

Dear Walter,

I do not actually know where to send this letter, for there have been rumours that you have moved to Chicago. Pending your confirmation (or otherwise) I can do no better than address this to Lincoln and hope for the best. I wonder if you could help me with some advice:

I have been invited to collaborate, and in particular provide documentary material, for a series of articles on a subject close to our hearts: the relation between architecture, painting, sculpture, textiles, stained glass etc. and the entity of the result achieved by their organised use, or in other words; team spirit. This, as we all know, is by no means a very recent problem; but there are many who do not know, or do not wish to know, that this was what occupied the minds of everyone, yours more than anyone else's, during and after ^{the} Bauhaus days. It is therefore essential to stress this, and show what the Bauhaus has done.

Before I begin to organise the work of documenting the subject, I should like to make another attempt at locating my own collection of documentary material, i.e. the considerable number of photographs (original negatives) which I took during my Bauhaus years. I wonder if there is anything you can recall, possibly from discussions with Moholy, who took care of them when I left in 1933.

It did not occur to me to ask you earlier, or at any rate not until Sybil told me the negatives were stored in the house where you and Ise lived in Berlin. Is this correct? If so, can you remember when they were deposited there and, whether they were left there when you decided to come to England? or were they moved elsewhere?

When I left, all my things i.e. books, pictures, household goods and negatives were in one place, and I know nothing about subsequent arrangements. When Moholy and Sybil came to London, some of my furniture and a few other odd things came along in their lift - but not unfortunately the negatives. I presume they were left behind on account of their weight, being glass.

This did not worry me unduly at first, partly because I hoped they could be retrieved later; partly because my mind was occupied with other, more acute worries. I began to feel the loss later on, increasing with the demand for lectures and articles which needed illustrating.

It was of course impossible to do anything about it during the war years. When, later, I wrote to Moholy asking him about the circumstances, he was too ill to reply. When Sybil came to London on her way to Germany, I brought the subject up, and it was then that she said (I had never heard it before) that the negatives were moved to your place. And, she continued, as the house was bombed, the negatives, no doubt, have been destroyed. But is this really so? Not knowing who looked after the place after you left, ~~xxxxxxx~~ I am a bit at a loss ~~xxxxxxx~~ whom to ask. Is it not possible that the negatives were moved to safety, and are still sitting somewhere - but if so, where? Any hint you may be able to give me, will be valuable.

Perhaps I ought to have written to you earlier, to corroborate Sybil's recollection. I hesitated to trouble you, and, somewhat naively perhaps, hoped that Sybil would try to do something herself.

Moreover, it was about this time that negotiations started concerning my assignment in Turkey, then Turkey itself proved of absorbing interest, engaging all my attention. Only since I am back - after a spell of work with the World Health Organisation in Geneva - have I had time again to put my own house in order. I promised myself above all to pursue the matter of my negatives as soon as circumstances permit.

So: if there is the slightest hope that my negatives may still be intact, I must do what I can to trace them. But how do I go about it? These negatives are irreplaceable documents which could be extremely useful, now more than ever. I am prepared to look into the matter myself, or request friends in Germany to do this for me. But I can do nothing unless I have a line to work on. Do you think you could advise me on this? I should be extremely grateful.

Meanwhile, I have been writing reports, and preparing lectures and broadcasts based on my work in Turkey. I am now studying the scope of similar projects within the Expanded programme of Technical Assistance and the Colombo Plan, which interest me intensely.

I have just had a review of your exhibition in Cassel sent to me by a friend. I pass it on to you for your files.

With many good wishes to you and Ise - hoping to hear from you, work, plans and all,

Yours ever

Lucia

Lucia Moholy

February 25, 1954

Lucia Moholy
127 Sloane Street
London S.W.1, England

Dear Lucia:

Returning from a lengthy trip to Brazil and Peru, I found your letter of January twenty-first on my desk. I am glad to hear that you are back in London and hope that you are well and full of new work. I have just received in Sao Paulo the Grand Prix International d'Architecture, "Premio Sao Paulo", which was handed out to me in a big ceremony by the President of Brazil, Getulio Vargas, in the presence of the diplomatic corps.

I am very interested that you take up as a theme: team spirit. As you know, I have tried quite a bit to promote teamwork in practice, and I have also written about it. In two of the recent numbers of THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW, you will find an article by Winston Weisman and my Letter to the Editor in answer to it.

Regarding the Bauhaus photos, you obviously have forgotten what happened; long years ago in Berlin, you gave all these negatives to me. I have carefully kept them, had copies made of all of them and have given a full set of copies to the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard which has built up a special Bauhaus Department which is steadily growing. I have promised them the original negatives with your name attached as soon as I do not need them any more myself. Both Ise and myself remember this clearly. You will imagine that these photos are extremely useful to me and that I have continuously made use of them; so I hope you will not deprive me of them. Wouldn't it be sufficient if I sent you contact prints of the negatives? There are a great many, but I certainly understand that you want to make use of them yourself. Anyhow it will be a relief for you to know that they are in existence and in good shape. I have never left them out of hand.

Hoping to hear from you soon again,

Yours sincerely,

Walter Gropius

WG:sw

20th March, 1954

Dear Walter,

Thank you for your letter of February 25 th. I am glad you have reminded me that I left my negatives with you and not, as I thought, with Moholy. This point might have been clarified long ago. The misunderstanding arose when the absence of my negatives from the lift was put down to transport difficulties, and it was perpetuated by subsequent information now revealed by your letter to have been incorrect.

Whether my possessions were left in one place or two is immaterial. My negatives, my most valued possession, were left with you in trust. They have, as you know, never been given to you, but have always remained my property. Our futures were very uncertain when I left Germany in 1933, and unable to use my negatives myself for an undefinable period, I left them under your care on the understanding that you might occasionally use them in my name, until I was able to carry on with my work. If at any time you felt the arrangement was open to interpretations which I could ill afford, you, an old friend and teacher, should have guided me and with your wisdom and foresight helped me to put it right.

My negatives, as you know, were the result of many years hard work in Weimar, Dessau, Berlin. They include photographs of Bauhaus and other workshop products of many different kinds, various architecture, interior decoration, stage design etc. as well as people, paintings and sculpture long since of world fame. They were - I need hardly remind you - widely appreciated, and through them I had made a name for myself in and outside Germany.

It was about the time when you came to live in England that, forced as I was to start from scratch again, I settled down as a photographer in London. My negatives should then have been returned to me.

My reasons for not having raised the matter with you before was that I have always been under the impression - as you must have gathered from my previous letter - that my negatives were still in Germany, if they had not been destroyed. There have, though, been many occasions during that period when I could not help feeling puzzled how, under the circumstances, editors, publishers, lecturers, museums and other exhibitors and lantern slide agencies were enabled to use and publish my photographs, often without my name.

These contradictory facts are now explained by your letter. The bombing story was no more than a myth; my negatives have left Germany long ago and were, without my knowledge and approval, taken along by you first moving to England and then to the United States. It is good to know, at long last, that they are intact; but what makes you think that my interest ends there, I wonder?

I have no doubt that my negatives have been extremely useful to you, and I gather from what you say that you have had copies made of all of them, have continually made use of them and presumably frequently published and publicly shown them. Moreover, you have, equally without my consent, given a whole set of copies to the Busch-Reisinger Museum to help them build up a special department. Do you realise what this means to me? Here am I, writing articles, making speeches and every other possible effort with a view to securing support for the setting up of a comprehensive museum collection of photographs in this country; and meanwhile, without my knowledge, my own photographs are given away to build up another museum collection elsewhere.

But this is not all. I am appalled to hear that you have promised the Museum the original negatives, my negatives, with my "name attached" as if I were long dead - your only stipulation being that you do not need them

any more yourself ! How can you do such a thing ?
If now or at any future time I want a museum or anyone else to have the ownership of my negatives, I would, obviously, wish to make the necessary arrangements myself.

Contact prints, as you know only too well, are a poor substitute, and to offer me contact prints in lieu of my negatives, is adding insult to injury. When, a few years ago, I described to you the difficulties of tracking down the required photographs for my lectures on the Bauhaus for which the interest has been growing over here (and might have been encouraged further) , you did not say that you were in a position to supply contact prints of my negatives. Nor did this further occasion move you - as it should have done - to return my negatives if you had not done so earlier, or to make some alternative suggestion which might have reunited me with my negatives.

During all these many years I have lived and worked on the assumption that my negatives have been out of reach. I turned down all and every request (I had one again last week) for copies from those "missing" negatives; and I had, on the other hand, to suffer the indignity of being refused the loan of lantern slides prepared, without my permission, from my own photographs. I will as yet say nothing of other plans which I have cherished for years, but have been prevented from carrying out.

I think you must have realised, when asking me not to deprive you, as you put it, of my negatives, that it is not you who are being deprived by my claiming my property, but that it is me who has been deprived of them for almost twenty years, while all this time you have retained them and made them serve you in every possible way. How do you propose to compensate me for all this ?

When first reading your letter I wondered if I was dreaming. I could hardly believe that it was real. To think this has been happening without a word ever being said to me, is beyond comprehension.

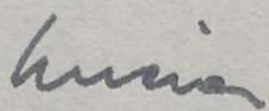
Surely if you, Walter Gropius, whose name has been associated with "team spirit", had felt happy in your own mind about the way and extent you have been using my negatives, you would have wished to tell me from time to time how they were faring; you would, as a matter of course, have taken every opportunity to convey to me your or other people's appreciation; or you would, at the very least, have kept me informed as a sine qua non routine courtesy.

You chose to do none of this, though not from lack of opportunity. We have never been out of touch for any length of time; and among all the other possible explanations one, and only one, appears to be adequate: am I, then, to conclude that you deliberately avoided to mention the subject? While this would be in line with the non-availability, until this month, of accurate information concerning the whereabouts of my negatives, it would add a very distressing feature to an already very unfortunate story.

That all this has come to me from you whom I always considered one of my truest friends, is a disheartening and shattering experience.

I am sure you will understand that I am anxious to have your reply as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,


Lucia Moholy