

Claudia Schubert

Karl Blossfeldt – Student Days and Teaching Career

Sources and Documents from the Berlin University of the Arts Archive

■ SK Stiftung Kultur

Die Photographische Sammlung
2009



Universität der Künste Berlin

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In cooperation with the Berlin University of the Arts, Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, Köln, has spent years studying, cataloguing, transcribing and digitizing the university's Karl Blossfeldt collection of original photographs, herbaria, sculptures and documents. The results have been made publicly available in a detailed, commented inventory at www.blossfeldt.info. In this text, the focus is on the documents in the Berlin University of the Arts Archive.¹ The documents in question are predominantly administrative records relating to school operations. Dietmar Schenk, the director of the university archive, refers to these documents as "Blossfeldtiana" and distinguishes them from the so-called instructive and specimen collections that include the artist's photographs, sculptures and herbaria.² The documents considered here, which are listed in chronological order in the appendix, provide a specific insight into Karl Blossfeldt's student days and teaching career at the University of the Arts' predecessor institutions, the Unterrichtsanstalt des Königlichen Kunstgewerbemuseums (Institute of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum) and the Vereinigte Staatsschulen für Freie und Angewandte Kunst Berlin (United State Schools for Fine and Applied Arts). The selected documents span the years 1885/86 – 1933.³

This extensive collection of documents includes a special sub-group comprised of nine letters by Karl Blossfeldt, some of which have not previously been published. Apart from the letter dated 1 May 1901, which is identified as a copy (Doc. 9), all of the correspondence is in Blossfeldt's handwriting (Docs. 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18). The letters provide valuable information about the content and didactic concept of his classes and also reflect his position within the educational establishment. On a more general level, moreover, they permit conclusions to be drawn about the structure of art and design education at the time. Other documents such as grade books, syllabuses and other relevant correspondence, e.g. between Moritz Meurer and Ernst Ewald, the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute's director from 1874 to 1904, also provide important clues to Blossfeldt's work and information about the Institute in general.

Student days and time in Rome with Moritz Meurer

Karl Blossfeldt's days as a student at the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum Institute in Berlin are documented in the grade books that can be studied in the university archive. Entries identifying Blossfeldt as a "sculptor" or "modeller" first appear in the 1884/85 academic year and end in 1887/88 (University of the Arts, university archive, fonds 7, no. 194, fonds 7, nos. 287–290). The grade books show which classes the artist attended and identify his teachers. Subjects for which he enrolled on more than one occasion included "Composition for Modelling" (taught by Fritz Behrendt), "History of Style in the Applied Arts" (Karl Elis) and "Figural Modelling"⁴ (Karl Albert Bergmeier).

¹ The documents inspected form part of fonds 7 and 8 of the Historical Document Archives section. Fonds 7 includes the documents of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum Institute, fonds 8 the documents of the Berlin United State Schools for Fine and Applied Arts. A number of the documents display file references and other notes, which have not been transcribed here for the sake of clarity. The spelling of the name *Karl Blossfeldt* varies in the documents (Karl/Carl, Bloßfeldt/Bloßfeld/Blossfeld) and has in most cases been retained. However, the uniquely German character "ß" is not used in the transcriptions; Blossfeldt is spelled throughout with "ss". No changes have been made to spelling that was widely used at the time, although mistakes in punctuation have been corrected for better legibility. The numerous abbreviations used in the documents have been expanded in the transcriptions in square brackets. In the English translation, abbreviations are written out in full.

² Dietmar Schenk: "Karl Blossfeldt im Archive der Berliner Hochschule der Künste. Mit einen Anhang unveröffentlichter Autographe" in *Konstruktionen von Natur*. Von Blossfeldt zur Virtualität, compiled by Angela Lammert, Amsterdam, Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2001, pp. 117–139. Schenk mentions the existence of 90 documents.

³ Bettina Gerdes brackets the documents between the years 1892 and 1935 in her thesis *Das fotografische Werk von Karl Blossfeldt – Entstehungszusammenhänge und Rezeptionsgeschichte* for the First State Examination for arts/science teachers, published in Berlin in 1994.

⁴ Cf. also Thomas Steigenberger's essay "Karl Blossfeldts Ausbildung und Lehrtätigkeit und die Bedeutung Moritz Meurers für sein photographisches Œuvre" in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, pp. 23–34. On page 26, Steigenberger also refers to courses in anatomy, proportion, figural plaster painting, sketching exercises and history of architectural style.

In a grade book with performance assessments kept by the sculptor Behrendt⁵ in the academic year 1885/86, Blossfeldt is described as "[...] exceptionally industrious and conscientious, making very good progress [...]" (Doc. 1). As of 1885, his convincing achievements won him a Dr. Otto Markwald Foundation⁶ scholarship, a fact later confirmed in a letter of 30 August 1886 written to the general administrator of the royal museums by his supervisor Conrad Grunow, architect and first director of the Berlin Arts and Crafts Museum and its collection: "The fourth candidate, a modeller from Schielo in the Harz, was awarded a Dr. Markwald Foundation scholarship last year"⁷ (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 194, sheets 75–77). The letter discusses the award of scholarships in 1886 and the prospect of Blossfeldt's award being renewed. Finally, an undated letter addressed to Grunow informs him that "[the] modeller Blossfeldt from Schielo in the Harz [...]" as well as three other students were "awarded scholarships from the current interest accruing from the fund of the Dr. Otto Markwald Foundation" (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 194, sheet 78). The fact that Blossfeldt was seen as a special achiever even as a student is evidenced e.g. by an entry on page 10 of the 1885/86 annual report: "Awards in the course competitions: 1st prize: Blossfeldt, C., sculptor 2".⁸ The archive contains no graduation certificate for Karl Blossfeldt, so the completion date of his studies can only be assumed from the grade books inspected. The last entry dates from the academic year 1887/1888 (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 290).

After completing his studies and before starting to teach at the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute, Blossfeldt spent a number of years in Rome. A first-class modeller, he was selected by Professor Moritz Meurer (1839–1916) to help with a project to introduce a "specialized course in plants studies and stylization of natural forms"⁹ in Italy.¹⁰ The University archive contains numerous documents, texts and letters by and about Moritz Meurer, who, as the driving force behind the development and introduction of the subject that Blossfeldt went on to teach for three decades, played a central role in shaping Blossfeldt's professional career.¹¹ Meurer studied painting at the Dresden and Munich Academies of Art, joining the teaching staff of the Berlin Arts and Crafts Museum Institute in 1869, first as a temporary lecture, then from 1873 to 1883 as a permanent member of staff teaching ornament studies (painting and drawing). Even at that time, he was keenly interested in linking ornamental design and botanical forms. The Museum Institute in Berlin played a prominent role in the 19th century artistic debate about ornament – a debate instituted, amongst other things, by Gottfried Semper's influential book "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts" published in 1863. Moritz Meurer was certainly one of the figures responsible for that prominence.¹²

⁵ Fritz Behrendt taught at the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute from 1874 to 1905. In his dissertation *Die Unterrichtsanstalt des Kunstgewerbemuseums in Berlin zwischen 1866 und 1933. Eine Studie zur Kunstentwicklung in Deutschland*, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 1984, p. 101, Johann Dorotheus Achatz Ferdinand Graf Rothkirch-Trach describes Behrendt's classes as follows: "The modelling class was run by the sculptor F. Behrendt from 1874 until his death in 1905. Students seeking admission to the course needed to have previously attended preparatory classes in ornament drawing, anatomy, modelling and history of style. Professor Behrendt started by giving his students modelling assignments based on three-dimensional models. These included stuffed animals, garments, musical instruments and, above all, plants. When students finished those assignments, he gave them design projects in which he specified the material to be used. The design had to take account of the material's properties. Behrendt also had his students work on in his own projects."

⁶ The requirements that needed to be met for a Dr. Otto Markwald Scholarship are recorded in the UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 60, sheet 3, document of 14 July 1886. The foundation established for it stemmed from a sum of 30,000 marks bequeathed to the Institute in 1878 by the Berlin industrialist Dr. Otto Markwald. That money and the interest earned on it was to be used to finance scholarships for "talented, meritorious German Arts and Crafts Museum students who would otherwise be unable to attend the higher classes of the Institute and thus complete their education for a career in the decorative arts." The responsibility for awarding scholarships resided with the Education Commission of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum. Applications for scholarships were submitted in writing to the Director of Education. The university archive contains no application papers submitted by Blossfeldt.

⁷ This is confirmed by a report dated 7 July 1886 in the Karl Blossfeldt Archive/Ann and Jürgen Wilde, www.karl-blossfeldt-archiv.de, 2008. It reads: "Due to hard work and natural talent, his progress and performance were very good. As of the beginning of October 1885 he is a Markwald Foundation scholarship holder."

⁸ Institute annual report 1886. In the 1884/85 annual report, Blossfeldt is mentioned as a participant in a study trip to Brandenburg an der Havel. In the 1885/86 annual report, it is also noted that Blossfeldt received a scholarship "to participate in Arts and Crafts School courses" (p. 9). In the academic year 1886/87, another scholarship for Blossfeldt is mentioned, as well as three first prizes that he won in the quarterly competition.

⁹ Quoted from "Auszug aus den Berichten und Vorschlägen des Professor Meurer im Juni und September 1887", UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheet 28.

¹⁰ In her M.A. thesis *Das Leben und Werk des Malers und Ornamentlehrers Moritz Meurer (1839–1916)*, Leipzig University, 1998, Regina Eberhardt speaks of a school that Meurer had founded in 1891 in Rome, pp. 71–74. A detailed biography of Moritz Meurer is found at www.blossfeldt.info.

¹¹ A detailed biography of Karl Blossfeldt is found at www.blossfeldt.info.

¹² Cf. Regina Eberhardt: *Das Leben und Werk des Malers und Ornamentlehrers Moritz Meurer (1839–1916)*, Leipzig, 1998, pp. 66–70; Johann Dorotheus Achatz Ferdinand Graf Rothkirch-Trach: *Die Unterrichtsanstalt des Kunstgewerbemuseums in Berlin zwischen 1866 und 1933*, Bonn, 1984, pp. 105–107. Apart from Semper's book, a major role was played in the ornamentation debate by London-born architect and designer Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* published in 1856.

In 1884, Meurer made Rome his permanent base. Since 1872/73, Italy and other Mediterranean countries had been his preferred destinations for study trips. Artists and institutions in Rome quickly came to view Meurer with respect. For several years, for example, he headed the German artists' association – the Deutscher Künstlerverein – in the city.¹³

In 1891, with a commission and support from the Prussian Ministry of Commerce, Meurer started making preparations for a plant studies course.¹⁴ The progress of those preparations is well documented by numerous items in the university archive. The correspondence with Ernst Ewald, the director of the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute at the time, is a particularly rich source of information about teaching methods and organisational details.¹⁵ Ewald vigorously supported Meurer's project and welcomed the introduction of the study of natural forms at the Institute in Berlin. His approval also ultimately paved the way for Blossfeldt's appointment as a lecturer.

Aside from teaching, Moritz Meurer wrote a number of art theory and educational papers, e.g. on the history of ornament and on the fundamental importance of studying natural forms.¹⁶ The abstract in the university archive entitled "Betreffend: Vorschläge für die Einführung eines Naturformenstudiums mit vergleichendem Unterrichte im K. Kunstgewerbe-Museum zu Berlin" [Re: Proposals for the introduction of a comparative studies course in natural forms at the Berlin Royal Arts and Crafts Museum] (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 45–52), which Moritz Meurer wrote on 4 December 1890 for the Royal Prussian Minister of State for Intellectual, Educational and Medicinal Affairs, Ludwig Gossler, shows the clear, well thought out structure of his educational concept. Meurer recommends two classes for the natural forms course: a lower and an upper class. From the very outset, attention should be focused on the "organic structure and structural development" of plants. This is built upon by studying "natural forms stripped of their chance manifestations, understanding the requirements that dictate their development (symmetry, proportion, direction etc.) and paying special attention to their organic statics and dynamics and thus representing them in a way that predicates their use in the decorative arts." However, Moritz Meurer stresses throughout that there is a constant need for comparison with existing forms in art. "Practical work in the upper class should be fuelled by a lecture on the analogy between natural and artistic forms and on the conditions that need to be met to transform the former for use as the latter. [...] So the ultimate purpose of the course will be to teach students to look at natural forms as a resource, as something from which new formal elements can be derived. At the same time, the comparative part of the course will serve to teach the student the rules for using the forms thus obtained and keep him from licence and the unconscious traditional or purely naturalizing use of form." Meurer also speaks of wanting to train teachers himself (scholarship holders in Rome) to provide the kind of tuition he envisages.

A similarly enlightening document on the practical implementation of the course is the "Bericht über die neu eingerichtete Naturstudienklasse des Prof. Meurer und die auf dieselbe bezüglichen Desiderate", [Report on Professor Meurer's new nature study class and the desiderata relating to it] which Meurer wrote on 15 December 1891 for Ernst Ewald (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 167–176). After a three month pilot teaching programme in Berlin, Meurer reports that good results were achieved by the students. As can be seen from the grade book, Blossfeldt was among the participating students (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 293, sheets 89–90). It is likely that it was in this class that the two men met for the first time.¹⁷

¹³ Cf. Friedrich Noack: *Deutsches Leben in Rom 1700 bis 1900*, Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1907, p. 341; Nancy Tanneberger: "From Waldenburg to Rome. The painter and art school reformer Moritz Meurer (1839–1916)" at www.blossfeldt.info.

¹⁴ Correspondence between Meurer and Ewald 1888, cf. UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 31–34. This fact is also corroborated in the numerous obituaries following Meurer's death in 1916, e.g. Albert Hofmann: "Moritz Meurer" in *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, 50. Jahrgang, no. 94, Berlin, 22 November 1916; Max Seliger: "Otto Greiners Porträt des Professors Meurer" in *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst. Mit den Beiblättern Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, 26. Jahrgang, Neue Folge, Leipzig: Verlag von E. A. Seemann, 1915. In her essay "From Waldenburg to Rome" at www.blossfeldt.info, Tanneberger explains the Prussian government's long-standing support for Meurer's project as a response to the low international acceptance of German arts and crafts at the time. Meurer's teaching method was supposed to raise the standard of decorative art and design.

¹⁵ This correspondence is in the UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7.

¹⁶ 1878: *Italienische Flachornamente aus der Zeit der Renaissance, Intarsien, Flachreliefs, eingelegte Marmorarbeiten etc. zum Gebrauch für Architekten und Handwerker als Vorlagen für Kunstgewerbliche und Zeichenschulen*; 1889: *Das Studium der Naturformen an kunstgewerblichen Schulen. Vorschläge zur Einführung eines vergleichenden Unterrichts*; 1895: *Pflanzenformen. Vorbildliche Beispiele zur Einführung in das ornamentale Studium der Pflanze*; 1896: *Die Ursprungsformen des griechischen Akanthusornamentes und ihre natürlichen Vorbilder*; 1896–1899: *Meurer's Pflanzenbilder. Ornamental verwertbare Naturstudien für Architekten, Kunsthandwerker, Musterzeichner pp*; 1909: *Vergleichende Formenlehre des Ornamentes und der Pflanze. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entwicklungsgeschichte der architektonischen Kunstformen*.

¹⁷ Cf. Thomas Steigenberger in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 27.

Meurer explains that the nature study classes should be extended, at least into the summer months, when it is easier to ensure material supplies. Because Meurer is unable to provide the extended tuition himself, he recommends the painter Heinrich Homolka, one of his protégés in Rome. Another notable fact is that he attaches a great deal of importance to "the management and propagation of teaching materials" with which the teacher will be entrusted. Payment should be provided for this activity. As a storage facility for the plants, Meurer proposes creating a "coldhouse" (greenhouse maintained at 5–10° C) where they could be kept. This would make it possible to run classes in winter. Karl Blossfeldt, as evidenced by his letter of 20 July 1900 (Doc. 8), will also raise the matter of a greenhouse. In addition, Meurer explains in the report of 15 December 1891 that teaching materials could be compiled in Rome, for example by a painter (Gehrke) and a modeller (Blossfeldt): "The services of a modeller would allow materials to be fabricated, in most cases as plaster models of greatly enlarged parts of plants." What is also remarkable about this text is that Meurer made sketches of botanical models as "prospective teaching materials for the ornamental drawing and morphology classes [...]" (Doc. 3).

On 18 December 1891, the teachers' conference in Berlin discussed Meurer's plant study concept ("Certified copy: Joint conference of Art School and Arts and Crafts Museum teachers," UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 180–183). This document evidences Meurer's aim of developing the relevant forms from botanical models alone.

All these documents confirm that Blossfeldt's course content, methods and concepts were closely related to those of Moritz Meurer – an observation found in much of the secondary literature about Karl Blossfeldt¹⁸ (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheet 194). Comparison of Meurer's graphic artwork with Karl Blossfeldt's photographs shows also how close the two men were in an artistic sense. Such comparison was possible on the basis of specific works featured in the exhibition *Plant Studies by Karl Blossfeldt and Related Works* that ran from 13 March – 7 June 2009 at Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, Cologne.

Documents in the University of the Arts Archive show that Karl Blossfeldt worked for Moritz Meurer in Rome during the years 1892 to 1895. The name Blossfeldt first appears on 15 December 1891 in a report by Ernst Ewald on Moritz Meurer's courses (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 184–188) in connection with an assignment to "model the most important forms from nature on a larger scale and cast them later in bronze or plaster of paris."¹⁹ In addition, "Professor Meurer's choice falls on the sculptor Blossfeldt, who currently models for the bronze workshop under the direction of Professor Behrendt." It is not entirely clear from the university archive sources what Blossfeldt did during the time between the presumed end of his studies in 1888 and the commencement of work in Rome.²⁰ Only weeks later, on 2 January 1892, it is reported "that the modeller should receive a monthly remuneration of 250 marks from the bronze fund with immediate effect, initially for the quarter 1 January – 31 March. [...] Blossfeldt has been notified accordingly [...] and provided with the necessary confirmation in writing for travel purposes. He plans to depart tomorrow (12 January)" (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheet 194).

The regular letters in which Moritz Meurer kept Ernst Ewald informed about the progress of the work in Rome are also a source of information about Blossfeldt's stay in Italy. In one letter from Rome dated 22 February 1892, Meurer makes special positive mention of Blossfeldt's performance: "In Blossfeldt, I am pleased to have found a modeller who really engages with my ideas in an intelligent way. There is no doubt in my mind that the assignments I entrust to him will produce very useful and valuable teaching materials. We are now working on the first shoots, which, thanks to the use of specially designed magnifying glasses, are yielding the most interesting forms."

¹⁸ Cf. in particular Thomas Steigenberger's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001. A reference to this connection is also found in Gert Mattenklott's introduction to *Karl Blossfeldt. Urfomen der Kunst – Wundergarten der Natur. Das fotografische Werk in einem Band*, Munich, Paris, London: Schirmer/Mosel, 1994.

¹⁹ The bronzes have been digitized and catalogued in the database of the Berlin Karl Blossfeldt Collection. See also Rajka Knipper's detailed commentary: "The Karl Blossfeldt Collection at the Berlin University of the Arts – Teaching materials for arts and crafts classes" at www.blossfeldt.info.

²⁰ Cf. also Thomas Steigenberger in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 26.

(UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 210–211). Positive assessments of Blossfeldt's work are also found in other source documents, e.g. in a letter from Meurer to Ernst Ewald on 17 March 1892: "Blossfeldt first models all materials in ordinary modelling wax but then subjects the models in the burnout wax to minute scrutiny, so the bronze casts are virtually flawless, as you will see from the samples soon to be sent. [...] I am extremely pleased with Blossfeldt because he is not just industrious and skilled; he is also very intelligent and appreciates what is important. He is the most independent of those working here and will profit most from the studies in the future [...]"²¹ (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 212–214). On 17 July 1892, Meurer reports on the use of photography to create botanical study materials – an important pointer to Blossfeldt's skill and familiarity with the medium: "We have obtained some nice results recently with microscopic photographs – I will continue to use this technique." (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 281–282).²² No microscopic images have survived.

When the funding for Blossfeldt's scholarship ended in September 1892 (letter from Ewald to Meurer, UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 269–270), Meurer was prepared to continue to employ him at his own expense (letter from Meurer to Ewald, UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 274–275). An exchange of letters at the beginning of 1893 again addresses the subject of extending the scholarship or securing a second, as yet unapproved scholarship for Blossfeldt (letter from Meurer to Ewald, UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 300–301; official application by Director-General Richard Schöne to Director Lessing for the continued employment of Blossfeldt in Rome, UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 80). Although there is no record of the second scholarship being approved, a letter from Meurer to Ewald dated 20 July 1894 indicates that Blossfeldt was still working for him. "Blossfeldt and Heitsch have truly become very fine modellers. It is to be hoped that they will again find jobs in which they can employ their acquired skills for the benefit of others. Blossfeldt has also become a velocipedist, which is very useful for our work, especially in the evening for collecting specimens on the beach or wherever else they grow. He has also paid me a few visits by bicycle." (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheets 101–103).

In 1895, Blossfeldt accompanied Meurer on a study trip to Greece, as can be concluded from a letter by the administrator-general of the royal museums on 19 March 1895 (Doc. 4). The document confirms the approval of 300 marks for Blossfeldt.

As indicated by some of the documents cited above, Karl Blossfeldt was not the only scholarship holder on assignment in Rome. Working alongside him for Meurer were the painters Heinrich Homolka and Fritz Gehrke and the modeller Louis Heitsch.²³ Homolka, who, like Blossfeldt, later became a lecturer at the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute in Berlin, described the time he spent studying with Moritz Meurer as follows on 15 December 1897: "The course started with a lecture on botany specially geared for artists, focusing mainly on the external form and structure of plants and the way their various organs develop as they grow. It was indicated repeatedly here that plants are only the visual, formal expression of a concept inherent in them. This morphology, or study of the forms of plants, was followed by a discussion of the meaning of natural forms in the plant and animal kingdom and finally a comparison of botanical forms in nature." (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 233)

²¹ The letter is published in full in Dietmar Schenk's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, pp. 124–125. Cf. also Meurer's letter to Grunow on 4 May 1892: "Mr. Blossfeldt has proven a very fortunate choice as a modeller. He works intelligently and accurately. We are enlarging natural forms – starting with tiny shoots which could not be studied from actual nature in classes at the Arts and Crafts Museum – to as much as 10–15 times life size" (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 7, sheets 242–243).

²² The Karl Blossfeldt Archive/Ann and Jürgen Wilde includes an original document written by the artist in 1929 – only parts of which have so far been published – containing Blossfeldt's recollections of his first formative encounter with photography during his student days. Cf. "Karl Blossfeldt Archive, Ann und Jürgen Wilde, Züllich/Köln" in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 112; also Jürgen Wilde: "Karl Blossfeldt – Ein Lebensbild" in *Karl Blossfeldt. Fotografie*, ed. Kunstmuseum Bonn, Ostfildern: Cantz Verlag, 1994, pp. 7–8.

²³ As regards the number of scholarship holders, the Friedrich Noack archive of notes at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome contains entries about Meurer as well as a short note on Blossfeldt. The documents are accessible online at www.biblhertz.it (June 2008) under Research/Friedrich Noack. In the 1 July 1892 issue of *Kölnische Zeitung* there is discussion of an exhibition of "drawings, watercolours and three-dimensional wax and bronze models" by Professor Meurer and his students in Rome. The artists named are the sculptors Blossfeldt and Heitsch and the painters Seliger, Homolka, Deventer and Gehrke. All the artists mentioned are named in various sources in fonds 7, no. 7, of the university archive, e.g. Homolka, Gehrke, Heitsch and Blossfeldt in a letter by Meurer to Ewald on 12 April 1892 (sheets 225–226). Deventer is referred to in a letter by Meurer to Ewald on 6 January 1891. The only one not mentioned in connection with the stay in Rome is Seliger. However, it can be assumed that the artist in question is Max Seliger, who lectured at the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute from 1894 to 1901, in Thieme/Becker, vol. 29/30, Leipzig: E. A. Seemann Verlag, 1999 (reprint of the original 1935 and 1936 Leipzig issues), described as "influenced by Meurer".

A list of the teaching materials is found in an undated document entitled "List of live plants required for nature studies classes", which includes instructions by Ernst Ewald (Doc. 5). Around half of the plants named are found in the surviving original photographs by Karl Blossfeldt.

The university archive also includes a "List of books and models sent to Professor Meurer for his nature studies class in Rome or acquired for the class with Education Ministry funds" (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 321). The books listed have been partially researched. They include scientific books on botany, such as *Der Ursprung der Culturpflanzen* [The origin of cultured plants] by Alphonse de Candolle, 1884, and specialized publications on detailed botanical issues (*Das mechanische Princip im anatomischen Bau der Monocotylen* [Mechanical principles in the anatomical construction of monocotyledons] by Dr. S. Schwendener, 1874). The list also includes textbooks for the preparation of courses or for direct classroom use (*Ein Hilfsbuch für den Unterricht in der Botanik* [A Handbook for botany teachers] by Prof. Dr. Th. Liebe, 1881). The fact that Meurer added a book like *Flora Mythologica oder Pflanzenkunde in Bezug auf Mythologie und Symbolik der Griechen und Römer* [Flora mythologica or references in botany to Greek and Roman mythology and symbolism] by Dr. Johann Heinrich Dierbach, 1833, once again shows the breadth of his research on the subject of plants. As the list shows, Meurer collected photographs as models;²⁴ 40 photos are listed from the Alinari and Cook studio alone. The individual motifs are a matter for speculation. It is probable that the photographs were of listed buildings or artworks, since these are two areas in which the Alinari brothers specialized.

Karl Blossfeldt's teaching career in Berlin

The earliest written reference to Blossfeldt's appointment as a teacher at the Institute is found in a letter dated 15 January 1898 (Doc. 6); the university archive fonds contain no official document, such as a contract or certificate of appointment. However, payments for teaching materials are evidenced by money orders (Doc. 7, earliest order dated 1901, for 250 marks in UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 262, recorded regularly until 1911, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 303, then continuing until 1923). The records show that Blossfeldt did not actually start teaching until 1899, when a new modelling class was formed (letter from Ernst Ewald to the administrator-general dated 8 February 1898, UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 235). An entry in the faculty book dated 1 October 1899 names Karl Blossfeldt as a lecturer for "Supplementary Class XIId, Plant Modelling" (Doc. 2). Up until 1928/29, he is listed as a member of staff in various documents such as minutes of meetings or circulation lists. Surviving syllabuses show that Blossfeldt taught the subject "Plant Studies/ Modelling", "Modelling from Live Plants" or "Plant Modelling" (Doc. 2) as a supplementary course unit in summer semesters and evening classes. A variant is found in the provisional timetable for the academic year 1908/09, where Blossfeldt is shown as teaching "Furniture Modelling, Ornament and Architectural Model Production" at lower and upper levels (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 26).

The earliest handwritten letter by Karl Blossfeldt in the University of the Arts Archive dates from 20 July 1900 and is addressed to Director Ernst Ewald²⁵ (Doc. 8). The letter discusses the difficulty of obtaining and storing plants for classroom use – a subject that continued to occupy Blossfeldt's thoughts until 1904. It also raises the question of how far the models made during the time in Rome have been integrated into classroom work and whether photographs of plants have already been used.

²⁴ More photographs survived in Moritz Meurer's estate, which is now at the Waldenburg Museum. See also Rajka Knipper's essay at www.blossfeldt.info.

²⁵ The letter was first published in Dietmar Schenk's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, pp. 126–127.

A study of the descriptions of Blossfeldt's studio by the artist Paul Wedepohl, who started studying sculpture at the United State Schools in 1927 and attended Karl Blossfeldt's "Plant Modelling" classes shows that Blossfeldt was still working with photographs of dried and live plants in the late 1920s and in all likelihood using plants in various media as classroom materials. He probably did this throughout his teaching career. "It is hard to describe the scene", Wedepohl says. "There was little space to stand or move around. The studio was packed with papers, especially photos, as well as jars and boxes of fresh and dried plants. [...] The most space to move around was in the area of the camera, which seemed curiously antediluvian and actually looked as if it were never used. Blossfeldt had made the camera himself and it met all of his photographic needs. It enabled him to photograph tiny parts of plants and magnify the images directly to the required format."²⁶

In the second letter dated 1 May 1901,²⁷ which survives only as a copy, Blossfeldt again identifies the difficulties associated with working with live plants (Doc. 9): "The biggest problem encountered when studying nature is that plants change very quickly. This cannot be prevented but the time spent working on them could be extended. Students have only two afternoons free for my class, which is barely enough time to draw the plant; there is no chance of modelling it as well. [...] So when students return to the assignment a week later, the plant has undergone a considerable transformation – or is no longer there at all – and I have a major problem finding a similar specimen. Under these conditions, students can rarely manage to finish a project completely." In addition to the problem of time, Blossfeldt took the view that only certain plant species of simple form ("wild plants") were suitable for sculptural representation. "If, for example, I find an interesting plant near Potsdam today, near Friedrichshagen tomorrow and at Teufelssee or Dalldorf the day after that, I have no choice but to make almost daily trips to the relevant locations for 3–4 months in search of one and the same plant." The considerable amount of work this entailed, he says, was worth doing only if his classroom hours were longer or grouped into blocks. In addition, Blossfeldt wanted to be able to give his students more freedom in rendering the natural forms. "Even if great things are not achieved in the short time available, if students initially use nature merely as a tool for revivifying old forms, the 10 years of experience I have accumulated means I am well placed to give them advice and provide the most suitable plants for the project."

As indicated by the other letters addressed to Director Ernst Ewald or the Arts and Crafts Museum management in the years 1901–1904 (Docs. 10, 11, 12), no satisfactory solution has been found to Blossfeldt's problem of securing plants and seasonally adjusting classroom hours. In the letter dated 22. March 1904²⁸, for example, he asks the Arts and Crafts Museum management to obtain an annual pass for admission to the Botanical Gardens in Dahlem and secure official permission for him "to collect plants for classroom use there. [...] I should like to point out that I have never asked for valuable plants, only outdoor annuals, whole beds of which are sown or planted in spring and then perish in autumn." (Doc. 12)

Just two years later, in a letter dated 11 April 1906²⁹, Blossfeldt makes a specific reference to enlarged plant photographs (Doc. 13). Praising photography's properties as a medium, he describes it as a particularly useful tool for the classroom. "In contrast to sketched enlargements, which always contain a subjective element, these [photographic] images present pure nature, so they make admirable stimulating material for students." Blossfeldt goes on in the letter to speak of "more than a thousand of such photographs, from which, however, I can only slowly make prints." Although earlier letters give the impression that Blossfeldt used only fresh plants in his lessons, what he wrote on 11 April 1906 undermines that assumption, although fresh plants were still broadly the standard material in the classroom.

²⁶ In *Karl Blossfeldt 1865–1932. Pflanzenfotografien*, exhibition catalogue, Galerie Taube, Berlin, 1984, no page reference.

²⁷ A handwritten copy of this letter survives in the Karl Blossfeldt Archive/Ann and Jürgen Wilde, see "Karl Blossfeldt Archive, Ann and Jürgen Wilde", Zülpich/Cologne, in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 114.

²⁸ The letter is published in Dietmar Schenk's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, pp. 128–129.

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 130–131.

Something else worth stressing in this letter are the arguments Blossfeldt advances in favour of enlargements. He states that "every metre-wide ceiling rose has its origins in a tiny flower. All the old-style leaf tips incorrectly referred to as acanthus are nothing but accurate reproductions of tiny leaf forms such as parsley, anemone and so forth. These small forms are the finest and – for the sculptor – the most useful of all. The leaves of all larger plants, such as rhubarb, are too floppy to be of use for sculpture." Very much echoing Moritz Meurer, who always stressed the need for comparison with existing artistic forms, Karl Blossfeldt cites an example from Greek Antiquity to illustrate the basis of his pedagogical concept: an acanthus ornament on the Erechtheion Temple on the Acropolis in Athens: "This classic, immaculate example shows very clearly how small natural forms, such as diminutive acanthus bracts, were used on a much enlarged scale and adapted to suit the material. I always draw students' attention to this interesting example. It also signals how my photographs – subject to a modern perspective, of course – should be used."

With regard to Blossfeldt's teaching materials, mention should also be made of a document dating from 1907 announcing payment of an additional fee to Blossfeldt at the director's request for "the management and maintenance of the preserved and prepared botanical and photographic material provided for the Institute by [Blossfeldt]" (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheet 303).

A document dated 25 July 1910 further confirms that Blossfeldt had been using the medium of photography since the time in Rome. The document in question is a letter by Meurer about the return of various materials to the management of the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 8, sheets 333–334). In it, a large microscope with stand is listed at no. 33 and a "large camera with tripod, a leather case with lenses for the same and a number of individual mounts" at no. 123. Meurer explicitly draws attention to Blossfeldt's photographic knowledge: "With regard to the microscope and camera (nos. 33 and 123), I would point out that the lecturer Mr. Blossfeldt is familiar with their assembly and use."

The fact that Karl Blossfeldt's botanical teaching materials attracted increasing attention is apparent from his letter of 22 January 1910 addressed to the director [Bruno Paul, Ernst Ewald's successor] (Doc. 14). The subject of the letter is the use of plant preparations made by Blossfeldt for the arts and crafts schools in Aachen and Charlottenburg. Before they are sent to the schools, he wishes to exhibit them at the Museum Institute. On 1 February 1910³⁰, he writes to the Institute director again in this regard (Doc. 15), citing as an example his colleague Miss Feldkircher,³¹ who, he says, was thrilled with the materials presented and immediately incorporated them in her classes. He then goes on to say: "The excellent example [presented by these materials] compels students to use their imagination and adapt the ideas inspired by nature to the purpose and material in question without being further influenced during the process by nature." Blossfeldt now wished to establish an extensive permanent collection of natural forms at the Institute, and he had clear ideas about the form it should take. "Just as in the library, where students make sketches and notes, a sizeable room could be provided for the purpose, presenting viewers with a display of motifs from nature in a wide variety of forms – from three-dimensional and pressed plant specimens to photographs. Insects could also be added, indeed animals in general, seashells, etc., creating a varied collection of natural shapes that would be freely accessible to all students at certain times of the day." There is no record in the university archive of such a project being realized.

³⁰ The letter is published in Dietmar Schenk's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, pp. 132–133.

³¹ Melitta Feldkircher (*1886) taught embroidery from 1908 to 1910 (cf. Dietmar Schenk in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 132).

In 1910, the year in which these two letters were written, the architect, designer and artist Bruno Paul (1874–1968) was in his fourth year of service as director of the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute in Berlin. Soon after taking up his appointment, he had implemented radical organizational and curricular reforms at the school. Classes and courses were restructured, for example, and new teachers were appointed following staff dismissals.³² The university archive contains a letter written by Bruno Paul on 26 March 1912, in which he comments on Karl Blossfeldt's teaching methods: "Mr. Blossfeldt's artistic activity consists essentially of using a method of his own design to make stylized plant preparations, which he then seeks to use as a basis for decorative art work. From the present perspective, this almost scientific method, developed in the closing decade of the last century, seems entirely obsolete. It certainly does not meet the needs of this institute – which is increasingly geared to fine art – for stimulating lessons in plant modelling from nature. The technique would, on the other hand, be admirably suitable for a botanical institute."³³ Despite this critical appraisal, Blossfeldt continued to employ his method, as the syllabi show,³⁴ through to the end of his active teaching career. His working conditions may not have substantially improved under the directorship of Bruno Paul but internal school exhibitions and purchases of Blossfeldt's work by the Institute at least indicate acceptance of what he was doing. It is also likely that a versatile artist and gifted educator like Bruno Paul would have been very interested in Blossfeldt's plant studies and their observance of strict formal rules. After all, they combine stylistic elements of Jugendstil with linear conceptual clarity – a design principle that is also found from time to time in Paul's own applied art designs.³⁵

As well as the aforementioned presentation of plant preparations in 1910, exhibitions of students' work were staged in 1912 and 1917 – exhibitions in which Blossfeldt's classes were also involved.³⁶ A payment order issued on 21 March 1912 for the payment of 250 and 300 marks to Professor Homolka and the sculptor Blossfeldt "for exceptional personal efforts in the interest of lessons for their courses" (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 9, I-No. U519/12) is another indication that Blossfeldt enjoyed a measure of respect within the Institute. The grade books show the following numbers of students (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 301 bis 7, no. 325): up to 20 students in his early teaching career, five to a maximum of ten from around 1905/06 onwards.³⁷ The university archive contains further documents relating specifically to the students Karl Himmelstoss and Wilhelm Kruse. In the case of Kruse, who is listed as one of Blossfeldt's students in 1908/09 (winter semester report list, 1908/09 academic year, UoA Archive, fonds 7, no. 310, sheet 103),³⁸ various drawings exist, three of which may have been done in Blossfeldt's class.³⁹ For the sculptor Karl Himmelstoss, who is listed as a student on the Plant Modelling course from 1900 until 1902 (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 302, sheet 41, 99; fonds 7, no. 303, sheets 60, 120), there is a multi-page dossier from 1906 onwards (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 181, U06/537, U06/680), especially about work for the Glaspalast in Munich and the payment received for it.

The first acquisitions of Blossfeldt's plant preparations by the Institute were made in the 1910s. Letters exchanged on 13 and 14 April 1916 refer to an order for 40 plant preparations at a price of 12.50 marks each (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 9, U467/16). However, the actual purchase appears not to have been made until a year later, in April 1917, as the following documents indicate.

³² Cf. Sonja Günther: *Bruno Paul 1874–1968*, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1992, pp. 141–142; *Bruno Paul. Deutsche Raumkunst und Architektur zwischen Jugendstil und Moderne*, ed. Alfred Ziffer and Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1992, pp. 12–15; William Owen Harrod: *Bruno Paul. The Life and Work of a Pragmatic Modernist*, Stuttgart, London: Edition Axel Menges, 2005, pp. 46–48. An account of the development of art academies in general is found in Nikolaus Pevsner's book *Die Geschichte der Kunstakademien*, first published in London in 1940. Situation in Berlin: pp. 273–279.

³³ UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 4, no sheet reference. According to the records, the letter was not sent, Dietmar Schenk in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 134. The letter was published for the first time in this essay.

³⁴ UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 26 to fonds 7, no. 47.

³⁵ Cf. for example Alfred Ziffer, *Bruno Paul*, 1992, pp. 82–83, tiled stoves designed by Paul, or p. 198, two-light candelabra. As far as Bruno Paul's views on and knowledge of photography are concerned, the records provide no clear picture. In 1914, however, he designed the villa "Haus Friedwart" for the Leitz family in Wetzlar, including the sumptuous interior fittings. On that contract alone he must have come into contact with the medium of photography and its technological development.

³⁶ A list of the costs of the 1912 exhibition of students' work in fonds 7, no. 81, sheet 92 showing expenses for tradesmen and materials as well as the sum of 38 marks payable to Blossfeldt for "expenses for photographic enlargements of students' work in the Plant Modelling class" and a circular dated 13 June 1917 in fonds 7, no. 86, announcing an exhibition of Plant Modelling class students' work in the staff room.

³⁷ Last list in the summer quarter 1924: 2 full students, 4 guest students (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 325, sheet 102).

³⁸ Cf. also Thomas Steigenberger's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, p. 32.

³⁹ Cf. Rajka Knipper's essay at www.blossfeldt.info.

An acquisitions list in 1917 (Doc. 16) shows 40 plant preparations in boxes behind glass, identifying their origin as "sculptor Karl Blossfeldt, [Arts and Crafts Museum] Institute lecturer, Südende, Stephanstrasse 6".

A purchase of "thirty photographs by Mr. Blossfeldt" is noted in the record of 24 June 1920 (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 49, letter of 24 June 1920), the invoiced amount shown as "20 marks, sum total 600.-". This record contains another important piece of information, namely the size of the photographs acquired: 24 x 30 cm.

From a number of records in the University of the Arts Archive, it is apparent that Blossfeldt conducted entrance examinations at the Institute during his teaching career. The earliest list dates from the summer quarter 1907, when Blossfeldt stood in for a colleague called Becker in the subject Nude and Architectural Drawing (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 93). The records extend through to the 1920/21 winter semester, when he was a member of the board of examiners for sculpture.

As of 1921, Karl Blossfeldt appears in the records with the title of professor, specifically in the 1920/21 syllabus (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 337) and in a list of teachers' names dated 11 November 1922.⁴⁰ The university archive contains no certificate of appointment or equivalent document.

The last known letter by Karl Blossfeldt dates from 26 May 1924⁴¹ (Doc. 17). In that year, after the merger with the Hochschule für die Bildenden Künste, the Institute relocated to Hardenbergstrasse, where it operated until 1939 under the name Vereinigte Staatsschulen für Freie und Angewandte Kunst (Berlin United State Schools for Fine and Applied Arts). Bruno Paul became director of the new institution and remained in the post until 1933. Karl Blossfeldt complained in a letter about the classroom in the new building being too small and dirty: "The cattle sheds on any modern farm are cleaner and tidier than this academy classroom." The accommodation does indeed seem to have been worse than before the move; many studios and classrooms now had to be shared.⁴²

The "Blossfeldtiana" includes various letters of notice and circulation lists from 1927 – 1929 documenting teachers' participation in joint visits to exhibitions and similar events. They show, for example, that Blossfeldt attended the 1927 International Book Art Exhibition in Leipzig (UdK Archive, fonds 8, no. 84, 75/27), the Embroidery Exhibition at the Märkisches Museum in Berlin in 1927 (UdK Archive, fonds 8, no. 84, 587/27) and the Centenary Exhibition of the Berlin Artists Association, undated (UdK Archive, fonds 8, no. 84, 130/29, sheet 24).

The two internal exhibitions of 1925 and 1928 took place in Blossfeldt's later years as a lecturer at the Vereinigte Staatsschulen. About the 1925 exhibition, the records state that "plant photographs, Prof[essor] Blossfeldt" were to be incorporated into the existing plan (UdK Archive, fonds 7, no. 86, *Gelegentliche Ausstellungs-Veranstaltungen*, Vol. 1, 16 January 1900 – 1926, sheet 795/25). A year later, Blossfeldt's first exhibition opened at the Nierendorf Gallery in Berlin – with huge implications for the artist's work, leading, as it did, to the 1928 publication of *Urformen der Kunst*.

The 1928 school exhibition merits special mention, particularly since it found considerable resonance in the press.⁴³ From 30 May to 30 June, plant photographs by Blossfeldt were presented on the Staatsschulen premises at Hardenbergstrasse 33 under the title "Urformen der Kunst". The fact that the title was the same as the book published that year by Ernst-Wasmuth-Verlag is no coincidence. The level of interest generated by the exhibition is evidenced by an enquiry from *Vogue* magazine on 15 June 1928 (UdK Archive, fonds 8l no. 80, 655/28) seeking to print a gallery of Blossfeldt's photographs with a brief text. The archive contains no record of the project being realized.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ The Karl Blossfeldt Archive/Ann and Jürgen Wilde includes a certificate of appointment as a professor that was officially presented to him on 6 May 1922, see www.karl-blossfeldt-archiv.de (November 2008).

⁴¹ The letter was first published in Dietmar Schenk's essay in *Konstruktionen von Natur*, Amsterdam, Dresden, 2001, pp. 136–139.

⁴² Cf. Andreas Bode's essay "Bruno Paul als Direktor der Unterrichtsanstalt des Kunstgewerbemuseums und ihrer Nachfolgeinstitutionen" in *Stadt. Neue-Heimat-Monatshefte für Wohnungs- und Städtebau*, ed. Vorstand der Unternehmensgruppe Neue Heimat, Vol. XXIX, Issue 10, Hamburg, 1982, pp. 8–14.

⁴³ UdK Archive, fonds 8, no. 80, cf. *Vorwärts*, Berlin, 15 June 1928; *Der Berliner Westen*, 19 June 1928; *Die Kunstauktion*, 24 June 1928, see also Gabriele Conrath-Scholl and Claudia Schubert: "1892–2008 Kontexte und Perspektivwechsel. Zur Rezeption der Pflanzenstudien von Karl Blossfeldt" at www.blossfeldt.info Kontexte und Perspektivwechsel.

⁴⁴ An examination of the issues of *Vogue* published in 1928 and 1929 produced no result.

Karl Blossfeldt's retirement from teaching came in 1930, although there is no certificate of emeritus status or similar document in the University of the Arts Archive.⁴⁵ In 1933, a year after Blossfeldt's death, the university archive records a transfer of property following a donation to the Vereinigte Staatsschulen by Karl Blossfeldt's widow (Doc. 18).

This document forms an important basis for the inventorization of Karl Blossfeldt's works at the University of the Arts.⁴⁶ In the same year as the donation, a presentation of Blossfeldt photographs was staged on the school premises in Hardenbergstrasse (UdK Archive, fonds 8, no. 97, 544/33) – a tribute to his three decades of service at the school.

Studying the records and documents in the Berlin University of the Arts Archive has produced a detailed picture of Karl Blossfeldt's life-long close links with the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute and the Vereinigte Staatsschulen in Berlin. For three decades, he essentially devoted his life to teaching students about forms in nature. Moritz Meurer's concept and influence, coupled with Blossfeldt's artistic flair and craft skill, led ultimately to the celebrated images that now occupy a place in photographic history. Another factor important for the quality and impact of Karl Blossfeldt's work was the continuity of his production of plant models. Unperturbed by any movements in art photography, he remained ever-loyal to his objective documentary method. The success he enjoyed in the later years of his life confirms the significance of his botanical studies and their innovative impact on photography. His influence continues unchallenged even today.

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Translated by Malcolm Bell

Cover Picture:

Karl Blossfeldt: Phacelia congesta. Blue curls. Inflorescence, undated,
property of the Berlin University of the Arts

⁴⁵ The retirement certificate of 1 October 1930 is in the Karl Blossfeldt Archive/Ann and Jürgen Wilde, see www.karl-blossfeldt-archiv.de.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rajka Knipper's essay at www.blossfeldt.info.

Selected Documents and Translations of their Transcriptions



Doc. 1, fonds 7,
no. 288, sheet 18

Translation:

"Class XIV, winter semester, academic year 1885/86

Composition for Modelling, daily from 8 - 12, 1 - 4, Mr Behrendt, sculptor [...]"

Entry on Blossfeldt:

"[...] Blossfeld, Carl, modeller,

[...] Blossfeld, Carl, modeller, school attendance regular, exceptionally diligent and industrious, very good progress, performance ditto"



Doc. 2, fonds 7,
no. 333, sheet 30

"Institute Staff Record" file Translation:

"Blossfeldt, Carl, sculptor, teacher, Protestant, 13.6.65 Schielo i/H. nr. Ballenstedt, Arts and Crafts Museum Institute, Supplementary Class XIIIId, (Plant Modelling) 1 October 1899, evening class 13b/9 and day school B 3c, 1.10.1909" (details refer to both evening and day school) "Teaching materials for use in Ornament Drawing and Morphology classes at the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum and the Royal Art Academy



Doc. 3, fonds 7,
no. 7, sheet 171r

- A. Foliage leaves, flat,
15 leaves
- a. Monocot ribbing

- A. Foliage leaves with characteristically different ribbing, drawn flat
- a. Monocot ribbing or parallel-veined ribbing
1. Straight-veined, round, slightly convergent or divergent at top. (Examples, grass species, acanthus flower sepals)
2. Parallel-veined, convergent arcing (example) (lily of the valley leaf)
3. Parallel-veined, divergent arcing (example) (typical of the acanthus leaf ribbing on classical capitals) arrowroot)



Doc. 3, fonds 7,
no. 7, sheet 173r

Translation:

"b. Dicotyledone Berippung

b. Foliage leaves, dicotyledone ribbing

Group I

a. Lateral feather-veined ribbing, running parallel
(example) (chestnut)

b. Lateral feather-veined ribbing, diverging
(2 examples) (thistle leaf, acanthus leaf)

Group II

c. Radial ribbing (3 examples)
(ivy, maple, grapevine)

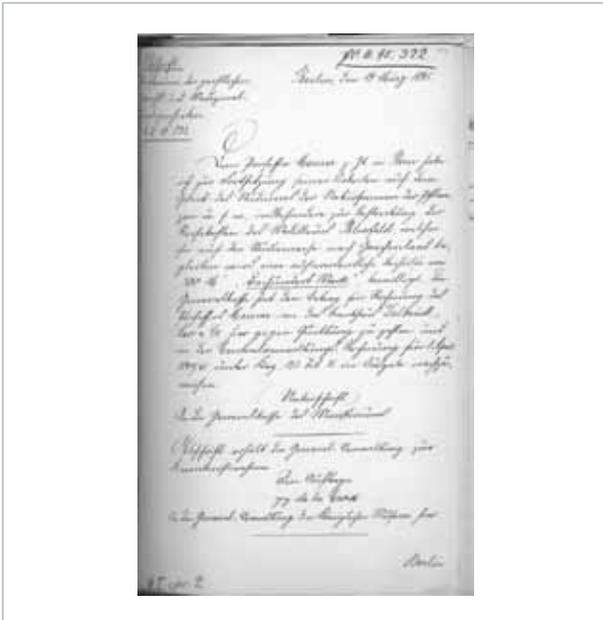
d. Radial ribbing, complex (2 examples)
(aconite)

Group III

e. Radial ribbing combined with arcuate system (ivy)

f. Feather-veined ribbing combined with arcuate system (tulip poplar leaf)

g. Feather-veined ribbing combined with arcuate ribbing (leaf from Thiergarten)"



Doc. 4, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 132

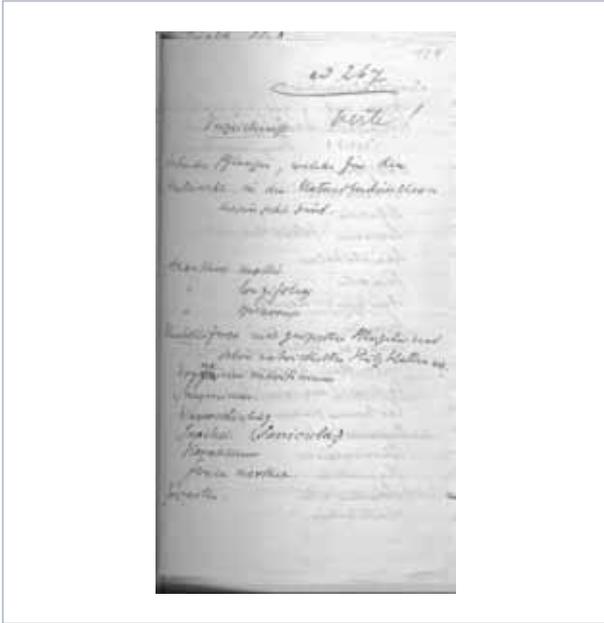
Translation:

"Berlin, 19 March 1895

Copy

Ministry of Intellectual, Educational and Medical Affairs

I have approved payment of "300 marks" – "*three hundred marks*" – to Professor Meurer, currently in Rome, as an extraordinary allowance for the continuation of his work in the area of the study of natural plant forms, etc., in particular for the defrayal of travelling expenses for the modeller Blossfeldt, who will accompany him on the study trip to Greece. The General Treasury should pay the amount against receipt here to Bankhaus Delbrück, Leo & Co for the account of Professor Meurer and record it as an expense on 1 April 1894/95 under item 15, section 123 of the central administration account.[...]"



Doc. 5, fonds 7,
no. 7, sheet 129r.



Doc. 5, fonds 7,
no. 7, sheet 129v.-130r.

Translation:

"List of live plants required for nature study classes.

Acanthus mollis/longifolius/spinosus, Umbelliferae with ribbed stems and well developed bracts as well as Eryngium maritimum, Smyrniun, sea holly, sanicle (*different handwriting*: Sanicula), Herakleum, Ferula narthex, Iris species.

different handwriting: Juncus or Sonchus?, Sonchus and (Crepis) species *different handwriting*: Crepis? (with interesting leaf initiation sites and angular stem developments), Passiflorae, Araceae, Liliaceae, Loasaceae (Loasa lateritii)?, horsetail, fern species, (Aquilegia) *different handwriting*: Aquilegia, geraniums, Cynareae thistle-like plants, (Ornopordon) *different handwriting*:

Onopordon, Carduus (marianus lanceolatus etc.) Carthamus tinktorius (safflower),

Centaureae, Convolvulaceae, Ranunculi, Solanum, Aristolochiae

Aconite, Chelidonium (majus), Polygonum, Cotyledon, Helleborus species (viriais, niger), hops, beans (broad bean), Belladonna, Cobaea scandens, Morina elegans, Dicentra spectabilis (Dielgra), (Grossybium) herbaceum *different handwriting*: Gossypium, Bryonia dioica, Lonicera caprifolia, Euphorbia (heli[o]scopia) *different handwriting*: helioscopia, ivy, (Brusonetia) papyrifera *different handwriting*: Brussonetia, chestnut, clematis, maple species (pseudoplatanum) *different handwriting*: pseudoplatanum etc.

These plants are naturally not available from horticulturists. Enquiries should thus be made – first at the Technical University, then at the botanical gardens and at the University or the Agricultural Institute – to ascertain whether at least some of them could be supplied to us during the period from

1 October to 24 December.

E[rnst] E[wald]"

[last passage, sheet 7, no. 7, sheet 130 v, not shown]



Doc. 6, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 234

Translation:

"Copy

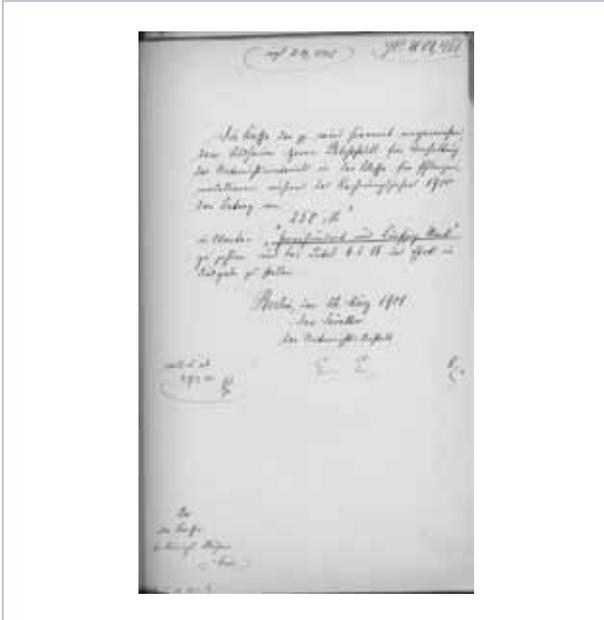
Berlin, 15 January 1898

Ministry of Intellectual pp.[praemissis praemittendis]

"I forward a copy of Professor Meurer's report of the 5th inst., incl. appendix, on the plant drawing courses he has run for decorative arts students and would request that the Administrator General have it examined and report back on the feasibility and practicability of implementing Professor Meurer's proposals for the immediate restructuring of courses at the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute. Consideration should be given specifically to the appointment of the modeller Blossfeldt at the beginning of the next academic year.

Should Institute funds be insufficient to cover the required equipment and acquisitions, I am prepared to grant Central Fund assistance. Signed by proxy, Weyrauch

To the Administrator General of the Royal Museums here [...]"



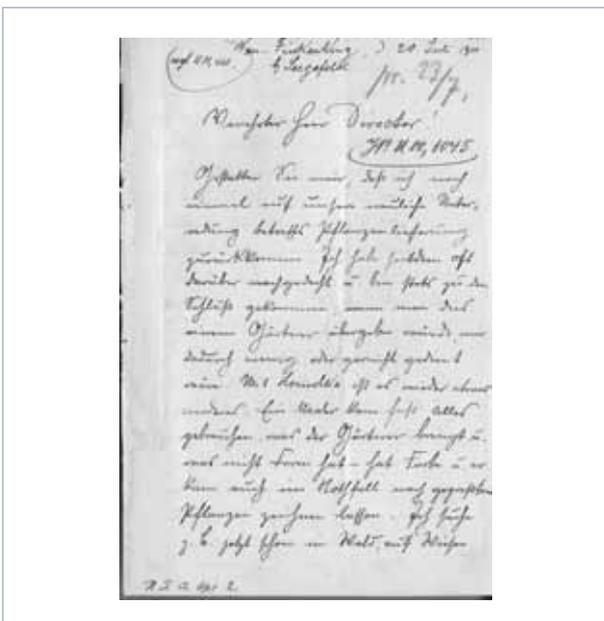
Doc. 7, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 262

Translation:

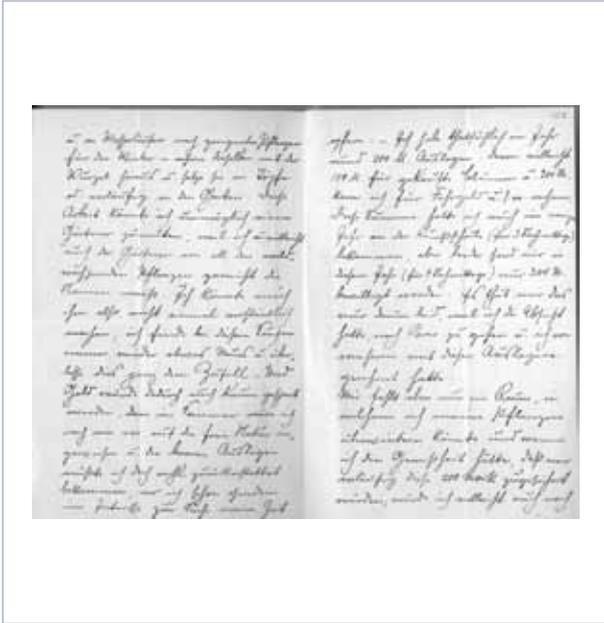
"The treasurer of the pp[raemissis praemittendis] is hereby instructed to pay the sum of "250 marks" – in words: two hundred and fifty marks – to Mr. Blossfeldt, sculptor, for obtaining teaching materials for the plant modelling class during the accounting year 1900 and to record the payment as an expense under item 6 i 15 in the budget.

Berlin, 26 March 1901

Director of the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute"



Doc. 8, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 257r



Doc. 8, fonds 7, no. 8,
sheet 257v.-258r.



Doc. 8, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 258v.

Translation:

"Neu-Finkenkrug, 20 July 1900 near Seegefeld

Dear Director [Ewald],

Please allow me to return to our conversation about the supply of plants. Since we talked, I have given the matter frequent thought and have invariably come to the conclusion that it would be of little or no benefit to me if the task were assigned to a horticulturist. Homolka is in a different position. As a painter, he can use nearly anything a horticulturist might bring. Anything that lacks form still has colour – and in an emergency he could even have students draw from pressed flowers. I am already, for example, searching woods, meadows and riverbanks for suitable plants for the winter – digging them up with roots and placing them in pots or at temporary sites in the garden. I could not possibly expect that from a gardener because I – and maybe even the gardener – cannot claim to know the names of all the plants growing in the wild. So I could not even explain to him what I need. When I go out in search of plants, I invariably discover something new purely by chance. An arrangement with a gardener is not likely to save much money either, because I would continue to rely on nature during the summer and, since I am already sacrificing my time, would have to be reimbursed for my expenses. I incur actual expenses of around 300 marks a year. 100 marks, perhaps, goes on the purchase of flowers and 200 marks on fares for transport, etc.. Although I received this sum last year at the art school (for 3 afternoons), the allowance this year has sadly been limited to just 200 marks (for 4 afternoons). I feel this is regrettable only because I had intended to travel to Paris and had reckoned with these expenses from the outset. All I need is a room in which I could keep my plants through the winter and if I could be sure that this 300 marks would be provisionally granted, I might even make that sacrifice and invest in a small greenhouse. Mr. Homolka's proposal to have a greenhouse built for us in the new botanical gardens would provide no short-term benefits either since the gardens will not be completed for another 3–4 years, by which time the new school building may be under construction.

Yours sincerely,

C[arl] Blossfeldt

different handwriting: Approval given for the payment of 250 marks to Mr. Blossfeldt for obtaining plants in the accounting year 1900. (c[on]f[e]r U 01, 461) 26.3.01. R[um]p"

Doc. 9, fonds 7, no. 1, sheet 75–76 (not illustrated)

Translation:

"Copy

To the Office of the Director of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum

Institute

With the honourable Director's permission, I should like to draw attention to certain grievances concerning my class. I recently had the honour of being introduced to His Excellency Privy Councillor Schöne, who made enquiries about my class. I took that opportunity to mention said matters and was advised by his Excellency to address my observations and requests in writing to the Office of the Director, which is the purpose of this letter.

In the light of my experience, please allow me to make a number of proposals and appeal to the Director's discretion to help.

The biggest problem encountered when studying nature is that plants change very quickly. There is no way to prevent this but the time spent working on the plants could be extended. Students have only two afternoons free for my class, which is barely enough time to draw the plant; there is no chance of modelling it as well. In addition, most students have as yet little proficiency in modelling, so two afternoons are not even enough for them to sketch a plant and when they return to the assignment a week later, the plant has changed considerably – or has gone altogether – and I have a major problem finding a similar specimen. Under these conditions, students can rarely manage to finish a project completely.

Since only simple forms are suitable for sculptural representation, I cannot use the double flowers, etc., that are grown by a gardener. I have to rely almost exclusively on plants that grow in the wild. For this purpose, I now make excursions by bicycle and by train and conduct searches all over the area around Berlin. If, for example, I find an interesting plant near Potsdam today, near Friedrichshagen tomorrow and at Teufelssee or Dalldorf the day after that, I have no choice but to make almost daily trips to the relevant location for 3–4 months in search of one and the same plant. I do this for the sake of the course, even though it means sacrificing my mornings and often even my free days. I should also like to point out here that if a student spends two afternoons a week for three months on a modelling project, that adds up – after vacation time, admission examinations, competitions and public holidays – to only 5–6 full days. So the most competent, independent-minded students deeply regret that there is not more time available for projects to be completed consecutively. One student, who has now been refused the 4 weeks once and for all and who knows from experience that two weeks is pointless for modelling, has already opted instead for Plant Drawing, which I find an entirely sensible decision on his part. Despite this refusal, a number of other students have occasionally come on four afternoons nevertheless – which is not something welcomed by the main subject teacher. The only thing those students regret is that there is no chance for them to do more modelling from nature in the evening. An evening class would also create an opportunity to study from nature for young people who have commitments during the day.

It would then be desirable to switch my class to four consecutive afternoons and give students the possibility of actually attending it on four afternoons. However, there should be no compulsion to do so, because the students who show no interest are generally the weakest and will not make good use of the time.

Because there are so many difficulties involved in working with live plants, it would also be a very good idea to schedule lessons to better effect. I will make a proposal for a more effective schedule. The Plant Drawing class would also profit from such an arrangement. By this I mean that it could be scheduled to span whole days. It surely makes no difference whether a student misses two afternoons

or a whole day of core lessons as a result. On the contrary, he can concentrate much better on one piece of work. Sketching practice and nude studies can be rescheduled but plants do not bend to the dictates of a timetable – they keep on growing.

One could even make studying from nature the main focus for a while – namely in the summer semester, when the climate is the most conducive.

At this point I should also like to mention another matter. The painters and drawers try to make practical use of their plant studies in the subject classes but I regret to say that I have not yet observed any such attempts among the sculptors. This totally debases the value of my class. I would thus urge the Director to allow the advanced students in my class not only to study from nature but also to try their hand at harnessing these forms for practical applications. Even if the initial outcome is that no great things are achieved in the short time available, that students initially use nature merely as a tool for revivifying old forms, my 10 years of experience makes me the person best qualified to provide them with advice and the most suitable plants for the project.

I would again request that I be given total freedom in this matter because my class will otherwise be totally pointless.

In the expectation that the honourable Director will consider and remedy these matters, I remain yours faithfully, C[arl] Blossfeldt Berlin, 1 May 1901.

To the Office of the Director of the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute
Berlin, 15 May 1901

If the classroom time allotted for the supplementary Plant Modelling class is extended more than at present, the main subject class will suffer so much that its existence could be seriously jeopardized. There should be no composition whatsoever in plant study lessons, just detailed study of nature. The composition work done so far in Class XIIIId. has not been satisfactory. The students assigned to the plant class by me were all good modellers. I would have no objection to students who are not in my class spending the whole week devoted to studies from nature, perhaps as preparation.

It is erroneous to claim that nature studies are not used in Class IIa; they are incorporated even in the broadest sense of the word, although study is not confined only to plant forms; animal forms are examined as well. However, the aspects that need to be considered for practical applications are not the same as for studies.

(signed) R[probably Fritz] Behrendt.

Berlin, 17 May 1901

To the Office of the Director of the Arts and Crafts Museum Institute

Mr. Blossfeldt's complaint that the classroom time for his class is too tight is certainly justified. However, no more day-time slots in the timetable can be set aside for supplementary lessons at the expense of main subject classes. As far as my own class is concerned at least, there are already so many disparate claims on students' time that I now have them attend classes in only the most vital secondary subjects. The only solution to Mr. Blossfeldt's problem is probably to create an evening class.

Yours faithfully,

(signed) L[udwig] Manzel"



Doc. 10, fonds 7,
no. 1, sheet 82r.

Translation:

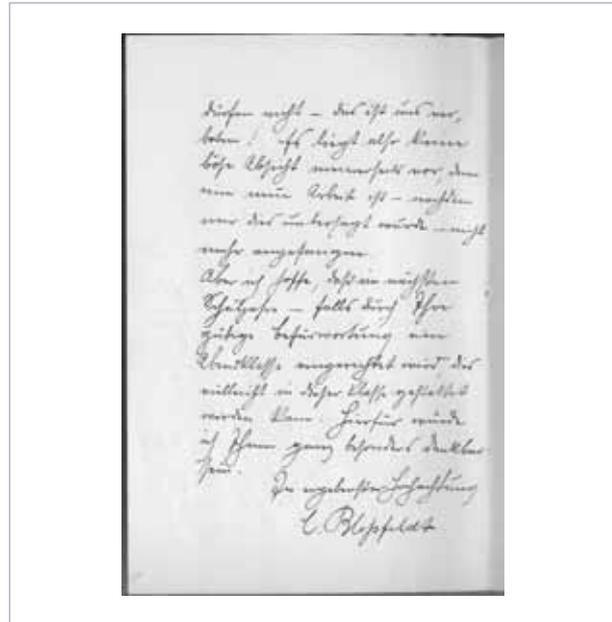
"Berlin, 7 June 1901

Dear Director [Ernst Ewald],

This is just to inform you that the candlestick you saw in my classroom yesterday is a project initiated some time ago. The student in question set it aside several weeks ago because he was engaged in a study of an eagle in the Zoological Gardens and would now like to finish the candlestick before the end of the school year. I could not tell him that he is not allowed to, that it is forbidden. So it is not a question of my flaunting the rules: no new projects have been started since the instruction banning them was issued.

I hope, however, that this may be allowed in the next school year if, with your kind support, an evening class is introduced. I would be extremely grateful to you for that.

Yours faithfully C[arl] Blossfeldt"



Doc. 10, fonds 7,
no. 1, sheet 82v.



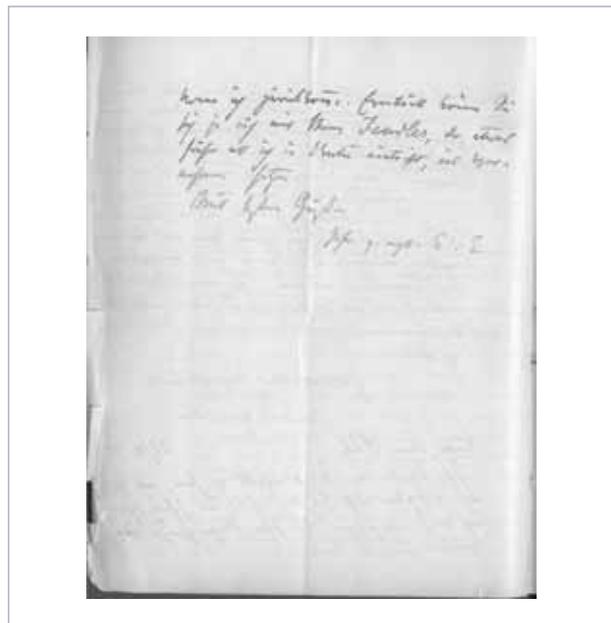
Doc. 11, fonds 7,
no. 1, sheet 83r.



Doc. 11, fonds 7,
no. 1, sheet 83v.



Doc. 11, fonds 7,
no. 1, sheet 84r.



Doc. 11, fonds 7,
no. 1, sheet 84v.

Translation:

"Finkenkrug nr. Seegefeld, 28 August 1901.

Dear Director [Ernst Ewald],

Begging your forbearance, I feel I must draw your attention again to the matter of my class. I believe that either the changes we discussed in the past were different or there must have been a misunderstanding on my part. You originally proposed that the same number of hours should be switched to the summer months in order to make up full days. Since you rejected the proposal for an evening class on the grounds that funding was not available and that more than 3,000 marks could not be spent on my class, I took this to mean that all of those hours would be paid.

Had you not said that attendance of my class in summer would be low because the students who had started a main subject class project in the winter would have to complete it in the summer, I would also have dropped the idea of the evening class. In response to my remark that since the most competent students work for the main subject teacher – and would certainly need to finish off a project in the summer – my class would be attended by only the weakest students, you confirmed that this eventuality might occur. It was only on that understanding that I pushed for the evening class.

I should again like to point out that the work of acquiring plants makes my class the most thankless in the entire Museum. I have to sacrifice all my time and can expect no recompense. For this reason, I would have appreciated an increase in hours or at least more effective timetabling. The present timetable brings no improvement for either the students or for me. The lessons are just as dispersed and even less favourably scheduled than before. If it is left to the students to decide whether they attend extra morning classes in the summer, no one will come because the better students who would be interested will be working for the main subject teacher. And conversely, if someone does turn up, I will also be compelled to be present because I need to provide the plants. So I come out of the frying pan into the fire and I would respectfully request that, if possible, the lessons should be left scheduled as they are. The better students could then also attend, albeit irregularly, and at least work all day by daylight. I have just one more request: that the lessons should be moved to four consecutive afternoons in the week.

Yours faithfully, C[arl] Blossfeldt

31.8.01 *different handwriting*: Dear Mr. Bl[ossfeldt]

Your letter of 28 A[ugust] was forwarded to me here, where I do not have access to the timetable to assure you in black and white that your fears are unfounded; however, you will be able to satisfy yourself of the fact when I return. Maybe you could also contact Mr. Fendler, who will be back in Berlin before me.

Yours sincerely, E[rnst] E[wald]"



Doc. 12, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 277v-278r.



Doc. 12, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 277r.

Translation:

"22/3. 04

To the Director of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum



Doc. 12, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 278v.

Since I encountered difficulties last summer taking the occasional plants for lessons from the new botanical gardens at Dahlem, I should like to ask whether you might not be able to arrange for me to be granted a permit for this purpose? I was repeatedly refused permission by Director Engler on the grounds that a worker would need to accompany me and would have to interrupt his work as a result. I cannot share Privy Councillor Engler's view on this matter, for I do not believe that it could ever matter to his institute – which costs millions to create and maintain – whether a poorly paid manual worker interrupts his work for perhaps hour twice a week. Such an institute only actually fulfils its purpose fully and completely if it is made accessible for the public in as many ways as possible.

So far, the botanical gardens have been exclusively for employees because the greenhouses have always been inaccessible for the public and the systemized plant section of the new botanical garden is even surrounded by a wooden fence. I should like to point out that I have never asked for valuable plants, only outdoor annuals, whole beds of which are sown or planted in spring and then perish in autumn. I required one of these plants last October, for example, and formally asked Privy Councillor Engler for permission on this single occasion to pick the plant, which had already suffered from frost and would have decayed in the next few days – but all was in vain. In order to achieve my objective, I travelled to Dahlem, paid 1 mark admission and stood before the aforementioned fenced system. I gained entrance through a forbidden door and then simply stole the plant. That is how I had to do it on every occasion and I even needed to bribe the gardeners. Mr. Homolka has made similar experiences and consequently prefers not to obtain materials from the botanical gardens. I would do the same if these plants were not so singularly valuable to me. I cannot find them at even the largest market gardens and seed merchants.

Privy Councillor Engler held out the prospect of a permit for this year but I was told at the office that the surest way for me to be granted a permit would be if the application for it were to come from the director of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum. This would satisfy the privy councillor that I really needed the plants for lessons. I would therefore respectfully request your help in this matter. Many thanks in advance. Yours faithfully, C[arl] Blossfeldt"



Doc. 13, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 295r.



Doc. 13, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 295v.



Doc. 13, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 296r.



Doc. 13, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 296v.

Translation:

"To the Director of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum

I hereby respectfully submit to the director a collection of enlargements of plants. Some of the main subject teachers to whom these photographs have recently been shown have been positive in their comments and consider them suitable for lessons. Thus encouraged, I would respectfully request that they should be presented for discussion at a meeting of the main subject teachers. In contrast to sketched enlargements, which always contain a subjective element, these images present pure nature, so they are likely to provide inspiring material for students.

In many cases, these photographs were made by enlarging small details that students could not easily make out in evening light. This considerably facilitates projects. I probably have more than a thousand of such photographs, from which, however, I can only slowly make prints. Because they are the fruit of years of work and considerable material sacrifice, I would very much welcome their being used in some way, either as inspirational material in individual classes, libraries, etc. for a wider audience and, above all, for all students.

From one quarter, however, I heard that enlarging plants to such a high magnification risks robbing students of their feel for delicate structures and that only fairly large plants should be selected as models. Fearing that the images could draw objections from the same quarter at the teachers' meeting mentioned above, I should like to refute that view here and now. Life-size images of very small plants can be used for gold jewellery, book illustrations, etc., whereas sculptors invariably require giant motifs for architectural ornamentation. Every metre-wide ceiling rose has its origins in a tiny flower. All the old-style leaf tips incorrectly referred to as *acanthus* are nothing but accurate reproductions of tiny leaf forms such as parsley, anemone and so forth. These small forms are the finest and – for the sculptor – the most useful of all. The leaves of all larger plants, such as rhubarb, etc., are too floppy to be of use for sculpture. It is a very different matter when painters use these forms – as well as the artificially enhanced blooms of carnations, etc., bred by horticulturists – because what matters in that case is the colour. The sculptor, however, can only make profitable use of the smaller, simple plants that grow wild. These plants are a treasure trove of forms – one which is carelessly overlooked only because the scale of shapes fails to catch the eye and sometimes makes the forms hard to identify. But that is precisely what these photographs are intended to do – to portray diminutive forms on a convenient scale and encourage students to pay them more attention.

I also enclose a photograph of an ornament on the Erechtheion in Athens and an enlargement of the bracts of *Acanthus spinosus*, which grows wild in Greece. I made these photographs myself on a field trip and am in no doubt that these acanthus bracts were the model for the motif at top left. This classic, immaculate example shows very clearly how small natural forms, such as diminutive acanthus bracts, were used on a greatly enlarged scale and adapted to suit the material used. I always draw students' attention to this interesting example. It also indicates how my photographs – viewed from a modern perspective, of course – should be used.

To facilitate discussion of these photographs, I feel it would be advisable to affix these prints in advance to a wall. I will gladly be of service here. There are 210 sheets measuring 20 x 30 cm each and they would require an area of around 12 square metres.

Yours sincerely C[arl] Blossfeldt, 11.4.06"



Doc. 14, fonds 7,
no. 86r., letter of
22 January 1910

Translation:

"recd. 22. 1.

B. 22.1.1910

Dear Director,

Last summer I was asked to present a number of my plant preparations to His Excellency the Minister of State Sydow and His Excellency was very complimentary in his comments. I was then asked by the directors of the arts and crafts schools in Aachen and Charlottenburg to prepare similar teaching materials for those institutions, which I was pleased to do in the interest of studying from nature.

I now have hundreds of very interesting and inspiring motifs for those schools and wish to put them on display before I deliver them. I am now bringing the items from my apartment and installing them in Room 117 for this purpose. When I am finished, I will take the liberty of inviting you again to a viewing. Maybe some of the teachers will also be interested.

different handwriting: Teaching staff to be informed.

I have also invited His Excellency the Minister Sydow to view the collection and would humbly request your permission to receive His Excellency here for that purpose.

different handwriting: naturally

Yours faithfully

C[arl] Blossfeldt

22 January 10

"To Mr. Blossfeldt,

Reimbursement and confirmation that there is naturally no obstacle to His Excellency Sydow being invited. As soon as the exhibition is ready, please notify this office so that an invitation can be issued to the teachers.

Fenders 22/1.10, noted C[arl] Blossfeldt[...]"



Doc. 14, fonds 7,
no. 86v., letter of
22 January 1910



Doc 15, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 308r.



Doc 15, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 308v.



Doc 15, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 309r.



Doc 15, fonds 7,
no. 8, sheet 309v.

Translation:

"Gross Lichterfelde, 1 February 1910
Chausseestrasse 60

To the Director of the Institute of the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum

In view of the requests expressed by various teachers at my small plant exhibition and especially in the light of a practical application referred to by Miss Feldkircher, I hereby take the liberty of making a

proposal.

When Miss Feldkircher saw the items she immediately exclaimed that they were precisely what she needed and would make an invaluable source of inspirational material for her class. She then voiced her regret that this collection was to become the property of other schools and she requested permission at least to make a few quick sketches with her students – a request to which I readily agreed. Miss Feldkircher immediately fetched her sketch pad and, together with her students, spent nearly half an hour making simple outline drawings of a large number of motifs for use in compositions. I believe this is the correct approach to take because it stimulates only the imagination; there is no risk of over-accurate reproduction leading to inappropriate naturalism. This exemplary approach compels every student to draw on his or her own imagination and adapt the ideas inspired by nature to the project and medium in question without being influenced again by nature beyond that point.

To realize this idea and give all students an opportunity to draw inspiration from nature as and when required, I should like to make a constructive proposal. Just as here in the library, where students make sketches and notes, a sizeable room could be made available for the purpose, presenting viewers with an array of motifs from nature in a wide variety of forms – from three-dimensional and pressed plant specimens to photographs. Insects could also be added, indeed animals in general, seashells, etc., creating a varied collection of natural shapes that would be freely accessible to all students at certain times of the day. Individual items could also be lent out to classrooms and a single supervisor would be all that is needed to handle all of the administrative work involved. It may well also be advantageous to grant access to outsiders so that former students might keep in touch with nature. This casual contact with nature would probably be the best of all answers to this question and I would ensure that this school gradually builds up a collection of natural forms that no other institution can match.

I shall leave the preparations in place for a few more days at the request of privy councillors Dönhoff and Muthesius, at whose instigation all senior officials assigned to the art department have been contacted by circular and informed of the opportunity to view the teaching materials. Geheimer Oberregierungsrat Dr. von Seefeld was then here and told me that a number of the gentlemen would like to see the items. I should hereby like to voice the humble request to be allowed to receive those gentlemen here for that purpose.

The fact that privy councillors Dönhoff and Muthesius ordered that these gentlemen should be invited shows that they consider this venture important enough to merit being brought to the attention of wider circles of people. Is it true that a number of officials at the education ministry are also interested? If so, I would also leave the items on show for several more days.

Yours faithfully, C[arl] Blossfeldt

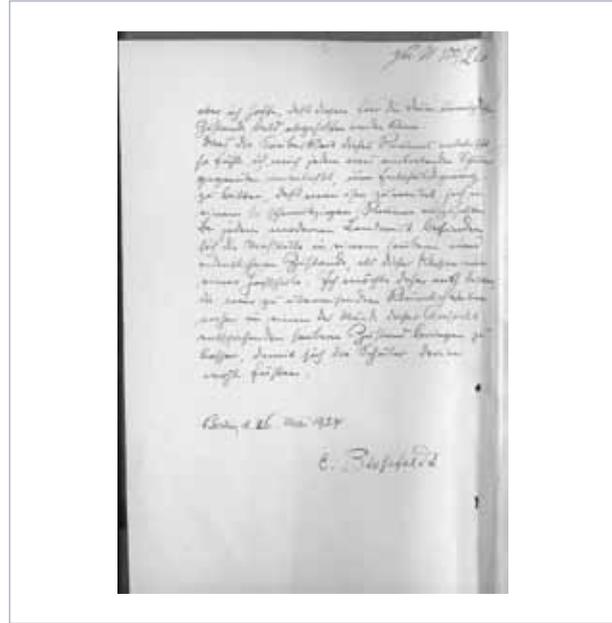
different handwriting: Privy councillor Professor Pallat has been invited to the exhibition by telephone; otherwise, this correspondence has been dealt with orally.

5.2. F[en]dler" For filing

Z[u] d[en] A[kten]



Doc. 17, fonds 7,
no. 21, sheet 89r.



Doc. 17, fonds 7,
no. 21, sheet 89v.

Translation:

"Although remedial action was promised when I was assigned my present inadequately sized classroom, I should like to draw attention to this unsatisfactory state of affairs yet again. The room is divided by a canvas, which is torn in places, and is 4.90 metres wide. Because of the tables and shelves at the walls, the clear space available narrows to around 3 1/2 metres. Crowded within this space are 18 modelling stands, a similar number of sculpting tables and boards, a large box for clay, 3 stepladders, etc., as well as the students' work in progress. Once the students have managed to squeeze between all these things, they barely have space to move. I should just like to point out that rooms 125 and 129, for example, are similarly divided by fabric walls and that those four rooms are used by only one student at a time, whereas my classroom, which is the same size, needs to accommodate a day class and an evening class.

I am aware of the difficulties regarding rooms as a result of the amalgamation of the two institutions but I hope that this situation – which is an impossible long-term arrangement – can soon be remedied.

As regards the cleanliness of this room, I feel I have to apologize to every new student for the fact that he or she is expected to study in such dirty conditions. The cattle sheds on any modern farm are cleaner and tidier than this academy classroom. I should therefore like to request that cleaning arrangements should first be made so that the premises assigned to me are in a state that reflects the dignity of this establishment and that students might feel comfortable in them.

Berlin, 26 May 1924

C[arl] Blossfeldt"

22 pcs. plant preparations behind glass, 24 x 30 cm	Inventory Catalogue C.	33,4. 1–22
7 " " " " 24 x 18 cm		33,5. 1–7
27 " " " " 13 x 18 cm		33,6. 1–27
23 " " " " 9 x 12 cm		33,7. 1–23
622 " "Photographs of plant preparations. Loose sheets		33,8. 1–622
115 " " " pots and receptacles loose sheets		33,9. 1–115
55 " " " ceramics exhibition 1922/23		33,10. 1–55
45 " " " Monza " 1927	33,11. 1–45	

Hahn
Document archivist

To Mrs. Prof[essor] Blossfeldt

Dear Professor,

You were kind enough to donate to us a collection of preparations and photographs from your late husband's estate and I should like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for that. The new plant preparations are a welcome addition to the preparations already in our possession. We now own a fine collection of them – the fruit of painstaking work and devotion – presenting a wealth of forms that easily escape notice in nature. In the near future, we plan to display a small selection of them, along with a number of photos, in one of our lower corridors. Maybe you will do us the honour of calling by.

Yours sincerely
[Sörrensen] 26.V 33

2. Mr. Hahn

Let us talk in situ about a small exhibition of preparations and photos.

Noted, Hahn 30. V.33 S

The cabinets will be obtained the week after Whit. Mr. Hahn has been informed.

S 30/V 33

Already discussed with Hahn. Week 12. VI.33

In progress S 7, VI. 33

The small exhibition has been on view in two cabinets in the canteen corridor since 8.VI. 33 and looks very nice. It will stay in place until further notice.

To Prof[essor] Blossfeldt

Dear Professor,

We have put a small selection of your husband's preparations and photos on display in two teaching material cabinets in our busiest corridor – not as a major exhibition but as a simple presentation. If you should be in the vicinity, please do call in. I should be particularly delighted to greet you in person.

Yours sincerely
[Sörrensen]

The exhibition will remain in place for the time being.

Different handwriting: Professor Blossfeldt visited the exhibition on 22.6.1933 and was very pleased. Hill"

(German Transcriptions: Sabine Lenthe, Bremen, Transcript. Büro für Umschreibarbeiten von alten deutschen Handschriften)