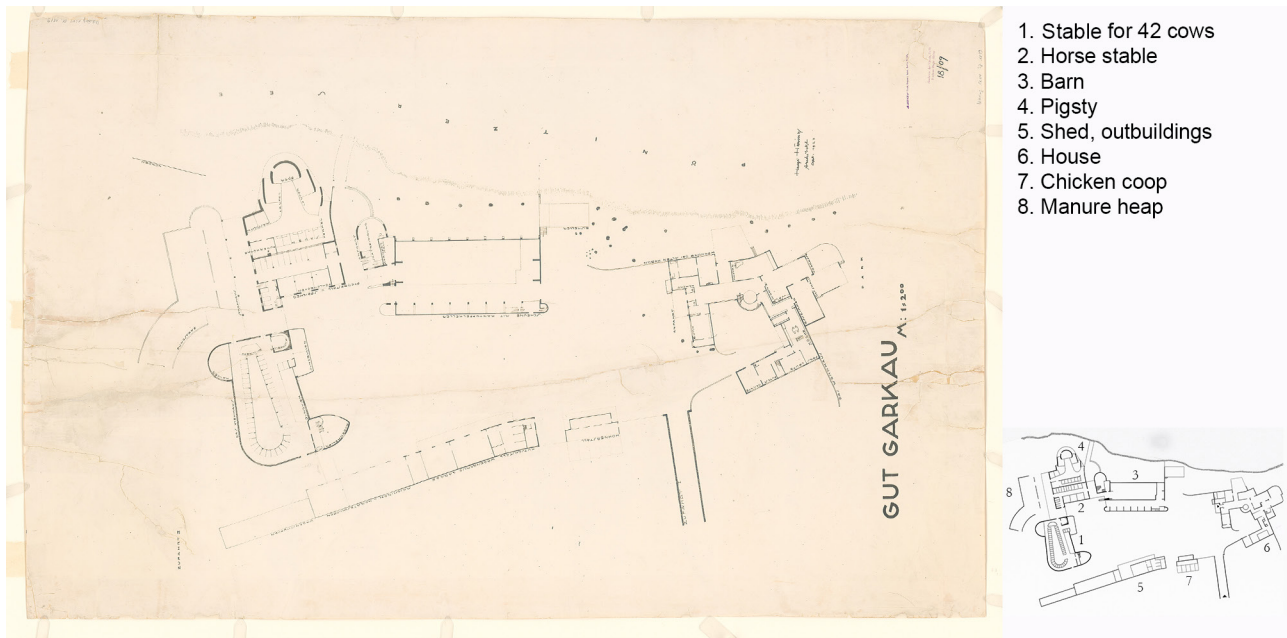


Fig. 2. Location Plan, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_009-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baunkunstarchiv, Berlin.

and unloading both livestock and grain, demonstrate the extensive functional and organizational study behind the architectural proposal [2].

But beyond mere functionalism, Garkau transcends the schematic through a deep understanding of the program, the place and nature, thus finding the most appropriate architectural form [Abascal García 2010, p. 74]. “We do not seek to feed the apparent antithesis between expressive and functional [...] we try to affirm expressive needs in the direction of life, of becoming, of movement, through a natural configuration, because the itinerary that shapes the functional form is consistent with the natural one. In nature, form is the result of the arrangement of multiple data in space, in relation to the evolution of life and both individual and complex efficiency” [Pizza 2002, p. 200]. On the other hand, Häring found structural humility and functional sincerity in vernacular forms. This recognition, adapted to new human needs, implied a reconsideration of the techniques and materials with which they were built. Häring’s projects show a combination of vernacular construction resources associated with other contemporary ones. “This seemingly [...] mixture gives him a wide range of expression, impossible to achieve with more abstract and limited vocabularies [Blundell Jones 1999, p. 70].

Although Häring developed new proposals for the horse stable and pigsty (1926), which would have closed off the corner joint, strengthening the architectural integrity of the complex, only the cattle stable and the barn (1925) were completed.

The barn

The barn building was placed in the north-western part, closest to the lake. It acts as a closing element of the complex towards the lake but respects the trees on the riverbank by separating itself by about 20 m. Häring will slightly hide the large volume among the trees to minimize the visual impact despite being the largest piece in the complex. The building consists of a rectangular central section measuring 15.50 m by 36.14 m with a pointed arch roof supported by a *Zollinger* type wooden structural system (fig. 5) and a smaller section attached to the courtyard measuring 2.97 m by 35.85 m.

There are three plans for Hugo Häring’s 1924 barn construction project, deposited and cataloged at the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin. The first of these (fig. 7), due to the overlapping lines and details, can be assumed to be the

development plan for the work. The drawings, which faithfully and concisely reflect the constructed project, do not show the connecting element with the stables and pigsty, as proposed in the general plans. The floor plan combines the ground floor and basement in a single line drawing. The elevations and sections show corrections and annotations of the heights of the wooden slats of the gable framework. The second plan (fig. 8) appears clean in its presentation. The plan and section view showed the construction of the connecting element with stables and pigsty and raised the hypothetical possibility of its construction. The basic dimensions of the building are established in both the section and the plan.

The last of the plans (fig. 9) shows larger-scale details of the southern volume of the side bay, defining the

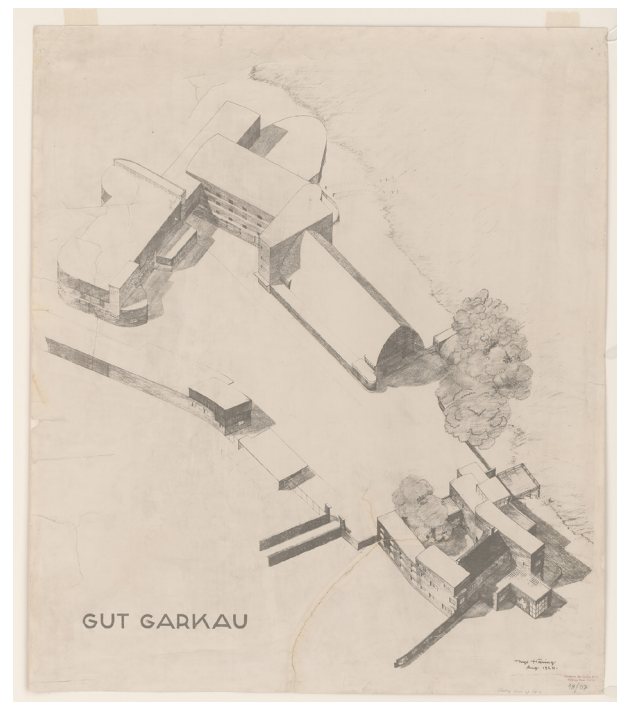


Fig. 3. Axonometry, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_007-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baukunstarchiv, Berlin.

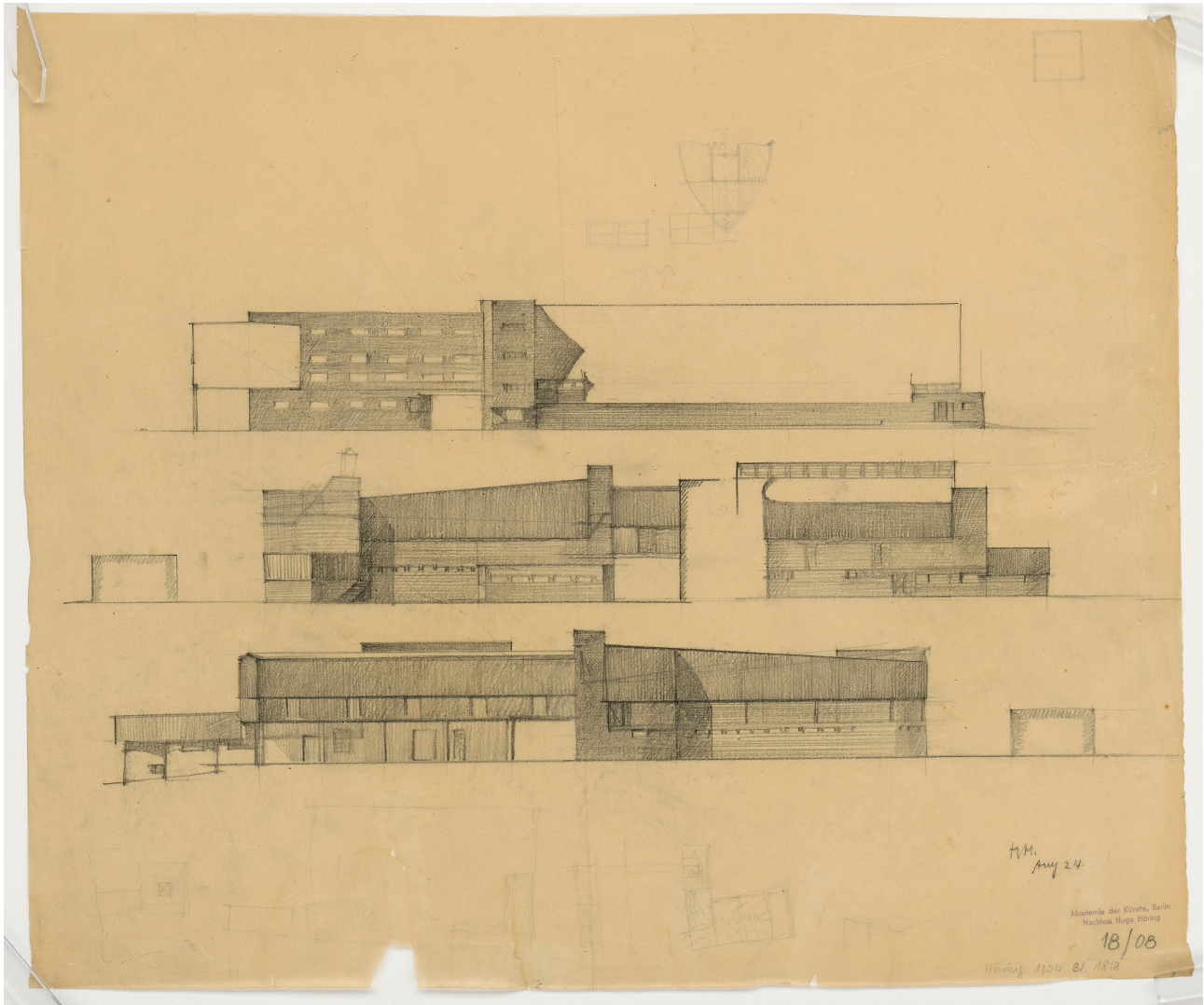


Fig. 4. Elevation – sections, 1. Residence and barn, 2. Stable and Pigsty 3. Stable and horse stable, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_008-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baunkunstarchiv, Berlin.

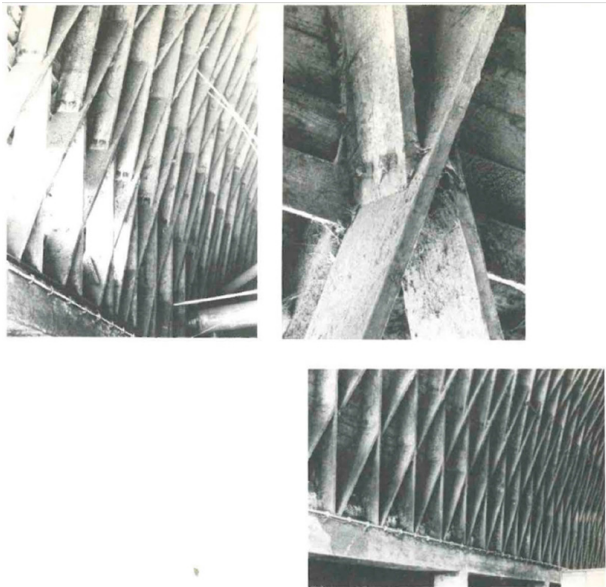
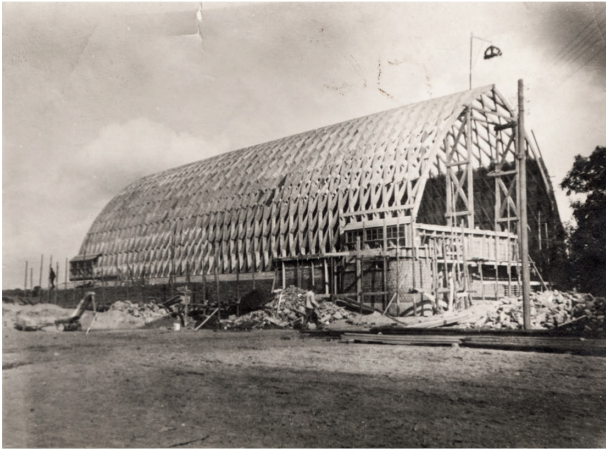


Fig. 5. Photo of the barn under construction Akademie der Künste, Hugo-Häring-Archiv, N°54, Berlin.

Fig. 6. Barn interior details [Bucciarelli 1980, p. 53].

exterior façade and the brickwork of the loading bay and the staircase leading to the basement. All these documents reflect the direct importance between thought, drawing and construction. The barn's design seeks to achieve maximum height using the thinnest possible structural thickness while recalling the curved profile of farms in northern Germany. To achieve this, Häring uses a construction made of thin sheets of wood nailed together to form a light three-dimensional mesh of rhombuses, a technique based on a system known as a *Zollinger* roof. The spatial structure is separated from the ground by resting along an exposed concrete wall on the side facing the lake, while on the opposite side it rests on a sturdy portico, also made of reinforced concrete, which supports a series of auxiliary buildings. On top of this perimeter plinth, a grid of wooden studs and straps is constructed on the gables to serve as a base and reinforcement for the exterior finish, which is made of large horizontal panels of treated planks.

Following the tradition established by Poelzig, Häring draws on the nature of materials and the way they are used to achieve expressive rhetoric in the building while establishing a dialogue with the surrounding landscape. Thus, the barn combines traditional materials, such as black Flemish tile roofing and red vitrified brick (laid in an English garden bond pattern, as in the old farms of Schleswig Holstein), with techniques that were more innovative for the time, such as reinforced concrete lintels and walls.

Häring even allows himself to experiment with variations on the most common details: in the vertical bond used in the circular corner that crowns the annex, in the highlighted bands that enliven the basement of the main façade of the barn, and in the composition of the large sliding entrance door, which uses three types of wood cladding.

These expressive resources introduce an ornamental extension to the nature of the construction, beyond pure functionality, which, in Häring's own words, "[...] may seem like a betrayal of functionality in favour of the purely ornamental", where "[...] if ornament is the correct word, it is a very special form of ornament. Because even if it produces a visual effect, it is realised within the discipline of the construction process, in fact, as a deliberate elaboration of it: construction elevated to the level of a game. This duality has strong precedents in the German vernacular tradition" [Blundell Jones 1999, p. 58].

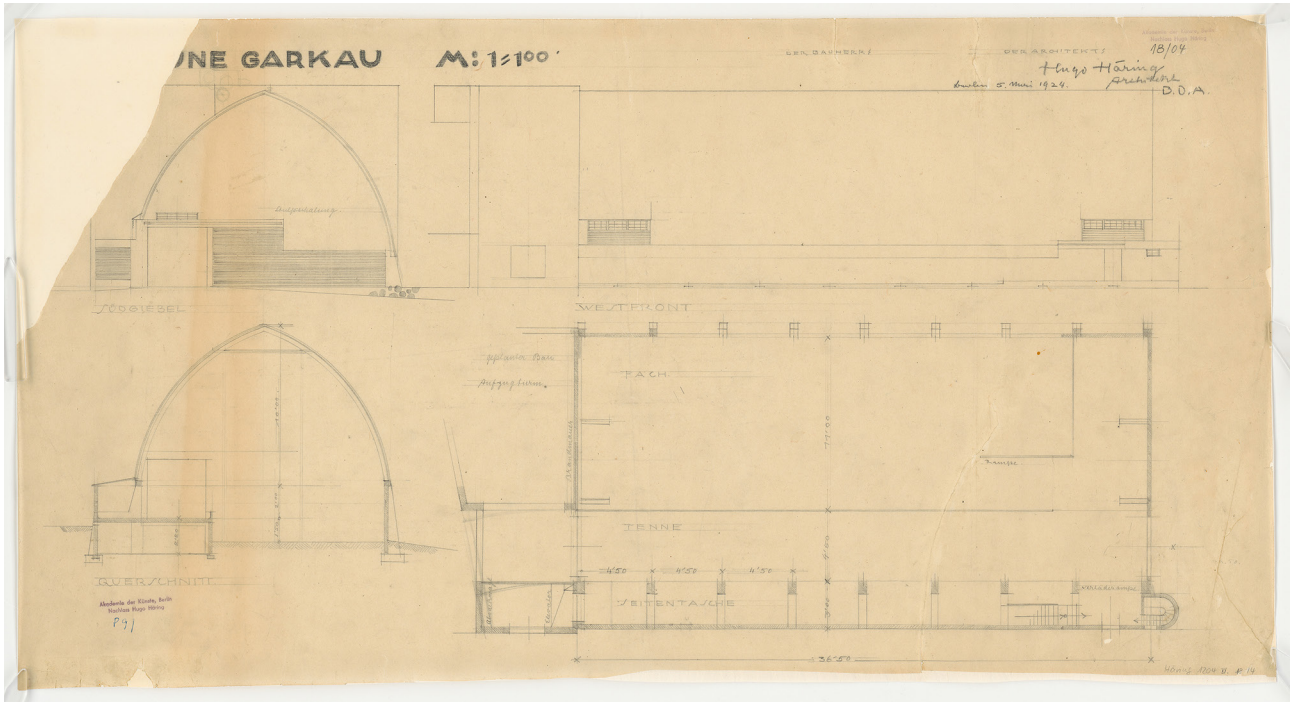
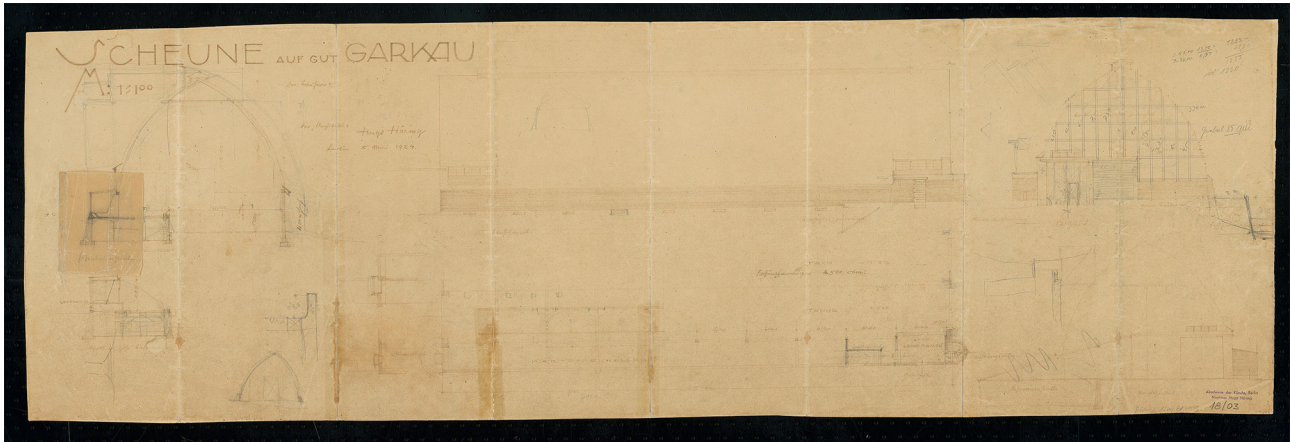


Fig. 7. Ground floor, elevations and section, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_003-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baunkunstarchiv, Berlin.

Fig. 8. Ground floor, elevations and section, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_004-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baunkunstarchiv, Berlin.

The stable

The stable is the most notable piece of Gut Garkau's ensemble, it is the irrefutable embodiment of the beginning of theoretical thought in the beginnings of Hugo Häring around 1924. The building is arranged at the north-western end of the *hof* –or courtyard– and closes the interior space in this direction acting as a backdrop. Only a plan of the floor plan is preserved of the stable project of Gut Garkau, (fig. 9) –undated, drawn in pencil, plan that includes the final version and corresponds to the rest of the general documentation of the complex analyzed above, also from 1924.

However, the only documentation available that corresponds to the final plan (fig. 10) bears no relation to the volume of the final proposal in the axonometric projection and elevations/sections of the general layout analyzed previously. The stable has a single-slope roof in the opposite direction to the final design, a skylight/ventilation on the north side that was never built, and the hopper has a different configuration. In addition, two detailed plans have been preserved, one partial plan of the north elevation and another with details and fittings of the brickwork.

The complexity of the stable is enormous, and the geometric construction initially seemed impossible. However, thanks to the precision of the architect's drawings, the rigor of the measurements and the consistency of the process, it was possible to bring it to fruition. With an approach close to that stated by Mendelsohn, who seeks form in the expressiveness of the structure, Häring's proposals attempt to achieve a morphology of the supporting structure that expresses the efficient fulfillment of its function [Joedicke 1960, p. 318] [3]. "In nature, the image is the result of the coordination of many parts, in such a way that allows the whole, as well as each of the parts, to coexist in the most effective manner [...] if we try to discover the true 'organic form', instead of imposing a foreign form, we will be acting in accordance with nature" [Joedicke 1960, p. 318] [4].

"For the stable of 42 cows, a pear-shaped plant was determined as the most suitable. The fodder went down from the hayloft to the feeders, which at the same time functioned as a threshing floor. This arrangement makes the feeding process much easier. At the same time, the manure is cleaned using a one-way system"

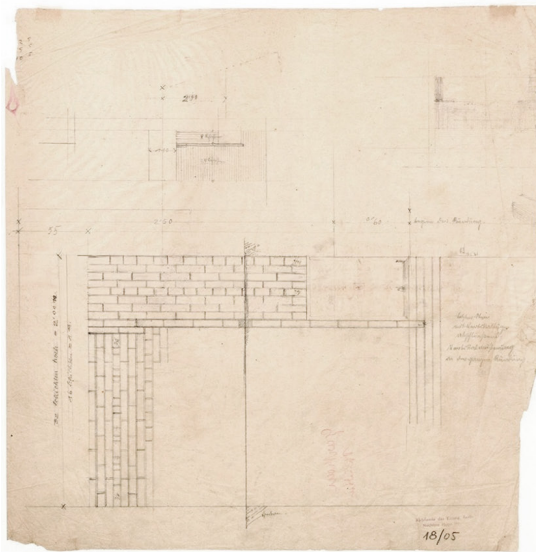


Fig. 9. Author Collage, Brick Rigging Details, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_005-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baukunstarchiv, Berlin, and source *Impegno nella ricerca organica* [Bucciarelli 1980, p. 52].

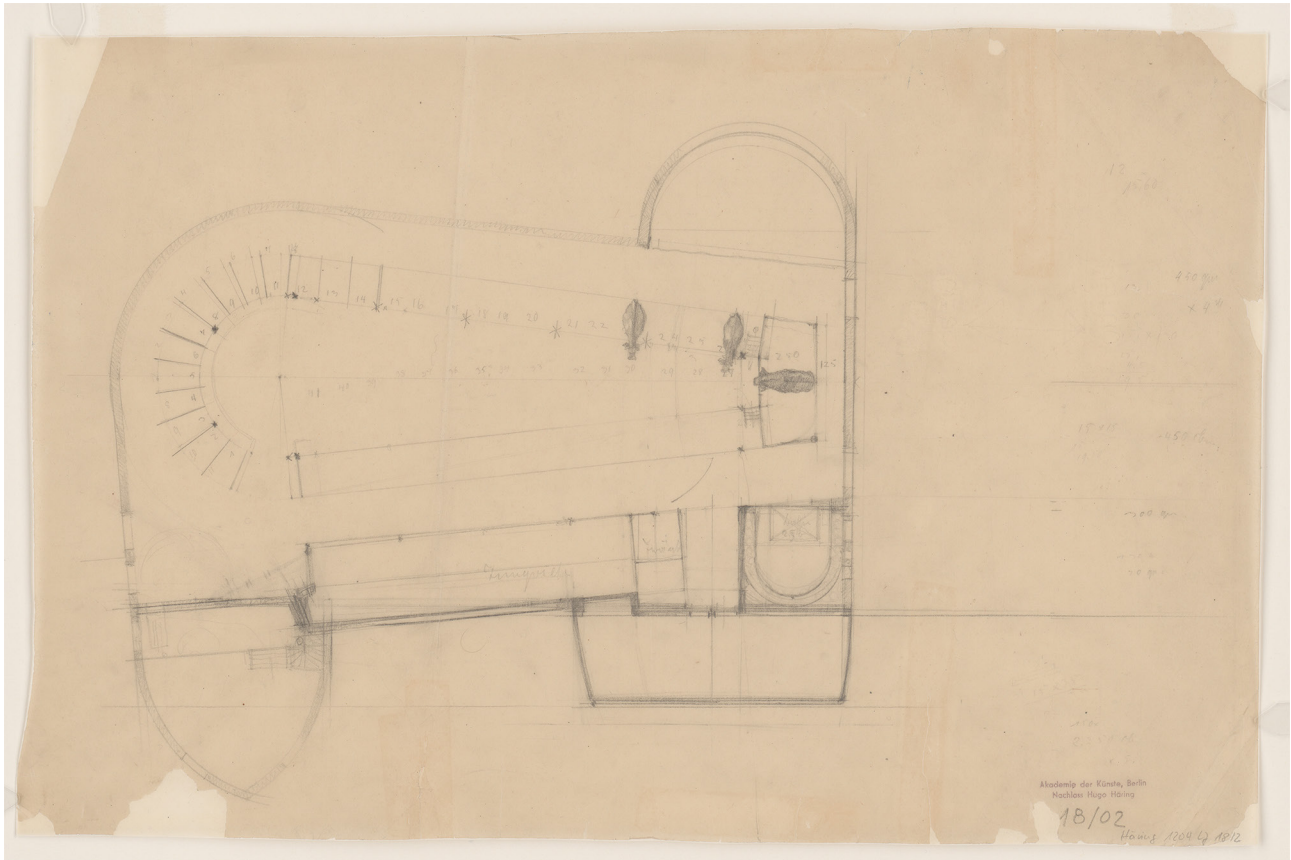
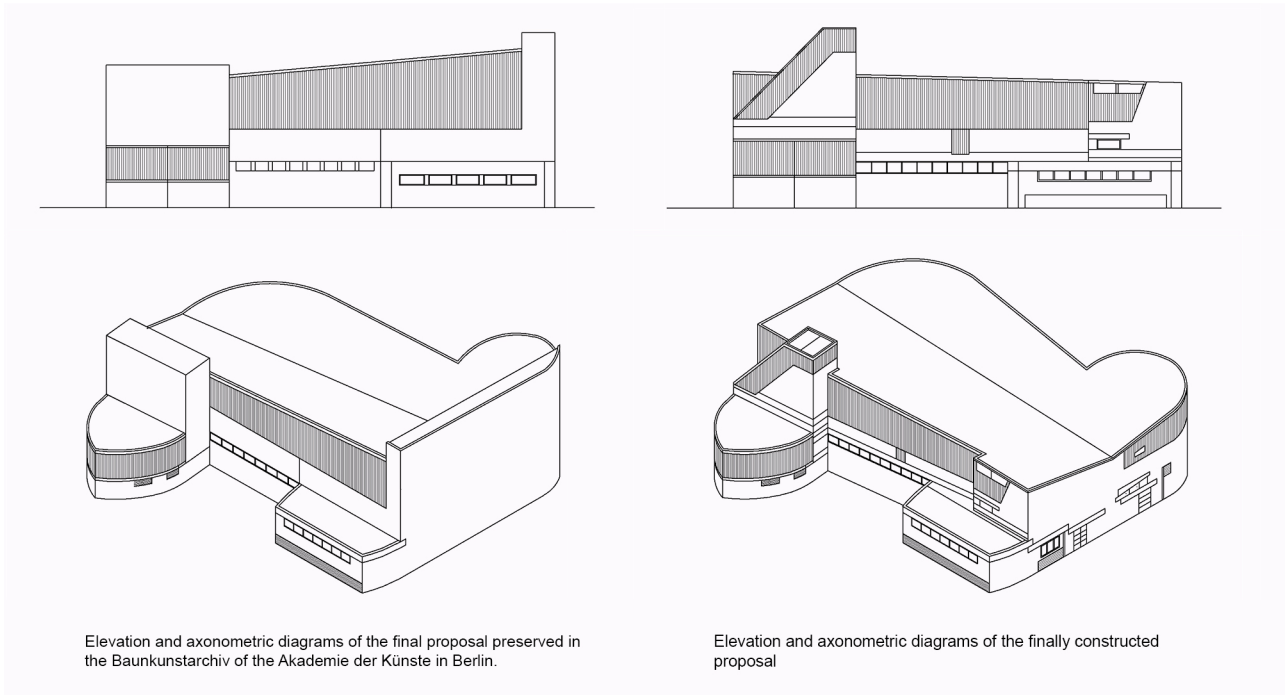


Fig. 10. Stable Plant – undated, Häring-Hugo_1204_018_002-1024w, Akademie der Künste, Baukunstarchiv, Berlin.

Fig. 11. Elevation and axonometry diagrams of the stable (graphic elaboration by the authors).



[Häring 1925, pp. 16-17]. Animals are not placed facing each other, so they do not directly share the exhaled air, reducing the risk of diseases. Livestock control is facilitated from behind with a curved perimeter corridor and at the head from the feeding space.

Like traditional agricultural buildings, the stable has two floors, the ground floor for cattle and the upper floor for straw. The section is organized in a "V" with a slope of 1:8 inwards to promote ventilation. A first slab 20 cm thick separates the stable from the hayloft (fig. 11). The perimeter level is constant horizontal and has a longitudinal slope also in a "V" shape with a low point in the western third to pour the straw over the center of the stable, slopes that allow the feed to be dragged to the point of pouring to the bottom. That "V" slope in the upper hayloft slab is repeated on the slope on the deck to collect the waters. With this section gesture in the

form of butterfly wings in the stable, you also solve the collection of water inside, ventilation and leave a clean profile on the outside.

The geometric conditions of the building are difficult to understand, but the outline is harmonious. The space for calves, young calves and dairy cows is attached to the main volume as a kind of "backpack" determining the shape of the building. In this initial sketch of Häring, it can be seen that there is a space planned for the haystack, the spaces for horses and storage would come later. The form of construction arises when it is sought to be the natural result of achieving the functionality of the work in the simplest and most direct way. "Naturally, there is no room here for influences of any other kind, such as folk art, traditions or crowned pediments, and yet the construction sits on the territory and landscape with much greater roots than the older buildings in the area" [Häring 2002, pp. 67-75].

The structure is built with concrete porticoes (fig. 12), sheets with a double central support and large overhangs, which are not really such because the ends are supported on the supports that, being hidden inside the double layer of brick and glass, seem to disappear. The windows are located in the upper part of the wall just below the slab line and are not practicable so that the ventilation of the enclosure does not depend on their opening. Light enters through this perforated perimeter ventilation hole from above, generating a suspension effect of the upper slab.

The angle of the section is present in the plan, the flat gantries are flexed in the center to be placed perpendicular to the perimeter and the central beam section between supports is strengthened. In order not to show the curve from below in the slab of the ceiling of the ground floor, the beams that in this case protrude on the floor of the hayloft partially disappear. The structure is arranged on the edge of the trough tray, so that its creative foundation comes from the functional, and consists of 6 large concrete pillars that dismiss a system of beams inwards and outwards.

"Through the materials of construction, the work of the spirit begins to become visible in earthly reality, in which materials, as bodies, occupy a space" [Häring 1951, as cited in Joedicke 1960, p. 318]. Häring makes a reading of the traditional construction model, in which the lower part is solid to protect animals from the weather and predators, and help to overcome changes in elevation. The upper part is made of wood to open holes easily in such a way that ventilation and hay storage are allowed. The exterior walls of the stable are not load-bearing, this kind of plinth only acts as thermal and climatic insulation, half is made of annealed brick and the other of concrete.

Conclusions

The present study has made it possible to evidence, from the few graphic documents preserved and the elaboration of interpretative schemes, the clarity with which Hugo Häring articulates the relationship between structure, function and formal expression on the farm of Gut Garkau (1923-1924). The study confirms that the structure cannot be understood only as a technical resource aimed at guaranteeing stability, but as a design principle with the capacity to generate form. In this way,

the structure reveals itself not only as a support, but as a design engine, simultaneously articulating function, spatial coherence and aesthetic expression. The analysis reveals a double construction-structural strategy: concrete in the stable, designed to respond to the demands of this type of space, and *Zollinger* type wood in the barn, which provides lightness and spatial adaptability. This duality does not respond only to technical criteria, but embodies Häring's idea that "each function must find its own form" [5], integrating structural logic and architectural expressiveness. In this way, it is confirmed that formal expressiveness does not arise as an aesthetic addition, but as a direct consequence of the adequacy between structural, constructive and functional means. In this sense, Häring's projects anticipate an organic conception of architecture, in which drawing, function and structure are inseparable dimensions of the same design process.

The line of structuralist expressionism with vernacular overtones initiated by Poelzig and developed in the post-war years by Taut, Mendelsohn and Häring, was "inhibited by Dutch and Russian abstract aesthetics, and would soon be reduced to nothing" [Banham 1985, p. 88], but would revive in the architecture of the fifties, and as Reyner Banham indicates, Gut Garkau's advanced work could be considered to be present in Alvar Aalto's fully mature works [Banham 1979, p. 30]: "With the arrival of Aalto, a second stage in modern architecture began; it was then that Häring's ideas took on a new breath of life, although he was unknown to most of the men who used them" [Joedicke 1960, p. 318] [6]. Although this way of thinking about architecture, intertwining function, structure and materiality, in an attentive way to the vernacular tradition, did not have much more projection immediately, it would flourish strongly in later decades. It would generate again, at the end of the fifties, a great interest among many of the English architects linked to Brutalism. Young people interested in the revaluation of construction and materiality as indispensable companions of the function. Despite the lack of specific references that show that the two main theoreticians of Brutalism, Alice and Peter Smithson, had knowledge of Häring's texts, the Garkau farm is mentioned in the previous notes of the manuscript *New Brutalism* (1955). Häring, along with Aalto, Duiker and Rietveld, will be vindicated as a key figure in 'the other tradition' in the book on the origins of the *Modern Movement, The Heroic Period of Modern Architecture*, which the Smithsons published in 1965.

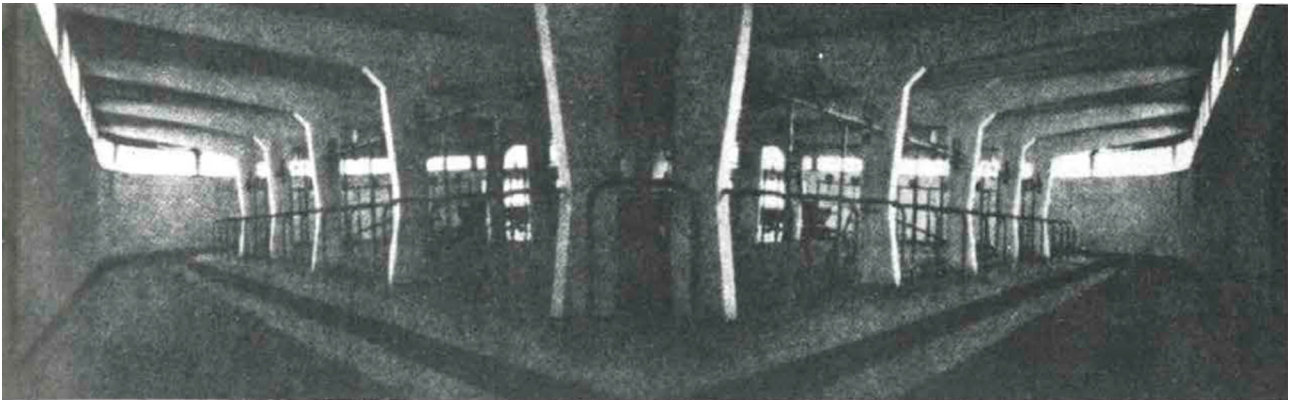
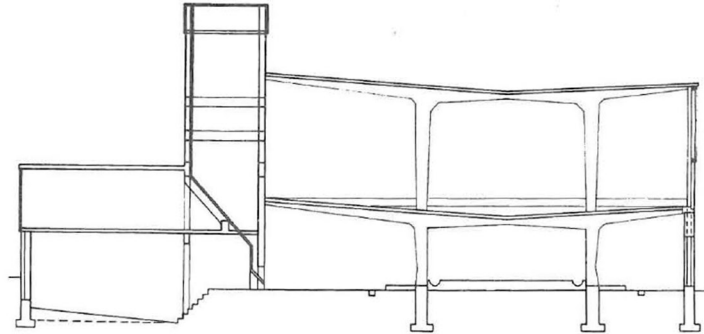
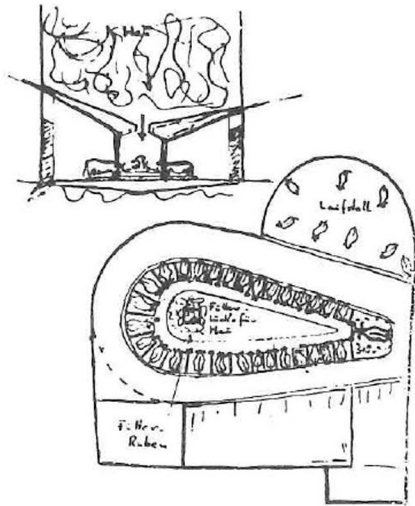


Fig. 12. Häring's preliminary sketch of the stable [Schirren 2001 , p. 362] y Stable cross-section [Bucciarelli 1980, p. 47].

Fig. 13. Photomontage of The Lissitsky (1927), stable interior of Gut Garkau [Bucciarelli 1980, p. 51].

Notes

[1] See also: García Roig 2006.

[2] The Gut Garkau farm, commissioned by Otto Birtner, attracted numerous farmers in its early years, who were interested in the new livestock and machinery facilities, thanks to the application of experimental agricultural criteria and the innovative architecture of Häring.

[3] Häring, H. (1925). Form findung nicht Zwangsform. In *Die Form*, Vol 1, pp. 3-5. Cited in: Joedicke 1960.

[4] Häring, H. (1951). Geometrie und Organik. In *Baukunst und Werkform*, pp. 132-136. Cited in: Joedicke 1960.

[5] In 1928 he published a text entitled *Architektur als Organismus* (Architecture as Organism), in which he argued that architectural form should arise from specific function and conditions, not from standardized models or imposed style.

[6] Joedicke, J. (1960). Haering at Garkau, *Op.Cit.*, p. 318. See also Bucciarelli 1980.

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