

In his book *Vom Neuen Stil* (On the New Style) Henry van de Velde continues the explanation of the principles set forth in his *Laienpredigten* (Lay Sermons). The three sections called by him *Credo* are to be found in the chapter entitled 'The Striving for a Style Based on a Rational, Logical Conception'. These principles, says Henry van de Velde, need only to be enunciated to be accepted as valid. Their fruitfulness has already been proved. In fact there arise from them the two basic demands not merely of the theory and critique of the new architecture, but also of its practice: honesty of materials, honesty of construction. Both have been till now uncontested.

Thou shalt comprehend the form and construction of all objects only
in the sense of their strictest, elementary logic and justification for
their existence.

Thou shalt adapt and subordinate these forms and constructions to
the essential use of the material which thou employest.

And if thou art animated by the wish to beautify these forms and
constructions, give thyself to the longing for refinement to which thy
aesthetic sensibility or taste for ornament – of whatever kind it is –
shall inspire thee, only so far as thou canst respect and retain the
rights and the essential appearance of these forms and constructions!

Adolf Loos (b. 1870 in Brno, d. 1933 in Vienna) brought back with him to Vienna from his three-year stay in the United States (1893–6) a remark of Louis Sullivan's: 'it could only benefit us if for a time we were to abandon ornament and concentrate entirely on the erection of buildings that were finely shaped and charming in their sobriety'. From this Loos developed his radical aesthetic purism, which made him a zealous foe of Art Nouveau and the German Werkbund: 'The German Werkbund has set out to discover the style of our age. This is unnecessary labour. We already have the style of our age.'

The human embryo in the womb passes through all the evolutionary stages of the animal kingdom. When man is born, his sensory impressions are like those of a newborn puppy. His childhood takes him through all the metamorphoses of human history. At 2 he sees with the eyes of a Papuan, at 4 with those of an ancient Teuton, at 6 with those of Socrates, at 8 with those of Voltaire. When he is 8 he becomes aware of violet, the colour discovered by the eighteenth century, because before that the violet was blue and the purple-snail red. The physicist points today to colours in the solar spectrum which already have a name but the knowledge of which is reserved for the men of the future.

The child is amoral. To our eyes, the Papuan is too. The Papuan kills his enemies and eats them. He is not a criminal. But when modern man kills someone and eats him he is either a criminal or a degenerate. The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his paddles, in short everything he can lay hands on. He is not a criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty per cent of the inmates show tattoos. The tattooed who are not in prison are latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies at liberty, it means he has died a few years before committing a murder.

The urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the start of plastic art. It is the baby talk of painting. All art is erotic.

The first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act which the first artist, in order to rid himself of his surplus energy, smeared on the wall. A horizontal dash: the prone woman. A vertical dash: the man penetrating her. The man who created it felt the same urge as Beethoven, he was in the same heaven in which Beethoven created the *Ninth Symphony*.

But the man of our day who, in response to an inner urge, smears the walls with erotic symbols is a criminal or a degenerate. It goes without saying that this impulse most frequently assails people with such symptoms of degeneracy in the lavatory. A country's culture can be assessed by the extent to which its lavatory walls are smeared. In the child this is a natural phenomenon: his

first artistic expression is to scribble erotic symbols on the walls. But what is natural to the Papuan and the child is a symptom of degeneracy in the modern adult. I have made the following discovery and I pass it on to the world: *evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects*. I believed that with this discovery I was bringing joy to the world, but it has not thanked me. People were sad and hung their heads. What depressed them was the realization that they could produce no new ornaments. We alone, the people of the nineteenth century, supposed to be unable to do what any Negro, all the races and periods before us have been able to do. What mankind created without ornament in earlier millenia was thrown away without a thought and abandoned to destruction. We possess no joyous benches from the Carolingian era, but every trifle that displays the ornament has been collected and cleaned and palatial buildings have been erected to house it. Then people walked sadly about between the glass panes and felt ashamed of their impotence. Every age had its style, is our age to be refused a style? By style, people meant ornament. Then I said: *Not so!* See, therein lies the greatness of our age, that it is incapable of producing a new ornament. We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament. See, the time is nigh, fulfilment awaits. Soon the streets of the city will glisten like white walls. Like Zion, the city, the capital of heaven. Then fulfilment will be come.

There were black albs, clerical gentlemen, who wouldn't put up with it. Mankind was to go on panting in slavery to ornament. Men had gone far enough for ornament no longer to arouse feelings of pleasure in them. It was enough for a tattooed face not to heighten the aesthetic effect, as among the Papuans, but to reduce it. Far enough to take pleasure in a plain cigarette case, whereas an ornamented one, even at the same price, was not bought. They were happy in their clothes and glad they didn't have to go around in velvet hose with gold braid like fairground monkeys. And I said: See, God's death-chamber is finer than all Renaissance splendour and a plain piece of furniture more beautiful than any inlaid and carved museum pieces. God's language is finer than all the ornaments of Pognitz's shepherds.

The black albs heard this with displeasure, and the state, whose task it is to halt the cultural development of the peoples, made the question of the development and revival of ornament its own. Woe to the state whose revolution is in the care of the *Hofrats*! Very soon we saw in the Wiener Kunstgewerbemuseum [Vienna Museum of Applied Art] a sideboard known as 'the rich fish', soon there were cupboards bearing the name 'the enchanted prince' or something similar referring to the ornament with which this unfortunate piece of furniture was covered. The Austrian state took its task so seriously that it is making sure the foot-rags used on the frontiers of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy do not disappear. It is forcing every cultivated man to wear 20 for three years to wear foot-rags instead of manufactured footwear. In all, every state starts from the premise that a people on a lower footing is easier to rule.

Very well, the ornament disease is recognized by the state and subsidised

state funds. But I see in this a retrograde step. I don't accept the objection that ornament heightens a cultivated person's joy in life, don't accept the objection contained in the words: 'But if the ornament is beautiful!' Ornament does not heighten my joy in life or the joy in life of any cultivated person. I want to eat a piece of gingerbread I choose one that is quite smooth and not a piece representing a heart or a baby or a rider, which is covered all over with ornaments. The man of the fifteenth century won't understand me. But modern people will. The advocate of ornament believes that my urge for ornament is in the nature of a mortification. No, respected professor at the school of applied art, I am not mortifying myself! The show dishes of past centuries, which display all kinds of ornaments to make the peacocks, pheasants and lobsters look more tasty, have exactly the opposite effect on me. I am horrified when I go through a cookery exhibition and think that I am meant to eat these stuffed carcasses. I eat roast beef.

The enormous damage and devastation caused in aesthetic development by the revival of ornament would be easily made light of, for no one, not even the ruler of the state, can halt mankind's evolution. It can only be delayed. We can delay it. But it is a crime against the national economy that it should result in a waste of human labour, money, and material. Time cannot make good this damage.

The speed of cultural evolution is reduced by the stragglers. I perhaps am a straggler in 1908, but my neighbour is living in 1900 and the man across the way in 1880. It is unfortunate for a state when the culture of its inhabitants is lagging over such a great period of time. The peasants of Kals are living in the fifteenth century. And there were peoples taking part in the Jubilee parade [of the Emperor Franz Joseph] who would have been considered backward even among the stragglers and marauders. Happy the land that has no such stragglers and marauders. Happy America!

Among ourselves there are unmodern people even in the cities, stragglers of the eighteenth century, who are horrified by a picture with purple flowers because they cannot yet see purple. The pheasant on which the chef has been working all day long tastes better to them and they prefer the rough case with Renaissance ornaments to the smooth one. And what is it to be in the country? Clothes and household furniture all belong to past centuries. The peasant isn't a Christian, he is still a pagan.

The stragglers slow down the cultural evolution of the nations and of the world; not only is ornament produced by criminals but also a crime is committed through the fact that ornament inflicts serious injury on people's health, on the national budget and hence on cultural evolution. If two people live side by side with the same needs, the same demands on life and the same time but belonging to different cultures, economically speaking the following process can be observed: [the twentieth-century man will get richer and richer, the eighteenth-century man poorer and poorer. I am assuming that people will live according to their inclinations. The twentieth-century man can satisfy his needs with a far lower capital outlay and hence can save money.] The vegetable he enjoys is simply boiled in water and has a little butter put on it. The other man likes it equally well only when honey and nuts have been

added to it and someone has spent hours cooking it. Ornamented plates are very expensive, whereas the white crockery from which the modern man likes to eat is cheap. The one accumulates savings, the other debts. It is the same with whole nations. Woe when a people remains behind in cultural evolution! The British are growing wealthier and we poorer . . .

Even greater is the damage done by ornament to the nation that produces it. Since ornament is no longer a natural product of our culture, so that it is a phenomenon either of backwardness or degeneration, the work of the ornamentor is no longer adequately remunerated.

The relationship between the earnings of a woodcarver and a turner, the criminally low wages paid to the embroideress and the lacemaker are well known. The ornamentor has to work twenty hours to achieve the income earned by a modern worker in eight. Ornament generally increases the cost of an article; nevertheless it happens that an ornamented object whose raw material cost the same and which demonstrably took three times as long to make is offered at half the price of a smooth object. Omission of ornament results in a reduction in the manufacturing time and an increase in wages. The Chinese carver works for sixteen hours, the American worker for eight. If I pay as much for a smooth cigarette case as for an ornamented one, the difference in the working time belongs to the worker. And if there were no ornament at all – a situation that may perhaps come about in some thousands of years – man would only have to work four hours instead of eight, because half of the work done today is devoted to ornament. Ornament is wasted labour power and hence wasted health. It has always been so.

Since ornament is no longer organically linked with our culture, it is also no longer the expression of our culture. The ornament that is manufactured today has no connexion with us, has absolutely no human connexions, no connexion with the world order. It is not capable of developing. What happened to Otto Eckmann's ornament, or van de Velde's? The artist has always stood at the forefront of mankind full of vigour and health. But the modern ornamentalist is a straggler or a pathological phenomenon. He himself will repudiate his own products three years later. To cultivated people they are immediately intolerable; others become aware of their intolerable character only years later. Where are Otto Eckmann's works today? Modern ornament has no parents and no progeny, no past and no future. By uncultivated people, to whom the grandeur of our age is a book with seven seals, it is greeted joyfully and shortly afterwards repudiated.

Mankind is healthier than ever; only a few people are sick. But these few tyrannize over the worker who is so healthy that he cannot invent ornament. They force him to execute in the most varied materials the ornaments which they have invented.

Changes of ornament lead to a premature devaluation of the labour product. The worker's time and the material employed are capital goods that are wasted. I have stated the proposition: the form of an object lasts, that is to say remains tolerable, as long as the object lasts physically. I will try to explain this. A suit will change its form more often than a valuable fur. A lady's ball

idea of style / fashion requiring built-in obsolescence

gown, intended for only one night, will change its form more quickly than a desk. But woe if a desk has to be changed as quickly as a ball gown because the old form has become intolerable; in that case the money spent on the desk will have been lost.

This is well known to the ornamentalist, and Austrian ornamentalists are trying to make the best of this shortcoming. They say: 'We prefer a consumer who has a set of furniture that becomes intolerable to him after ten years, and who is consequently forced to refurnish every ten years, to one who only buys an object when the old one is worn out. Industry demands this. Millions are employed as a result of the quick change.'

This seems to be the secret of the Austrian national economy. How often do we hear someone say when there is a fire: 'Thank God, now there will be work for people to do again.' In that case I know a splendid solution. Set fire to a town, set fire to the empire, and everyone will be swimming in money and prosperity. Manufacture furniture which after three years can be used for firewood, metal fittings that have to be melted down after four years because even at an auction sale it is impossible to get a tenth of the original value of the material and labour, and we shall grow wealthier and wealthier.

The loss does not hit only the consumer; above all it hits the producer. Today ornament on things that have evolved away from the need to be ornamented represents wasted labour and ruined material. If all objects would last aesthetically as long as they do physically, the consumer could pay a price for them that would enable the worker to earn more money and work shorter hours. For an object I am sure I can use to its full extent I willingly pay four times as much as for one that is inferior in form or material. I happily pay forty kronen for my boots, although in a different shop I could get boots for ten kronen. But in those trades that groan under the tyranny of the ornamentalist no distinction is made between good and bad workmanship. The work suffers because no one is willing to pay its true value.

And this is a good thing, because these ornamented objects are tolerable only when they are of the most miserable quality. I get over a fire much more easily when I hear that only worthless trash has been burned. I can be pleased about the trash in the Künstlerhaus because I know that it will be manufactured in a few days and taken to pieces in one. But throwing gold coins instead of stones, lighting a cigarette with a banknote, pulverizing and drinking a pearl create an unaesthetic effect.

Ornamented things first create a truly unaesthetic effect when they have been executed in the best material and with the greatest care and have taken long hours of labour. I cannot exonerate myself from having initially demanded quality work, but naturally not for that kind of thing.

The modern man who holds ornament sacred as a sign of the artistic superabundance of past ages will immediately recognize the tortured, strained, and morbid quality of modern ornaments. No ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level.

It is different with the individuals and peoples who have not yet reached this level.

I am preaching to the aristocrat, I mean the person who stands at the pinnacle of mankind and yet has the deepest understanding for the distress and want of those below. He well understands the Kaffir who weaves ornaments into his fabric according to a particular rhythm that only comes into view when it is unravelled, the Persian who weaves his carpet, the Slovak peasant woman who embroiders her lace, the old lady who crochets wonderful things with glass beads and silk. The aristocrat lets them be; he knows that the hours in which they work are their holy hours. The revolutionary would go to them and say: 'It's all nonsense.' Just as he would pull down the little old woman from the wayside crucifix and tell her: 'There is no God.' The atheist among the aristocrats, on the other hand, raises his hat when he passes a church.

My shoes are covered all over with ornaments consisting of scallops and holes. Work done by the shoemaker for which he was never paid. I go to the shoemaker and say: 'You ask thirty kronen for a pair of shoes. I will pay you forty kronen.' I have thereby raised this man to heights of bliss for which he will thank me by work and material infinitely better than would be called for by the additional price. He is happy. Happiness rarely enters his house. Here is a man who understands him, who values his work and does not doubt his honesty. He already sees the finished shoes in his mind's eye. He knows where the best leather is to be found at the present time; he knows which craftsman he will entrust the shoes to; and the shoes will be so covered in scallops and holes as only an elegant shoe can be. And then I say to him: 'But there's one condition. The shoes must be completely smooth.' With this I have cast him down from the heights of bliss to the pit of despondency. He has less work, but I have taken away all his joy.

I am preaching to the aristocrat. I tolerate ornaments on my own body, when they constitute the joy of my fellow men. Then they are my joy too. I can tolerate the ornaments of the Kaffir, the Persian, the Slovak peasant woman, my shoemaker's ornaments, for they all have no other way of attaining the high points of their existence. We have art, which has taken the place of ornament. After the toils and troubles of the day we go to Beethoven or to Tristan. This my shoemaker cannot do. I mustn't deprive him of his joy, since I have nothing else to put in its place. But anyone who goes to the *Ninth Symphony* and then sits down and designs a wallpaper pattern is either a confidence trickster or a degenerate. Absence of ornament has brought the other arts to unsuspected heights. Beethoven's symphonies would never have been written by a man who had to walk about in silk, satin, and lace. Anyone who goes around in a velvet coat today is not an artist but a buffoon or a house painter. We have grown finer, more subtle. The nomadic herdsmen had to distinguish themselves by various colours; modern man uses his clothes as a mask. So immensely strong is his individuality that it can no longer be expressed in articles of clothing. Freedom from ornament is a sign of spiritual strength. Modern man uses the ornaments of earlier or alien cultures as he sees fit. He concentrates his own inventiveness on other things.

1910 Frank Lloyd Wright: Organic architecture (excerpt)

In 1910 Frank Lloyd Wright (b. 1867 or 1869 in Richland Center, Wisconsin, d. 1959 in Taliesin West, Arizona) came to Germany at the invitation of the publisher Ernst Wasmuth in order to supervise the first publication of his *Collected Works* (1893–1910). Kuno Franck, for some time an exchange professor at Harvard, had drawn attention to Wright in Berlin. With this publication, for which Wright himself wrote an introduction, the architectural idea of a free spatial flow between the various dwelling-areas, and the organic development of a building on an L-, X-, or T-shaped ground plan gained a firm foothold in Europe.

In Organic Architecture then, it is quite impossible to consider the building as one thing, its furnishings another and its setting and environment still another. The Spirit in which these buildings are conceived sees all these together at work as one thing. All are to be studiously foreseen and provided for in the nature of the structure. All these should become mere details of the character and completeness of the structure. Incorporated (or excluded) are lighting, heating and ventilation. The very chairs and tables, cabinets and even musical instruments, where practicable, are of the building itself, never fixtures upon it...

To thus make of a human dwelling-place a complete work of art, in itself expressive and beautiful, intimately related to modern life and fit to live in, lending itself more freely and suitably to the individual needs of the dwellers as itself an harmonious entity, fitting in colour, pattern and nature the utilities and be really an expression of them in character, – this is the tall modern American opportunity in Architecture. True basis of a true Culture. An exalted view to take of the 'property instinct' of our times? But once founded and on view I believe this Ideal will become a new Tradition: a vast step in advance of the prescribed fashion in a day when a dwelling was a composite of cells arranged as separate rooms: chambers to contain however good aggregations of furniture, utility comforts not present: a property interest chiefly. An organic-entity, this modern building as contrasted with that former insensate aggregation of parts. Surely we have here the higher ideal of unity as a more intimate working out of the expression of one's life in one's environment. One great thing instead of a quarrelling collection of so many little things.

organic → unity through structure animated by spirit, which is metaphorically alive

1914 Muthesius/Van de Velde: Werkbund theses and antitheses

In June 1914 the first great exhibition of the Deutscher Werkbund was opened in Cologne. It was intended to provide a conspectus of the Werkbund's work the seven years since its foundation. The very heterogeneity of the buildings in the exhibition – ranging from the Neo-Classicism of a Behrens to the gaily austere objectivity of Gropius and Meyer's office building and factory – gives a hint of the opposing forces within the Werkbund. They clashed with full vigour at the Werkbund conference in Cologne at the beginning of July, when Muthesius proclaimed concentration and standardization as the aims of Werkbund design, while van de Velde advanced the contrary thesis of the artist as a creative individualist.

1. Architecture, and with it the whole area of the Werkbund's activities, pressing towards standardization and only through standardization can recover that universal significance which was characteristic of it in times of harmonious culture.
2. Standardization, to be understood as the result of a beneficial concentration, will alone make possible the development of a universally valid, unimpaired good taste.
3. As long as a universal high level of taste has not been achieved, we cannot count on German arts and crafts making their influence effectively felt abroad.
4. The world will demand our products only when they are the vehicles of convincing stylistic expression. The foundations for this have now been laid by the German movement.
5. The creative development of what has already been achieved is the most urgent task of the age. Upon it the movement's ultimate success will depend. Any relapse and deterioration into imitation would today mean the squandering of a valuable possession.
6. Starting from the conviction that it is a matter of life and death for Germany constantly to ennoble its production, the Deutscher Werkbund, as an association of artists, industrialists, and merchants, must concentrate its attention upon creating the preconditions for the export of its industrial art.
7. Germany's advances in applied art and architecture must be brought to the attention of foreign countries by effective publicity. Next to exhibitions the most obvious means of doing this is by periodical illustrated publications.
8. Exhibitions by the Deutscher Werkbund are only meaningful when they are

restricted radically to the best and most exemplary. Exhibitions of arts and crafts abroad must be looked upon as a national matter and hence require public subsidy.

The existence of efficient large-scale business concerns with reliable goods is a prerequisite of any export. It would be impossible to meet even internal demands with an object designed by the artist for individual requirements.

For national reasons large distributive and transport undertakings whose activities are directed abroad ought to link up with the new movement, now that it has shown what it can do, and consciously represent German art in the world.

Hermann Muthesius

So long as there are still artists in the Werkbund and so long as they exercise some influence on its destiny, they will protest against every suggestion for the establishment of a canon and for standardization. By his innermost sense the artist is a burning idealist, a free spontaneous creator. Of his own free will he will never subordinate himself to a discipline that imposes upon him a type, a canon. Instinctively he distrusts everything that might sterilize his actions, and everyone who preaches a rule that might prevent him from linking his thoughts through to their own free end, or that attempts to drive them into a universally valid form, in which he sees only a mask that seeks to make a virtue out of incapacity.

Certainly, the artist who practises a 'beneficial concentration' has always recognized that currents which are stronger than his own will and thought demand of him that he should acknowledge what is in essential correspondence to the spirit of his age. These currents may be very manifold; he absorbs them unconsciously and consciously as general influences; there is something materially and morally compelling about them for him. He willingly subordinates himself to them and is full of enthusiasm for the idea of a new style *per se*. And for twenty years many of us have been seeking forms and decorations entirely in keeping with our epoch.

Nevertheless it has not occurred to any of us that henceforth we ought to impose these forms and decorations, which we have sought or found, upon others as standards. We know that several generations will have to work upon what we have started before the physiognomy of the new style is established, and that we can talk of standards and standardization only after the passage of a whole period of endeavours.

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endeavours will still have the charm of creative impetus. Gradually the energies, the gifts of all, begin to combine together, antitheses become neutralized, and at precisely that moment when individual strivings begin to slacken, the physiognomy will be established. The era of imitation will begin and forms and decorations will be used, the production of which no longer calls for any creative impulse: the age of infertility will then have commenced.

5. The desire to see a standard type come into being before the establishment of a style is exactly like wanting to see the effect before the cause. It would be to destroy the embryo in the egg. Is anyone really going to let themselves be dazzled by the apparent possibility of thereby achieving quick results? These premature effects have all the less prospect of enabling German arts and crafts to exercise an effective influence abroad, because foreign countries are a jump ahead of us in the old tradition and the old culture of good taste.

6. Germany, on the other hand, has the great advantage of still possessing gifts which other, older, wearier peoples are losing: the gifts of invention, of brilliant personal brainwaves. And it would be nothing short of castration to tie down this rich, many-sided, creative élan so soon.

7. The efforts of the Werkbund should be directed toward cultivating precisely these gifts, as well as the gifts of individual manual skill, joy, and belief in the beauty of highly differentiated execution, not toward inhibiting them by standardization at the very moment when foreign countries are beginning to take an interest in German work. As far as fostering these gifts is concerned, almost everything still remains to be done.

8. We do not deny anyone's good will and we are very well aware of the difficulties that have to be overcome in carrying this out. We know that the workers' organization has done a very great deal for the workers' material welfare, but it can hardly find an excuse for having done so little towards arousing enthusiasm for consummately fine workmanship in those who ought to be our most joyful collaborators. On the other hand, we are well aware of the need to export that lies like a curse upon our industry.

9. And yet nothing, nothing good and splendid, was ever created out of mere consideration for exports. Quality will not be created out of the spirit of export. Quality is always first created exclusively for a quite limited circle of connoisseurs and those who commission the work. These gradually gain confidence in their artists; slowly there develops first a narrower, then a national clientele, and only then do foreign countries, does the world slowly take notice of this quality. It is a complete misunderstanding of the situation to make the industrialists believe that they would increase their chances in the world market if they produced *a priori* standardized types for this world market before these types had become well tried common property at home. The wonderful works being exported to us now were none of them originally

created for export: think of Tiffany glasses, Copenhagen porcelain, jewellery by Jensen, the books of Cobden-Sanderson, and so on.

10. Every exhibition must have as its purpose to show the world this native quality, and it is quite true that the Werkbund's exhibitions will have meaning only when, as Herr Muthesius so rightly says, they restrict themselves radically to the best and most exemplary.

Henry van de Velde

1914 Paul Scheerbart: Glass architecture (excerpt)

The architect Bruno Taut called Paul Scheerbart (b. 1863 in Danzig, d. 1915 in Berlin) the 'only poet in architecture'. Scheerbart's Utopian phantasmagoria, which he wrote in marvellous abundance from 1893 on, evokes more impressively each time the idea of a 'glass architecture', the architect's dream of light, crystal clear, colourful, mobile, floating and soaring constructions that will transform 'Old Europe's' habits of thought and feeling. In 1914, the same year in which Bruno Taut, inspired by Scheerbart, built his 'Glass House' at the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne, Herwarth Walden printed Scheerbart's III-chapter 'Glass Architecture' in *Sturm*.

I. The environment and its influence on the evolution of culture

We live for the most part within enclosed spaces. These form the environment from which our culture grows. Our culture is in a sense a product of our architecture. If we wish to raise our culture to a higher level, we are forced for better or for worse to transform our architecture. And this will be possible only if we remove the enclosed quality from the spaces within which we live. This can be done only through the introduction of glass architecture that lets the sunlight and the light of the moon and stars into our rooms not merely through a few windows, but simultaneously through the greatest possible number of walls that are made entirely of glass – coloured glass. The new environment that we shall thereby create must bring with it a new culture.

XVIII. The beauty of the Earth if glass architecture is everywhere

The surface of the Earth would change greatly if brick architecture were everywhere displaced by glass architecture.

It would be as though the Earth clad itself in jewellery of brilliants and enamel.

The splendour is absolutely unimaginable. And we should then have on the Earth more exquisite things than the gardens of the Arabian Nights.

Then we should have a paradise on Earth and would not need to gaze longingly at the paradise in the sky.

XLI. The possibilities which iron construction renders capable of development

Iron construction makes it possible to give walls any form that may be desired. Walls need no longer be vertical.

Hence the possibilities which iron construction enables to be developed are quite unlimited.

The dome effects up above can be displaced to the sides, so that when sitting at a table one need only look sideways and upwards in order to observe the dome effect.

But curved surfaces are also effective in the lower parts of the walls – this effect is particularly easy to achieve in smaller rooms.

Smaller rooms are totally and completely freed from the need for verticality.

The significance of the ground-plan in architecture is thereby greatly reduced; the design of the outline of the building acquires greater importance than hitherto.

LXII. The terraces

No doubt a terrace formation is necessary in taller glass buildings and with several storeys, since otherwise the glass surfaces could not reach the free light-conducting air, to which they aspire, since in darkness they can fulfil their purpose only at night – not during the day.

This terrace formation of the storeys will of course quickly replace the dreary frontal architecture of brick houses.

LXXI. Transportable buildings

Transportable glass buildings can also be manufactured. They are particularly well suited for exhibition purposes.

Such transportable buildings are not exactly easy to produce. But let it not be forgotten that when something new is involved it is very often precisely the most difficult problem that is tackled first.

CII. The transformation of the Earth's surface

Again and again something sounds to us like a fairy tale, when it is not really so fantastic or Utopian at all. Eighty years ago the steam railway came along and actually transformed the whole surface of the Earth, as no one will deny.

According to what has been said so far the surface of the Earth is to be transformed – and by glass architecture. If it comes, it will transform the Earth's surface. Naturally, a part will also be played by other factors outside the present discussion.

It was the steam railway that produced the brick metropolis culture of today from which we all suffer. Glass architecture will come only when the metropolis in our sense of the word has been done away with.

That it must be done away with is perfectly clear to all those who aim at the further evolution of our culture. This is no longer worth talking about.

We all know what colour means; it forms only a small part of the spectrum. But this we want to have. Infra-red and ultra-violet are not perceptible to our eyes – but no doubt ultra-violet is perceptible to the sense organs of ants.

Even if we cannot for the present assume that our sense organs will evolve further from today to tomorrow, we shall nevertheless be justified in supposing that to begin with we may attain that which is accessible to us – to wit, that part of the spectrum which we are able to perceive with our eyes, those miracles of colour which we are capable of taking in.

The only thing that can help us to do this is glass architecture, which must transform our whole life – the environment in which we live.

It is therefore to be hoped that glass architecture really will 'transform' the surface of our Earth.

1914 Antonio Sant'Elia/Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: Futurist architecture

In 1914 two young architects, Antonio Sant'Elia and Mario Chiattone, exhibited in Milan drawings and plans for a 'New City'. The radical ideas put forward by Antonio Sant'Elia (b. 1888 in Como, killed 1916 at Monfalcone) in the foreword to the catalogue were immediately reinterpreted by Marinetti, the mouthpiece of Italian Futurism, into a 'Manifesto of Futurist Architecture', which appeared in July of the same year, four months after Marinetti's manifesto *The Splendour of Geometry and Mechanics and the Sensibility of Numbers*, and concluded the series of great Futurist proclamations.

The words and passages in italics were added to Sant'Elia's statement by Marinetti and Cinti.

Since the eighteenth century there has been no more architecture. What is called modern architecture is a stupid mixture of the most varied stylistic elements used to mask the modern skeleton. The new beauty of concrete and iron is profaned by the superimposition of carnival decorative incrustations justified neither by structural necessity nor by our taste, and having their origins in Egyptian, Indian or Byzantine antiquity or in that astounding outburst of idiocies and impotence known as 'neo-classicism'.

In Italy these products of architectural pandering are welcomed, and greedy incompetence from abroad is rated as brilliant inventiveness, as the very latest architecture. Young Italian architects (those who gain a reputation for originality through the clandestine machinations of art magazines) display their talents in the new quarters of our cities, where a joyful confusion of ogival columns, seventeenth-century foliage, Gothic arches, Egyptian pilasters, rococo volutes, fifteenth-century putti and bloated caryatids seriously claim to be regarded as style and arrogantly strive for monumentality. The kaleidoscopic appearance and disappearance of forms, the constantly growing number of machines, the daily increase of needs imposed by the speed of communications, by the agglomeration of people, by the demands of hygiene and a hundred other phenomena of modern life, cause no concern to these self-styled renewers of architecture. They stubbornly continue to apply the rules of Vitruvius, Vignola and Sansovino and with a few little German architectural publications in their hands try to re-impose age-old imbecilities upon our cities, which ought to be the direct and faithful projections of ourselves.

Thus this art of expression and synthesis has become in their hands an empty stylistic exercise, an endless repetition of formulas incompetently employed to disguise as a modern building the usual hackneyed conglomeration of bricks and stones. As though we – the accumulators and generators of movement, with our mechanical extensions, with the noise and speed of our life – could live in the same streets built for their own needs by the men of four, five, six centuries ago.

This is the supreme idiocy of the modern architecture that constantly repeats

*defined as a new problem
architecture for the time plan replaces facade as a way
out of problem of style.*

itself with the self-interested complicity of the academies, those prisons of the intelligence in which the young are forced onanistically to copy classical models, instead of opening up their minds to the search for limits and the solution of the new and imperious problem: 'the Futurist house and city'. The house and the city spiritually and materially ours, in which our turbulent existence can take place without appearing a grotesque anachronism.

The problem of Futurist architecture is not a problem of linear rearrangement. It is not a question of finding new profiles, new door and window frames, substitutes for columns, pilasters, consoles, caryatids, gargoyles. It is not a question of leaving the façade bare brick, painting it or facing it with stone; nor of establishing formal differences between new and old buildings. It is a question of creating the Futurist house according to a sound plan, of building it with the aid of every scientific and technical resource, of fulfilling to the limit every demand of our way of life and our spirit, of rejecting everything grotesque, cumbrous, and alien to us (tradition, style, aesthetic, proportion), establishing new forms, new lines, *a new harmony of profiles and volumes*, an architecture (whose raison d'être lies solely in the special conditions of modern life) whose aesthetic values are in perfect harmony with our sensibility. This architecture cannot be subject to any law of historical continuity. It must be as new as our frame of mind is new.

The art of building has been able to evolve in time and to pass from one style to another while maintaining the general characteristics of architecture unaltered, because, while changes due to fashion and those resulting from successive religious movements and political regimes are frequent in history, factors that cause profound changes in environmental conditions, that overturn the old and create the new – such things as the discovery of natural laws, the perfecting of mechanical systems, the rational and scientific use of material – are very rare indeed. In modern times, the process of the consistent stylistic evolution of architecture has come to a stop. 'Architecture is breaking free from tradition. It must perforce begin again from the beginning.'

The calculation of the strength of materials, the use of reinforced concrete, rule out 'architecture' in the classical and traditional sense. Modern building materials and our scientific ideas absolutely do not lend themselves to the disciplines of historical styles and are the chief cause of the grotesque appearance of buildings à la mode, in which an attempt is made to force the splendidly light and slender supporting members and the apparent fragility of reinforced concrete to imitate the heavy curve of arches and the massive appearance of marble.

The tremendous antithesis between the modern and the ancient world is the outcome of all those things that exist now and did not exist then. Elements have entered into our life of whose very possibility the ancients did not even dream. *Material possibilities and attitudes of mind* have come into being that have had a thousand repercussions, first and foremost of which is the creation of a new ideal of beauty, still obscure and embryonic, but whose fascination is already being felt even by the masses. We have lost the sense of the monumental, of the heavy, of the static; we have enriched our sensibility by a 'taste

harmony beauty

for the light, the practical, *the ephemeral and the swift*. We feel that we are no longer the men of the cathedrals, *the palaces*, the assembly halls; but of big hotels, railway stations, immense roads, colossal ports, covered markets, brilliantly lit galleries, freeways, demolition and rebuilding schemes.

We must invent and rebuild the *Futurist* city: it must be like an immense, tumultuous, lively, noble work site, dynamic in all its parts; and the *Futurist* house must be like an enormous machine. The lifts must not hide like lonely worms in the stair wells; the stairs, become useless, must be done away with and the lifts must climb like serpents of iron and glass up the housefronts. The house of concrete, glass, and iron, *without painting* and without sculpture, enriched solely by the innate beauty of its lines and projections, extremely 'ugly' in its mechanical simplicity, high and wide *as prescribed by local government regulations*, must rise on the edge of a tumultuous abyss: the street, which will no longer stretch like a foot-mat level with the porters' lodges, but will descend into the earth on several levels, will receive the metropolitan traffic and will be linked, for the necessary passage from one to the other, by metal walkways and immensely fast escalators.

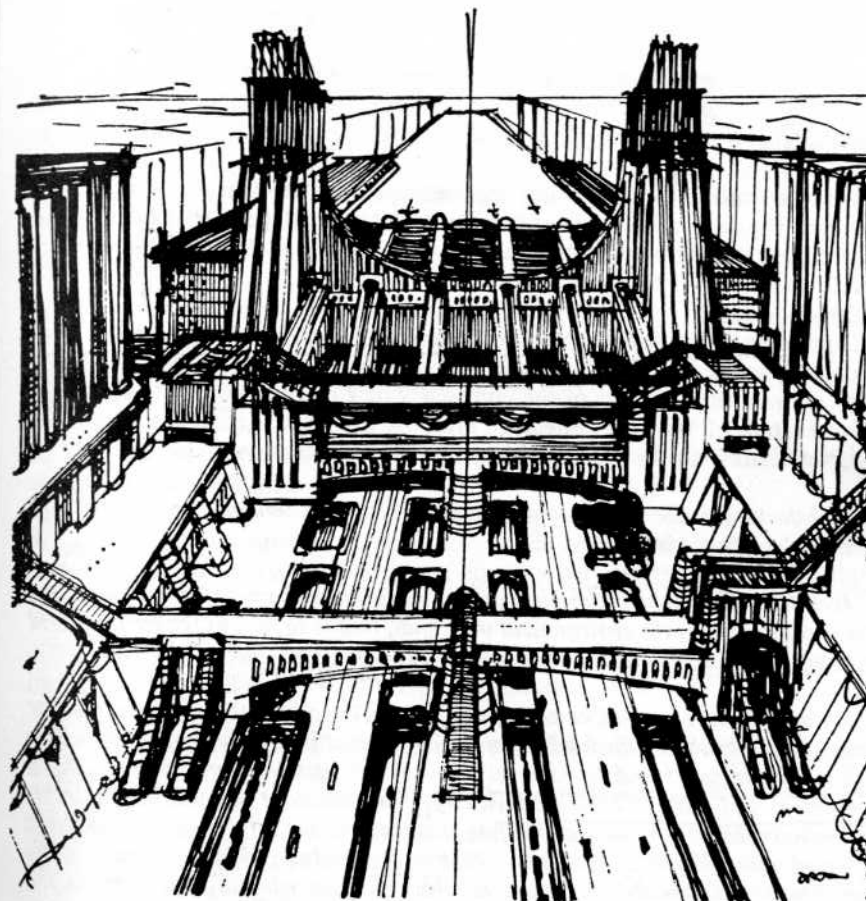
'The decorative must be abolished.' The problem of *Futurist* architecture must be solved not by plagiarizing China, Persia, or Japan with the aid of photographs, not by foolishly adhering to the rules of Vitruvius, but by strokes of genius and armed with scientific and technical *experience*. Everything must be revolutionary. We must exploit the roofs, utilize the basements, reduce the importance of the façades, transplant the problems of good taste from the petty domain of the section, the capital, the entrance door, to the wider one of great 'groupings of masses', of vast 'town planning projects'. Let us have done with monumental, funereal, commemorative architecture. Let us throw away monuments, sidewalks, arcades, steps; let us sink squares into the ground, raise the level of the city.

I oppose and despise:

1. All the pseudo avant-garde architecture of Austria, Hungary, Germany, and America.
2. All classical, solemn, hieratic, theatrical, decorative, monumental, frivolous, pleasing architecture.
3. The embalming, reconstruction, and reproduction of monuments and ancient palaces.
4. Perpendicular and horizontal lines, cubic and pyramidal forms that are static, heavy, oppressive and absolutely alien to our new sensibility.

And proclaim:

1. That *Futurist* architecture is the architecture of calculation, of audacity and



Antonio Sant'Elia. 1914

simplicity; the architecture of reinforced concrete, of iron, of glass, of paste-board, of textile fibre, and of all those substitutes for wood, stone, and brick which make possible maximum elasticity and lightness.

2. That this does not render architecture an arid combination of the practical and utilitarian, but that it remains art, that is to say, synthesis and expression.

3. *That oblique and elliptical lines are dynamic by their very nature and have an emotive power a thousand times greater than that of perpendicular and horizontal lines and that a dynamically integrated architecture is impossible without them.*

4. That decoration, as something imposed upon architecture, is an absurdity and that 'the decorative value of Futurist architecture depends solely upon the original use and arrangement of the raw or bare or violently coloured material'.

New nature

5. That, just as the ancients drew the inspiration for their art from the elements of nature, so we – being materially and spiritually artificial – must find this inspiration in the elements of the immensely new mechanical world which we have created, of which architecture must be the finest expression, the most complete synthesis, the most efficacious artistic integration.

6. *Architecture as the art of arranging the forms of buildings according to pre-determined criteria is finished.*

7. *Architecture must be understood as the endeavour to harmonize, with freedom and great audacity, the environment with man, that is to say, to render the world of things a direct projection of the spirit.* *Hegel, Romantic Modern not just utility*

8. *An architecture so conceived cannot give birth to any three-dimensional or linear habit, because the fundamental characteristics of Futurist architecture will be obsolescence and transience. 'Houses will last less long than we. Each generation will have to build its own city.' This constant renewal of the architectonic environment will contribute to the victory of 'Futurism' already affirmed with 'Words in Freedom', 'Plastic Dynamism', 'Music without Bars', and 'The Art of Sounds', a victory for which we fight without pause against the cowardly worship of the past.*

To what extent is language and value of past theory present here?

Ren. ideal geometry harmony

Rom. spirit organic

14th taste

Platform of MM is break w/ past. to what degree is this true?
a) critique of Romanticism
b) appropriation of historical discontinuity
c) terms of art the same or new?
Platonism
beauty

1918 'De Stijl': Manifesto I

The famous first manifesto of the De Stijl group, the full importance of which can only now be assessed, appeared in November 1918 and introduced the second year of the periodical of the same name. A year earlier a group of radical artists had been formed in Leyden under the leadership of Theo van Doesburg (b. 1883 in Utrecht, d. 1931 in Davos). Their goal: the organic combination of architecture, sculpture and painting in a lucid, elemental, unsentimental construction. The group took the name 'De Stijl', thereby stating quite precisely that their constructive doctrine was aimed at a new aesthetic. The first word was 'purity'; a 'white' world was to replace the 'brown' one.

1. There is an old and a new consciousness of the age. The old one is directed towards the individual. The new one is directed towards the universal. The struggle of the individual against the universal may be seen both in the world war and in modern art.

2. The war is destroying the old world with its content: individual predominance in every field.

3. The new art has brought to light that which is contained in the new consciousness of the age: a relationship of equality between the universal and the individual.

4. The new consciousness of the age is prepared to realize itself in everything, including external life. *Hegel/Hugo a modern truism*

5. Tradition, dogmas and the predominance of the individual stand in the way of this realization.

destruction a new part of creation

6. Therefore the founders of the new culture call upon all who believe in reform of art and culture to destroy these obstacles to development, just as in the plastic arts – by doing away with natural form – they have eliminated that which stood in the way of pure artistic expression, the logical conclusion of every artistic concept.

anti the Romantic individual as state policy

7. The artists of today, all over the world, impelled by one and the same consciousness, have taken part on the spiritual plane in the world war against the domination of individualism, of arbitrariness. They therefore sympathize with all who are fighting spiritually or materially for the formation of an international unity in life, art, and culture.

8. The organ *De Stijl*, founded for this purpose, seeks to contribute towards

setting the new conception of life in a clear light. The collaboration of all is possible by:

Sending in (to the editorial board) as a proof of agreement the (exact) name, address, and profession.

Contributions in the broadest sense (critical, philosophical, architectural, scientific, literary, musical, etc., as well as reproductions) to the monthly magazine *De Stijl*.

Translation into other languages and propagation of the views published in *De Stijl*.

Signatures of the contributors:

Theo van Doesburg, painter / Robt. van't Hoff, architect / Vilmos Huszar, painter / Antony Kok, poet / Piet Mondrian, painter / G. Vantongerloo, sculptor / Jan Wils, architect.