because of their prosaic subject matter, he displayed these works off-site at his unofficial but widely visited *Pavilion de Realism*. Hence the phenomenon first pejoratively coined "realism" rather quickly translated itself into a powerful artistic and literary movement – one with a significant architectural impact. In its most general meaning, realism can be defined as the attempt to represent the real world in a truthful and objective manner, that is, to disregard many of the artistic pretensions of the past. Artists must therefore deal with the present and its problems with a sense of independence and individuality. The following statement appeared as a preface to Courbet's catalogue of 1855, "Realism – Gustave Courbet," and is sometimes attributed to Courbet's friend and accomplice in popularizing the movement, the writer Champfleury.

The title 'realist' has been imposed on me in the same way as the title 'romantic' was imposed on the men of 1830. Titles have never given the right idea of things; if they did, works would be unnecessary.

Without going into the question as to the rightness or wrongness of a label which, let us hope, no one is expected to understand fully, I would only offer a few words of explanation which may avert misconception.

I have studied the art of the ancients and moderns without any dogmatic or preconceived ideas. I have not tried to imitate the former or to copy the latter, nor have I addressed myself to the pointless objective of 'art for art's sake'. No – all I have tried to do is to derive, from a complete knowledge of tradition, a reasoned sense of my own independence and individuality.

To achieve skill through knowledge – that has been my purpose. To record the manners, ideas and aspect of the age as I myself saw them – to be a man as well as a painter, in short to create living art – that is my aim.

209 CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
from "The Painter of Modern Life" (1859)

Central to the realist movement was the notion of "modernity," a term that captures the lure and celebration of the present while at the same time expressing a sense of impatience or disdain for the traditions of the past. The poet and critic Charles Baudelaire popularized this notion with his literary homage to the artist Constantin Guys (1805–92), here simply identified as "Monsieur G." The "transitory, fugitive element" underlying modernity for Baudelaire was in part represented by the *flâneur*, the urban stroller or idler who takes in the sensations and active imagery of the streaming metropolis with both a sense of thrill and dread over the accelerating pace of life. Being "modern" now takes on a certain polemical edge, and its translation into architectural terms is equally evident in the transformation and expansion of the city of Paris (through the creation of several new boulevards) by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann.

Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), from "The Painter of Modern Life" (1859, published 1863) in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne. New York: Da Capo Paperback, 1986, pp. 12–14. © 1965 by Phaidon Press Limited. Reprinted by permission of Phaidon Press Limited.

Modernity

And so away he goes, hurrying, searching. But searching for what? Be very sure that this man, such as I have depicted him – this solitary, gifted with an active imagination, ceaselessly journeying across the great human desert – has an aim loftier than that of a mere *flâneur*, an aim more general, something other than the fugitive pleasure of circumstance. He is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call 'modernity'; for I know of no better word to express the idea I have in mind. He makes it his business to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distil the eternal from the transitory. Casting an eye over our exhibitions of modern pictures, we are struck by a general tendency among artists to dress all their subjects in the garments of the past. Almost all of them make use of the costumes and furnishings of the Renaissance, just as David employed the costumes and furnishings of Rome. There is however this difference, that David, by choosing subjects which were specifically Greek or Roman, had no alternative but to dress them in antique garb, whereas the painters of today, though choosing subjects of a general nature and applicable to all ages, nevertheless persist in rigging them out in the costumes of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance or the Orient. This is clearly symptomatic of a great degree of laziness; for it is much easier to decide outright that everything about the garb of an age is absolutely ugly than to devote oneself to the task of distilling from it the mysterious element of beauty that it may contain, however slight or minimal that element may be. By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. Every old master has had his own modernity; the great majority of fine portraits that have come down to us from former generations are clothed in the costume of their own period. They are perfectly harmonious, because everything – from costume and coiffure down to gesture, glance and smile (for each age has a deportment, a glance and a smile of its own) – everything, I say, combines to form a completely viable whole. This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensed with. By neglecting it, you cannot fail to tumble into the abyss of an abstract and indeterminate beauty, like that of the first woman before the fall of man. If for the necessary and inevitable costume of the age you substitute another, you will be guilty of a mistranslation only to be excused in the case of a masquerade prescribed by fashion. (Thus, the goddesses, nymphs and sultanas of the eighteenth century are still convincing portraits, *morally* speaking.)

It is doubtless an excellent thing to study the old masters in order to learn how to paint; but it can be no more than a waste of labour if your aim is to understand the special nature of present-day beauty. The draperies of Rubens or Veronese will in no way teach you how to depict *moire antique, satin à la reine* or any other fabric of modern manufacture, which we see supported and hung over crinoline or starched muslin petticoat. In texture and weave these are quite different from the fabrics of ancient Venice or those worn at the court of Catherine. Furthermore the cut of skirt and bodice is by no means similar; the pleats are arranged

according to a new system. Finally the gesture and the bearing of the woman of today give to her dress a life and a special character which are not those of the woman of the past. In short, for any 'modernity' to be worthy of one day taking its place as 'antiquity', it is necessary for the mysterious beauty which human life accidentally puts into it to be distilled from it. And it is to this task that Monsieur G. particularly addresses himself.

210 EUGÈNE-EMMANUEL VIOLLET-LE-DUC
from *Lectures on Architecture*, Lecture VI (1859)

In the late 1850s and 1860s Viollet-le-Duc's theory began to evolve once again in light of the intense architectural debate taking place in France. In 1856 Henri Labrouste closed his popular design studio, which he had opened in 1830 in defiance of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Fifteen students, led by Anatole de Baudot (1834–1915), approached Viollet-le-Duc and asked him to open a studio. The latter responded with a full architectural program of study, the cornerstone of which would be a series of lectures that he immediately set out to compose. Even though the studio failed and his students left him, Viollet-le-Duc continued with his task and completed his first series of ten lectures by 1863. Of these, the sixth lecture stands apart in its general tenor. Whereas the first five lectures are largely didactic and historical, Viollet-le-Duc in his sixth lecture speaks directly to contemporary issues and with both a sense of urgency at contemporary prospects and a mature system of historical development. Greece and the Middle Ages are both periods of great accomplishment and style, but they now have little to offer the present except the logic and discipline of an overriding principle. The inspiration of the artists must be conjoined to them and the functional steam locomotive now becomes a symbol of the new industrial age.

I admit that in what appertains to Architectural Art we are far from rightly appreciating our own times, – what they demand, and what they reject. We are just at the same point with regard to Architecture that the Western World at large was at the time of Galileo in regard to the sciences. The conservators of *the fixed principles of beauty* would, if they had the power, willingly confine, as a dangerous maniac, him who should attempt to prove that there exist principles independent of form; – that, while principles do not vary, their expression cannot be permanently riveted to one invariable form. For nearly four centuries we have been disputing about the relative value of ancient and modern Art; and during these four hundred years our disputes have turned not upon principles, but upon ambiguous terms and figures of speech. We architects, shut up in our art – an art which is half science, half sentiment, – present only hieroglyphics to the public, which does not understand us, and which leaves us to dispute in our isolation. Shall we never have *our* Molière to treat us as he did the doctors of his time? May we not hope some day (while still admiring them) to part company with Hippocrates and Galen? [. . .]

Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, from Lecture VI, *Entretiens sur l'architecture* (1859), trans. Benjamin Bucknall, and published in 1877 in Viollet-le-Duc, *Lectures on Architecture*. New York: Dover, 1987 (facsimile edition), pp. 172, 176–7, 183–4.

There are times when man needs some of the barbarian element, just as the soil needs manure; for production requires a process of mental fermentation, resulting from contrasts, from dissimilarities, from a disparity between the real and the ideal world. The periods most fruitful in intellectual products have been periods of the greatest agitation (it must be understood that I include the arts among intellectual products – with no offence to those who produce "works of art" as a velvet weaver makes yards of velvet), – periods in which the student of history finds the greatest contrasts. If a society attains to an advanced degree of civilisation, in which everything is balanced, provided for, and adjusted, there ensues a general equality of well-being, – of the good and the proper, – which may render man materially happy, but which is not calculated to arouse his intellect. Movement, struggle, even opposition, is necessary to the arts; stagnation in the mental order, as in the physical, soon induces decay. Thus Roman society placed in the centre of the West, and absolute mistress of the known world, became enfeebled and corrupted, because discussions and contrasts were wanting. Morals and Art decline, simply because everything in this world which does not renew itself by movement and the infusion of foreign elements, becomes subject to decay. Ideas are like families: they must be crossed if we would not see their vitality enfeebled.

What themes shall the poet find amid a perfectly well-ordered, well-governed, well-behaved society, where all have the same number of ideas, and of the same kind, on every subject? Extremes and contrasts are necessary to the poet. When a man of strong feelings sees his country invaded; when he is the witness of shameful abuses; when his sense of right is outraged; when he suffers or hopes, – if this man is a poet, he is inevitably inspired; he will write and arouse emotions in others: but if he lives in the midst of a polished, tolerant, easy-going community, by whom extremes alone are regarded as want of taste – what will he find to say? He will perhaps describe the flowers, the brooks, the verdant meadows, or, stimulating his imagination to a fictitious warmth, he will plunge into the domain of the unreal, the unnatural, the impossible; or, on the other hand, he will give expression to an undefined longing, a groundless disgust of life, and sufferings for which no adequate cause can be alleged. No! – the true poet, sounding to its depths this social condition, apparently so calm and unvaried, will seek in human hearts feelings which never die, wherever man is to be found: beneath the uniform garb in which all the members of this community are dressed, he will find various passions, noble or base; he will compel us to recognise again those contrasts whose manifestations we seek to suppress: thus and thus only will he make himself heard and read. The more civilised and regular society becomes, the more is the artist compelled to analyse and dissect passions, manners, and tastes, – to revert to first principles – to lay hold of and display them in naked simplicity before the world, – if he would leave a deep impression upon this externally uniform and colourless society. Hence it is more difficult to be an artist in times like our own, than among rude, unrefined, people, who openly display their good or evil passions. In primitive epochs, *style* imposed itself on the artist; now, the artist has to acquire style.

But what is style? I am not speaking now of style as applied to the classification of the arts by periods, but of style as inherent in the arts of all times; and to make myself better understood, I remark that independently of the style of the writer in each language, there is a style which belongs to all languages, because it belongs to humanity. This style is inspiration; but it is inspiration subjected to the laws of reason, – inspiration invested with a distinction

peculiar to every work produced by a genuine feeling rigorously analysed by reason before being expressed; it is the close accord of the imaginative and reasoning faculties; it is the effort of the *active* imagination regulated by reason. [. . .]

We may say as much of the ideas, systems, and principles which regulate art. When ideas, systems, and principles are modified, the forms corresponding should be modified also. We admire a hundred-gun ship of war, rigged as a sailing vessel; we perceive that there is in this work of man – the principle being admitted – not only a wonderful product of intelligence, but also forms so perfectly adapted to their purpose, that they appear beautiful, and in fact are so; but however beautiful these forms may be, as soon as steam-power has supervened, they must be changed, for they are not applicable to the novel motive force; hence they are no longer *good*; and on the principle just now cited they will no longer be beautiful for us. Since in our days, when we are subjected to an imperative necessity, we subordinate our works to that necessity, we are so far capacitated for acquiring style in art, which is nothing more than the rigorous application of a principle. We erect public buildings which are devoid of style because we insist on allying forms derived from traditions with requirements which are not in harmony with those traditions. Naval engineers in building a steam-ship, and machinists in making a locomotive, do not endeavour to reproduce the forms of a sailing vessel of the time of Louis XIV., or of a stage-coach: they simply conform to the novel principles with which they have to deal, and thus produce works which have a character, a style of their own, as indicating to every eye a definite purpose. The locomotive, for example, has a special physiognomy which all can appreciate, and which renders it a distinct creation. Nothing can better express force under control than these ponderous rolling machines; their motions are gentle or terrible; they advance with terrific impetuosity, or seem to pant impatiently under the restraining hand of the diminutive creature who starts or stops them at will. The locomotive is almost a living being, and its external form is the simple expression of its strength. A locomotive therefore has style. Some will call it an ugly machine. But why ugly? Does it not exhibit the true expression of the brute energy which it embodies? Is it not appreciable by all as a thing complete, organised, possessing a special character, as does a piece of artillery or a gun? There is no style but that which is appropriate to the object. A sailing-vessel has style; but a steamer made to conceal its motive power and looking like a sailing-vessel will have none; a gun has style, but a gun made to resemble a crossbow will have none. Now we architects have for a long time been making guns while endeavouring to give them as much as possible the appearance of crossbows, or at any rate that of arquebuses; and there are persons of intelligence who maintain that if we abandon the form of the arquebuse we are barbarians, – that Art is lost, – that nothing is left for us but to hide our heads in shame.

211 CÉSAR DALY
from *Revue générale*, Vol. 21 (1863)

In his introductory editorial of the *Revue générale* for 1863, César Daly reflected back on the previous 23 years of his publication: both the great promise that the journal held out for a new style of architecture and the failure of his generation to find a unifying architectural principle. He still staunchly defends freedom and taste in art, but this belief over the years had led him to regard the eclecticism of his day – of which so many of his contemporaries were complaining – as a necessary and useful transitional stage to prepare the way for the "new world" of art and society. Once again he opposes all forms of intellectual and moral exclusivity in architectural design, such as what the advocates of the classical and Gothic camps demanded. At the same time these two passages contain a hint of the resignation that was descending over the architectural profession in general. The lively architectural debates of the past half century seemed to have accomplished very little in altering the course of development, although the changes of outlook in retrospect appear nothing less than profound.

Every system of signs, symbols, and representations that express feelings or convey intelligent human communication is a language. Architecture, from this point of view, is also a language, but a language that supports as many revolutions and radical transformations as history presents in distinct styles.

The architect who has studied only one style of architecture is like the Frenchman who knows only his maternal language; he is enslaved to the style, which *thrusts itself* upon him each time he attempts an artistic composition.

And this tyranny is so complete that he, possessed by a form of art whose yoke it is impossible for him to shake off, is only able to master his preferred form of art with an incomplete understanding. He is thus master of himself but he is not a master. In effect, he is similar to the Frenchman who is totally ignorant of Latin, who is only imperfectly the master of his national language. He is the same as the architect who is concerned only with a single architectural style, who can only understand it very incompletely because he is ignorant of its origin, its primitive *raison d'être*, and the successive transformations of a series of artistic forms that his preferred style has received by a tradition of preceding styles.

Does the knowledge of the rules of grammar or the general philosophy of languages not provide an understanding, a more perfect appreciation of the special grammar of each language?

Similarly we can ask – *à fortiori* – if it is possible to master fully a particular style of architecture when we remain absolutely ignorant of all the other historical styles of this art? [. . .]

* * *

The contemporary architect is not able to contemplate the promised land of the future art and know exactly in which direction to set out today [. . .] Master of every style, initiated at least in the feelings that they express, in the moral and physical causes that have defined

César Daly, from "Introduction" to the *Revue générale*, Vol. 21 (1863), pp. 5–6, 8–9, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave.