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On The Delight of the Yearner:
Ernst May and Erica Mann in Nairobi, Kenya, 1933–1953

In January of 1945, the émigré German architect Ernst May was busy refining a new kind of modular housing architecture for use in the growing East African cities of Kampala and Nairobi. These homes were intended only for native Africans, and were designed to be cheap, easy to construct, expandable and adaptable. Self-sufficiency, independent home ownership, and modern construction methods were all hallmarks of the ideology May had brought with him from Weimar Frankfurt to British East Africa. He had by then been living there for eleven years.

From 1925–1929, following a term building farming villages in Silesia, May was appointed Frankfurt's chief architect, and oversaw the construction of more than 10,000 public housing units in planned, satellite communities around the central city. May hired his leading colleagues to help enact his vast and complex plans, including Walter Gropius, Mart Stam, Martin Elsaesser, Emil Kaufmann, Max Taut, and Leberecht Migge.

But in 1930, with the city's budget eviscerated by the Depression, May left Frankfurt for a new commission to build mining cities in the Soviet countryside, taking a number of collaborators with him. But the conditions of that project also proved difficult and dispiriting: by 1933, May was labeled a foreigner and a capitalist in Russia, but denounced as a Bolshevnik in Germany. He was effectively stateless. In frustration, he renounced architecture altogether and decided to withdraw to the wilds of Africa to recuperate his spirits.¹

¹ Kai K. Gutschow, 'Das Neue Afrika: Ernst May's 1947 Kampala Plan as Cultural Program', in Fassil Demissie ed., *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa: Intertwined and Contested*



III. 1 Ernst May's City House, Kampala, C-Print, 28 x 35cm, 2008

With his family in tow, May sailed from Genoa to the coastal city of Mombasa in the final days of 1933. Long an enthusiastic gardener, May purchased a 160 acre coffee plantation in the village of Arusha in the mountain highlands surrounding Kilimanjaro, in what is today Tanzania, where an ethnically German population remained from the previous colony. He immediately set about tearing down the few existing structures on the new property and re-planning it in the manner of his own Silesian farming villages. He singlehandedly built a miniaturized Germanic landscape: he surveyed the land, brought in wood and stone, constructed irrigation pipelines, and housing infrastructure for his growing workforce. He raised sheep and cattle, and grew rye, corn, vegetables, fruit trees, and coffee. In a letter to his friend Martin Wagner, dated October 20th, 1935, May claimed that he had created “my own third Reich”.²

May's decision to remove himself from the European scene of architecture is a complex one. Surely farming was a respite from the political realities of urban planning, though his obsessive farm architecture was an exercise in those same possibilities for control. It is clear that May truly enjoyed gardening, and perhaps moved to Africa, at least initially, in an honest attempt to become a gentleman

Histories (London: Ashgate, 2009, editor's proof, in press). I am indebted to conversations with Prof. Gutschow and Prof. Susan Henderson, both of whom offered this project enthusiastic support.

² Ibid. Gutschow finds this in a letter in the Gropius-Nachlass, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

farmer. But May was also seduced by the frontier myth of Africa – that it was uncorrupted by modernity and politics, a clean slate on which to reckon with his faith in technology away from the catastrophe in Europe.³ Besides, an ideology of universalism was already attached to modern architecture by the time he left: it was supposed to work everywhere, and for everyone.

After three years of farming, his spirits were rested, and once again restless: he sold the farm and moved his family to Nairobi in 1937 to re-establish his practice. His first major projects from this time still resonated with the aesthetics of the New Frankfurt. In 1938 he built a small shopping plaza in downtown Kampala called the City House, for the prominent Goan businessman Norman Godinho, a building which borrowed many of its design tropes from the Siedlung Römerstadt in Frankfurt (Ill. 1). That same year, under the patronage of the British colonist Sir Derek Erskine, he drew plans for an apartment complex aimed at middle-income European settlers who yearned for Modernist design. May essentially borrowed his own Frankfurt blueprints for this project, reformulating his mass-housing designs into a simplified cluster of nine three-story apartment buildings. Sited on a small hill near downtown Nairobi, they would eventually become known as the Delamere Flats, though they were not actually constructed until some years after the war (Ill. 2, 3).

In April of 1940, after a return to architecture that included these shopping plazas, some industrial buildings, and a number of private homes, May was abruptly interned in a mass round-up of all the colony's German residents, now considered enemy aliens. He spent most of the next two years in a British prison camp called Ganspan, near Andalusia, South Africa. Intellectually restless, he read books and elaborated his theoretical framework for future projects, as he still had vast ambitions for African planning work. Fighting the Nazi regime, for May, meant helping the British build more effective colonial cities. He corresponded with many friends and colleagues, including Walter Gropius and Martin Wagner, who were then both at Harvard, and the American urban planner and theorist Lewis Mumford (► see the essay of Konstanze Sylva Domhardt in this book), but none could secure him an American professorship.⁴ Ultimately, due to support from a few prominent British figures, May was released in the spring of 1942 and returned to Nairobi.

In the wake of his release, he turned his attention to the questions of large-scale social housing, seeing in this moment a continuation of his earlier projects in Breslau and Frankfurt. Reviving his technical ideas from that period, May tested prefabricated pieces, simple methods of construction, and locally available materials.⁵ By the early weeks of 1945, he had been granted his first large-scale

³ Author's notes from personal conversation with Kai Gutschow, Pittsburgh, PA, July 2010.

⁴ Gutschow, 'Das Neue Afrika', p. 5.

⁵ Eckhard Herrel, *Ernst May: Architekt und Stadtplaner in Afrika 1934–1953* (Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt am Main, Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2001). See chapter on the



Ill. 2 Delamere Flats Apartment Complex, Building H, designed by Ernst May in Nairobi, 1951, C-Print, 51 x 61cm, 2008



Ill. 3 Delamere Flats Apartment Complex, Building G, designed by Ernst May in Nairobi, 1951, C-Print, 51 x 61cm, 2008

public commission since leaving Germany: a redesign of Kampala, whose large populations of Indians, Africans, and Europeans posed a special challenge, as May felt that each racial and social group would have distinct housing needs.

In a letter to Lewis Mumford on June 16th, he summarized some of his new plans:

“Dear Mumford, Recently the Uganda government entrusted me with the working out of a town planning scheme for the Uganda capital, Kampala. This job was in so far most interesting as I had not only to accommodate Europeans, Asiatics and Africans in one township, doing justice to the special requirements of every community, but also because I had to find modern ways for housing natives. So far all designs for African housing were but copies of European small holdings. No effort had been made to develop types of houses to meet the psychology of advanced natives. I think I found a solution by the designing of houses which adhere to the curved shape with regard to the outer appearance of the structures while the method of production is based on the lines of pre-manufacturing the house units.”⁶

The Native House for Concrete Pre-Manufacture, as May called it, was to be a simple, low-cost way for colonial Africans to purchase their own homes. It was a one-room structure made by extruding a set of parabolic standards, pinning them together with cross-bracing, and covering the framework with a skin of curved concrete panels. It was an opaque shell of a building, with windows on the two short sides and a door in the center of the long wall. Small architectural models indicate that it was expandable in length and could interlock with other houses in various configurations. May took out a patent on his construction method, which he called “hook-on-slab” architecture.⁷

Aiming to be sensitive to African cultural needs and traditions, May claimed the *Native House* was simply a clean, modern version of the traditional East African grass hut, which he imagined the “native” had always lived in and still desired. By producing a version of something familiar to Africans, but with contemporary materials and methods, May hoped to help acculturate them to European standards of civilization. But the *Native House* stalled in the prototype stage, when the Ugandans to whom he tried to sell these homes rejected his design – in part because the form reminded them too much of their traditional grass huts. They requested instead that he build for them the same housing he was building for the whites.⁸

Native House. This is also discussed in May’s letters to Lewis Mumford (specifically one dated June 16, 1945), archived in Mumford’s papers at the University of Pennsylvania, photographed by the author in fall 2010. Gutschow further elaborates on this idea, placing May’s African work within a clear genealogy of specific forms and techniques that informed his vocabulary throughout his career.

⁶ Letter from May to Lewis Mumford, June 16, 1945. Archived in the Lewis Mumford Papers collection, University of Pennsylvania.

⁷ From *The Architects’ Journal*, June 13, 1946. Reproduced in Herrel, *Ernst May*.

⁸ ‘Der Plan-Athlet’, in *Der Spiegel*, May 4, 1955.

By simultaneously differentiating city neighborhoods architecturally and ethnically, May's logic of cultural difference also presupposed a racial order. The early radicality of his ideas and strategies – once rooted in regenerating a society devastated by war – now slid into service as a social control mechanism. The *Native House* thus sits at the nexus between the utopian impulse of modernist planning and the power hierarchies of the colonialist project. But May's arrogant and paternalistic attitude toward Africans was quite similar to what he had shown both Silesians and Frankfurt's working-class. And indeed, the *Native House* was in many ways similar to the slope-roofed, A-frame housing May had built in Breslau. His sense of social mission often manifested itself as a powerful self-righteousness. Perhaps because of this, May seems to have had little, if any, self-reflexivity about the moral politics of his position as a refugee from one crazed empire and a civil servant in another.

In the fall of 2007, while working at a Nairobi television station, I stumbled upon the seemingly mis-contextualized façade of the Delamere Flats apartment complex. Its bold conjunction of geometric shapes, the arrangement of its blocks into a miniature community, and the elegant typography of its labeling all plainly echo the tropes of the Frankfurt estates, and indeed these buildings are their haunted, lost twin. They were completed in 1951, from plans drawn in 1938, which were themselves based upon earlier plans from around 1929, but here adapted to local climatic and material conditions. The Delamere complex can now be seen as an early expression of “tropical modernism” – the idiom resulting from the contact between European architectural genealogies and the climatic, social, and political parameters of the equatorial state.

The nine buildings face East-West across a hillside, so as to minimize their exposure to the equatorial sun. All the buildings are elevated one story off the ground, both to provide parking spaces and to keep dust out from the units. Windows and doors are often covered or recessed to create pockets of shade, and the cast concrete stairwells are aerated by an open lattice pattern. The original color scheme of the buildings was bright shades of red and pink, in order to hide the accrual of Kenyan dust. It was one of the first residential buildings in Nairobi to deal innovatively with sanitation and waste disposal. Each unit has a trash chute, whose piping to the ground level is hidden inside the central stairwell columns, and each apartment is outfitted with its own version of Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's famed *Frankfurter Küche*, the model of Weimar society's vogue for domestic hygiene, efficiency, and order.

When I visited the Delamere Flats, I met some young residents who lived in Block J, Apartment 332. Hillary, who grew up in Kenya, told me the story of his roommate Eric, who fled the Rwandan genocide as a child and walked to Kenya with his family in 1996. Along the way, he was separated from his mother, who he later heard had found her way back to Rwanda before passing away. Eric was adopted with the help of Hillary's father, and they grew up together as cousins and best friends. In fact, it turns out that much of the Delamere Flats complex is

Ill. 4 *The Delight of the Yearner*
(video still), Single-channel digital video,
2:00", 2008



Ill. 5 *The Delight of the Yearner*
(video still), Single-channel digital video,
2:00", 2008



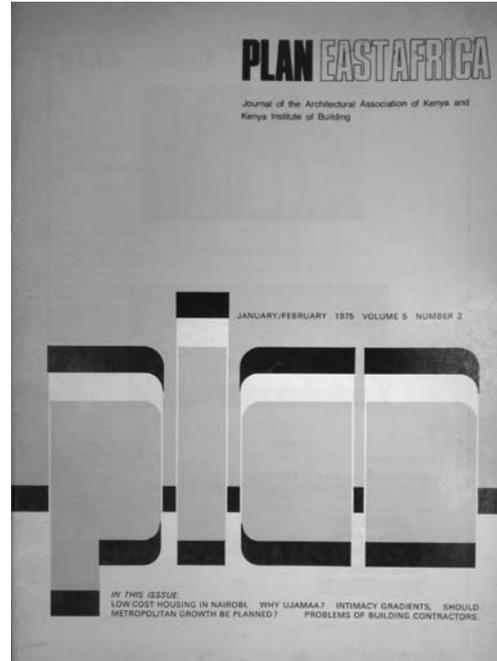
now populated by immigrants from the neighboring East African countries of Rwanda, Burundi, and Somalia, including many who fled their war-torn countries throughout the 1990s, and arrived at the sprawling mega-city of Nairobi. I was able to make a short video project at this site, wherein Hillary narrates the story of Eric's arrival in Kenya, while re-enacting scenes from Ernst May's 1929 promotional film *Die Frankfurter Küche* (Ill. 4, 5). The piece triangulates the resonance between the narrator, the building, and the architect. That May's housing for white settlers is now almost entirely occupied by East African immigrants is a remarkable inversion of history. All three are united by their displacement during war, their forced emigration, and their reconfigured life in exile.

Nairobi today has 3.1 million people. When it was formally designed in 1948, it was projected to have only 250,000 people by 1975. Regional conflict, environmental strain, and unforeseen patterns of migration have swelled its numbers. "The Nairobi you see today is not the Nairobi that we planned,"⁹ wrote the

⁹ Betty Caplan, 'A Woman of Substance', in *The East African*, July 17, 2007. This 2,500-word obituary is the sole long-form piece of writing I could find about the life and career of Erica Mann. I have further specific information about her career from a group of unpublished texts Mann wrote in her post-retirement years, which were given to me by her son Oscar in the late autumn of 2007.



III. 6 *Build Kenya* (January/February 1983)



III. 7 *Plan East Africa* (January/February 1975)

Romanian-born urban planner Erica Mann in the early 1990s, after retiring from some forty years of service as an officer in the town planning department, which had been established by the British in 1946, just a few years after her arrival. One of May's colleagues in the colony, Mann's participation on the city's master plan in 1948 was the first major project of her career.

Erica and her husband Igor had initially fled from Bucharest in 1942, escaping across the Danube into Bulgaria and eventually finding passage on a transport ship to Palestine. Unhappy there, they took an offer to be moved to Northern Rhodesia, but Igor soon found a veterinary job in the Kenya colony, and they finally settled outside Nairobi. Erica had been one semester short of completing her architecture studies at the Académie des Beaux Arts in Paris when she left Europe, and so when she heard the British administration was establishing a Ministry of Towns and Settlements in 1946, she eagerly took up a position there. Erica commuted into Nairobi each day by hitch-hiking, and rapidly established herself as a skillful and committed urban planner in the service of the colonial

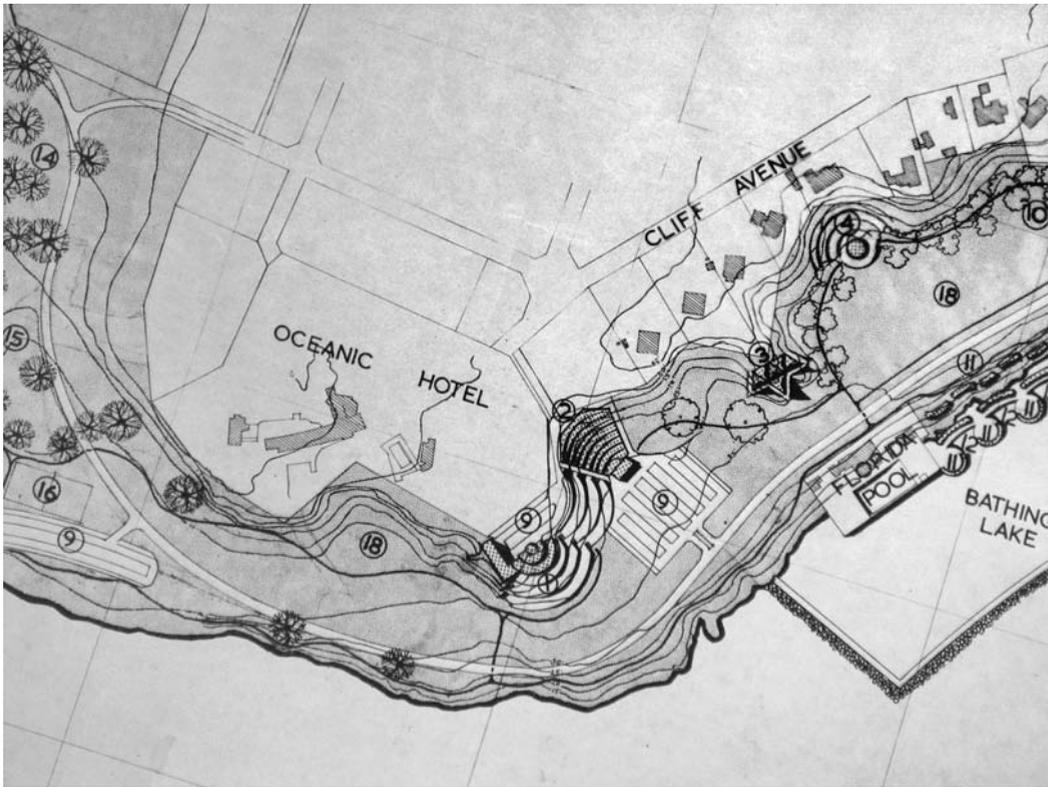
A recorded interview with Oscar provided yet more insights and details about her work. Interviews about Erica were also conducted with Yasmin Shariff (Dennis Sharp Architects, London), and with Lisa Rozsa, the widow of one of Mann's architectural colleagues in Nairobi, Imré Rozsa, best known for designing the Nairobi Synagogue.

authorities, eventually becoming the lead regional planning and development officer for almost every inhabited district of Kenya.¹⁰ Her core responsibilities were in generating the field research and sociological evidence for major decisions: the size and scale of neighborhood units, placements of schools and churches, proportions of housing stock and zoning requirements. She was an active leader in the Kenyan professional community, founding both *Plan East Africa* and its successor *Build Kenya*, the first two architectural magazines in the country (Ill. 6, 7). Through these magazines and her official travels, Mann was in touch with a wide circle of architects, artists, and intellectuals from across the globe. During her five decades in Kenya, her career came to be anchored in a broad web of professional connections that went beyond a network of fellow émigrés (though, indeed, many were). She was close to the British architects and architecture historians Dennis Sharp and Yasmin Shariff, and was an enthusiastic supporter of Doxiadis’s “Ekistics” movement. Through *Plan East Africa* and *Build Kenya*, she advocated for the innovative work of architects and designers like Roberto Burle Marx, Buckminster Fuller, and Paolo Soleri. In her later years, Erica was also close friends with fellow émigré Otto Königsberger, who had fled Berlin in 1933 and gone on to build social housing systems in India, ultimately leaving to work at the Department of Tropical Architecture at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London in 1953. In the mid-1970s, he met Mann while both were working on UN Habitat initiatives, and they became fast friends.¹¹ Her contributions to Kenyan architectural, urban planning, and cultural heritage were only belatedly recognized by the Kenyan establishment, when she was awarded the title of Architect Laureate in 2003, at the age of 86.

In 1952, Mann was involved in the master planning strategy for the coast province that included the city of Mombasa, where Ernst May was in the midst of one of his final Kenyan projects, the Oceanic Hotel. At the home of Erica Mann’s son, I found her site plans for the area, including the grounds of the unfinished hotel (Ill. 8). The Oceanic would go on to become an architectural landmark of the country: a great curving mass of a building, decorated with palm trees and a large outdoor pool. Designed in 1950 but not finished until 1958, the hotel was one of the first major coastal tourist resorts in Africa. Early in its construction, in 1953, May returned to Germany to design social housing blocks in Hamburg, where he finished his career. Roughly fifty years later, having fallen into disrepair, the Oceanic Hotel itself was destroyed to make way for an Aga Khan school, an institution that had once been one of his most prominent clients. I was unable to

¹⁰ Erica Mann’s CV, given to author by Oscar Mann, autumn 2007.

¹¹ From various entries in Mann’s unpublished writings, her CV, and a number of telephone conversations with architect Yasmin Shariff, London, fall of 2010. For more on the life and work of Otto Königsberger, see Vandana Baweja, *A Pre-history of Green Architecture: Otto Koenigsberger and Tropical Architecture, from Princely Mysore to Post-colonial London*, PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2008.



III. 8 Blueprints for site of the Oceanic Hotel, Mombasa, 1951

find a precise date for its demolition when I visited Mombasa, and in fact heard conflicting reports about its existence, as if not everyone was certain that it was gone. When a local driver finally took me there, I found only a vast, squared-off pit in the earth – a precise negative image of its footprint.

In the 1960s, Erica Mann's attentions broadened to questions of human rights and sustainable development, and she took up positions as an international cultural emissary. It is a peculiar cultural reversal that a white, Jewish, immigrant woman, alone in a field dominated by men, came to represent a newly independent African country at dozens of lectures and conferences around the world. Jomo Kenyatta's policies of gradual adjustment and social continuity meant that civil servants like Mann – who, as a self-identified Socialist, was eager to support the Independence movement – stayed in her position under the new government. Starting in 1964, she worked with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to promote Kenya's agricultural development at international trade exhibitions. Igor was by then overseeing major livestock initiatives, and they proudly displayed working models of the new kind of abattoir Erica had designed for his

program. In 1968, her essay outlining the history and projected future of Nairobi's urban growth and housing patterns was published in a special edition of *Ostafrikanische Studien – East African Studies*, through the Friedrich-Alexander University in Nuremberg.¹² Many of the papers she cites in her footnotes were in fact studies that she herself had worked on, as at this point she was a senior officer. She wholeheartedly represented the spirit (if not always the reality) of a new, modern, forward-thinking, multi-cultural Kenya.

After her eventual retirement in 1984, Erica focused on adding to the vast garden of succulent plants she had been cultivating for decades. Though lost when the family property was sold some years ago, Mann's garden was said to have been a unique phenomenon, and – at its prime – the largest private collection of succulent species in Africa.¹³ Traveling across the continent over the course of her decades there, she had collected diverse specimens, grouping together in one plot species which would never be found near each other in nature. Mann had a deep memory for the Latin names of all her plants, and took great pleasure in walking around her garden, which she had designed to be softer in height, proportion, spatial depth and color combinations than the urban neighborhoods that she planned professionally. It is said that botanists from the Kew Botanical Gardens in England, when visiting East Africa, would make trips to Nairobi specifically to study her collection.¹⁴

Though punctuated with some compelling successes, Ernst May's time in Africa was difficult. He arrived in Kenya at the height of his career, and was a gruff and arrogant German now living reluctantly under British rule. Though he spoke fluent English, he was caught between nationalities, aesthetic positions, and political sympathies. A committed civic reformer concerned with the working class, he was now surrounded by the social stratifications of imperialist colonial life, and remained an outsider (and competitor) to the British-dominated community of architects and planners. Though May sought repatriation to Germany immediately after the war's end, he was convinced (by Lewis Mumford, and perhaps others) to stay in Africa until the German political situation had stabilized. By the time he finally returned in 1953, the window of his generation had closed.

Erica Mann, arriving in exile with little more than her education, found a more fluid route to a professional life in Kenya. She adapted to British aesthetics and cultural idioms, and mastered the ethnically-rooted codes that European communities reproduced in exile. This meant, at times, both pandering to British elitism or Germanic *Kultur*, and condescending to newly-arrived emigrant Jews from Eastern European countries. Though she patronized Africans as primitives

¹² Erica Mann, 'Nairobi: From Colonial to National Capital', in *Ostafrikanische Studien – East African Studies*, offprint from *Nürnberg wirtschafst- und sozialgraphische Arbeiten*, Band 8, Schriftleitung Herfried Berger, herausgegeben im Selbstverlag des Wirtschafts- und Sozialgraphischen Instituts der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Nürnberg, 1968.

¹³ Author interview with Kenny Mann, fall 2010.

¹⁴ Caplan, 'A Woman of Substance'.

who needed elevation to European standards of culture, she also loved Kenya and intended, upon arrival, to stay there. She never looked back on having left Europe, and embraced her new life in Africa as fulfillment of the adventurous wanderlust she had dreamed of as a child in Bucharest. She once claimed, “Hitler was the best thing that ever happened to me.”¹⁵

In the background of these two stories is a third character: another architect, with another garden, and another narrative of travel. He is a cipher for both the Fascism that gave rise to these African exiles and the contest of architectural ideologies that framed their professional discourse. The American art historian Barbara Miller Lane has drawn a comparison between Ernst May and Albert Speer, who, following the death of Paul Ludwig Troost in January of 1934, effectively became Hitler’s chief architect at the age of 29.¹⁶ Miller Lane’s central thesis is that both May and Speer relied on vast reservoirs of political power to enact large-scale public works, and thus each imposed a very personal aesthetic paradigm on a large population. However, it is Speer and May’s post-war narratives that bring each other into sharper relief. Both effectively disappeared from architectural discourse immediately after the war, and both later felt insufficiently recognized for their contributions to that discourse. They each envied the canonization of their colleagues Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, though for opposite reasons: May felt he ought to be lionized along with them as a foundational Modernist, while Speer was their ideological antithesis. After the Nuremberg trials, Speer was sentenced to twenty years in the Spandau prison complex in West Berlin, and his incarceration there forms a kind of obsidian mirror to the developments in Kenya at this same time.^{17 18}

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Barbara Miller Lane, ‘Architects in Power: Politics and Ideology in the Work of Ernst May and Albert Speer’, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 17:1 (Summer 1986), p. 297. Miller Lane notes: “After the death of Troost in 1934, Speer became principal architect to Hitler and, in 1937, Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt (general supervisor of building for the imperial capital).” He continued architectural work until 1942, when he was picked to become Minister of Armaments.

¹⁷ The notion of May’s rueful resignation towards his eclipse from the high canon of early modernists comes from author’s notes from conversations with Gutschow (Pittsburgh, summer 2010) and with Eckhard Herrel, Ernst May Gesellschaft, Frankfurt am Main, November of 2010. On Albert Speer’s mild tone of resentment, I draw from his book *Spandau: The Secret Diaries* (New York, Macmillan, 1976. First published as *Spandauer Tagebücher*, 1975, Verlag Ullstein GmbH, Frankfurt/Berlin). Speer evidently followed the architectural discourse of his generation from his cell. On May 7, 1955, he wrote: “I also have an issue of *American Builder*. With astonishment I note the many German names: Gropius, Mendelssohn [sic], Neutra, Breuer, Mies van der Rohe. Naturally I know them all. When I studied under Tessenow in Berlin, many of them were working only a few halls down, so to speak... It is plain now that at age twenty-eight I did not understand the Bauhaus. But even now, at fifty, I am deeply convinced that the glass high-rise is wrong when it is used outside the industrial realm.” Speer, p. 273.

¹⁸ The remainder of this essay focuses on one small aspect of Speer’s personal activities in Spandau from 1947–1966 – his gardening – and I rely specifically on his own Spandau Diaries. As art historians like Christian Fuhrmeister (and more popular journalists, like Dan van der Vat, in his *The*

Spandau's courtyard garden was available for Speer and his six fellow inmates to tend from early in their sentences, beginning in August of 1947.¹⁹ But while the others were ranking military officers, Speer alone was a restless former architect: by the spring of 1948, his obsession with gardening was crystalizing while the others largely sat idle as he worked. By the summer of 1951, Speer had a section of the garden entirely to himself, and had begun an increasingly ambitious and expansive landscaping program.²⁰ At the end of his eighth year, in the autumn of 1954, he happened upon the idea that would occupy him for the remainder of his sentence. In addition to his continual landscaping work, he began to walk the perimeter of the courtyard and imagine that he was traveling on foot. "I have marked out a circular course in the garden," he wrote, on September 30, 1954. "Lacking a tape measure, I measured my shoe, paced off the distance step by step, and multiplied by the number of paces."²¹ In this way, he produced a path of some 270 meters, which he repeatedly circled for the following decade, keeping accurate track of his kilometers by shifting small beans (plucked from the garden) from one pocket to the other at a given mark along the route, and tallying the total at the end of each day. His first trip took him to his family home in Heidelberg: 626 kilometers. From there, the walking project began to take on unexpectedly vast dimensions. With the aid of travel guides borrowed through the prison library, he pictured himself traveling east: from Heidelberg, he set off across Eastern Europe towards Istanbul, then through Afghanistan into India and China. After traveling across all of Russia, he arrived at the Bering Strait, which he crossed, continuing southwards down the western coast of North America.

Landscaping and walking continued in tandem throughout the remainder of Speer's sentence, and by 1959, the garden had taken over practically the entire courtyard, a leisure park of one man's design. April 14th, 1959: "About two years ago [...] I systematically set about landscaping our garden, making a park of it. I

Good Nazi: The Life and Lies of Albert Speer, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1997) have shown, Speer's prison-era pose of penitence and introspection was a shrewd effort to formulate and control his legacy. I allow quite plainly that Speer's words are dubious and suspect, perhaps in some cases outright falsehoods or constructs. Speer's obsessive garden work appears, at any rate, to be true in the most generic sense; and his sense impressions, or fantasies, are as verifiable as anyone's. However, even if Speer's garden (and walking project) were entirely a fabrication, it would still serve the purposes of this project, and its specific inversion of urban planning, gardening, and the mental space of exile. I am very grateful for a conversation with Mr. Fuhrmeister in Munich, fall 2010, which helped clarification here.

¹⁹ The other inmates in Spandau were: Karl Dönitz, Konstantin von Neurath, Baldur von Schirach, Erich Raeder, Rudolph Hess, and Walther Funk.

²⁰ June 4, 1951: "I can now do whatever I please in my part of the garden. In the spring I dug out the ground to a depth of about half a meter, and created a sunken rock garden; using thousands of bricks, I made a series of retaining walls twenty to forty centimeters in height. [...] My determination to do something, to make something of my time, has now found a new object. [...] This garden, this ridiculous architecture in bricks, has the priceless advantage of being concretely tangible and still there every single morning." Speer, p. 179.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.



III. 9 *The Delight of the Yearner #1: Proposal for the Reconstruction of Two Lost Gardens Within one Lost Home*. Polished aluminum, cork, succulent plants, 13" x 15" x 28", 2008-2010. Installation View

graded uneven ground into interesting terraces, sowed lawns, planted forsythia, lavender, hydrangea bushes, and roses. [...] Spandau has become a meaning in itself. [...] The garden has taken full possession of me."²² Three months later, just days after his notional arrival at the Imperial Palace in Peking, Speer noted a critical final development in his garden's structure. On July 19th, he wrote: "For several weeks I have been building a new walk, twenty meters long and eight meters wide. It leads from the prison exit to my avenue lined with flower beds, which in memory of the planned Berlin grand boulevard is aligned in a north-south direction."²³

And so, in effect, the proposed German capital was here imagined again, but this time in miniature, holding to the same logic we have already explored: that the restless intellectual grapples with exile by attempting to reduplicate precisely what they have lost. Whatever meaning can be derived from the narrative is located here, in the specific discrepancies between intention and outcome. In his boredom and vanity, Speer had imposed on himself a kind of faux-exile, where the city, the garden, and the journey all collapsed into an endless loop. He never

²² Ibid., p. 335.

²³ Ibid., p. 339.

actually saw the world he had helped to destroy until he imagined himself walking through it in prison. His trip ended in 1966, twelve years after it had begun. In the final week before his release, he sent a postcard to a friend, asking to be picked up some thirty kilometers outside Guadalajara, Mexico. His diaries tally the total distance he walked: some 31,936 kilometers.²⁴

A city, a garden, and a home are each open forms: they are instantiations of some symbolic order, representations of ideas about space that are constantly renegotiated. To that end, the logic of my own project, *The Delight of the Yearner*, arrives at a sculpture that re-imagines Ernst May's *Native House* as a greenhouse for a garden combining the design impulses of Erica Mann and Albert Speer. Produced at the propositional scale of 1:12, the sculpture is made of polished aluminum, cork wood, and cut succulent plants (Ill. 9). The garden within is arranged according to the original 1948 city plan of Nairobi, just as Speer had arranged his own according to his lost plans for Berlin. The Kenyan capital's urban grid is here embedded as a set of walking paths for an imaginary gardener. The concrete shell of May's *Native House* has been dissolved to its skeletal framework, foregrounding its burdened aesthetic history by transmuting its opacity into transparency. If our gardener were to look up at the sky from within this greenhouse, its polished armature would mirror itself out of view. Perhaps the unlikely collaboration of narratives bound together within this object can suggest propositions that cannot be posed with language, or with logic: the unforeseen overlap of political and social ideologies, the complexities of moral behavior within reconfigured contexts, and the fraught coexistence, in the same person, of nihilistic evil and an accidental quest for the sublime.

Part of the tumult of Modernist architecture was the crisis over how to conceive of our relationship to the past while imagining a new future. In a sense, architecture encodes our ideas of time through its production of space. But time cannot be shaped in a garden: plants regrow, exceed their boundaries, threaten disorder, and need constant attention. It is endless. Perhaps that is why these architects found refuge there: they were relieved of linear planning. Designing a garden may share much with designing a city, but tending to one is an activity lightened by its submission to the circularity of nature. A garden can be a temporary respite from the crises of technology and politics; an expression of an alternate, parallel self; or a sanctuary composed of pure repetition. Ultimately, it is through their complex relationship to horticulture that these architects triangulate three possibilities for the shape of exile: you can wander endlessly without compass, you can resettle and begin again, or you can forever yearn for a return home.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 446.