

Architect peter behrens

[Design](#), [Architecture](#)



The purpose of this analysis is to identify, define, and explain. It is a three part analysis that also has an Introduction and a Conclusion. The first section discusses the “ Historical Background of the Architect”, Peter Behrens. Behrens was born in Germany where he made a significant contribution to the industry field. He brought the styles of Expressionistic, Industrial Classicism, Jugendstil, and International Modern Style to his masterpieces. In fact, these styles are explained in section two which is the “ Critical Analysis”.

Behrens’ buildings, Behrens House, A. E. G. High Tension Factory, I. G. Farben Offices, and New Ways are assigned particular styles based upon the way they were designed and the year in which they were built. The final section is the “ Building Analysis”. Additional details are given for the Behrens House. These details are in terms of technicality, criticism, and building for the times. Based upon the findings of this information, a Conclusion is drawn. Historical Background of the Architect Peter Behrens was originally from Hamburg, Germany. He was born in 1868.

Behrens first profession was as a painter. However, graphic and applied arts appealed to Behrens more. Thus, he re-channeled his energy to those areas and steered away from painting. In 1899, an invitation to attend the Artists’ Colony in Darmstadt enabled Behrens to establish a leadership role there. Yet, he would not stay put for long. Behrens next venture was in Dusseldorf where he was employed as the Director of the Kunstgewerkeschule. It was an interim position that sparked Behrens’s interest in adding a unique geometric abstraction to his work (“ Peter Behrens?

" 2007). The 1890s was the time period when Behrens was located in Munich where he was employed as a painter and graphic artist. It is also when Behrens gained membership into the Jugendstil movement. However, it was not until 1893 that Behrens became one of the co-founders of the Munich Secession. Additionally, " He produced woodcuts, colored (sic) illustrations, designs for book bindings and crafts objects entirely shaped by the Jugendstil formal language" (" Biography: Peter Behrens" n.

d.). Artists and architects such as August Endell, Bernhard Pankok, Bruno Paul, Hermann Obrist, and Richard Vereinigte united forces with Behrens in 1897 to find "...the Vereinigth Werkstätten für Kunst und Handwerk in Munich to produce handmade utilitarian objects" (" Biography: Peter Behrens" n. d.). These contributions to society were just as the word utilitarian means: functional, practical, and down-to-earth. Consequently, Behrens displayed humbleness in his work as well.

This side may also have been evident when Behrens joined forces in 1898 to design " Pan", a Berlin journal as well as when he fashioned the first of his furniture designs (" Biography: Peter Behrens" n. d.). At the same time that Behrens was creating unique architecture that stirred up a lot of talk and criticism, he was knee-deep in leadership roles. For example, " In 1899 Peter Behrens was appointed by Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse-Darmstadt to the Mathildenhöhe artists' colony the Grand Duke had just established in Darmstadt" (" Biography: Peter Behrens" n. d.).

Naturally, having a position of such this caliber bestowed upon him by such a high prestige, this meant that Peter Behrens had earned respect, in addition to this honor, in the eyes of the Grand Duke. This could have been the

reason why Behrens felt it time to build his own home. “ Designed as a total work of art, “ Haus Behrens” caused quite a stir; Behrens himself designed the architecture and the interior with all its appointments and furnishings down to the last detail” (“ Biography: Peter Behrens” n. d.). Accordingly, Behrens was able to implement the Expressionistic style into his home.

Perhaps this inner-creativity is what caused the AEG to become interested in Behrens. The time between 1907 and 1914 led Behrens’ life to Berlin where he became an artistic advisor to the AEG. It was during this period in his professional career that Behrens became known as the person who “...created the world’s first corporate image” (“ Peter Behrens? ” 2007, par. 2). Remarkably, Behrens’ work with the AEG was when he displayed a keen interest for designing architectural pieces that utilized the form and material found in the industry field.

Moreover, Behrens’ work helped pave a path for others to follow. Therefore, he “...can be considered a key figure in the transition from Jugendstil to Industrial Classicism. ’ ’ He [indeed] played a central role in the evolution of German Modernism” (“ Peter Behrens? ” 2007, par. 3). During the time frame between 1922 and 1936, Behrens was headmaster to the Vienna Akademie der Bildenden Künste which is an architecture department where he also taught (“ Biography: Peter Behrens” n. d.). As a result, Behrens was able to play a significant part in the way Germans (and people, in general) perceive architecture.

Furthermore, Behrens “...designed china, glass objects and patterned tile flooring for various companies. ’ ’ One of his last commissions, in 1938, was to plan a new AEG headquarters in Berlin” (“ Biography: Peter
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Behrens" n. d.). This was, of course, all accomplished before Peter "...died in Berlin in 1940" (" Peter Behrens? " 2007, par. 4). Fortunately, Behrens was able to put many of his ideas into his architecture. In addition, he was able to demonstrate a high level of skill and technicality in his work. Critical Analysis One of Behrens' first works was the Behrens House.

It was designed in 1901 and is located in Darmstadt, Germany. The house is known for its fine dining rooms and music appeal. Its outline is one of the normal formats "...for a small burgeois house..." (" Behrens House" 2007, par. 1). However, "...its internal and external expression was unusual, particularly for its combination of features drawn from the English Arts and Crafts movement...with elements such as the high-pitched roof drawn from the German Vernacular" (" Behrens House" 2007, par. 1). In this sense, the word vernacular gives a strong indication that the German culture was evident in Behrens' works.

Vernacular is just another term for the word language. Thus, the Behrens House is characteristic of the Expressionistic style (explained later) as well as of Industrial Classicism which is basically an ideology in which human beings and machines can coexist. In this case, the word " machine" refers to buildings. Another of Behrens' works is " A. E. G. High Tension Factory" (2007). The building was designed in 1910 and is located in Berlin, Germany. It is an industrial plant made of glass and iron. When Behrens created the building, he was able to incorporate a very unique and different look to it.

" Behrens achieved a plastic effect and a dynamic form of construction of the trusses, which were pulled towards the outside, as well as through the tapering iron trusses and the glass areas which were drawn towards the

inside" (" A. E. G. High Tension Factory" 2007, par. 1). This look aroused many other architects and caused them to criticize Behrens. In fact, " Luduig Hilberseimer wrote: ' Peter Behrens is led astray by the imperialistic power consciousness of the prewar years and restrained by classical influences, and he thinks to add a facade to his turbine hall of the AEG at Moabit, an otherwise terse structure..." (" A.

E. G. High Tension Factory" 2007, par. 1). However, Behrens' work really demonstrated Expressionistic, Jugendstil, and Industrial Classicism styles. Yet, it was also represented of the International Modern Style. Did knowing these things stop others from criticizing Behrens' works? No. Another architect also had strong words to say about Behrens. In fact, "...Erich Mendelsohn criticized the building [A. E. G. High Tension Factory}; ' He pastes over the expression of tension, which the hall creates, with the rigidity of a repeatedly broken temple tympanon..." (" A. E. G.

High Tension Factory" 2007, par. 1). However, this meant the work was characteristic of the Expressionistic style. This style was " A movement in the arts during the early part of the 20th century that emphasized subjective expression of the artist's inner expressions" (" Peter Behrens? " 2007). Of course, the expressionistic style occurred around the World War I era. Perhaps the strains of the war created a stir within the architects' souls because Behrens was not the only artist to take up this style; other German architects did as well (" Peter Behrens? " 2007).

Consequently, maybe that is why some architects saw the beauty in Behrens' masterpiece. " Le Corbusier...admired the structure as being a charged center, which represents the integral architectonic creations of our

time—rooms with admirable moderation and cleanness, with magnificent machines, which set solemn and impressive accents, as the center of attraction” (“ A. E. G. High Tension Factory” 2007, par. 1). This means that Behrens’ architecture was both Jugendstil and Industrial Classicism. Jugendstil is a cross between Art Nouveau and other unique styles (“ Jugendstil” 2007).

Art Nouveau is defined as “...a new form, an original artistic and decorative movement inspired by the idea of ‘ total art’” (“ Introduction to Art Nouveau” 2007, par. 4). Behrens also put Jugendstil and Industrial Classicism styles into his offices. The I. G. Farben Offices were designed between 1920 and 1925. In fact, these buildings are located in Frankfurt, Germany. Behrens used brick masonry as the construction system for these commercial offices. He followed the Dutch Expressionist Modern style as well.

This type of architecture was symbolic of both “...the theatrical play of light...” as well as “...the systematic use of slanting rafters which serve to disrupt the overall rectilinearity” (“ I. G. Farben Offices” 2007, par. 1). Consequently, this building was reminiscent of the Expressionistic style as well. Again, in this style the artist puts his heart into his work. One of Behrens’ later masterpieces was New Ways. “ In 1926 Peter Behrens designed ‘ New Ways’, a private dwelling in Northampton, which is regarded as an early example of the International Modern style” (“ Biography: Peter Behrens” n.

d.). Carpenter (n. d.) indicated, “ Need and demand inspires Art. ’ ‘ International Modern Style buildings appeared in the early post war in the form of many large industrial sized buildings’” (par. 1). During the years

following the war, hospitals were needed for the injured and other buildings were needed to house soldiers after they were released from the hospital and before they could go home. Of course, this is mandatory when dealing with any war. However, back in the 1900s when World War I was occurring, people were not familiar with so many injuries.

Thus, architects that were able to design establishments that would benefit the war contributed greatly to their countries. In fact, the German language was present in Behrens' Behrens House, as indicated in previous sections. Building Analysis The Behrens House is unique in nature. It was built to become Peter Behrens habitat, where he could display his ideas into his work in detail. Moreover, the house was where Behrens thought of some of his greatest ideas. In fact, it was discussed at the Wikipedia website that, "... Behrens built his own house and fully conceived everything inside the house (furniture, towels, paintings, pottery, etc.).

' ' The building of this house is considered to be the turning point in his life..." (" Peter Behrens: Biography? " 2007). It was the time period when Behrens went to the Expressionistic style and re-directed many of the thoughts he put into his architecture from the Jugendstil style. During this period, Behrens also steered away from the Munich artistic circles for which he had grown acquainted. Behrens became temperate and rigorous in his style of designs (" Peter Behrens: Biography? " 2007). This was evident in the Behrens House. In fact, the construction system was made of brick and stucco facade, with a wood interior (" Behrens House" 2007).

Thus, this gave the impression that Behrens had been serious when he built this home. It could have been the strain of involvement with so many

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different things or the toil that war can bring to even citizens of the war, whatever the case, Behrens House was amongst the first designs that took Peter Behrens in a totally different direction. This would be the Art Nouveau style (" Behrens House" 2007). Of course, this style brings the total package of art designs to the home. So, what are the technicalities behind this design? Well, architecture itself is a technicality.

Egan (1998) wrote, " In terms of architecture, before we decide how to build, we must decide what to build, and why" (par. 4). Peter Behrens decided that he wanted to construct a home and then he built Behrens House to be his home. At the same time, Behrens knew his safe-haven would be the building ground for many of his ideas. This factor relates to Egan's (1998) discussion in the fact that Egan said, "...the most challenging questions in architecture are not answered through laws of physics or engineering; they are questions of culture and psychology" (par. 4).

Behrens became Expressionistic around the time of World War I. Since the details in his architecture were somber, one could say that Behrens had seen some horrors of the war that had found a place in his heart and came out in his designs. Even so, Behrens still portrayed the fact he was a German by having the German culture displayed in his work. This answers the question of culture. Psychology is answered by the fact that Behrens went from Jugendstil to an Expressionistic style of design. Do these attributes imply that technicalities existed in Behrens design? Yes. However, Egan (1998) mentioned,

...the essence of architecture is not construction; instead it is the design of spaces for humans. It includes spaces for humans, for their activities, for

their treasures, and for their aspirations. Architecture uses the physical world of construction to shape, order, structure, articulate, and embody our spaces and our beliefs. (par. 4) This statement, in itself, gives way to the fact that Industrial Classicism existed. Industrial Classicism was considered to be the style that connected man with machine. Thus, Behrens tied himself with his architecture by building his own home and then working out of it.

What type of mentality did this suggest of Behrens? It could be noted that Behrens had a Cognitive pragmatics mentality. Tirassa (1999) pointed out, "Cognitive pragmatics is concerned with the mental process involved with intentional communication, that is, with the characteristics of the mind/brain that allow individuals belonging to the human (and possibly to other) species to intentionally communicate with each other" (1). If this is the case, then Behrens was able to communicate his thoughts and aspirations with the design of his home in 1901. Architecture does not rely on oral communication.

Therefore, Behrens was able to effectively communicate his design style, which everyone did not approve of. In order to fully understand what this means, the assumptions behind cognitive pragmatics must be given. Tirassa (1999) wrote, "The first is that communication is best viewed as one form of social activity and that a theory of communication belongs therefore to the study of action and social action rather than of language or of the transmission of information. The second is that communication involves some form of active cooperation between participants. (1-2)

In architecture, this may not be entirely true. For example, Behrens' critics picked up on his rigid style by viewing his buildings and so did those who

enjoyed Behrens' work. Therefore, on social interaction had to take place for this to occur. Additionally, not everyone was in agreement that the Behrens House was one of the best pieces of architecture of that time. However, the design had people talking. Unfortunately, not all the communication was good—as criticism was evident amongst some of the discussions (discussed earlier). So, was Behrens House a building for the times?

Yes and no. It is because Behrens designed the home to last. Not only that, Behrens House received a lot of talk and during a time when war rages, opening up some form of communication is better than keeping it all bottled in until it explodes on its own. The main reason is because when/if that tension explodes in a negative manner, not telling what type of additional problems it will cause. Behrens House was also a building of its time because it allowed Behrens to express himself in such a manner, that he helped others go on to achieve great things.

This was evident due to the contributions of architectural teachings and creations of utilitarian objects that Behrens brought to the world. On the other hand, Behrens design may not be the best building for all times. In the presence of war and ever-increasing technological advancements, Behrens House may not have been practical living quarters for a family on the move. In these times, houses can be built in a matter of days and those with a high degree of difficulty can be built in one week (as seen on ABC's, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition). Yet, back in those days, houses could be quickly assembled as well.

An article about snail-like homes surfaced around 1943. It indicated that buildings, called Ratio Structures had been created and the buildings were

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being tested in The Bronx. The article also pointed out that these buildings were, Built on small concrete piers...[and] is unique having its framework, like a snail's, on the outside. The Structure is composed of two practically independent parts: 1) an arch-shaped roof made of insulated panels and supported by posts; 2) rooms, formed of demountable inner & outer panels (sic) which can be shuffled around at will under the roof.

Thus the structure has no weight-carrying walls. (" Houses Like Snails" 1943). Consequently, these buildings were good for housing the injured and supporting the war. In fact, it was written that the " Large unites could be changed to meet the requirements of homes, hospitals, recreation centers, storage, schools, etc. " (" Houses Like Snails" 1943). These factors, alone, make Ratio Structures both durable and convenient for today's times as well. Moreover, this statement is relative to current war issues. This is because the article also mentioned,

Under (sic) wartime restrictions the panels are made of celotex and wallboard. But they could be made of any material. Having no weight-carrying walls, the Wiener-Sert system uses only 50% of the structural lumber and 80% of the metal permitted by WFB. (" Houses Like Snails" 1943) What do all these things suggest about Behrens and his art? More than meets the eye. Conclusion Peter Behrens was able to listen to his heart and design the desires therein. That speaks volumes of the man. Not too many architectures, let alone, people are willing to do something new.

Many professionals and individuals, in general, are more concerned with what others might do, think, or say than they are with being different. Of course, World War I had a lot to do with the fact that Behrens changed the

way he designed from the Jugendstil style to the Expressionistic style. Yet, what should be noted is that those were not the only two design styles of the architect. Behrens also created works that displayed the style of Industrial Classicism and International Modern Style as well. Therefore, Behrens House should be considered as groundwork to other masterpieces in his time.

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