

The Building Concept of the Goetheanum

GA 289

27 August 1921, Dornach

Automated Translation

7. About the Goetheanum

Dear attendees!

With your permission, I would like to expand on what I said during the tour of the Goetheanum by saying a few more words about our building today. For many years, our anthroposophical movement held its meetings in ordinary halls, just as they are available today. And even when we were able to present dramatic performances based on the impulses of the anthroposophical worldview, starting in 1909, we initially had to limit ourselves to having these performances in ordinary theaters and under ordinary theater conditions. As our anthroposophical movement grew, a large number of our friends came up with the idea of building a house for anthroposophy. And now I was given the task, so to speak, of creating a home for the anthroposophical movement. I would like to make it clear that the order to build did not come from me, but from friends of the anthroposophical worldview.

The question now arose: how should the construction of such a house be approached? If any other society, an association with any task or objective, builds a house for itself today – and today there are all kinds of associations with all kinds of objectives – then it consults with some architect. They agree on the style in which such a house is to be built: Greek, Gothic, Renaissance or some other style. This is the usual procedure today. If anthroposophy were a movement like all the others, it could have proceeded in this way. But anthroposophy takes into account the great demands of our time for a thorough renewal of our entire culture, and therefore it could not be built in this way.

Furthermore, anthroposophy is not a one-sided body of ideas, but the body of ideas of anthroposophy arises from the whole of human experience, from deep sources of the human being. And that which lives in the ideas of anthroposophy has sprung from a primeval source, just as it did in the case of the older cultures. And just as the words of Anthroposophy can be pro-

claimed by human mouths and given as teachings, so too can that which flows from the sources from which the Anthroposophical ideas also flow be given for direct artistic contemplation. It is not a matter of translating or applying anthroposophical ideas to art, but rather of another branch growing out of the same source of life from which anthroposophical ideas come, and developing as art. What Anthroposophy has to reveal can be said from a podium in words that signify ideas. But it can also speak from the forms, from plastic forms, from painting, without sculpture or painting becoming symbolism or allegory, but rather within the sphere of the purely artistic. But that means nothing other than: If anthroposophy creates a physical shell for itself in which it is to work, then it must give this physical shell its own style, just as older world views have given their physical shells the corresponding style.

Take the Greek architectural style, as it has partly been realized in the Greek temple: This Greek temple has grown entirely out of the same world view that gave rise to Greek drama, Greek epic poetry, and Greek conceptions of the gods. The Greek felt that in creating his temple, he was building a dwelling for the god. And the god is again nothing other than what older cultural views saw in the human soul that had passed through death in its further development; a certain qualitative relationship between the god and the human soul that has passed through death was felt in older cultural currents. And so, as in ancient times, when people believed that the human soul had passed through death, they built dwellings for it while still on earth, thus constructing houses for the dead, they designed something similar for the older times, as the Greeks then designed in their temples at a later stage. The temple is the dwelling of the god, that is, not of the human soul that has passed through death itself, but of that soul which belongs to a different hierarchy, to a different world order.

Those who can see forms artistically can still feel in the forms that have been created by carrying and other loads for the Greek temple, as in older times the dead, who still remained on earth after death, who, so to speak, as a chthonic deity, as an earthly deity, this house was formed out of this earth; so that a continuation of the gravitational forces of the earth, as they can be felt by man when he somehow looks through his limbs, such a connection of forces as a temple was erected. The Greek temple is only to be regarded as complete when one looks at it in such a way that the statue of the god is inside. Those with a sense of form cannot imagine an empty Greek temple as complete. They can only imagine, they can feel, that this shell contains the statue of Athena, Zeus, Apollo and so on.

Let's skip some of the art historical development and look at the Gothic building. If you feel the Gothic building with its forms, with its peculiar windows that let in the light in a unique way, you actually always feel that when you enter the empty Gothic cathedral, it is not a totality, nothing complete: the Gothic cathedral is only complete when the community is inside,

whose souls resonate in harmony in their effects. A Greek temple is the wrapping of the god who dwells on earth through his statue in the people; a Gothic cathedral is in all its forms that which encloses the community in harmony and with thoughts directed towards the eternal.

Greek world view, world view that created form in the Gothic, are dead worlds for humanity. Only the degenerate forces of decline that originated from them can still live today. We need a new culture, but one that is not only expressed in a one-sided way in knowledge and ideas, but one that can also express itself in a new art. And so the development of art history also points to the necessity of a building style for anthroposophy, which wants to bring a new form of culture.

The way in which Anthroposophy is to be lived is based on the idea that a higher being, which is in fact the human being himself, speaks to the person who lives in the ordinary life that unfolds between birth and death. By feeling this, the two-dome structure presented itself to me as the necessary building envelope for this basic impulse of the anthroposophical world view. In the small dome, what is inwardly large and wide is, as it were, physically compressed; in the large dome, what is inwardly less wide, what inwardly belongs to the life we lead between birth and death, is spatially expanded.

And when a person enters this structure in the sense of such an anthroposophical worldview, they must find their own being. This is based on what has just been said. And while he is inside, he must feel the structure in such a way that he, as a human being, as a microcosm, does not feel constrained by the structure, but is externally connected to the universe, to the macrocosm, through the entire structure. But if you look at the structure from the outside, you must have the feeling: Something is going on in there that brings something unearthly, something extraterrestrial, to earthly existence. Something is going on in there that is hidden in the earthly itself. So it must be possible to look at the building in terms of its overall form and also in terms of the sculptural extensions, which, as I said over there, must represent organic structure.

I ask you to view the slides from this perspective, which I will now take the liberty of showing you. Of course, they show nothing other than what you have already seen; they are only intended to conclusively present what can be seen of the building. We will start by showing an exterior view looking towards the west portal.

The building seen from a little further away (Fig. 6), looking towards the west portal.

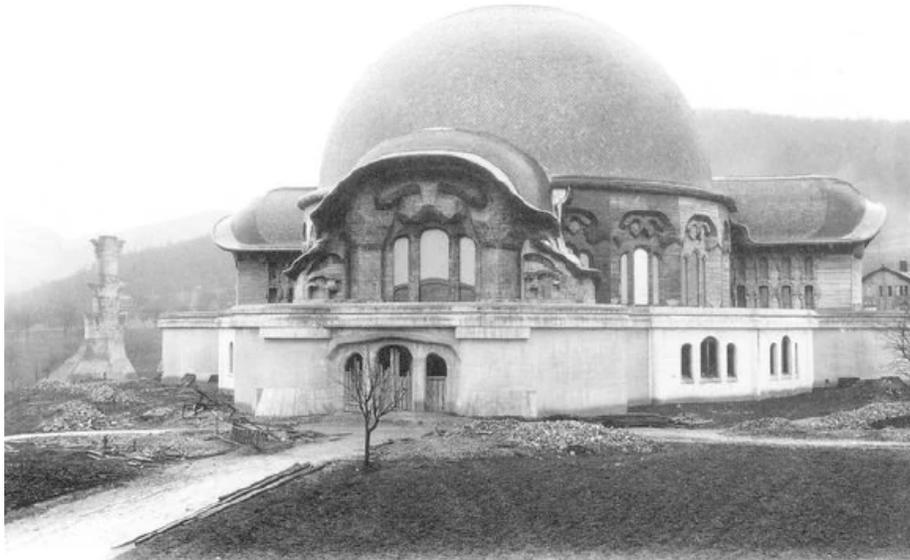


Figure 6

The next picture (Fig. 7): looking more towards the south portal, the west and south portals seen more together.



Figure 7

Here (Fig. 2) is a view of the building from the east, with a simultaneous view of the building that contains the lighting and heating units for the building. This boiler house is, of course, particularly controversial in its form because it looks different from the buildings we are accustomed to seeing today. And this boiler house is not built according to any principle other than everything that has been built here at all. The original idea was to have a number of heat-

ing and lighting systems. That is, in a sense, the nut. And now, as with the nut, only the nut-shell can arise as a covering from an inner, logical necessity, and that, when one has such a utilitarian building, one cannot proceed otherwise than that one perceives everything that must be inside this structure in its essence and then makes a shell that corresponds to this content in the same way that the nutshell corresponds to the nut.

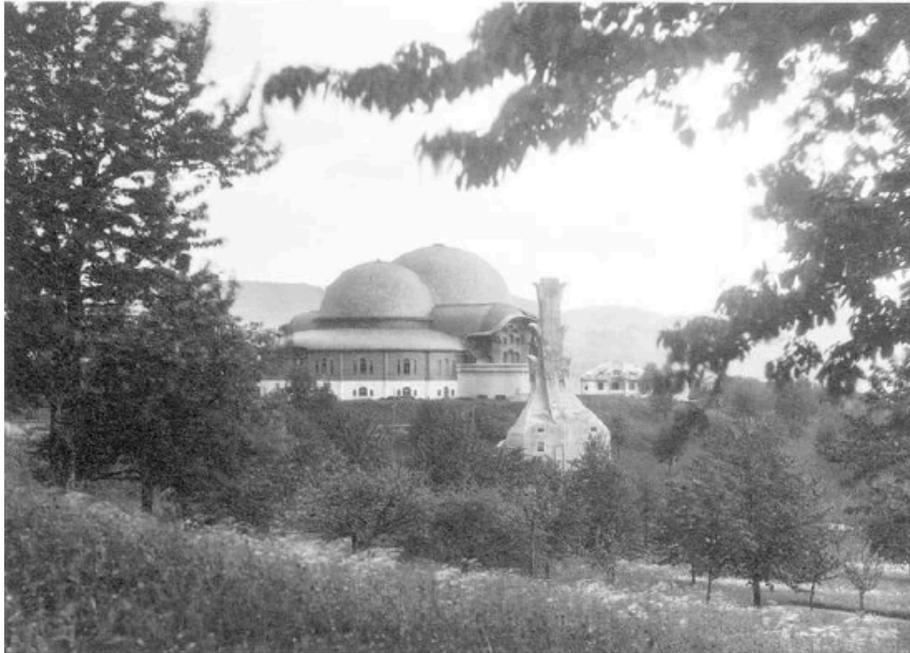


Figure 2

Of course, this can only be felt; it cannot be discussed. Another person may feel differently. But if one criticizes the ground, I would like to ask the people who do so to consider what would be there if no attempt had been made – even if it was not immediately successful at the first attempt – to find the right covering for heating and lighting, but had stuck with the current one, then there might be a red chimney here. Perhaps the philistines would have liked it more, but art would have been less satisfied.

The next picture (Fig. 4) will show a view from a greater distance of the north-west portal.

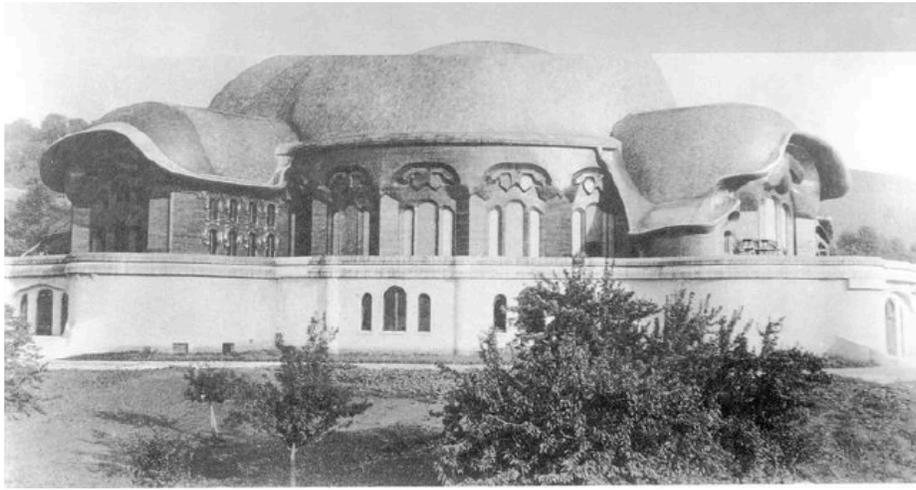


Figure 4

The next picture (Fig. 1) is supposed to show the building from an even greater distance.



Figure 1

It was always my intention, despite the fact that the building was not originally intended for here, but in the middle of houses, to design it here so that it fits into the overall configuration of the landscape, the Jura landscape. I cannot, while trying to avoid any illusion, but say otherwise than that I think the building is already growing out of the plastic forms of the landscape.

Here I take the liberty of showing you the ground plan (Fig. 20), which expresses exactly what I have just said. The point was to feel through the effect, I would like to say, of one side of the human being on the other, in the ground plan and in the whole form of the building.

What now follows is a cross-section through the entire structure (Fig. 21).

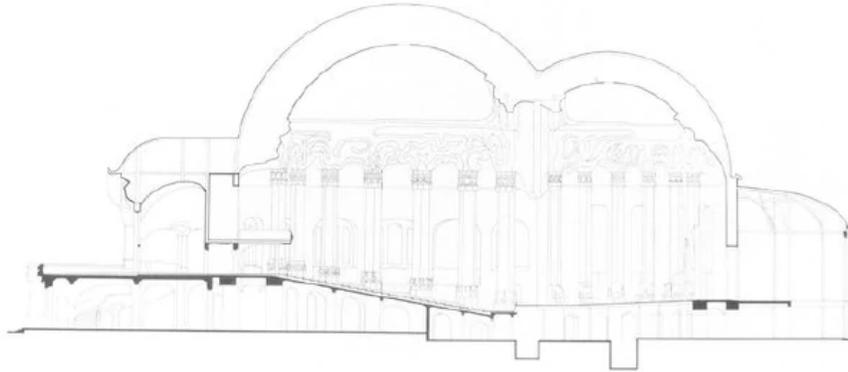


Figure 21

Now I will try to show this cross-section; I will try to show what can be built on this cross-section by showing you the model that I originally made (Fig. 22). This is the original model of the construction, the large dome, the small dome, as I made it here from the fall of 1913. It is largely made of wax, insofar as one is dealing with plastic forms, and partly of wood.

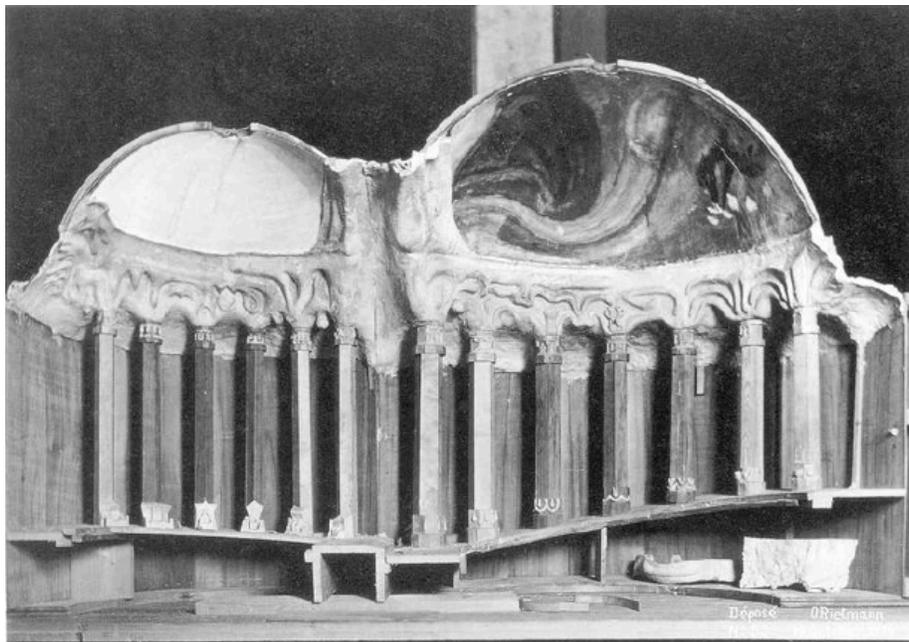


Figure 22

The next one will show a side wing, seen from the side (Fig. 13), where you can particularly see the metamorphosis that the motif, which can be seen above the west portal, can undergo in a smaller form. The forms become quite different on the outside, but according to the idea, they are the same on the inside.

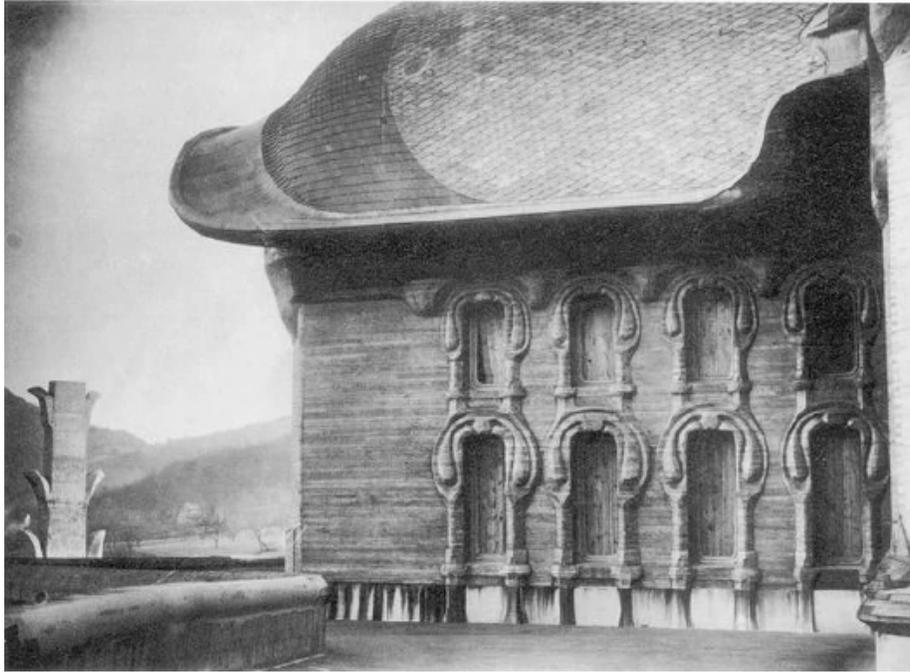


Figure 13

The next motif is depicted in the piece above the south portal, which is above the southern entrance door (Fig. 11): the same motif as on the west portal, but in a simpler, more primitive metamorphosis. Next, we present part of the room that one enters when going down into the concrete sub-room, which is intended for depositing the clothes (Fig. 23). One goes up there via the stairs. In any case, all the honored attendees have become aware of the underlying feelings behind the design of this room.



Figure 11



Figure 23

The staircase with its surroundings (Fig. 24), which we can pass over particularly quickly because they are only intended for recapitulation. The next thing I bring is a column from the interior, which one enters when one has gone up the stairs, that is, before one enters the main room (Fig. 27). Everything that is worked here is already worked in wood.



Figure 24

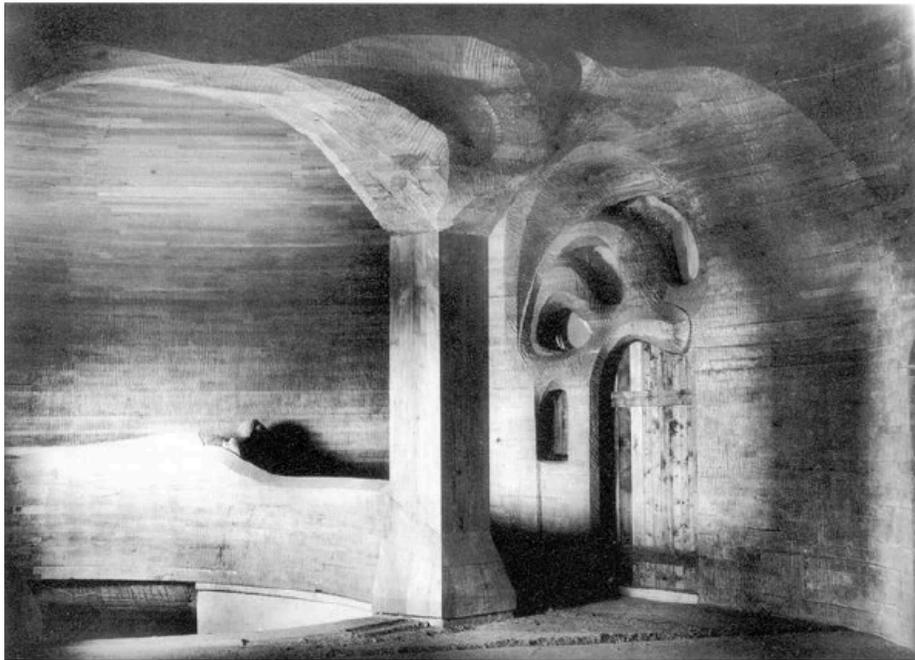


Figure 27

Here I present the organ motif, but not as you see it now, but as it was as a model (Fig. 30). It is a photograph of the organ motif model and you can see it here (Fig. 29) in an unfinished state at the same time. I said in the description over in the building that an attempt was made

to design the whole sculpture around the organ so that the organ does not appear to be inserted into the space, but rather to have grown out of it. Here you can see the work of this organ sculpture still half-finished. First, I had to work out the general shape, and only later did I adapt the general forms to fit exactly with what emerged as the lines through the ends of the organ pipes upwards.

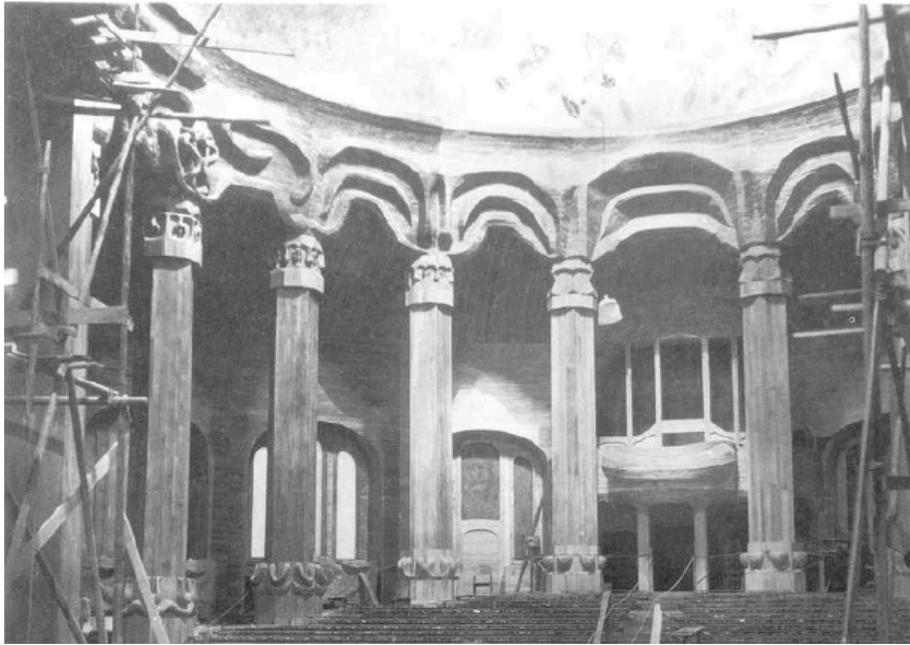


Figure 29



Figure 30

We now see in the next picture [the capital of the first column in the west] (Fig. 33), and I ask you to pay attention to the next three pictures. They are presented here to show two consecutive capitals. You should note that a single capital is actually not something that can be viewed on its own. The thing on which everything is based is the way in which each subsequent capital emerges from a preceding one. Therefore, I show two capitals emerging from each other [of the second and third columns] (Figs. 36, 38), and in between the two together [with the architrave above] (Fig. 37), thus each individual one in succession and in between the two together.

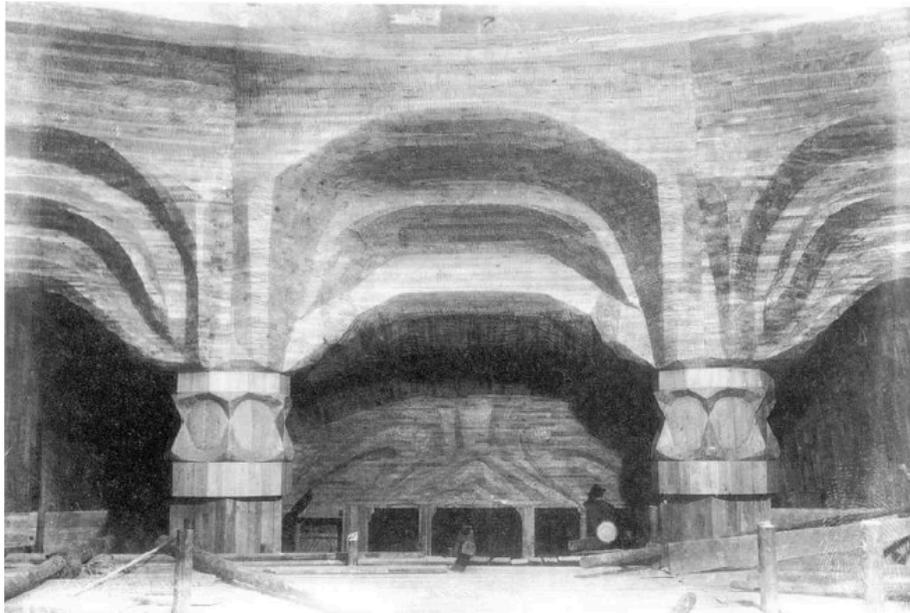


Figure 33

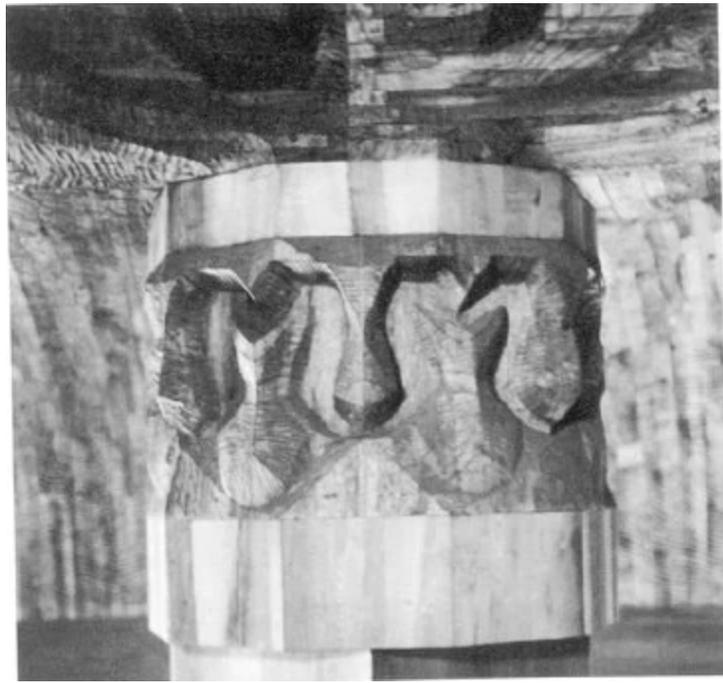


Figure 36



Figure 38

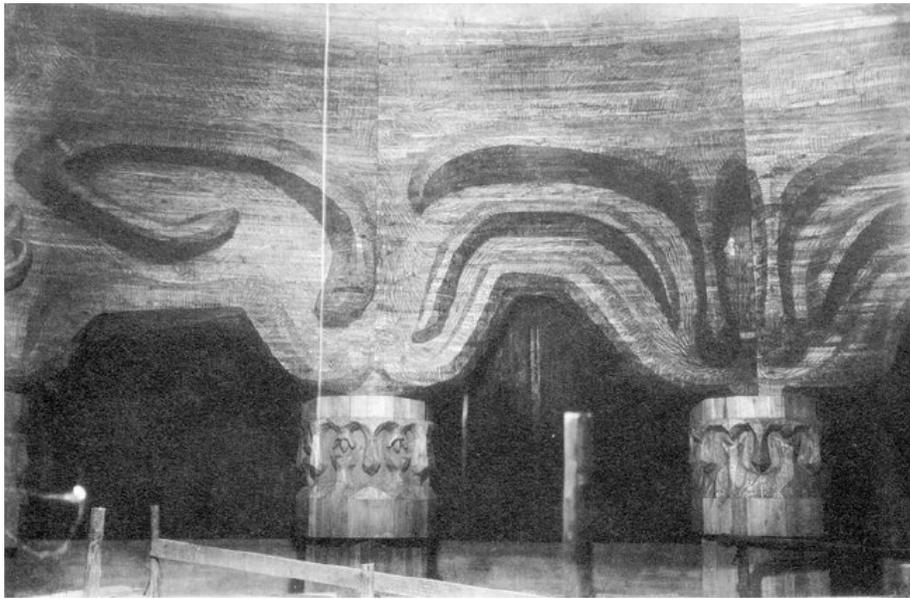


Figure 37

We see here the fourth capital (Fig. 40). Now the two capitals in succession, the fourth and fifth (Fig. 41). Now the fifth alone (Fig. 42).

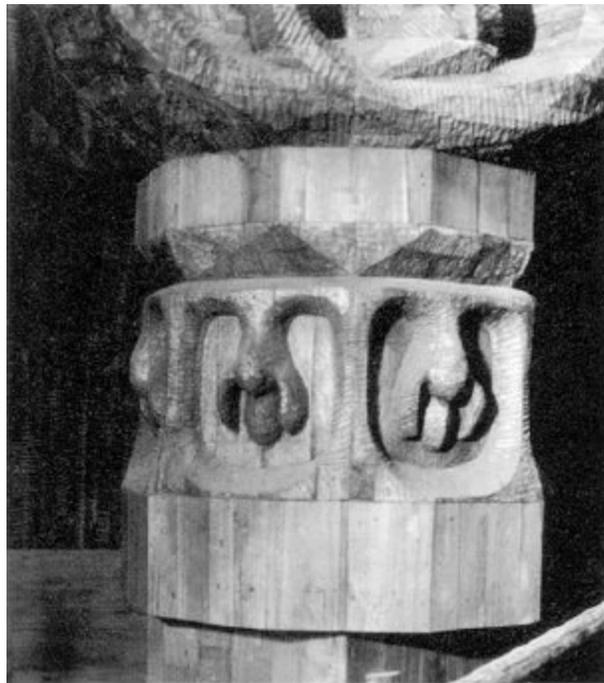


Figure 40

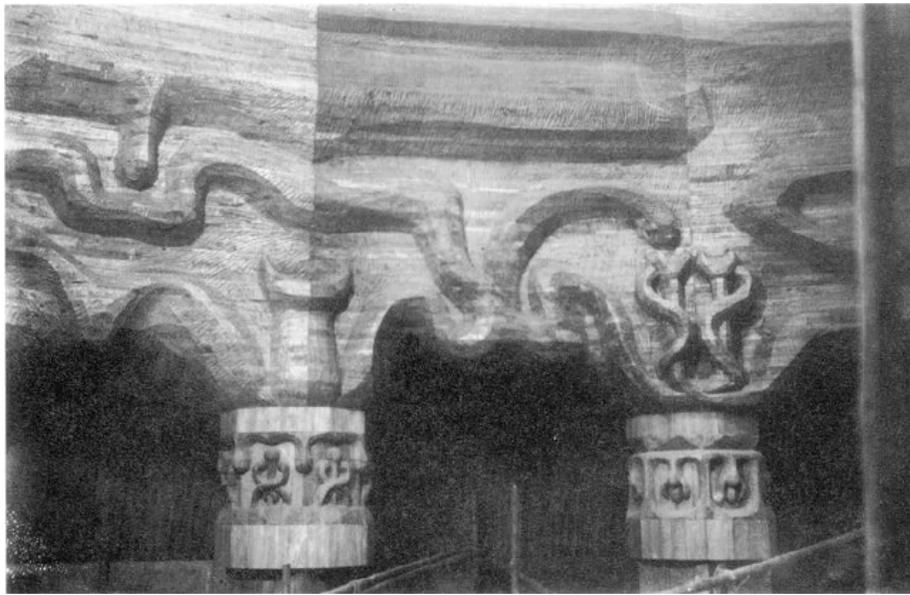


Figure 41



Figure 42

Likewise, I will now show two bases that have been formed one after the other, again the individual one is not to be understood in isolation, but only as emerging from what has gone before.

The first pedestal, the fifth (Fig. 52).

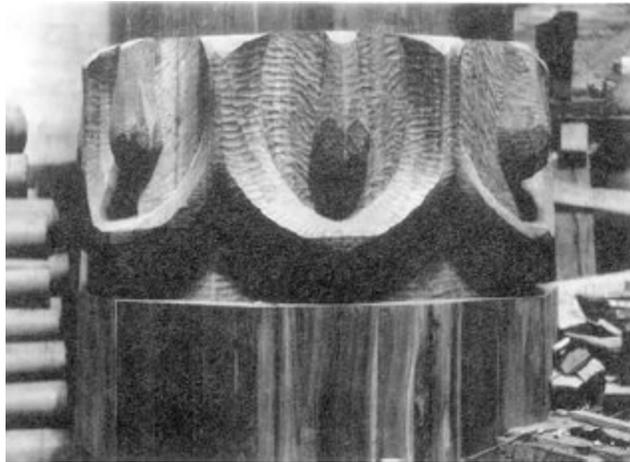


Figure 52

Now the sixth (Fig. 53). The next picture will show the motif that arises when we look east, standing in the building and see what is in the east (Fig. 57).

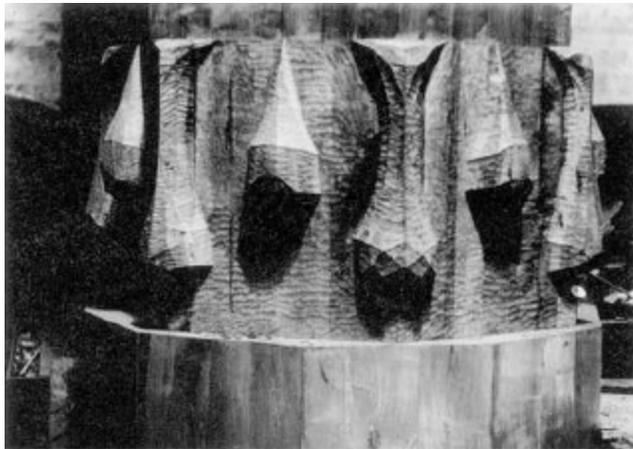


Figure 53

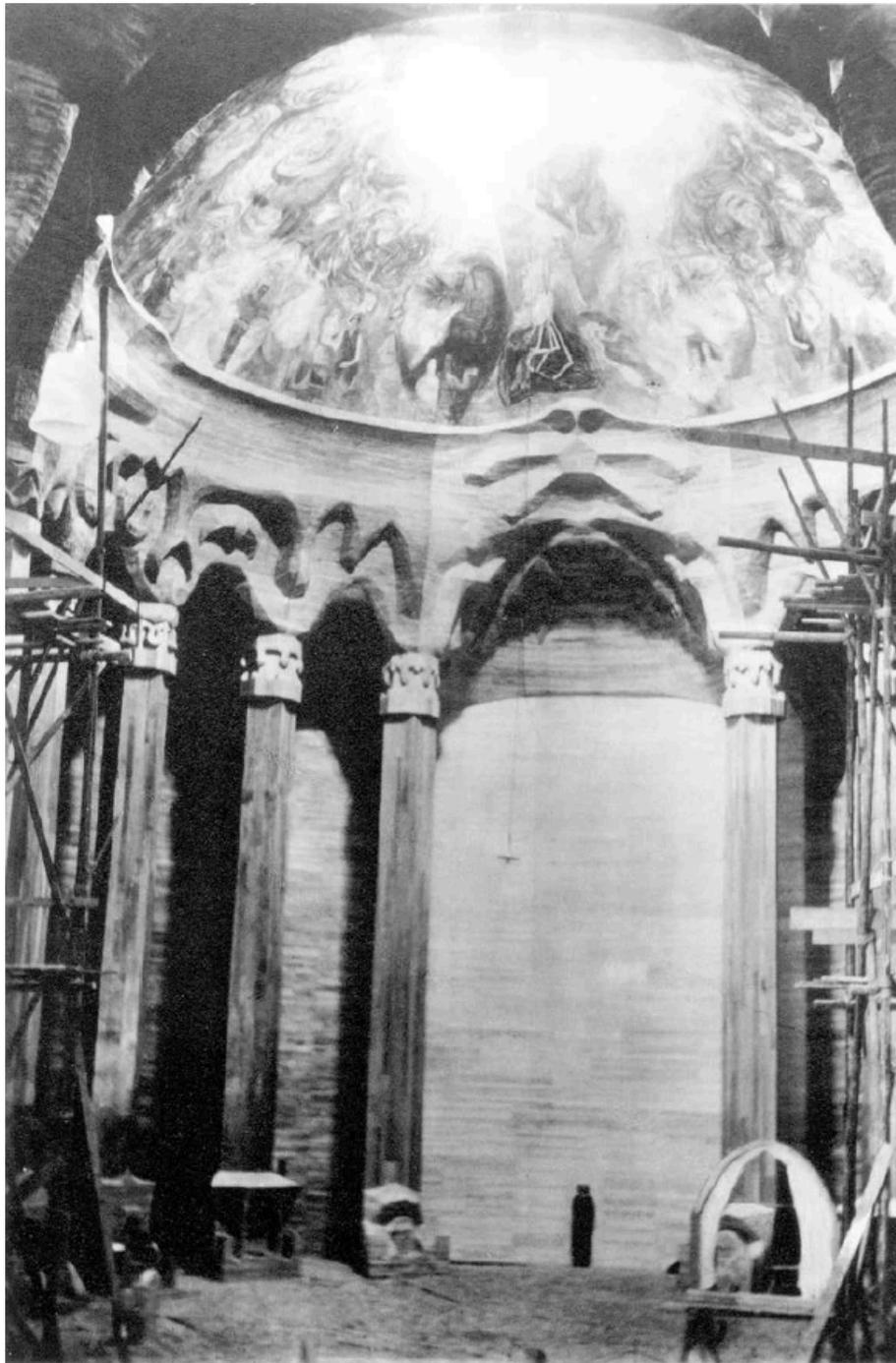


Figure 57

A column order: This is the view after the organ motif when standing in the building, looking from east to west (Fig. 29).

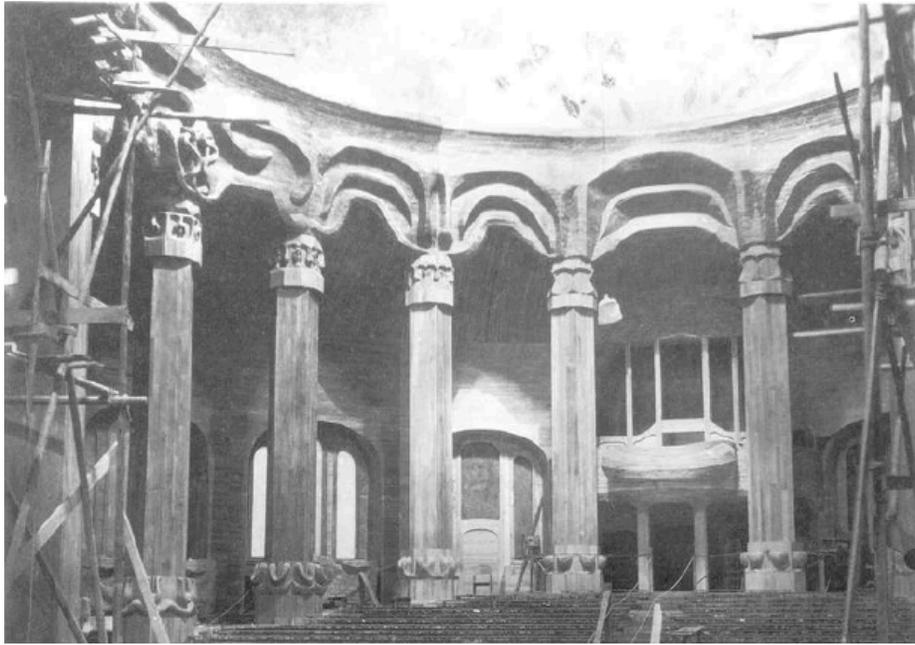


Figure 29

Here you can see the motif carved into the wood above the curtain slit (Fig. 55). The curtain is open, we look into the small domed room, and below we can also see the carving of the small domed room, only a little indistinctly, and above it the painting.

The next one shows the motif that was carved in the small domed room: as a kind of synthetic conclusion of the individual forms (Fig. 67). If you look from the auditorium into the small domed room, you will see, immediately below the painted Christ-like figure, with Lucifer above him and Ahriman below him, a wood carving that combines all the forms that are otherwise distributed throughout the building – but initially, I would like to say, only in an organic, not yet spiritualized way.

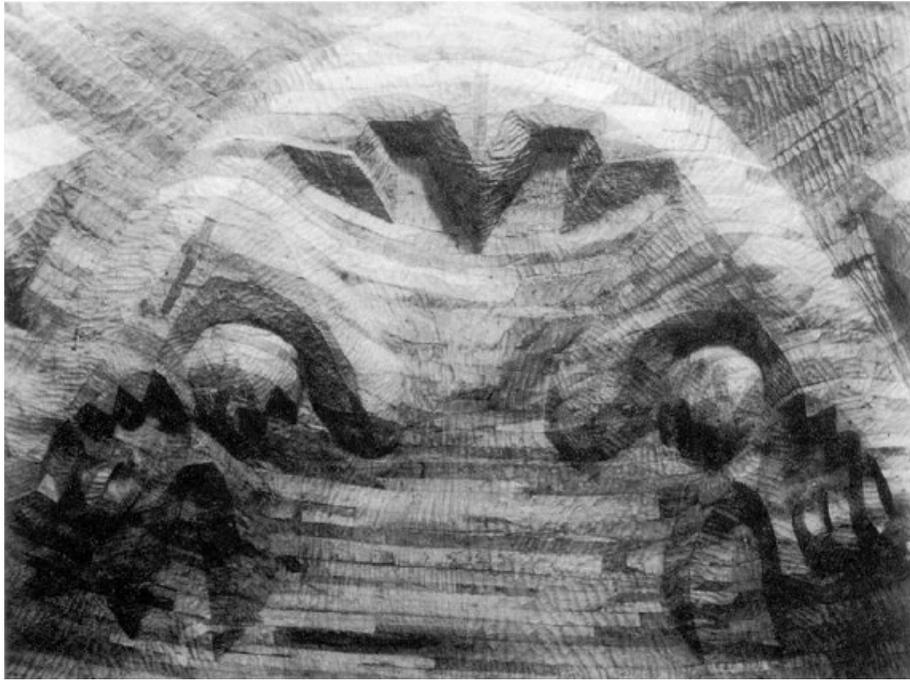


Figure 67

Psychically, it is only summarized in the Christ group (Fig. 93), which is a nine-meter-high wooden group that will stand in the far east and show the representative of humanity in the middle, who can be understood as the Christ – but must be understood in the feeling – [and] has the Luciferic principle above him and the Ahrimanic principle below him. Psychically, this will synthesize all the individual forms.



Figure 93

I will now describe some of the motifs in the small cupola painting.

First, you see the child, depicted in an orange tone (Fig. 72), in front of the blue figure, which looks like a fist (Fig. 70), holding a tablet with the “I” – the only word that will be found in the entire structure, for very specific reasons. I would be pleased, ladies and gentlemen, if you would feel something absurd from these pictures, which, after all, could only be viewed in black and white, because here the painting is done in such a way that everything is brought out in color. You can actually only give something in the reproduction in which, according to perception, something must be missing, something absurd. Perhaps one should see here that something quite unfinished, something absurd stands before one, and then one should give oneself the answer: it must actually be so, because the thing has meaning only in color. Whoever understands the inner meaning of the colored world will thoroughly grasp that even the figurative can, to a certain degree, be created entirely out of color. Those who see the blue above in the neighborhood of the other colors will perceive it purely as a possible creation from the color that a kind of Faust figure appears here. The next picture (Fig. 71) shows Death below Faust. The modern discerning person is placed between Death, the end of life, and Birth, the other end of life, which has been depicted in the child.



Figure 72



Figure 70



Figure 71

The next image (Fig. 78): a kind of figure that resembles an Egyptian initiate.



Figure 78

The inspirers hovering above him, initiating world powers (Fig. 77). From the way the treatment is presented, it will be clear that I may say: Although Figural is distinguished here from the colored, what I have said about the creative in color still applies.



Figure 77

Here you can see a detail, a kind of ahriman head (Fig. 81). It is only conceivable to paint from the color used in the dome above: a peculiar brown-yellow.



Figure 81

Here together: Ahriman head and Lucifer head (Fig. 79). They are only truly contrasted in color. The lower one shows what is inspired by Lucifer and Ahriman when they are grasped in their objectivity, when one is not grasped by them oneself, which is then particularly effective in man or can become so because man is of a special kind, who stands to the child as indicated in the lower figure.



Figure 79

The next picture shows Lucifer's head on its own (Fig. 80), that is, painted; in sculpture, it looks different.



Figure 80

Here (Fig. 82) you see the [Germanic] man with the child, who has Ahriman and Lucifer above him, as shown earlier.



Figure 82

Here (Fig. 87) you can see Lucifer in a reddish-yellow painting above the representative of humanity in the central image of the small dome.



Figure 87

The next image (Fig. 88) then represents Ahriman under the representative of humanity – Ahriman, who is embraced with his love rays as if by a crushing lightning bolt.

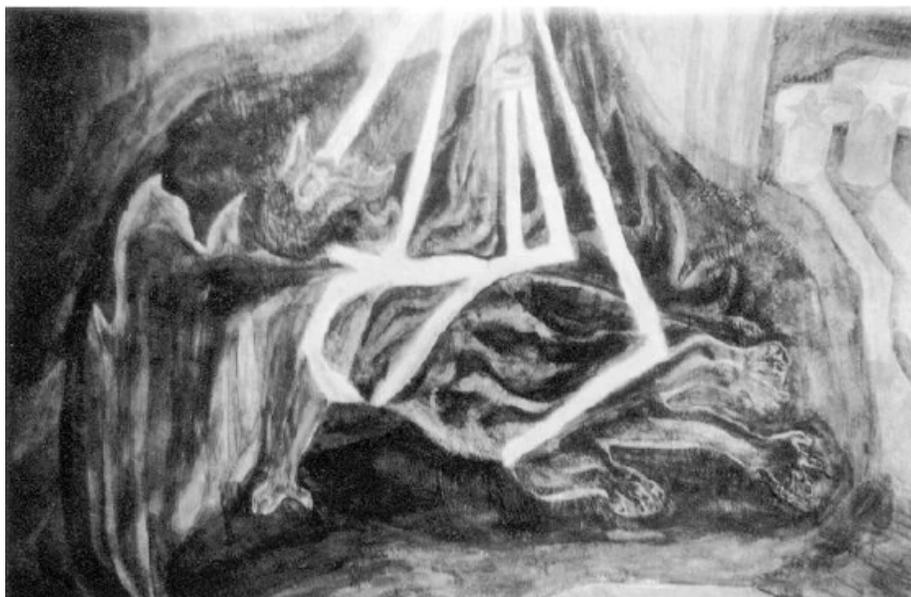


Figure 88

This is the painted Representative of Man, that is, the head of it (Fig. 90). This (Fig. 91) represents my model as it is initially worked in profile view of the Representative of Man; while what was shown earlier is a painting, this here is a sculpture. This is the first model of the Representative of Humanity in sculpture, the Representative of Humanity who can be felt as Christ.



Figure 90



Figure 91

The next part will show the plastic group (Fig. 98). At the top left, this elemental being will show itself, an elemental being that has, to a certain extent, grown out of the forces of the rock. Below, you can see Lucifer striving upwards. The elemental being has grown out of the forces of the rock here in the wood group, whereby it becomes clear how one first dared here to work out ways of overcoming mere composition through organic design by means of asymmetry work out ways of overcoming mere composition through organic design, thus working in asymmetry. What is important here is that the form is worked out precisely from the place, with all its asymmetries, from the place where this being is located in the nine-meter-high group.



Figure 98

I will now show you my first Ahriman model (Fig. 99), which was created in 1915 in wax. The other Ahriman heads here are modeled after this Ahriman head. I would just like to note: This is what a person would look like if he had no heart at all and only reason. For the Ahrimanic represents the super-intellectual, the super-rational in man.



Figure 99

I will now show two views of the boiler house, the boiler and lighting house (Figs. 106, 107).



Figure 106



Figure 107

Now we come to the glass house below, in which you have held many a meeting here (Fig. 103). You can see the double-dome structure in a different form, a metamorphosis of the large building, metamorphosed in such a way that the two domes have to be the same size and do not adjoin each other, but are separate. I would like to illustrate the fact that everything about these buildings is individualized down to the last detail by showing you the gate of this glass house (Fig. 104), where you will see the individualization down to the stairs and the woodcarving.



Figure 103



Figure 104

Now another picture (Fig. 110 or 112), which should show how what is intended by scratching out the colored glass pane, what is created from the feel of the material, so that it can only appear in the color in question. I ask you to look at this and see for yourself that if this appears uncolored, it is hideous.

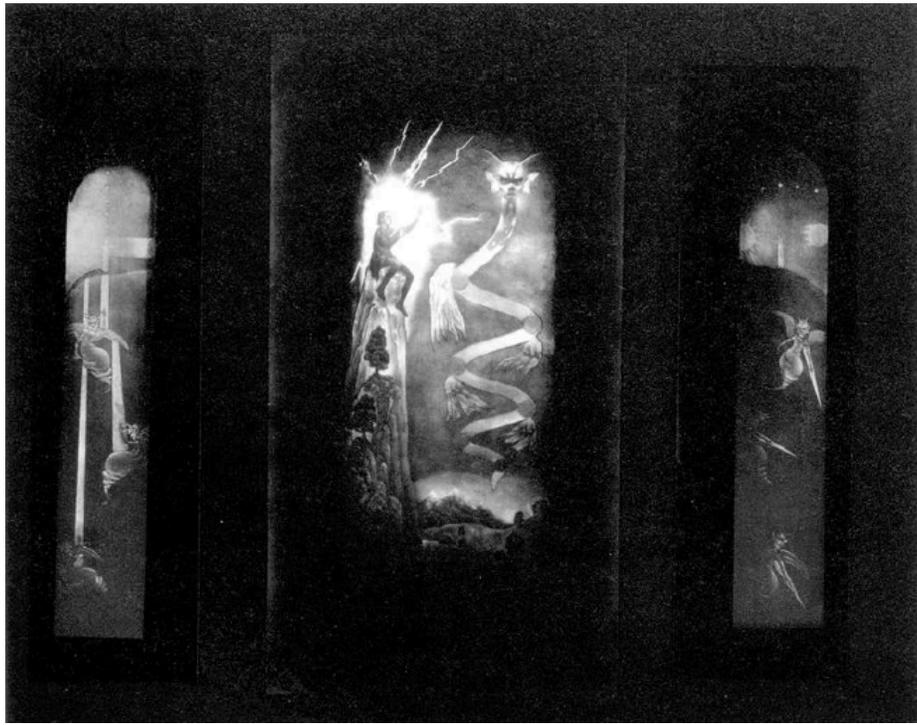


Figure 110



Figure 112

In recapitulating these things, I believe I have once again been able to point out how anthroposophy does not want to be just a science, but wants to be something that can act creatively in culture, that can speak in words, but that can also reveal itself in artistic forms. And now I just want to add at this point that perhaps it has emerged to you from what we have seen here in the building, what you have heard here in the building, what is intended and how it is connected with the signs of the times. The project that has come to fruition could only be realized through the great willingness of some of our members to make sacrifices; but the exchange rate situation in the world and the poverty of the Mediterranean countries have led us to a point where I had to say, which was also spread by a small brochure that was sent to members: If we do not receive active help from the world, we will not be able to complete the building, but the building will have to come to a halt. If our members apply themselves with the same zeal to the completion of the building as they did to the founding of the World School Association, which is intimately connected with the building idea of Dornach, then we will soon be able to see a torso in the fall, which can be seen as a torso.

Since your time is limited, in particular the time of some of our esteemed visitors, I will not add anything further to what has been said, but ask you to come over to the building, where I will then take the liberty of saying a few closing words for this summer event.

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