



ARQ_(Santiago)

On-line version ISSN 0717-6996

ARQ (Santiago) no.105 Santiago Aug. 2020

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-69962020000200040>

READINGS

Spatial Histories of Dissidence: Imagination, Memory, and Resistance in Istanbul, Vienna, and Santiago de Chile, 1938-1945

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ABSTRACT

This essay illuminates a story of friendship between the Austrian Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and the Chilean Victoria Maier Mayer, two architects who took part in the resistance against the Nazi regime. The observation of their lives opens up ways of writing spatial histories of dissidence and pose question about kinship after trauma.

Keywords: resistance; memory; dissidence; imagination; essay.

The conviction that everything that happens on earth must be comprehensible to man can lead to interpreting history by commonplaces. Comprehension does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden, which our century has placed on us - neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated attentive facing up to, and resisting of reality - whatever it may be ([Arendt, 1958](#):viii).

Comprehension or Resisting of Reality⁴⁴

In 1953, the Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897-2000) wrote from Vienna to her friend and

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colleague, the Chilean architect Victoria Maier Mayer (1914-2004) in Santiago.⁴⁵ It was one of the many written communications between the two women who had shared a political and architectural life in Turkey and Austria during the early 1940s, where they had been active in the Communist resistance against the Nazi regime. "I live in Vienna, I separated from my husband," Schütte-Lihotzky wrote to Maier Mayer, "now I am alone at Hamburgerstrasse 14, in Vienna's fifth district, of which you would not have so pleasant memories."⁴⁶ Those "not so pleasant memories" referred to the Gestapo's seizure of Maier Mayer in 1941, at this very address, on the same day Schütte-Lihotzky was also captured.⁴⁷ In the aftermath, both women were interned by the Nazis along with hundreds of other dissidents.⁴⁸

This essay is about Schütte-Lihotzky's and Maier Mayer's resistance work in Istanbul and Vienna, their suffering in internment, and their respective activism in postwar Austria and Chile. Highlighting these architects' dissidence within networks and alliances of resistance fighters who engaged in true political-creative labor is critical because these histories have been persistently ignored in architectural discourse. More importantly, this essay asserts that Schütte-Lihotzky's and Maier Mayer's memoirs allow historians to excavate visual and linguistic forms of resistance as critical spatial and social histories. Based on deep archival work, this text focuses on these strategies of opposition as historically specific concepts providing a methodological and theoretical framework for writing spatial histories of dissidence.⁴⁹ In doing so, it counters years of scholarship burdened by the critique of operative history and what architectural historian Mark Wigley recently coined as "the voice of the unmoved historian."⁵⁰ Therefore, this essay privileges a methodology that highlights "reports about or from the victims," as advocated by the German Holocaust survivor and resistance historian Arno Lustiger (2001), and connects them with the present.

Today, Schütte-Lihotzky is widely remembered for her social commitment within architecture, but her political activities still pose historiographical challenges. Despite the voluminous scholarship on her famed Frankfurt Kitchen, which was developed in the late 1920s for the municipality of Frankfurt, Germany, today no single English language essay examines her 1984 memoir *Erinnerungen aus dem Widerstand, 1938-1945* (Memories of the Resistance).⁵¹ Little remains known about her political formation in the Soviet Union where she and her husband, Wilhelm Schütte (1900-1968), worked with the so-called May Brigade in the 1930s.⁵² Although ample primary and secondary sources exist in archives, even less has been uncovered about the small clandestine circle of mostly architect émigrés with whom she joined the Austrian Communist resistance while exiled in Istanbul.

Maier Mayer's architectural and political efforts provoke similar and yet distinct historiographical questions. A Chilean designer with German ancestry, she graduated from Universidad de Chile in 1935 and subsequently worked in three countries - Austria, Turkey, and Chile. Like many other female architects of the time, she contributed to private practice, public service, and education. Because Maier Mayer herself never prolifically wrote about her resistance and design activities, one of the few scholarly commentaries on her work, even speculated that she had died in the early 1940s (Nicolai, 1998). Such forms of erasure signal persistent challenges about the gendered and geographically narrow nature of architectural inquiry. The coupling of historical with historiographical facts, moreover, emphasizes the need to continue to write transnational and intersectional histories of architecture based on primary research.⁵³ Letters, public records, and a series of oral histories with family members provide enough evidence to attempt a first discussion of Maier Mayer's labor of dissidence and its links to architecture here.

It is worth acknowledging that traces of many other dissidents who worked with Maier Mayer and Schütte-Lihotzky in the Communist resistance are still more fragile and tenuous. That is to say, the two women's lives of relative privilege enable this discussion about spatial histories of dissidence. For any balanced analysis of this oppositional work, it is crucial to emphasize that most Communist resistance fighters came from working-class backgrounds and, notably, a quarter of those working with Schütte-Lihotzky and Maier Mayer as dissidents were Jewish. Acknowledging these identities is important because, in her 1984 memoir, Schütte-Lihotzky rarely recognized or spoke about her own background of relative privilege and - more problematically - never once mentioned that this activism, both within Austria and abroad, was considerably more dangerous for Jewish resistance fighters. Maier Mayer's and Schütte-Lihotzky's texts are thus reflections on mourning, loss, and kinship after severe trauma, but they also pose complex questions about the nature of writing histories of dissidence in relation to class, gender, sexual orientation, age and religious identity during and after the Holocaust.

In "On Humanity in Dark Times," Hannah Arendt reminded readers about the critical need to recognize difference when it comes to resistant political work, famously writing that "one can resist only in terms of the identity that is under attack" ([Arendt, 1968](#):18). In the context of Nazi Germany and Austria - the very context Arendt was writing about - this meant that to minimize difference or to completely obscure it, was to partake in the violence of anti-Semitism. Recognizing this fact, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt illuminated the critical need for comprehension, which she defined as the "facing up to, and resisting of, reality," meaning to envision creative forms of political work that defy succumbing to a reality of totalitarianism. This idea of comprehension, which is resistant at its core, has been the guiding principle in my theorizing of spatial histories of dissidence. It implies a directedness against reality, one that is shared and deliberate, theoretical and material, historical and actual.

In Maier Mayer's and Schütte-Lihotzky's resistance practices, as well as those of their comrades, such imagination was made manifest in the invention of terms, the fabrication of material objects, and in the conceptualization of spatial counter-tactics within multiple cities. These tactics required inventive ways of using language, creating different forms of relationality with one another, and applying one's bodily knowledge and familiarity with a city in individual and collective actions. Studying these forms of resistance today opens up the possibility of highlighting questions of difference and identity within collective resistance. Moreover, they allow a reading not only of the work of individual resistant architects, but a complex spatial history of dissidence. As both Maier Mayer and Schütte-Lihotzky hoped - and as I too imagine - some of these tactics, might be valuable for the contemporary reader beyond any mere historical and historiographical study.

On Dissident Terms or Learning to Resist: An 'illegal minute' in Istanbul, 1938-1940

Schütte-Lihotzky's active resistance began in Turkey in the fall of 1938, when she and her husband arrived in Istanbul. In the months prior, the two had desperately sought work in Paris and London, but ultimately accepted architect Bruno Taut's (1880-1938) offer to join the Architecture Department at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Istanbul, where he had secured "respectable contracts" for them.⁵⁴ Once in Istanbul, Schütte-Lihotzky dedicated herself to the design of rural schools, but she felt isolated in that environment. "It was the first time there, that I did not work in a collective" - she would write later ([Nicolai, 1998](#):100). She was also disheartened by the treatment of her colleagues, who were considered 'ethnic minorities' in Turkey and did not have the same rights before the law. Her own life, by contrast, was privileged and Schütte-Lihotzky insisted that she and her husband were not 'exiled' in the strict sense. They had left Germany in 1930, and the fact that she was a Protestant and had been a naturalized German citizen since 1927 was important for her ability to carry out dangerous resistance work later within Austria.



Source: University of Applied Arts Vienna, Collection and Archive, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky Papers, F-151.

Figure 1 Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and Wilhelm Schütte in their home, Istanbul, 1939.

Only a few days after the couple's arrival in Istanbul another Austrian architect, Herbert Eichholzer (1903-1943), visited Schütte-Lihotzky at the Académie des Beaux-Arts.⁵⁵ Eichholzer would soon find employment in the office of an acquaintance, Clemens Holzmeister (1886-1983), in the district of Tarabya on the outskirts of Istanbul. Eichholzer was committed to a modern architecture of certain regional influences and shared with Schütte-Lihotzky a fascination for the design of housing and educational facilities. In the late 1920s, he had trained in the office of Le Corbusier in Paris and, like Schütte-Lihotzky, he was briefly exiled in France in 1938. In the same year, Eichholzer was sent from Paris to form a clandestine resistance cell in Istanbul on behalf of the Communist Party of Austria. Schütte-Lihotzky, who had signaled her preparedness to join the Communist opposition in Paris, was thus one of the first people Eichholzer approached upon arrival in Istanbul.

Turkey was a peripheral site of resistance activity during WWII, but it held a strategic position between Europe, the Soviet Union, and British Mandate Palestine ([Nicolai, 1998](#):100). Eichholzer was intent on establishing a highly reliable group of people to carry out resistance work, both for activities abroad and within Austria. His most intimate collaborator would become Mayer Maier who arrived in Turkey in 1939. She had finished her graduate studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna under Holzmeister and consequently found work in his office as well.⁵⁶ It is critical to emphasize that, contrary to previous assertions, which speculated that Holzmeister aided and supported the Communist resistance, recent findings have conclusively shown that he was instead a prominent Austro-Fascist architect. While his office sheltered people with a variety of ultra-conservative ideologies, it predominantly catered to those who had been loyal to the proto-Christian Austrian state. Sharing political and architectural passions in this climate, Maier Mayer quickly became a close office colleague, a trusted collaborator in resistance activities, and a life partner to Eichholzer.⁵⁷ For Schütte-Lihotzky, in turn, Eichholzer and Maier Mayer were the most reliable colleagues in dissident labor in Istanbul. For all of them, the two years in Turkey and the friendships formed there marked a shift from fashioning an architecture for the poor on behalf of municipalities to radical political work against the state.

Between 1939 and 1940, the group collaborated closely to prepare active resistance within Austria while they resided in Istanbul. They shared a theoretical-discursive life and rehearsed dissident tactics, sometimes staying up long into the night. The privacy of the Schütte-Lihotzky's temporary home in a guesthouse became a locale for secret social and political activity in exile.⁵⁸ It was not purely architecture that captured the circle's shared imagination, but the joint deliberations about political work and historical-theoretical reflections on Marxism, which they believed would create the social framework through which a more democratic architecture would eventually unfold. Indeed, all three of them had been committed to this mission in architecture having worked on social housing, children's institutions, and domestic spaces. Schütte-Lihotzky was already widely recognized for her kitchen designs, Eichholzer had done substantial work on devising ideas on collective housing, and Maier Mayer had dedicated her thesis to children's orphanages.

These private gatherings in Istanbul were venues for tactical training as well. When important party liaisons or officials crossed from Europe into the USSR, where the Communist Party of Austria operated from Moscow after 1939, Eichholzer called for instructions and conversations. These meetings were limited to only a handful of people and actual identities had to remain concealed. All of the resistance fighters used pseudonyms - or 'illegal' names, as they called them - Eichholzer was 'Karl,' Maier was 'Wera,' and Schütte-Lihotzky was 'Paula.' When a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee came to Istanbul, he taught the group about the 'illegal minute' ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):37,46).



Source: Personal Archives of Carla González Maier, Santiago de Chile.

Figure 2 Victoria Maier Mayer (right) with architect and resistance fighter Greta Vajs Aleksić (left) in Yugoslavia, on her way to her mission in Vienna, spring 1940.

That concept was crucial for any resistance activity, particularly within Austria and Germany in the 1940s. It established protective rules and protocols for dissident work, especially for the first contact with others. At face value, the 'illegal minute' was part of the directive to obscure resistance fighters' identity at all costs and to use the fabric of the city in carrying out clandestine work. This meant that, at prearranged meeting points, pseudonyms were exchanged and a false origin of acquaintanceship was established. Within a few moments, resistance fighters would establish the basic qualitative characteristics of their relationship - were they friends, colleagues, or lovers - which had to be maintained throughout multiple meetings. They agreed upon a credible but fabricated place they had come from that day and a false point of destination. In making these connections, the seemingly simple Communist directive to conceal one's true identity actually prompted the reinvention of selfhood, both within the context of dangerous dissident work as well in one's connection to others. This type of resistance labor relied on the invention of fictitious names, a fabricated relationality, and even a shared and imagined psychogeography of the city. It was, therefore, more than just a guideline; it was a tactic, a heuristic, a bond, and a shelter; a way of detaching oneself from one's own 'legal' identity and of creating an imagined friendship with another. It was, in a sense, a form of *comprehension*, or facing up and resisting of reality in an Arendtian sense.

After Eichholzer had been called to Austria in the spring of 1940, and Maier Mayer left on a separate mission, Schütte-Lihotzky departed from Istanbul in December of that year. During their respective trips, Schütte-Lihotzky and Maier Mayer employed a number of resistant or 'illegal' tactics, using bodily and mnemonic practices in creating a repository to transport information. When Maier Mayer arrived in Agram, Yugoslavia, she was introduced to the tactic of decrypting secret messages through a sequence of fractions by Julius Kornweitz (1911-1944) or 'Bobby,' who was an architect by training as well. In this system of encryption, numerators and denominators indicated lines and letters on the page of a book that served as a prearranged key for clandestine messaging.

Schütte-Lihotzky also received instructions in Agram by Kornweitz.⁵⁹ He equipped her with an encoded message of Viennese contacts and addresses based on the same 'mathematical' system. She hid this information on a small piece of crumpled paper in her ear canal during further travel. On December 30, 1940, Schütte-Lihotzky arrived in Vienna, having carried this vital information across borders ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):45-48).

Careful to follow instructions practiced in Istanbul, Schütte-Lihotzky stayed at her sister's house in Vienna and went to meetings only after long and meandering walks through the city. It was paramount, and self-explanatory, for everyone working in the resistance to understand that organized opposition to the Nazi regime, especially within Austria and Germany, was extremely dangerous, especially if they were followed. In addition to the shared dissident urban psychogeography established by the 'illegal minute,' resistance fighters within Vienna relied on the actual performativity of the city to guarantee not being tailed. Schütte-Lihotzky took long wandering detours crisscrossing through the park and its avenues of the imperial grounds of the Habsburgs' former summer residence at Schönbrunn ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):50). The axiality of the Baroque landscape lent itself to ensuring that there was no one in sight and that she was not detected. The park's monumentality and its imperial architecture of surveillance were thus turned against the totalitarian state.

Maier Mayer, who operated from Austria much longer than Schütte-Lihotzky did, was tasked with the particularly precarious but critical organization of resistance groups between three major Austrian cities - Vienna, Graz, and Linz.⁶⁰ Working with Eichholzer, whom she saw only a few times in Vienna and Salzburg over the course of eight months, she managed to connect resistance fighters in Vienna with a group of factory workers, typesetters, and artists around Karl Drews (1901-1942). The group in Graz eventually managed to produce what would become the only known leaflet today publicizing the atrocities and mass killings of people with disabilities - still known euphemistically as 'euthanasia' programs - under the Nazi regime in Austria ([Neugebauer, 2014](#):92).

During what would become twenty-five days of active resistance work in Austria, Schütte-Lihotzky embarked on her primary mission to locate the head of the Communist Resistance, Erwin Puschmann (1905-1943), whom she only knew by his pseudonym 'Gerber.' She was to persuade him to leave the country, because it was feared that the central organization had been compromised. He was reluctant to leave, however, and their meetings were overshadowed by the presence of his right-hand man with the pseudonym 'Ossi.' Schütte-Lihotzky also took notes of anti-fascist literature for reproduction and dissemination abroad. To this end, she went to Favoriten, one of Vienna's working-class districts where a majority of the last resistance activity was organized. In a small house, inhabited by a typesetter and his wife, she read and memorized leaflets and agitprop.⁶¹ Only one day before Schütte-Lihotzky's scheduled return to Istanbul, Maier Mayer was to meet her at Hamburgerstrasse, likely to hand off contacts and addresses. Before this meeting, Schütte-Lihotzky also saw Puschmann one last time, to prepare and discuss his temporary departure from Austria. For once, 'Ossi' was not at the established meeting point at Café Victoria. On this afternoon, January 22, 1941, the Gestapo captured Schütte-Lihotzky and Puschmann. In waves of arrests following their seizure, the Gestapo searched apartments and detained hundreds of resistance fighters. When Maier Mayer arrived at Schütte-Lihotzky's sister's residence that afternoon, she was captured by the Gestapo as well. During the interrogations that began immediately after seizure, both women found strength in the knowledge they had gained from rehearsed resistance tactics, including how to stay calm and obfuscate information during and beyond the 'illegal minute' in Istanbul.

In his 1987 book *The Language of the Third Reich*, philologist and Holocaust survivor Victor Klemperer theorized the concept of 'illegality,' the term assigned by the Nazis to tarnish dissident work ([Klemperer, 1987](#):12). Retained proudly by many resistance fighters in their memoirs after the war, this term marked their agency in having deliberately and actively resisted against the totalitarian regime. Yet Klemperer also noted how that very 'illegality' had originally, in the interwar years, referred to the Nazis themselves, who, after their rise to power, turned it against others including political dissidents as well as any person who vigorously fought for the preservation of any 'dissenting' worldview ([Klemperer, 1987](#):6). Timothy Snyder, a historian of National Socialism, observes that this distortion and abuse of language is a widespread fascist tactic that still exists today ([Snyder, 2017](#):59-64). Klemperer was similarly careful to retain the origin of the term in writing about a fictional conversation - in essence, a conversation with an entire generation of Germans and Austrians after WWII. However, Klemperer simultaneously turned the term back on itself as he laid open the much too rare efforts of opposition in Germany and Austria. "Acts of bravery existed," he wrote, "I am thinking of the many brave people in concentration camps

and the (few) daring 'illegals.'"⁶²— These words by Klemperer are critical in at least two ways. Firstly, they mark that 'illegality' became a resistant term, although it was originally conceived to tarnish and repress. They also remind us today of how modest this resistance really was. Thus, the nature of deliberateness and identity as such continue to be critical aspects in reevaluating resistant work.

Resistance and Internment, Writing from Vienna, 1940-1945

My dearest Sister, my dear Hana! I think so much - so much - about you and only ask that you forgive me for all the hardship I have caused you. I have no one in this world to turn to but Wilhelm and you both. Your love and care mean everything to me, and when I receive the laundry on Saturdays, I am happy just to have held something in my hands that you too, Dele, have also held in yours. Dearest Dele, you must maintain your health, not only for you and Hana, but also for your little sister, who will need you so desperately!! I am gathering strength and energy so that I can survive this time well.—⁶³

On February 7, 1941, Schütte-Lihotzky wrote a first censored letter to her sister Adele and her husband from a Gestapo prison at Elisabeth Promenade in Vienna, where she was interrogated, intimidated, and assaulted. The letter showed the desperation about confinement, isolation, and the terror she and other resistance fighters faced. It made evident the profound need for contact and consolation

in an attempt to reach out to the exterior world.

Schütte-Lihotzky's cell remained almost entirely dark throughout the day. The walls were smeared in filth, the toilet corroded, and the nights marked by a prolonged cold. She would later learn that isolating political prisoners from each other was a Nazi tactic ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):65-66). Attempts to defy isolation gave her the will to persist, although under drastically changed and extremely precarious circumstances.

In their work on *celltexts*, architectural critics Ines and Eyal Weizman have theorized that writing in cells can "acquire a potential subversive content, becoming critical spatial apparatuses" fostering "the individual's impulse to survive through texts, through reclaiming her own voice against the imposition of others, creating an autarkic realm in which practices of dissidence, political and personal, could be reinstated."⁶⁴— I want to acknowledge this critical framework, but also push back against this notion of complete autarky. While cells can become subversive sites for writing, making, and imagining in isolation, these activities are most often directed at creating collectivity even in an imagined exchange with others. Furthermore, imprisonment in the Nazi terror apparatus, in the cells of 'district prisons,' could entail, at any moment, deportation to labor and concentration camps and the reduction to what Giorgio [Agamben termed 'bare life' \(Agamben, 1998](#):119-181).

In the first days after the 'arrests' at Elisabeth Promenade, the hours of isolation were interrupted only by interrogations at the Gestapo headquarters in the former Hotel Métropole at Morzinplatz 4. Holocaust historian and resistance scholar Elisabeth Klamper has written that during these interrogations people were tortured with "threats, insults, standing for hours, water and food deprivation, slaps, punches, kicks in the abdomen, beatings with rubber truncheons, whips, ox gills and steel rods (...) burning cigarettes, shackling with chains, and the hanging of bound victims from doorframes" ([Klamper, 2017](#):39). Schütte-Lihotzky and Maier Mayer - who quickly became aware of each other's fate - suffered constant verbal assaults and were threatened with physical violence, the insinuation of executions, and the encouragement of suicide.⁶⁵— Faced by these forms of abuse, Schütte-Lihotzky tried to remain calm so as not to reveal details about others and to obscure information during interrogations. As she had established with Eichholzer in Istanbul, to avoid unnecessary contradictions and inconsistencies, she stuck to the truth whenever political work was not involved and "lied convincingly" otherwise.—⁶⁶ Maier Mayer admitted what she believed the Gestapo already knew in interrogations, and refused to change her statements even when encouraged to do so with the prospect of 'leniency.' Indeed, the feeling of having acted out of her own volition instilled Maier Mayer with a sense of self-determination. Schütte-Lihotzky's strength to control her statements, on the other hand, gave her initial confidence that there was a way to persist in resistance labor. Back in isolation, she recounted shaking for hours in her cell in fear for others.



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at Schiffamtsgasse to develop several ways to exchange information within the prison walls and the outside world. Those who could establish visual connections communicated between cells with a simplified hand sign language. A basic Morse code permitted the delivery of short messages to prisoners below a particular cell. A knocking signal became a warning sign of the imminent arrival of guards on individual floors. Secret messages written on paper or cloth, called *Kassiber*, were transported at great risk to the outside world or within the prison by those detainees delivering food.



Source: Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (DÖW), no. 4408.

Figure 4 “Kassiber,” secret message commenting on Schütte-Lihotzky’s trial, Vienna, 1942.

Another method of transferring information, *Schnürln* or ‘stringing,’ was also used to comrades whom the Gestapo had brutally abused in basement cells and who had to go without sustenance for days. Woolen threads were strung outside prison windows to send *Kassiber* or food down to the basement. Resistance fighters in vertically aligned cells each added a portion of their meager food rations. Schütte-Lihotzky recalled the help and bravery of two Jewish women interned on the ground floor, who had the courage to pass food and *Kassiber* along, though the risk was considerably greater for them ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):80). The design logic of the carceral space with impenetrable, thick walls, conceived only to punish and oppress, to enhance isolation, dehumanization, and terror, was subverted by the infinite thinness of woolen threads, small portions of sustenance, courage, and solidarity.

One further critical infrastructure in creating collective spaces in isolation was perhaps the least expected - the toilet’s pipework. Connecting a total of thirty-six cells (eight on four floors), the toilet ducts were the only means of

communicating directly with other prisoners in the levels below and functioned as amplifiers of speech. They were essential in transmitting threats and advice, but also in exchanging stories about the continued struggle, of hope, and of a different life that once was, and once again could become possible. Over the months of internment, this system allowed prisoners to deliver lectures and in one rare instance even to share a festivity. “We celebrated May 1, 1942, twelve men and eight women, all Communists, over the toilet,” Schütte-Lihotzky recalled ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):80). Hedwig Urach (1910–1943), who had been a key organizer in factories in Vienna, delivered a festive speech focusing on resolution and uplift. Urach’s friendship and continued defiance, which developed through the shared wall between their cells, gave Schütte-Lihotzky hope in persisting.

These methods to build collectivity in utter isolation were supported by precarious yet shared educational undertakings in rare instances. Intricate spatial puzzles and crosswords allowed resistance fighters to operate against the carceral logic by inserting terms that only interned comrades were familiar with, such as *Schnürln* or *Kassiber*. A crossword crafted by Schütte-Lihotzky contained resistance fighters’ ‘prison’ names – different from their pseudonyms or ‘illegal’ names – as well as disparaging nicknames the women had assigned to their oppressors as acts of defiance. These crosswords reflected the struggle and necessity to disassociate oneself from the reality of terror yet to actively confront it at the same time. Though distinct from the introspective production of texts Ines and Eyal Weizman theorized, these crosswords, as well as *Kassiber*, were in a sense, forms of subversive, clandestine co-writing.

Covert craftsmanship also served as subversion of forced labor practices on a single occasion. Once Schütte-Lihotzky crafted a nightstand in secret. The piece was made from cardboard boxes of effervescent tablets, which detainees had to wrap in forced labor. Although no reconstruction of this nightstand exists, it was likely foldable, to be hidden flat under a blanket or a straw sack. In the 1920s Schütte-Lihotzky had devised dozens of foldable household objects in her architectural work including pull-down beds, folding chairs, and portable tables. Even in utter isolation at Elisabeth Promenade, she detailed descriptions of a folding table in her cell, noting that its presence, if only in moments, served as a reminder of the possibility of social space.

Maier Mayer spent days untangling a ball of wool and then sorted each thread by color and size. When a guard gave her a large package of stamps, she classified them and lived – as she recalled decades later – in “the small worlds” of each of their pictures.⁶⁸ Another task that most women at Schiffamtsgasse had to carry out was to cut fabric remnants, which were then woven into rag rugs. All of these forms of labor were forced, and often abused further by the guards to extract favors. Yet, in a few rare instances, the women hid some of the threads from the fabric and crafted small presents for each other. These signs of solidarity turned the labor power that had been stripped from them into symbols of resistance. “Miniature note-books with good wishes,” and “slippers, as a symbol of one day ‘walking to freedom,’” Schütte-Lihotzky remembered ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):89). This type of solidarity was essential to Schütte-Lihotzky’s ability to maintain strength, even as she believed her own execution to be imminent. “My dear, dear sister! Now I write to you the last time before my fate will be decided,” she wrote on September 13, 1942, nine days before her sham trial.⁶⁹

Please, continue to be as happy and brave as you were, I wish with all my heart that you can continue to enjoy life. In spite of my hard fate, your life must not be spoiled, and neither must be Wilhelm’s. You were the whole time of imprisonment like a mother to me, full of love and care, and you have immensely relieved it. (...) Life in internment was not in vain, I was able to help a lot of suffering people, read a lot, and I learned a lot. Only for the moment, it is (...) very difficult. Indeed, this is probably the greatest emotional suffering that a human can experience (...) My cellmates are at this moment full of care and compassion.⁷⁰

The camaraderie of which Schütte-Lihotzky wrote was exemplified in systems of care, which extended in the rarest instances to cheerful support when one of their friends was released. In 1942, the Chilean embassy managed to negotiate Maier Mayer’s extradition after the Rio conference, in which Chile tragically remained one of the only Latin American countries that maintained neutrality towards Nazi Germany. As Maier Mayer was leaving Schiffamtsgasse, comrades chanted her pseudonym ‘Wera’ and ‘Until we see you in freedom’ ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):106). Schütte-Lihotzky was never sure if Maier Mayer had heard them.

On September 22, 1942, the ‘Second Senate’ of the Nazi’s ‘People’s Court’ condemned Schütte-Lihotzky to fifteen

years of forced confinement in the women's labor camp Aichach.⁷¹ Scholars in carceral studies have highlighted that thinking about degrees of guilt reinforces carceral logics in general. Moreover, 'sentencing' in the Nazi's terror apparatus was entirely arbitrary, cruel, and outside of any conventional understanding of legal procedure or the law. It severely punished the most minor acts of decency and humanity with torture, internment, forced labor, and executions. Jewish resistance fighters, especially after 1941, were not even subject to these sham trials. In the Nazi's intrinsically anti-Semitic ideology, their identity alone condemned them to deportation, concentration camps, and mass killing in the Shoah.



Source: AzW, Center for Architecture Vienna, Margherita Spiluttini Papers, Ka 404, 35A.

Figure 5 Drawing from Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's prison notebook, likely from 1941, currently missing.

In Aichach, Schütte-Lihotzky was interned in an environment of constant terror for more than two and a half years.⁷² One of her friends committed suicide, many of the women starved, and Schütte-Lihotzky herself, who had suffered from tuberculosis since the 1920s, became life-threateningly ill. Finally, on April 29, 1945, Schütte-Lihotzky and hundreds of other women were liberated by American and Canadian troops. Although she wrote about this period in her *Memories of the Resistance*, her recollections of this place of terror are thin. The contemporary reader cannot help but wonder if these experiences, even at four decades' distance, were too painful to put on the page.

Continuing to Resist: 'Illegal' Names in Vienna and Santiago, 1945-2000

In 1947 Schütte-Lihotzky returned permanently to Vienna and remained committed to dissident labor for the rest of her life. In the late 1940s, she advocated for the creation of several monuments to anti-fascism in Austria.⁷³ But a few years later she failed to bring the 1946 exhibition "Never Forget" into circulation as a traveling exhibit in Austria. While this show documented the horrors of the Holocaust, it did not address the support of the Austrian public for the 'Anschluss' and the atrocities committed by civilians against the Jewish population, nor Jewish achievement in Austria. It thus foreshadowed half a century of shameful erasure and a culture of forgetting. In 1950, moreover, a pro-posed project by Schütte-Lihotzky and Schütte for the victims of Fascism at the concentration camp Mauthausen received no funding. Their marriage, too, ended thereafter. "The six years of

being apart from 1940 to 1946 were not good for our marriage," Schütte-Lihotzky would note in a 1956 letter to Maier Mayer, marking the trauma and suffering she had endured.

In the conservative climate of post-war Austria, with former Nazis climbing again into positions of power, Schütte-Lihotzky found herself personally ostracized from the social and intellectual communities in Vienna which she longed for.⁷⁴ Unofficially she was barred from major commissions even within Social Democratic municipal organizations in Vienna, although she was skilled, qualified, and notably famous. As a female Communist who had been interned, her life bore witness to the Austrian Second Republic's chief falsehood of Austria "as the Nazis' first victim."⁷⁵ Schütte-Lihotzky, therefore, retreated deeper into the Communist Party, where she maintained official functions throughout the rest of her life ([Bois, 2018](#):66-88). In June 1948, she was elected president of the Federation of Democratic Women, the women's organization of the Party (Schütte-Lihotzky et al, 1996:274). By the early 1950s, she designed the bureau and personnel wing of the Globus, the print and publishing house of the Communist Party. The larger commission brought her back into collaboration with other architects in a rare instance of teamwork.

Maier Mayer returned to Chile in 1942 under extremely difficult conditions. For months she was forced to work in an architecture office in Jena, close to Weimar, under strict supervision of Nazi officials, until she was released. Her mail was intercepted, and she would not have returned to Chile had it not been for enormous political pressure.⁷⁶ Upon her return, she registered at the Colegio de Arquitectos de Chile, becoming the first licensed female architect in the country. She soon began teaching at the Universidad de Chile,⁷⁷ where she was part of a group of progressive educational reformers and politically engaged Chilean intellectuals who advocated for an architectural education focused on the social reality of the country and the needs of its workers ([Maulén, 2006](#)). Among the group were her soon-to-be husband Jorge Bruno González Espinoza (1915-2008), her brother-in-law Sergio González Espinoza (1926-2004), and the later members of Taller de Arquitectura y Urbanismo (TAU) and BEL Arquitectos ([Silva Lara, 2013](#); [Lawner, 2013](#)). In 1943, Maier Mayer also attempted to join the Communist Party of Chile, yet was discouraged from any official affiliation to avoid potential consequences for her fellow resistance fighters in Austria. In 1946, after four years of waiting for any news from Austria, she was informed that Eichholzer, her partner in life, had been executed in 1943.⁷⁸

When Maier Mayer learned that Schütte-Lihotzky had survived, she immediately sought to make a connection, but it was not until the early 1950s that the two women could finally establish a more frequent correspondence.⁷⁹ Their sustained letter exchange reveals shared concerns, despite differences in family circumstances, age, and their new geopolitical and geographic environments. Among their joint commitment remained the support for the Communist Party, a deep political and personal care for others, and - most strikingly - a continuation of their resistant architectural and political work.

Indeed, one of Schütte-Lihotzky's foremost goals in publishing her 1984 *Memories of the Resistance* - initially conceived as part of an autobiography - was to write the lives of fellow resistance fighters into evidence and thus act against a culture of forgetting. In its appendix are more than one hundred biographical sketches, containing resistance fighters' actual names, and biographical outlines when Schütte-Lihotzky was certain of them. She also included detailed descriptions of persons whose names she could not recall or which she had never known. The only exception to this rule was her description of Maier Mayer, whose true name Schütte-Lihotzky knew well but chose to conceal, annotating only her pseudonym 'Wera' ([Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984](#):183). She deliberately chose to protect her friend because she suspected that Maier Mayer was once again engaged in resistance activity when Schütte-Lihotzky was compiling her manuscript in the early 1980s. Indeed, while working as a technical inspector in the Department for Housing, Urbanism, Public Works, and Transportation for the Central Comptroller for the Republic of Chile, Maier Mayer organized clandestine gatherings in her home during and after Pinochet's military *coup d'état* in 1973. In these meetings, she was able to impart strategies like the 'illegal minute' to her family and friends in Santiago.

In 1986, when she was honored by the Colegio de Arquitectos de Chile, Maier Mayer thus only alluded to her early resistance labor but compared it to the activism she deemed necessary in Chile.⁸⁰ In her speech, she also referred to the entanglements of social responsibility, politics, and, notably, architecture. "I received the title of architect

comparably young, at 22," Maier Mayer wrote in her acceptance speech to the Colegio. "Almost immediately, a small group of colleagues from our school (...) was chosen to travel to Europe together with a delegation of engineers from the same class." She continued, "I come from a German-speaking family whose moral values stem from the thinking of a Schiller, a Goethe, a Hegel, a Marx, a Humboldt, or a Fechner."⁸¹ After these remarks about her background, she articulated why she thought architects had a particular disposition for resistance. Speaking of the years 1935 to 1938 in Nazi Germany and Austria she said:

Today, I understand that the conjunction of the moral values referred to above and the political process that had been brewing in Chile before our departure generated a conscience and violent rejection of any form of dictatorship, long before being exposed to the National Socialist dictatorship. I do not have the slightest doubt that it was for that conjunction that I, architect on one hand and democrat on the other (which is almost the same in a good sense), had to resist the ravages of Nazism. (...) I wish these words are especially heard by our young specialists, and by the students in our profession. I trust that in them will grow the seeds that nourish the construction of better times and that, all of us architects, will go back to place our skills to better serve our congeners, especially those most dispossessed, with high spirits and, in this way, contribute to the building of a more just society.⁸²

This commitment to democratic ideals, humanism, and social justice proved the most critical motivation behind her life of resistant work. These convictions contributed to her decision to join the resistance in 1938 as well as in 1973. Yet, it is worth highlighting that in Maier Mayer's view, a humanistic outlook and resistant potential also shaped the discipline of architecture itself. The creation of lasting improvements to the material conditions of life through establishing a political framework was after all the foundational Marxian approach shared by Schütte-Lihotzky, Maier Mayer, and Eichholzer in 1930s Istanbul. In the postwar period, like Schütte-Lihotzky, Maier Mayer insisted on relaying the specificities of their resistance practices to a younger generation of architects and artists so they might be used within and beyond the profession.

When Schütte-Lihotzky revised her memoir's foreword in 1995, it read almost verbatim as a reflection of Mayer Maier's speech. She wrote that she hoped the book would reach historians, filmmakers, and young people. Yet, she dedicated the most space by far to the third group, in the hope that "those who were born after the war (...) might want to gain insight into the lives of the Austrians of my generation, and into their political and ethical choices" (Schütte-Lihotzky, 1984:113). She further elaborated:

The young people of today feel that their own choices will determine the fate of future generations, as we did ourselves during those years (...) We live in uncertain times, and who is to say what the younger generation will have to endure, even in Europe. This is precisely the reason why I gave such a detailed account of my dealings with the police, of their interrogation methods, and of my trials: should any of my readers find themselves in a similar situation, I hope that my testimony will allow them to react to it in a better and more informed fashion.

After four decades, Schütte-Lihotzky and Maier Mayer maintained a view on political work and life that had been formed in the 1940s. Seventeen years apart in age - Schütte-Lihotzky was 41 when she joined the Communist resistance and Maier Mayer 25 - they remained committed to the humanist ideals they saw under attack and openly defended them, even as elderly women. While Maier Mayer organized clandestine meetings in her home in Santiago during the 1970s and 1980s, Schütte-Lihotzky began to fight the rise of the far-right in Austria when she was nearing her hundredth's birthday in the late 1990s.

Schütte-Lihotzky spoke of resistance and solidarity again when she finally sent one of the last copies of her *Memories* to Maier Mayer. The gift arrived only days after the inauguration of the first democratically elected president of Chile on March 11, 1990. In the accompanying letter, Schütte-Lihotzky acknowledged her suspicion that Maier Mayer had once again been involved in dangerous political labor and how happy she was to finally speak freely after so many years. Likely to protect her friend, in this letter, Schütte-Lihotzky used Maier Mayer's less-known name 'Ines' to address her.

My dear Ines and family, now we can finally speak freely, at least by letter. I don't know where to start - there is so much to say. I did not dare to write all these years because it could harm you, because I was sure that you would continue illegally. What a fortune that we now meet (via letter) again.

Charming all your offspring. Thank you for the lovely pictures. Here is my book about our times of "heroism" and suffering. I described you as "Wera" because I was afraid using your true name could still harm you. I'm 93! years old now. Brrr!! But it's still going all right. I just hope that you will come to Europe soon, and (it will be) not too short. (...) It was very im-portant to me that as many people as possible in Austria learn what great sacrifices the Austrians made in the resistance. You get the very last copy (of the book).—⁸³

In addressing Maier Mayer as Ines, Schütte-Lihotzky, who sometimes signed her letters to her friend in a composite of her 'prison' name, legal name, and her pseudonym, 'Liesl-Grete-Paula,' had found a way to make her friend's actual persona a resistant one.

In 1997, her wish to be united with Maier Mayer became a reality, when she visited Vienna to celebrate Schütte-Lihotzky's one-hundredth birthday. Other surviving resistance fighters came from Turkey, Poland, and Germany. This occasion was the only time 'Paula' and 'Wera' would see each other again. They had met only one other time after their internment, in Berlin in 1966, when Victoria was able to tell Grete that she had heard her cheers as she walked into freedom.



Source: Personal Archives of Carla González Maier

Figure 6 Renee, Grete, Halet, and Victoria at the Hamburgerstrasse apartment, Vienna, 1997.

Post-script on Kinship and Identity: For Intersectional Spatial Histories of Dissidence and Beyond

Although *Memories of the Resistance* provides a path into writing architectural histories of dissidence today, it is critical to note it is not unencumbered by the ever-present and decades-long culture of forgetting in Austria. What Schütte-Lihotzky's memoir does accomplish is to highlight the visual and spatial tactics critical to resistance work during WWII. Moreover, her book was one of the first that thematized female resistance and exposed material and immaterial forms of care that were imagined, built, and maintained in this gendered framework. Nonetheless, it seems pertinent to raise a few questions regarding identity and kinship from the perspective of resistance studies and the history of architecture.

The idea of writing histories of dissidence attuned to questions of gender is certainly not new in resistance studies

today. Since the 1980s, survivors and scholars alike have pervasively emphasized the intersections of gender, sexuality, and resistance labor and that the Nazi terror apparatus persecuted and repressed people primarily based on identity. Those who did not correspond to hetero-normative displays of gender, moreover, were particularly vulnerable. Schütte-Lihotzky's friend, Urach, for example, who was one of the most daring female activists and single, presented deliberately masculine. She was characterized by the Nazis' "People Court" as highly intelligent - on par with her male comrades - an indictment that sealed her death sentence at the sham trial ([Mugrauer, 2010](#)).

Moreover, as the historian, resistance fighter, and Holocaust survivor, Vera Laska observed in 1983, the Nazis' patriarchal ideology was in fact so encompassing that it considered female resistance fighters less likely to be the masterminds of risky operations.⁸⁴ Secondary sources in resistance studies, which are also dominated by heteropatriarchal norms, still highlight gender and sexuality only when discussing the work of female-identifying dissidents. Conventional narratives assert that 'women used their charms,' in clandestine work. Yet, the ways in which male-identifying resistance fighters utilized their sexuality in dissident activities have rarely been considered by historians. Eichholzer, for example, seemed to have solidified political bonds through love affairs and promised marriage to several people. In fact, a number of dissidents maintained multiple affective relationships within clandestine organizations, which raises questions about what can be further inferred about solidarity and kinship within the Communist Party.

These questions, however, also lead to interrogating more complicated issues about the sometimes tacit violence of oppressed groups along the lines of class, gender, and especially religion. Schütte-Lihotzky herself was particularly unforgiving when she felt people with whom she had previously empathized and collaborated had strayed from party lines. In a letter written to Maier Mayer, dated December 30, 1956, she stated her skepticism about the class privileges of a former 'comrade' who had returned to his business as an industrialist in Styria: "Our Florian married a nice but incredibly boring wife, grows a belly and leads a rural life in luxury with two dogs and no children." To her, this life in luxury, of a man enjoying all benefits of the postwar boom, was not appropriate for a former resistance fighter. Elsewhere, in the same letter, she writes "Your children look lovely and I am content that your life has been happy. This cannot be said for most of us, that is, our friends in suffering."⁸⁵ She then recounted the loss of fellow resistance fighters, who were working-class women and who, like her, had suffered severe familial consequences during the war. These feelings were deep and genuine, yet Schütte-Lihotzky rarely acknowledged or spoke of her own substantial class privileges that set her life substantially apart from those of her friends.

Schütte-Lihotzky's memoirs are most considerably wanting and indeed troubling when it comes to questions of religion and identity. Re-published in the 1990s in Vienna, the book struggles and fails to move from a rhetoric of anti-fascism to a critique of anti-Semitism. Throughout the book, Schütte-Lihotzky never mentions that almost a quarter of the people working in the organized resistance abroad with her were Jewish. She neglects to acknowledge that their activism both within Austria and abroad was more dangerous than hers. She also fails to discuss that not a single Jewish resistance fighter with whom she collaborated survived the Holocaust. As such she never truly recognized difference or comprehended the Arendtian premise that "one can resist only in terms of the identity that is under attack" (Arendt, 1968:18). For the production of scholarship today, we must question how histories of organized political resistance have been written, especially since they have time and again prioritized national resistance while neglecting identity, particularly when it comes to describing the achievements of Jewish resistance fighters. Despite the fact that their activism was significantly more dangerous, their work remained often unacknowledged by their closest 'comrades' within the Communist resistance and even in secondary literature. Only a 2011 essay, for example, thoroughly researched the resistance activities of Kornweitz, who was one of the most skilled Communist resistance fighters.⁸⁶

In conclusion, we must continue to recognize how history is narrated today and how it enters into the present. The foremost question for me here is why architectural history has for decades privileged aesthetic discussion over richer political and social histories. Why have these essential forms of spatial production and imagination stayed so far away from our field of research? Why has architectural history recently been so concerned with images, when there are nuanced spatial histories to be excavated from text, songs, and oral narration? Architectural historians have by and large even rejected fragile material spatial histories in favor of discussions of large technological systems. These analyses more often than not confirm forms of oppression, but, with few exceptions, do little to provide accounts of how these systems were resisted. Songs sung, moving strings in the air, and fragile, imagined psychogeographies, however, seem to be equally imperative precedents of architectural and political technologies

that are wanting and needed today.

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