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Minimum Documentation Fiche 2003

composed by national/regional working party of: Germany

International working party for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

### 0.1 Picture of building/site



depicted item: Alfeld, Faguswerk  
source: Monika Markgraf  
date: 2008

	db code
<b>1. Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden</b>	
1.1 Current name of building: Fagus-GreCon	3
1.2 Variant or former name: Fagus-Werk, later Fagus-Werk Karl Benschmidt	4
1.3 Number & name of street: 58 Hannoversche Straße	5
1.4 Town: Alfeld / Leine	6
1.5 Province/state: Niedersachsen / Lower Saxony	7
1.6 Zip code: 31061	8
1.7 Country: Germany	9
1.8 National grid reference:	10
1.9 Classification/typology: IND (Industry)	11
1.10 Protection status & date: Protected monument since 1946. Nomination for World Heritage list is under preparation since 1997	12

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<b>2</b>	<b>History of building</b>	
2.1	Original brief/purpose: shoe last and punching knife factory	13
2.2	Dates: commission/completion: 1911 – 1924	14
2.3	Architectural and other designers: Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer, Eduard Werner	15
2.4	Others associated with building: Furniture: Bauhaus workshop. Graphics for Advertising and other printed materials for the company: Max Hartwig, Johannes Molzahn, Theo van Doesburg, Herbert Bayer. Photographs: photographer of the company, Edmund Lill, Albert Renger-Patzsch.	16
2.5	Significant alterations with dates: 1911 – 1914 first phase of building, 1915-24 several additions designed by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer. 1938 addition sawmill designed by Ernst Neufert. 1950 additional sawmill designed by a company in Alfeld. 1974 alteration in the interior of the office building designed by Wilfried Köhnemann. 1984 - 2000 renovation and conversion of some parts designed by Jörn Behnsen, Jürgen Goetz, Wilfried Köhnemann	17
2.6	Current use: Factory (Manufacturing and development of shoe lasts. Manufacturing and development of measuring equipment and fire protection systems for the wood-based panels industry.) Exhibitions on Fagus and Gropius as well as today's shoe lasts and shoe last production.	18
2.7	Current condition: generally good	19
<b>3</b>	<b>Description</b>	
3.1	General description: The factory consists of: Saw mill with steam room, warehouse, drying rooms, main work hall, machine room, packing area and offices. Separate from that, the forge and locksmith workshop for the production of punching knives. The ensemble was organized in separate buildings by the architect Edmund Werner. Later, Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer were commissioned with the architectural and artistic design based on this concept: They created an integrative design for the different parts of the ensemble and developed the innovative design of the Modern Movement.	20
3.2	Construction: Mostly masonry, yellow facing brick, steel and wood floor construction. Warehouse: timber framework beneath bright rough plaster. Main work hall: cast-iron columns and timber roof structure. Office building: tapering masonry pier (stiffening by cross wall and iron beams) with large hanging steel-glass elements that were three storeys high, and corner without load bearing support.	21
3.3	Context: The factory was planned along the railway track between Hannover and Kassel. It was erected right opposite of the large shoe last factory of Carl Behrens, where Carl Benscheidt had been technical director until 1910. The formation of his own factory was based on this knowledge, professional experiences as well as experiences gained on his journey to the United States, and the help of American investors. The competition with the neighbouring factory encouraged Benscheidt to present his work as an innovative and progressive company, also by the help of modern architecture.	22

## 4 Evaluation

- 4.1 Technical: The traditional construction of the building was determined by architect Eduard Werner. 23  
The innovative design of the facade, especially the steel-glass façade was done by Gropius and Meyer. Between tapering masonry pier the glass elements were placed. The glass elements were placed in front of the masonry and therewith the masonry vanished, when looking at the building from the side. Most important is the “transparent corner” without column. The glass element has been built around the corner seeming to ignore the law of load bearing. This required big efforts, because the steel glass facade is not a real curtain wall.
- 4.2 Social: The industrialist Carl Benscheidt was interested in social reforms and tried to improve the 24  
production of orthopedical shoe lasts. Further more, he was looking for more precise and faster production methods. Due to the pursuit of better organization, lightness and cleanliness the working conditions were better than in many other places. The utility rooms provided were canteen, dressing room and lavatory.
- 4.3 Cultural & Aesthetic: Carl Benscheidt used the building for advertisement and commissioned 25  
artists of the avant-garde. Thus Gropius got the chance to create a building which serves for the purpose of production as well as representing modern design. Cubic volume of the buildings, reduced shape, material and color are characteristic features of the elevations. Most significant attributes are the large glass-facades, especially covering the southeast corner of the staircase without load bearing support. The light and elegant Impression of this corner is supported by the stairs which are designed with a distance to the facade and which appear floating. Not only is the architecture showing modernity and progress by the fusion of functionality and aesthetics, also interior design, advertisement, stationary and other commodities have been developed by avant-garde architects and artists. They created a synthesis of the arts.
- 4.4 Historical: The Fagus-Werk is considered to be a starting point of modern architecture and marks 26  
a turning point in the history of architecture towards the Modern Movement. The unity of art and technology, as Gropius later formulated in the Bauhaus, the design with cubic volume, reduced shapes, large steel glass façades and transparent corners were leading towards the architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.5 General assessment: The Fagus Werke was the first big commission for the young architect 27  
Walter Gropius. He was interested in developing a new architecture, connecting the functional character of the factory with its demand of representation by using new shaphes and new materials like steel and glass. His client Carl Benscheidt was interested in showing his attitude as a social reformer and in presenting his factory as a modern company in regards of product and production. This coincidence was leading towards an architecture which is considered one of the most important steps to modern architecture while including interior design and commodities.

## 5 Documentation

- 5.1 principal references: 28  
Jaeggi, Annemarie: Fagus. Industriekultur zwischen Werkbund und Bauhaus, Berlin 1998  
Nerdinger, Winfried: Der Architekt Walter Gropius, Berlin 1985  
Weber, Helmut: Walter Gropius und das Faguswerk, München 1961  
Wilhelm, Karin: Walter Gropius Industriearchitekt, Braunschweig 1983

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5.2 visual material attached: Photographs 29

5.3 rapporteur/date: Monika Markgraf, June 19 2008 30

## 6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R

name of examining ISC member:

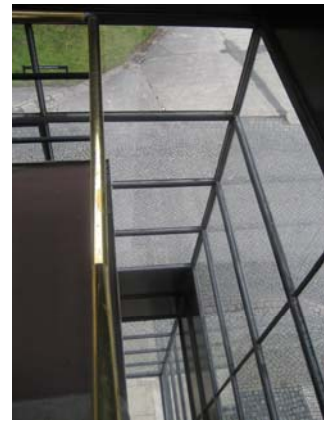
date of examination:

approval:

Wp/ref. no:

comments:

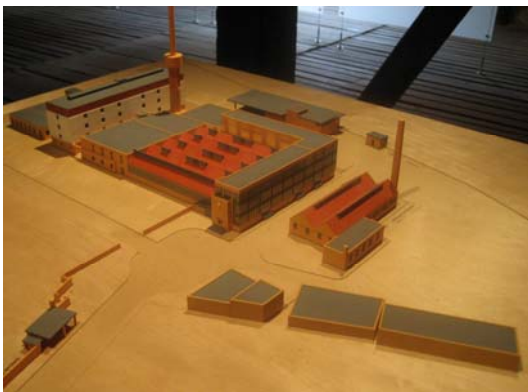
NAI ref. no:



depicted item: Alfeld, Faguswerk (view southwest and staircase inside)

source: Monika Markgraf

date: 2008



depicted item: Fagus Werk, model

source: Fagus-Grecon (Fagus – Gropius exhibition)

date: 2004

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