ERICH MENDELSOHN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO
THE LIKEABILITY OF BUILDINGS

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Abstract

In my paper, I attempted to answer a central question about architecture: what makes certain buildings create such a strong sense of belonging and what makes others so sterile and unwelcoming. I used the work of German-born architect Erich Mendelsohn to help articulate solutions to these questions, and to propose paths of exploration for a kinder and more place-specific architecture, by analyzing the success of many of Mendelsohn’s buildings both in relation to their context and in relation to their emotional effect on the viewer/user, and by comparing this success with his less successful buildings. I compared his early masterpiece, the Einstein Tower, with a late work, the Emanue-El Community Center, to investigate this difference. I attempted to place Mendelsohn in his architectural context.
I was sitting on the roof of the apartment of a friend of my mother’s in Constance, Germany, a large town or a small city, depending on one’s reference point. The apartment, where I had been frequently up until perhaps the age of six but hadn’t visited recently, is on the top floor of an old building in the city center, dating from perhaps the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. The rooms are fairly small, but they are filled with light, and look out over the bustling downtown streets onto other quite similar buildings. Almost all these buildings have stores on the ground floor, often masking their beauty to those who don’t look up (whatever one may say about modern stores, especially chain stores, they have done a remarkable job of uglifying the street at ground level). Above the ground floor are primarily apartments, with multi-paned windows set somewhat back into the buildings. Some have murals, often magnificent ones, dating back hundreds of years. The streets are usually much narrower than typical American streets.
are, with room for perhaps one and a half cars, if they aren’t completely pedestrianized. The streets are warmed by the ocher and yellow tones of the buildings that line them.

In order to get to the roof of our friend’s apartment, one has to leave the main portion of the apartment and walk along a narrow passageway, presumably a former service area, with a very different tone to the rest of the building. Instead of light walls and an airy feeling, with linoleum or light wood floors, this passageway has dark wood floors and paneling, not the sort of paneling one sees in elegant clubs but rather workaday, rough, dark wood darkened further with age. The same wood made up the floor. If it weren’t for the lack of a fireplace and the view over the long staircase, one might imagine oneself in a modest Swiss skiing cabin. After climbing up a steep and fairly short staircase, of the same wood, once comes out onto the roof, with a small table in front of one. The roof is a functional roof, with a plant or two but mainly covered in tar paper and not really meant for use. The view is straight down onto a busy commercial street corner.

Suddenly, as we were sitting down to lunch, I found myself thinking, “I would like to live here.” The feeling that this was a good place to live, that I could have this view, walk through this corridor, climb up these stairs, and sit down for
lunch at this table every day for the rest of my life.

Looking back on it, this feeling is in many ways a product of urban planning and architecture. Why did this place feel so pleasant, so welcoming to me? Of course it was in part the fact that I had been there often when I was young; but there was more to it than that. This one apartment was not the only place I had had a similar feeling. Almost all old European towns have at least a part that, to me, feels so welcoming that I would gladly settle down there. It is these places where tourists like to snap pictures: “Look how quaint it is!” Even those without knowledge of history or the wish to live in Europe feel somehow attracted to these areas.

In thinking about why I was so attracted to this one specific place, I came to think of a building that had always seemed particularly evocative to me: the Einstein Tower. One of the more striking buildings of the twentieth century, it stands in a park in the German city of Potsdam, about 15 miles outside of Berlin. Set in a clearing in the woods, the Einstein Tower is a small observatory, built between 1919 and 1921, in curving stucco over a layer of brick, by the then-unknown architect Erich Mendelsohn [fig. 1]. Out of a base of elevated ground, punctuated by windows from the basement, rises a building so curved it almost seems made out of play-doh. There is a short
horizontal entrance at the front, then the main compositional
element, the tower itself, with rounded walls and windows,
about six stories tall, topped by the observatory dome. At the
back of the building there is another two-story group of rooms.

The Einstein Tower emerged out of a time of great
scientific experimentation and advance. It was commissioned by
Erwin Finley-Freundlich, an astrophysicist who had worked as
Einstein’s assistant. Freundlich wanted to “test... the general
deviation of all the sun’s spectral lines, predicted by the
Theory of Relativity”¹. After much back-and-forth, the Prussian
government agreed to put up a part of the funds for the Tower,
the rest being provided by private contributions. According to
Freundlich, “The main idea of the Einstein Tower consisted of
combining a telescope of a large focal length and of great
aperture with a physics laboratory”². Freundlich describes the
Tower as “a beginning of a new era which started with
Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and with a new era of organic
structure in architecture, possible only in the new materials
of steel and concrete”³. It is interesting that Freundlich saw
no contradiction between the rational science that lay at the
heart of the purpose of the Einstein Tower and the organic,

² Finley-Freundlich, Erwin: Das Turmteleskop der Einstein Stiftung, Berlin: Julius Springer, 1927. Quoted
and translated by Louise Mendelsohn in Zevi, p. 58.
³ Finley-Freundlich, quoted and translated in Louise Mendelsohn in Zevi, p. 59.
natural form of the tower. Rather, to him, the curved lines of the Tower echoed the experimental and dynamic nature of the Theory of Relativity, and, of course, its curved lines echoed the bending of light by mass, the key to Einstein’s Theory. Mendelsohn had a similar view of science and of relativity:

Ever since science has come to realize that the two concepts matter and energy, formerly kept rigidly apart, are merely different states of the same primary element, that in the order of the world nothing takes place without relativity to the cosmos, without relationship to the whole, the engineer has abandoned the mechanical theory of dead matter and has reaffirmed his allegiance to nature... The machine, till now the public tool of lifeless exploitation, has become the constructive element of a new, living organism.  

The Einstein Tower was Mendelsohn’s first major project, although he had made hundreds of sketches, primarily for unrealized buildings, between 1914 and 1920, many of them in the trenches of the East Front [figs. 2 and 3]. Born in Allenstein, East Prussia (now Poland) in 1887, he studied economics for some time to follow the wishes of his father, a successful businessman, but soon followed his true passion, architecture, studying in the Academies first in Berlin and then in Munich. In Munich, Mendelsohn studied under the renowned architect and teacher Theodor Fischer.  

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5 James, p. 392.
Fischer was a quite major architect of the time, and certainly a huge influence on Mendelsohn. One of Fischer’s most important buildings was the Pauluskirche (Church of St. Paul) in Ulm, built between 1908 and 1910 [fig. 4], which is a prime example of an architecture moving from traditional modes of building to the modern ones that Mendelsohn’s generation would embrace. Its traditional elements include the red tile roof characteristic of all houses of the time, and an overall layout usual in German churches. However, there is almost no decoration of the exterior walls, a clear signal of a break with the past.

Not only did Fischer influence Mendelsohn while he was studying in Munich, but he came into contact with leading members of the expressionist movement, especially those associated with the Expressionist “Blauer Reiter” (Blue Rider) movement.6

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Expressionism was inspired, in part, by the work of late-19th-century writers and thinkers, including Friedrich Nietzsche, August Strindberg, and Walt Whitman. Other “proto-Expressionists” include the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch,

best known for his painting “The Scream” (or, as Munch called it, “The Scream of Nature”).

Expressionism, like many other artistic movements of the beginning of the twentieth century, rejected traditional representations of reality and focus on the rational. Instead, it placed its main value on emotions, and in distorting reality for emotional weight. In visual arts, this interest expressed itself through organic shapes and distortion of perspective, which the expressionists believed spoke to deeper human emotions rather than the rational senses addressed by right angles. According to the New York Times, expressionist artists had “no desire to hold a mirror up to nature.... They seek truth not in the outer world of nature, but in the soul of the artist.”

Inspired in part by the Bridge artistic movement in Dresden, the “Blue Rider” (Blue Rider) group took shape in Munich around 1910, led by Russian writer Wassily Kandinsky [fig. 6]. The Blue Rider, unlike most artists’ groups, did not have a specific style (although all works were under the general grouping of expressionism). Rather, it aimed to

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encourage the differences and individuality in the styles of its associated artists; the main function of the association was to put out magazines and organize exhibits. Mendelsohn probably visited the Blue Rider exhibit in Munich, and mentioned Kandinsky admiringly in a letter of 1913⁹.

In architecture, similarly, expressionism was particularly associated with organic shapes and romantic naturalism. The spatial result of these ideas was unusual angles and curved lines, the point of which was to engage the viewer in the building and speak directly to the viewer’s or user’s emotions rather than “just” his or her reason. As with painting, Germany was perhaps the center of expressionist architecture (its only rival being the Netherlands, with the important Amsterdam School), with important German precursors to expressionism including Peter Behrens, Hans Scharoun and Mendelsohn’s teacher Fischer himself.

Expressionism was certainly not the only, or even the major, architectural movement of the early twentieth century. Around the turn of the century, new architectural movements began sprouting across the northwest of the continent,

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signaling a clear sense of unease with traditional modes of building. The roots of many of these movements can be traced to the Arts and Crafts movement, which centered around the work of one man, the British writer, craftsman, architect, designer, and Renaissance man William Morris. Influenced by the philosopher John Ruskin, Morris believed that the quality of life was being debased by industrialization, represented by machine-production. When Morris had a new house built and could not find any furniture of a quality and style he liked, Morris and his family members made the furniture themselves, thus launching the Arts and Crafts movement, based on craftsmanship and a romantic neo-Medieval aesthetic. Arts and Crafts had an international influence, particularly in America and Europe. Although it was, to some extent, just another architectural style, Arts and Crafts was a forerunner of modernism in its rejection of traditional decoration and emphasis on a simply beauty. Even though many modernists embraced the machine and would have been at loggerheads with William Morris, most modernism would not have been possible without his work.

Arts and Crafts was important mainly for its major influence on the young American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who would not only have a major direct influence on Mendelsohn but would be one of the most innovative and important
architects of the twentieth century. Arts and Crafts also had a huge influence on the major artistic and architectural movement in Europe at the start of the twentieth century: Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau was characterized primarily by its emphasis on curves as decoration. Although disliked by Arts and Crafts architects because of its lack of ideology and, in furniture, often shoddy quality, Art Nouveau sowed the seeds for the growth of modern architecture, due to what architectural historian Spiro Kostof called its “obsessive goal of modernism, freedom from the past”\textsuperscript{10} and because, with it, “the frank use of iron … entered domestic architecture for the first time.”\textsuperscript{11}

Art Nouveau was also the inspiration for the Spanish master Antoni Gaudí, whose buildings, such as the Casa Milá in Barcelona, were the first to integrate the curves of Art Nouveau into the structure itself, as opposed to using them merely as decoration, and who truly was the great Expressionist architect [fig. 7]. With undulating lines and ornate decoration, Gaudí was hardly a typical modernist architect, but he represented the culmination of an alternative stream of modernist thought, one alternately developed by Mendelsohn in the Einstein Tower.

Meanwhile, modernism began to move toward a vocabulary


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 687.
influenced by heavy industry: it is no coincidence that one of the first modernist masterworks was Peter Behrens’s AEG Turbine Factory in Berlin (1908-9). After the First World War, the rationalist, functionalist wing of modernism began to predominate, “champion[ing] prismatic blocks with flat roofs and a coat of unadorned white stucco, sleekly machined industrial details, efficient interior planning, and up-to-the-minute equipment.”¹² The most important exponents of this style were Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius. Gropius’s buildings for the Bauhaus, the German art school that was the hotbed of modernist architectural education, exemplify the characteristics that Kostof describes: white, undecorated stucco walls, long horizontal lines of windows without breaks, and flat roofs [fig. 8]. This vision, which was eponymously known as Bauhaus and was later called the International Style, demonstrates a love of the reproducible and the machine-made and a disregard for place and tradition.

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This is the historical background of the Einstein Tower. Although it has no parallels within the rest of Mendelsohn’s work, the Einstein Tower seems to be the culmination of the many sketches he had made during and after the war. His main

¹² Kostof, p. 700.
output consisted of department stores, which were much simpler than the Einstein Tower but still, for the most part, very elegant and individual. Most importantly, perhaps, these buildings, which were on busy streets, a very different location from the sylvan setting of the Einstein Tower, do not try to command their surroundings, but rather fit into their context. It is, however, crucial not to describe Mendelsohn as an expressionist architect; much of his work fit the category of rational functionalism much better, such as his house for himself in a suburb of Berlin from 1929-30, which exemplified the white stucco walls, flat roof, and bands of windows championed by the Bauhaus [fig. 9]. Architectural historian Bruno Zevi describes the Mendelsohn House as “the most remote phase of expressionism with not even a single semicircular, projecting volume”\textsuperscript{13}. Mendelsohn also designed many other important buildings across Germany, but specifically in Berlin, including a cinema on the Kurfürstendamm, a house for himself outside Berlin, and a headquarters for the Metal Workers’ Union, later to become the headquarters of the National Socialist party. It is interesting that the Einstein Tower finds no repetition of its swooping, expressionist forms elsewhere in Mendelsohn’s. Granted, curved lines would recur throughout Mendelsohn’s work, but never in the same extreme,

\textsuperscript{13} Zevi, p. 190.
dynamic fashion of the Einstein Tower. Rather, as architecture critic Reed Kroloff points out, most of his early buildings, and certainly his department stores, are strongly influenced by Art Deco streamline moderne\(^\text{14}\) It seems, then, that the Einstein Tower is a sort of culmination of Mendelsohn’s early work, and that he then felt the need to move on to an aesthetic more influenced by the dominant modes of modernism. Toward the end of his life, Mendelsohn wrote that, in the Einstein Tower, he “had mistakenly emphasized form over structure”\(^\text{15}\). The evolution of modernist design, from a very experimental and romantic stage in the 1910s to a much more rational approach after the First World War, was thus mirrored in Mendelsohn’s own work.

In 1933, with the rise of National Socialism, Mendelsohn emigrated to England, where he founded a practice with the young Russian-born architect Serge Chermayeff. Their practice was neither prolific nor long-lasting, but they did design the well-known De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex [fig. 10]. But Mendelsohn began receiving more and more commissions from the British Mandate in Palestine, in part due to his strong connections to the Jewish community in Germany. His first major project in the British Mandate was the Weizmann

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\(^{14}\) Kroloff, Reed. E-mail interview by the author. May 5, 2013.

\(^{15}\) James, p. 403.
residence, home of Chaim Weizmann, Nobel laureate and later to be first president of Israel\textsuperscript{16} \textit{[fig. 11]}. Other major projects in Israel include the Schocken Residence (built for the head of the department store chain that had commissioned much of Mendelsohn’s early work in Germany) and the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Although many critics find Mendelsohn's work in Palestine weaker than his previous projects, I think that they do a fantastic job of using vernacular materials – primarily stone – and simple shapes to ground the building in the landscape.

Mendelsohn received many major important commissions in Palestine, but despite his success, Mendelsohn wanted to be appointed head architect of the burgeoning Israeli state, and was disappointed. In 1941, Mendelsohn and his wife sailed to the United States, and Mendelsohn began lecturing at various universities. In 1945, the Mendelsohns settled in San Francisco and Mendelsohn taught from then until his death at the University of California at Berkeley\textsuperscript{17}.

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One of Mendelsohn's important late American projects, and an interesting contrast to the Einstein Tower, was the Emanu-El

\textsuperscript{16} Zevi, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{17} Louise Mendelsohn in Zevi, p. 276.
Community Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, built between 1948 and 1952, which I do not like at all [fig. 12]. The most noticeable element of the Emanu-El Center is its horizontality. The roof is flat, in sharp contrast to that of the Einstein Tower, and is, in fact, angled slightly upward. Curved or pitched roofs differentiate a building from its landscape while simultaneously grounding it in that context. The curved or sloped roof draws the eye upwards and provides a simple and elegant ending to a building rising from the ground (not to mention its practicality in rain and snow). The flat roof does none of these things, rather seeming boring and impersonal. Flat roofs align the building with the street rather than setting a building apart from it. This comparison is perhaps not so far-fetched as it seems, since Mendelsohn cited the speed of traffic as an inspiration for the dynamism of the Einstein Tower, which, ironically, seems grounding rather than moving despite its dynamism. A flat roof can, theoretically, extend indefinitely, whereas a sloped or domed roof can only keep going for a little ways beyond the end of the building before hitting the ground.

Mendelsohn’s use of the flat roof no doubt stems in part from his love for America and his vision, shared by many

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18 James-Chakraborty, Kathleen. E-mail interview by the author. April 10, 2013.
others, of America as a land of opportunity, of the open highway, of the drive westward, the pioneer spirit, possibility around the next bend. The flat roof also echoes the early work of Frank Lloyd Wright, who, in his Prairie Style buildings, used flat roofs and extremely horizontal compositions to fit his buildings into their Prairie surroundings.\(^{19}\) Wright was a major influence on all European modernists, as his sketches were published in Germany in 1910-11, long before he became famous in the United States\(^ {20}\). In fact, Mendelsohn visited Wright at Taliesin East in 1924, and, upon his return to Europe, organized an exhibition of Wright’s work\(^ {21}\).

Despite Wright’s support for them, I don’t believe that flat roofs in fact echo a sense of freedom and limitlessness, as one would think their alignment with the road would suggest. Rather, they are less freeing and more bland, especially in the case of the Emanu-El Community Center, since the roof is so heavy and so low over the windows that one immediately feels that the inside will be dark, low and cramped.

So why, then, does this building seem so uninspiring? I have discussed the horizontality of the building. Furthermore, however, many would also argue that the building seems so

\(^{19}\) Thanks go to Dr. Michele Metz for this idea.
\(^{20}\) Kostof, p. 685.
\(^{21}\) Louise Mendelsohn in Zevi, p. 81.
generic simply because there are so many like it. This argument deserves closer attention. Are we simply tired or this type of building? If so, though, then why do Georgian and Neoclassical architecture not have the same effect on us? For example, the Royal Crescent in Bath [fig. 13] still seems as elegant as it did 200 years ago, even though it is made up of identical buildings with many similar ones across England. Is a flat roof really enough to make a building type seem boring? It certainly seems insufficient. I think that the flat roof, then, is a symptom rather than a cause: the cause is boring and oversimplified massing. Whereas in the Einstein Tower there are many shapes and dynamic lines, the Grand Rapids Community Center is simply one rectangle.

The question of why I like the Einstein Tower and not the Emanu-El Community Center brings up a central question: what makes some buildings so pleasant and satisfying to be in and others unpleasant?

This question brings up an important debate in architecture: that of space versus place. All architects can do is create a space, a physical room, or a scaffolding, a building. But the best spaces and buildings, both from the inside and out, lend themselves to becoming places that summon memories for their viewers and occupants, evocative and
recognizable. What can architects do to create such effective spaces and structures?

In an article in the *Architectural Review*²², critic Peter Buchanan addresses in detail the question of space and place. Buchanan describes how, in some places, “it is easier to be fully present, to feel a sense of belonging to, and relationship with, our setting, to open up and simply be.”²³ He points out that “the environmental crisis and the need to create a sustainable culture is asking us to come back home, to feel a sense of belonging to and deep respect for the earth, things we cannot do in the alienating and placeless world we have been creating.”²⁴ Buchanan argues that the most important part of a sense of place in a building is pattern: “not pattern as a continuous decorative surface, as is currently fashionable, but pattern as an irreducible perceptual gestalt that confers on a building a distinct physiognomy, a sense of stability and wholeness, and raises it from useful, subservient artifact to a being in its own right.”²⁵ He writes that glass boxes, while sometimes elegant, “are also lifeless and, without any focus (or foci) to hold the eye or elements interlocking

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²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Ibid.
inside and out, are unable to hold the space before them and help invest it with some sense of place.” 26

The Einstein Tower seems to me an excellent example of a building that creates a sense of place. Although it is rendered in concrete and brick, the Einstein Tower is unquestionably organic. It is very soft and gentle on the eye, welcoming to the viewer, in sharp contrast to so much of modern architecture, which is stark and challenging. Its curves appeal, I think, to all of us: we would all prefer to sit down on a soft surface than a hard one; and we associate curved lines with softness and straight lines with hardness. Although curved lines do not make a building more natural – the same manmade materials go into a building with curved lines and one with right angles and straight walls – curved lines give the illusion of nature, and help a building fit into its natural surroundings. Moreover curved lines keep the eye in the foreground, making us feel grounded in the here and now, unlike horizontal lines, which lead the eye on toward the horizon. In other words, curved lines fulfill admirably the role of pattern Buchanan places so much value on.

The massing of the building, too, works to keep the viewers’ eyes in the foreground. Not only does the Einstein

26 Ibid.
Tower have two main shapes - the tower sitting on top of a rounded box - but, within these main shapes there are a multitude of perspectives and angles. Most noticeably, the windows are inset and the windows themselves have many panes. The insets around the windows not only give shade, they also break up the walls texturally and compositionally. The panes of the windows are an often-overlooked detail that can make a huge difference in our perception of a building by giving texture to an otherwise-flat surface. However, Mendelsohn does not take curves and variegated massing to extremes and thus avoids the frivolity of Frank Gehry and others whose aim seems to be to cram as many angles as possible into a building [fig. 14].

The overall composition of the Einstein Tower and its placement in its natural context work to create a sense of place. The Einstein Tower is set in a clearing in the forest, and, with its strong verticality, can be described as a man-made tree. It echoes the tress surrounding it, but, with its clearly non-wood-like material, it does not try to mimic them. It adds to its landscape but is firmly a part of it, a human contribution to the beauty of the surrounding nature.

We can ask two questions based on this comparison of two buildings. First of all, what motivated the shift in Mendelsohn’s work that leads the Emanu-El Community Center to
be so different from the Einstein Tower? Secondly, what can architects draw from the lessons we have learned in formulating a newer, kinder architecture?

In response to the first question, I think that it seems natural that, building in a very different environment, twenty years and three countries later, Mendelsohn should build in a quite different style. (It is also important to remember that the Einstein Tower represented an organic outlier in Mendelsohn’s early work, that most of his early buildings were quite different.) According to architectural historian Kathleen James-Chakraborty, “[Mendelsohn’s] aims had shifted from a largely commercial approach to building for the Jewish community in the wake of the Holocaust” 27. What these factors fail to explain, however, is why Mendelsohn should settle for the cramped and uninspiring nature of Emanu-El, why this late work seems so much weaker than his early work. This is true not only of the two buildings I compare, but holds more generally as well. The best answer to this question I can think of is that Mendelsohn was simply searching for new ways to express his vision in a new country and that many of the resulting experiments were not as good as others. Additionally, as architecture critic Kroloff points out, “Mendelsohn bec[ame] 27 James-Chakraborty, Kathleen. E-mail interview by the author. April 10, 2013.
much more earth-bound” as his career progressed. Kroloff also mentioned that Mendelsohn “would not be the first architect” whose work became less adventurous as he grew older.

As to what architects can take from Mendelsohn, I think that the lessons are manifold. Curved lines are a commonplace in today’s “high-design” buildings, but they are notably absent from tract houses and the like. Most important, I think, is that architects need to use more variegated massing, as opposed to the boxy and undifferentiated buildings we see all too much of. What is particularly interesting about Mendelsohn is his utilization of the plastic possibilities of reinforced concrete: most of the curved lines in “architect-designed” buildings nowadays are superimposed on the overall composition, rather than growing out of the plasticity of a material itself. For example, Norman Foster’s Zayed National Museum [fig. 15] is curved, but in no sense organic, since the curves are formally imposed: this is an important distinction for architects to, even if not recognize, at least consider. Another lesson, and one that I hope to take into account in my own buildings, though it is less directly related to the two buildings consider above, is Mendelsohn’s ability to fit a building into its urban context. Overall, Mendelsohn, especially in the

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28 Kroloff interview.  
29 Ibid.
Einstein Tower and in his buildings in Palestine, uses the “play of pattern” Buchanan emphasizes, both in terms of material, nature, massing, curved lines, and other attributes, to ground his buildings, and by extension the buildings’ viewers, in their context.
1. Einstein Tower in Potsdam, Germany.
2. An early Mendelsohn sketch for a garden pavilion.

3. A view of the completed pavilion.
4. Theodor Fischer’s Pauluskirche in Ulm.
5. Wallfahrtskirche Vierzehnheiligenkirche (Basilica of the Fourteen Holy Helpers) by Balthasar Neumann in Bad Staffelstein, Bavaria. Note the differences and similarities to the Pauluskirche.

7. Antonio Gaudí’s Casa Milà in Barcelona, representing a different vision of expressionism from that of Mendelsohn.

8. The Bauhaus in Dessau, by Walter Gropius, exemplifies the principles the Bauhaus School espoused.
9. Mendelsohn’s own house at the Rupenhorn in suburban Berlin, strongly influenced by the Bauhaus.

10. Mendelsohn’s major project from his English partnership with Serge Chermayeff, the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea.
11. One of Mendelsohn’s major projects in Palestine, the house of scientist and politician Chaim Weizmann.

The Royal Crescent, Bath.

14. The Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, by Frank Gehry.
15. Zayed National Museum, Dubai, by Norman Foster. Notice that the curves seem superimposed on the material, rather than the plastic nature of the material itself being exploited.

This source is an article dealing with Munch and the poem that preceded/accompanied/inspired the Scream. It is from the American Reader, a new literary monthly. I used this source mainly to get the poem by Munch that I included in my historical summary. I also used it somewhat to inform myself about Munch.


This source is the website of the museum dedicated to the "Brücke," or Bridge, movement in German art. It is, unsurprisingly, clearly biased and somewhat indulgent toward the often silly rhetoric of the Brücke movement, but I found that rhetoric to be useful to illustrate what the artists of the movement believed they were achieving.


This article is a fascinating account of what may be the strangest element of Mendelsohn’s career, his design for German Village, a testing site for bombs destined for Berlin and other parts of Germany.


This article, a review of an exhibit of Mendelsohn’s drawings at the Cooper Hewitt Museum of Design, provides an overview of Mendelsohn’s work along with the argument that Mendelsohn’s designs presaged many of the great works of curvaceous modernism, such as Jørn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House and Eero Saarinen’s design for Dulled airport. The author, who succeeded Ada Louise Huxtable as architecture critic at the Times, went on to be the occasional architecture critic for the New Yorker. He is now a contributing editor for Vanity Fair and teaches at the New School.


This source is an article in the scholarly journal published by the American Society of Architectural Historians. I have used it extensively, less in actual citations than in informing myself of Mendelsohn’s early mindset and work. It is extremely good on Mendelsohn’s early work, on the Einstein Tower, and on the theory of relativity, which was a major influence on both. The author (now Kathleen James-Chakraborty) is a professor at University College Dublin – one of the preeminent universities in Ireland, and was previously a professor at UC Berkeley.

James-Chakraborty, Kathleen. E-mail interview by the author. April 10, 2013.


A very clear overview of architectural history, which I used mainly for my
discussion of Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau, and Bauhaus.

Kroloff, Reed. E-mail interview by the author. May 5, 2013.


———. View of completed Garden Pavilion at Luckenwalde. Illustration. 1920.


This source, a summary of the history of expressionism from the website of MOMA (New York), was very useful in beginning an exploration of expressionism. It is a chronology, and therefore offers an excellent starting point. Some of it is simplistic, but overall it is fairly free from bias.


This article provides insight into international opinion on German expressionism and was quite useful in its focus on the visual arts. It captures quite well the various strands of expressionism, which are more loosely connected than they are in most artistic movements.


This very basic definition from the MOMA website was useful in my discussion of the Blue Rider movement.


This treatise is a somewhat strange, but understandable, nationalist art plea that argues that Germany has been overwhelmed by a flood of cheap and low-quality French art. Vinnen, a German artist whose work is clearly influenced by impressionism, wrote his article in the newspaper Bremer Nachrichten. His polemic is particularly powerful because he was clearly not a blindered Francophile, but rather felt that Germany needed to develop its own artistic styles.


This book is the first major monograph to cover all of Mendelsohn’s work. Von Eckardt, an exile from Germany like Mendelsohn, was, with Ada Louise Huxtable, one of the two first architectural critics at an American general-interest newspaper. Like Mendelsohn, he was a major figure in the German and then the American architectural community.


This article was a useful source for information about Theodor Fischer, Mendelsohn’s teacher in Munich, and his other important students (of whom there were many).