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**CfP: “We have to build a town, a whole town.” –
The Darmstadt Artists’ Colony on the Mathildenhöhe**

Darmstadt, Sun 17 to Tue 19 April 2016

Abstracts due: 18 September 2015

Conference organized by Wissenschaftsstadt Darmstadt in cooperation with the German Committee of ICOMOS and the Regional Office for Built Heritage Conservation in Hessian.

Concept / organization: Dipl.-Ing. Wenzel Bratner, Dr. Philipp Gutbrod, Dipl.-Ing. Nikolaus Heiss, Renate Charlotte Hoffmann M.A., Dr. Inge Lorenz, Dr. Jennifer Verhoeven.

As part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination of the Darmstadt Artists' Colony on the Mathildenhöhe, the City of Science Darmstadt will organize – in cooperation with the German National Committee of ICOMOS and the Regional Office for Built Heritage Conservation in Hessian – a conference between 17 and 19 April 2016 with the working title of: *“We have to build a town, a whole town.”* – The Darmstadt Artists' Colony on the Mathildenhöhe.

The Darmstadt Artists' Colony on the Mathildenhöhe with its buildings, public gardens, and works of art is a unique ensemble of experimental creation. It is an extraordinary document of the transition from Art Nouveau to Modernism in architecture, fine and applied arts, inspired by the International Reform Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Darmstadt Artists' Colony was founded in 1899 by the art loving Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse and by Rhine (1868-1937) in order to promote Hessian arts and crafts. Over the course of its 15 years of existence 23 artists were members of the Darmstadt Artists' Colony. During this period an eminent architectural ensemble was created consisting of buildings, gardens, sculptures, and interior design in an all-embracing and innovative form.

Four exhibitions were held between 1901 and 1914 in which walk-in “lived” worlds as aesthetic works of art presented a completely new concept of architecture, interior design, and the shaping of landscapes. Here, artists reflected on the conditions of “living” and “working” at the beginning of modern age. By means of this programmatic analysis, the Mathildenhöhe was radiating decisive impulses for the development of architecture in the early twentieth century.

The following thematic sections are planned for the conference:

1. Sources and past history

The Arts & Crafts Movement, which originated as a reaction to the consequences of industrialization, was consciously taken up by

Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig on the Mathildenhöhe in order to give a shape to ideas of the Reform-oriented living at a high artistic level, with experimental architecture and an innovative design.

Possible subjects and questions continuing these findings are:

- The influence of the Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe
- The significance of the periodicals edited by Alexander Koch
- The relationship of the participating artists, such as Peter Behrens, Hans Christiansen or Joseph Maria Olbrich, with the developments of the Industrial Revolution or the dawning of Modernism
- European artists' colonies in comparison
- Goals of the Life Reform Movement around 1900

2. Architecture and Exteriors

The focus of the first exhibition “A Document of German Art” (1901) presented eight fully designed and completely furnished homes grouped in a clear urban order around the central Studio Building, the Ernst Ludwig House.

The most prominent building complex on the Mathildenhöhe is the Wedding Tower with the Exhibition Hall, both created by Olbrich within the scope of the “Hessian Exhibition of Fine and Applied Arts” (1908). This exhibition also displayed a model housing estate with six fully furnished small houses. The Group of Tenement Houses with Studio Building (1914) by Albin Müller finally supplied the northern completion of the Mathildenhöhe.

With the shaping of the Plane Tree Grove into a sculpture park on the Mathildenhöhe by Bernhard Hoetger for the last exhibition (1914), the Darmstadt Artists' Colony received an emphasis in the fine arts.

Possible subjects and questions continuing these findings are:

- Influences on the architecture of the Darmstadt Artists' Colony and its reception within an international comparison
- Purpose-oriented construction: “residence”, “work”, “exhibition”
- Landscape gardening and Life Reform
- The Plane Tree Grove as a sculptural total work of art in Modernism

3. Interior design (“Raumkunst”)

The four exhibitions, with the fully furnished residential and artist’s homes, were “lived-in” worlds put on stage that represented unprecedented innovations that were taken note of and could exert a decisive influence on the further development of interior decorating and design.

Possible subjects and questions continuing these findings are:

- Architecture and “Raumkunst” as a total work of art
- The applied arts of the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony at the intersection between national and international design developments
- Craft and iconography of material

4. Reception and international effect

Far-reaching international impulses for architecture and design in the twentieth century were sent out by the members of the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony and their works on the Mathildenhöhe.

Possible subjects and questions continuing these findings are:

- Comparison with other sites in Germany and worldwide that have a connection to the development of architecture in the twentieth century

- Comparison with the beginnings of Functionalism and Modernism in international architecture and design
- Goals of the German Werkbund and of Bauhaus Weimar / Dessau with reference to the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony on the Mathildenhöhe
- What was the contribution given by the members of the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony after their time at Darmstadt for the further development of Modernism?

The conference is intended to be interdisciplinary. We invite researchers and scholars within the disciplines of the history of architecture and the arts, the preservation of historic buildings and monuments, landscape gardening, architecture and history, etc.

The papers are scheduled for 30 minutes each. The main language of the conference will be German, however contributions in English are also welcome.

Abstracts of papers (max. 300 words) in German or in English will be accepted until the 18 September 2015 to Dr. Jennifer Verhoeven (j.verhoeven@denkmalpflege-hessen.de). Please include your name, institution, and a short biography.

The City of Science Darmstadt will bear the costs for travel and accommodation. Unfortunately we cannot pay any fees for speakers.

Following the conference a publication of the contributions is planned in 2016.