



Opus 28

**Alte Völklinger Hütte**

With texts by Lucius Burckhardt, Johann Peter Lüth and Georg Skalecki and photographs by Hans Meyer-Veden. 72 pp. with 56 ill., 280 x 300 mm, hard-cover, German/English  
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»UNESCO has made the Völklinger Hütte a World Cultural Heritage Monument. Thus a piece of 19th-century German industrial plant is placed alongside the Pyramids of Giza, Charlemagne's cathedral in Aachen and the Taj Mahal. Something that seems to be a homogeneous series – the World Cultural Heritage Monuments – has acquired a new dimension with the addition of the Völklinger coal and steel conglomerate. In the field of monument protection, memory has hitherto been equated with ›preservation‹, but what preservation meant under the conditions of decay of all human works was scarcely discussed. ... Here the Völklinger Hütte, with its drastically abbreviated half-life period and the rapid change of all conditions brings a new dimension. The thing protected is for once not an object, but a process. It raises the question what events are under conditions of wear, and who is being remembered. ... The plant can stand as technological evidence of the inventive spirit of the 19th-century period of rapid industrial expansion, for the division of labour and the jobs of a generation that still has members living in Völklingen, of a war machine, or a landmark in the local Saar bend. ...

The political story that should be considered above all is invisible. ... The kitschy statement by enthusiastic school teachers that blast-furnace plants are ›cathedrals of work‹ makes sense only if cathedrals are seen also as documents of collective cooperation. ... The spiritual surroundings of steel production are limited to the polytechnic approach: the engineer is responsible for function, the owner wants his return and no-one asks how the steel is used. It would be naive to think one was critically disposed to the belligerent policy that led to two world wars, although proximity to France could have conveyed an enlightened view of the world situation. ... Anyone who talks about the cathedral of work should not forget the crypt.« (Lucius Burckhardt in *Daidalos*.)

Lucius Burckhardt, a young don at HfG Ulm and ETH Zurich, later editor-in-chief of the magazine *werk*, Professor at the Gesamthochschule Kassel from 1973 to 1997, in the meantime chairman of the Deutscher Werkbund, is indubitably one of the most unusual ›lateral‹ thinkers of our day. Johann Peter Lüth worked as an architect, before becoming Director of the Saarland State Conservation Office in 1985. His colleague Georg Skalecki is responsible for drawing up inventories and for building research there. Hans Meyer-Veden studied photography from 1955 to 1959 in Hamburg. He taught at the Fachhochschule Dortmund and at the Fachhochschule Kiel.

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