

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

When H.W.E. Stauch came to South Africa, towards the end of 1934, architecture in South Africa was undergoing a slow transition towards twentieth century architecture, with most of the quality work at this time still traditional or retrospective, both in public buildings and in domestic architecture. In Pretoria, Stauch made significant contributions to this transition in the following years (Herbert, 1975, pp 73 and 100). In terms of quantity, Stauch was responsible for some 700 projects by 1958, (see Addendum A) and had a tremendous influence on the architectural scene in South Africa, particularly in Pretoria, more even than Martienssen.<sup>(1)</sup>

1.2 Present state of knowledge

Hellmut Stauch was one of South Africa's most prominent architects from 1934 until his death in 1970. He is generally regarded as having made a substantial contribution to architectural development in South Africa. To date, no survey of his work has been carried out; nor have more than a few dozen articles been published concerning the man and his work. He himself was extremely reticent and left almost no written records. The projects with which Stauch was wholly or partly associated have not been identified, listed, collected or recorded.

Generally "known" was that he had done well in sailing, had been trained at the Bauhaus in Dessau and had come to South Africa because of his family connections in South West Africa; and that his father had risen from relative obscurity to the opulent status of a diamond magnate in the then German South West Africa, only to lose everything in the aftermath of over-confident over-investment.

It was also known that Stauch had worked for and with Aubrey Nunn, had for a time been a partner of F.J. Wepener and thereafter practised on his own account.

Motivation

The sources of information about Stauch are decreasing. Those who knew him well and can provide information are ageing. The buildings he designed are being altered or may even run the risk of demolition. And

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1. Wepener, J.F., Ex-partner of H.W.E. Stauch, (1984 - interview).

his drawings are deteriorating with age. It was therefore essential for this study to be carried out without further delay and published, to make it generally available to those concerned with the development of architecture in South Africa.

#### 1.4 Statement of the problem

This research programme aims to collect and evaluate all the data obtainable concerning the background of Hellmut Stauch, his training, personal and professional activities, building and other designs and buildings constructed, and any other relevant data; to correlate this and establish an historical chronological sequence of work.

#### 1.5 The Delimitations

This study does not attempt to evaluate his contribution to or influence on architecture in South Africa.

#### 1.6 Investigation procedure

The original intention was to carry out research in phases, first by interviews, then by collection of drawings and location and photography of existing buildings, followed by checking and correlation. It proved more practical, however, to follow leads as they were uncovered, so the process was followed more or less at random although still under the same headings.

Complications in substantiating facts were the imitative drawings of his staff, his love of misleading others, the dearth of any autobiographical facts, and the reticence and introversion of a man who was an apparent extrovert. From this and from the conflicts which arose concerning authorship of buildings and opposing statements, it also became clear that the inclusion of apparently irrelevant facts on Stauch as an individual would be necessary to an understanding of his personal architectural philosophy.

In the course of investigation more information than could be included in this thesis was uncovered so that it was necessary then to winnow and select; and it is this selected information which appears in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER II - THE EARLY YEARS

 .1 Childhood years<sup>(1)</sup>

Hellmut Wilhelm Ernst Stauch was born on March 10th 1910 in Eisenach. His brother Hans was then five years old and his sister Marianne four. While Marianne would become his closest friend, confidante and mentor throughout his early life and would mother him in the way of little girls of that age group, Hans would frequently torment and tease him, especially since his mother dressed Stauch in silks and laces, allowing his fair curly hair to hang to his shoulders in the way of a young page-boy.

His first years were spent in luxurious circumstances for his father, August Stauch was a discoverer of diamonds in 1908 in the then South West Africa and had become a multi-millionaire in the years before Stauch's birth. August had developed a number of business interests in South West Africa and spent at least half of each year there attending to these. Christmas and New Year, however, were spent with his beloved family in Germany. Possibly in a move to spend more time in Germany, he invested heavily in other business ventures. Unfortunately these were to lead to later financial disaster, which was to have considerable influence on the course of Stauch's career (Levinson, 1983, pp 125, 126, 127).

His mother Ida was a strong, serene and warm person who endured her husband's frequent absences with a good grace and gave her children emotional security, an immaculate home and a mind - broadening background.

Before Hellmut was a year old, the family moved to Nikolaussee, a suburb of Berlin. Surrounded by lakes and woods, it was a beautiful place. The family would take walks through the woods together, a treat to be looked forward to, where the foundations of a deep and sensitive appreciation of nature were laid.

When he was two years old, the family made their final move in Germany, to Zehlendorf in Berlin. Here, their home was in a hectare of ground, large even for those times, on a lake, where the children had their own rowing boat. There was a special playroom, a well-appointed library and to the joy of the children a large and well-equipped playground. Photographs show a staff of several people and great reception

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1. Krafft, Mrs Marianne, Sister of H.W.E. Stauch. Unless otherwise stated, the information contained in this chapter was obtained from Mrs Marianne Krafft in interviews during 1984.

and dining rooms, suitable for the large-scale entertainment which was expected of a millionaire mining magnate.

Hans particularly enjoyed the playground. With the enthusiasm of a child who was particularly able, physically, he would spend much of his time on gymnastic feats while the young Hellmut hero-worshipped from the side-lines, imitating his brother at every possible opportunity. Their father, when he was home, would watch his children with love and pride from the vantage point of the red bench between three birch trees in the middle of the lawn. It was an idyllic childhood. August's keen intellect, warm friendliness, bubbling sense of humour, and intense interest in the world around him had a profound influence on the questioning minds of his children, and each in their own way developed an awareness of colour, form, pattern and order; of touch, taste, smell and physical movement - a feast for the senses.

On his third birthday Hellmut rejected scornfully the new blue silk frock presented by his mother and from that moment followed Hans in every possible way. No longer fastidious and upset by dirt, he entered into the games of boyhood, growing strong and often wild. By this time he had a younger sister, Käthe, but he, in the process of growing up was little concerned with his baby sister; all his attention was on the older two.

He was questioning, inventive, wild, funny and spirited, with a sense of humour matched by that of Hans. Gifted at physical occupations, he was also intensely sensitive, and had an interest in music, playing the cello, and in sailing.

## 2.2 The basis of Stauch's ambidextrous drawing technique

Stauch was by nature left-handed. Forced by his first school at Zehlendorf to write with his right hand, he produced mirror-writing, but eventually learned to do as the school wished. There was, however, nothing to stop him drawing with his left hand, and throughout his life he was to draw left-handed and write right-handed - often almost simultaneously, (fig. 1) with that abundant, overflowing energy evident in every aspect of his life.<sup>(2)</sup>

## 2.3 The beginning of his interest in sailing

At ten he went sailing for the first time, with his cello teacher.

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2. Various interviews (1984, with T.J.R. Scholtz, Mrs Tosca Vorster, R. Vorster, Mrs Pulli Thoms, partners, friends, relations, students)



FIG. 1 Hellmut Stauch; working ambidextrously on plans of the boat initially named "Tagati" with B Lello : this photograph was taken by David Baker in 1962



Typically, he did not wish to expose his lack of knowledge, and spent the entire night beforehand reading up on sailing in a book he had obtained. It was the start of a life-long love-affair with boats. He began building a model boat named the Mariannchen, for his sister, working night and day on its construction and sailing it at a model boat club on one of the nearby lakes. He followed this up with a surprisingly mature article on the boat, published in "Die Jacht" (192-). When he was twelve his father gave him his own boat, which he sailed at the Klein Wannsee yacht club; it was followed within two years by another which he had designed himself. Both these boats were professionally built and Stauch would spend every spare moment watching their progress and construction at the boatbuilders. His later predilection for and understanding of timber as a construction material probably had its roots in this early experience, for his detailing shows a profound sensitivity for its qualities and properties.

2.4

#### Stauch's interest in the Ittenschule

Stauch's schooling had, until this time, been that of an average German boy in Berlin. When he was 15, Marianne had become one of Johannes Itten's first students at the school which Itten was establishing in Berlin and which would from 1926 onwards be known as the Ittenschule, where her studies took her through the basic course into a specialisation in weaving and painting. Like all of Itten's students she almost idolised him, following his personal philosophy and beliefs on diet and meditation as well as his outstanding approach to the teaching of art. For two years Stauch listened, learned, absorbed and became fascinated with his sister's intense involvement. Eventually he began badgering his father into letting him leave school and join Marianne at the Ittenschule. Reluctantly, his father attended an interview with Itten and discussed the possibility. Itten was greatly impressed with August but it is doubtful whether the feeling was mutual. At that time August's own empire was crumbling; he had over-extended himself in too many directions and his resources were too thinly spread (Levinson, 1983, pp 140, 141). Decisions on the future were difficult to make; there was no knowing what would be the best course for his children to take. Reluctantly, he allowed Stauch to have his own way. In 1926 the sixteen-year-old joined the now formally constituted Ittenschule in Berlin.

## CHAPTER III - ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

### 3.1 The Ittenschule and Stauch

The young Stauch was a warm and likeable person, hard-working and capable of intense concentration and sensitive response.<sup>(1)</sup> He soon became one of Itten's best students and a close life-long friend, visiting Itten several times as a house guest, together with his family, on his visits to Europe.<sup>(2)</sup> The training which he had from Itten was to lay the foundation from which Stauch would develop his architectural approach which would eventually influence the architecture of South Africa.

In respect of his architectural training one question in particular remains unanswered; and that is why it was generally believed that he obtained his training at the Bauhaus in Dessau. The only reference made by him to this training is contained in a letter dated 1942.08.11 to the Institute of South African Architects, in which he states "after completing my education I started my architectural training at the 'Ittenschule', Berlin (branch of the Bauhaus) under Prof. Itten (one of the founders of the Bauhaus in Weimar), Professors Muche, Forbat, Neufert and Koehn, 1926-1929. At the same time I studied at the 'Technische Hochschule Berlin' under Professors Taut and Tessenow." Clearly, he did not conceal the information that he had studied at the Ittenschule; but equally he was misleading in stating that the Ittenschule was a branch of the Bauhaus. In looking for a reason for his misleading of others in this respect, it is necessary briefly to examine the Bauhaus, its reason for existence, function and training. It is also pertinent to examine the role of Johannes Itten in the Bauhaus training, on which he had a profound influence from its inception in 1919 to the date of his departure from it in 1923.<sup>(3)</sup>

### 3.2 The Bauhaus System and Johannes Itten

In the early part of the 20th century, architecture was seen as having largely become weakly sentimental, decorative and ornamental (Gropius, 1959, p 27). A new architecture adapted to the fast moving technologically orientated age was needed, its function clearly recognis-

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1. Krafft, Mrs Marianne, Sister of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.
  2. Vorster, Mrs Tosca, Step-daughter of H.W.E. Stauch, (1984)
  3. Unless specifically otherwise indicated, the general information concerning the Bauhaus and Johannes Itten contained in this chapter is from Wingler (1969), Naylor (1968), Neumann (1970), Gropius (1959).

able in the relationships of its forms. The Bauhaus was developed to meet that need.

### 3.2.1 The Bauhaus

According to Gropius the Bauhaus did not pretend to be a crafts school. Contact with industry was consciously sought, and a closer approach between craftsmanship and industry.

Johannes Itten joined the Bauhaus at its inception in 1919 on the invitation of Gropius. During the previous year in Vienna he had been teaching according to a system which he had developed and which at the Bauhaus was expanded into the "Vorkurs" - a preliminary course which was to spread and to influence the teaching of art and architecture throughout the world.

The architectural course at the Bauhaus was provided only to those students who had completed this preliminary introductory course and graduated to the workshops for practice and instruction in the study of form. Within the Bauhaus, training consisted of experience in the Research Department as well as with actual buildings under construction, providing students with contact with all the building trades - and with the opportunity of earning a living (Gropius, 1959, p 51).

Since the Bauhaus did not provide advanced courses in engineering, physics, statics, mechanics, heating, plumbing and similar technologies, the students were directed to appropriately selected technical and engineering schools.

### 3.2.2 Johannes Itten

Itten's total involvement with the Mazdaznan philosophical movement with its headquarters in Herrliberg and his strict application of the Mazdaznan tenets, affected many aspects of life and teaching at the Bauhaus; from the strictly vegetarian and spartan catering to regular periods of meditation and the rejection of conventional dress.

He was a person who evoked strong emotions, whether of love or of hate. His teaching of the Vorkurs gave the students an emotional, spiritual and intellectual understanding of line, form, colour, texture and composition and a depth of involvement that was near to discipleship. He was a strong and influential personality and a teacher in the true sense of the word. A strength of his was the recognition and development of individual tendencies and talents. The group of enthusiastic teachers





and students who surrounded him would not lend themselves to simplification. They were art enthusiasts, and so they would remain (Wingler, 1969, p 51). Marianne Krafft/Stauch, was a pupil of Itten from 1924 to 1929. When she was interviewed in 1984, aged 78, nearly blind and deprived of contact with her beloved painting, she said of him, her face radiant and serene, "in art, Johannes Itten set us free!"

### 3.2.3 Conflict

But a conflict was coming to a head. Modern technology was developing increasingly fast and contact with industry was becoming more important than Itten's gentle philosophy of a mystic communion with matter. While Gropius urged his students towards reality, Itten's students sought to transcend reality and found themselves in conflict with Gropius' stated aims. In 1922 Gropius sent a circular to the staff in which he highlighted some of the differences between himself and Itten stating "Recently, Master Itten demanded from us a decision either to produce individual pieces of work in complete contrast to the economically oriented outside world or to seek contact with industry. It is here, in this method of formulating the question I believe, that the big unknown that needs to be solved is hidden. Let me at once clarify this: I seek unity in the fusion, not in the separation of these ways of life" and again "Some of our Bauhaus members subscribe to a kind of misunderstood 'return to nature' doctrine of Rosseau's." (Wingler, 1969, p 51).

At this time, in 1921, Theo van Doesburg arrived in Weimar and finding the Bauhaus strongly dominated by Itten, whose approach he disliked intensely, the following year he set up a rival course there. This spurred Gropius on to reorganise some of his courses and to appoint new staff. Rather than dismissing Itten, and in order to retain the highly regarded Vorkurs, he restricted Itten's influence in the workshops by making administrative changes. When Kandinsky was appointed in 1922 he added his weight to that of Klee, and together they tended to counteract Itten's iconoclasm (Naylor, 1968, p 76)

Under these constraints, in the spring of 1923, Itten left the Bauhaus. The circumstances of this parting of the ways are not totally clear. Gerhard Marcks stated curtly "for Itten, Schlemmer and myself, it meant our leaving. Since then I have had nothing more to do with the Bauhaus." (Neumann, 1970, pp 74, 75). Paul Citroen, apparently more subjective in approach; said "After his return from Herrliburg", (Itten

had taken several months leave to become initiated into his doctrine), "Itten never again felt quite at home at the Bauhaus. He felt that what was being done there was not worth the effort, compared with what was taking place at Herrliburg. Only there could he see any chance of growth and spiritual enrichment for himself. And so said farewell and left for Switzerland. The loss to us was great ...." (Neumann, 1970, p 50).

Werner Graeft writes "... schisms gradually developed among teachers as well as pupils and in 1928 led to an open break between Itten and Gropius and to a new conception of the Bauhaus." (Neumann, 1970, pp 74, 75).

Walter Dexel wrote "Theo van Doesburg fought an almost futile war against the romantic ideas about handicrafts existing at the Bauhaus in its founding years, and against the doctrines of Johannes Itten, ..." (Neuman, 1970, p 105).

Georg Mucbe, more objectively, stated; "Johannes Itten's teaching of creativity went beyond the aims of Gropius. These would have been weakened if neither of them had given in. Itten yielded and left ..." (Neuman, 1970, p 204).

And T. Lux Feiniger with characteristic clarity, gave what may be the most balanced view. He said; "Gropius' plan was based on his expectations of results coming from the total personality of his collaborators rather than from their opinions. In this light it is interesting to note that the most 'trained' and experienced educator on the staff, Itten, was the least able to submit to the collective plan and left the Bauhaus early." (Neumann, 1970, pp 178, 179).

### 3.3 The Ittenschule

According to Wingler, from 1923 to 1926 Itten was in Zurich, and from 1926 to 1931 he directed his own art school in Berlin (Wingler, 1969, p 253). (According to the Ittenschule records, these dates were 1926 to 1934).

However, Marianne Krafft/Stauch states that she was Johannes Itten's first student, at the outset one of only four, whom he taught in rooms in Berlin in 1924 and 1925 prior to his formally opening the art school in 1927, once he had sufficient students.

While no documentary evidence directly concerning Itten and his school during 1924 and 1925 has yet been found, Mrs Krafft has given sufficient supporting data for this information to be accepted as correct. This casts an interesting sidelight on Itten's motivation and actions after leaving the Bauhaus.



### 3.4 Stauch's probable motives in his statement to the Institute

It is not unlikely that Itten was, if not embittered or humiliated, at least disappointed by his most recent experiences at the Bauhaus and that this conveyed itself to his students. Under these circumstances his students might well regard Itten's teachings as being closer to the original aims and direction of the Bauhaus than the Bauhaus now was itself. A young graduate, in another country might find it difficult, if not impossible, to explain the circumstances of his training. The Bauhaus was well-known, the Ittenschule was not. And the statement that the Ittenschule was "a branch of the Bauhaus" was in a philosophic sense if not in a legal one true enough and avoided lengthy explanations. (figs. 2 to 16).

### 3.5 Stauch's Student Work

Marianne was a dedicated and enthusiastic student and has described the Vorkurs used by Itten from 1924 to 1928 which was mandatory, as it had been at the Bauhaus, and which Itten apparently retained with little or no change in character from that which he had developed for use there. <sup>(4)</sup>

According to her detailed description, it was a carefully graded introduction to a sensitive appreciation of line, form, colour, texture and rhythm. Analytical studies of the Old Masters were carried out in the same way as they had been in Weimar. And as the school expanded into more specialised fields the students were directed to the appropriate sources of technical training, just as had been the case with the Bauhaus. In the case of the young Stauch, this technical training was obtained at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin. <sup>(5)</sup>

Stauch's work bears close comparison with the work of other students at the Bauhaus, published in Wingler's book.

### 3.6 The stay at Arosa

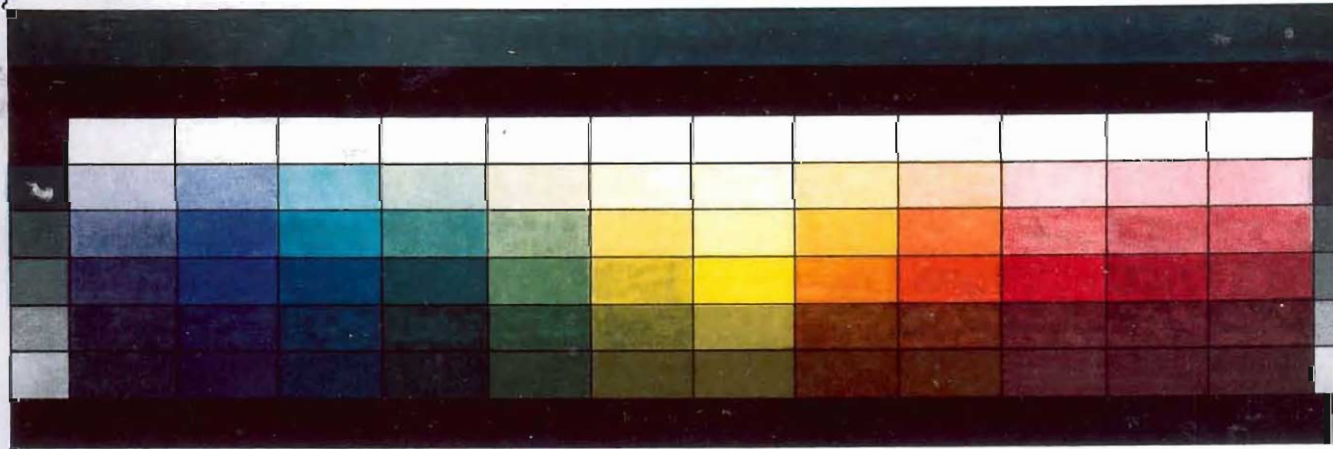
Marianne and Stauch followed Itten's teachings in every way, including that of a sparse and probably inadequate diet, interspersed with occasional fasts. Towards the end of 1926, both young people developed tuberculosis and were sent to a sanatorium at Arosa for treatment.

The stay at Arosa was not quite a complete holiday; Stauch acquired

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4. Krafft, Mrs Marianne, Sister of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.

5. Ibid



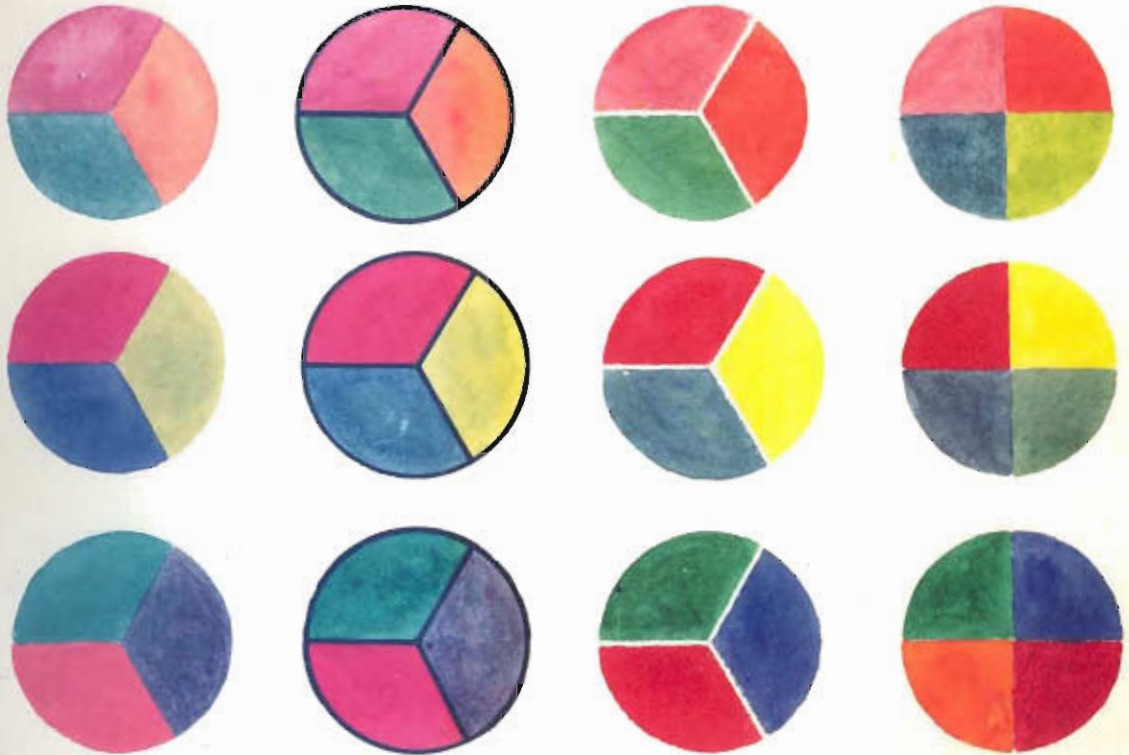
## Farbenkugel

in 7 Lichtstufen und 12 Tönen

von Johannes Itten

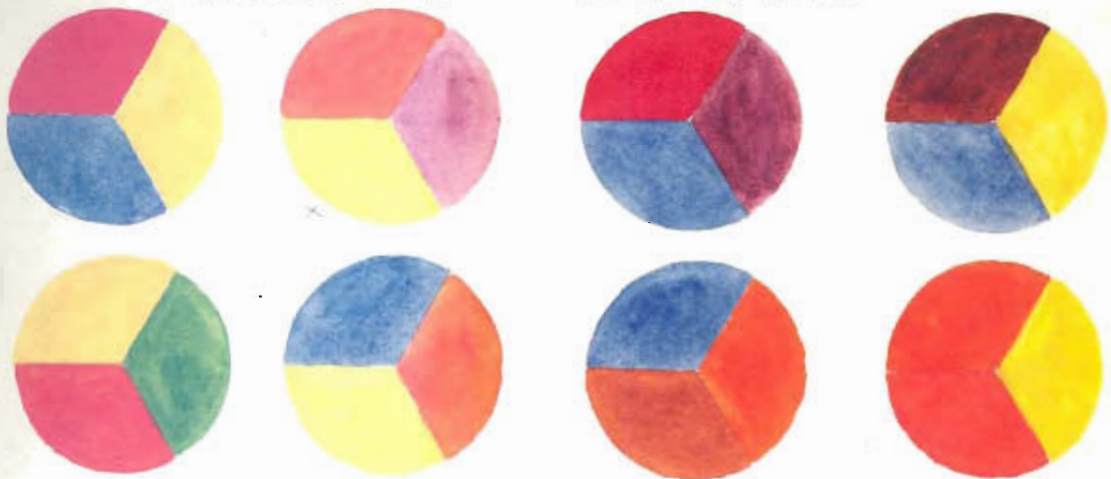
FIG. 2 Colour chart used for the "Vorkurs" This chart was developed by Johannes Itten and used in his "Vorkurs" both at the Bauhaus and at the Itten Schule. The original of this print was the full-colour card used by Stauch as a student.

GESETZMÄSSIGE DREI KLÄNGE



SUBJEKTIVE

DREI KLÄNGE



MELIM. STAUCH  
1927

FIG. 3 Colour studies by Stauch (1927). These, too, were a standard part of Itten's Vorkurs.

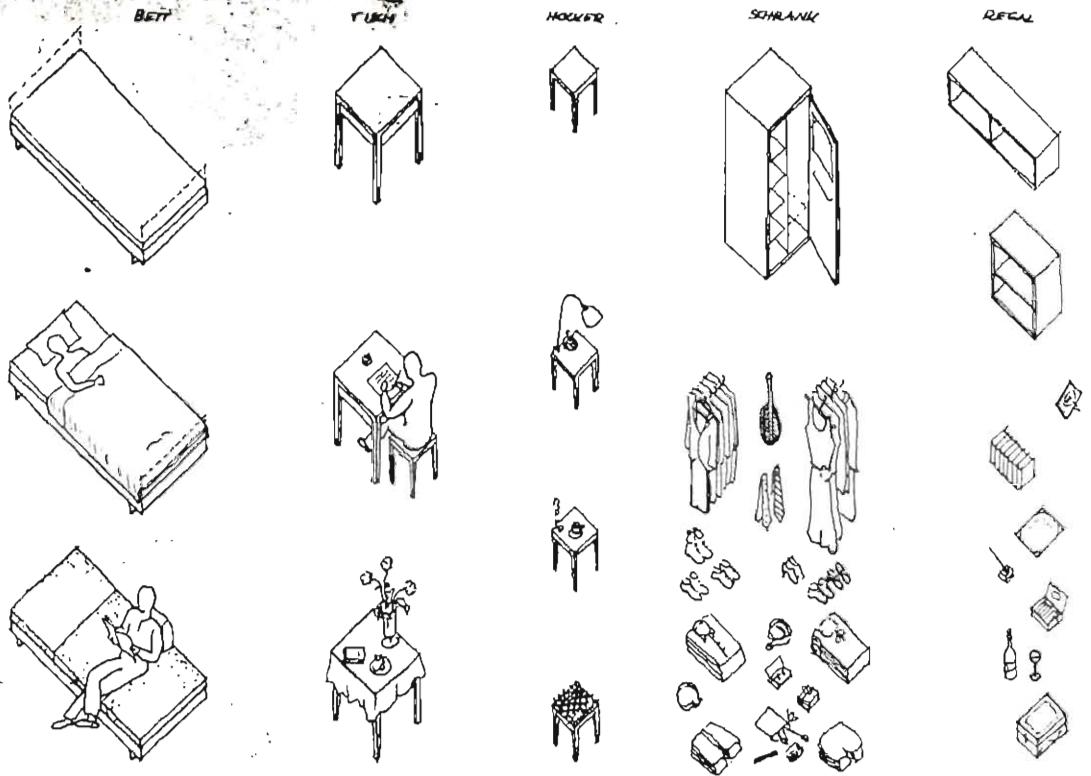
MINDESTBEDARF  
FÖR 1 PERSON:

FIG. 5 Studies in minimum personal requirements by Stauch (above) through which he concluded that it was practical to live in a "2x2x2 metre" space - and proceeded to do so for two years, as he stated in his paper at the 1969 Stauch Vorster seminar. Compare with "minimal dwelling", (Gropius (1959) p 109), where a similar concept is expressed in a tongue-in-cheek illustration.

ZIMMER FÜR 2 PERSONEN

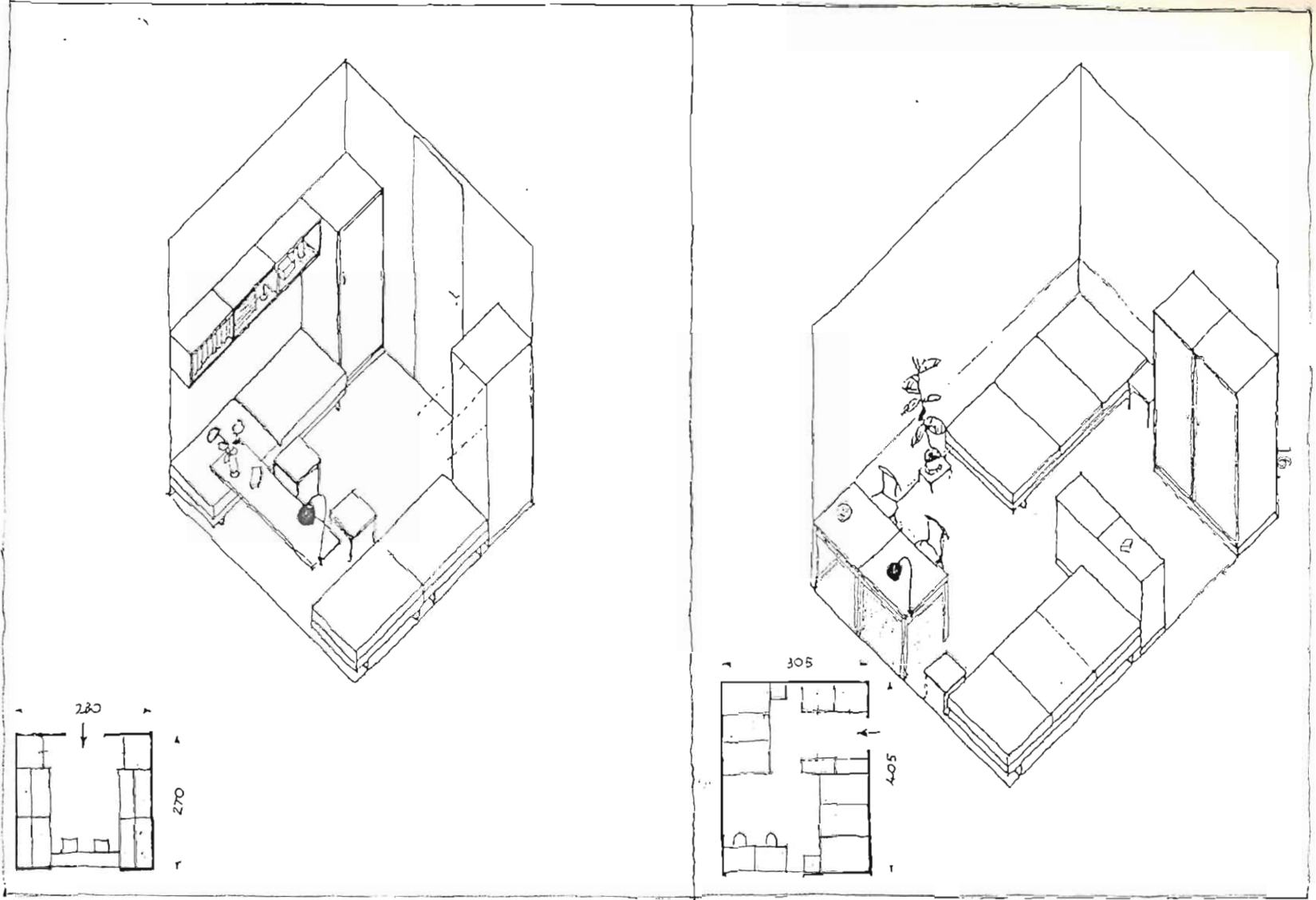


FIG. 6 Space study of room for 2 persons - a development of the "minimal space" concept.

ZIMMER FÜR ELTERN

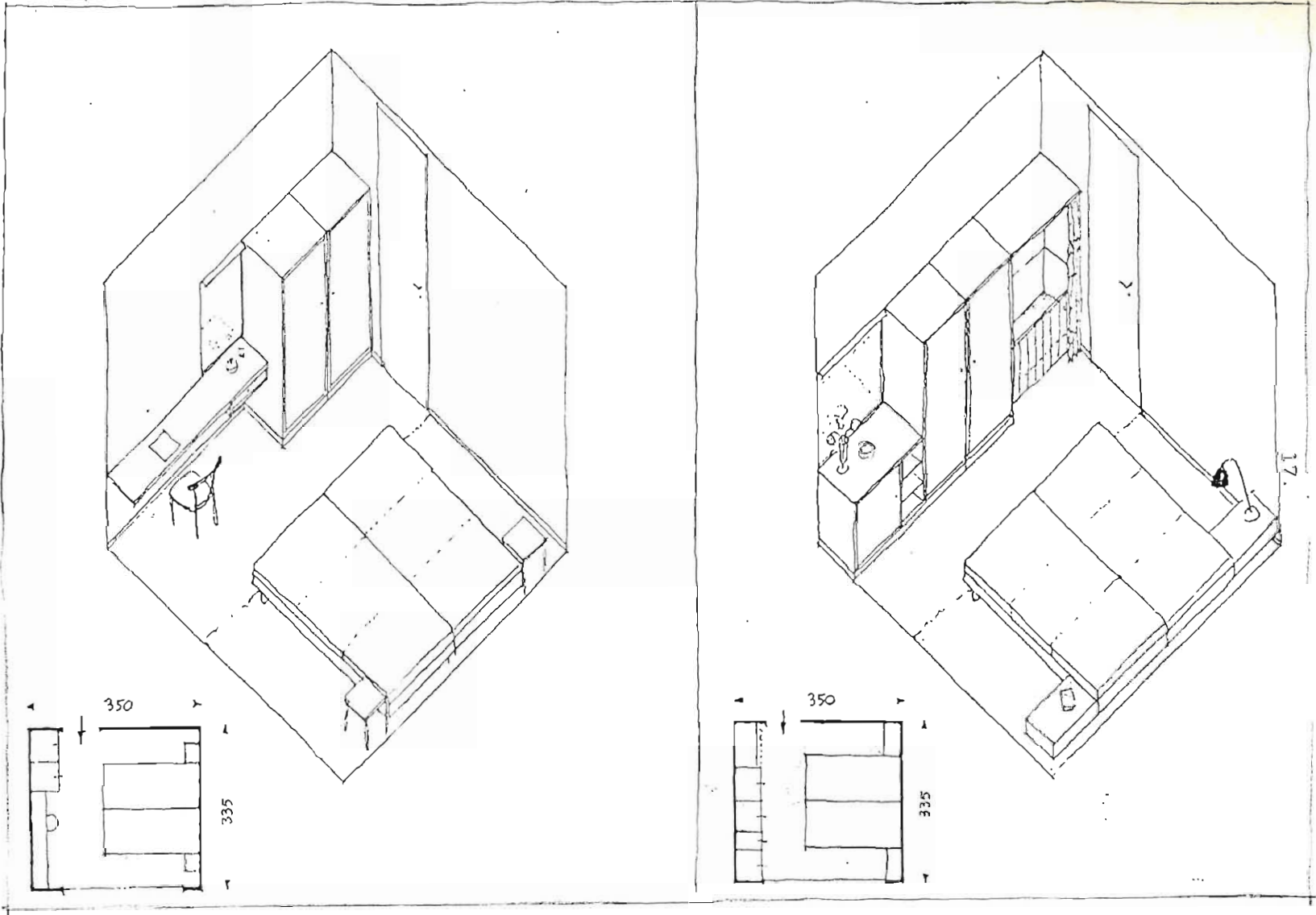


FIG. 7 Space study of room for parents - a similar development of the "minimal space" concept.



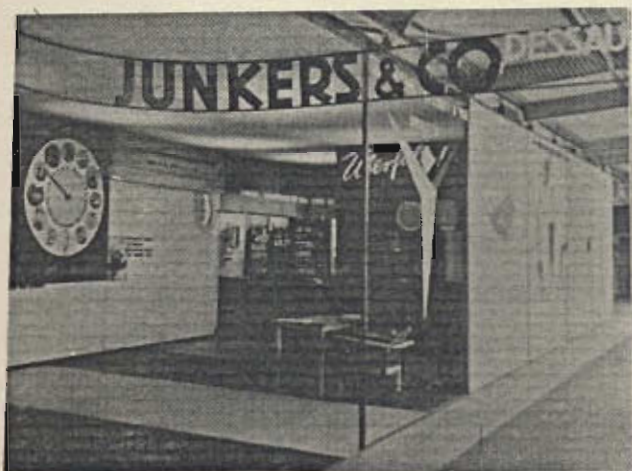
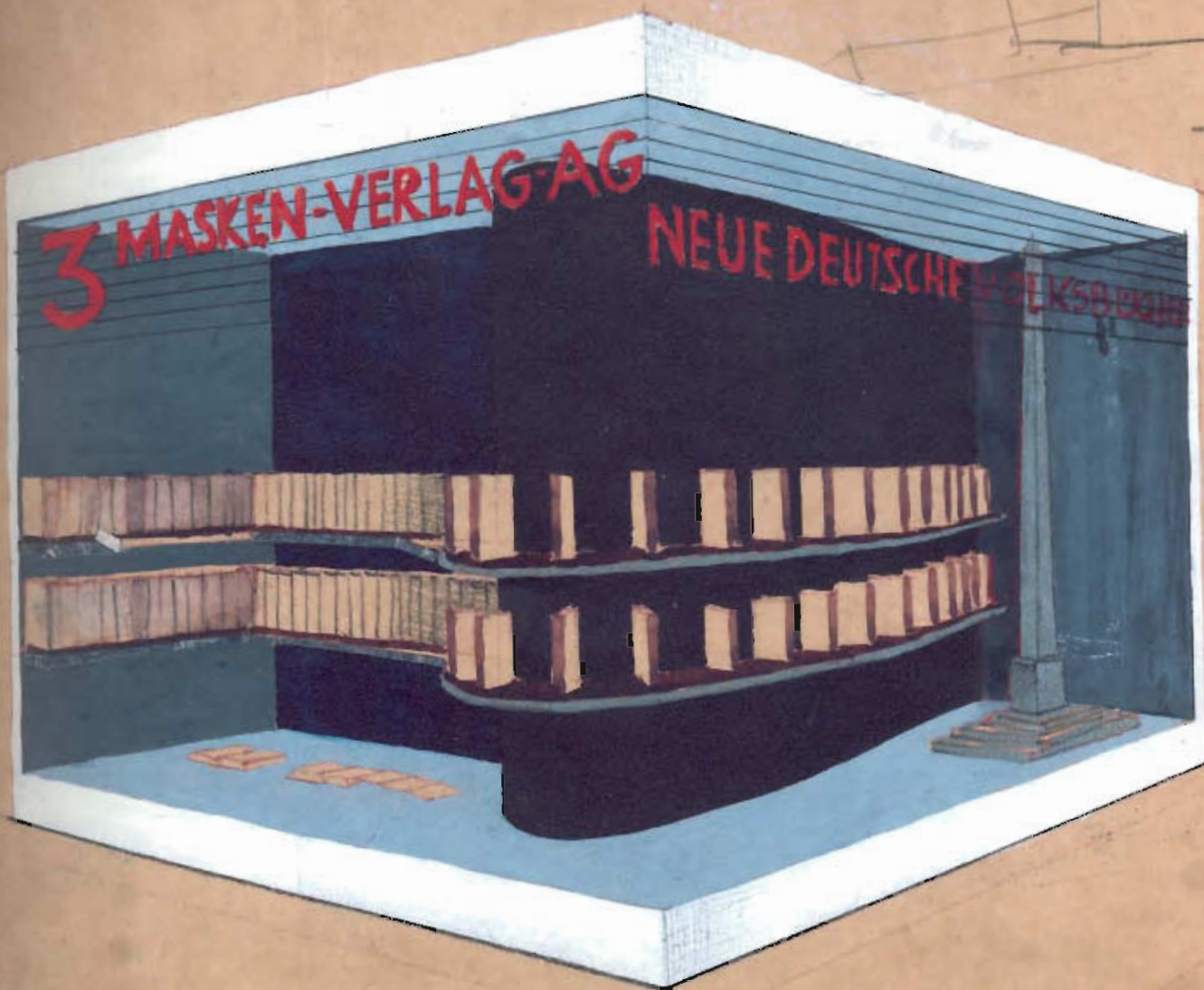


FIG. 8 Design for an exhibition stand. A colour study of an undated project of Stauch (above) and a similar student project carried out at the Bauhaus (Wingler 1969, p 512)

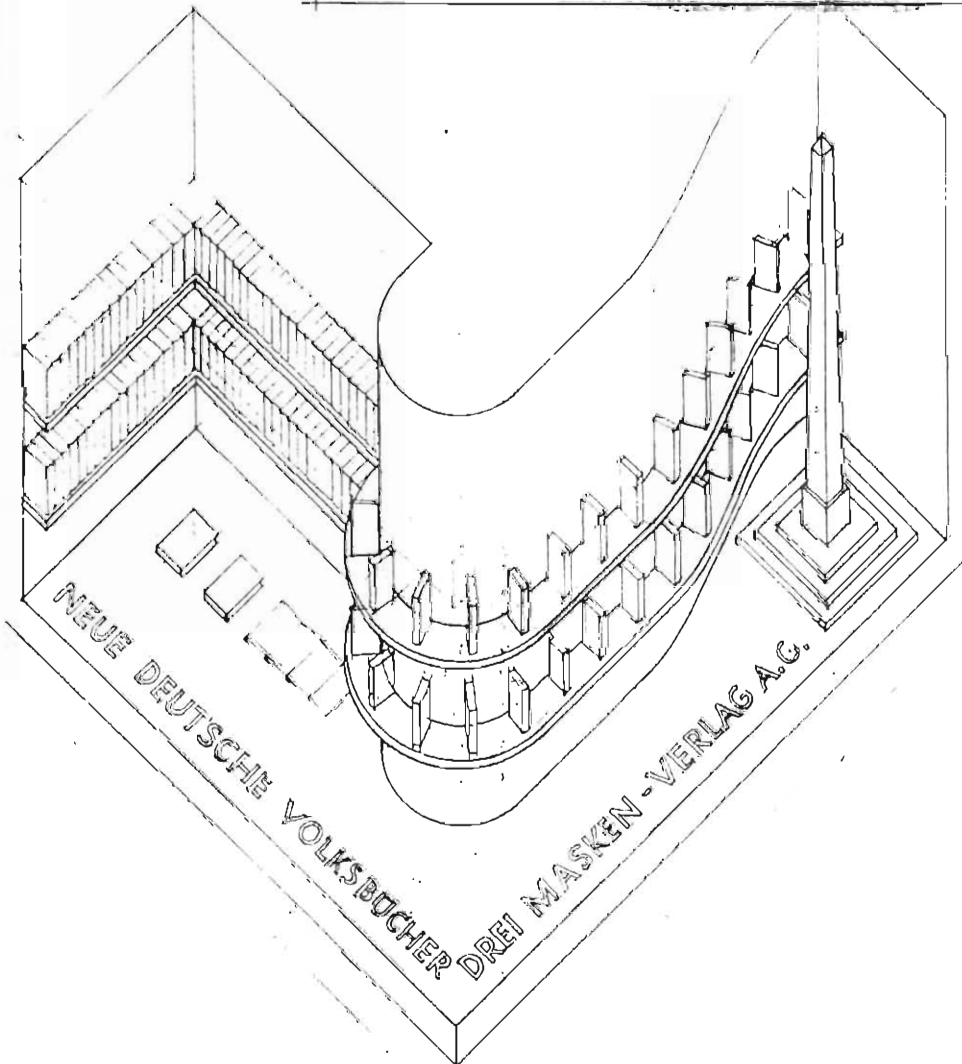
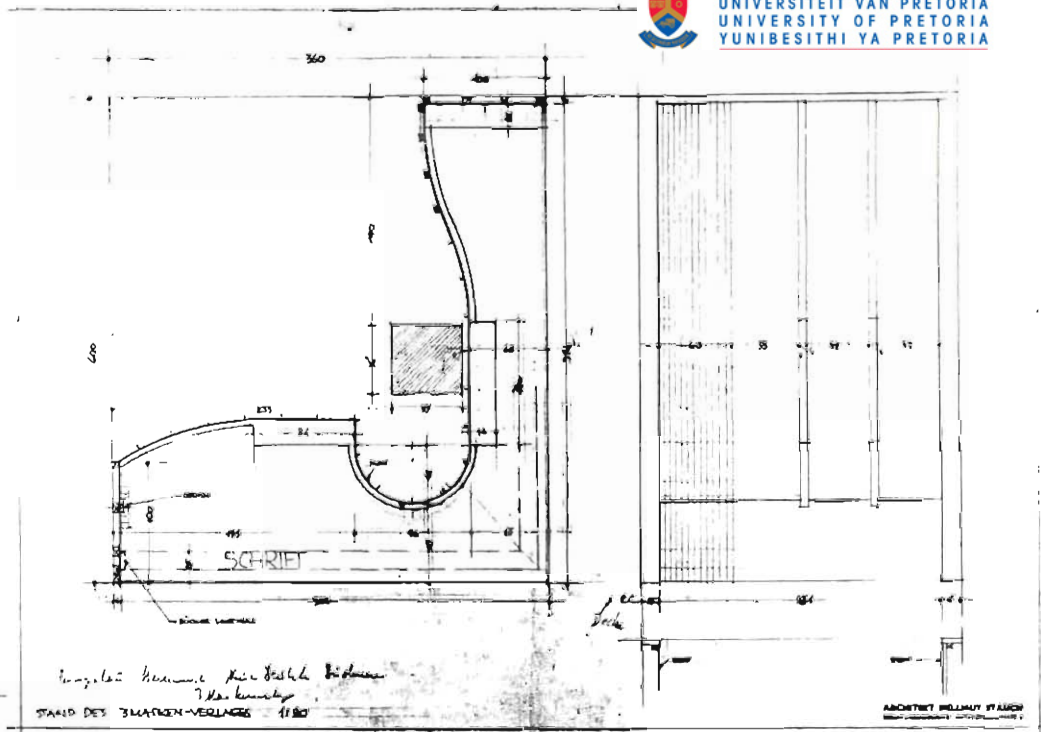


FIG. 9 Design for an exhibition stand. Preparatory line diagram for the colour study shown in fig. 8.

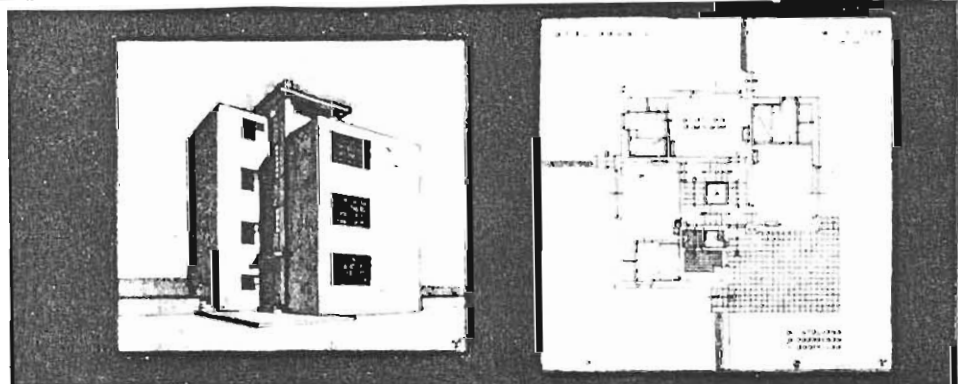
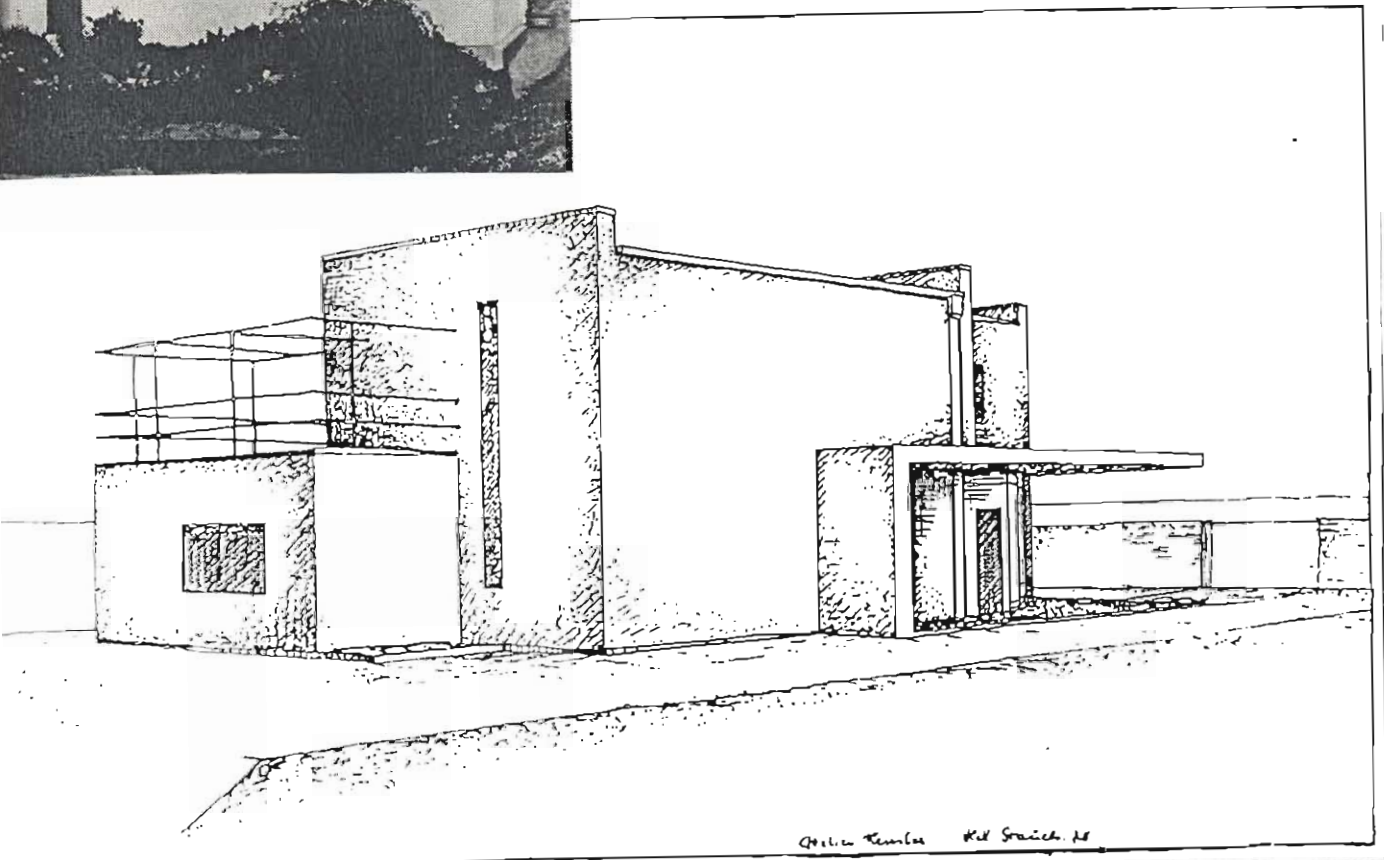


FIG. 10 Student designs of houses. The centre illustration is of his first commission - a studio for a sculptor, A Hensler, at Wiesbaden, designed while Stauch was at Arosa in January, 1928; the other illustrations are of Bauhaus projects Wingler (1969, p 500) and Gropius (1959, p 73).

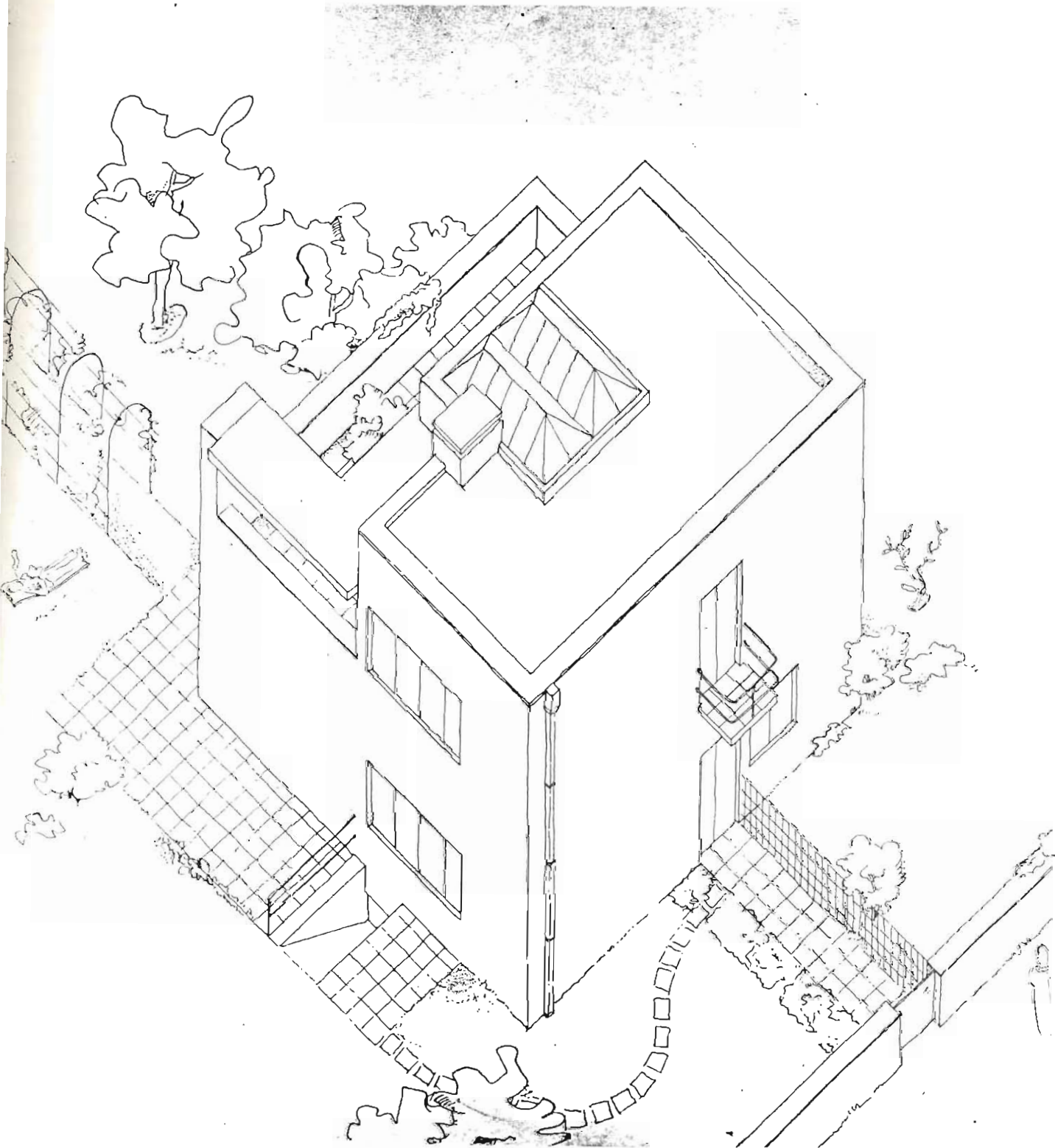


FIG. 11 A design of a house by Stauch as a student. (Compare this also with the illustrations in fig. 10)

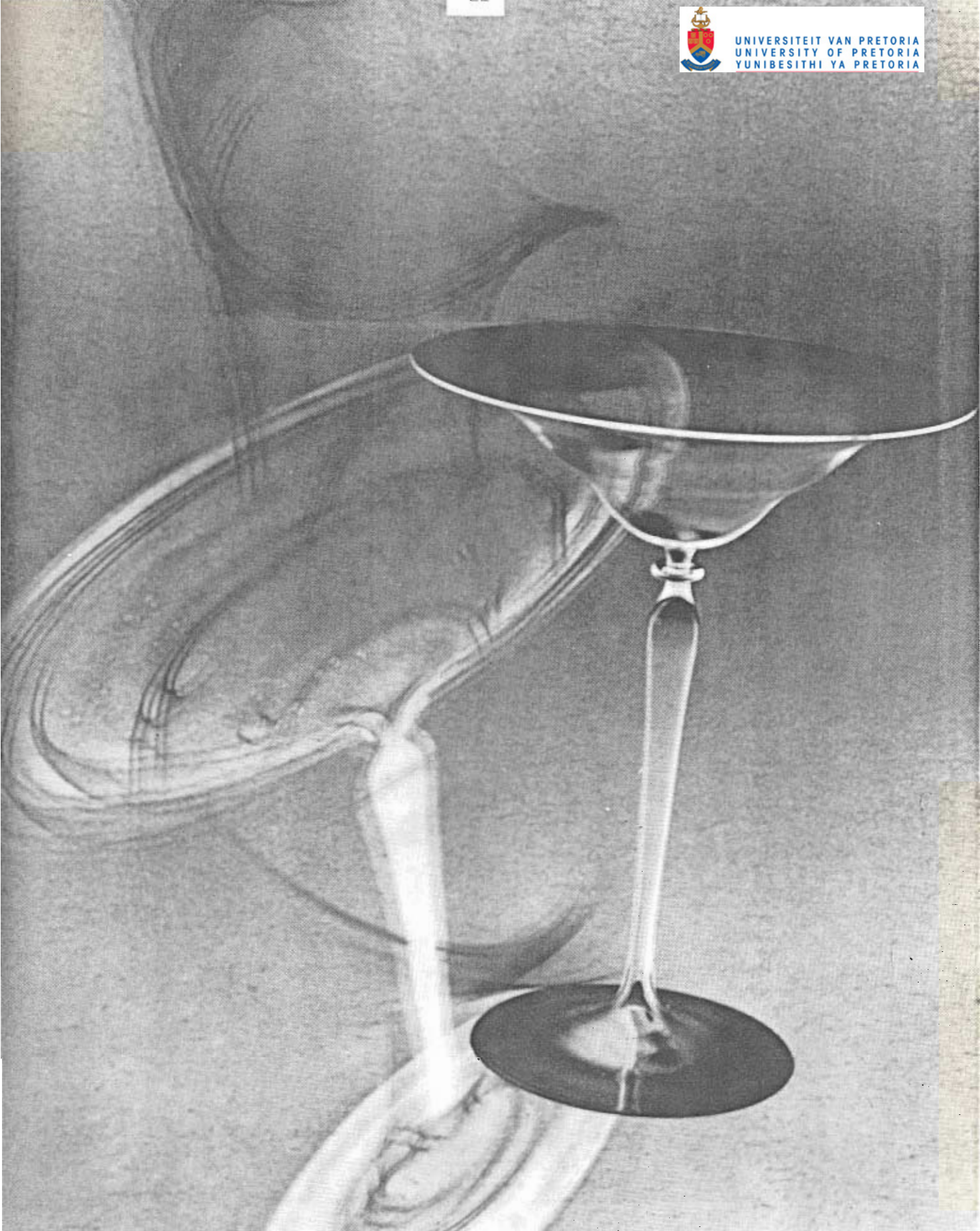


FIG. 12 Photographic study by a Bauhaus student (Wingler 1969, p 499)

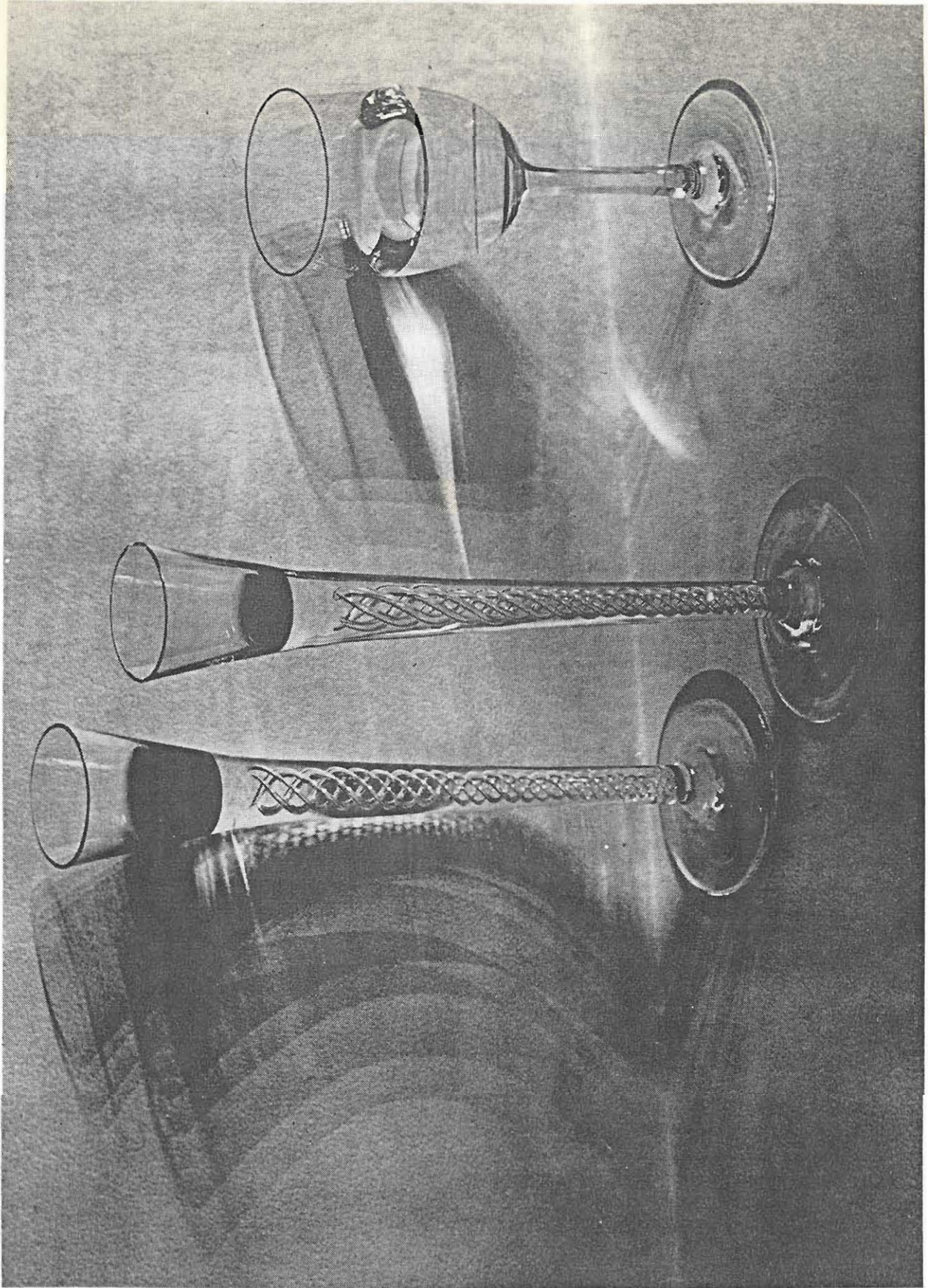


FIG. 13 Photographic study by Stauch as a student. (Compare this with the study in fig. 12)

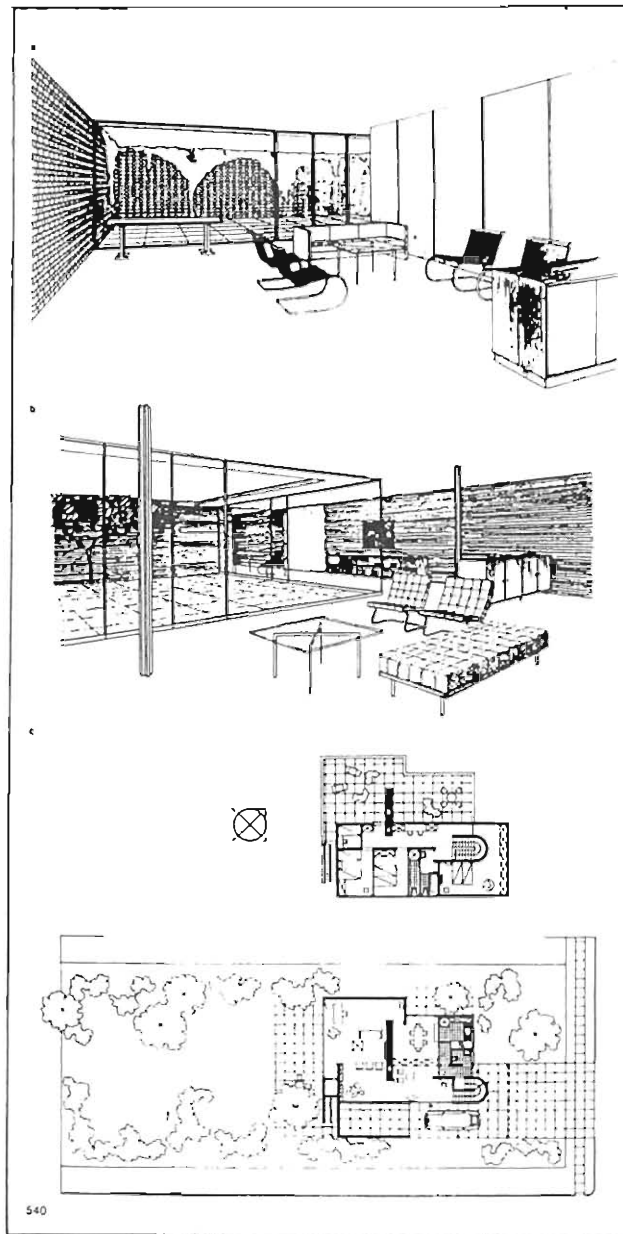
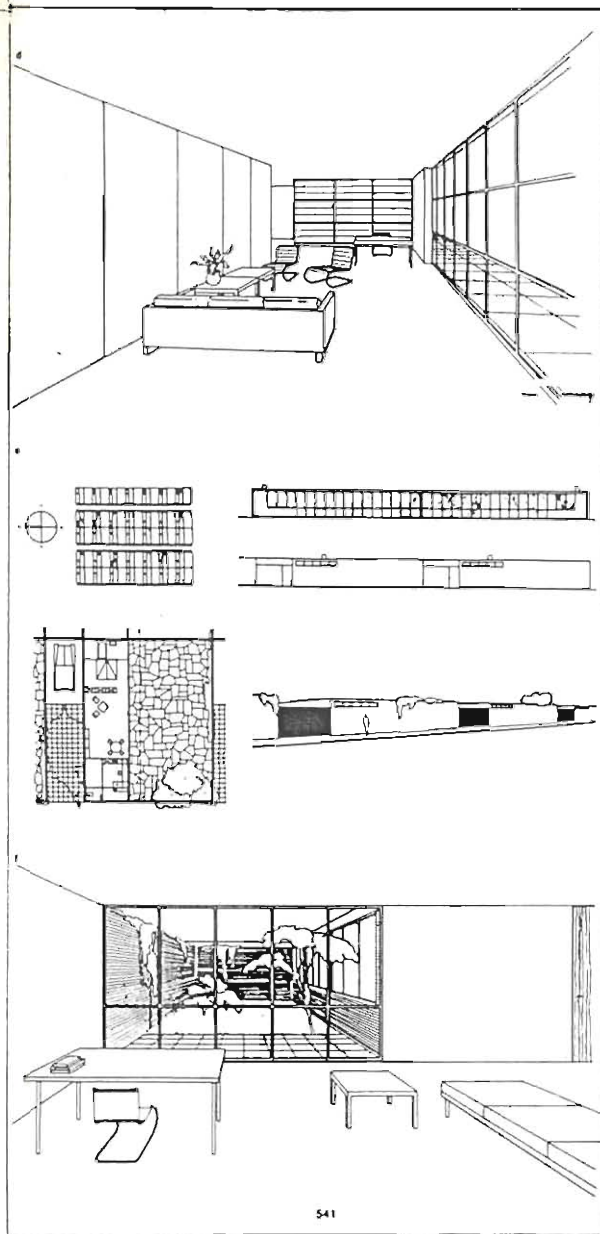


Fig. 14 Presentation technique used at the Bauhaus (Wingler (1969, pp 540, 541))

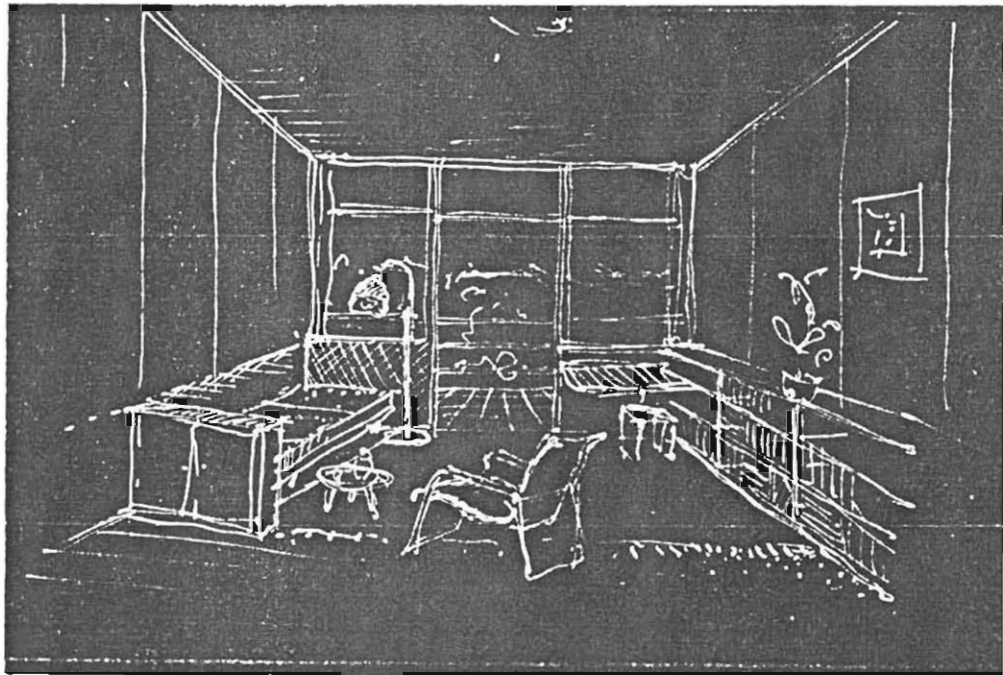
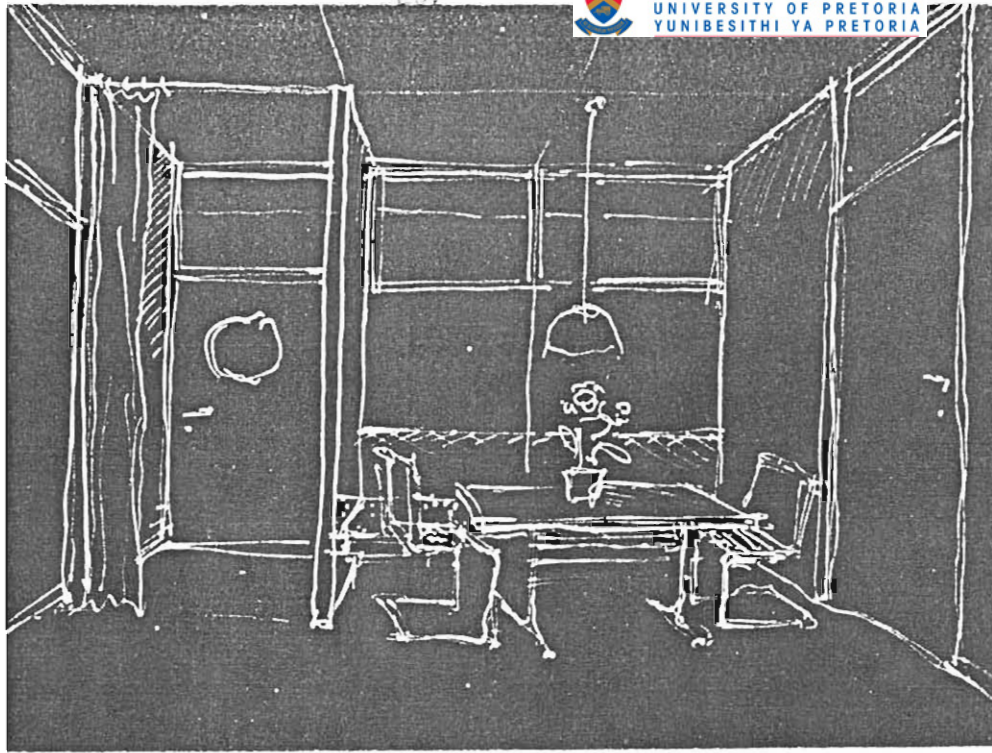


FIG. 15 Presentation technique of Stauch. Although the technique in the blueprint illustrated here is rougher in character it reflects much of the same background technique as that in fig. 14.



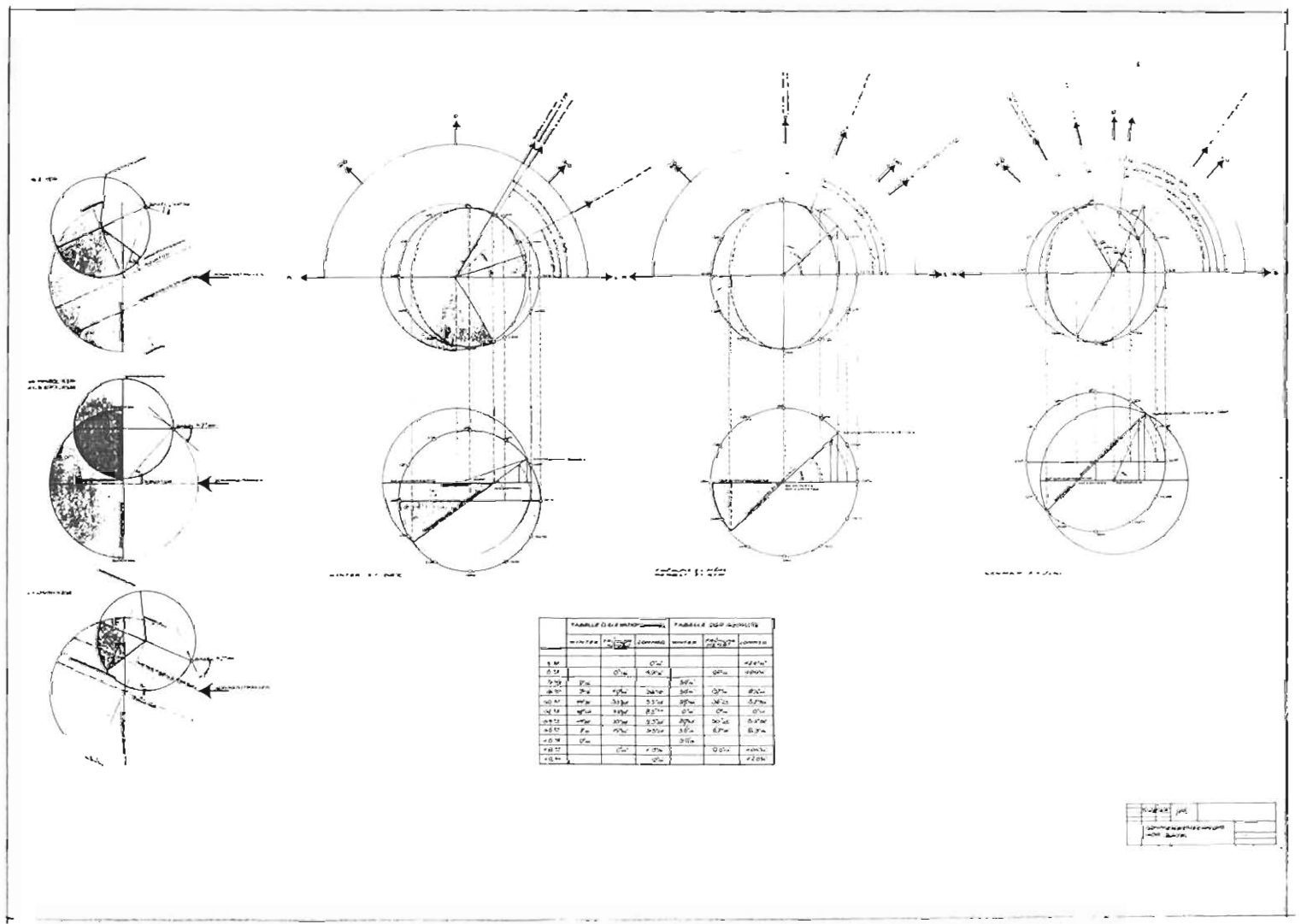


FIG. 16 Sun Angle Studies. Dated November 1929, this was some of the last of his student work.

books and continued his studies there, as the inscriptions in well-thumbed copies of several text-books on building construction, now in library of his step-daughter, Mrs T. Vorster, with dates and notes attests. Marianne, too, was well occupied. She met in Arosa a charming young man, Nikolai Krafft, whom she was later to marry.

August returned to Germany, as was his custom, at the end of the year. He paid a visit to his children at Arosa. He had decided that Ida should move permanently to South West Africa, and that their home at Zehlendorf would have to be sold. Ida reluctantly packed up her personal belongings, the household furniture and silverware was crated to be sent to South West Africa, and a flat was found in Nikolaussee, for the use of Stauch and Marianne (Levinson, 1983, pp 137 and 140). Before returning to her studies, Marianne took a holiday in South West Africa with her parents, returning to Berlin still unaware of her father's precarious financial position as indeed he himself was, while Hellmut continued studying. Fortunately there was no rigid timetable at the Ittenschule and the occasional interruption of studies was not a great handicap.

### 3.7 Financial support ends

In 1929 their peace was shattered by the unexpected message that there would be "no more pocket money from now on." They were shaken, uncertain as to what had happened, and reluctant to halt their training.<sup>(6)</sup> In South West Africa, August's affairs had taken a turn for the worse. His estate was sold up, piecemeal, from 1930 to 1933 with the exception of the farm Dordabis, which he managed to retain with the assistance of a full loan from a leading local bank (Levinson, 1963, p 140). An old friend, Dr. Lübbert, kept Stauch and Marianne supplied with sufficient pocket money to enable them to complete their studies. Ida, with her usual serene self-sufficiency eventually repaid this loan from the proceeds of her small flock of karakul sheep.<sup>(7)</sup>

The effect of the bankruptcy of their father must have been devastating to the two young people, raised in luxury and never wanting for anything. Marianne had a modicum of her mother's serenity, was engaged to be married and was looking forward to a pleasant change of life-style, so she accepted the blow with relative calm.<sup>(8)</sup> But Stauch, judging by his later reactions, may have been deeply and permanently affected, his security shattered and money suddenly becoming something important, perhaps because of its scarcity.

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6. Ibid

7. Ibid

8. Ibid