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# A Ghost in the Machine Age: The Westerwald Stoneware Industry and German Design Reform, 1900–1914

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## **Abstract**

Between the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900 and the Deutscher Werkbund’s first major exhibition of mass-produced products in Cologne in 1914, German stoneware underwent a remarkable process of technical and aesthetic modernization. In collaboration with artists and cultural critics, the German region known as the Westerwald transformed its provincial, handcrafted vessels to rank among the exemplary mass-produced goods selected and deployed by the Werkbund to promote—at a domestic, grass-roots level—the development of a modern, national style. But this modern transformation was complicated by the legacy of the past: the Westerwald’s heritage of indigenous craft affected its manufacture of modern products. This article traces the Westerwald’s paradoxical approach to modern design as a reflection of Wilhelmine Germany’s ambivalent modernism and employs “modern” stonewares in an

interpretation of the Werkbund's vision for a technological future conflated with a vernacular past. Analysis of Westerwald vessels designed by influential modern artists and displayed, published and marketed by the Werkbund, helps to concretize the organization's notoriously elusive design theory, including its specialized use of the terms *Qualität* and *Sachlichkeit*. To a young German nation in search of an enduring, all-pervasive, national style, the Westerwald offered an "evolved" vernacular fit for modern consumption.

**Keywords:** Deutscher Werkbund, *Kultur*, modern design, *Qualität*, Richard Riemerschmid, *Sachlichkeit*, vernacular, Westerwald

No matter where the whims of fashion may lead, the beer mug will always stick with stoneware.<sup>1</sup>

### An "Artistic Emergency"

At the turn of the twentieth century, the German stoneware industry found itself in aesthetic and economic crisis. The Kannenbäckerland, or "Jug-Baking Country"—the small region of western Germany to the east of the Rhine, between the Rivers Sieg and Lahn, and situated in the southwestern portion of the Westerwald (western forest) mountain range—had seen better days. Kannenbäckerland had earned its nickname for five centuries of utilitarian pottery production—five hundred years of cobalt-stained, salt-glazed tankards, jugs and punchbowls known as Westerwald stoneware. Three primary production

centers at Höhr, Grenzau and Grenzhausen, grew up around the lower or "Unterer" Westerwald mountains, which contained the largest and richest deposits of stoneware clay constituents in northwest Europe. This natural, material resource fueled the development of the Westerwald industry, from its fourteenth-century production for local markets to its international renown in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

The material character of Westerwald clay—fine-grained and plastic, yet durable and sanitary owing to its high firing temperature—suited it not only to a variety of utilitarian, domestic forms (from preserving jars to chamber pots), but also to the elaborately embellished drinking vessels that became fashionable during the sixteenth century and won the Westerwald potters recognition as fine craftsmen (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> Rhineland beer mugs and kitchen crockery, traded across Europe and Britain and exported as far as North America, Africa and Asia, came to be identified with reliability and authenticity: the word "Westerwald" spoke of German quality.<sup>4</sup>

By the eighteenth century, Westerwald stoneware had secured a reputation for usefulness; but by the nineteenth century this reputation was all it had left. The eighteenth century saw Westerwald stoneware already assuming a narrower market niche as primarily functional pottery, appropriate to the utilitarian needs that imported fine-ware (e.g. tin-glazed earthenware) failed to meet; but the discovery of kaolin near Dresden in the early eighteenth century and the rapid development of European porcelain that followed foretold the total eclipse of Westerwald stoneware as a decorative ceramic.<sup>5</sup> During the nineteenth



**Fig 1** Large baluster jug with applied body frieze depicting the Triumphal Procession of the Four Seasons, date of 1589 and initials "IE" for Jan Emens, a potter who relocated from Raeren to Grenzau during the 1580s. The shoulder features stamped floral motifs and incised diaper ornament [*Kerbschnitt*]. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

century, as porcelain became increasingly affordable to the middle classes for everyday use, stoneware began to seem downright crude. The Westerwald firms rallied to the nationalism of the *Gründerzeit*: the period

of economic boom following Germany's 1871 victory in the Franco-Prussian War and subsequent unification. But their intricate copies of German Renaissance vessels, though technologically progressive, attracted only fleeting consumer interest (Figure 2).<sup>6</sup> By 1900, flea markets were flooded with blue-and-gray beer mugs so stripped of market value that their pewter lids constituted their greatest material asset.<sup>7</sup>

At the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle, the juxtaposition of "dusty" Westerwald stoneware with the dazzling spectrum of glazes and innovative, Asian-inspired forms of French "art pottery" proved humiliating, not only for the Rhineland firms, but for the new German nation. In desperation (and with Prussian government support)



**Fig 2** Left: jug, stoneware with iron-oxide, Merkelbach & Wick, Grenzhausen, 1873. Right: jug, stoneware with cobalt-oxide, designed and modeled by Peter Dümmler, S.P. Gerz, Höhr, c. 1878–83. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

the Westerwald turned to progressive German artists for a solution to its “artistic emergency.”<sup>8</sup> The Westerwald’s collaborative response to this calamity, in its struggle for survival at the dawn of the machine age, presents two fundamental paradoxes: first, how the hallmarks of handcraft could live on in the design of industrial products; and second, how the symbols of an outmoded, regional tradition could provide the “raw materials” for a modern, national style. The story of the Westerwald’s modernization from 1900 through 1914 illuminates the rhetoric of craft within the language of modern design.

### The Quality of “Thingliness”

In an 1899 article for the Munich journal *Kunst und Handwerk* (Art and Handcraft) entitled “The Artistic Emergency of the Westerwald Stoneware Industry,” applied arts professor Ernst Zimmermann explored the complexities of Rhineland stoneware’s contemporary dilemma. Its modern problems, he argued, could not be solved simply by reclothing Westerwald vessels in historicist forms; nor could one superficially “tart up” the somber stonewares with flashy, low-fired colored enamels applied after the glaze firing.<sup>9</sup> The 1890s had witnessed the economic failure of both strategies. But if the emergency could not be remedied by fashion, then how could Westerwald stonewares be made to appeal to modern German consumers, yet retain their dignity as time-honored products of Germany’s cultural heritage?

Two interdependent concepts—each gathering heightened significance in the discourses of architecture and design roughly

contemporaneous with Zimmermann’s Westerwald lament—together offered a means of rejuvenation untainted by the novelties of fashion and rooted in the German soil. These were *Qualität*: a specialized adaptation of the more generic “quality,” endowing material characteristics with cultural values; and *Sachlichkeit*: generally translated as matter-of-factness, sobriety, or objectivity, but more literally interpreted as “thingliness”—the essential nature, or character, of material things. *Sachlichkeit* was first applied to the designed environment in 1896, when Munich architect Richard Streiter employed the term to describe a new “realistic architecture” that rejected the pomp of historicist styles, embracing instead utilitarian purpose, current living conditions, and local and regional building traditions, as well as locally available materials and technologies. Streiter believed that the “character” of a building or object should be derived “from the qualities of available materials, and from the environmentally and historically conditioned feeling of the place.”<sup>10</sup> The appearance and texture of regional or vernacular materials—like the cobalt-stained, salt-glazed skin of Westerwald stoneware—signaled *Sachlichkeit* in design. The *sachliche* object discarded fashion’s seductive veneer and proclaimed its own inner substance, its physical nature and ideological essence, directly through an emphasis on the characteristics of its materials and its method of construction.

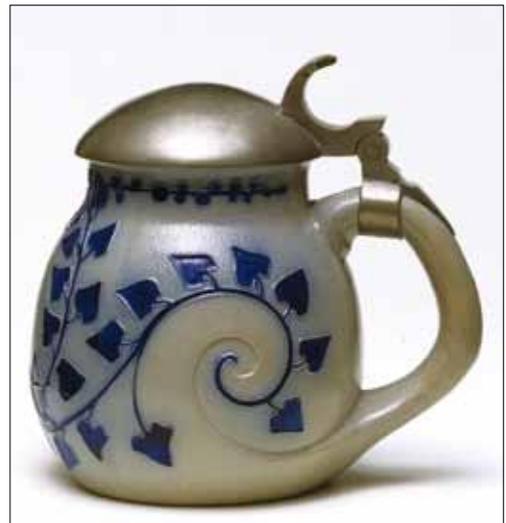
Zimmermann’s reform strategy for the Westerwald, stemming from a dual appreciation for its material product and its cultural heritage, was pure *Sachlichkeit*. He believed that modern artistic and

technological reforms must engage not merely with visible surface but with practical and ideological substance, with “the actual, current circumstances in the ceramics industry, which are the direct result of its history and fundamental character (*Bodenbeschaffenheit*).”<sup>11</sup> Zimmermann’s opposition of the term *Bodenbeschaffenheit* (literally, “ground-character”), with words like novelty and fashion, set the tone for the Westerwald’s twentieth-century modernization, grounded in the “character” of the clay itself. At *Sachlichkeit*’s expressive heart lay a hard kernel of materiality that would be celebrated, theorized and eventually proselytized as *Qualität*.

Between the Westerwald’s embarrassment at Paris in 1900 and the 1907 founding of the Deutscher Werkbund—the organization of artists, architects, educators and industrialists who targeted the applied arts as the key to a modern German aesthetic culture—the indigenous Rhineland industry would undergo rigorous technical and aesthetic modernization. The collaboration among manufacturers, technicians and artists necessary to achieve its reincarnation would stand as a model for the Werkbund’s symbiotic vision for art and industry. The product of this union was envisioned as a useful, affordable *Alltagskunst*, or “everyday art.” This new *Alltagskunst* should establish a modern German style rooted so deeply in German culture that it could weather the whims of fashion, and integrated so completely into contemporary everyday life that it would be experienced as the natural, material expression of an indigenous people, or *Volk*.

### Richard Riemerschmid’s “Great Step Forward”

A gray stoneware tankard bearing a motif of spiraling, cobalt-stained ivy and designed in 1902 by Munich artist Richard Riemerschmid (1868–1957) for the Westerwald firm of Reinhold Merkelbach, placed the gritty texture of the past into the hands of a modern German *Volk* (Figure 3). In discussing the influence of the vernacular in German design reform, Maiken Umbach has proposed that “on a conceptual level, the notion of the ‘vernacular’ bound together the two decisive components of this reform project: the tradition of craftsmanship and a sense of geographical ‘rootedness’ that countered the threatening alienation between people and the material culture of modernity.”<sup>12</sup>



**Fig 3** Richard Riemerschmid, *Hedra Helix* tankard designed for Reinhold Merkelbach (tankard model no. 1729), gray stoneware with inlaid cobalt stain, 1902. ©V&A Images/2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Riemerschmid's salt-glazed beer mug eased its user into modern life by giving him something familiar and concrete—rock-solid—to hold on to. The history of Westerwald stoneware as indigenous resource, geographically specific material, vernacular craft process and utilitarian tradition, adapted by modern designers for cosmopolitan life in the twentieth century, reveals the paradox inherent in shaping a modern German identity. For although the stoneware industry strove toward technological innovation and mass production, it did so in order to recover the Westerwald's lost glory, which—like the clay itself, literally rooted in the German soil—was buried in the past. The Westerwald aspired to what Susan Stewart has termed a “future-past”: a utopian state in which the idealized image of a bygone era is resuscitated.<sup>13</sup> But by infusing their modern, reproducible designs with signs of regional handcraft, designers for Westerwald firms not only ensured the survival of craft in the machine age, but also bequeathed its historians material evidence of Wilhelmine Germany's ambivalent engagement with modernity. The vernacular idyll—an idealized vision of a timeless, preindustrial Arcadia distinct and exempt from the recent, historical past of the *Gründerzeit*—was central to the conception of modern German design. Westerwald stoneware's embodiment of this vernacular past helped it to define a modern sense of German “quality.”

Ironically, however, the first significant interaction between modern “art” and stoneware “industry” resulted from the Westerwald's collaboration with an artist whose mother tongue was not

German. In 1901, the Westerwald District Council applied to the renowned Belgian designer Henry Van de Velde to bring his contemporary sensibility to Westerwald products. Although Van de Velde had had little prior experience with the medium of stoneware, his work was already well known in Germany and greatly admired among its progressive design-reform circles. Just the year before, Van de Velde had been instrumental in an attempt to revitalize Krefeld's struggling silk and dressmaking industries by assuming a commanding role in an exhibition of artist-designed women's reform dresses mounted by Friedrich Deneken, director of Krefeld's Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, in August, 1900.<sup>14</sup> In addition to his celebrated avant-garde interiors, Van de Velde's participation in this public campaign to rejuvenate the native industry of a German manufacturing center suffering at the hands of the French fashion industry aligned him with the nationalist cause of German design reform, making him a highly desirable candidate to update the outdated Westerwald wares.

The success of Van de Velde's first designs for stoneware prompted the District Council to recommend him in 1902 to the Prussian Ministry of Trade in Berlin, which subsequently divided his designs among several of the Westerwald firms for immediate production. The new designs inspired the hope of progress in Kannenbäckerland, presenting the possibility of a fresh approach to its age-old industry and earning Van de Velde the historical title of “catalyst” of the modern Westerwald. In addition to bringing new theories of form to bear upon salt-glazed stoneware through the application of his stylized linear

motifs to traditional blue-and-gray vessels, he received most acclaim for his temporary expansion of the conventional Westerwald glaze palette by using the colorful, high-fired, Asian-inspired glazes—previously seen in German stoneware only on the one-off studio ceramics of 1890s “art potters”—on his decorative vases for the firm of Reinhold Hanke (Figure 4).<sup>15</sup>

At Krefeld, Van de Velde’s goal had been the “künstlerische Hebung” (artistic elevation) of the modern woman’s dress as an alternative to Paris fashion; rather than rejecting the fashionable dress’s history of elegance, Van de Velde had offered fashionable German women sophisticated, artistic dresses, which (he hoped) they would desire in place of conventional Parisian novelties.<sup>16</sup> But Van de Velde’s strategy of “artistic elevation” proved more appropriate to Krefeld silks than to Westerwald beer mugs. Despite the new life he injected into tired German stoneware through the fashionable cachet of his colorful, modern vases, Van de Velde’s preoccupation with formal concerns blinded him somewhat to the Westerwald’s two core values: craft

and utility. Zimmermann wrote in 1903 that Van de Velde’s stonewares owed too much to the “international” (i.e. French) influence of art nouveau, but the designs of Munich artist Richard Riemerschmid demonstrated true *Materialschätzung*, an affectionate appreciation for the material.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1890s, Riemerschmid had risen from a local Munich painter to a nationally recognized architect-designer. A founding member of Munich’s Vereinigte Werkstätten für Kunst im Handwerk (United Workshops for Art in Handcraft) in 1898, he went on to work under contract for the Dresdner Werkstätten für Handwerkskunst (Dresden Workshops for the Art of Handcraft), exerting a major influence on the company’s design program from 1902 onward.<sup>18</sup> Riemerschmid’s initial experience with ceramics grew out of his friendships with three colleagues at the Vereinigte Werkstätten, the art potters Theodor Schmutz-Baudiss, Walter Magnussen and Jakob Julius Scharvogel. In 1900, after the success of Riemerschmid’s “Room for an Art Lover” at the Paris World’s Fair, the Westerwald firm of Reinhold Merkelbach



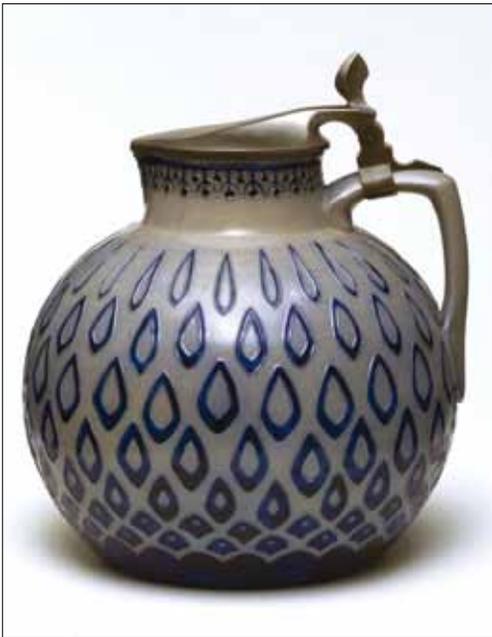
**Fig 4** Henry Van de Velde, salt-glazed stoneware vessels with high-fired polychrome glazes designed for Reinhold Hanke, c. 1902. © The Trustees of the British Museum/2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

approached him to design modern beer vessels, inviting him to visit the manufactory in order to experiment directly with the clay and work with the firm's technicians.<sup>19</sup>

Riemerschmid's close collaboration with Reinhold Merkelbach resulted in a redefinition of craftsmanship for the machine age and the adaptation of the Westerwald's utilitarian vernacular for the modern middle-class consumer. His designs constituted a new conception of stoneware that seemed refreshingly modern compared with nineteenth-century historicist wares, yet restrained and functional in contrast to both individualistic studio art pottery and Van

de Velde's undulating vases. Period reviews praised Riemerschmid for expressing the "right feeling" for the tough, dense clay body in simple, sturdy forms. One critic argued that Riemerschmid's stonewares were more successful than his designs in any other material, while another claimed that through his keen understanding of the material itself, Riemerschmid followed "in the footsteps of the old potters."<sup>20</sup>

But Riemerschmid's appreciation for the material went beyond the stoneware clay, to embrace the history of its technology, or craft (Figure 5). His rationalized sphere-and-cylinder construction of a 1903 jug, decorated in a blue-and-gray lozenge pattern, was designed for serial production and also for domestic use. Its broad surfaces and simplified forms were visually "modern," as well as being easy to use and clean. These aspects of Riemerschmid's design contrast starkly with the more complex, ornamented form of a sixteenth-century baluster jug (see Figure 1); however, Riemerschmid's dripping geometry shares more with the sixteenth-century decoration than cobalt pigment. The baluster jug's complicated decorative scheme was achieved by hand through a combination of techniques, including the application of a molded frieze, as well as the stamping, rouletting and incising of the clay surface. During the incising process, known in the Westerwald as the "scratch technique," a sharp tool was used to outline ornaments in the leather-hard clay, after which cobalt oxide was applied within the voided areas. But Riemerschmid's incised lozenges, while they allude to the Westerwald's decorative traditions and convey the sense of time-honored craftsmanship, were far from "handcrafted" in the conventional sense.



**Fig 5** Richard Riemerschmid, jug with lozenge pattern designed for Reinhold Merkelbach (jug model no. 1769), gray stoneware with inlaid cobalt stain, 1903. ©V&A Images/2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Though initially carved into the body of a model jug, the “scratched” lozenges became reliefs when this original jug was cast to form a hollow mold, within which jug after identical jug could then be thrown. Rather than being painstakingly incised one by one, the lozenges were thus imprinted all at once into the jug’s surface as the technician pressed the clay against the mold; the cobalt stain was applied later within the impressions. This serial production process enabled Merkelbach to manufacture hundreds of identical vessels—each one ostensibly unique. Zimmermann immediately hailed Riemerschmid’s modernized scratch technique as a “great step forward” in



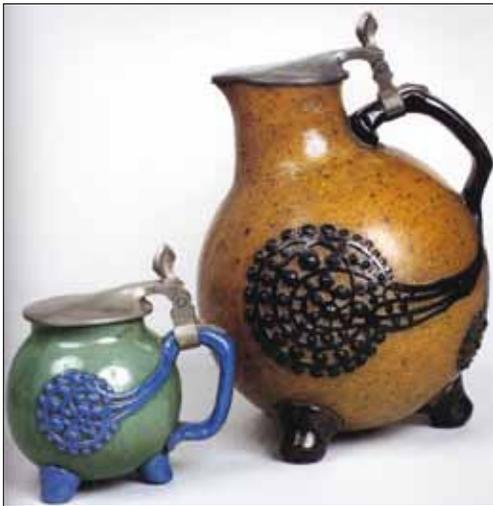
**Fig 6** Richard Riemerschmid, jug designed for Reinhold Merkelbach (jug model no. 1729, 1902), executed in gray stoneware with *braun geflammt* [oxidized brown] surface treatment, 1910. Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with the Haney Foundation Fund, the Bloomfield Moore Fund, and the Edgar Viguers Seeler Fund, 1987/2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

its adaptation to “modern mechanized production.”<sup>21</sup> By perpetuating the illusion of one-of-a-kind, hand-decorated pottery, while at the same time facilitating a production process in which form and ornament were created simultaneously in one infinitely repeatable step, Riemerschmid’s design not only advanced Westerwald technology, but, more significantly, bridged the gap between vernacular craft and the modern demand for reproducible, affordable and hygienic products. His modern stonewares fetishized Westerwald craft within their rationalized, reproducible forms, repackaging regional tradition for a new national market.

Riemerschmid used his “modern scratch” technique to integrate the generous body of a bulbous brown jug with its invitingly rounded handle in a single, powerful spiral incision (Figure 6). This vessel, designed in 1902, performed a second, symbolic integration of traditional craft and modern technology when it was fabricated in 1910 with a speckled brown surface. While Van de Velde had explored arty, “foreign” colored glazes, Riemerschmid became involved in the revival of iron-brown surface treatments, based upon the archaeological study of sixteenth-century stonewares excavated during the 1890s near the ancient Rhineland city of Cologne. Though the Cologne stoneware tradition was historically and geographically distinct from that of the Westerwald, Reinhold Merkelbach capitalized upon its nationalist resonance—particularly as a unique product of the German Renaissance that could be readapted for modern use—in the appropriation and revival of the *kölnisch* stonewares. Shortly after 1905, in their attempts to replicate the surface treatments of the excavated

pieces, technicians at Reinhold Merkelbach “rediscovered” the technique of applying a layer of iron-bearing slip beneath the salt glaze. If exposed to oxygen during firing, the iron particles oxidized and speckles developed in the brown slip. The suggestion of antique patina that the speckles conveyed was achieved, however, through a distinctly modernist approach to surface decoration that relied solely upon the inherent properties and processes of materials, rather than intentionally applied ornament.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to this *braun geflammt* or “oxidized brown” effect, a second rediscovered technique—*kölnisch braun*, or



**Fig 7** Richard Riemerschmid, jug from a beer service designed for Reinhold Merkelbach (jug model no. 1758) in 1903, executed in gray stoneware with *kölnisch braun* surface treatment, 1910 (right); tankard from Merkelbach beer service in blue-and-green treatment (left). 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

“Cologne brown”—featured cobalt relief ornaments that turned a shiny black when fired under a layer of iron-brown slip (Figure 7). In a process similar to his “modern scratch,” Riemerschmid’s relief ornaments were again fabricated simultaneously with his vessels. This time, in order to mimic the meticulously handcrafted reliefs on vessels excavated at Cologne, Westerwald technicians pressed cobalt-colored clay into depressed areas of molds before throwing their pots within them; in this way, the cobalt clay adhered to the pot as it was being thrown. After being dipped in brown slip and then fired, these “applied” ornaments turned a glossy black. A review of Riemerschmid’s *kölnisch* browns noted reassuringly that “Although the decorations are strictly modern in origin, and used in sparse and striking new ways, they still nestle against the body of the vessel, as the old reliefs did.”<sup>23</sup>

The fabrication of these “new” antique browns was hailed as a great technological advance; but here technology was understood not simply as a progressive force, but rather, as a means for reclaiming the lost pinnacle, not only of Westerwald production, but of German achievement. Both Reinhold Merkelbach’s appropriation of Cologne’s historic, regional tradition and the positive critical reception of the *kölnisch* Renaissance stoneware’s adaptation for the modern Westerwald industry, signal the expressly modern attitude to the regional vernacular adopted by a recently unified Germany seeking national cultural currency in the regional riches of its past. While Cologne and the Westerwald had evolved separate stoneware traditions, to early

twentieth-century eyes, both were time-honored, authentic and indisputably German. In its bid for the status of Germany's preeminent modern stoneware producer, Reinhold Merkelbach amalgamated regional traditions into a consolidated, modern "German vernacular."

This hybrid vernacular was interpreted as being not only newer but *better* than its historical counterparts. The new *kölnisch* browns, according to contemporary glaze chemists, were even richer and more vibrant than their sixteenth-century prototypes.<sup>24</sup> These brown slip-wares, which both referred to and improved upon the long-forgotten pottery of Cologne with the tools, techniques and materials of the Westerwald, became synonymous with Riemerschmid's modern designs for Reinhold Merkelbach between 1905 and 1915.<sup>25</sup> Their enactment of a nostalgia-driven progress exemplifies the Westerwald's complex and cautious approach to modernism. Riemerschmid's "great step forward" was taken "in the footsteps of the old potters," aligning his accomplishment for the Westerwald with Jeffrey Herf's description of Germany's paradoxical "reactionary modernism," in which the development of technology was aggressively promoted and celebrated for its "magical" ability to recreate a faded era in a new-and-improved Technicolor.<sup>26</sup> This "future-past" modernism—busily improving the present in order to reclaim a distant, idealized past—made the Westerwald industry a valuable asset to the nascent Deutscher Werkbund in 1907: its products were practical, tangible examples of how a modern German culture of the everyday—an *Alltagskultur*—might look.

### **"Quality Work": Westerwald Model and Werkbund Agenda**

In their synthesis of tradition and progress, Riemerschmid's new designs adapted both aesthetics and technology for contemporary use. His modern vernacular positioned the Westerwald to serve as a prime example for the Deutscher Werkbund in its campaign to revitalize German culture through the development of modern, "quality" products. Quality (*Qualität*) took on special significance in Werkbund discourse between the organization's 1907 founding and its first major exhibition at Cologne in 1914. Although it would seem simply to imply something well made, the Werkbund used *Qualität* in a more exacting sense, to mark specific products that met its technical and aesthetic standards. Both Werkbund members and cultural scholars have wrestled with the Werkbund's appropriation of *Qualität*, noting a tendency toward abstract, ambiguous jargon. The designer August Endell wrote in 1914 that "The unfortunate word *Qualität* in the Werkbund program" had led to "dire misunderstandings. For 'Quality' means in the end nothing more than to make something well, and that is simply self-evident."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, modern Westerwald stoneware was understood by Werkbund members as a quintessentially "quality product." An investigation of its particular physical and ideological properties facilitates a more complex interpretation of the deceptively simple *Qualität*—a term that began with materials and process, but expanded ambitiously to embrace form, culture and commerce. Conversely, an examination of Westerwald *Qualität* enables a more practical, *sachlich* understanding of the Werkbund itself.

*Qualität* was founded upon the modernist vernacular idyll. To architect, cultural critic and influential Werkbund member Hermann Muthesius, simple vernacular forms, evolved in response to utilitarian needs, were perfectly suited for adaptation to a practical modern lifestyle. In his review of the 1906 Third German Applied Arts Exhibition in Dresden—an event that juxtaposed conventional crafts with modern, artist-designed products fabricated with the aid of machines, galvanizing the progressive *Kunstgewerbewegung* (Art-Industry Movement) and prompting the formal founding of the Werkbund in 1907—Muthesius praised Riemerschmid's modern stonewares, whose forms and functions were derived from vernacular prototypes, which had stood the test of time by transcending the influence of fashion.<sup>28</sup> Muthesius's notion of an unpretentious, ahistorical, "style-less" German material culture that had, he believed, evolved naturally from a primeval vernacular for contemporary use, was central to the concept of *Qualität*: a measurement of inherent worth that outweighed both historical style and commercial value.<sup>29</sup>

Applied arts products labeled as *Qualität* demonstrated the successful evolution of preindustrial regional craft for modern national industry, since *Qualität* began with the material itself. Ernst Berdel, chief glaze chemist at the Westerwald's government-funded Royal Ceramics Technical College in Höhr, equated stoneware with authentic German culture because it "grew out of the ground, which contained the most delectable clay deposits."<sup>30</sup> In his 1907 review of the Dresden exhibition, Muthesius targeted the inappropriate use of materials as the primary cause for "cheap and nasty" products;

where indigenous natural resources, such as stoneware, were concerned, the misuse of materials actually squandered the national wealth. The remedy, Muthesius concluded, was for the designer to study the precise *character* of the material, which would, in turn, dictate the best methods of construction and the most suitable forms.<sup>31</sup> His Werkbund colleague, Stuttgart museum director Gustav Pazaurek, characterized Westerwald stoneware as a "beautiful, hard, manly material" that required appropriate handling. While firms that resorted to applying low-fired, colored enamels to their stoneware beer mugs as cheap marketing gimmicks were accused of emasculating stoneware, Riemerschmid and the designers who followed his example were applauded for restoring stoneware to its primal virility.<sup>32</sup>

In 1910, Pazaurek named two slightly younger designers, Albin Müller (1871–1941) and Paul Wynand (1879–1956), as the successors to Riemerschmid's remarkable *Materialschätzung*, or material-appreciation.<sup>33</sup> Under the rubric of *Qualität*, a material's essence could only be expressed through "quality workmanship." Vessels designed by Müller and Wynand met that criterion by furthering the new model of workmanship that Riemerschmid had pioneered between 1900 and 1905. The Magdeburg designer Albin Müller was felt by critics to have achieved a more successful, practical collaboration with many of the stoneware firms than even the "father of the modern Westerwald," Riemerschmid, himself.<sup>34</sup> Müller attended the Magdeburg *Kunstgewerbeschule* (Applied Arts College) in 1900, proceeding to teach interior design there until 1906, when he was invited to join progressive designers, including Josef Maria

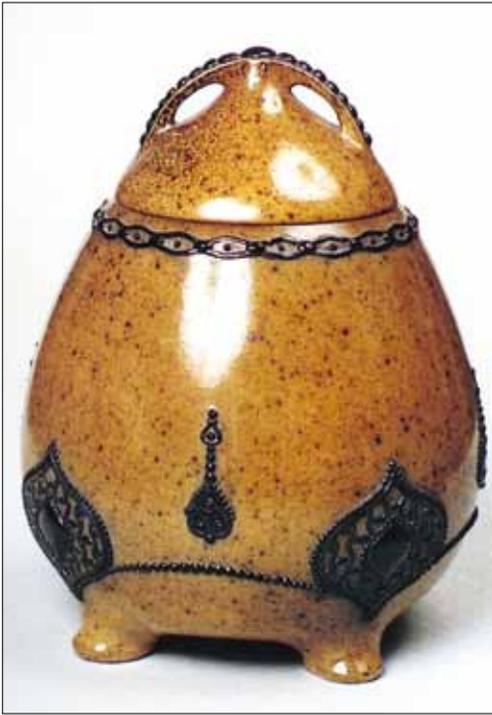


**Fig 8** Albin Müller, punchbowl designed for Simon Peter Gerz I, gray stoneware with cobalt stain, 1910. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

Olbrich, at the artists' colony in Darmstadt. Müller's contributions to the modern Westerwald were not the first to come from a Darmstadt artist. Peter Behrens (1868–1940), perhaps Müller's most illustrious predecessor at the colony (Behrens had left in 1902 to become the director of the Düsseldorf *Kunstgewerbeschule*), had made a few early designs for the Westerwald firms.<sup>35</sup> Though Behrens's legacy for modern design far surpasses that of his Magdeburg colleague, Müller's impact upon the medium of stoneware was indisputably the more significant. Between 1906 and 1912, Müller worked with over a dozen Westerwald firms, contributing numerous designs to their expanding repertoire of "modern" products.<sup>36</sup>

Raised in a family of carpenters, Müller brought his personal experience with *Handwerk* to bear upon his role as a designer. His designs for the Westerwald firms received high praise for their *Machbarkeit* (technical feasibility), an achievement which Pazaurek believed to be the direct result of Müller's "loving cooperation" with potters and model-makers.<sup>37</sup> Though Müller's interpretation of the *Bowle*, a traditional punchbowl form, revealed the designer's delight in decoration, he outdid even Riemerschmid in his rationalized approach to its application, relegating his interlacing patterns to predetermined bands and panels within broad expanses of the rough, gray surface (Figure 8). Müller approached the clay surface like a woodworker; addressing the facets of his vessels as if they were smooth boards to be carved. But despite the impression of hand carving in leather-hard clay, a wheel-casting process similar to Riemerschmid's, in which the pot was thrown within a carved mold, enabled the simultaneous, standardized fabrication of vessel and ornament; additional cast elements, such as handles and feet, were added later. While this eliminated hours of handwork, it also facilitated the dissemination of a handcrafted "look" to a wide audience, through the manufacture of multiple identical—and affordable—vessels.

Paul Wynand found his way to stoneware not through traditional handcraft but through his training as a sculptor. After studying at the Berlin *Kunstgewerbeschule*, Wynand worked in 1900 with Auguste Rodin in Paris, later teaching at the applied arts school in his home city of Elberfeld (now Wuppertal). In 1905 he joined the faculty at the Westerwald's Royal Ceramics



**Fig 9** Paul Wynand, punchbowl designed for Reinhold Merkelbach, gray stoneware with *kölisch braun* surface treatment, 1911.

Technical College in Höhr, where, in addition to teaching, he worked with Reinhold Merkelbach, continuing Riemerschmid's exploration of the Westerwald's *kölisch braun* palette with a series of designs featuring black reliefs on speckled brown bodies. Wynand's sculptural vessels, whether architectonic or organic, appeared strikingly modern. Biomorphic, marine-like motifs clung like barnacles to his hefty forms in an intuitive fashion that demonstrated Wynand's *Materialgerechtigkeit*—his "justice" to the material. A speckled brown punchbowl for Reinhold Merkelbach struck a compromise, in the eyes of the stoneware critics, between

the "foreign" novelty of Van de Velde and the tried-and-true materials, utilitarian forms and decorative techniques of the old Rhineland potters (Figure 9). In contrast to Riemerschmid's "nestled" decorations and Müller's "carved" bands, Wynand's obsidian jewels protrude from the brown surface of his punchbowl as if worked, like exquisite beaded embroidery, into the slick skin of the voluptuous form. These molded reliefs, created as part of the vessel in a single step during the casting process, reinterpreted the delicate *Perldekor*—the ornamental clay pellets applied painstakingly, one by one, to German stonewares from the region of Thuringia during the seventeenth century. This modern, technological translation of a seventeenth-century vernacular convention anchored Wynand's expressive design in Germany's cultural heritage with the weighty substance of stoneware. His complex, yet efficient integration of artistry with industry represented for Berdel "the grand, organic advancement of the truly old. Here the modern and antique triumphantly shake hands, and the character of the heavy, dignified stoneware technique is guaranteed [for modernity] by this artist who works the material with his own hands."<sup>38</sup>

The Werkbund vision of quality workmanship dictated the collaboration of modern art, traditional craft and industrial technology. Though the Werkbund was a diverse body of individuals whose views were frequently in conflict with one another, its basically progressive formal and technological agenda had developed in opposition to the products and practices of the traditional trades.<sup>39</sup> For Muthesius and his supporters, mechanized production was key, not only to the development of modern

forms, but to creating a modern *Alltagskultur* by equipping the middle class with *Qualität* through the mass production of reliable, artistic and affordable products. In the Westerwald, new methods of manufacture celebrated the stoneware industry's legendary achievements: Berdel decreed that the modern forms and decorations generated by serialized, mechanized processes were so "harmonious and organically unified" that he could confidently compare them to the best sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples. The increase in production resulting from new techniques made these celebratory wares available for everyday use.<sup>40</sup>

The collaboration of progressive designers and technicians at Westerwald firms had effectively replaced both the excessive embellishments of historicism and the undesirable idiosyncrasies of handcraft with standardized, sanitized pottery that spoke at once of heritage and hygiene. A new kind of Westerwald "craftsmanship"—though it rendered the virtuosity of the traditional craftsman obsolete and even borrowed, at times, from the history of other regional traditions—actually strengthened the modern industry's symbolic connection to its vernacular heritage. Through an evolution of the technology already inherent in its craft, the Westerwald had, by 1910, begun to reclaim its lost title of *Qualität*.

### **Delight in *Sachlichkeit*: Modern Stonewares as Cultural Agents**

While *Qualität* derived its critical weight as a marker of an object's inherent value from the belief that all materials possessed an "essential nature," its twin concept of *Sachlichkeit* implied an essential nature,

character—or even personality—of form. And just as *Qualität* applied not simply to materials as such, but to materials in action—that is, to process—so the formal implications of *Sachlichkeit*, the ways in which an object's form was understood to express its character, were inseparable from the object's function, or, in *sachlich* terms, from the *purpose* of the *thing*. Period commentators support a reading of *Sachlichkeit* as "thingliness" by linking purpose with personality in their animated descriptions of Riemerschmid's utilitarian objects. In his 1908 account of modern design in Germany, the Austrian art critic and Werkbund member Joseph August Lux wrote that Riemerschmid's objects "act as if they really were individual beings, characters who have their own moods and follow their own rules . . . all the housewares are given expressive faces, inspiring droll, gnome-like thoughts . . ." <sup>41</sup> Lux's Werkbund colleague, Paul Johannes Rée of the Bavarian Museum of Commerce and Industry in Nuremberg, concurred with this assessment, noting the curious way in which Riemerschmid's things seemed to "affect us like beings who, while they are intended to serve us, do so gladly and willingly, with faces that testify to their inner cheerfulness and freedom." Rée concluded that "die Sache"—the task at hand, or, in this case, the *purpose*—was everything to Riemerschmid.<sup>42</sup>

For Rée, the rough, gritty texture of Riemerschmid's salt-glazed stoneware tankards expressed a "männlicher Biederkeit," or manly honesty, conveying a distinct sense of *Biergemütlichkeit*—beer coziness!—to all who drank from them. But Rée's formulation of "cheerful servitude" seems almost restrained in contrast to Muthesius's



**Fig 10** Richard Riemerschmid, *Beer Service* designed for Reinhold Merkelbach 1903, photograph published in *Dekorative Kunst* VII/7 (April 1904), p. 273.

description of Riemerschmid's 1903 *Beer Service* for Reinhold Merkelbach (Figure 10) in an affectionate passage from the April 1904 issue of Munich's applied arts journal, *Dekorative Kunst*: "The little baby tankards offer themselves in an orderly fashion to the loving embrace of the empty hand, while the large jug seems in his [seiner] already half-tipping motion, to be just waiting for the moment when he will be next called upon to perform his accommodating service with drink."<sup>43</sup> Somewhat surprising in these modern critics' accounts is the palpable sense of delight in the animated forms that express the individual "thingliness" of Riemerschmid's objects. While one might imagine that Muthesius, an aggressive proponent of standardization in design, would eschew the notion of biomorphic playfulness, his article for *Dekorative Kunst* reveals his inability to contain himself when confronted with Riemerschmid's jocular beer mugs. As serendipitous as they may seem, the exuberant responses of these earnest *Werkbund* members were hardly coincidental. An animated "quality object," whose *sachliche* form both showcased the essential nature of its materials and enabled it to act out its purpose within the middle-class German home, was the perfect candidate to further the *Werkbund's* grass-roots agenda.

For Muthesius, Riemerschmid's objects were "kräftige Hausmannskost," or hearty

home-cooking.<sup>44</sup> He identified in the Bavarian artist's designs "art in that special, Germanic sense," a craftsmanship and character that were "rooted in the soil [*bodenwüchsig*] ... the art of daily life ..."<sup>45</sup> Riemerschmid's stonewares evoked a folk past, realizing a common ideal of rustic German life through their celebration and animation of everyday utilitarian functions. But his beer service not only recalled preindustrial traditions of making and use: it was also eminently usable in modern life. The conviviality associated with centuries' worth of durable Westerwald stoneware could now be reenacted with updated versions of time-honored vessels. This performative aspect of the new stonewares allowed middle-class Germans to participate in a modern culture indexically connected to a common (if idealized) past, through the material of the clay itself. And it was the clay, in turn, that determined the economic force of *Qualität* as indigenous product, national resource and cultural symbol. According to Karl Ernst Osthaus, director of the German Museum for Art in Trade and Industry in Hagen (a vehicle for *Werkbund* programs), this "authentic product of the soul" of Germany would rejuvenate its economy.<sup>46</sup> Put more plainly, modern stoneware's potential to combine culture with commerce in a recognizably German product tantalized *Werkbund* reformers like Muthesius and

Osthaus, who enlisted the modernized Westerwald in their campaign for *Qualität*.

Stoneware's attraction for the Werkbund was due in large part to its reification of a specifically German cultural ideology, or *Kultur*. Much like stoneware, *Kultur* implied an indigenous, inherent Germanness predating and resisting the inhibiting structures of foreign civilization, or *Zivilisation*. While *Zivilisation* came to signify the external imposition of transitory novelties and foreign frivolities—the “tyranny of fashion”—associated with the nineteenth-century rise of industrial capitalism, *Kultur* stood for that which was both innate and enduring in German self-identity. Characterized by intellectual freedom, *Kultur* was reflected and protected by the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or educated middle class.<sup>47</sup> Werkbund reformers capitalized upon the middle-class connotations of *Kultur* in the concept of *Lebenskunst* (life-art), an aestheticization of everyday objects that architectural historian Mark Jarzombek has called the theme of Wilhelmine domestic culture.<sup>48</sup> The fetishizing of everyday life as the heart of all German culture endowed utilitarian objects such as Riemerschmid's stonewares with a moral purpose (in addition to their practical one) as bearers of “Germanness.”

Art critic and Werkbund member Karl Scheffler discussed the idea of an *Alltagskunst* and explored the connections between German art and German life in *Moderne Kultur*, a two-volume edited guide to modern domesticity published in 1907.<sup>49</sup> In articles on subjects from kitchen crockery to religion, Scheffler, along with other prominent intellectuals and artists, attempted to synthesize cultural pedagogy into a modern bourgeois ideology. *Moderne Kultur* charged

the *Bildungsbürgertum* as the modern stewards of *Kultur*. By educating the middle class about modern *Qualitätsware*, or “quality products,” *Moderne Kultur* encouraged discerning consumers to enact practical reforms from the inside out—beginning in the domestic interior and overflowing into public life. Through their purchases, the educated middle class could infuse modernity with Germanness; the acquisition of household items was to be understood not merely as an expression of personal taste, but as an act of cultural allegiance.

*Moderne Kultur* implied in its title an evolution of German culture for modern life: the preindustrial, spiritual force of *Kultur* would ground the destabilizing aspects of modernity, including industrial capitalism. If a modern German culture was to be disseminated through consumer goods, the problematic ambivalence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* toward modern consumerism had to be counteracted through the stamp of *Kultur*, applied to modern products. The vernacular motif—the tangible sign of handcraft imprinted upon the industrially produced beer mug, for example—representing the values of usefulness, simplicity, authenticity and permanence, was the emblem necessary to redeem consumer capitalism and so harmonize the turbulence of modern life. In its section on ceramics, *Moderne Kultur* applauded the Westerwald's revival of “long-forgotten” techniques and their adaptation to modern products. Like Muthesius, Scheffler championed the work of Riemerschmid, who, he claimed, combated the forces of *Unkultur* with his stoneware vessels for Reinhold Merkelbach.<sup>50</sup> Riemerschmid embraced modernity and, together with Merkelbach,

exploited the potential of technology; but he remained clad in the armor of *Kultur* throughout by allowing stoneware's preindustrial heritage to guide his designs. As early as 1901, Scheffler had discussed the concept of the *Kulturprodukt*—a man-made product (distinct from a “natural gift”) whose design had been culturally engineered to inculcate the values of *Kultur* in the modern German *Volk*.<sup>51</sup> By 1910, modern Westerwald stoneware had been dubbed a *Kulturprodukt*: a product whose market value was (or should be) secondary to—and determined by—its cultural value, or *Qualität*.<sup>52</sup>

### “The Spiritualization of German Work” and the Evangelizing Object

*Stil* and *Mode*, or style and fashion, as Frederic J. Schwartz has pointed out, functioned as opposing discursive terms analogous to *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* in the Werkbund's approach to product design and marketing. The sociologist and dress reform advocate Heinrich Pudor exemplified this *Stil/Mode* polarity in his 1910 article “Practical Suggestions for the Achievement of *Qualitätsware*,” with the brief, emphatic statement: “Fashion is the transient, Style is the enduring.”<sup>53</sup> Viewed in the light of economist Werner Sombart's chapter on “Economy and Fashion” in his seminal *Modern Capitalism* of 1902, fashion signified not only changing styles of dress, but also the experience of social and cultural life as a unique product of the modern economy, including the design of utilitarian objects. Sombart stressed “the frantic speed of changes in Fashion,” personifying it as capitalism's “favorite child.”<sup>54</sup> It was this fractious Fashion's chaotic shifting of “styles”—all too familiar to Werkbund

members from the nineteenth century's parade of historicist idioms and from the more recent absorption of Jugendstil into the stylistic lexicon of industrial mass production—which the Werkbund sought to arrest (or at least circumvent) through the establishment of a unified (and unifying) modern German style, based on vernacular prototypes yet practical for modern life and immune to Fashion's fancies.<sup>55</sup>

This pure and enduring style was to purge the modern economy of its addiction to fashion. The crusade to cleanse industrial capitalism with *Kultur* was expressed in the title of the Werkbund's 1912 Yearbook, *Die Durchgeistigung der deutschen Arbeit*—The Spiritualization of German Work. The yearbooks, produced as the organization's public face, were to function as educational yet practical handbooks for industrialists and retailers; as such, they exemplified the integration of Werkbund theory and practice.<sup>56</sup> In conjunction with didactic articles including Muthesius's landmark assessment of Werkbund achievement, “Where Do We Stand?,” in which he proclaimed that German “quality products” must begin to exert an influence on the foreign market, the 1912 Yearbook published lavish photographs of industrially produced *Qualitätsware* endorsed by the Werkbund and featured several pages of Westerwald stonewares including pieces by Riemerschmid, Müller and Wynand.<sup>57</sup>

The most drastic measure in the Werkbund's campaign to spiritualize the German economy in the name of *Qualität* was the *Deutsches Warenbuch*, or German Warebook, a catalog published jointly in 1915 by the Werkbund, the Dürerbund (another cultural reform organization) and

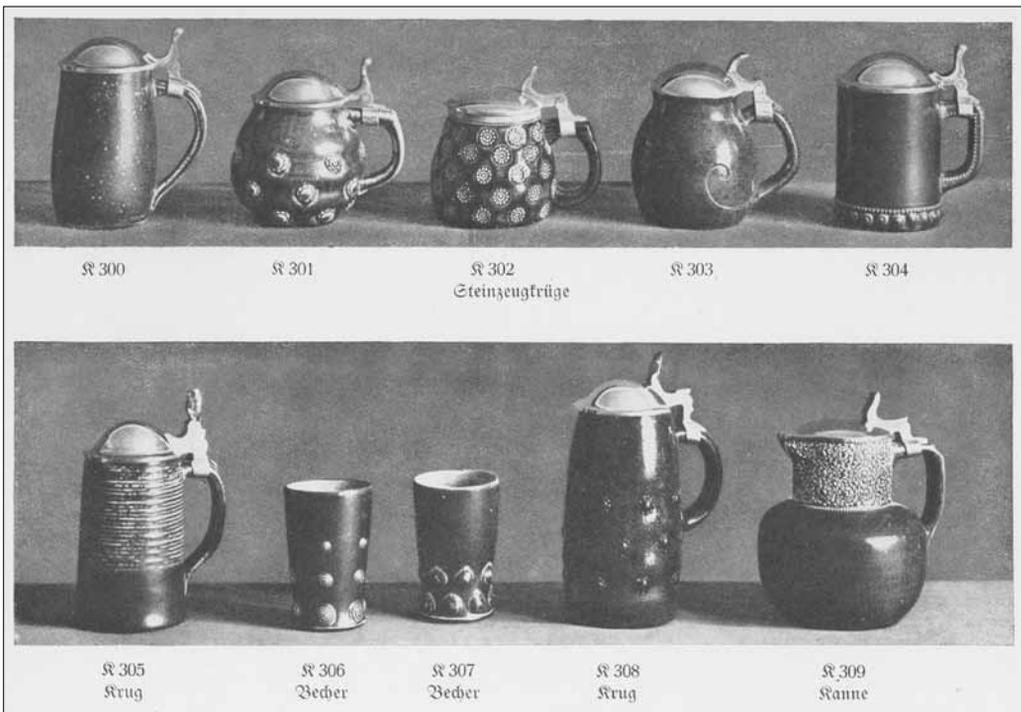
four retail merchants' associations.<sup>58</sup> Although the *Warenbuch* appeared after the outbreak of the First World War, it was planned in 1913 as a catalog of *Wertarbeit* (work of value): exemplary mass-produced goods for household use. The *Warenbuch* was designed to "exert a significant influence on culture in general," since, as the introduction pointed out, "good products advance a people [*Volk*] not only economically, but also morally and artistically."<sup>59</sup> As proof of their *Wert* or *Qualität*, the products selected for the catalog by the Dürerbund-Werkbund Association (but manufactured by various companies) were stamped physically with a *Wertmarke*, or mark of value. This symbol was printed boldly in the catalog's accompanying text, so as to be easily recognized by consumers "in the flesh."

Unlike twenty-first-century catalog shoppers, *Warenbuch* readers were thoroughly schooled in the principles of both technology and taste. The introductory text included a two-page definition of "quality work," a lamentation on cheap products, a warning against the deceptions of fashion or "*Nouveautés*," and a brief education in the principles of mass-produced wares concluding with the assurance that *Qualitätsware* could indeed be fabricated through modern industrial means. Generous sections were devoted to the proper employment of materials and decoration. Finally, each medium was treated individually: its material nature, the techniques of its fabrication, the appropriate strategy for its design and the practical application of these designs in the home, were all systematically addressed.<sup>60</sup> The section devoted to modern ceramics detailed acceptable and unacceptable practices of manufacture.

Stoneware, as one might expect, should confine itself to sturdy, established utilitarian forms and must never attempt to imitate another material, such as wood or metal. The *Warenbuch* implicitly refuted Van de Velde's earlier proposal of a more colorful glaze palette for stoneware by insisting that its "natural" colors were the traditional blue-and-gray, or the revived *kölnisch* browns. But even these restrained glaze colors should not be applied so thickly as to obscure the recognizable presence of the familiar clay body beneath.<sup>61</sup>

At a more profound level, even, than the *Warenbuch's* exhaustive didactic text, its numerous photographs provide invaluable information about Werkbund-sanctioned *Qualität*. While stonewares by Behrens and Van de Velde (both Werkbund members) are nowhere to be seen, vessels by Müller and Wynand, as well as Riemerschmid's designs for Merkelbach, are generously represented (Figure 11). Wordlessly, Riemerschmid's robust, *sachliche* beer mugs put *Warenbuch* principles into practice. Here *Sachlichkeit* offered an antidote to the seductions and delusions of fashion, as Riemerschmid's mugs bared their essence to the viewer—the way they *looked* was the way they *were*. At a glance, the educated middle-class consumer could understand not only the functional purpose of these mugs, but the materials from which they were made and the tradition to which they referred. *Sachlichkeit* articulated a symbolic yet direct link from visual form to the network of theoretical and material "qualities" embedded in *Qualität*.

While some period critics indicted the *Warenbuch* as an insidious form of advertising by the ostensibly not-for-profit Werkbund, its defenders maintained that its *Sachlichkeit*



**Fig 11** Stoneware tankards including designs by Riemerschmid, Müller and Wynand, published by the Dürerbund-Werkbund Genossenschaft in *Deutsches Warenbuch*, 1915, p. 101. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Thomas J. Watson Library Copy Photograph, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

acted precisely to reclaim capitalism for *Kultur* by stripping the commodity of its guises. The Dürerbund-Werkbund *Wertmarke* was seen by many as nothing more than the Werkbund's "brand"; however, the underlying purpose of the *Wertmarke* was to redeem the brand from fashion, or as Schwartz has argued, to "separate the brand from capital" and restore it to a sign of inherent worth by denoting the actual value of an object rather than its superficial "look." In the pursuit of this goal, the *Warenbuch* traced a second relationship between *Qualität* and *Sachlichkeit* through the visual presentation of its *Wertarbeit*. Schwartz has

discussed the *Warenbuch's* "deadpan" black-and-white photographs of products arranged in orderly rows as a means of transcending capitalist fashion by presenting true quality goods as standardized "types"—objects that had emerged from a process of design evolution as modern examples of established utilitarian predecessors.<sup>62</sup> Printed below the *Warenbuch* photographs was neither the designer's name nor any descriptive caption, but simply the object's "type"—"mug," or "jug," for instance—followed by a serial number. Rather than dazzling consumers with choice, the *Warenbuch* presented them with tasteful, pre-chosen "types": survivors of

the Werkbund's "natural selection" through *Qualität*.

Just as the brand implied the capricious tyranny of Fashion, so the "type" heralded the arrival of the Modern German Style. With the *Warenbuch*'s publication in 1915, the Westerwald's heritage of regional craft had been incorporated into what the Werkbund promoted as a national language of symbolic form, in which the value of a pot could be read on its salt-glazed surface. The "modern-scratch" spiral on Riemerschmid's industrially cast *Warenbuch* "mug no. 303" traced not simply the technical steps from model to mass product, but an evolution of decoration from vernacular craft to modern *Sachlichkeit*, marking, as it did so, the indexical connection between original and replica, in which the hand of the potter became the ghost in the machine.

### **Baring the German Soul: *Sachlichkeit* on Display**

*Sachlichkeit* was in effect the face of *Qualität*, the immediate, intuitive meaning that modern German products conveyed both at home and abroad. The Modern German Applied Arts Exhibition, organized by Werkbund member and museum director Karl Ernst Osthaus with John Cotton Dana of the Newark Museum, traveled between 1912 and 1913 to seven American cities, disseminating the Werkbund's vision of *moderne Kultur*.<sup>63</sup> Inside a large, unornamented glass vitrine at the Newark Museum, modern stonewares, including vessels by Riemerschmid and Wynand, were arranged in a restrained display akin to their later presentation in the *Warenbuch* (Figure 12). Not only was this clinical parade the Westerwald's first foreign showcase, it

constituted a retrospective of the industry's recent rejuvenation, complete with two vessels by Van de Velde.<sup>64</sup> One Newark reporter identified in the stonewares "a strong folk note, not necessarily in its peasant quality, but as a demonstration of the common bond of race ... The German finds beauty in vase-forms like truncated cones, in household vessels whose cubes and angles assert themselves, in cups made like sections of a cylinder. These belong to him—something within his soul accepts them as fit."<sup>65</sup> This assessment, made not by a Werkbund ideologue but by an outsider, marks the modern Westerwald's arrival at its longed-for goal. Not only did *Sachlichkeit*'s stark, modern forms impress the American critic, he recognized them as the product of a cultural evolution—the evolution of *Kultur* from regional vernacular to national symbol, implicit in the ascription of *Qualität*.

One of Wynand's stonewares for the American exhibition—an assertive jug with concentric rings accentuating its disk-like body, a conical neck punctuated by a non-nonsense spout, a sharply jutting handle and persistent pointed nubs outlining its radius (Figure 13)—was displayed again at Cologne in 1914 as part of the first comprehensive exhibition of Werkbund-sanctioned design. In conjunction with its segmented, industrially cast body, the jug's antique brown surface treatment corporealized the Werkbund vision of a "future-past." The future of German design, prefigured in this emphatic jug, was understood in the Westerwald as utterly dependent upon its heritage. At the 1914 exhibition, Ernst Berdel declared that: "The industry of Kannenbäckerland will, as it has already done so frequently in the undulating passage of its history, find and fight



**Fig 12** Display of German stonewares including works by Riemerschmid and Wynand at The Modern German Applied Arts Exhibition, Newark, NJ, 1912. Exhibition installation photograph courtesy of The Newark Museum.

for justice with its own strength. It carries the future within itself!"<sup>66</sup> But it was the *designer* who had secured the Westerwald's survival, for it was he who had breathed the ghost of craft into the mechanism of modern industry.

## Notes

- 1 "Der Bierkrug wird und muß immer; mag auch vorübergehend einmal die Mode sich anderswo hinwenden, dem Steinzeug bleiben." Ernst Zimmermann, "Steinzeugkrüge von Richard Riemerschmid," *Kunst und Handwerk* 54 (1903/1904), p. 270.
- 2 Kannenbäckerland and the entire Westerwald region have since 1946 been part of the Rheinland-Pfalz, or Rhineland-Palatinate, state. The three production centers have since merged into one location known as Höhr-Grenzhausen. See David Gaimster's history of the Westerwald in his comprehensive *German Stoneware, 1200–1900: Archaeology and Cultural History* (London: British Museum Press, 1997), pp. 251–53.
- 3 Ernst Jaffé, "Neue deutsche Steinzeugkunst," *Kunstindustrie und Kunstgewerbe* 1 (1913), p. 95. Toward the close of the sixteenth century, potters from the villiage of Raeren in present-day Belgium relocated to the Westerwald production center of



**Fig 13** Paul Wynand, stoneware jug with iron-brown surface treatment, 1912.

Grenzau, bringing their expertise and even some of their molds with them; Jan Emens, whose initials are stamped into the baluster jug in Figure 1, was among these immigrant potters. See Gaimster (1997: 224 and 251).

- 4 For more on Westerwald exports, see Gaimster (1997: 124 and 251).
- 5 See Gaimster (1997: 252) for a discussion of eighteenth-century Westerwald stoneware.
- 6 The manufacture of these neo-Renaissance vessels involved the development of a casting process at the firm of Merkelbach & Wick that was a precursor to the more modern, industrial processes developed in the first decade of the twentieth century. See Gaimster (1997: 325).
- 7 "War es doch schließlich dem Material wie der Herkunft nach die gleiche Ware, wie sie in den billigsten Ramschbasaren herumhing, wie diese gelb-grün-blauen Krüge, bei denen die leichten Zinndeckel immerhin noch das Teuerste waren" Jaffé (1913: 383).
- 8 Applied arts professor Ernst Zimmermann used this phrase to describe the Westerwald's situation in his article "Die künstlerische Nothlage der Westerwälder Steinzeugindustrie," *Kunst und Handwerk* 50 (1899/1900): 76–83.
- 9 The application of low-fired enamels (commonly found on porcelain and ubiquitous on low-fired ceramics, or earthenware) was not perceived as "natural" to the stoneware process, since it necessitated an additional step or "afterthought" following the glaze firing. In this sense, applying enamels to stoneware was felt to be a kind of cheapening or adulteration of its inherent material qualities and processes.
- 10 Streiter first used the word *Sachlichkeit* to refer to this new "realist" agenda for architecture and design in the "Aus München" section of the Berlin journal *Pan* II/3 (1896), p. 249. For an in-depth discussion of Streiter's concept of *Sachlichkeit* and its influence see Harry Francis Mallgrave, "From Realism to *Sachlichkeit*: The Polemics of Modernity in the 1890s," in Mallgrave, ed., *Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for Arts and Humanities, 1993), pp. 281–321.
- 11 "Die keramischen Versuche, welche in letzter Zeit in fast allen bedeutenden Kulturländern Europas unternommen sind, leiden daran, daß sie zu wenig an die thatsächlich [sic] bestehenden, aus Geschichte und Bodenbeschaffenheit resultierenden keramischen Verhältnisse der betreffenden Länder angeknüpft haben." Zimmermann (1899/1900: 76).
- 12 Maiken Umbach, "The Deutscher Werkbund and Modern Vernaculars," in *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization and the Built Environment*, Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf, eds. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 124.
- 13 See Susan Stewart's discussion of nostalgia and the "future-past" in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 14–24.

- 14 This exhibition is treated in the second chapter of my doctoral dissertation, "Delight in *Sachlichkeit*: Richard Riemerschmid and the Thingliness of Things." For further published information on the Krefeld exhibition and Van de Velde's role in it, see Radu Stern, "Henry van de Velde and Germany," in *Against Fashion: Clothing as Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 11–22 and Brigitte Stamm's section on "Künstlerische Reformkleidung in Deutschland: Ausstellungen" in *Das Reformkleid in Deutschland* (Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, 1976), pp. 51–93.
- 15 Gaimster (1997: 330–31).
- 16 See Van de Velde's opening address at the Krefeld exhibition, later published as a pamphlet called "Die künstlerische Hebung der Frauentracht" (The Artistic Elevation of Women's Costume) (Krefeld: 1900).
- 17 Zimmermann (1903/4: 269).
- 18 In 1907 (the year of the Deutscher Werkbund's founding) the Dresdner Werkstätten simplified its name and expanded its ambition to become "Die Deutsche Werkstätten."
- 19 Beate Dry-von Zezschwitz, "Vorbemerkung zu Riemerschmids Keramischen Arbeiten," in *Richard Riemerschmid: Vom Jugendstil zum Werkbund*, Winfried Nerdinger, ed. (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1982), p. 313.
- 20 "Ein Künstler wie Riemerschmid, der seine Gestaltungskraft an allen möglichen Materialien mit Gelingen erprobt hat, dürfte kaum in einem anderen soviel Glück haben wie gerade im Steinzeug." Jaffé (1913: 384); H. H., "Die keramische Ausstellung im Berliner Kunstgewerbemuseum," *Keramische Monatshefte* 7 (1907), p. 148.
- 21 "Die alte Ritztechnik aber, d. h. das Umziehen der Ornamente durch eingeritzte Linien, zwischen die dann kobalt-blaue Farbe gelegt wurde, ist so der modernen Mechanik angepaßt worden, daß, um das jedesmalige Ritzen an den Gegenständen selber zu vermeiden, die Linien breit in die Hohlform gedrückt worden sind, so daß sie nachher beim geformten Gegenstande als erhöhte Stege erscheinen, zwischen die dann mit Leichtigkeit die Farbe gelegt werden kann ... eine höchst einfache Technik ... die einen ganz gewaltigen Fortschritt bedeutet" (Zimmermann 1903/4: 270).
- 22 For more on these archaeological finds at Cologne see Gaimster (1997: 326).
- 23 H. H., "Die keramische Ausstellung im Berliner Kunstgewerbemuseum," pp. 146–48, translated in Kathryn Bloom Hiesinger, *Art Nouveau in Munich: Masters of Jugendstil* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1988), p. 123.
- 24 For a period perspective on the development of the antique brown surface treatments see Westerwald glaze chemist Ernst Berdel's article "Die Moderne Entwicklung der Westerwälder Industrie," *Sprechsaal* 45 (1912): 83–85 and 99–101.
- 25 Gaimster (1997: 326).
- 26 Herf's concept of a "reactionary modernism" is conceived in relation to the Weimar era and the Third Reich, but I find it useful in analyzing the late Wilhelmine period as well, especially in relation to the decade leading up to the First World War. See Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- 27 Endell is quoted in *Die Werkbund-Arbeit der Zukunft und Aussprache darüber. 7. Jahres Versammlung des Deutschen Werkbundes vom 2. bis 6. Juli in Köln* (Jena: Eugen Diedrichs, 1914), pp. 57–58 and translated by Frederic J. Schwartz in *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 122.
- 28 Muthesius's passionate review of the Dresden exhibition, in a lecture entitled "The Significance of Applied Art," printed in a 1907 issue of *Dekorative Kunst*, denounced the shoddy production methods and application of historicist styles in German industrial production, as well as the reactionary stubbornness evident in the forms and fabrication methods of conventional craft, both of which, he argued, failed to express

- the spirit of the modern age. His attacks on the fabrication and aesthetics of German products laid the foundations for the Werkbund debate regarding the implications of *Qualität*. See Hermann Muthesius, "Die Bedeutung des Kunstgewerbes," *Dekorative Kunst* 10 (1907): pp. 177–92.
- 29** This line of reasoning is most familiar to architectural history from Muthesius's concept of *Typisierung*—the standardization of product design based on long-standing models or "types," whose utilitarian purpose dictated the modern product's appearance—proposed in his "Theses" of 1914 and reprinted in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestos on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 28–29.
- 30** The Königliche Keramische Hochschule had been established in the production center of Höhr in 1876 by the Prussian government to spur the modern development of the Westerwald industry. See Berdel (1912: 83).
- 31** Muthesius (1907: 76–82).
- 32** Gustav E. Pazaurek, director of the Königliches Landesgewerbemuseum in Stuttgart, lamented the improper handling of stoneware in the first decade of the twentieth century, including the use of inferior clay bodies and colorful, low-fired enamels as cheap marketing gimmicks. He writes, "Schade um das schöne, harte, männliche Material!" in "Neues Steinzeug von Albin Müller," *Die Kunst* 24 (1910/11): 178.
- 33** Gustav Pazaurek, "Neue Trinkgefäße," *Die Kunst* 22 (1910): 174.
- 34** "Auch der tüchtige Münchener Riemerschmid, dem wir einige der besten Steinzeugkrüge der Gegenwart verdanken, konnte nicht alle Schwierigkeiten beheben. Erst Albin Müller ... schaffte dadurch Wandel, daß er in persönliche Verbindung mit der Westerwälder Industrie trat und sich von dem Möglichkeiten zu den Notwendigkeiten führen ließ." Otto Pelka, *Keramik der Neuzeit* (Leipzig: 1924), p. 116. See also Ulrich Plöger and Jürgen Schimanski, *Die Neue Ära, 1900–1930: Westerwälder Steinzeug, Jugendstil und Werkbund* (Düsseldorf: Contur-Verlag, 1987), p. 16.
- 35** Gaimster (1997: 331). The survival of some of Behrens's stonewares is likely a testament to his prominence as a modern designer; rather than an indicator of the reception of his stoneware vessels during the period in which they were produced.
- 36** While Müller, like Riemerschmid, designed prolifically for Reinhold Merkelbach, he also collaborated with a number of other firms (including Simon Peter Gerz I, Reinhold Hanke, Marzi & Remi and Roßkopf & Gerz) to the extent that he was credited by the British *Studio Yearbook* of 1914 with reviving "the potter's art as a domestic industry in the villages of the district [the Westerwald], where it had once flourished." See L. Deubner, "German Architecture and Decoration," *The Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1914), p. 96. Useful timelines of the careers of many important stoneware designers can be found in Plöger and Schimanski (1987: 17–21).
- 37** "Nur ... durch das liebevolle Zusammenarbeiten des Künstlers mit den Drehern und Modellieren in den verschiedenen Werkstätten ... wurde in verhältnismäßig sehr kurzer Zeit der überraschende Erfolg erzielt ..." Pazaurek (1910/11: 181).
- 38** "Mit am glücklichsten in neuen Formen sind die Krüge von Simon Peter Gerz I nach Entwürfen von Wynand, eine prachtvolle organische Weiterentwicklung des wirklich alten. Moderne und Antike reichen sich hier erfolgreich die Hand, und der Charakter der wuchtigen, gediegenen Steinzeugtechnik ist von diesem Künstler, der eben mit eigener Hand in dem Werkstoff arbeitet und die ganze technische Seite der Sache voll erfaßt hat, in treffender Weise gewahrt." Ernst Berdel, "Die Tonindustrie im Westerwald," *Keramische Rundschau* (1909), p. 420.
- 39** The most notable example of conflict within the Werkbund was the 1914 debate over standardization versus individualism in design,

led by opponents Hermann Muthesius and Henry Van de Velde. Significant to the founding of the Werkbund, however, was its members' unanimous opposition both to cheaply manufactured, "shoddy" goods featuring superficial ornament in a variety of styles and to "outdated," traditional craft processes generating goods that were either too expensive or too impractical to be widely distributed and used.

- 40** "Formen und Ornamente wie farbige Dekore sind derart harmonisch und organisch verbunden, daß man nicht mehr den Vergleich mit der allerbesten Stücken des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts zu scheuen braucht" Berdel (1912: 101).
- 41** "Die Möbel gebärden sich tatsächlich als Einzelwesen, als Charaktere, die ihrem eigenen Gesetzen und ihren eigenen Stimmungen folgen ... Der ganze Hausrat gewinnt ein sprechendes Gesicht, gnomenhaft, drollige, lustige Gedanken blitzen hin und wieder durch und setzen humoristische Lichter auf ..." J. A. Lux, *Die Geschichte des modernen Kunstgewerbes in Deutschland* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1908), pp. 146 and 147–48.
- 42** "Die Sache gilt ihm alles," and "... so die Gegenstände auf uns wirken wie Wesen, die zwar zu unserem Dienst bestimmt sind, aber diesen gerne und willig und mit einer von innerer Heiterkeit und Freiheit zeugenden Miene tun ..." Paul Johannes Réé, "Richard Riemerschmid," *Dekorative Kunst* IX/7 (April 1906), pp. 266 and 286.
- 43** "Die kleinen Krüglein laden ordentlich zum liebevollen Umfassen mit der hohlen Hand, ein, und der große Krug scheint in seiner schon halb kippenden Bewegung nur auf der Moment zu warten, wo seine Dienste zur weiteren Versorgung mit Naß angerufen werden." Hermann Muthesius, "Die Kunst Richard Riemerschmids," *Dekorative Kunst* VII/7 (April 1904), p. 278.
- 44** Muthesius (1904: 254).
- 45** Muthesius's article "Die moderne Bewegung," in *Spemanns goldenes Buch der Kunst*, para. no. 1032 (Berlin & Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Spemann, 1901), is quoted and translated in Umbach (2005: 120). In preparation for this short article comparing design reform movements in Britain, Germany and France, Muthesius wrote his first letter to Riemerschmid, asking him to submit photographs of his designs as examples of "The Modern Movement" in Germany. An excerpt from Muthesius's letter from London of April 30, 1900, is printed in Nerdinger (1982: 468).
- 46** Karl Ernst Osthaus, "Deutscher Werkbund," *Das Hohe Ufer* 1/10 (October 1919), p. 14.
- 47** For a thorough discussion of the development of the ideology of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* in Germany, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenic and Psychogenic Investigations*, revised ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 5–30.
- 48** Mark Jarzombek critiques the aestheticization of everyday life inherent in the Wilhelmine notion of *Lebenskunst* as a paternalistic approach to reform engineered by upper middle-class ideologues with the aid of upper middle-class consumers in "The 'Kunstgewerbe', the 'Werkbund' and the Aesthetics of Culture in the Wilhelmine Period," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53/1 (1994): 7–19.
- 49** Karl Scheffler, "Kultur und Kunst" and "Kunst und Leben," in *Moderne Kultur* I, ed. Eduard Heyck (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1907): pp. 17–92 and 93–112.
- 50** Karl Scheffler, "Keramik," in *Moderne Kultur* I, ed. Eduard Heyck (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1907), p. 232.
- 51** See Scheffler's reference to the *Kulturprodukt* in "Notizen über die Farbe," *Dekorative Kunst* IV: 5 (Feb 1901): pp. 183–96.
- 52** For an applied analysis of the *Kulturprodukt*, see the discussion of Westerwald stonewares as "quality" gifts in an anonymous article on the ethics and economics of gift giving: "Geschenke: vom Schenken Überhaupt," *Dekorative Kunst* XIII/3 (1909), pp. 114–23.

- 53** Heinrich Pudor, "Praktische Vorschläge zur Erzielung von Qualitätswaren," *Volkswirtschaftliche Blätter* 9/15–16 (1910), p. 283. Quoted in Schwartz (1996: 29).
- 54** Werner Sombart, *Wirtschaft und Mode: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie der modernen Bedarfsgestaltung* (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1902), p. 13. See the illuminating discussion of Sombart in Schwartz (1996: 28–29).
- 55** See Schwartz's detailed and definitive discussion of "Style Versus Fashion" (1996: 13–74).
- 56** Bernd Nicolai, ed., *Die Durchgeistigung der deutschen Arbeit. Jahrbuch des deutschen Werkbunds 1912*, reprint (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1999), p. 5.
- 57** Muthesius, "Wo Stehen Wir?" 1912, in Nicolai (1999: 11–26). Neither Van de Velde's nor Behrens's stoneware designs appeared in the photographs of the 1912 *Jahrbuch*, despite the fact that both were Werkbund members, prominent artists and more established within the canon of modern design today than Riemerschmid, Müller, or Wynand.
- 58** Josef Popp, *Deutsches Warenbuch*, München (Dürerbund-Werkbund Genossenschaft, n.d., 1915), p. xvii.
- 59** "Die gute Ware fördert ein Volk nicht nur wirtschaftlich, auch sittlich und künstlerisch." Popp (1915: xvii).
- 60** See Popp (1915: xxi–xxxiii).
- 61** See the section on "Keramik" in Popp (1915: xxxiv).
- 62** For an excellent discussion of the *Warenbuch/Wertmarke* controversy, see Schwartz (1996: 141–45).
- 63** The Modern German Applied Arts Exhibition opened in Newark in March, 1912 and traveled to St. Louis, Chicago, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Pittsburg and New York. See "1912–13-German Applied Arts-Scrapbook," *Newark Museum Archives*.
- 64** It is likely that Van de Velde's stonewares appeared in the Newark exhibition (while being absent from the *Werkbund Jahrbuch* and *Deutsches Warenbuch*) for two primary reasons: first, the traveling exhibition represented an artistic retrospective of modern German stoneware and so would naturally have included Van de Velde's work in light of his initial impact upon the industry's modernization and his generally high artistic stature within the international design community; and second, Van de Velde was a valued colleague and close personal friend of Osthaus, who respected and admired his work.
- 65** "German Applied Art at Library," *Newark News*, March 16, 1912.
- 66** "In der Hauptsache aber wird die Industrie des Kannenbäckerlandes, wie schon so oft in dem wellenförmigen gang ihrer Geschichte, aus eigener Kraft das Recht finden und erkämpfen. Sie trägt ihre Zukunft in sich!" Berdel (1912: 101).