

A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

OPPOSITIONS



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The word “historicism” has, since the 1950s, been somewhat uneasily associated with a theory of historical determinism on the one hand, and a relativistic eclecticism on the other. While Karl Popper has seen in historicism a teleological theory of history that has, for him, totalitarian implications, Nikolaus Pevsner has warned against what he regarded as a “return to historicism” in the work of the late fifties, by which he meant a return to the eclectic, stylistic allusionism of the nineteenth century. Popper was, of course, referring to those idealizing schemes of historical development that, following Hegel, saw history as some giant impersonal force replacing God or Providence as the implacable instrument of human destiny. Pevsner, however, was using the word in an entirely different sense simply to denote a resurgence of historical “quotation” of the sort that Modernism had thought to ward off once and for all by a combination of abstraction and the machine aesthetic. “Historicism” for Popper represented a “poverty,” a flattening of the pluralistic nature of human existence; for Pevsner it signalled a lack of “authenticity,” a betrayal of the manifest conditions of modernity as proclaimed by the Modern Movement. 1

These two negative understandings of the nature of historicism, while apparently mutually opposed, in fact both refer to the sense of the word as it first occurred in English as a translation of the German *Historismus* and the Italian *storicismo*. Here the sense of the word was entirely positive, derived from the perception, common to historians like Ernst Troeltsch and Friedrich Meinecke and philosophers like Benedetto Croce, that a new vision of history had been developed in the nineteenth century. With its roots in the “Scienza Nuova” of Vico and the careful philology of Leopold von Ranke, this historiography (generally called the German Historical School) was thought, in the 1920s and 1930s, to constitute the very essence of modernity: opposed to the Natural Law philosophies of the Renaissance and the universalizing rationalism of the Enlightenment, it held that the characteristics of each historical event were unique and particular, that they were to be understood, not through any preconceived system of judgment, but solely through the standards of their own time. The idea of a uniform and constant rule, permeating the universe as a whole and governing the life of natural species as well as that of mankind, was in historicism overthrown in favor of a vision that concentrated on the individual nature of each age, according to values derived from inside the period itself. The “science” of nature and the “science” of human institutions, culture and society were for ever separated; not only was the object of study different, but the methods utilized to understand each were radically opposed. Rather than searching for a universal causation for natural and human

phenomena, historicism stressed the understanding of human historical events on their own terms. Underlying this sense of historical specificity was of course the quasi-organic notion of unity proposed by the Romantic Movement, a unity constituted at any one time by an individual, an institution or culture, which was immediately manifested by every production of that culture. Styles, languages, social forms, laws and customs were all, in each period and place, bound to each other as symptoms of a “character” which was unique to that age and to no other.

2 Here we can see the intimate relations of historicism as a theory of historical enquiry to nineteenth century stylistic eclecticism. For the assumption that each age possessed its own style allowed each style so identified to be assimilated to the values and ethical standards ascribed to that age. Each different style became in some way, thereby, an emblem of its society, a reflection of the morality and historical meaning of events; like language itself, a style was seen as revealing and “standing for” its speakers. Styles, historically understood, were thus loaded with the “meaning” of their societies and might be used as “signs” of that meaning. Abstracted as they were from their original conditions of formation, the historical styles signified, as it were, by themselves. Behind the eclecticism of a Piranesi, a Pugin or a Morris, lay this idea of history: that the style was endowed with *authenticity* by virtue of the historical idea of the society that first gave birth to it. This “idea,” at once historically specific and morally redolent, was carried by the style of its time; so much so, indeed, that the style alone might act, in another time, to stimulate the *re-birth* of the original social and moral conditions of its first formulation. Style and society were linked like cause and effect—a neat reversal of the terms of historicism, but one logically derived from its premises. In this sense, Pevsner, himself a historicist historian, is correct in viewing the apparent eclecticism of the fifties as a return to nineteenth century historicism.

But, according to the tenets of historicism itself, such a “return” was bound to be “inauthentic.” While the phenomena of nineteenth century eclecticism might be understood, as Hegel himself pointed out, as deeply rooted in the individualistic and autonomous position of the post-Romantic artist, that of the twentieth could be explained with no such ease. For had not the Modern Movement called for, and to a large extent produced, an art entirely characteristic of the modern age? Had it not, by breaking decisively with the “styles,” and rejecting the weight of tradition, forged a new language consistent with the demands of the new epoch? Had it not, indeed, finally fulfilled the latent requirements of historicism itself, that the style and the age be in perfect harmony? The recognition of a specifically modern *zeitgeist* was after all an essentially historicist act. This all the historians of the Modern Movement in the twenties, thirties, and forties recognized; they were, after all, themselves deeply historicist in their methods and preconceptions. The predictions of nineteenth century historiography were seemingly being dramatically confirmed by events. Emil Kaufmann, writing his celebrated essay “From Ledoux to Le Corbusier” did not have to elaborate the point that was obvious from his title: that the intimations of bourgeois modernity, found in the “abstract” forms of Ledoux, had found their appropriate resolution in Modernism. The internal laws of history had once again

demonstrated their truth; the architect was simply an agent of their implacable development. From these presuppositions, and others linked to them in the Hegelian canon, came the “method” of the first historians of modern architecture as they searched for “origins” of ideas and forms, tried to follow their “development” and culmination in a phase of history that itself was called a “movement.”

The Post-Modernist age has, we are continually reminded, no such easy faith in the laws of historical development, nor so strong a belief in the authenticity of abstraction as the basis of modern expression. As the utopia of the Modern Movement has come under social attack, so its aesthetic has been criticized as lacking those dimensions of humanistic reference, of pluralistic statement, that might prevent what many have seen to be the “creeping totalitarianism” of Radiant City. The reaction, as Pevsner noted, has been toward a revival of historically based images, quotations from historical styles, assimilation of “contextural” incidents in literal and realistic ways. As Collage City, the visual counterpart of Popper’s “piecemeal” reformism, replaces Radiant City, and as the direct emulation of classical or gothic motifs gradually covers the bare surfaces of Modernism, we have to recognize that, despite any nostalgia, the aesthetic of the twenties and thirties has itself become a style of the historical past, consumed and implicated by the very history it sought to suspend.

This is not, however, to say that the premises on which this new allusionism is based are themselves any more soundly formulated *historically* than those of Modernism. Indeed, they rely absolutely on the very fiction promulgated by Modernism that it had succeeded in breaking with the past; they demand the myth, so dear to the avant-garde of the twenties, that a rupture, a discreet shift had been effected between the old eclectic world and the brave new one. For “Post-Modernism” self-consciously tries to “heal” that break, overcome that “rupture”; in the search for consolation, or, more cynically, for ever-renewable consumable images, it turns to the “history” of architecture, its “rich tradition” of meaning and form, as if, in disinterring the signs of a homely past, the deserted present might once more be domesticated. But while the myths of the Modern Movement are thereby sustained while being challenged, the “Post-Modern” architects and their ideologues are no longer served by the same theory of history, the *historicism*, that once gave meaning to eclectic and Modernist alike. The historical city and its historical architectures are referred to, but without the coherent framework of ideology that, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, endowed specific styles with overtones of particular politics and moralities, or in the early twentieth century, that gave sense to the Modernist project. We cannot, then, with Pevsner, see the recent rash of historical allusions as a simple “return” to historicism. Not only the conditions for referring to the past, but the very possibilities for ideological signification, are profoundly different.

In one sense this difference has to be blamed on the prior existence of Modernism itself. By asserting the primacy of abstraction—with all the attendant values of spatial or volumetric order, typologies of pure form, geometric absolutes—Modernism did, in some way, “end” the possibility of an architecture firmly based on an historical style. Not only were the

outward forms of expression changed, but the entire mode of recognition, of seeing relations and perceiving meaning was turned inside out. For as long as historical architectures had been the source of the styles—since the Renaissance that is—architecture had been constructed, so to speak, out of elements and their relations that were already formulated. However one might interpret, re-compose or juxtapose them, the codes were known, available in history; that is why, in the most general way, it is possible to talk of the “classical language” of architecture operating as a grid of known elements and already tried combinations. Archeology and invention might provide new combinations, even new elements and motifs, but the “lexicon” and the “grammar” were already in existence. Thus Mannerism and Baroque, the Rococo, were so many neologisms; even Gothic when it entered the canon in the early nineteenth century, was subjected to an ordering of its parts that corresponded in every way with the previous ordering of the classical Orders. This is why Neo-Classical and Gothic styles seem virtually interchangeable throughout the nineteenth century, in the work of, for example, Charles Barry or Schinkel. A common system of representation bound together all the styles of traditional architecture, one that easily adapted to shifts in compositional practice or ideological stance.

Modernism broke decisively with this system of architecture. Where all the historical styles no matter how different from each other ultimately spoke to each other within a grand scheme of historical taxonomy, Modernism proposed an end to speech about and through, history. Thus any historical allusion now is bound to be seen against, as it were, a “backdrop” of abstraction; it no longer partakes of a style in the system of which it takes on meaning. It has to be seen as an addition, a distinct motif, brought from the outside into a code of making and reading architecture that recognizes it as different, as foreign. Isolated from the context that originally gave it meaning, it takes on the characteristics of a sculptural attribute, a fragment, a “found-object” re-used from a distant past. This is true also even for those attempts at a holistic revival of architectural style; Modernism was also, as it never ceased to proclaim, a way of working aesthetically with new and different material conditions, of making and production. Together with the “nature of materials,” so the system of fabrication—socially, economically and practically—altered drastically in the Second Industrial Revolution. The *material* conditions for the making of style no longer existing, the very details of any revived version are reduced to the level of signs, or shapes. Venturi has recognized this in the patently cut-out character of the “Ionic” capital at Oberlin; at another, faintly ridiculous extreme, the “images” of Thomas Gordon Smith can never be anything other than cartoons of a long forgotten language. And if the insubstantial “reproduction” of images is, however perversely, celebrated for its own sake, then, even as in the first age of industrial reproductibility, the ascription of *kitsch* can hardly be avoided.

There was, of course, a tension, present within the modes of expression of the Modernist avant-garde from the beginning, between the purely abstract formalism of, for example De Stijl or some versions of Constructivism, and the more literal use of referential objects or motifs common to Dadaism and Surrealism. Where the former “worked on the

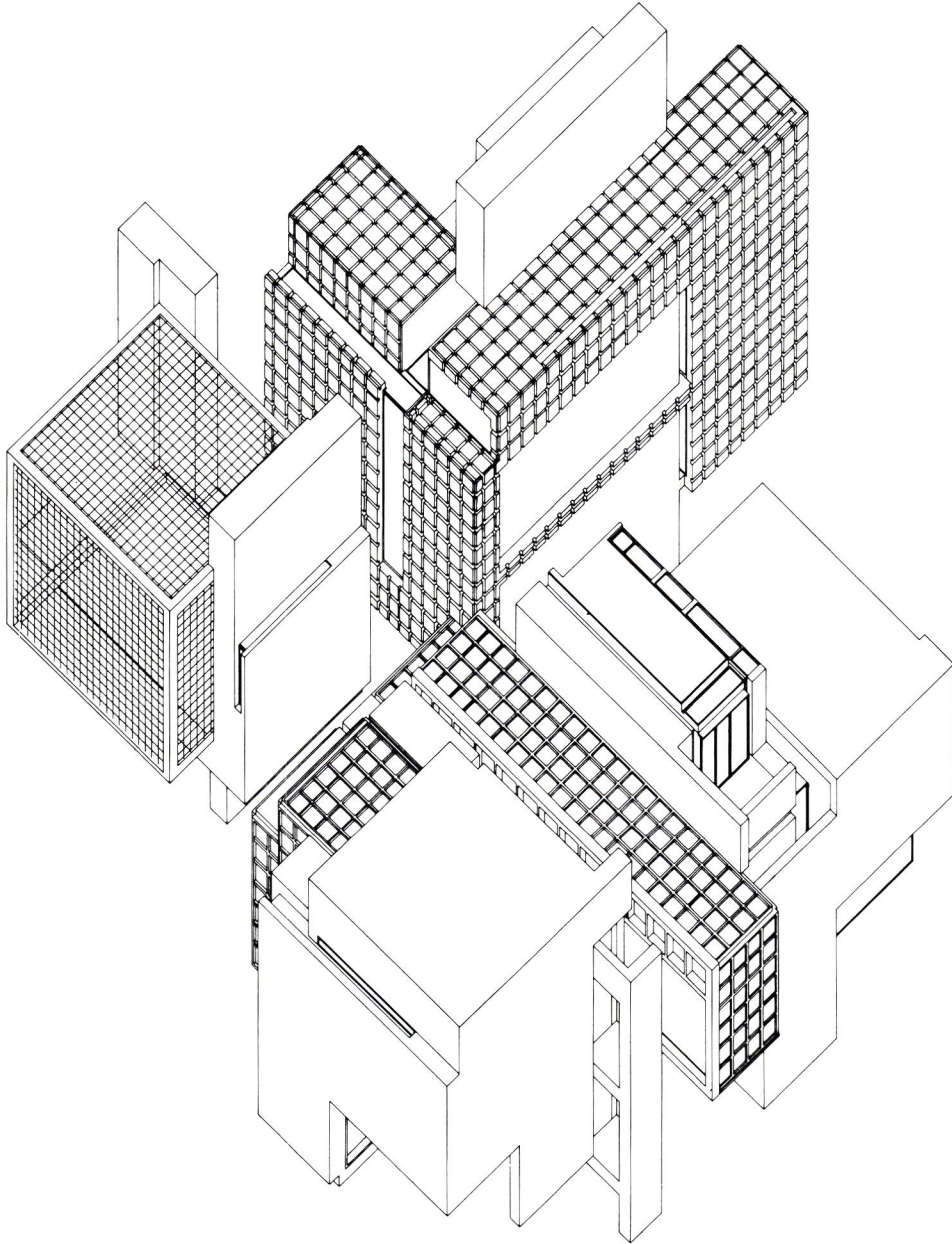
language” to provoke meaning by means of displacements, distortions, inversions—all the *devices* articulated by Formalist critics—the latter relied for its effect on the displaced nature of found objects, the transpositions that utilized realist images in dreamwork and artistic practice alike. Should we then see the displaced motifs of architectural history—the shattered pediments, the fragments of rustication, keystones, and capitals as so many surrealist objects? Are the realist allusions of the present simply a continuation of a thoroughly Modernist tradition? Again, it would seem that both conditions and intention are radically different. The surrealist, armed with the transgressional power of the unconscious and the instruments by which to work on the mind provided by the new psychoanalysis, set out to shock the world, to break old institutional forms, to insert the questions of uncertainty, chance, disruption against any affirmation of positive, solid reality. The Post-Modernists cannot be said to follow such a demanding and ascetic credo; concerned with softening, absorbing, and wrapping shock, their images may *look* “surrealist” but they have precisely the opposite function.

We cannot ignore then the pre-existent mode of seeing and formulating that is Modernist; but equally we cannot claim to have overcome historicity. As Manfredo Tafuri has remarked, although the recent attempts to establish typologies and modes of analysis that are “structuralist” *seem* to suspend history and temporality in favor of the timeless, the categorical, and the systematic, such an anti-historicism can easily, like that of the eighteenth century before, be itself historicized. The work of Michel Foucault is an example of thought which, while it continuously resists the grand schemes of historicism, nevertheless situates its “archeology” in a profoundly historicized matrix. The very perception of a difference between a pre-Modernist world and a post-Modernist one relies on a high degree of historical self-consciousness.

To dream of the restoration of a happy past, in the face of an empty present, has ever been the tendency of the modern avant-gardes. The utopias of Enlightenment, the rural arcadias of Rousseau, Fourier, and Morris, and the urban fantasies of the last hundred years, have all been set in a timeless world of mythical serenity, bathed in never setting sunlight. They have all sought to suspend history. In so doing they have at the same time refused any self-conscious historicity in their present; Walter Benjamin noted the similarity of these *returns* to a primal origin with the *futures* for which they provide the model. In each case they have returned to earth as the consumable dreams of the middle classes losing in the process any implied critical qualities they may have gained from their first confrontation with reality. Whether, in this era of disenchantment with the consumed effects of modern utopias, we try to remedy appearances with new and colorful wrappings or even dream yet again of a bonded, pre-industrial state in images of a city built of stone and inhabited by its builders, we are simply hastening this process of production and consumption. Neither the stage sets of a-historical pasts nor the reproduction of their ornaments will do more than “paper over the cracks.” History, taken as allusion or idealized content provides no solutions.

Anthony Vidler

6



From Structure to Subject: The Formation of an Architectural Language

Mario Gandelsonas

The Foundation of Language

The establishment of society can be seen as the establishment of order through conventions, or more specifically, the establishment of a language through symbolic codes.¹ Before order, before language, there exists a primal chaos where there are no rules for marrying, building, eating; in this chaos, which precedes society, there is only an infinite field of potential for manipulation of the individual and collective realms from the verbal to the sexual. The systematization and institutionalization of rules in these domains, the making of rules, involves at once a repression of chaos, of the amorphous, and an invention of social codes of a 'language' of kinship relations, a 'language' of myth, or a 'language' which expresses the spatial organization of a tribe.²

In its primitive stages, society, in order to become truly social, initially performs rituals and enacts sacrifices which, while they might seem to be chaotic acts that stand against any instinct toward the preservation of the species, and against the nature of society itself, nevertheless are in themselves creative and symbolic.³ Indeed sacrifice is to be seen as a constructive action: its victims become the first symbols of man's struggle against nature, of the formation of the first culture, and thereby of language. The symbols of sacrifice, and the symbolic representations of language have in common their systematic character. In the end, sacrifice, instead of giving rise to further violence, *represents* the violence of culture through a ritualized and symbolic act, thus exorcizing the urge for violence in fact, and articulating an order similar in every way to that of a language.⁴

Such a concept of sacrifice, founded in anthropological understanding, can be used not only to describe the initial establishment of a language or social practice, but also a situation where a new language or practice replaces an old one, where a new order is created to supersede a perceived anterior chaos: a humanist order against a religiously dominated one, a relativist vision in the face of humanism, and so on. In architecture, two moments can be isolated in history where the foundation of a new language was preceded by a kind of ritual sacrifice. The

establishment of a classical language and a theoretically organized practice of architecture in the Renaissance implied the death of the medieval architect-builder who, in Alberti's definition, "worked with his hands," in favor of the new rational architect who worked "with his mind."⁵ Similarly, at the beginning of this century, the establishment of modern architecture against nineteenth century eclecticism, the foundation of an architecture which "had nothing to do with the styles," in Le Corbusier's terms, sacrificed stylistic variety to a high vision of abstraction.⁶

In both circumstances the aim was to produce a systematic organization of the codes of architectural practice, to define an apparently finite and stable number of forms and their correlated meaning within a closed system; that is, to create the illusion of a language. But whereas in classicism a fully constituted language in this sense can be observed in the way in which the elements of antiquity, deployed in an entirely new way, sustained a grammatical framework, in modernism the linguistic organization was essentially illusory. For while modern architecture apparently promoted a new symbolic organization, it did not create the conditions for its systematic development. Functionalism, the dictum "form follows function," said much about the origin of signs but little about their nature; it proposed new 'words' but no rules for their combination, no grammatical framework for their use. Where the rules of the language were finite, those of functionalism were in constant flux, varying in response to changing needs, changing aesthetic preference, and individual interpretations. Equally, where the traditional nature of the 'sign' was a shape that related in a conventional way to a meaning, functionalism implied a natural, ideally transparent, and motivated relation between the expression and the content of its signs, an evident utopia in the face of the socially determined nature of functionalism itself.

Ultimately, the 'functionalist' sign differed little from its classical counterpart; shapes were derived not from function itself, but from other disciplinary references—from machine technology and Cubist aesthetics—in order to suggest a functional meaning. Such a relativistic approach could neither establish a finite vocabulary nor its grammar

1 (frontispiece) House X. Peter Eisenman, 1975–1977. Axonometric drawing.

8 and syntax—the necessary components of a specific architectural language.

The understanding of the limitations of functionalism has led, in the last decade, to a strong reaction against modern architecture and its aspirations toward an architectural language. This reaction has taken two entirely opposed forms, both of which propose an extension of the traditional conceptions of language or, in other terms, of the traditional modes of generating meaning in architecture. The first, in its most extreme form characterized by the theory and practice of Robert Venturi, advocates a reinstatement of a multivalent and eclectic language which superficially is not unlike that constituted by the ‘styles’ of the nineteenth century. This position stresses the generation of signs themselves, understands in a critical way the nature of conventional meanings, and relishes the complexity of a plurality of meanings however organized in the whole.

The second reaction, most clearly represented by the work of Peter Eisenman, tries to address the more basic questions of language, the grammatical questions.⁷ What are the limits, qualitatively and quantitatively, to the lexicon of architectural signs; what makes certain configurations architectural; which shapes can or cannot be used? And more important, how should they be articulated? The open condition in which there exists no syntactic criteria for the language and no definitions of its formal structure is, in the theory and practice of Eisenman, challenged by a rigorous assessment of the failure of modernism to generate its own coherent terms. Where in Venturi we find a reaction against the singular nature of the architectural sign (classical or modernist) in order to see it as a more complex entity, but without much concern for the underlying structure of language, in Eisenman we find a reaction against the architectural sign itself, and in particular the idea of the meaning of the sign, in order to concentrate on the generation of a linguistic structure. In the process of establishing this structure Eisenman sacrifices not only functionalism, but humanism itself, attempting to create an entirely other order, a new language.⁸

The Concept of Structure

The model of language adopted by Eisenman is, as is well known, structuralist: it derives from his personal reading of the theories of Chomsky⁹ and, as we have noted previously, such a model allows him to generate systems of relations among architectural forms hitherto precluded by the classical or modernist canon. The legitimacy of applying a linguistic model which was originally developed to explain creativity in language (the ability of a speaker to create an infinite number of sentences) to architecture may be demonstrated in two ways. First it may be seen as a natural result of architecture’s concern with formal and semantic organization, that is with the arrangement of forms and meanings, and second it may be related to the convention that has permitted generations of architectural theorists, from Alberti to Le Corbusier, to refer to the ‘language’ of an architecture and utilize grammatical and rhetorical categories in turn to supply terms of structure and meaning to their art.

The specific adoption of Chomsky’s model of language, however, allows Eisenman to go beyond any previously established linguistic ‘analogy’. It first and foremost proposes on behalf of the architect a *competence* or knowledge of his object, ‘architecture’. Then it clearly distinguishes between a *deep* (conceptual) and a *surface* (perceptual) structure for the language, where, as opposed to the functionalist ideal, deep and surface structure do not necessarily coincide or become transparent to each other. Finally it suggests an equivalence of ‘deep structure’ and ‘syntax’ as a basis for a formal conception of architecture that reacts against the perceptual, relativistic realm of conventional meanings.

Eisenman’s linguistic structuralism is in these terms an attempt to criticize the generally held notions of ‘meaning’ in architecture, to make the definition of architecture *as* language stand against the evident lack of rigor in present theoretical discourse, against the purely subjective and non-measurable aspects of architecture. Accordingly he is initially drawn to concentrate his attention on the only *objective* material provided by architecture, that is *form* itself. Considering form in its syntactic capacity, Eisen-

man sees it to be ordered according to specific laws internal to architecture and not derived from notions outside itself.

Traditionally, meaning in architecture was delivered by means of a process which moved from an understanding of the form toward an understanding of the expected use of the form. Eisenman, in his anti-functionalism, attempts to enclose all meaning within the form, so that the meaning becomes intransitive. In such a condition any meaning coming out of the form has to be reincorporated within that form; where the semantics of use are denied, forms are no longer a “means toward an end,” a representation of something, but an end in themselves. They constitute part of a formal domain, structured according to finite and specific rules, prescribing particular lines of action. In order to understand Eisenman’s particular conception of syntactic structure we must first analyze the nature of the architectural sign, that is, the specific relation between form and meaning as conceived by classical and modern architecture. Since Alberti, the sign ‘door’ has been recognized as a distinct configuration within a larger system of shapes—a particular formal solution to opening a vertical plane between two spaces, permitting both their separation and connection. Signs like this one generally imply the coupling of an expression with a content. The expression of this content then characterizes the sign’s form. In this case the content is the system of social actions, such as movement from one space to another. Both the expression (form) and the content (the action) fuse to generate binary oppositions: door/wall; present place/future place; separation/connection; stasis/passage. The sign ‘door’, like other signs, is never an isolated entity. It becomes a sign in the context of codes, in opposition to other signs which are also part of the larger system. Doors then acquire their meaning of actual passage within a context of a code of openings, through their opposition to windows, for instance, which represent only visual passage. Staircases, which represent vertical passage, are seen in opposition to the horizontal passage suggested by doors and windows.¹⁰ In architecture a door becomes a sign as the provisional result of coding rules, which establish *transitory* relationships between elements of expres-

sion and elements of content.¹¹ However the analogy of architecture as language is imprecise. The conventions of a language are rigid and they are accepted as such. In architecture rules are *transitory* and not mandatory. Architectural signs are different from the linguistic signs because they are not socially accepted facts. For example, in certain periods of architecture one finds distinct differences between doors and windows, while in other periods these differences disappear. Or, one finds the same expression fusing with different content at different times: the Greek cross plan is both church and house (Villa Rotunda); or the same content fusing with different expression: the idea of house is expressed by both the Palladian and the Corbusian villa. However, such a description does not completely define the architectural sign since the actual and virtual prescriptions which determine the shape of the wall, the door, the spaces are not considered. The sign is dependent not only on pre-linguistic conditions such as gravity or the necessary size of the door, but also on *general linguistic conditions* such as opposition of vertical and horizontal, of opening and barrier, etc. There are also more *specific formal conditions*. In classical architecture the door could exist as an opening in the wall; it could be square or round; it could emphasize the vertical or the horizontal. Similarly the top of a door could be square or round. These options articulated a formal paradigm which not only allowed the recognition of the conventional shape of a door—the triangular Mayan doors would seem an anomaly—but also provided the potential for a system of contrasts and hierarchies—e.g. central versus lateral doors—or a system of rhythmic differences—e.g. the organization of alternation of round/square. These are the conditions not only inherent to content as a system of actions but also to language itself. Therefore the expression of the *architectural sign* requires the definition of a *formal coding system*.

However in architecture the formal system has never been defined in a rigorous and exhaustive way, as for example has the formal system in music. Architects have always worked with fragments of systems rather than with a complete language. The logic of the system of meanings and functions generally imposed itself on the

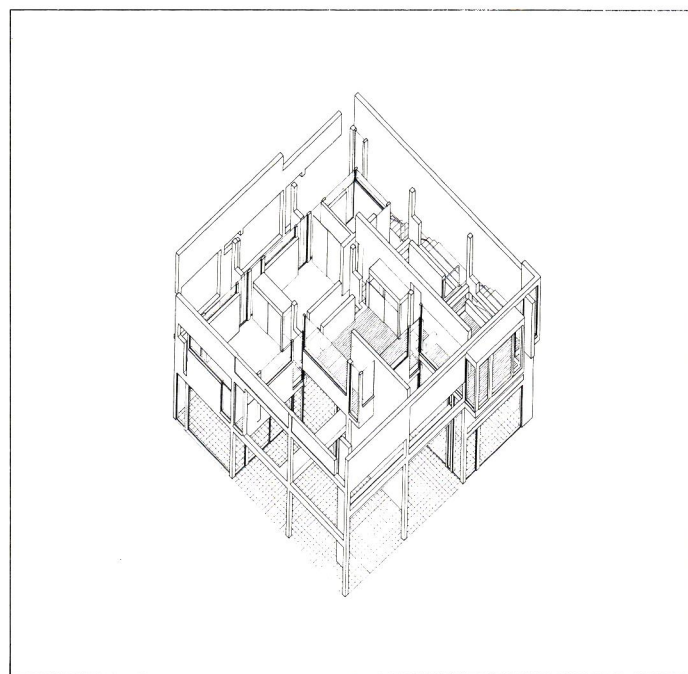
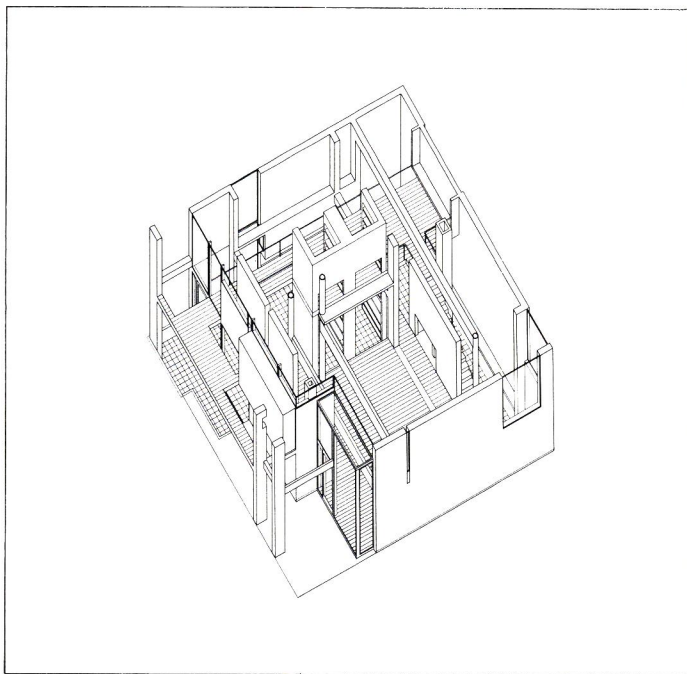
2 House 1. Peter Eisenman, 1967–1968. Axonometric drawing.

3 House II. Peter Eisenman, 1969–1970. Axonometric drawing.

4 House III. Peter Eisenman, 1969–1971. Axonometric drawing.

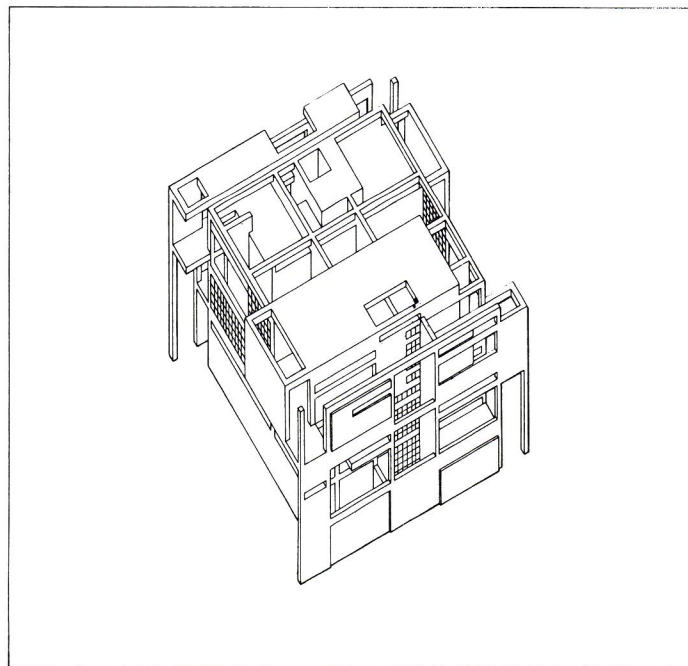
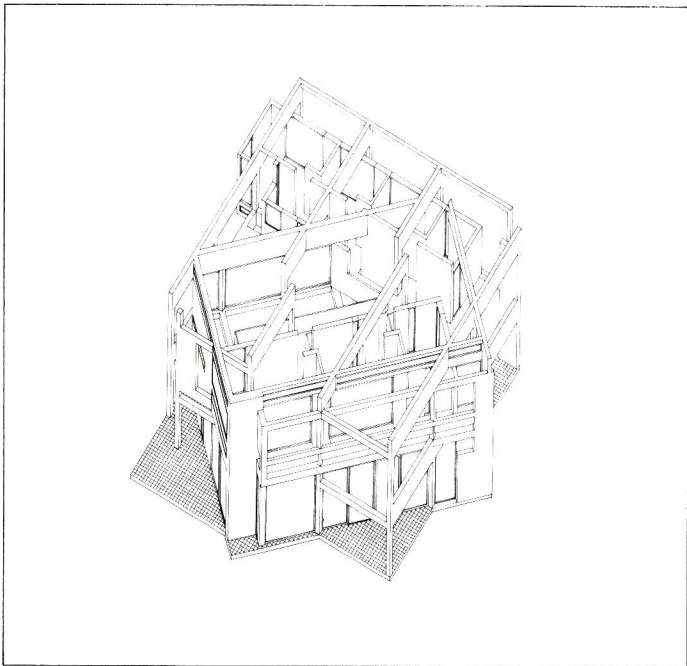
5 House IV. Peter Eisenman, 1971. Axonometric drawing.

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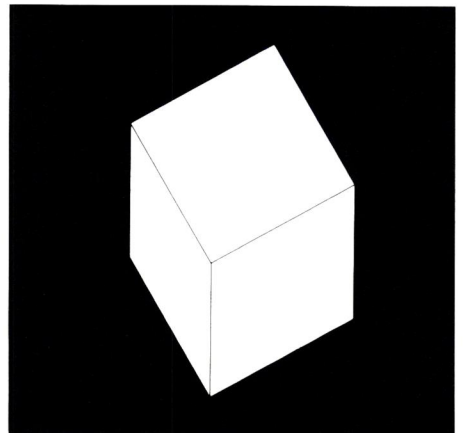
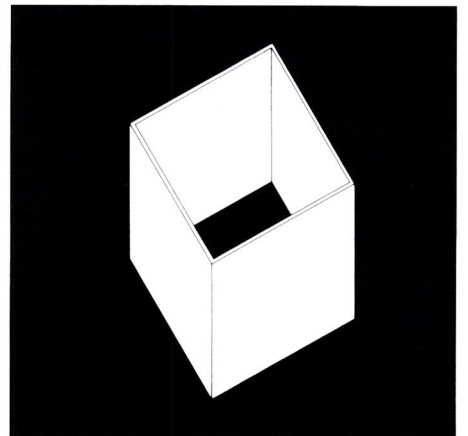
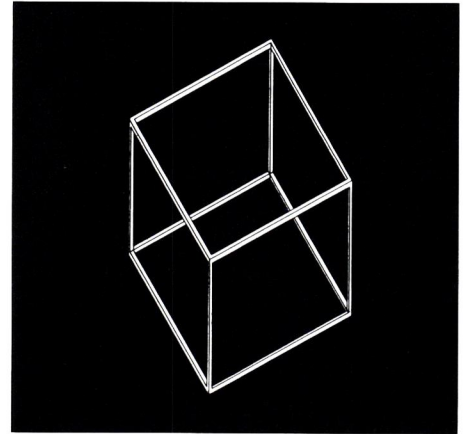
formal system and in so doing provided only the illusion of an explanation or a theory. Thus, a reading of functions seems to suggest that the forms are a product of function; but in fact this is not the case. Functional logic has a quality of inexorable presence since functional needs, worldly or symbolic, are the original impetus of architecture. For example, a house is supposed to suggest and allow certain uses, which are systematically structured according to oppositions and sequences. A house is not just a place where one opens a door, enters, and remains. It is a system and a sequence of elements that provide a fine gradation of public, semi-public, and private spaces, separated and connected in sequences which go from purely public—the entrance door—to purely private. The oppositions public/private, interior/exterior, and staying/moving, and the articulation of a sequence to configure these within a functional logic established by social and cultural conventions, constitute the system that in most times provided the logic for architectural form. As a result there has hardly ever been in classical or modern architecture, a formal system in its own terms—as a true language demands. And the feeling of unity transmitted by previous architectural buildings is an illusion produced by a unity of materials or building techniques rather than the conceptual unity which we find in language systems. For instance, one system interrelates walls and columns; another system differing openings—doors, windows, or staircases; a third system proportions; a fourth system rhythms; a fifth the vertical and horizontal organizations; etc. And these partial systems are rarely articulated within an overall system, despite the professed acceptance of the classical and modern dogmas of unity.

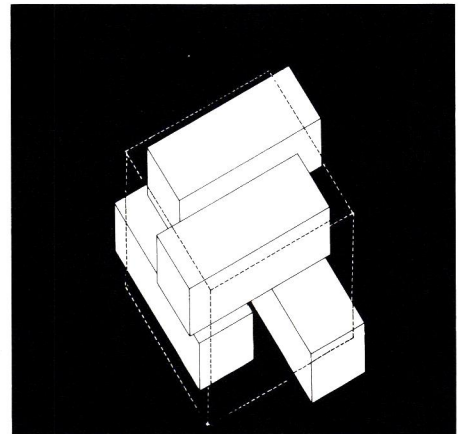
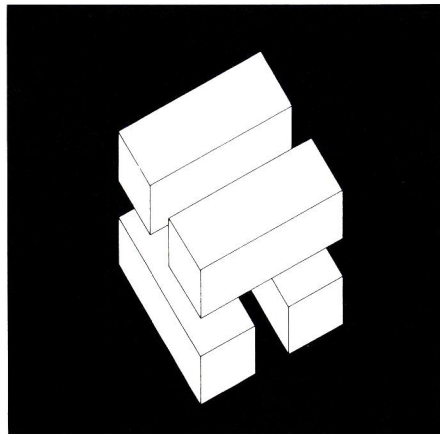
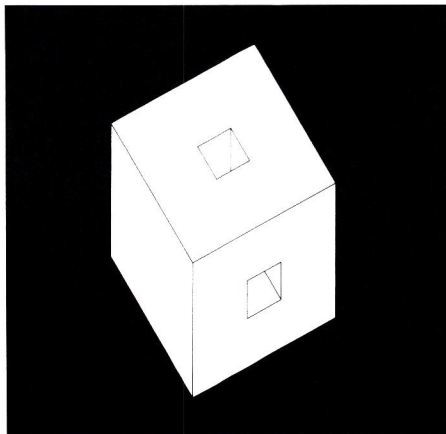
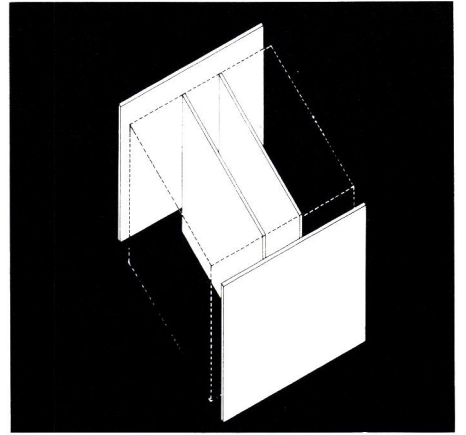
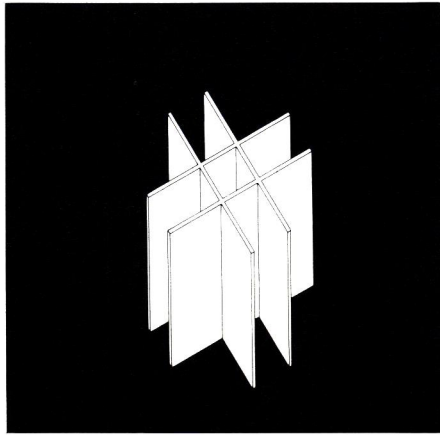
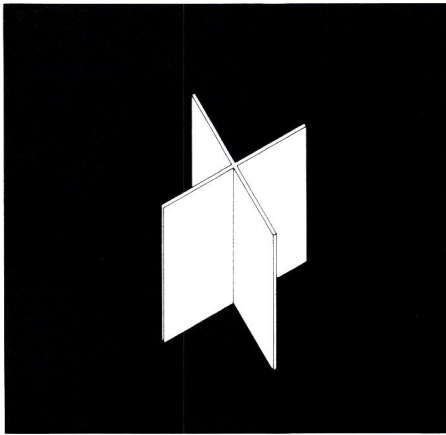
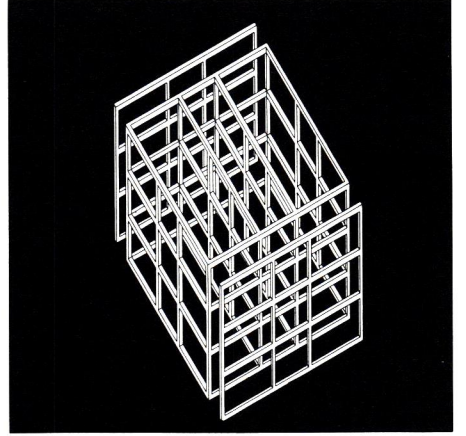
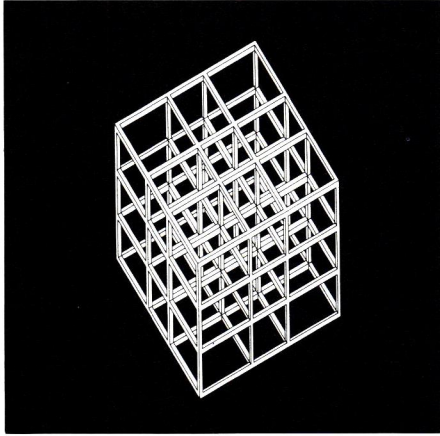
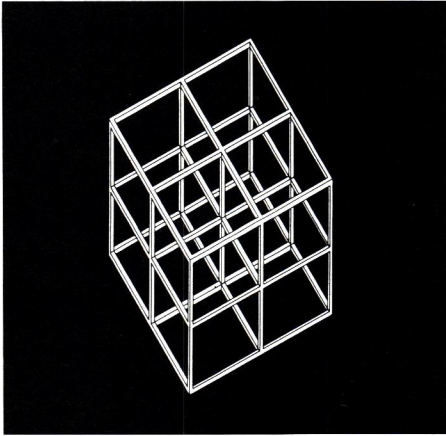
In his first four houses (figs. 2–5) Peter Eisenman attempted to recapture the idea of unity embodied in the first theoretical discourses of both classical and modern architecture, those of both Alberti and Le Corbusier. He attempted to produce this unity with a *totally structured formal system*. In order to do this he worked with form as an autonomous entity, i.e., architecture as ‘spatial music’. In doing so he attempted to present his architecture as devoid of meaning, as pure expression. However, the attempt to eliminate meaning completely is ultimately an

impossible task—even in music, an art form which initially seems to be removed from semantic considerations. For in music a sound, when considered in the context of a musical system, denotes itself. It also denotes a position opposed to other positions in the system. This opposition is not sufficient to create a sign, but it does denote a series of possible moves and in some way stands for them. It announces a foreseeable musical situation, and a potential solution.¹² This characteristic allows us to consider sound as syntactic signs and thus to modify the notion that sounds in music are not a language because they do not convey meanings, because music is pure expression without content. Rather sounds *can* be considered signs because a single sound can be seen as the expression of a content, one sound in a series of sounds, suggesting other possible simultaneous sounds and predicting possible sequences of development. In this context music can be considered a language. In these houses Eisenman seems to posit that something similar would occur in architecture if the normal or regular architectural sign could be reduced to a pure syntactic sign.

The syntactic system in the first houses (fig. 6), then, is initially defined as a structure of syntactic signs seen as an interplay of empty positions and binary oppositions. There are two differences that distinguish these signs from classical ones. Traditionally the architectural sign is an *entity*—a meaning or function which belongs to a different realm: conceptual or social for someone. In Houses I and IV one confronts signs—shapes—which do not refer to ‘something else’ or to someone but only to other shapes. Second, while the sign is traditionally a dual entity that relates a form to a meaning, or an expression to a content, the syntactic signs in Houses I to IV are signals, that is, singular entities which become signs only through their relationship to other signals.¹³ For example, a square is a shape which only becomes a sign when seen in relationship to another square or to a circle—the sign value then being equal or different. These signals have no value or syntactic meaning in themselves; their value is purely relational. The shape-signals thus acquire a syntactic meaning only when they occupy a position within the formal system.

- 12 In Eisenman's architecture the process of design is a process of research into formal structures and shapes which do not exist prior to the design. At the beginning there is an idea that is both formal and conceptual, and the design becomes an obsessive search for the corresponding shape. The 'idea' is the organizing force; it is the energy which determines the design of a structure of empty positions which will be occupied by shapes. In each of the stages of this process in which the goal is to arrive at a set of shapes, every shape acquires first a syntactic meaning in contrast to other shapes that may or may not be present in the final design. The shapes that are actually present in the design can be assigned two different kinds of meaning, which represent two conditions of architectural language. Unlike the formation of traditional signs which are coupled with actual or virtual functions and thus read as doors or rooms, they are not generated from any functional logic, and so in order to become architectural, that is, to avoid being merely sculptural, they must postulate an alternative syntactic system which still serves as a support for such functional meaning. More important, Eisenman's syntactic system incorporates the *capacity to overcome the functional meaning* so as to go beyond that meaning to suggest intrinsic architectural notions. At every stage there are rules that permit the selection of what can be called correct configurations and the discarding of the inappropriate ones. 'Correct' in his terms is not to deal with beauty or meaning. Eisenman selects not only those shapes that are most consistent with the structure but also the ones which transmit in the most direct way the idea that he is trying to develop through the house. The aim of the process is to find a law, a general rule that will combine each of the partial moves or stages into a continuous uninterrupted sequence explanatory of the process from simple beginning to a complex end. *This law of development is formal and should be independent of any functional interpretation*, or in other terms, the functional meanings are never contained in explanatory notions. With this approach design is concerned with syntax, and not with semantics, which is assumed to be known and which is seen as just the cultural, conventional attribution of functions to forms.





14 *The Subject of Architecture*

But the Chomskian notion of syntax that allows Eisenman to deny functional meanings and more generally the semantic domain is in no way a purely internal notion of a complete and self-referential structure. As opposed to the classical concept of syntax which focuses on the *structure* of language itself Chomsky's model focuses on the *subject's knowledge* (intuition) of the structure of language and its capacity to generate infinite numbers of sentences. The introduction of the *subject* into linguistic theory in this way as an explanation for language generation changes completely the structuralist view of language which is seen no more as a static inventory or lexicon but rather as a productive capacity of the speaking subject.

When such a model is turned toward architecture, it immediately becomes clear that despite the traditional concentration on the *object* and its internal relations in theory and practice, there has emerged at least since the eighteenth century a more or less conscious understanding of the implications and place of the *subject*. While never mentioned as such, and endowed with different names—reason, intuition, genius, consciousness, and so on—this 'latent subject' has in its different forms been used in aesthetics to define the most important general principle—*beauty*—and the different stages in the process of architectural composition by which beauty is to be achieved. Thus, in his *Eléments et Théorie de l'Architecture*, summarizing a century and a half of theoretical development, Julien Guadet defined beauty as a direct relation to the question of the conscious subject: "Beauty is the splendor of the truth. Art is the means given to a man to produce beauty; art is thus the pursuit of beauty in the truth and by the truth. In the arts of imitation, truth is nature: in the arts of creation, in architecture most of all, truth is less easily defined: nevertheless for me I would translate it by one word: consciousness. If for the painter and the sculptor truth is in the external world, for us it resides within ourselves."¹⁴ The subject as origin and determinant of the architectural object is omnipresent in nineteenth century doctrine—in the development of the Romantic movement's insistence on individual feeling. Beauty, one of the general principles of

architecture, is defined as the "splendor of truth," which in architecture is not understood as in the other arts as "imitation of nature," but rather as the consciousness of the subject who creates and views. But the subject, as embodied in the notion of the designing architect, is also implied in the very notion of *composition*, since the architectural idea is itself generated by the subject's intuition—"the true genesis of the artistic idea"—as Guadet continues: "Reasoning and criticism, of which I pretend to make no abstraction, will come in their turn, in order to control your conception; because, after you have imagined you must know how to be the proper judge of your imagination." Thus the subject is, in classical theory, articulated systematically (in the theory of beauty) and genetically (through composition) within the organizational structure as a whole. Beyond this, of course, an allusion to the subject is always implicit in any definition of the object of architecture as a technical practice; whenever we note an appeal to "intuition," "reason," "invention" in architectural treatises, the subject is always present.

In classical architecture, from the Renaissance on, the definition of both subject and object is allowed for by the idea of *representation* (fig. 7): thus geometrical perspective permits 'reality' to be seen as if through a window (Alberti) "where an imaginary piece of glass combining the qualities of firmness and planeness with that of transparency . . . operates . . . as a genuine projection plane."¹⁵ Representation is itself complemented by the notion of the sign—something *representing* something else for *someone*—and it is these two realms that work to propose a specific place for the subject. Together perspective and sign organize the visual and verbal domains so that the subject may be developed in an imaginary dimension at the point of a visual pyramid intersected by the projection plane.

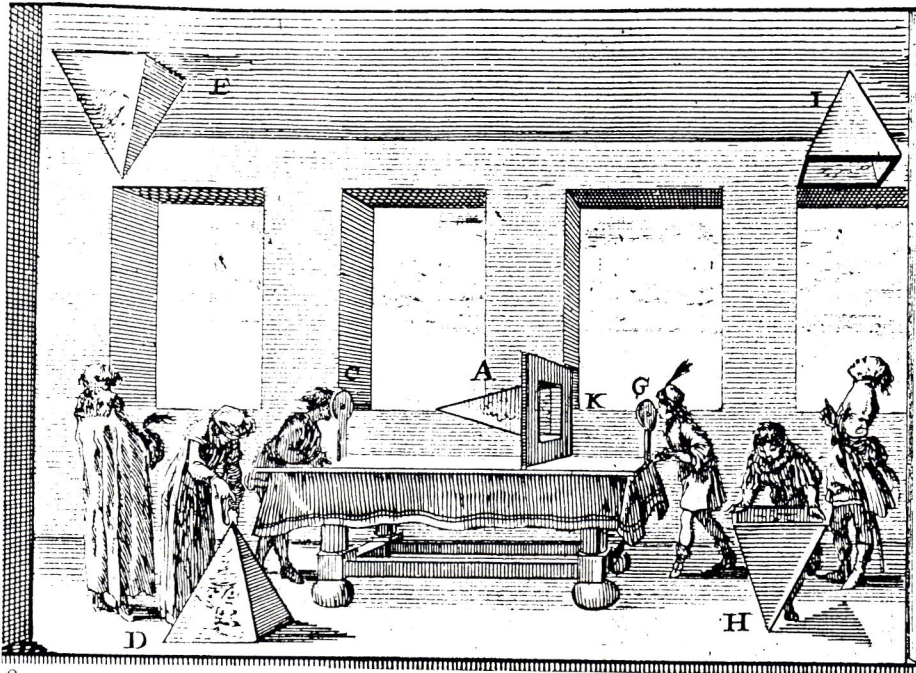
But while in painting reality is represented through specific distortions of the two dimensional image (figs. 8, 9) in architecture representation is, so to speak, doubled. For architecture provides the real context where representation—theatrical or painterly—is made possible, is realized; at the same time it is itself a representational



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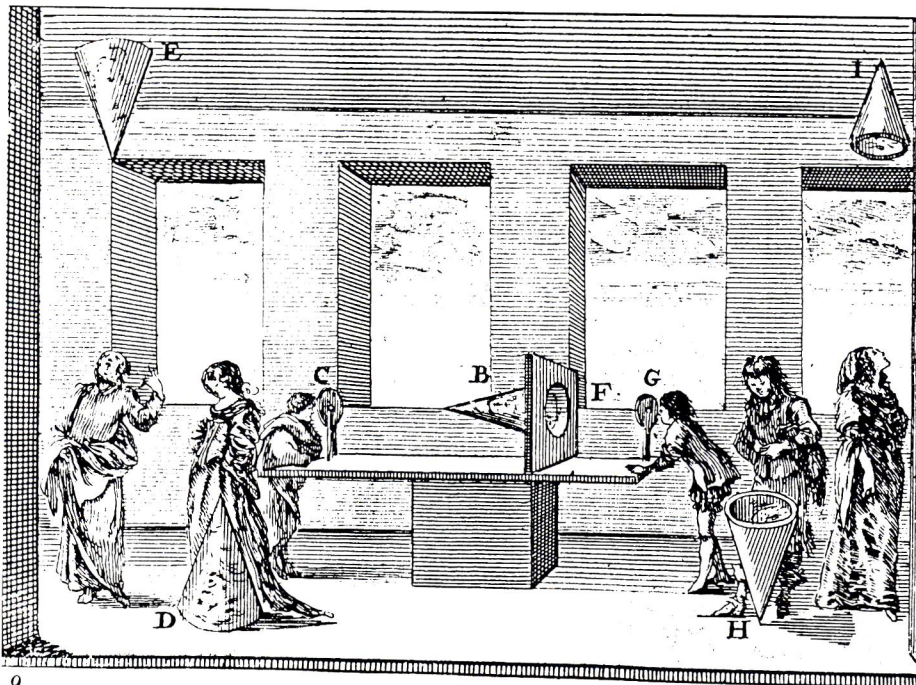
7 Albrecht Durer, Drawing a reclining woman. Engraving 226, c. 1525.

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8

8, 9 Le Père Du Breuil, Cabinets d'Anamorphoses Pyramidales et Coniques, 1649.



9

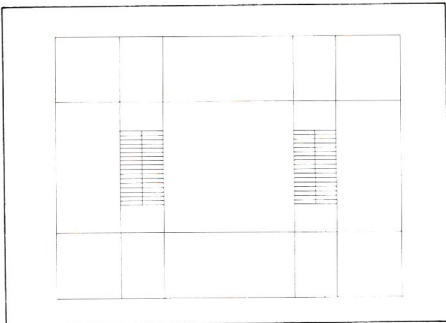
10–20 Rudolph Wittkower's
diagrammatic plans of eleven
Palladian villas.

10 Villa Thiene at Cicogna.
11 Villa Badoer at Fratta, Polesine.
12 Villa Pisani at Montagnana.
13 Villa Pisani at Bagnolo.

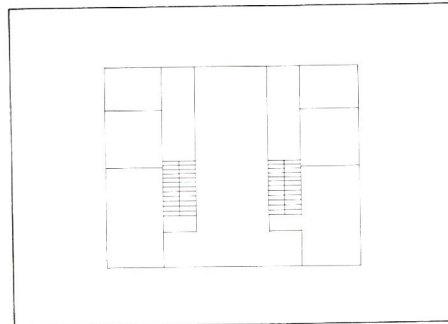
14 Villa Sarego at Miega.
15 Villa Zeno at Cessalto.
16 Villa Emo at Fanzolo.
17 Villa Capra ("La Rotonda")

18 Villa Poianna Maggiore.
19 Villa Cornaro at Piombino Dese.
20 Villa Foscari ("La Malcontenta").
21 Geometrical pattern of Palladio's
villas.

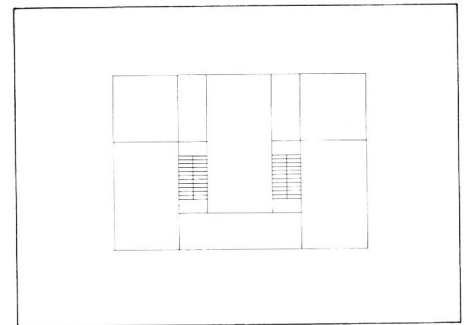
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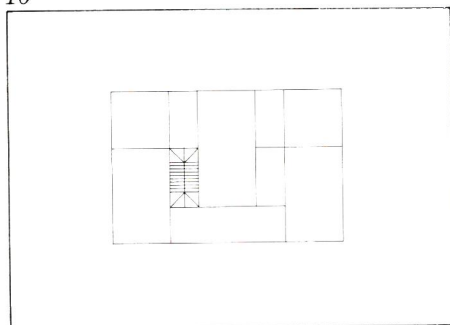
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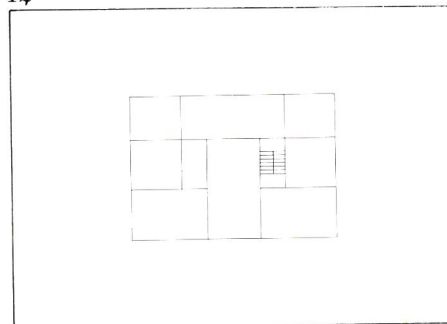
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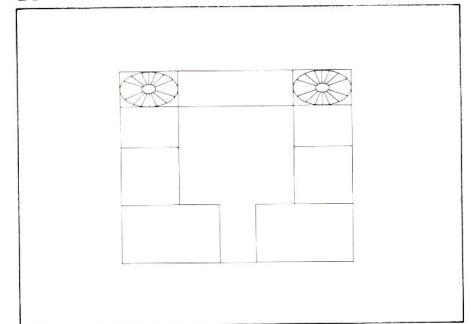
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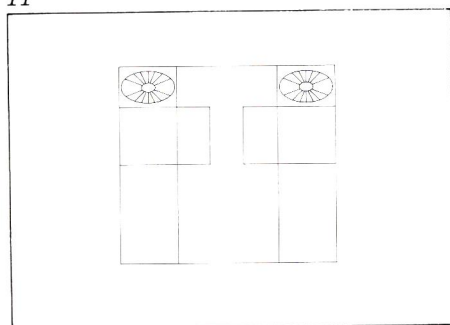
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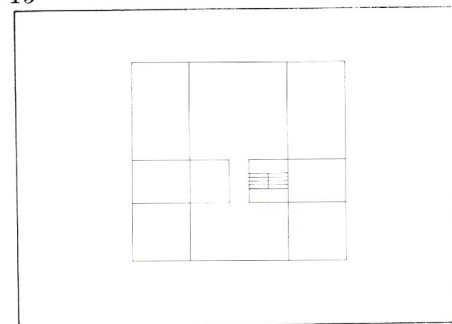
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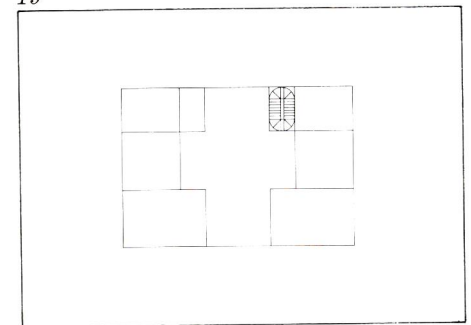
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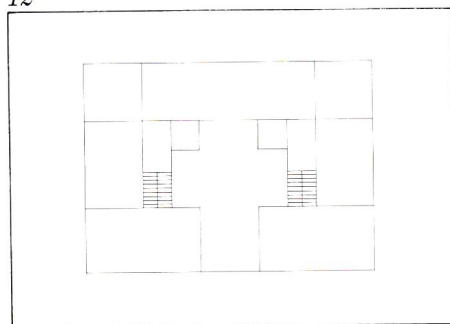
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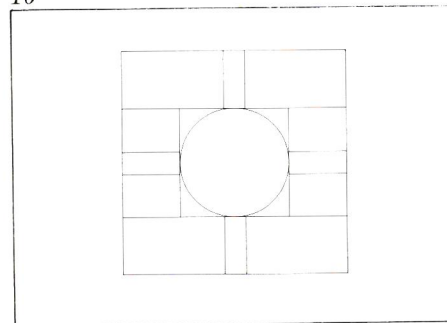
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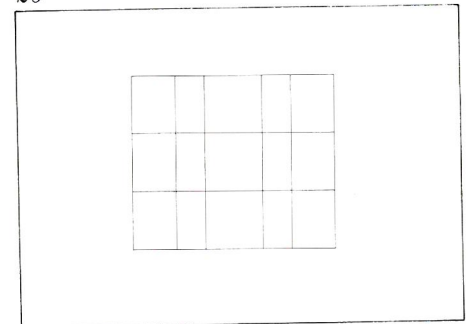
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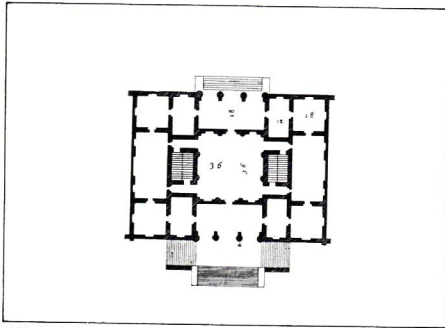
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22-32 Actual plans of Andrea Palladio's same eleven villas.

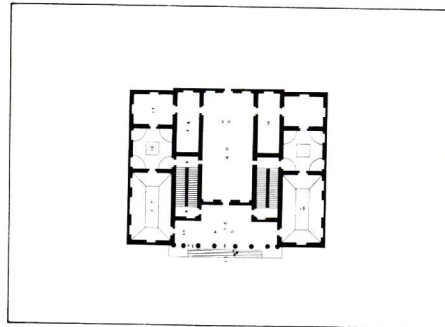
- 22 Villa Thiene at Cicogna.
- 23 Villa Badoer at Fratta, Polesine.
- 24 Villa Pisani at Montagnana.
- 25 Villa Pisani at Bagnolo.

- 26 Villa Sarego at Miega.
- 27 Villa Zenò at Cessalto.
- 28 Villa Emo at Fanzolo.
- 29 Villa Capra ("La Rotonda").

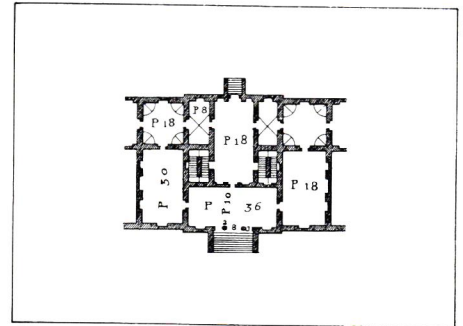
- 30 Villa Poiana Maggiore.
- 31 Villa Cornaro at Piombino Dese.
- 32 Villa Foscari ("La Malcontenta").
- 33 Geometrical pattern of Palladio's villas.



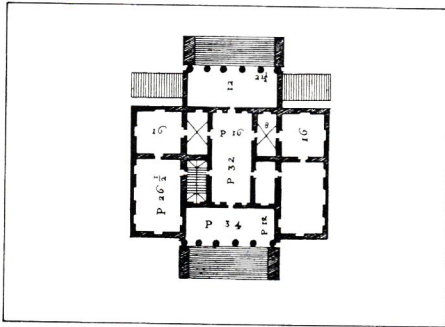
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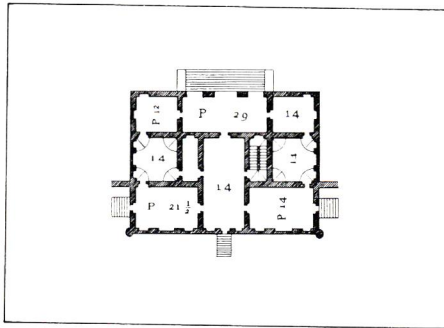
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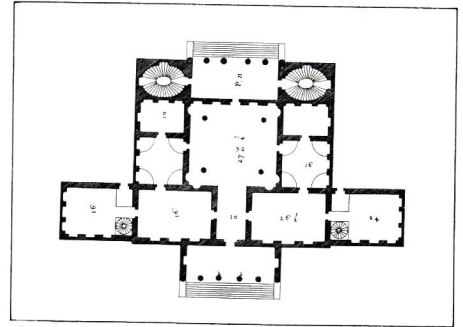
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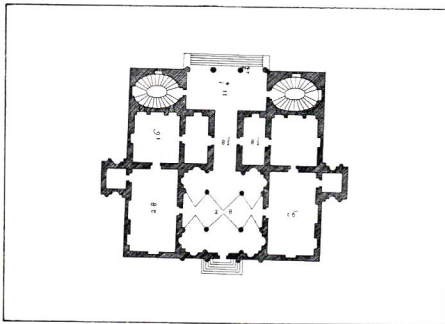
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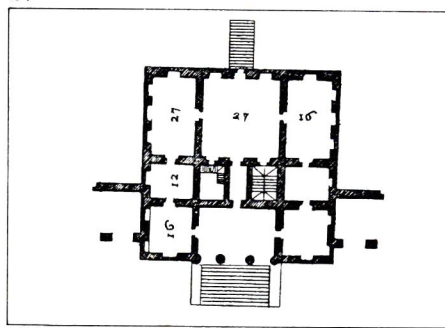
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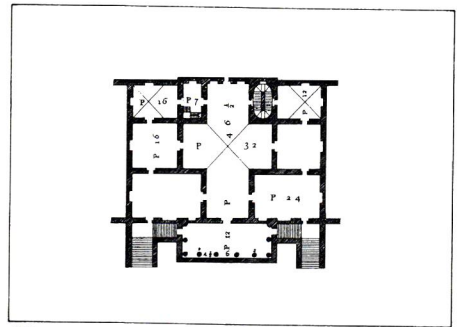
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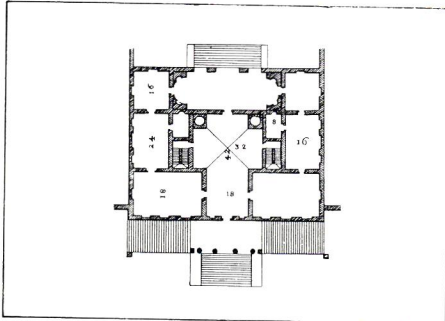
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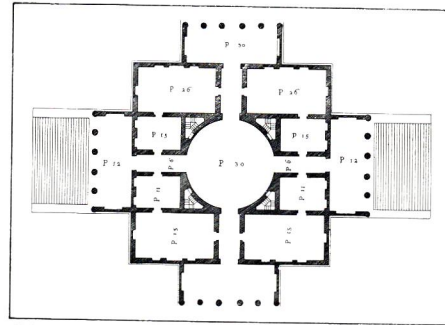
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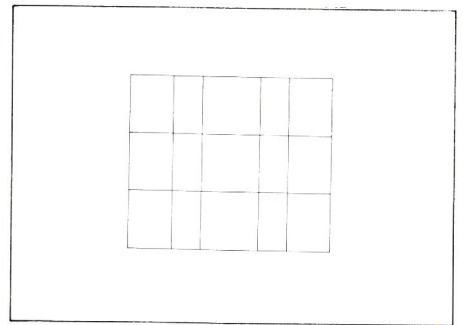
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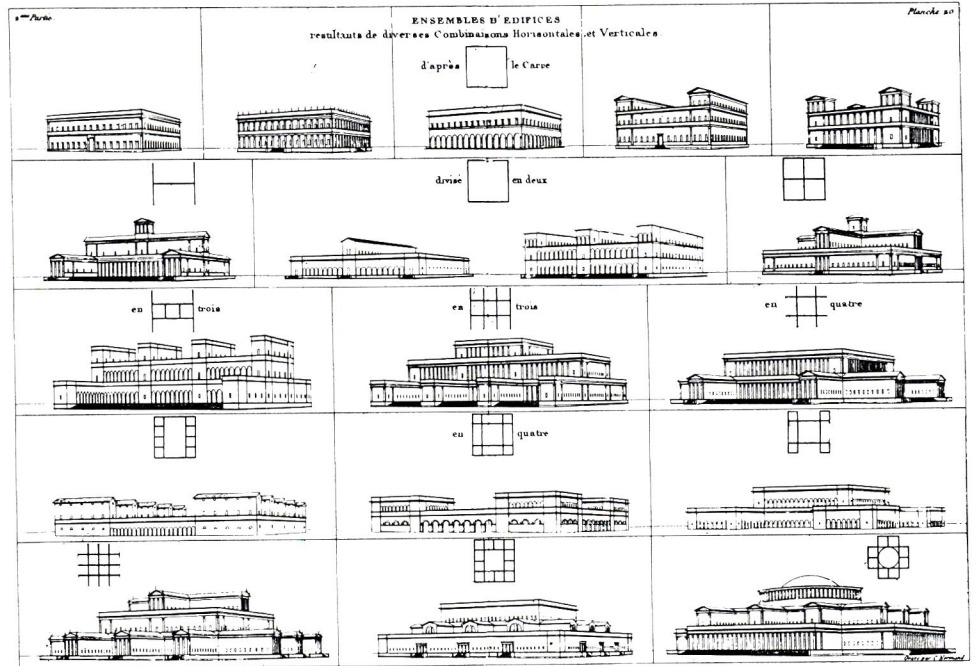
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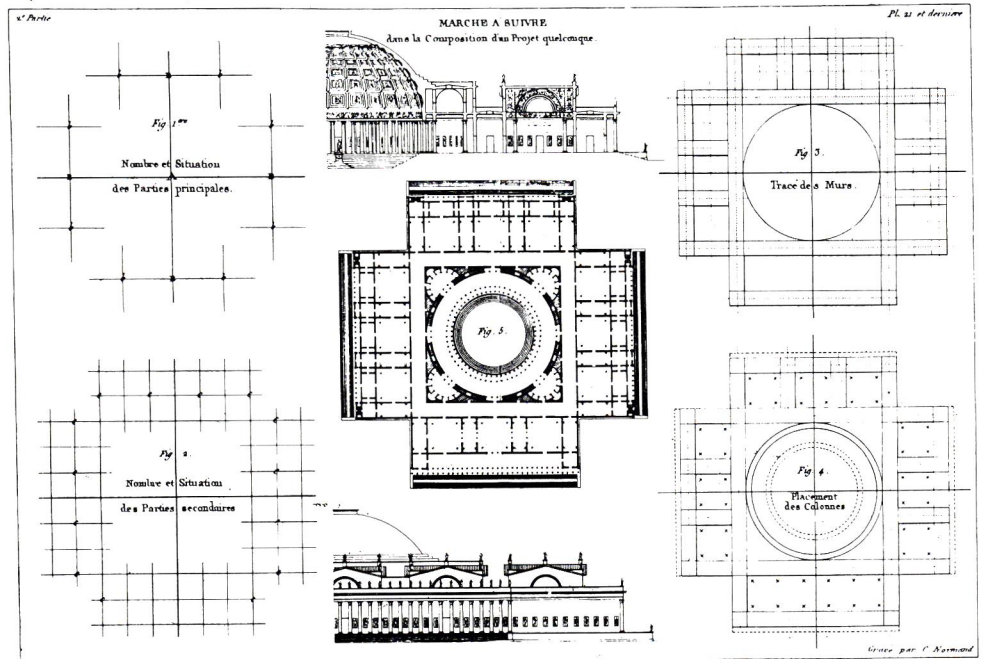
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18 34 Combinations of elements:
buildings resulting from various
combinations of horizontal and
vertical elements. J. N. L. Durand,
1809.

35 Combinations of elements:
continuous walkway. J. N. L.
Durand, 1809.



34



35

art. For Alberti, it represents the underlying structure of nature mediated by musical proportional intervals and the natural processes of creation.¹⁶ The notion of representation, however, presupposes a transparent, neutral medium that permits the referent, what is referred to, to shine through clearly. When the medium is a painting or a building this transparency is always clouded by the interjection of the medium itself. The medium is ever substituting itself for the referent, excluding the real, communicated message in favor of the imaginary, the fictive world inside the medium. In classical architecture, and especially in the period from Palladio to Durand, this concentration on the medium tends to take over, acting to displace interest from the building in its relation to the exterior world (which it represents) toward the internal organization of the object itself. And at the point when this *object* (architecture) becomes clearly, and almost autonomously, defined in its systematic internal, formal relations then does the *subject* take on a clear configuration. In linguistic terms the definition of an *organization* as a normative system, which in architecture would be the constitutive rules of the *object*, implies at the same time its *subject*.¹⁷ Two examples, taken from the classical tradition but representing opposed positions with respect to the question of the organization of building and its process of design, will serve to clarify this point. On the one hand there is Palladio who, while paying homage to the Albertian idea of architecture representing nature, does so only after having described the orders in terms of their systematic numerical properties; the representational relationships embodied in their genetic description (the representation for example of the male or female body) are not in fact made explicit. In Palladio (figs. 10–33), beauty is no longer seen in terms of the linkage between building forms and nature through the mediation of music, but rather as an integral part of the buildings themselves. On the other hand, three centuries later, there is Durand, who, in taking this concentration on the object even further—to its ‘logical’ conclusion—develops an entirely different notion of architectural organization. In Durand (figs. 34, 35) the very notion of representation itself, together with all related notions such as the properties of the orders, is criticized and abandoned. Design for Durand

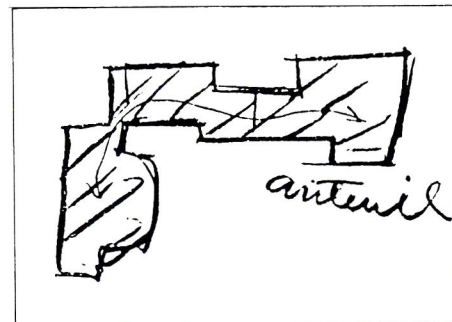
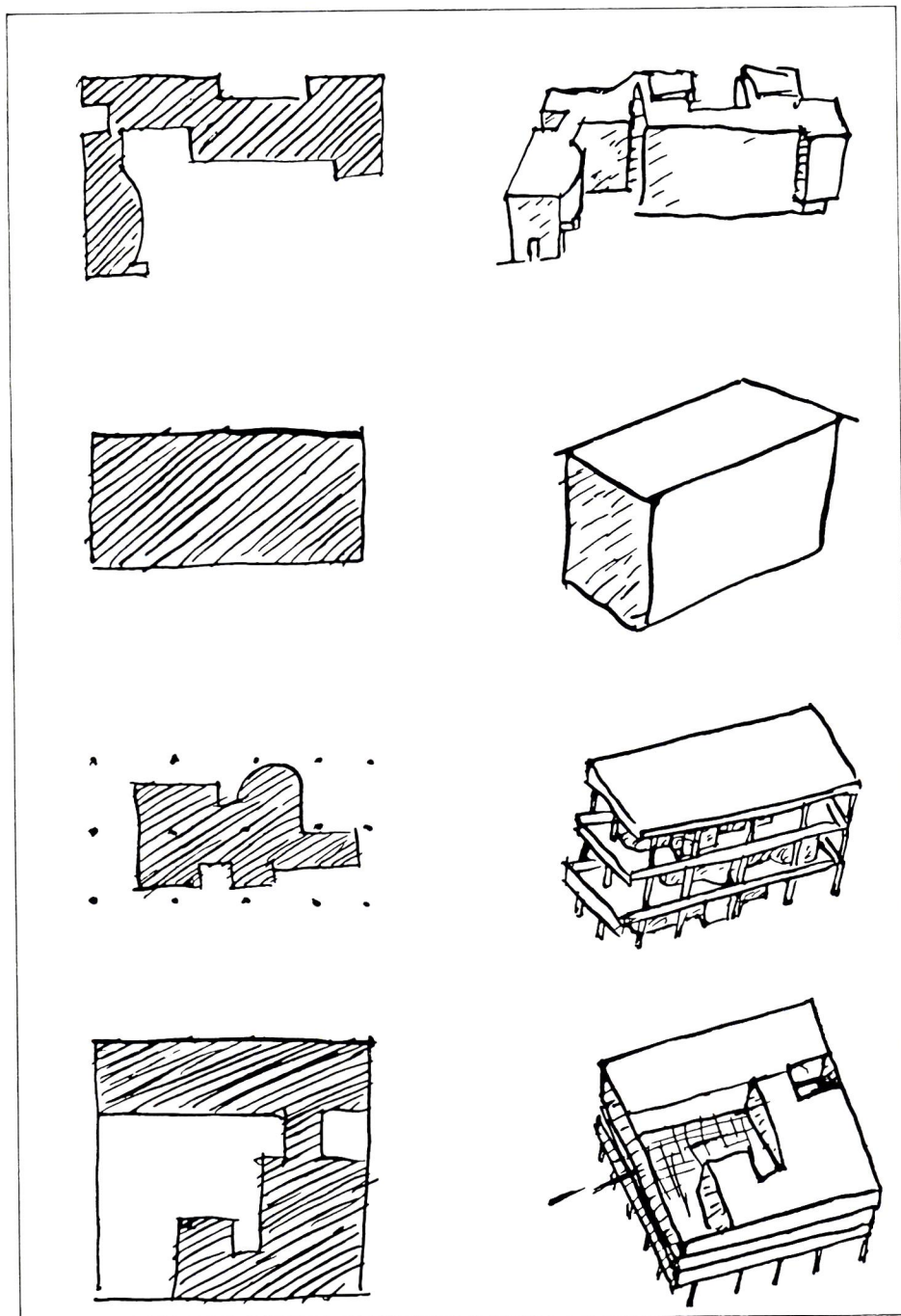
is reduced to a pure combinatory system based on inventories of elements or units and rules for their selection and combination into larger units or parts and finally into building types. This is a completely different attitude to the notion of type than that of Palladio, for whom the definition of type still holds to a different and more traditional concept of unity. The identification of the ‘villa’ in Palladio thus serves as a ‘macro-unity’¹⁸ that allows for formal research by establishing a *syntactic domain* where forms might be transformed but meaning remains by and large unchanged.

As the object is subjected to differing forms of organization, so the subject shifts: in Palladio the process of formal transformation within an established type implies the existence of a *creative subject* present in the term ‘*invenzione*’ used by Palladio to describe both built and unbuilt designs. In Durand, on the other hand, the *subject is reduced to zero*, any combinatory creativity being seen as a structural property of the system, a system organized as a language, where shapes act as signifiers of functional signs.

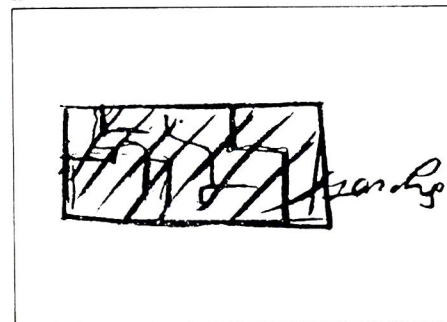
In effect, Palladio and Durand represent not so much fundamentally opposed interpretations, but more, two domains of language itself, domains that express the articulation between the linguistic structure and the structure of the speaking subject.¹⁹ Thus in linguistics, Saussure’s structuralist theory of language based on the linguistic *sign* describes its combinatory properties in terms of a taxonomic activity which more or less excludes the subject who realizes the language (*langue*) in speech (*parole*). There is, in this theory, no implied creativity, even as there is no implied creativity in Durand’s lexical approach; there is only *classification*. According to the theory of Chomsky, however (a theory anticipated in part by that of Humboldt), *creativity* in the normal use of language, as well as its potentially infinite extension, resides in the *sentence* where the subject can be observed and analyzed. The subject of syntax for Chomsky is the subject of the imaginary, even as imagination offers for Palladio a generative device within the syntax of the chosen type.

36 *The Four Compositions. Le Corbusier, 1929. a) La Roche house type, b) villa at Garches, c) villa at Tunis?/Stuttgart?, d) Villa Savoye.*

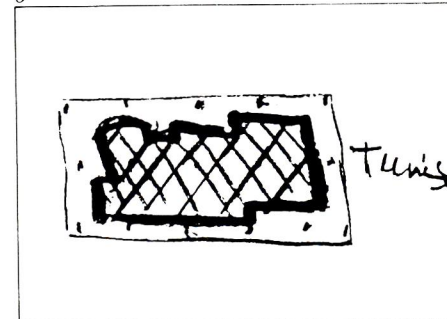
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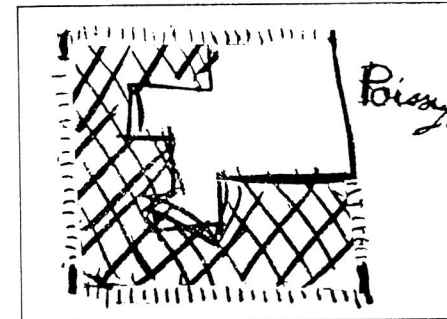
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The modern period subjected the classical idea of subject to a deep transformation or mutation; the impact of modernism on architecture was to deprive it of its (classical) language, and to propose instead a search for a new symbolic organization. The idea of a transformational practice operating on a singular, well defined *language* was abandoned for research into the nature of *language genesis* itself. The rules represented in classical architecture by the orders, the notion of beauty, and rational Cartesian principles are abandoned and replaced with an ideology that stresses the importance of relationships rather than shapes, leaving architecture with a highly diffuse lexicon and an entirely new syntax (fig. 36).

In this context the *subject* is forced into a new creative role where the domain of the unconscious is re-articulated with that of the imaginary. Not just the originator of the process of imagination, it becomes omnipresent, the center of focus of architecture itself. Architectural structure—the object—now becomes more and more determined by the subject. Thus in Le Corbusier architecture is defined almost solely in terms of the presence of the subject, its formal organization and beauty, described as the function of a subject, stratified so that the body, the dimension of the imaginary, and the unconscious are articulated within the formal dimension: “The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by forms and shapes he affects our sense to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationship which he creates he wakes profound echoes in us, he gives us the measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty.”²⁰

The Subject in the Work of Eisenman

Reacting to the explicit subjectivity of the Modern Movement, Eisenman, in his early work at least, refused any explicit mention of the subject; and because its spontaneous presence is not controlled by the theory of syntax which only acknowledges it ‘laterally’, this lacuna has remained unnoticed. But, as we have pointed out, any the-

ory that stresses the object of architecture so clearly of necessity implicitly defines a subject. And in Eisenman’s work the subject has been there from the beginning; its presence is not excluded as in the lexicon of Durand, or the classificatory theory of Saussure, but, with its architectural knowledge it acts more like that quasi-theoretical subject of Chomskian linguistics. Its role is twofold. First it acts as a heuristic device, the *inventor* of the syntactic process. Second it operates to test or control the introduction of shapes by means of its architectural intuition. As such a subject marks its presence in the production of form *as* creation and it would seem to differ little from that understood in classicism or its mutation in modernism. But whereas classicism as we have seen directed its concern toward *representation*, to and with the subject’s implied presence at the point of the visual pyramid opposing the imaginary screen, and modernism, despite its implied critique of perspective, hardly escaped its limits, the architecture of Eisenman is concerned with *communication*. In his work, the form is supposed to establish a linear communicational relation with the interpreter-user, that is, to address his capacity to read visual configuration, to be clearly recognized and understood.

This opening toward communication is in fact literally manifested in the first four houses by means of a vertical layering of their spatial structure, a layering which allows for a linear and sequential relationship to be established between man and building, between, that is, an upright *subject* standing on a horizontal plane and the house-object. The organization of sequential arrangements provides a dual network to which the elements belong. First, sequences have stages where an element interrelates with other elements so that the formal elements are not recognizable in themselves, but rather in terms of the systematic relationships linking them to other elements. Second, there is the interplay of elements opposed to other elements that belong to a different stage within the sequence. The role of the sequence of vertical planes is also twofold. First, the linearity of elements, clusters, and events produces a drastic reduction of the multiple dimensions of architectural space to just one. Consequently the anxiety produced by the newness of the formal vocab-

22 ulary and formal operations is balanced by the reduction of the natural anxiety produced by the multiple dimensions that characterize spatial architecture texts. Second, a homology is established between the visual spatial linearity and the linearity of the theoretical explanatory discourse. This makes a parallel between the visual development and the verbal discourse. Now the possibilities are not only a one-way explanation from a beginning to an end but also a reverse interpretation from the end in order to reconstruct the starting point. At least there is a strong illusion that it is possible that one can reconstruct this process. The visual linearity can be seen as the marking of another linearity—the theoretical discourse, an attempt to produce an exhaustive and reversible explanation of the complete design process.

The importance of this process resides in its ability to allow any element in any stage of the sequence to be derived from a previous and similar stage. A flowing discourse is established which develops immediately from simple to complex, general or abstract to specific or concrete, conceptual to perceptual; which is in the end equivalent to Chomsky's understanding of deep to surface structure. And the adherence to Chomsky's model is complete, especially as it pertains to the generative capacities of the subject, defined by Chomsky, and allowed for by Eisenman. The static repertory of a Durand which denied the existence of a subject has been put in motion, and the subjective, intuitive, and mobile observer of modernism has been displaced to the level of theory. But while Eisenman's subject has lost the new and dialectical articulations between the object and the 'social' proposed by modern architecture, and by no means falls into the static and entirely autonomous zero degree of a Durand, in its retention of a generative imagination, it perhaps recuperates something of the Palladian notion. We are confronting a condition where a demonstrably *new object* exists side by side with an *old subject*. The implications of this are twofold. The object, the syntax, acts as an explanatory model when the problem is stated in such a way as to allow the exploration of syntactic mechanisms articulated to a Cartesian, imaginary subject—a preconscious mechanism—which operates on the basis of logical propositions

and judgment. But the model, precisely because it refuses any theoretical incorporation of the notion of subject, cannot explain situations that cannot be controlled in an exhaustive way within the structural system. This inevitably leaves the door open to *semantic* notions and to the workings of the unconscious, which in Metz's terms always takes advantage of the weakening of repression to "break and fragment the crystalline signifying surface of the imaginary subject."²¹

De-Composition

While in the first four houses Eisenman was able to hold this door closed by an apparently rigorous closure of the system, a number of contradictions gradually emerge in the later work (figs. 37–40), contradictions which finally result in the 'explosion' of the system itself. For the system as proposed initially, not being static and entirely passive in its essential characteristics, proposes its own development, its own 'evolution' at the hands of its 'speaking subject'; the questions of unity and linearity at first addressed with such single-mindedness are themselves put into question as the work develops. Thus the communicational notion of vertical layering, a one-way linear concept, is, in House VI juxtaposed to another notion. In this house the spatial structure is given a dual character which tries to combine a notion of layering with the more traditional notion of centrality: it develops aspects of both a sequential progression of space but is at the same time an investigation of centrality. While sequences imply linearity—a beginning, an end—centrality does not imply one beginning but rather the superimposition of several readings, parallel but not causally related.

The superimposition of those two—linearity and centrality—in House VI produces a highly complex situation, where the possibility of linear exhaustive and reversible readings, as in the previous houses, becomes impossible. Here the implied linearity of the process of communication—from complex to simple, conceptual to perceptual, deep to surface—finally breaks down; no dominant readings are any more possible in this condition of logical contradiction; the assumption that the reader of the message can enter a reversed situation and go through it from

beginning to end at the same time reconstructing the message in the process, is denied by the urge toward centrality. Of course the move toward the retention of centrality is in itself a product of Eisenman's self-critical design process. Linearity is evidently only *one* way of structuring a system; the comprehensive model—which Eisenman seeks—demands its alternative, and this by means of the introduction of a notion of what Eisenman calls “the architectonic.” This architectonic is no more than that knowledge which defines the conscious or pre-conscious subject of architecture, a subject *who knows* the limits of linearity as being only one of the many possible formal notions in architecture, who knows that a comprehensive theory has to be able to deal with all of them. But this subject immediately begins to resist *the unitary reduction of architecture to language*, and begins a process of *testing the theory*, of *falsifying the model*, a process latent in House V, and fully evident in House VI, which will result in an entirely new structure being proposed.

The elements of this auto critique are many: there is the internal criticism of contradictions, proposed didactically in Houses V to VIII; there is also the ‘external’ critique;²² but most important has been a second sacrificial reaction of Eisenman himself. Where first he sacrificed functionalism, now he sacrifices ‘post-modernism’. In his important essay “Post-Functionalism,” he outlines a new strategy.²³ In this text he realizes that his work implicitly embodies and preserves the ‘humanism’ of both classical and modern architecture, together with the notions of a subject as ‘originating agent’, of a simple origin, of unity, of a hierarchical structure. Criticizing—that is going beyond these notions—Eisenman utilizes Foucault’s notion of the *vanishing subject* of post-humanism, calling for an entirely new approach to the subject of architecture, and a burial of the humanist subject. This, significantly, is the first time that the *subject* becomes an *explicit* part of Eisenman’s discourse; but it is also significant that it is just as quickly repressed by precisely Foucault’s *subject that has already vanished*.

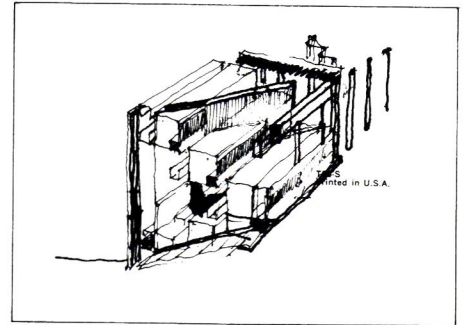
This theoretical position is almost immediately transformed into a material object of architecture, an object

37 House V. Peter Eisenman, 1972. Axonometric drawing.

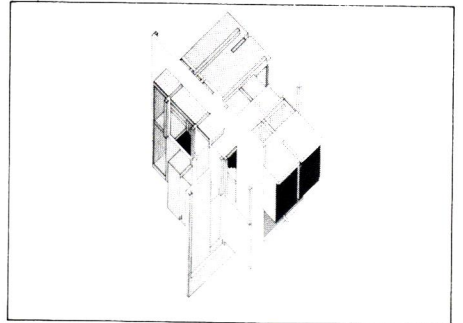
38 House VI. Peter Eisenman, 1972–1976. Axonometric drawing.

39 House VIII. Peter Eisenman, 1973. Axonometric drawing.

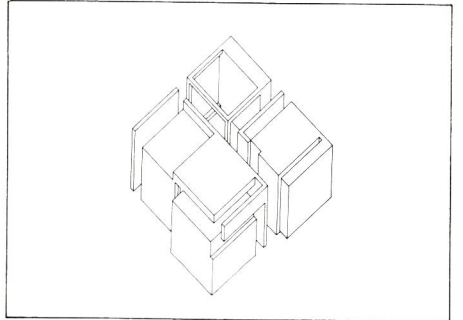
40 House X. Peter Eisenman, 1975–1977. Axonometric drawing.



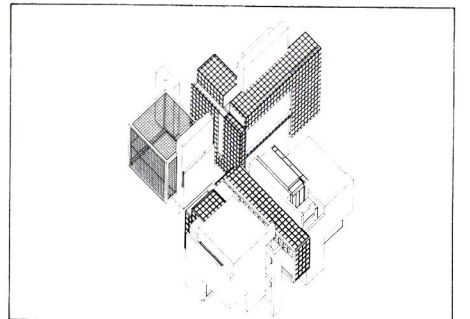
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24 which while attempting to retain the boundaries of the syntactic domain nevertheless works to criticize the original forms of Euclidian geometry, the Cartesian spatial grid, in order to open up the system to the new, ideologically based shapes. This object becomes House X.

The starting point of this object is Eisenman's realization of the 'humanist' content of the forms he used in previous buildings—precisely the Cartesian grid, the geometric elements of point, line, and plane—and that any critique of humanism necessarily proposes a transformation of these forms, and thereby the humanistic ideological notions they embody. On the surface, House X still utilizes elements, syntactic signs, and syntactic codes very similar in appearance to those of the previous houses; but in the way in which these signs are *expressed* a significant change can be noted. The starting point of the architectural process and its finishing point are radically transformed; there is a crucial change in the idea of unity involved, in the consistent and exhaustive system which was once the basis for communication. The agent of this change, and that of Eisenman's critique of humanism in general, is the notion of *de-composition*.

In the earlier houses Eisenman, in conserving the classical idea of *unity*, also conserved its natural corollary, the classical notion of *composition*, a notion whereby the principles of architecture, its elements, and their comparative analysis are all directed toward a process—composition—where form is created and developed. In Guadet it is defined as “the bringing together in a same whole the different parts.”²⁴ Eisenman in the first houses assimilated this idea to that of grammar, transforming the parts, the elements, into new types of signs, and criticizing rather than following historical precedent. Composition, even as the classical subject, remained latent in the new process. But a criticism of classical humanism presupposes a demolition of all its concepts and practices; against the humanist device of composition, Eisenman for the first time introduces its post-humanist opposite, *de-composition*.

Since the notion of composition in the first houses had

been assimilated to the notion of structure, the critical introduction of de-composition was bound to affect the basic structural concepts of Eisenman's architecture. De-composition completely overturns not only the synchronic aspects of the system, but also its diachronic, historical relations, not only the systematic aspects within the synchronic structure but also the processual ones.²⁵ Thus the simple and unitary starting points of the first houses are in House X criticized by a *process* of fragmentation marked by the L-shaped configuration taken as the beginning; in itself this is a *fragment*, whose use produces 'disjunctive' readings inside and out.

The L-shapes configure an origin, a starting point which is more complex than any other previous house. In doing this, Eisenman is criticizing the idea of a development from simple to complex, a notion that helped to sustain the symmetry between the design and the reading of his first houses. However, the L-shape is also critical of the notion of starting from a complex situation which does not allow for systematic development as in the case of Venturi and his followers. That the L-shape can be seen as a fragment of a prior, simpler condition; it implies a simple operation such as a subtraction or an addition of simpler shapes. Moreover, in House X the complexity which is critical of the notion of unity and structure does not play a role only at the starting point but also in the end product. The house is not a single house anymore, but a set of four fragmentary houses which produce an empty center as a symbol for the loss of unity.

This fragmentation in the end operates to criticize the system itself, to erode the overall structure proposed in the earlier work—a syntactic level which was developed in order to repress any externally derived motifs, any levels of cultural meaning. The criticism of structure and unity, the introduction of decomposition, finally work toward the opening that has continually been resisted; they open the door to a semantic play where form is given a value beyond that of the purely syntactic. Thus the Cartesian grid, becoming a fragment, is elevated to more than a simple formal device: in House X it becomes a way of giving shape to technical material requirements (joints),

it becomes a cage. This cage made of a screen material occupies one of the four quadrants of the house. This useless space has a major role within the conceptual structure of the house. It represents in itself the primary simple shape of the cube which is not seen anymore as an origin but rather as a complex intermediary figure in the specific logic of the house. It sets up a series of contradictory readings within its quadrant in the relation between the solid L and the void cube. As a quadrant it is anomalous in relation to the other three: the relationships are in general established between pairs, and the cage suggests a very different organization based on the opposition 1 versus 3. Through this cage the prison of rational Cartesian geometry has been symbolized: the message of the humanist critique has been endowed with rhetorical force.

A similar critical move can be seen in Eisenman's attack on the diachronic, historical levels of the earlier work. While in House VI for example, the question centers around the horizontal plane, which, not located anymore where it should be (under our feet), floats suspended in the air as a conceptual index of ground floor and roof; in House X this 'critique' of the Dom-ino scheme has been itself reversed: the horizontal slabs have become vertical walls, and the implied vertical transparent walls have become horizontal windows. Where the floating planes of House VI left the possibility of vertical windows, in House X we stand on top of windows and our eyes can see no longer perspectively and horizontally, but only blank walls.

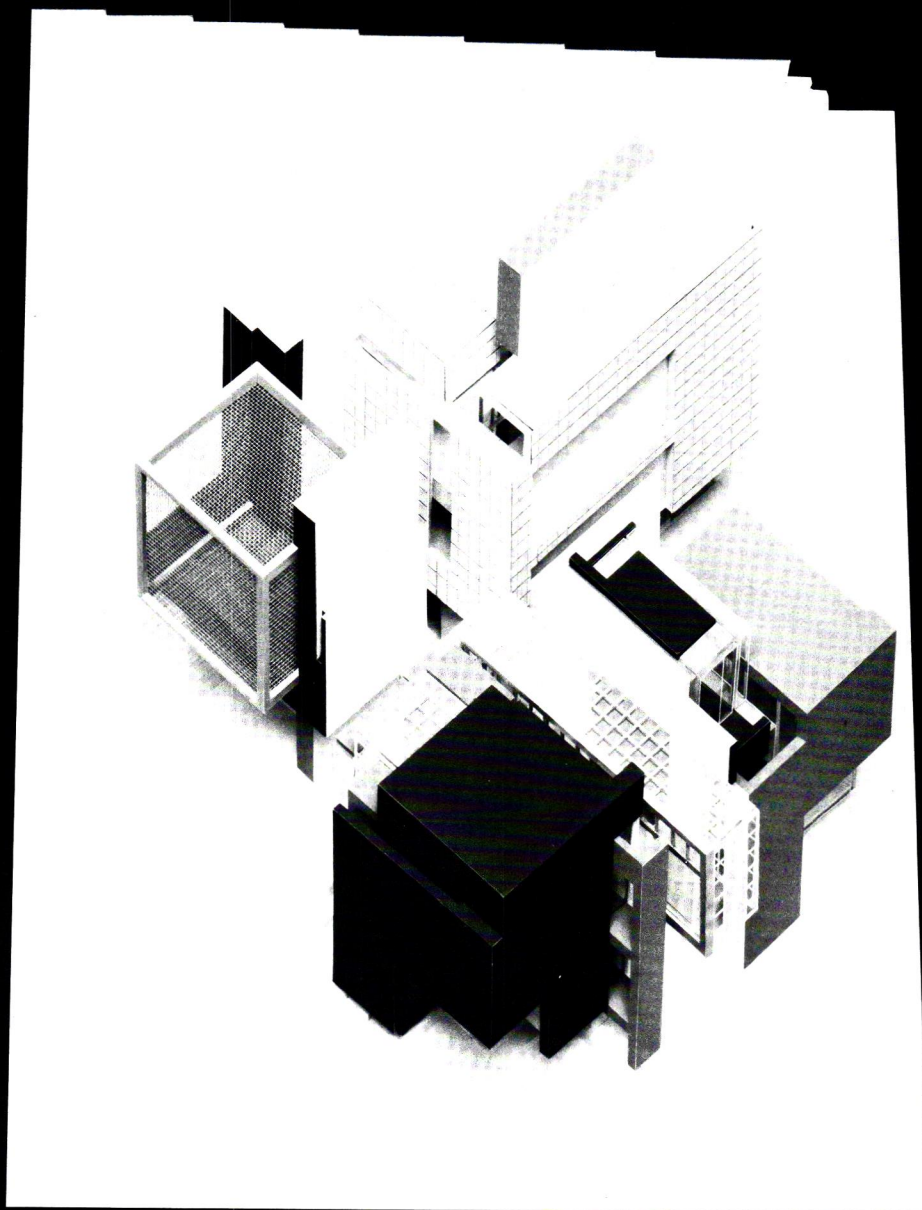
At first we might see little conceptual difference between the upside-down staircase in House VI marking the central horizontal plane as datum and the inverted Dom-ino scheme in House X. But in the first the reference leads one to the understanding of its structure, while in the second case it misleads one. The reason for the misleading is that the house is trying to say that it is possible that there is not just one structure, that there is no unity or reversibility between design and interpretation . . . House VI is complex but peaceful. House VI gives clues to the reader, albeit very different ones, nevertheless real clues. House X gives false clues. It makes one work to interpret

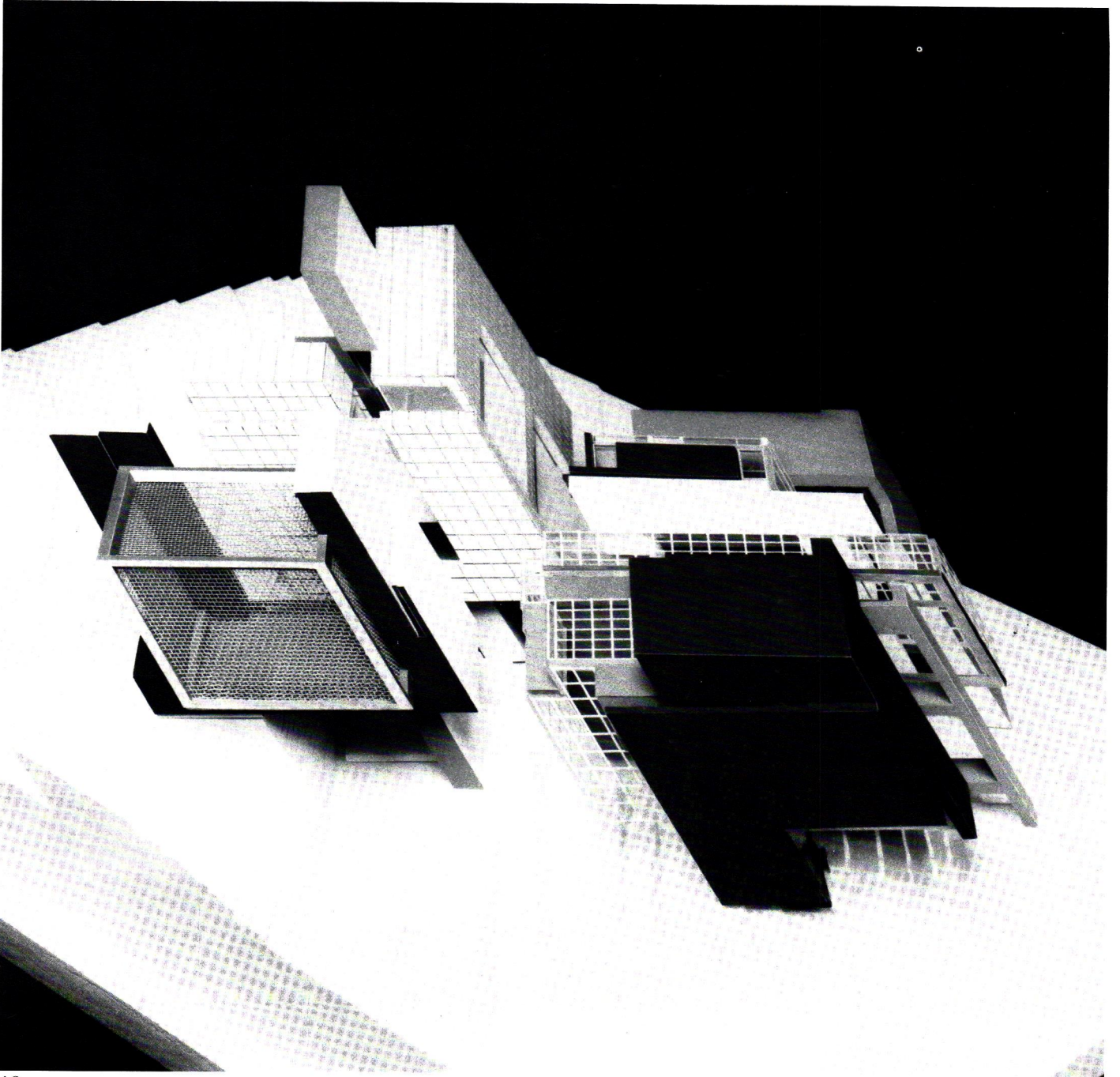
these clues, only to realize that they are false clues. This is because the clues are directed toward interpreting architecture in a traditional way; and this house is structured in a different way. The false clues signify the death of rationality and humanism.

The *inversion of the Dom-ino* scheme is the symbolic expression of the anti-humanist ideology proposed in "Post-Functionalism." It sets up the possibility for the relocation of the position of the subject in relation to the new condition created by House X where there is not a single structure anymore but rather fragments of structure, which can be linked or chained in different ways.

It is in the critique of humanist representation itself that House X proposes its most radical opening: the 'normal', 'rational' Cartesian subject of classical architecture is finally exploded by the specific mode of representation chosen for House X—the *axonometric model*. In traditional terms, the axonometric is an abstract two-dimensional drawing that allows us to 'see' the three-dimensional object in two. It does not pretend to provide a naturalistic image of the building but simply to depict the more objective presence of every element or aspect in the building and their relationships. These relations are measurable, since there are no dimensional distortions as a product of the artificial vanishing point of perspective. That is, the axonometric truthfully provides knowledge about a certain reality of the object; through scale reductions it represents the additional dimension of space to the knowledge provided by plan and section. But the axonometric model of House X is a three-dimensional construction made to provide the image of a two-dimensional drawing. It does not provide knowledge of the object in a dimensional sense; it is not about reality, but about fiction; it provides phantasmagoric images—a sequence of anamorphisms—among which the 'right' image is very difficult to discover. It makes the 'normal' image appear to be an anomaly (fig. 41): we perceive it only at the instant where we see the false image—the model as a two-dimensional drawing—while the 'abnormal' images are in fact the only ones that describe the true nature of the three-dimensional object, the model (fig. 42).

41, 42 *House X. Peter Eisenman, 1975–1977. Axonometric model.*





28 On each of these levels, the critique of process, of synchrony, of diachrony has ended by proposing a series of open endings, or rather 'spaces' left between the rational fragments deployed in order to make the critique. At these points the system is invaded, inevitably and irrevocably, by implications that stem from outside the system itself. No longer can the structure resist the semantic dimension: the '1', the vertical walls, the cage, the model, all call to be read as units of meaning that derive their signification not from their syntactical positioning, but from external referents, in this case the systems and structures under criticism. In recognizing the *ideological* content of humanism, Eisenman has been forced into an ideologically based critique of it. Without a boundary established by a totalizing system, the symptoms of this ideology, like some unconscious lapses, 'intrude' in the voids.

This returns us to the notion of sacrifice established at the beginning of the essay: a sacrifice which in Eisenman's work has been twice repeated, first of functionalism, then of the humanist traces within the first supplanting order. We have said that sacrifice involves the establishment of rules, of an order, and we have seen these rules and this structure established in the first instance as a language or syntax in the first houses. We have seen that the unity implied in this language is then sacrificed to its opposite as a self critique. But there is another aspect to sacrifice in itself that has to be recognized in order to explain, at least partially, the openings and intrusions into the second gesture, openings which the initial act served for a while to suppress.

Simultaneous with the moment of sacrifice there is also a spontaneous appearance of ceremonies, which are neither logical as languages are—that is, they cannot be seen as rational acts—nor are they completely irrational. They are aesthetic—artistic or poetic—ceremonies and they belong to a parallel practice. The role of such artistic or poetic ceremonies is the representation of sacrifice itself. In a sense, these ceremonies are constituted from the residual energy of chaos, which is never completely channeled by the ordering of the other symbolic systems im-

posed in the establishment of society and language. It is an energy in *excess* of the systematic order of language; and it generates *Art*.

Art then is the process whereby the extra energy of chaos is transformed into a specific symbolic practice. It is parallel to, and a by-product of, the channeling of ritualized violence into the establishment of language and society. As such it appears as an area of production where the *subject* works in a transgressive way with the notion of rules as a limit; it is a practice where pre-linguistic relations dominate: that is, the marking of discontinuities in different materials, the establishment and articulation of connections by displacements and condensations. In its transgression of language and judgment, the frontier between true/false is shaken, and truth is no longer a reference to an object identifiable outside of language but rather to the process of construction of the object itself.

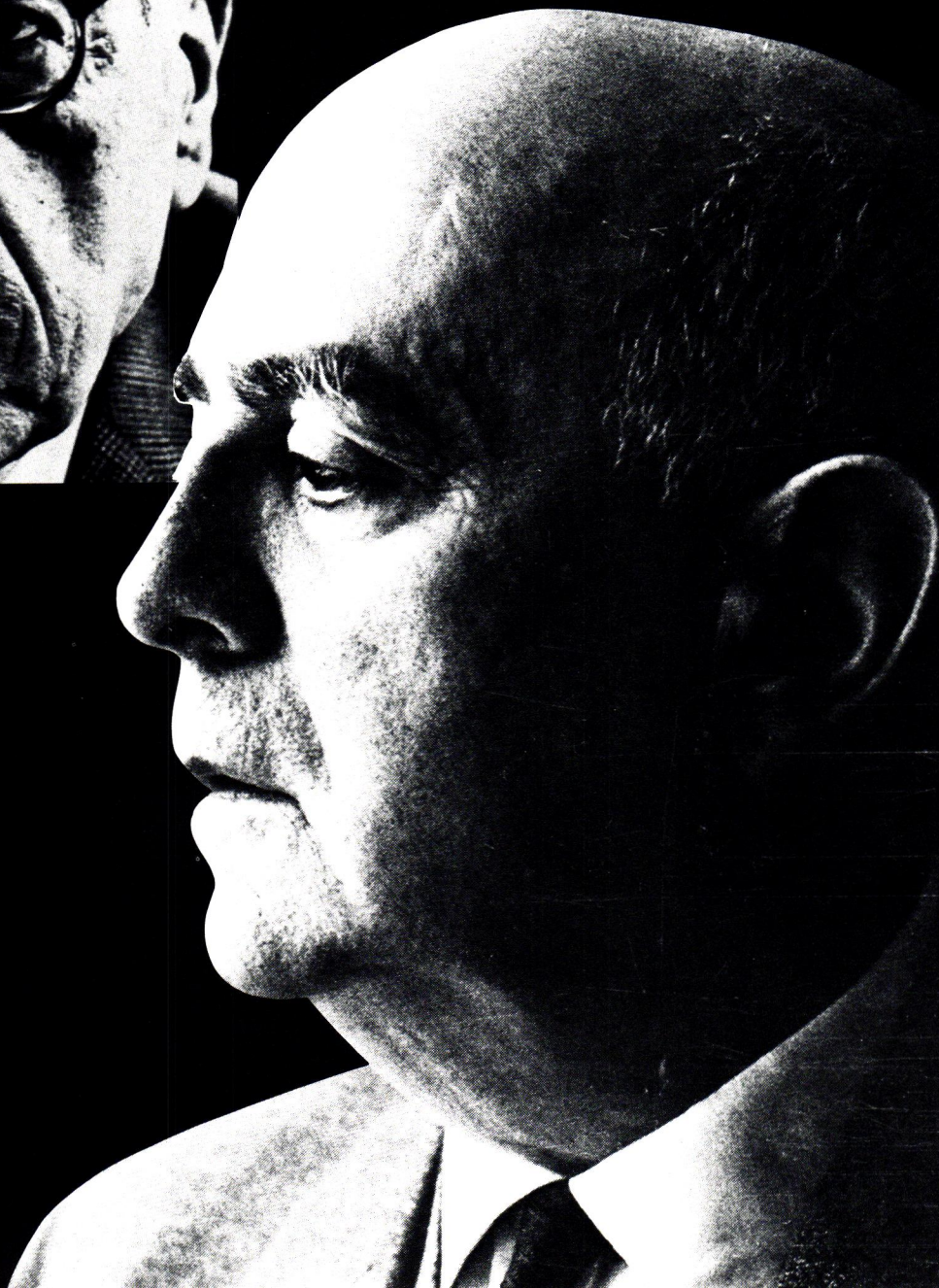
So, the 'unexplained intrusions' in Eisenman's more recent architecture are the result of the action of an energy now liberated from the constraints of the imaginary, of the preconscious rational subject of syntax, and marking itself by writing a second text on the house, fragmenting the meanings in a specific manner not controlled by the de-compositional theory.

December 1978

1. Claude Levi-Strauss, "L'analyse structurale en linguistique et en anthropologie," *Anthropologie Structurale* (Plon, 1958).
2. Ibid.
3. Julia Kristeva has discussed sacrifice and art as the counterparts of the symbolic foundation of society and language in "Sémiotique et Symbolique" in *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974).
4. Ibid. Kristeva describes a similarity in the structures of sacrifice and symbol—the establishment of a contract, a play of images, the establishment of an ideal community, the introduction of the object of pleasure within social norms.
5. L. B. Alberti, *Ten Books on Architecture* (London: Alec Tiranti, 1965), English translation by James Leoni, ed. Joseph Rykwert.
6. Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris: Editions Vincent, Fréal & Cie., 1923).
7. This and following analysis of Eisenman's work are based on the reading of House I and House II in *Five Architects* (New York, George Wittenborn & Co.); House VI in *Progressive Architecture*, June 1977; "Post-Functionalism" editorial in *Oppositions*, 6, 1976; together with a series of unpublished manuscripts for House VII, House VIII, and House X.
8. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (M.I.T. Press), and *Cartesian Linguistics* (M.I.T. Press).
9. It has been suggested that in an ideal situation where there are just doors and no other signs of opening one would not have a code of openings but just walls and doors, because a single sign does not make a code. But even this situation has an implied code. One recognizes the 'door' as such because it is a place where the wall is perforated, as opposed to the solidity of the rest of the wall. The oppositions here is that of the sign's presence in one place and its *absence* elsewhere: presence and absence constitute a minimum code.
10. Umberto Eco, *Theory of Semiotics* (Mouton, 1976).
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. N. Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics*.
14. Julien Guadet, *Eléments et théorie de l'architecture* (Paris, Librairie de la Construction Moderne).
15. Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renaissances in Western Art* (Harper and Row, 1972).
16. Ibid., and also Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (W.W. Norton and Co., 1971).
17. John R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge University Press, 1969).
18. Cf. Julia Kristeva "Objet, complément, dialectique" in *Critique*, February 1971.
19. Julia Kristeva, "Du Sujet en Linguistique, Epistémologie de la Linguistique" in *Langages*, 24, 1971.
20. Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture*.
21. Christian Metz, "Le Signifiant imaginaire," *Pschanalyse et Cinéma*, 10/18 (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1977).
22. Mario Gandelonas, "Linguistics and Architecture" in *Casabella*, 1973; Manfredo Tafuri, "European Graffiti: Five x Five = Twenty-five" in *Oppositions*, 5, Summer 1976.
23. Peter Eisenman, "Post-Functionalism," *Oppositions*, 6.
24. Guadet, *Eléments et théorie de l'architecture*.
25. Saumjan distinguishes two different notions of process: the one acknowledged by the oppositions between synchronic and diachronic, and the other proposed by him to differentiate within the 'synchronic'. J. Saumjan, *Linguistica Dinamica* (Bari: Laterza, 1973).

Figure Credits

- 36 © S.P.A.D.E.M., Paris/V.A.G.A., New York, 1980.
 1-6, 37-42 Courtesy Peter Eisenman.
 7 From *Durero. Los Maestros del Grabado* (Buenos Aires, 1953).
 8, 9 From Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux* (Paris: Olivier Perrin, 1969).
 10-21, 33 From Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (W. W. Norton and Co., 1971).
 22-32 From Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).
 34, 35 From J. N. L. Durand, *Leçons d'architecture. Partie graphique des cours d'architecture* (Paris, 1819).
 36 From Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *Oeuvre Complète 1910-1929* (Zurich: Editions Girsberger, 1937).



Theory

Functionalism Today

Theodor W. Adorno

Translated by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith

I would first like to express my gratitude for the confidence shown me by Adolf Arndt in his invitation to speak here today. At the same time, I must also express my serious doubts as to whether I really have the right to speak before you. *Métier*, expertise in both matters of handicraft and of technique, counts in your circle for a great deal. And rightly so. If there is one idea of lasting influence which has developed out of the Werkbund movement, it is precisely this emphasis on concrete competence as opposed to an aesthetics removed and isolated from material questions. I am familiar with this dictum from my own *métier*, music. There it became a fundamental theorem, thanks to a school which cultivated close personal relationships with both Adolf Loos and the Bauhaus, and which was therefore fully aware of its intellectual ties to objectivity (*Sachlichkeit*)⁽¹⁾ in the arts. Nevertheless, I can make no claim to competence in matters of architecture. And yet, I do not resist the temptation, and knowingly face the danger that you may briefly tolerate me as a dilettante and then cast me aside. I do this firstly because of my pleasure in presenting some of my reflections in public, and to you in particular; and secondly, because of Adolf Loos's comment that while an artwork need not appeal to anyone, a house is responsible to each and everyone.¹ I am not yet sure whether this statement is in fact valid, but in the meantime, I need not be holier than the pope.

I find that the style of German reconstruction fills me with a disturbing discontent, one which many of you may certainly share. Since I no less than the specialists must constantly face this feeling, I feel justified in examining its foundations. Common elements between music and architecture have been discussed repeatedly, almost to the point of ennui. In uniting that which I see in architecture with that which I understand about the difficulties in music, I may not be transgressing the law of the division of labor as much as it may seem. But to accomplish this union, I must stand at a greater distance from these subjects than you may justifiably expect. It seems to me, however, not unrealistic that at times—in latent crisis situations—it may help to remove oneself farther from phenomena than the spirit of technical competence would

usually allow. The principle of “fittingness to the material” (*Materialgerechtigkeit*)⁽²⁾ rests on the foundation of the division of labor. Nevertheless, it is advisable even for experts to occasionally take into account the extent to which their expertise may suffer from just that division of labor, as the artistic naiveté underlying it can impose its own limitations. 31

Let me begin with the fact that the anti-ornamental movement has affected the “purpose-free” arts (*zweckfreie Künste*)⁽³⁾ as well. It lies in the nature of artworks to inquire after the essential and necessary in them and to react against all superfluous elements. After the critical tradition declined to offer the arts a canon of right and wrong, the responsibility to take such considerations into account was placed on each individual work; each had to test itself against its own immanent logic, regardless of whether or not it was motivated by some external purpose. This was by no means a new position. Mozart, though clearly still standard-bearer and critical representative of the great tradition, responded in the following way to the minor objection of a member of the royal family—“But so many notes, my dear Mozart”—after the premier of his “Abduction” with “Not one note more, Your Majesty, than was necessary.” In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant grounded this norm philosophically in the formula of “purposiveness without a purpose” (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*). The formula reflects an essential impulse in the judgment of taste. And yet it does not account for the historical dynamic. Based on a language stemming from the realm of materials, what this language defines as necessary can later become superfluous, even terribly ornamental, as soon as it can no longer be legitimated in a second kind of language, which is commonly called style. What was functional yesterday can therefore become the opposite tomorrow. Loos was thoroughly aware of this historical dynamic contained in the concept of ornament. Even representative, luxurious, pompous, and in a certain sense, burlesque elements may appear in certain forms of art as necessary, and not at all burlesque. To criticize the Baroque for this reason would be philistine. Criticism of ornament means no more than criticism of that which has lost its functional and symbolic signifi-

32 cation. Ornament becomes then a mere decaying and poisonous organic vestige. The new art is opposed to this, for it represents the fictitiousness of a depraved romanticism, an ornamentation embarrassingly trapped in its own impotence. Modern music and architecture, by concentrating strictly on expression and construction, both strive together with equal rigor to efface all such ornament. Schönberg's compositional innovations, Karl Kraus's literary struggle against journalistic clichés, and Loos's denunciation of ornament are not vague analogies in intellectual history; they reflect precisely the same intention. This insight necessitates a correction of Loos's thesis, which he, in his open-mindedness, would probably not have rejected: the question of functionalism does not coincide with the question of practical function. The purpose-free (*zweckfrei*) and the purposeful (*zweckgebunden*) arts do not form the radical opposition which he imputed. The difference between the necessary and the superfluous is inherent in a work, and is not defined by the work's relationship—or the lack of it—to something outside itself.

In Loos's thought and in the early period of functionalism, purposeful and aesthetically autonomous products were separated from one another by absolute fact. This separation, which is in fact the object of our reflection, arose from the contemporary polemic against the applied arts and crafts (*Kunstgewerbe*).⁽⁴⁾ Although they determined the period of Loos's development, he soon escaped from them. Loos was thus situated historically between Peter Altenberg and Le Corbusier. The movement of applied art had its beginnings in Ruskin and Morris. Revolting against the shapelessness of mass-produced, pseudo-individualized forms, it rallied around such new concepts as "will to style," "stylization," and "shaping," around the idea that one should apply art, reintroduce it into life in order to restore life to it. Their slogans were numerous and had a powerful effect. Nevertheless, Loos noticed quite early the implausibility of such endeavors: articles for use lose meaning as soon as they are displaced or disengaged in such a way that their use is no longer required. Art with its definitive protest against the dominance of purpose over human life suffers once it is reduced to that practical level to which it objects, in Höld-

erlin's words: "For never from now on/ Shall the sacred serve mere use." Loos found the artificial art of practical objects repulsive. Similarly, he felt that the practical re-orientation of purpose-free art would eventually subordinate it to the destructive autocracy of profit, which even arts and crafts, at least in their beginnings, had once opposed. Contrary to these efforts, Loos preached for the return to an honest handicraft⁽⁵⁾ which would place itself in the service of technical innovations without having to borrow forms from art. His claims suffer from too simple an antithesis. Their restorative element, not unlike that of the individualization of crafts, has since become equally clear. To this day, they are still bound to discussions of objectivity.

In any given product, freedom from purpose and purposefulness can never be absolutely separated from one another. The two notions are historically interconnected. The ornaments, after all, which Loos expelled with a vehemence quite out of character are often actually vestiges of outmoded means of production. And conversely, numerous purposes, like sociability, dance, and entertainment, have filtered into purpose-free art; they have been generally incorporated into its formal and generic laws. Purposefulness without purpose is thus really the sublimation of purpose. Nothing exists as an aesthetic object in itself, but only within the field of tension of such sublimation. Therefore there is no chemically pure purposefulness set up as the opposite of the purpose-free aesthetic. Even the most pure forms of purpose are nourished by ideas—like formal transparency and graspability—which in fact are derived from artistic experience. No form can be said to be determined exhaustively by its purpose. This can be seen even in one of Schönberg's revolutionary works, the First Chamber Symphony, about which Loos wrote some of his most insightful words. Ironically, an ornamental theme appears, with a double beat recalling at once a central motif from Wagner's "Götterdämmerung" and the theme from the First Movement of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. The ornament is the sustaining invention, if you will, objective in its own right. Precisely this transitional theme becomes the model of a canonical exposition in the fourfold counterpoint, and

thereby the model of the first extreme constructivist complex in modern music. Schönberg's belief in such material was appropriated from the *Kunstgewerbe* religion, which worshiped the supposed nobility of matter; it still continues to provide inspiration even in autonomous art. He combined with this belief the ideas of a construction fitting to the material. To it corresponds an undialectical concept of beauty, which encompasses autonomous art like a nature preserve. That art aspires to autonomy does not mean that it unconditionally purges itself of ornamental elements; the very existence of art, judged by the criteria of the practical, is ornamental. If Loos's aversion to ornament had been rigidly consistent, he would have had to extend it to all of art. To his credit, he stopped before reaching this conclusion. In this circumspection, by the way, he is similar to the positivists. On the one hand, they would expunge from the realm of philosophy anything which they deem poetic. On the other, they sense no infringement by poetry itself on their kind of positivism. Thus, they tolerate poetry if it remains in a special realm, neutralized and unchallenged, since they have already relaxed the notion of objective truth.

The belief that a substance bears within itself its own adequate form presumes that it is already invested with meaning. Such a doctrine made the symbolist aesthetic possible. The resistance to the excesses of the applied arts pertained not just to hidden forms, but also to the cult of materials. It created an aura of essentiality about them. Loos expressed precisely this notion in his critique of batik. Meanwhile, the invention of artificial products—materials originating in industry—no longer permitted the archaic faith in an innate beauty, the foundation of a magic connected with precious elements. Furthermore, the crisis arising from the latest developments of autonomous art demonstrated how little meaningful organization could depend on the material itself. Whenever organizational principles rely too heavily on material, the result approaches mere patchwork. The idea of fittingness to the materials in purposeful art cannot remain indifferent to such criticisms. Indeed, the illusion of purposefulness as its own purpose cannot stand up to the simplest social reality. Something would be purposeful here and now only

if it were so in terms of the present society. Yet, certain irrationalities—Marx's term for them was *faux frais*—are essential to society; the social process always proceeds, in spite of all particular planning, by its own inner nature, aimlessly and irrationally. Such irrationality leaves its mark on all ends and purposes, and thereby also on the rationality of the means devised to achieve those ends. Thus, a self-mocking contradiction emerges in the omnipresence of advertisements: they are intended to be purposeful for profit. And yet all purposefulness is technically defined by its measure of material appropriateness. If an advertisement were strictly functional, without ornamental surplus, it would no longer fulfill its purpose as advertisement. Of course, the fear of technology is largely stuffy and old-fashioned, even reactionary. And yet it does have its validity, for it reflects the anxiety felt in the face of the violence which an irrational society can impose on its members, indeed on everything which is forced to exist within its confines. This anxiety reflects a common childhood experience, with which Loos seems unfamiliar, even though he is otherwise strongly influenced by the circumstances of his youth: the longing for castles with long chambers and silk tapestries, the utopia of escapism. Something of this utopia lives on in the modern aversion to the escalator, to Loos's celebrated kitchen, to the factory smokestack, to the shabby side of an antagonistic society. It is heightened by outward appearances. Deconstruction of these appearances, however, has little power over the completely denigrated sphere, where praxis continues as always. One might attack the pinnacles of the bogus castles of the moderns (which Thorstein Veblen despised), the ornaments, for example, pasted onto shoes; but where this is possible, it merely aggravates an already horrifying situation. The process has implications for the world of pictures as well. Positivist art, a culture of the existing, has been exchanged for aesthetic truth. One envisions the prospect of a new *Ackerstrasse*.⁽⁶⁾

The limits of functionalism to date have been the limits of the bourgeoisie in its practical sense. Even in Loos, the sworn enemy of Viennese kitsch, one finds some remarkably bourgeois traces. Since the bourgeois structure had already permeated so many feudalistic and absolutist

34 forms in his city, Loos believed he could use its rigorous principles to free himself from traditional formulas. His writings, for example, contain attacks on awkward Viennese formality. Furthermore, his polemics are colored by a unique strain of puritanism, which nears obsession. Loos's thought, like so much bourgeois criticism of culture, is an intersection of two fundamental directions. On the one hand, he realized that this culture was actually not at all cultural. This informed above all his relationship to his native environment. On the other, he felt a deep animosity toward culture in general, which called for the prohibition not only of superficial veneer, but also of all soft and smooth touches. In this he disregarded the fact that culture is not the place for untamed nature, nor for a merciless domination over nature. The future of *Sachlichkeit* could be a liberating one only if it shed its barbarous traits. It could no longer inflict on men—whom it supposedly upheld as its only measure—the sadistic blows of sharp edges, bare calculated rooms, stairways, and the like. Virtually every consumer had probably felt all too painfully the impracticability of the mercilessly practical. Hence our bitter suspicion is formulated: the absolute rejection of style becomes style. Loos traces ornament back to erotic symbols. In turn, his rigid rejection of ornamentation is coupled with his disgust with erotic symbolism. He finds uncurbed nature both regressive and embarrassing. The tone of his condemnations of ornament echoes an often openly expressed rage against moral delinquency; "But the man of our time who, out of inner compulsion, smears walls with erotic symbols is a criminal and a degenerate."² The insult "degenerate" connects Loos to movements of which he certainly would not have approved. "One can," he says, "measure the culture of a country by the amount of graffiti on the bathroom walls."³ But in southern countries, in Mediterranean countries in general, one finds a great deal. In fact, the Surrealists made much use of such unreflected expressions. Loos would certainly have hesitated before imputing a lack of culture to these areas. His hatred of ornament can best be understood by examining a psychological argument.⁽⁷⁾ He seems to see in ornament the mimetic impulse, which runs contrary to rational objectification; he sees in it an expression which, even in sadness and lament, is related

to the pleasure principle. Arguing from this principle, one must accept that there is a factor of expression in every object. Any special relegation of this factor to art alone would be an oversimplification. It cannot be separated from objects of use. Thus, even when these objects lack expression, they must pay tribute to it by attempting to avoid it. Hence all obsolete objects of use eventually become an expression, a collective picture of the epoch. There is barely a practical form which, along with its appropriateness for use, would not therefore also be a symbol. Psychoanalysis too has demonstrated this principle on the basis of unconscious images, among which the house figures prominently. According to Freud, symbolic intention quickly allies itself to technical forms, like the airplane, and according to contemporary American research in mass psychology, often to the car. Thus, purposeful forms are the language of their own purposes. By means of the mimetic impulse, the living being equates himself with objects in his surroundings. This occurs long before artists initiate conscious imitation. What begins as symbol becomes ornament, and finally appears superfluous; it had its origins, nevertheless, in natural shapes, to which men adapted themselves through their artifacts. The inner image which is expressed in that impulse was once something external, something coercively objective. This argument explains the fact, known since Loos, that ornament, indeed artistic form in general, cannot be invented. The achievement of all artists, and not just those interested in specific ends, is reduced to something incomparably more modest than the art-religion of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would have been willing to accept. The psychological basis of ornament hence undercuts aesthetic principles and aims. However, the question is by no means settled how art would be possible in any form if ornamentation were no longer a substantial element, if art itself could no longer invent any true ornaments.

This last difficulty, which *Sachlichkeit* unavoidably encounters, is not a mere error. It cannot be arbitrarily corrected. It follows directly from the historical character of the subject. Use—or consumption—is much more closely related to the pleasure principle than an object of

artistic representation responsible only to its own formal laws; it means the “using up of,” the denial of the object, that it ought not to be. Pleasure appears, according to the bourgeois work ethic, as wasted energy. Loos’s formulation makes clear how much as an early cultural critic he was fundamentally attached to that order whose manifestations he chastised wherever they failed to follow their own principles: “Ornament is wasted work energy and thereby wasted health. It has always been so. But today it also means wasted material, and both mean wasted capital.”⁴ Two irreconcilable motifs coincide in this statement: economy, for where else, if not in the norms of profitability, is it stated that nothing should be wasted; and the dream of the totally technological world, free from the shame of work. The second motif points beyond the commercial world. For Loos it takes the form of the realization that the widely lamented impotency to create ornament and the so-called extinction of stylizing energy (which he exposed as an invention of art historians) imply an advance in the arts. He realized in addition that those aspects of an industrialized society, which by bourgeois standards are negative, actually represent its positive side: “Style used to mean ornament. So I said: don’t lament! Don’t you see? Precisely this makes our age great, that it is incapable of producing new ornament. We have conquered ornament, we have struggled to the stage of non-ornamentation. Watch, the time is near. Fulfillment awaits us. Soon the streets of the cities will shine like white walls. Like Zion, the sacred city, heaven’s capital. Then salvation will be ours.”⁵ In this conception, the state free of ornament would be a utopia of concretely fulfilled presence, no longer in need of symbols. Objective truth, all the belief in things, would cling to this utopia. This utopia remains hidden for Loos by his crucial experience with *Jugendstil*: “Individual man is incapable of creating form; therefore, so is the architect. The architect, however, attempts the impossible again and again—and always in vain. Form, or ornament, is the result of the unconscious cooperation of men belonging to a whole cultural sphere. Everything else is art. Art is the self-imposed will of the genius. God gave him his mission.”⁶ This axiom, that the artist fulfills a divine mission, no longer holds. A general demystification, which began in the com-

mercial realm, has encroached upon art. With it, the absolute difference between inflexible purposefulness and autonomous freedom has been reduced as well. But here we face another contradiction. On the one hand, the purely purpose-oriented forms have been revealed as insufficient, monotonous, deficient, and narrow-mindedly practical. At times, of course, individual masterpieces do stand out; but then, one tends to attribute the success to the creator’s “genius,” and not to something objective within the achievement itself. On the other hand, the attempt to bring into the work the external element of imagination as a corrective, to help the matter out with this element which stems from outside of it, is equally pointless; it serves only to mistakenly resurrect decoration, which has been justifiably criticized by modern architecture. The results are extremely disheartening. A critical analysis of the mediocre modernity of the style of German reconstruction by a true expert would be extremely relevant. My suspicion in the *Minima Moralia* that the world is no longer habitable has already been confirmed; the heavy shadow of instability bears upon built form, the shadow of mass migrations, which had their preludes in the years of Hitler and his war. This contradiction must be consciously grasped in all its necessity. But we cannot stop there. If we do, we give into a continually threatening catastrophe. The most recent catastrophe, the air raids, have already led architecture into a condition from which it cannot escape.

The poles of the contradiction are revealed in two concepts, which seem mutually exclusive: handicraft and imagination. Loos expressly rejected the latter in the context of the world of use: “Pure and clean construction has had to replace the imaginative forms of past centuries and the flourishing ornamentation of past ages. Straight lines; sharp, straight edges: the craftsman works only with these. He has nothing but a purpose in mind and nothing but materials and tools in front of him.”⁷ Le Corbusier, however, sanctioned imagination in his theoretical writings, at least in a somewhat general sense: “The task of the architect: knowledge of men, creative imagination, beauty. Freedom of choice (spiritual man).”⁸ We may safely assume that in general the more advanced archi-

36 tects tend to prefer handicraft, while more backward and unimaginative architects all too gladly praise imagination. We must be wary, however, of simply accepting the concepts of handicraft and imagination in the loose sense in which they have been tossed back and forth in the ongoing polemic. Only then can we hope to reach an alternative. The word "handicraft," which immediately gains consent, covers something qualitatively different. Only unreasonable dilettantism and blatant idealism would attempt to deny that each authentic and, in the broadest sense, artistic activity requires a precise understanding of the materials and techniques at the artist's disposal, and to be sure, at the most advanced level.

Only the artist who has never subjected himself to the discipline of creating a picture, who believes in the intuitive origins of painting, fears that closeness to materials and technical understanding will destroy his originality. He has never learned what is historically available, and can never make use of it. And so he conjures up out of the supposed depths of his own interiority that which is merely the residue of outmoded forms. The word "handicraft" appeals to such a simple truth. But quite different chords resonate unavoidably along with it. The syllable "hand" exposes a past means of production; it recalls a simple economy of wares. These means of production have since disappeared. Ever since the proposals of the English precursors of "modern style" they have been reduced to a masquerade. One associates the notion of handicraft with the apron of a Hans Sachs, or possibly the great world chronicle. At times, I cannot suppress the suspicion that such an archaic "shirt sleeves" ethos survives even among the younger proponents of "handcraftiness"; they are despisers of art. If some feel themselves superior to art, then it is only because they have never experienced it as Loos did. For Loos, appreciation of both art and its applied form led to a bitter emotional conflict. In the area of music, I know of one advocate of handicraft who spoke with plainly romantic anti-romanticism of the "hut mentality." I once caught him thinking of handicrafts as stereotypical formulas, practices as he called them, which were supposed to spare the energies of the composer; it never dawned on him that nowadays the uniqueness of

each concrete task excludes such formalization. Thanks to attitudes such as his, handicraft is transformed into that which it wants to repudiate: the same lifeless, reified repetition which ornament had propagated. I dare not judge whether a similar kind of perversity is at work in the concept of form-making when viewed as a detached operation, independent from the immanent demands and laws of the object to be formed. In any case, I would imagine that the retrospective infatuation with the aura of the socially doomed craftsman is quite compatible with the disdainfully trumped-up attitude of his successor, the expert. Proud of his expertise and as unpolished as his tables and chairs, the expert disregards those reflections needed in this age which no longer possesses anything to grasp onto. It is impossible to do without the expert; it is impossible in this age of commercial means of production to recreate that state before the division of labor which society has irretrievably obliterated. But likewise, it is impossible to raise the expert to the measure of all things. His disillusioned modernity, which claims to have shed all ideologies, is easily appropriated into the mask of the petty bourgeois routine. Handicraft becomes hand craftiness. Good handicraft means the fittingness of means to an end. The ends are certainly not independent of the means. The means have their own logic, a logic which points beyond them. If the fittingness of the means becomes an end in itself, it becomes fetishized. The handworker mentality begins to produce the opposite effect from its original intention, when it was used to fight the silk smoking jacket and the beret. It hinders the objective reason behind productive forces instead of allowing it to unfold. Whenever handicraft is established as a norm today, one must closely examine the intention. The concept of handicraft stands in close relationship to function. Its functions, however, are by no means necessarily enlightened or advanced.

The concept of imagination, like that of handicraft, must not be adopted without critical analysis. Psychological triviality—imagination as nothing but the image of something not yet present—is clearly insufficient. As an interpretation, it explains merely what is determined by imagination in artistic processes, and, I presume, also in the

purposeful arts. Walter Benjamin once defined imagination as the ability to interpolate in minutest detail. Undeniably, such a definition accomplishes much more than current views which tend either to elevate the concept into an immaterial heaven or to condemn it on objective grounds. Imagination in the production of a work of representational art is not pleasure in free invention, in creation *ex nihilo*. There is no such thing in any art, even in autonomous art, the realm to which Loos restricted imagination. Any penetrating analysis of the autonomous work of art concludes that the additions invented by the artist above and beyond the given state of materials and forms are *miniscule* and of limited value. On the other hand, the reduction of imagination to an anticipatory adaptation to material ends is equally inadequate; it transforms imagination into an eternal sameness. It is impossible to ascribe Le Corbusier's powerful imaginative feats completely to the relationship between architecture and the human body, as he does in his own writings. Clearly there exists, perhaps imperceptible in the materials and forms which the artist acquires and develops something more than material and forms. Imagination means to *innervate* this something. This is not as absurd a notion as it may sound. For the forms, even the materials, are by no means merely given by nature, as an unreflective artist might easily presume. History has accumulated in them, and spirit permeates them. What they contain is not a positive law; and yet, their content emerges as a sharply outlined figure of the problem. Artistic imagination awakens these accumulated elements by becoming aware of the innate problematic of the material. The minimal progress of imagination responds to the wordless question posed to it by the materials and forms in their quiet and elemental language. Separate impulses, even purpose and immanent formal laws, are thereby fused together. An interaction takes place between purpose, space, and material. None of these facets makes up any one Ur-phenomenon to which all the others can be reduced. It is here that the insight furnished by philosophy that no thought can lead to an absolute beginning—that such absolutes are the products of abstraction—exerts its influence on aesthetics. Hence music, which had so long emphasized the supposed primacy of the individual tone, had to discover finally the

more complex relationships of its components. The tone receives meaning only within the functional structure of the system, without which it would be a merely physical entity. Superstition alone can hope to extract from it a latent aesthetic structure. One speaks, with good reason, of a sense of space (*Raumgefühl*) in architecture. But this sense of space is not a pure, abstract essence, not a sense of spatiality itself, since space is only conceivable as concrete space, within specific dimensions. A sense of space is closely connected with purposes. Even when architecture attempts to elevate this sense beyond the realm of purposefulness, it is still simultaneously immanent in the purpose. The success of such a synthesis is the principle criterion for great architecture. Architecture inquires: how can a certain purpose become space; through which forms, which materials? All factors relate reciprocally to one another. Architectonic imagination is, according to this conception of it, the ability to articulate space purposefully. It permits purposes to become space. It constructs forms according to purposes. Conversely, space and the sense of space can become more than impoverished purpose only when imagination impregnates them with purposefulness. Imagination breaks out of the immanent connections of purpose, to which it owes its very existence.

I am fully conscious of the ease with which concepts like a sense of space can degenerate into clichés, in the end even be applied to arts and crafts. Here I feel the limits of the non-expert who is unable to render these concepts sufficiently precise although they have been so enlightening in modern architecture. And yet, I permit myself a certain degree of speculation: the sense of space, in contradistinction to the abstract idea of space, corresponds in the visual realm to musicality in the acoustical. Musicality cannot be reduced to an abstract conception of time—for example, the ability, however beneficial, to conceive of the time units of a metronome without having to listen to one. Similarly, the sense of space is not limited to spatial images, even though these are probably a prerequisite for every architect if he is to read his outlines and blueprints the way a musician reads his score. A sense of space seems to demand more, namely that something

38 can occur to the artist out of space itself; this cannot be something arbitrary in space and indifferent toward space. Analogously, the musician invents his melodies, indeed all his musical structures, out of time itself, out of the need to organize time. Mere time relationships do not suffice, since they are indifferent toward the concrete musical event; nor does the invention of individual musical passages or complexes, since their time structures and time relationships are not conceived along with them. In the productive sense of space, purpose takes over to a large extent the role of content, as opposed to the formal constituents which the architect creates out of space. The tension between form and content which makes all artistic creation possible communicates itself through purpose especially in the purpose-oriented arts. The new "objective" asceticism does contain therefore an element of truth; unmediated subjective expression would indeed be inadequate for architecture. Where only such expression is striven for, the result is not architecture, but filmsets, at times, as in the old Golem film, even good ones. The position of subjective expression, then, is occupied in architecture by the function for the subject. Architecture would thus attain a higher standard the more intensely it reciprocally mediated the two extremes—formal construction and function.

The subject's function, however, is not determined by some generalized person of an unchanging physical nature but by concrete social norms. Functional architecture represents the rational character as opposed to the suppressed instincts of empirical subjects, who, in the present society, still seek their fortunes in all conceivable nooks and crannies. It calls upon a human potential which is grasped in principle by our advanced consciousness, but which is suffocated in most men, who have been kept spiritually impotent. Architecture worthy of human beings thinks better of men than they actually are. It views them in the way they could be according to the status of their own productive energies as embodied in technology. Architecture contradicts the needs of the here and now as soon as it proceeds to serve those needs—without simultaneously representing any absolute or lasting ideology. Architecture still remains, as Loos's book

title complained seventy years ago, a cry into emptiness. The fact that the great architects from Loos to Le Corbusier and Scharoun were able to realize only a small portion of their work in stone and concrete cannot be explained solely by the reactions of unreasonable contractors and administrators (although that explanation must not be underestimated). This fact is conditioned by a social antagonism over which the greatest architecture has no power: the same society which developed human productive energies to unimaginable proportions has chained them to conditions of production imposed upon them; thus the people who in reality constitute the productive energies become deformed according to the measure of their working conditions. This fundamental contradiction is most clearly visible in architecture. It is just as difficult for architecture to rid itself of the tensions which this contradiction produces as it is for the consumer. Things are not universally correct in architecture and universally incorrect in men. Men suffer enough injustice, for their consciousness and unconsciousness are trapped in a state of minority; they have not, so to speak, come of age. This nonage hinders their identification with their own concerns. Because architecture is in fact both autonomous and purpose-oriented, it cannot simply negate men as they are. And yet it must do precisely that if it is to remain autonomous. If it would bypass mankind *tel quel*, then it would be accommodating itself to what would be a questionable anthropology and even ontology. It was not merely by chance that Le Corbusier envisioned human prototypes. Living men, even the most backward and conventionally naive, have the right to the fulfillment of their needs, even though those needs may be false ones. Once thought supersedes without consideration the subjective desires for the sake of truly objective needs, it is transformed into brutal oppression. So it is with the *volonté générale* against the *volonté de tous*. Even in the false needs of a human being there lives a bit of freedom. It is expressed in what economic theory once called the "use value" as opposed to the "exchange value." Hence there are those to whom legitimate architecture appears as an enemy; it withholds from them that which they, by their very nature, want and even need.

Beyond the phenomenon of the "cultural lag," this anti-nomy may have its origin in the development of the concept of art. Art, in order to be art according to its own formal laws, must be crystallized in autonomous form. This constitutes its truth content; otherwise, it would be subservient to that which it negates by its very existence. And yet, as a human product, it is never completely removed from humanity. It contains as a constitutive element something of that which it necessarily resists. Where art obliterates its own memory, forgetting that it is only there for others, it becomes a fetish, a self-conscious and thereby relativized absolute. Such was the dream of *Jugendstil* beauty. But art is also compelled to strive for pure self-immanence if it is not to become sacrificed to fraudulence. The result is a quid pro quo. An activity which envisions as its subject a liberated, emancipated humanity, possible only in a transformed society, appears in the present state as an adaptation to a technology which has degenerated into an end in itself, into a self-purpose. Such an apotheosis of objectification is the irreconcilable opponent of art. The result, moreover, is not mere appearance. The more consistently both autonomous and so-called applied art reject their own magical and mythical origins and follow their own formal laws, the greater the danger of such an adaptation becomes. Art possesses no sure means to counter such a danger. Thorstein Veblen's aporia is thus repeated: before 1900, he demanded that men think purely technologically, causally, mechanistically in order to overcome the living deceit of their world of images. He thereby sanctioned the objective categories of that economy which he criticized; in a free state, men would no longer be subservient to a technology which, in fact, existed only for them; it would be there to serve them. However, in the present epoch men have been absorbed into technology and have left only their empty shells behind, as if they had passed into it their better half. Their own consciousness has been objectified in the face of technology, as if objective technology had in some sense the right to criticize consciousness. Technology is there for men: this is a plausible proposition, but it has been degraded to the vulgar ideology of regressionism. This is evident in the fact that one need only invoke it to be rewarded from all sides with enthu-

siastic understanding. The whole situation is somehow false; nothing in it can smooth over the contradiction. On the one hand, an imagined utopia, free from the binding purposes of the existing order, would become powerless, a detached ornament, since it must take its elements and structure from that very order. On the other, any attempt to ban the utopian factor, like a prohibition of images, immediately falls victim to the spell of the prevailing order.

The concern of functionalism is a subordination to usefulness. What is not useful is assailed without question because developments in the arts have brought its inherent aesthetic insufficiency into the open. The merely useful, however, is interwoven with relationships of guilt, the means to the devastation of the world, a hopelessness which denies all but deceptive consolations to mankind. But even if this contradiction can never be ultimately eliminated, one must take a first step in trying to grasp it; in bourgeois society, usefulness has its own dialectic. The useful object would be the highest achievement, an anthropomorphized "thing," the reconciliation with objects which are no longer closed off from humanity and which no longer suffer humiliation at the hands of men. Childhood perception of technical things promises such a state; they appear as images of a near and helpful spirit, cleansed of profit motivation. Such a conception was not unfamiliar to the theorists of social utopias. It provides a pleasant refuge from true development, and allows a vision of useful things which have lost their coldness. Mankind would no longer suffer from the "thingly" character of the world,⁽⁸⁾ and likewise "things" would come into their own. Once redeemed from their own "thingliness," "things" would find their purpose. But in present society all usefulness is displaced, bewitched. Society deceives us when it says that it allows things to appear as if they are there by mankind's will. In fact, they are produced for profit's sake; they satisfy human needs only incidentally. They call forth new needs and maintain them according to the profit motive. Since what is useful and beneficial to man, cleansed of human domination and exploitation, would be correct, nothing is more aesthetically unbearable than the present shape of things, subjugated and inter-

40 nally deformed into their opposite. The *raison d'être* of all autonomous art since the dawning of the bourgeois era is that only useless objects testify to that which may have at one point been useful; it represents correct and fortunate use, a contact with things beyond the antithesis between use and uselessness. This conception implies that men who desire betterment must rise up against practicability. If they overvalue it and react to it, they join the camp of the enemy. It is said that work does not defile. Like most proverbial expressions, this covers up the converse truth; exchange defiles useful work. The curse of exchange has overtaken autonomous art as well. In autonomous art, the useless is contained within its limited and particular form; it is thus helplessly exposed to the criticism waged by its opposite, the useful. Conversely in the useful, that which is now the case is closed off to its possibilities. The obscure secret of art is the fetishistic character of goods and wares. Functionalism would like to break out of this entanglement; and yet, it can only rattle its chains in vain as long as it remains trapped in an entangled society.

I have tried to make you aware of certain contradictions whose solution cannot be delineated by a non-expert. It is indeed doubtful whether they can be solved today at all. To this extent, I could expect you to criticize me for the uselessness of my argumentation. My defense is implicit in my thesis that the concepts of useful and useless cannot be accepted without due consideration. The time is over when we can isolate ourselves in our respective tasks. The object at hand demands the kind of reflection which objectivity (*Sachlichkeit*) generally rebuked in a clearly non-objective manner. By demanding immediate legitimation of a thought, by demanding to know what good that thought is now, the thought is usually brought to a standstill at a point where it can offer insights which one day might even improve praxis in an unpredictable way. Thought has its own coercive impulse, like the one you are familiar with in your work with your material. The work of an artist, whether or not it is directed toward a particular purpose, can no longer proceed naively on a prescribed path. It manifests a crisis which demands that the expert—regardless of his prideful craftsmanship—go

beyond his craft in order to satisfy it. He must do this in two ways. First, with regard to social things; he must account for the position of his work in society and for the social limits which he encounters on all sides. This consideration becomes crucial in problems concerning city planning, even beyond the tasks of reconstruction, where architectonic questions collide with social questions such as the existence or non-existence of a collective social subject. It hardly needs mentioning that city planning is insufficient so long as it centers on particular instead of collective social ends. The merely immediate, practical principles of city planning do not coincide with those of a truly rational conception free from social irrationalities; they lack that collective social subject which must be the prime concern of city planning. Herein lies one reason why city planning threatens either to degenerate into chaos or to hinder the productive architectonic achievement of individuals.

Secondly, and I would like to emphasize this aspect to you, architecture, indeed every purposeful art, demands constant *aesthetic* reflection. I know how suspect the word “aesthetic” must sound to you. You think perhaps of professors who, with their eyes raised to heaven, spew forth formalistic laws of eternal and everlasting beauty, which are no more than recipes for the production of ephemeral, classicist kitsch. In fact, the opposite must be the case in true aesthetics. It must absorb precisely those objections which it once raised in principle against all artists. Aesthetics would condemn itself if it continued unreflectively, speculatively, without relentless self-criticism. Aesthetics as an integral facet of philosophy awaits a new impulse which must come from reflective efforts. Hence recent artistic praxis has turned to aesthetics. Aesthetics becomes a practical necessity once it becomes clear that concepts like usefulness and uselessness in art, like the separation of autonomous and purpose-oriented art, imagination, and ornament, must once again be discussed before the artist can act positively or negatively according to such categories. Whether you like it or not, you are being pushed daily to considerations, aesthetic considerations, which transcend your immediate tasks. Your experience calls Molière’s Monsieur Jourdain to mind, who

discovers to his amazement in studying rhetoric that he has been speaking prose for his entire life. Once your activity compels you to aesthetic considerations, you deliver yourself up to its power. You can no longer break off and conjure up ideas arbitrarily in the name of pure and thorough expertise. The artist who does not pursue aesthetic thought energetically tends to lapse into dilettantish hypothesis and groping justifications for the sake of defending his own intellectual construct. In music, Pierre Boulez, one of the most technically competent contemporary composers, extended constructivism to its extreme in some of his compositions; subsequently, however, he emphatically announced the necessity of aesthetics. Such as aesthetics would not presume to herald principles which establish the key to beauty or ugliness itself. This discretion alone would place the problem of ornament in a new light. Beauty today can have no other measure except the depth to which a work resolves contradictions. A work must cut through the contradictions and overcome them, not by covering them up, but by pursuing them. Mere formal beauty, whatever that might be, is empty and meaningless; the beauty of its content is lost in the pre-artistic sensual pleasure of the observer. Beauty is either the resultant of force vectors or it is nothing at all. A modified aesthetics would outline its own object with increasing clarity as it would begin to feel more intensely the need to investigate it. Unlike traditional aesthetics, it would not necessarily view the concept of art as its given correlate. Aesthetic thought today must surpass art by thinking art. It would thereby surpass the current opposition of purposeful and purpose-free, under which the producer must suffer as much as the observer.

Source Note: "Functionalism Today" (Functionalismus Heute) 41
was originally a lecture given by Theodor Adorno at a meeting of the German Werkbund in Berlin on 23 October 1965. It was first published in German in Neue Rundschau, Vol. 77, No. 4, 1966.

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1. See Adolf Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften*, I, Franz Glück, ed. (Vienna/Munich, 1962), p. 314 ff.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 282ff.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 393.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
8. Le Corbusier, *Mein Werk* (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 306.

Translators' Notes:

- (1) The "Neue Sachlichkeit" movement, one of the main post-expressionist trends in German art, is commonly translated as "New Objectivity." The word *sachlich*, however, carries a series of connotations. Along with its emphasis on the "thing" (*Sache*), it implies a frame of mind of being "matter of fact," "down to earth."
- (2) *Gerechtigkeit* implies not just "fittingness" or "appropriateness," but even a stronger legal or moral "justice."
- (3) The word *Zweck* appears throughout Adorno's speech, both alone and in various combinations. It permeates the tradition of German aesthetics since Kant. While it basically means "purpose," it must sometimes be rendered in English as "goal" or "end" (as in "means and end," *Mittel und Zweck*). Hence there is a certain consistency in Adorno's use of the word which cannot always be maintained in English.
- (4) *Kunstgewerbe* carries perhaps more seriousness than "arts and crafts." It covers the range of the applied arts.
- (5) The word *Handwerk* in German means both "handwork" and "craftsmanship" or "skill." Because Adorno later emphasizes the "hand" aspect, we have decided on "handicraft."
- (6) The reference here is unclear. It means literally "Field (or Acre) Street." Perhaps he is referring to a real street, a movement, or a historical place or event. We have not been able to trace it.
- (7) It is unclear in the original text to what extent the following argument is Adorno's or Loos's. We have tried, to some extent, to maintain the ambiguity.
- (8) The word *Ding* ("thing") is also attached to numerous traditions in German thought and therefore has a certain philosophical or poetical importance (hence the "thingliness of things"). Heidegger and Rilke, for example, both tried to elevate the notion of *Ding* to a new essential and existential status.

Figure Credits

1 Photograph of Bloch from Ernst Bloch, *Man On His Own* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); photograph of Adorno from Theodor W. Adorno, *Text + Kritik* (Munich: GmbH, 1977) taken by Wolfgang Haut.

Postscript

Roberto Masiero

Translated by Diane Ghirardo

42 “You are me,” wrote Adolf Loos to Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein on his first journey to Finland did not reject Karl Kraus’s journal *Fackel*. Schönberg wrote to Karl Kraus in a dedication to his *Harmonielehre*, “I have learned more from you than one should if one wants to remain autonomous.” Kraus dedicated his *Zeitstrophen* book to Loos. Loos was to say in his *Rundfrage über Karl Kraus*, “He stands on the threshold of a new age and indicates to mankind that their path is far removed from God and nature.” Wittgenstein is acknowledged in Loos, and Schönberg in Kraus and Loos.

The young Adorno arrived on this turnabout Viennese scene (whose map of relationships was to be greatly extended and articulated) during the 1920s, and his work was to be marked by it. His cultural itinerary began with his reading of Kassner (fantasy as comprehension of physiognomy), the tragic visions of Paul Ernst (in his own way a student of Weininger), the young Lukács (taken to task by Adorno during the 1930s), and the rethinking of history and sociology of music in Karl Bücher and Paul Bekker; and he found a center of theoretical elaboration in the *Harmonielehre* and music of Schönberg. Wittgenstein, Kraus, Loos, and many others in the Viennese universe would similarly become ‘occasions’, ‘stimuli’, and ‘symptoms’, in relation to particular ‘places’ in his own critical development, in his own critical theory.

But Adorno was not a man to forget, as he demonstrated in *Parva Aesthetica*, the collection of essays that contains “Functionalism Today.” Yet in his critical theory these Viennese figures are in no way cited as exemplars. This can be justified only if one supposes that in spite of their mutual identification, Adorno on the one hand sensed his substantial differences with the radical operation of Schönberg’s aesthetics, and on the other was affirming his own overcoming of that Viennese universe who so fascinated him. Similarly the relationship between Loos and Adorno must be understood within the context of the ‘universe’ of turn-of-the-century Vienna and Adorno’s efforts to overcome the theories of, for example, Loos; efforts which Adorno made throughout the early period of his participation in the Institute for Social Research at

Frankfurt, the American period marked by his *Minima Moralia*, and that of his subsequent return as director of the Institute in Frankfurt.

Adorno initially seized upon Vienna as a privileged place of ‘culture’. That culture was swollen with the various differences among the disciplines, extending to Musil’s production of *The Man Without Qualities*. Adorno would have been able to initiate a critique of the culture; however, he insistently denied all functioning of truth in the critique of culture, precisely in the name of the autonomy of disciplines, an autonomy that signified and signifies distance and the relative possibility of judgment.

In this Adorno practiced his attachment to an unresolved Kantian affirmation that goes like this: “It is possible to posit the factual character of the disciplines without mentioning the noumenal.” In other words, the disciplines are disciplines precisely because their foundations are in another area, are inexpressible. The factual character of the disciplines rests in their very thinking. So it was for Schönberg as a musician and, though only in part, for Loos as an architect.

The moralistic-therapeutic critique of culture tends to reunify the criticism of the foundations with the criticism of the discipline itself (its sociological actualization). It does not come to terms with autonomy, which is at once a product of and a reason for the social division of labor. But here is the first substantial difference. While for Schönberg the function-principle is entirely within the abstraction of music, for Loos the function-principle has mystical Enlightenment bases. The autonomy of Schönberg’s music embraces the total criticism of society, its absolute detachment; in the architecture of Loos, through the unitary recompositioning of the function-principle, it is once again subjected (even if in a tragic way) to the principle of heteronomy.

We can use one of Benjamin’s propositions to attempt a synthesis of the process extending from Loos to Adorno: “Loos’s principal object . . . was to separate the work of art from the object of use, just as Kraus’s principal scope

was to hold the work of art separate from information.” Benjamin’s affirmation ends up being entirely paradoxical with respect to traditional interpretations of both Loos and Kraus, but it has a profound content of truth and can also synthesize Adorno’s position in this context.

According to this scheme, the work of art would tend increasingly to ineffability, to the inexpressible (Symbolism, Rilke, . . .), to that which becomes possible only by its “liberation” from the function implicit in objects of use. What permits the ineffability of art would be precisely the expansion of the form as a result of a function. In this sense the ineffable is not the final point of bourgeois art but a stage toward the autonomy of art as a maximum of estrangement, and its ineffability is present in all aesthetic phenomena of the bourgeois era, thanks to the total dependence of function on the means of production and on the dialectic of market-production.

Technics guarantees the expansion of the form-function relationship. It has served as the medium for the production of meaning ever since the aesthetic of the eighteenth century. More precisely, the Enlightenment utopia was realized in the unity of technics and meaning, and the ideology of progress operated on it. The content of technics was the very content of progress (it mattered little if its “reason” was based on the pure form of production). At the same time, precisely to the extent that the foundation of technics was considered only in its autonomy and in relation to the form of production, the entire universe of forms, the entire memory, the entire past could rise to the bounds of reproducibility. To Loos, the modern, its surroundings, that which had to be combated, presented itself as the will to revive old forms or else to invent them again. He grasped (and this is very important) that there was no substantial difference between the two choices. His answer was radical and opposed the autonomous content of function, never invoking ends beyond those of simple use. He repropounded ‘values’ not in their form but in their substance, as inexpressible. To design a building ‘technical correctness’ and the ‘right human approach’ were sufficient. Spontaneity guaranteed correctness and rightness. Moreover, the relationship be-

tween form and function had to ‘be revealed’ not explicitly (this was a great Enlightenment illusion) but as an act of will of the thing itself, as a ‘manifestation’.

Clearly to Adorno this would have seemed non-dialectical thinking. In fact the immediate sociological result of this Loosian ‘aesthetic’ suggests a chain between thought and action that can be sustained only by way of a silently metaphysical and anti-dialectical presupposition: God produces the artist, the artist the epoch, the epoch the artisan, the artisan the button. If part of the nineteenth century drama is connected to the processes of the genocidal destruction of the artisan in industry, with a relative degree of ‘nostalgia’, Loos illusorily resolved it by seeming to give rational dignity to artisan work (in accordance with the sense of the epoch that the artist cannot participate since he is not understood and is excluded from it) which from private neuroses (those of the Biedermeier) must be transformed into pure rationality (must renounce ornament). This reconciliation offered against the commonplace occurs through the existence of a ‘superior sphere’: that of the possible spontaneity of the relationship form-function. The result with respect to ‘aesthetics’ would be to represent from the beginning the sublime . . . to make it a science, with a pact not to mention the noumenal.

Another consequence of Benjamin’s proposition is this: once the separation between object of use and object of art is accomplished, through the ineffability of art, all the divisions between the arts collapse. This does not entail a rationalist re-edition of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* so much as a real and true pre-Hegelian regression which would be entirely unacceptable to Adorno. It would be falling back into the universe of utopia without being able to support it by a plan. For Loos a radical hatred of ornament, of the superfluous, was inevitable. But for Adorno, while this hatred was justifiable with respect to a moral, what moral, he asked, could exist where the superfluous was transformed into the necessary? And what ‘rigor’ does an analysis have that excludes, in the form of hatred, precisely that which produced it?

44 If it is true, as Loos affirms, that ornaments do not permit invention, it is also true that the “phenomenon he announced now wants to be expanded” (the entire language cannot be invented), expanded by accomplishing the transformation (unthinkable for Loos) of the work of art that is purely constructed, narrowly objective, “sworn enemy of anything that knows the applied arts”—precisely the applied arts by virtue of their mimesis of functional forms. The more that is invented the more uncertain it is that one can invent. Loos grasps the tragedy of the modern, seeking to resolve the aporia between that which becomes and that which submits to laws of identity and recognition, by means of a metaphysical refoundation of values (which permits the astonishing evolution of his design thought). In this he is not at all the precursor of the technological “animus” of the Bauhaus, even though he sought to liberate the object of use from the ineffable (that is, from the aesthetic—in this his criticism is always social) by means of a real and true ethic of silence and from the guaranteed spontaneity of a well-wrought affirmation only apparently similar to the final proposition of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*: “to remain silent about that which one cannot speak.” Adorno, by contrast, knows that from this ineffable there can be no liberation; rather, in it one can realize, also through technics, the reawakening of that which has been forgotten.

For Adorno the task of art is to introduce chaos into order; for Loos the task of art is to introduce order into chaos through the separation of works of art from objects of use and through the silent recognition of that which produces both form and function.

Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament

Ernst Bloch

Translated by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith

Part One

We also take on the form of our surroundings. Not only does the man make his world, but the world makes the man. *Homo faber* and also *homo fabricatus*¹—both are equally true; they are dialectically interrelated. The very way in which a chair causes us to sit has—at least at times—an effect on our general posture. And as for the arrangement of the furniture in a room, as telling as it can be of the arranger, at the same time it clearly contains him and his guests in its form. So, for example, the more approachable and gregarious personality is expressed in the abundance of seats offered in his rooms. On the other hand, even more telling is the room which lacks ample chairs but whose walls are richly decorated with elevated *objets d'art*. Hence the manner in which objects fill a space generally reflects the manners of those who are served by them.

Part Two

Of course, these manners never depend solely on the taste of the individual, of Mr. Jones or Mr. Doe. They are never as individual as the name on the door, notwithstanding any so-called personal touches. The most appropriate posture in the chair, as well as that of the chair itself, is determined by the social *habitus* of an entire era, i.e., by its fashion-determining class and, not least, by the petty bourgeoisie's imitation of the taste of the ruling class, by the latter perhaps most revealingly. This relationship is most visible in the visible, in exterior and interior architecture, both of which dominate by imposing the forms of those who dominate. This relationship, then, is what is called style. Up until the first half of the last century, there existed a relatively genuine architectonic style, i.e., one without the deceptions of a class which set the fashion and its false creations. However, especially in the realm of home decoration and construction, the appearance of the *nouveau riche* bourgeoisie brought with it a decline in craftsmanship, enduring mediocrity, and the swindle of mechanical reproduction. This trend served that entire counterfeit enterprise which can be called the *Gründerzeit*² of art history.

We are a direct result of this period even though it is

barely past as a social era. Through its products, it became clear how our so-called artistic taste *should not taste*; in it we saw bad taste. Nothing should be as it was then, when the *parvenu* wore a false mask, when there were coverings everywhere, stuffed Renaissance furniture, overly high plaster ceilings, and plaster busts of Goethe and Schiller around. Enough of all this; unless of course such abominable kitsch—the petty bourgeoisie tapestry circa 1880, the halberd with a tiny thermometer on its plush post—was to be taken surrealistically, as a harmless caricature. Of course, à la Werkbund-Bauhaus, such things were and are not even under consideration; those movements strove to liberate themselves from such unmitigated kitsch, not only aesthetically, but also morally, out of honesty. And so, around the turn of the century and into the following decades, there arose an asceticism, partially indebted to socialism, against swindle and extravagance, and absolutely anti-ornament. It was intended to educate to pure purposive-functional form,³ and thereby to make the pure table, for example, sharp against, as Adolf Loos said, the scabrous and cancerous ornament. Indeed, every ornament became suspect, was condemned for being scabrous and cancerous. This bolstered a general disgust with the epigonal nature and decadence of the *Gründerzeit*, an aversion to its attachment to long since faded, indiscriminately mimicked styles that had lost their validity. But it never confronted the question of whether the social *habitus*, which had posited the decayed charm of the *Gründerzeit*, in the meantime had itself become any more honest. Or whether the ornament-free honesty of pure functionalism⁴ might not itself be transformed into a fig leaf which concealed the not quite so great honesty of the conditions behind it. In any case, from this time on, knightly castles no longer served as buffets, and entrances to railway stations à la Palladio were no longer built to mask ticket windows and train tracks within.

Part Three

Of course, since there was suddenly a demand for more reality than appearance, we were forced to give up our most prized souvenirs. The reason, according to pure purpose, was that after all this time a smooth spoon or some

46 other implement would be easier to handle than a senselessly decorated one. The small devices were there precisely to be useful, effort-saving; they and their own clear form made the break with embellishments. Naturally, “honest” clarity was praised above all in such desertions, and ranged from naked stainless steel chairs to interior walls of unplastered rough tiles. Yet it is still striking that such thoroughly ornamental decorations as Oriental carpets are foregrounded with particular delight against the background of such clarity. The “honest” was the trump ever since the earlier Werkbund, even if its bareness called attention to itself and required Kilims, Kirmans, and Kazaks to disguise it. And yet, even granting that this asceticism and deliberate purity without false appearances are self-consistent, the question persists; what could this kind of honesty or even “new objectivity”⁵ mean in real terms? That is, in terms of a less clear, perhaps even consciously opaque social life? The obscurity was maintained even as a new *clarté* was being created outside of the realm of the technical arts with their fig leaves and shadowcasting light. Claudel once sang of the new *clarté*, “Into the waves of the divine light/the building master places planfully/a stone framework like a filter/and grants the whole construct the water of a pearl.” Even then, no, precisely then, the inhabitants though beautifully illuminated in this transparency, could not yet discover their new humanity, indeed nor even their old one. For especially in the built, exterior space of architecture, the pre-existing life-forms clouded the water of the pearl, not only in a narrow, social sense, but also technologically. The accelerating pace, the desire to break all records, and the restless annihilation of human interaction, all these introduced an unprecedented problematization into the emphatic *clarté* of the Lichtstadt (radiant city) itself. So much greenery, free space, hygiene, overview, serenity, visible dignity had been projected. But time and again, the conditions within its confines and those outside did not conform to the same ideals, and the architecture could not establish alone a small enclave of realized inhabitability. The pace of work and its traffic, the objectification of the means precisely by disassociating them from any purpose, end, meaning, and humane use, have largely transformed our cities into a dangerous nightmare. In our

transformed cityscapes, man has remained—or more accurately has become—at best peripheral to the measure of things. Contradictions are deeply embedded. No humanitarian planning or just regulation of work has yet been able to manage even the chaos of the traffic, not to mention the termite existence in box houses. A modern urban planner, Doxiadis, no romantic reactionary, bears witness in his book *Architecture in Transition*: monstrous, schematically rigid skyscrapers project out of a raging sea of lacquered tin. This life and its built space are clearly and painfully distant from the humanitarian *clarté* of the kind Le Corbusier had once intended for his “new Attica” constructed in steel, glass, and light. And time and again, in a realm of general alienation, where clarity is merely an ideology of monotonous vacuity, precisely the purposively pursued form⁶ of implements and buildings increasingly forfeits all differentiation involved in differing formations of purpose.⁷ Forms are no longer differentiated humanely, true to purpose: bungalow, airport (minus runway), theater, university, slaughter house—all are rendered uniform in the domineering form of the glass box. An unquestionably high price has been paid by this kind of clarity for its dissociation from the patchwork of decorative kitsch of the *Gründerzeit*; geometrical monotony, alienated from purpose, together with an undernourishment of the imagination and extreme self-alienation, all represented by this coldness, this vacuous non-aura.

Part Four

From this arises another position, another posture; other ideas begin to come to mind. It was implied above that the *Gründerzeit* has not yet been superseded if it still serves as a necessary foil, if it is still allowed to dictate the poverty of any richness, to force the hypocritical reaction of total bareness. But this is no longer the architectural task, as it was for Loos, when an urgent *medicina mentis* was needed against the raging scabs and cancers. So it was too, and probably remains, a necessary remedy in other places against a Red *Gründerzeit* and its corresponding Stalinist style. And yet, something else, the sentence published forty years ago in *The Spirit of Utopia* is still valid: “Birth forceps must be smooth, but by no

means sugar tongs.”⁸ This is valid, that is, for all birth forceps. The strictly functional⁹ implement serves and emancipates us best, indeed only when it is free of decoration. Art in general, furthermore, is not there for decoration; it is in principle too good for that. And so it is correct that art has been liberated from this merely luxurious employment of decoration. However, this assertion has nothing in common with the application to all interior and exterior architecture of forceps purity, which serves only to elevate the depravity of ornamental imagination so as to justify the egg cartons or glass boxes. And we must be reminded and warned, objectively, again and again: circumstances do not allow a general extension and maintenance of the sanitary purity of pure functionalism.¹⁰ Sociologically, such purity, an ideological kind of clarity, is and remains a distracting, deceptive smokescreen. It is not without reason that it occasionally joined forces with other arts outside of architecture which also strove for the smoothness of neoclassicism, as if the latter’s external regularity once and for all excused a lack of imagination. It is true, of course, that genuine classicism, ever since the nobler times of simplicity and peaceful grandeur,¹¹ had no special fecundity when it came to ornaments. Yet now it plays a different role, accompanying the supposedly pure geometrization arising in a void together with the artificially advanced death of ornament. “Duke, this Mortimer happened to die conveniently,” is the line from *Maria Stuart*; the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the exultation upon ornament’s death and the synthetically manufactured lack of imagination. And so, enough said on the ornamental wasteland, unique in spite of everything, especially when compared to the precision enchanted forest of the primitive, of East Asian, Islamic, Gothic, or Baroque art.

But will the limbs of this seriously paralyzed body ever be revived? Is the laming seizure not even more shocking and extraordinary since it has struck the once blooming and comprehensive art of architecture? The problem is as serious as it is urgent; perhaps it can be taken as a slight sign of improvement that the superstitious ornament taboo no longer wields such absolute power. At least not in the way it did in Loos’s day when it was in full strength

and was employed, albeit exaggeratedly, as a *medicina mentis*. Increasingly architects may no longer conceive of themselves as joyfully excused from the demands of ornamental architectural imagination. The formations of their figures may finally indulge in the suspect wave and sunflower contours of Art Nouveau, in which van de Velde had his origins. The limbs, artificially paralyzed for so long, are slowly reviving in the wave-like interior stairways of Scharoun’s Berlin Philharmonic Hall; the movement began even earlier, in a completely different way, in the exterior contours of Frank Lloyd Wright’s buildings. In these examples, the constraints of the late-capitalist rat-race and alienation are confronted with something significantly new and different, namely the transition beyond the overall railway-station character¹² of our existence. These are mere beginnings, certainly, and they are constantly threatened; they too often become calcified forms; a temporary return of identity takes hold and architecture becomes for the first time merely a faceless screen, an anti-flower. But now—and this is truly amazing—how is it possible that at the same time, in the formation of the same space, five steps from the pale glass box, contemporaneous painting and sculpture wander off on an entirely different path, become exorbitant?¹³ It is not a question here of their special caliber—which in some cases was extremely high—but of the astonishing contrast *vis à vis* the undernourished architectural imagination, of the boldness, of the imaginative extravagance of these entire genres. Even a quick pursuit of the high and low points¹⁴ of the movement leads unavoidably into an open, unmarked, and therefore yet uncritical and uncriticized voyage for the imagination. A journey from the days of the “Blue Rider” (1912), from both before and then after, from Kandinsky, Franz Marc, de Chirico, Picasso, Chagall, Klee, Max Ernst, from Archipenko, Boccioni, today Henry Moore, Giacometti—to name but a few contrasts. They retrieved exotic flora from their journey, ornamental imagination. These artists avoided above all the danger of a damnably perspicacious talent, which had only produced a monotony of form. In any case, the synchrony is peculiar: an architecture which needed wings, and pictorial and plastic arts which, if anything, could have done with some ballast, given the emphatic repulsive force that has always

48 pushed them up and away from those ever-present fixtures, the leaden commercial buildings (even in Expressionism they had shown signs, surrealistic traits, of their flight away into upper, alternate, and underworlds.) And so, the revealed skeletons of our architecture share space with the literal extravagance of the other fine, but still formative, arts.¹⁵

Part Five

But now: is this temporal coincidence of ice and fire mere chance? In general, after all, there does exist a connection between sober purification and the place made free by it for something quite different, not unlike the relationship between emancipation from the inessential made possible by technological automatization and the leisure achieved thereby for the essential. And yet, if we look more closely at the case at hand, it seems that the split between mere dwelling cubicles¹⁶ and that which had once allowed those buildings to participate in the fine arts (those which form the essential)¹⁷ is a split out of context, without connection. But is, or better, does the split *remain* unmediated if we take into account those signs which could be grouped under the heading “march separately, but toward a united front” (even if those signs were often undesired and certainly unused, above all, still unused architecturally)?¹⁸ This could form a possible, certainly not yet conscious conspiracy which makes the temporal coincidence of the dwelling machine and the excessive plastic and pictorial arts in the end essentially more than mere chance. “Railway-station character” already disappeared as a slogan; but the more internal transition, namely of the unity of the fine arts as a whole, is still buried and obscure, another contributing factor to the ornamental bareness of architecture. But Klee, of all people—yet not really of all people—was at the Bauhaus; Lenbach could certainly never have been there. Or, as another sign of *rapprochement*, a Chagall painting hangs inappropriately, although not as an absolutely foreign body, in the glass foyer of the new Frankfurt theater; this is possibly a more authentic home for it than in the epigonal rigidity of an old Kaiser Wilhelm memorial church. And above all, an especially remarkable simultaneity: in the midst of the first functionalist¹⁹ buildings the Folkwang Museum was opened in Essen; it was

stuffed full of displays of expressionisms—only, of course, in the company of primitive and atavistic art, apart from any kind of metallurgic new world functions and forms. To make up for this, however, purely technological forms, especially metals, are extending increasingly further into contemporary sculpture; we need only think of the perforated hollow tin statues by Henry Moore, or the stylized fine mechanics of even as “literary” a sculptor as Zadkin. To no less a degree, as Hans Curjel has correctly emphasized, the rebellion in form by Picasso, Kandinsky, Boccioni, Kirchner, *et al.* has exerted an influence back on its origins, on Werkbund and Bauhaus, on pure architecture that focused only on the technical. However, the effect has been limited to frame construction and can hardly be said to have aroused a renaissance of ornament, except in a few cases, here and there, where mere evolutionary reform produced revolutionary reversals. This even took place through the channel of literature; for example, Scheerbart’s influence on Bruno Taut. At least this new frame painting did engender an inclination for what we might call qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, construction—to such an extent that, although the effort was never pursued and in fact was even eradicated, veritable living creatures intervened in and emerged from the lines on the drawing board, from a geometry which did not want to remain inorganic. There were a few hopeful signs—but, as can be seen clearly in the conventional figures of the high-rise and the newest of new Brasilia, they have still never retrieved what was lost: the caresses of a Muse. The juxtaposition of pure technology in architecture and the Chagallian in the isolated remaining fine arts²⁰ never overcame the mere contiguity of the latter’s ability to facilitate and emancipate on the one hand and the former’s power of essence on the other.²¹

Part Six

Must it remain thus? Will disassociated formation²² never again become allied? Must architecture alone stop being an art, stop blossoming, indeed stop being as it once was? That it has achieved marvelous feats of engineering technology there is no doubt; but formative imagination is something else. This form of imagination is protean; its everchanging ornamental features are experiments with

us, not just with the skeleton within a building, or even with the building as such. The present dichotomy, with mechanical emancipation and its extension into architecture on the one hand, and expressive abundance liberated in the realms of painting and sculpture on the other, must therefore not be made absolute, functionless, insurmountable. “March separately, but toward a united front”: in the era of transition, in our truly formative,²³ i.e., progressive productions, this should not degenerate into a mere hardening of differences. The very simultaneous appearance of engineering and expressive forms points to a *tertium*, to a more fundamental unity underlying this unfinished epoch. Its railway-station character proves to be both tempting and open in terms of productive possibility, both directing and experimental for each of the two factions of the fine arts²⁴ created by it—whereby architecture never wants to forget that it is a fine art. This Exodus character,²⁵ as such able to unite only via a processive utopian common denominator, offers a set of by no means tranquil, least of all classicistic forms, to budding ornamentation. But even in the sphere of pictorial, plastic, and architectural formations,²⁶ all of the prevailing figurines and figures, all ornamental forms, as details and as wholes, are still through and through excerpts, departures, flights from themselves.²⁷ Easily movable interior spaces; anti-barracks in the city (an idea derived from ships); spanning bridges, which aptly are called bold; pictorial, and sculptural ciphers as drawn lines in things unfinished: all this touched the common point of orientation, inhabitability on the front where we now find ourselves. And only this would again constitute a true honesty of formation, a true justice done to function (but with horizons), both of which gave rise to training in the modern technical arts in the first place, and both of which, in spite of insistent warnings from the realms of painting and sculpture since the days of the “Blue Rider” have been missing from this training thanks to the *sacrificio della fantasia*.

Part Seven

At this point, it is especially advisable to overshoot the mark in order to hit it. Beauty and form which are more than noble simplicity and serene grandeur: without a

doubt, this is the point at stake in the present discussion. But in trying to educate by means of pleasing (thus in the last analysis via classicistic, fixed forms) one must forget that it was precisely the Nazis who built and painted classicistically. One must also consider the young Goethe, standing in front of the Strasburg cathedral in the middle of classicism (to be sure the so-called genuine one), who certainly had no conception of the purity of a glass skyscraper in New York. Indeed, expressly, beauty à la Greque as one of a kind did not exist for him; certainly he did not consider beauty as the entrance way to or as the boundary or fixity of a single principle of art. Instead, the young Goethe discovered a startling principle which arched over the gap between an as yet hardly known primitive art and the Gothic. He daringly formulated this sweeping proposal: “art is long in being formed²⁸ before it is beautiful, yet it is still true, great art, indeed often truer and more beautiful than the beautiful itself.” This statement, made by a man who was then still young, appeared in what was a revolutionary period, i.e., one of transcendent transition, when aesthetics provided for the *humanum*. Today the over-arching category of primitive Gothic has become self-evident; it has expanded and become great through its sympathetic reception in modern painting and sculpture, which have extended it to encompass suspended forms and elastically dynamic space. It has become a thoroughly ornamental style both pictorially and sculpturally: Exodus, as it turns out. Hence the conclusion: he, Goethe, alone—exerting a rebellious influence radically different than in the first periods of modern technological art—could reconcile architecture not with the death of imagination *usque ad finem* but with the other fine arts,²⁹ those which were truly qualified. Then, finally, architecture would once again encompass the pictorial and the plastic, become the main figure in the still “masked decorations of our innermost form” which had already been experimented with in painting and sculpture by Kandinsky and Archipenko. All this returns time and again to the problem of the new ornament, to sculptural excess—in *nuce* when it blossoms in the details of a building, in *entelechia* when it characterizes the all-encompassing principle of the entire building figure. The magnitude of architecture’s sculptural loss can be measured precisely

50 by the emptiness and lack of its ornamental force. There is and remains an abrupt breach of contract, which historically has never been fulfilled or terminated, a gap in the by no means consummated *entelechia* according to which architecture was conceived. Yet this breach can and may not stay unmediated; on the contrary, Vitruvius's postulated unity of *utilitas* and *venustas* (now of transparent fullness)³⁰ summons architecture more demandingly than ever to the fronts—to reassume its still recoverable position as the “city crown” (to use a conceptually modified version of Bruno Taut's term) of all the optical fine and formative arts.³¹

Source Note: “Formative Education, Engineering Form, Ornament” (Bildung, Ingenieurform, Ornament) was originally a lecture given by Ernst Bloch at a meeting of the German Werkbund in Berlin on 23 October 1965. It was first published in German in *Werk und Zeit*, 11/12, Nov./Dec., 1975. This text is published here with the permission of Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main.—Ed.

Translators' Notes: There were several basic problems of translation. First, the style is extremely elliptical. Many of the statements in the original are in fact incomplete sentences. Some of these have been preserved but many have been converted into complete grammatical units. Second, the argument itself is elliptical. Some gaps were filled by the translators (every translation is in part an interpretation), but where possible the logic was fully maintained. Finally, the title already contains one of the most difficult problems of word translation. The German word *Bildung* has been translated throughout as “formative education.” The word, however, is polysemic with numerous connotations. It is derived from the verb *bilden* which means to form, to shape, to take shape, to educate. The noun *Bild* means image or picture. Hence *bildende Künste* are the fine or pictorial arts, literally the “forming arts.” *Bildung* implies then a kind of growth, a process of education through formative experiences (hence the genre of the *Bildungsroman*), and the end-product of that education (culture, cultivation).

1. The flavor of the German is slightly lost here since Bloch uses a proverbial expression which we could not match in English. Unfortunately the characteristic mixture in Bloch's rhetoric of intricate dialectics and colloquialisms is not really conveyed by the Latinate English.

2. Literally “founder time,” the term used to refer to the German Empire at the end of the nineteenth century, according to Gordon A. Craig's *Germany: 1866–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 79, “named after the great manipulators who ‘founded’ gigantic enterprises on the basis of paper and little else and who led millions of Germans in a frenzied dance around the statue of Mammon that ended in exhaustion and, for many, financial ruin.”

3. “Education” here is *Erziehung*, the common word used for school education. “Purposive-functional form” is *Zweckform* (literally “purpose-form”), and is generally translated as “functionalism” throughout.

4. “Functionalism” is here *Zweckform*.

5. The movement *Neue Sachlichkeit*, one of the main trends in German art in the early twentieth century, is commonly translated as “New Objectivity.” The word *sachlich* however carries a series of connotations. Along with its emphasis on the “thing” (*Sache*), it implies a frame of mind, of being “matter of fact,” “down to earth.”

6. “Form” is here *Gestalt*, a slightly more neutral word than *Bildung*. “Purposive” is *zweckmässig*, “according to the purpose or end of the thing.”

7. “Formation of purpose” is *Zweckgestaltung*.

8. The pun is lost here. “Birth forceps” are *Geburtszangen* and “sugar tongs” are *Zuckerzangen*.

9. “Functional” here is *nützlich*, i.e., “practical, useful.”

10. "Functionalism" again *Zweckform*.
11. The phrase is taken from Johann Joachim Winkelmann's "Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Painting and Sculpture" (1755). It characterizes the fundamental nature of Greek art and was the guiding spirit of German classicism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.
12. "Railway-station character" is *Bahnhofhaftigkeit*, literally "railway-stationness."
13. The use of the word "exorbitant" seems to rest on the Latin etymology of the word (especially since Bloch uses *Exorbitanten* and not the germanized version which would be more common). Namely, *exorbitare* (from *ex* + *orbitus*), "to go out of the track." This is supported by the extended spatial and wandering metaphors in this passage.
14. "High and low points" loses the pun and creativity of the German *Hoch- und Tiefstaplerisches*; thus a *Hochstapler* is a con-artist, while *Tiefstaplerisch* is an invention by Bloch (say, high and low con-artists).
15. "Fine, but still formative arts" are the *noch bildende Künste* which were above (page 47) called by their individual names, "pictorial and plastic."
16. "Dwelling cubicles" is even more drastic in German: *Wohnmaschinen*, literally "dwelling machines."
17. "Fine arts (those which form the essential)" loses the pun somewhat, namely *bildende Künste des Wesentlichen*, i.e., "forming (= fine) arts of the essential."
18. Again a proverbial expression or slogan, which translates literally: "march separately, attack together."
19. "Functionalist" again *Zweckform*.
20. "Fine arts" again *bildende Künste*.
21. This seems to be a reversal of the position in Part Five and below in the beginning of Part Six. In both those places he implies that technology (functionalist principles as applied to architecture) facilitated life, eased the burden of the inessential, and hence made room for the essential (fine arts and their ornamentation). Here he associated the emancipation with the (Chagallian) fine arts and the concern for the essential with architecture.
22. "Formation" is *Bilden*, the substantive of the verb.
23. "Formative" is the adjective *bildend* from the verb (literally "forming").
24. "Fine art" here and in the next line again *bildende Kunst*.
25. "This Exodus character" is in German *dieses Exodushafte*, literally "this Exodusness."
26. "Formations" again the substantive *Bilden*.
27. "Excerpts, departures, flights from themselves" is *Auszugs-gestalten ihrer selbst*. *Auszug* means excerpt or abstract, but it is also the germanization of the word Exodus (the flight from Egypt is the *Auszug*).
28. "Being formed" is again the progressive form of *bilden* (*bildend*). Of course for Goethe, one of the founders of the *Bildungsroman* tradition with his *Wilhelm Meister*, *bilden* was a key aesthetic concept.
29. The opposition here is between *Werkkunst* ("work art," technical art") and *bildende Kunst*.
30. This parenthetical statement stands in an unclear relationship to the "postulated unity," though it is probably in apposition,

a contemporary reformulation (*utilitas*—transparency, clarity; 51 *venustas*—fullness, richness).

31. "Formative arts" again *bildende Künste*.

**Report of the Discussion with Theodor W. Adorno
from *Werk und Zeit*, November/December 1965**

Translated by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith

- 52 “I don’t believe that today there exists anything like formative education through form.”

Bloch’s intention, according to Adorno, is essentially to reintroduce into discussion the category of imagination and thereby ornament, as well as all those things which are at the heart of the critique of the *Werkbund* movement. He attempts this on the basis of his insight into an unquestionably critical situation. He, Adorno, on the other hand, reminds us that the concepts of imagination and creativity, as well as all those categories which are for Bloch related to the notion of utopia, ought not to be considered merely as an addition, addendum, or desideratum. Rather these things, says Adorno, must be deduced by coming to grips with the material itself. Thereby he also wants to remind us of what he had said earlier concerning the status of autonomous art, which has of course changed *vis-à-vis* the situation of expressionism forty years ago in that it has in itself confronted the central critique of appearance and illusion. He is therefore particularly pleased with Claus Bremer’s lecture in which precisely this point was expressly emphasized.

The entire critique raised by the *Werkbund* movement against ornament, and even further against aesthetic illusion *per se*, exerts a unifying influence; this unification extends today into the crisis of so-called autonomous art and thereby infringes upon it in the most diverse ways. This was made especially clear in the lectures dealing with literature and theater. On the other hand, however, it cannot simply be assumed that the very nature of the materials or utilization necessarily gives rise to what could be called shape or form. He knows well enough from his own *métier*, music, that the attempt to develop forms purely from the material is doomed to fail. Hence, we have reached a true impasse: artisanry cannot succeed if one proceeds purely from the material, nor will it succeed solely on the basis of imagination or the addition of some other outside force. He believes, therefore, that the most significant task before us involves a rethinking of categories like imagination and craftsmanship, thus converting them into actual questions and approaches. In that way it could be possible to rise above and get beyond this

situation, which otherwise leads not only to a state of silence, but also to a state of homelessness in the literal sense of the word—namely, a state in which building is impossible.

The theme of the convention, Adorno continues, was neglected in the majority of the lectures. Even in his own it receded into the background, although he does feel that it was still implicit in what he said. He wished to add a word to this complex of ideas, however, and to formulate his stance more pointedly and radically: namely, he does not believe that there exists such a thing today as formative education through or in form. He attempted to demonstrate that the gap between the most advanced production and the public is not merely a mental or spiritual phenomenon, not a phenomenon of attitude or conviction; instead it is related to the society in which we live, a society which keeps its members in such a state of minority that they cannot even perceive (not to mention identify with) their own expression, their own product, that which actually corresponds to them. This implies that, as long as we live within a society, we delude ourselves if we believe that mere formative education will raise us above this contradiction. Max Frisch once pointed out that some of the most notorious and murderous Nazis, like Herr Keitel and Herr Heydich, were, in their own way, people who appreciated music; they evidently relaxed after a day of slaughter by listening to recordings of Bruckner’s symphonies not just with passion, but, and this is to be emphasized, with understanding. Adorno believes that this situation has not changed. Once we realize that that which we generally call culture has failed, failed in a radical sense, once we realize that we have not been able to form men in such a way as to make the most extreme, naked terror impossible, then we must also give up hope that such a pure cultural category as form could ever in, of, and by itself essentially change mankind. Adorno states in addition that he believes it is not the task of art to participate in any tasks of formative education. He is likewise extremely skeptical of any education that strives to lead men to art or seeks to form them through art. Rather it is the essential task of art to denounce this very culture by means of the extreme logic of its form, i.e., in

its own language, a wordless language which borders on silence (as in the tremendous work of Samuel Beckett). Art must not convert itself into a part of culture and thereby participate in this infamous game. If, then, art does have a task, it is to resign from culture, rather than to play along.

In response to the question of whether now is the time for a new aesthetic, we can only say it is both always and never the time. But Adorno also wanted to emphasize once again that he did not mean a traditional aesthetic which would once again pompously proclaim some eternal norms of pure form. Questions of aesthetics, as he envisioned and endeavored to make visible in his own works, are exclusively questions of reflection to which every artistic work, architectural, dramatic, or musical, must lead. Every person working responsibly and productively today knows that nothing can be taken as self-evident; each individual must therefore account for the presumptions underlying his own work. The moment of reflection must be internalized. Aesthetics means nothing other than that one emancipates this necessary self-reflection from amateurism and pursues it just as one does a craft. For in thought there exists the danger of amateurism and irresponsibility, just as it exists in applied art or in any other realm; it is all too common that practical artists demonstrate a certain dilettantism precisely when practicing this necessary reflection.

Such aesthetic questions and approaches must today be integrated into production itself. Aesthetics may no longer remain an academic science. This alone justifies the appearance of philosophers at this convention. All the while, Adorno continues, he is fully aware that this was only a first attempt, and that, in plain terms, it has not yet really clicked. Without wanting to reduce his share of the guilt, he does want to say to the honorable Max Bill that his (Adorno's) efforts do follow their own logic and force; as a philosopher one has little freedom of movement without those intricately formulated and articulated propositions which evidently met opposition in Bill. Precisely when an individual is at home (as he would like to feel himself) both in the material, in an artistic material, and in philos-

ophy, he recognizes that both deal with the same thing. Just as today there exists little uniformity of style—and he is of the opinion that the notion should be eliminated, barred, prohibited—so too, he believes, there is little so-called pluralism. Rather in these matters there is a latent uniformity which he can only characterize as the uniformity of the problem.

Therefore we must not write each other off, even if we express ourselves in different languages. There will never be an understanding if the one half thinks it is easy for the other half to speak so long as they do not roll up their sleeves, while the other half thinks that the first does not understand its finely spun thoughts. There will never be any cooperation, for in reality both halves are saying the same thing. And so he concludes that what he had said in these insufficient, impromptu remarks served but one purpose: to encourage us all now—with the necessary ruthlessness but also with the necessary humanity—to concretize and pursue further those reflections which we have here initiated.

Notes

Source Note: This editorial report was published in German in *Werk und Zeit*, 11/12, November/December 1965, together with Ernst Bloch's "Bildung, Ingenieurform, Ornament" and other transcripts of the meeting of the German Werkbund in Berlin, 23 October 1965.

Translators' Note: It should be mentioned that this whole "Report" is written in indirect speech, a special German subjunctive form which indicates that while sentences are not direct quotations, they still constitute an exact account. Hence as is indicated periodically throughout, every sentence has an implied "Adorno says" before it.



Manfredo Tafuri

Translation by Diane Ghirardo and Stephen Sartarelli

1 (frontispiece) Freud's consulting room, Berggasse 19. with his chair and footstool behind the couch, 1938.

"Sometimes (but not always) there is a moment during research when, as in a game of solitaire, all the pieces begin to fall into place. But unlike the game of solitaire, where the pieces are within reach and there is only one figure to compose (so that the exactitude of the moves is precise and immediately controllable), in research the pieces are only partially available, and more than one figure is theoretically possible. In playing solitaire, one always takes risks more or less consciously, using the pieces like blocks in a toy construction kit. For this reason, the fact that everything falls into place is an ambiguous clue: it is either completely right or completely wrong. In the latter case, external verification is replaced by the selection or solicitation (more or less deliberate) of evidence, forcing it to confirm the more or less explicit presuppositions of the research. The dog thinks he bites a bone and instead bites his tail."¹

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In one of the few recent studies which has had the courage to describe, not the olympian and definitive results of research, but its tortuous and complex itinerary, Carlo Ginsburg and Adriano Prosperi thus summarize the labyrinthine path of historical analysis and the dangers it faces. But why present the architectural culture with the problem of 'games of solitaire' in historiographic work? In the first place, one could answer that we aim in this essay to travel an indirect path toward an understanding of what has been called the "language of architecture." To those who pose the theme of architectural *writing*—the term 'language' seems in fact to be taken uniquely as metaphor²—we will present the problem of critical writing: is it not the task of criticism to constitute the historical specificity (and therefore the reality) of artistic writings? Does not historical writing possess a language of its own which, perpetually in conflict with the plurality of techniques of environmental formation, can function as a kind of litmus test for discussions about architecture?

Only apparently, then, *do we speak about something else*. All too often, taking soundings around the edges of a given problem, do we discover the most productive keys for attacking it—especially if, as in the case of the one we

56 are about to consider, the problem seems overburdened with ambiguities.

Let us further clarify our theme. Architecture, language, techniques, institutions, historical space: we are simply lining up a series of problems (each endowed with intrinsic characteristics) on a thread strung in the void. Or can we challenge and split up the 'terms' used in order to trace them back to some subordinate or hidden structure that will allow them to find a basis for common meaning? Not by chance have we reduced to 'words' the body of historically stratified disciplines. Every once in a while, in fact, the critic's goodwill makes his bad conscience explode and construct linear paths, which force architecture to transmigrate into language, language into institutions, and institutions into the comprehensive universality of history. The question arises as to why it is so common now to offer such illicit simplifications as truth.

After so many persuasive demonstrations of the impossibility of translating architecture into linguistic terms, after the discovery—already in De Saussure—that language itself is a "system of differences," after the obvious appearances of institutions themselves have been called into question, historical space seems to dissolve, to fracture into pieces, to become a mere apology for multiplicity, disorder, and elusiveness, a *space of domination*. Is this perhaps what finally emerges from a good part of the 'Lacanian left' or from an epistemology of pure appearance? And besides: is not architectural writing (this phantasm which by now we have come to know as disjointed and compounded within techniques unable to communicate among themselves) itself an institution, a meaningful practice—a group of meaningful practices, a multiplicity of projects for domination?

Is it possible to fabricate history from such 'projects' without departing from them, that is, without abandoning the perspectival visions of history itself and without interrogating the condition of its existence? Is it still necessary to remember that the global nature of capitalistic relationships of production is at once a condition of cohesion and of diffraction of techniques, that the 'enigma of goods'

breaks and multiplies the relations that are at the basis of their reproduction?

The historian discovering how unhomogeneous his material is confronts a series of questions that go to the root of historiographical labor, indissolubly uniting the question of languages, techniques, sciences, architecture to that of the languages of history. But what history? With what long-term objectives?

The questions we are asking set out from a highly precise assumption. History is seen as a 'production', in all senses of the term: it is a production of meanings, starting out from the 'meaningful traces' of events; an analytical construction which is never definitive but always provisional; an instrument for the deconstruction of a certain reality. As such, history is both determined and determining: determined by its own traditions, by the objects it analyzes, by the methods it adopts; also determining its own transformations as well as those of the reality it deconstructs. The language of history implies and assumes the languages and techniques which operate and produce reality. It 'contaminates' those languages and techniques and in turn is 'contaminated' by them. Once the dream of a knowledge that is immediately identified with a power is over, the constant struggle between analysis and its objects, their irreducible tensions, remains. And it is precisely this tension which is 'productive': the historical 'project' is always the 'project of a crisis'.³

"Interpretive knowledge," wrote Franco Rella,⁴ "has a conventional character and is a production, posing a meaning in-relation-to, and not discovering *the* meaning. But what is the *limit* of these *operations*, this activity? What is the site of this relation? What stands behind the *Fiktion* of the subject, the thing, the cause, being? What, finally, can support this 'appalling plurality'? The body. 'The phenomenon of the *body* is the richest, more meaningful (*deutlichere*), most comprehensible phenomenon: to present (*voranzustellen*) methodically without deciding anything about its ultimate meaning'.⁵ This is the *limit* of interpretation, even the locus of *description*. . . . In fact, through criticism and the 'plurality of interpretation' we have ac-

- 4 André Vésale, anatomical diagram from *De Humani corporis Fabrica libri septem*, 1543.
 5 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *La Verità*, 1646–1652.
 6 Eighteenth century fashion.

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causality. But he thereby exposes himself to a risk caused by the shocks and incidents, by the weak points or points of resistance which history itself presents. There is no constancy in such a genealogy, and above all no ‘rediscovery’ or ‘rediscovery of oneself’: “Science is not made to understand but to dissect.”⁸

So, in opposition to a *wirkliche Historie*, we seek an analysis capable of reconstructing the event in its most unique and acute character, of restoring a disruptive character to its irruption. And chiefly one that is able to “shatter that which permits a consoling game of recognitions.” Recognition presupposes what is already known: the unity of history—the subject to be recognized—is founded on the unity of the structures it *rests* upon, and on the very unity of its single elements. Foucault explains very clearly the consequences of such a cruel “will to know” freed of consoling temptations: “Even in the greatly expanded form it assumes today, the will to knowledge does not achieve a universal truth; man is not given an exact and serene mastery of nature. On the contrary, it ceaselessly multiplies the risks, it creates dangers in every area, it breaks down illusory defenses, it destroys the unity of the subject, it releases those elements of itself that are devoted to its subversion and destruction.”⁹

This is exactly what Nietzsche foretold in *Aurora*. “Knowledge,” he wrote,¹⁰ “has transformed itself in us into a passion which fears no sacrifice, and in the last analysis, which has only one fear, namely, extinguishing itself.” In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he added that “inherent in the fundamental institution of existence may even be the fact that he who reaches perfect knowledge faces annihilation.”¹¹

But is not such a limit, such a mortal risk, the same one that language runs when it desires to theorize itself perfectly? Is not the feigned crystalline transparency of history analogous to that which Wittgenstein saw as the prejudice of the crystalline transparency of language? What guarantee do I have that breaking and dissociating stratifications which I recognize as already plural in themselves will not result in a dissemination that is a conclusion

in itself? In the end, by establishing differences and disseminations, as Derrida does, I in effect risk facing the 'annihilation' Nietzsche predicted and feared. But perhaps the real danger lies elsewhere. The danger incurred by both Foucault's genealogies—of madness, clinics, punishment, sexuality—and Derrida's disseminations is the re-consecration of microscopically analyzed fragments into new autonomous unities which are meaningful in themselves. What then allows me to negotiate the transition from a history written in the plural to a questioning of this very plurality?

Undoubtedly both Nietzsche and Freud felt that theoretical language must include plurality: the plurality of the subject, of science, of institutions. To discover that language is only one way of organizing reality, we must take advantage of the profound dissociation of this very reality. It must be made clear that history cannot be reduced to a hermeneutics, that history's task is not to draw back the 'Maja's veil' of truth, but rather to cut away the barriers history itself erects, in order to proceed and to surpass itself. It is useless however to identify such barriers with the great Institutions. Power itself is plural: it cuts across social classes, ideologies, and institutions. On this we can still agree with Foucault: the place of the Great Refusal does not exist. We must recognize it as within the power systems themselves.¹²

In other words, one must be alert to the fact that there is no perfect identity between institutions and systems of power. Architecture itself, an institution, is anything but a unitary ideological block. As with other linguistic systems, its ideologies do not operate in a linear fashion. It is therefore correct to suspect that the criticism of architectural ideology, as it has been undertaken up to now, has only taken account of the most apparent and immediate features of this ideology: the refusals, removals, and introspections which run through the body of architectural writing. Nevertheless, to shift the inquiry from a text—a work, as it is presented, in all its apparent accomplishment—to a context is insufficient. The context squeezes together artistic languages, physical realities, behavior, urban and territorial dimensions, politico-economic dy-



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60 namics. But it is continually broken by ‘technical incidents’: by tactical maneuvers which intersect obscurely with grand strategies; by subterranean ideologies which are nevertheless operative on an intersubjective level; and by the reactions of different techniques of domination, each of which possesses a specific but untranslatable language.

This is what Simmel, in *Metaphysics of Death*, recognized in the fragment of a letter of Nietzsche: “the secret of form is that it is a boundary; it is the thing itself and at the same time, the cessation of the thing, the circumscribed territory in which the Being and the non-Being of the thing are only one thing.”¹³ But form is boundary, there is still the problem of plural boundaries, and of calling them into question. Not by chance did Simmel, in his essay on “*La Moda*,” acknowledge that “the way in which it is given to us to understand the phenomena of life makes us notice a plurality of forces at every point of existence; we feel that each of them aspires to overcome the real phenomenon, limits its infinity in relation to the other, and transforms it into pure tension and desire.”¹⁴ He adds later, “Precisely because the desire to go on with the given, to be equal to the others and to do what the others do is the implacable enemy of the desire to proceed to new and specific forms of life, and because each of these two principles extends by itself to infinity, social life appears to be the battlefield where every inch of territory is contested and *social institutions seem like those brief reconciliations during which the antagonisms of the principles, continuing to act, have assumed an outward form of cooperation.*”¹⁵

The issue is not to validate, through Simmel, the Freud of Eros and Thanatos, or—a perverse but always possible act—Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphysics of desire. Rather the task is to recognize that the theme of boundary intrinsic to forms, of the *limits of languages*, is an integral part of a historically determined crisis, beyond which (but within the signs it has imposed on us) we are today obliged to position ourselves. This is to say that one can only speak about language knowing that there is no place from which comprehensive fullness can arise, because such full-



ness has been historically destroyed. The failure of a science of signs in general—of a semiology capable of translating one linguistic system into another—is thus presented to us. It is possible to seek endlessly to make De Saussure’s “system of differences” coincide with that of architecture, of the physical context, of non-verbal languages. One can try endlessly to exorcise the unrest provoked by the perception of ‘epistemological ruptures’, by trying to recover, for example, the innocence of archetypal symbols: thus the pyramid, the sphere, the circle, the ellipse, the labyrinth are installed as permanent structures of inexplicably mutant forms, until the archaeologist’s anxiety can be placated in the recognition of an ‘eternal return of the identical’. One could hardly translate Nietzsche more radically than the readers of Cassirer are capable of doing today.

The problem is rather to discover why such a need for certainty is still present, and to ask whether such infantile efforts to reconstruct a lost amplitude through disenchanting words are not congruent with the privilege given by Lacan to the pure materiality of the signifier. Nothing remains but to await analysis of forms—the Borrominian, Piranesian, or Corbusian ectoplasms would lend themselves perfectly to this game—as instantaneous arrivals of the Subject, and their reunification as manifestation of the word of the Other. The nostalgia for dialectical synthesis, in other words, is nourished by terror in the face of the ‘differences’ that dominate linguistic games and the multifarious practices of power, and it is dispersed in innumerable contrivances: the temptation to recover a domestic focus in resuscitating—with the most underhanded tools—the Kantian *I think* is inscribed in the history of a crisis which erects fragile fences against its own direction of movement.

How much longer must we lament to those who are nostalgic for ‘centrality’ that at present there is really no other possibility than to trace the history that leads to the divorce between signifier and signified, to journey again through the crisis of that unstable marriage and to concretize its intimate structures?

To search for a fullness and an absolute coherence in the interactions of the techniques of domination is therefore to mask history: or rather, to accept the masks in which the past presents itself. Does not the ‘crisis of ideology’ proposed by great bourgeois thought perhaps conceal the appearance of signifying practices which are more deceitful, hidden in the folds of techniques for the transformation of reality? And if this reality is the site of an unceasing battle, will it not be necessary to penetrate it further in order to bring to light what is, in itself, least evident?

“Just because Napoleon was nothing,” Marx writes,¹⁶ “he could signify everything except himself. . . . He became the collective name of all coalition parties. . . . The election of Napoleon could be explained only by replacing a name with its manifold meanings.” In the place of one, then, “manifold meanings.” Only by assuming that this hidden plurality is real is it possible to destroy the fetish that condenses around a name, a sign, a language, an ideology. With this, we return directly to Nietzsche. “Whenever the primitives established a word, they believed they had made a discovery (*Entdeckung*); they had met a problem and in the illusion that they had *solved* it, they created an obstacle to its solution. Today, for every bit of knowledge, one has to stumble across words which have become as petrified and solid as stones. And one will break a leg on them instead of a word.”¹⁷ Since the use of language is a technique of domination, it should not be difficult to bring Nietzsche’s observation back to different techniques. Marx’s entire *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* achieves a filtering and a rewriting which break “words petrified and solid as stones.”

With such ‘words’, criticism—and not just architectural criticism—repeatedly constructs impenetrable monuments. The ‘stones’ are piled up: their multiplicity is concealed by buildings that merely pretend to give shape to a Borgesian ‘imaginary library’. Or the reverse: always leaving to the ‘stones’ their unspoken corporeal nature, caverns come to be excavated in their interstices. Criticism thus obligates itself to superfluous journeys; the phantasms which it encounters within the false space it carefully delimits assume the most varied countenances—

62 urban analysis, typological analysis, semiological analysis—but only so as to conceal the real interlocutor at the bottom of the cavern: dialectical synthesis.

“There is currently a critique of dialectical synthesis,” Cacciari noted recently,¹⁸ “because this synthesis has fallen into a state of crisis which has historically marked an entire phase of development and of the contemporary State. . . . If it is ‘indecent’ by now to speak of Politics in metaphysical terms . . . or of its Language, perspectively privileged, comprehensive, ‘panoptic’—it is equally indecent to want to ‘save’ the forms of Politics as institutions which are somehow ‘autonomous’ with respect to the peculiar impermanence of other languages and with respect to the constant transformation of ‘techniques’ in whose universe Politics appears inexorably confined.”

Architecture as politics is a myth by now so spent that it is useless to waste words on it. But if Power—like the institutions in which it takes bodily form—‘speaks many dialectics’, the object of history is the analysis of their ‘confrontation’. The construction of physical space is certainly the site of a ‘battle’: an accurate urban analysis amply demonstrates this. That such a battle is not totalistic, that it leaves margins, remains, residues, is likewise an incontestable fact. Here a vast field for inquiry opens up: for inquiry into the limits of languages, the limits of techniques, and the thresholds that ‘give thickness’. The threshold, the boundary, and the limit ‘define’: and it is in the nature of this definition that the object so circumscribed immediately becomes evanescent. The possibility of constructing the history of a formal language arises only by destroying, step by step, the linear nature of that history and its autonomy: traces, fluctuating signs, unhealed fissures remain. The ‘movement of the horse’ becomes historical as a ‘game’ completed in itself, and thereby tautological. The ‘many languages’ of forms discover thus that the limits of form itself do not enclose monads casually floating in their ‘divine’ self-transformation. The boundary line—what the rigorous formalism of Shklovsky or of Fiedler and Riegl has so wisely traced within the verbal and figurative arts—is there to mark the points of impact which condition the interaction of

meaningful practices and practices of power endowed with specific techniques.

But when and why did it happen that the disciplines recognized themselves so specifically as to end up untranslatable to one another, deprived of any transcendental unification? When and why was the autonomy of techniques defined as a permanent crisis, a conflict among languages and even among the various dialects within the same language? In what way does it help us, in the field of architecture, to acknowledge its increasingly radical fragmentation from the eighteenth century on, in disciplinary areas that only a delayed idealism would like today to bring back to an operative unity?

And beyond this, a new question: is it legitimate to pose the question of *when* and *why* without subjecting to criticism, always and anew, the theme of origin? We have then returned in full to the question of genealogy as Nietzsche proposed it: as ‘construction’ in the true sense of the word, an instrument (susceptible to modification and to being consumed) in the hands of the historian.

Historical genealogy is presented with all the characteristics of a labor, a deconstructive and reconstructive labor which displaces the Nietzschean ‘stones’ and reunites them, and *produces* meanings by removing the ones offered. Jean-Michel Rey has astutely related the ‘massive omissions’ that Nietzsche discovered in the formation of languages, values, and sciences to the work of deciphering that Freud indicated as essential for analysis.¹⁹

“In the distortion of a text,” Freud observed in *Moses and Monotheism*,²⁰ “there is something analogous to murder. The difficulty does not consist in the perpetration of the act, but in the elimination of the traces. It would be necessary to restore to the word *Enstellung* the double meaning it has a right to, although today the custom might be lost. This term should not only mean ‘modify the appearance of some thing’, but also ‘put elsewhere, move (*verschieben*) to another place’. This is why in numerous cases of the alteration of a text, we hold it necessary to find hidden somewhere, albeit modified and torn from its

context, what has been repressed (*das Unterdrückte*) and what has been denied (*das Verlergnete*). But to recognize it is not always easy.”

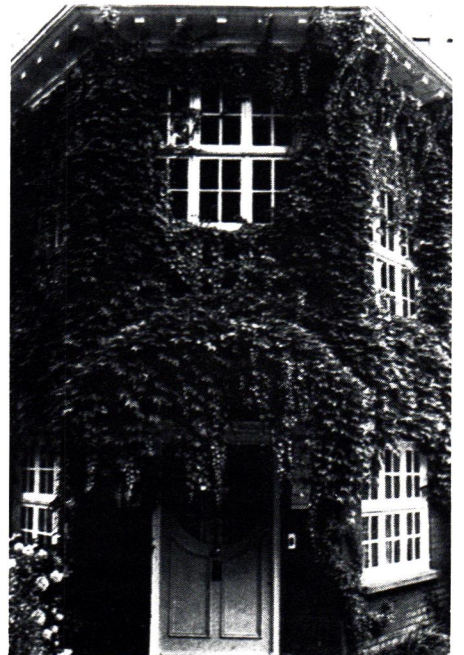
Let us try to turn the discourse in upon itself. Are not the language of history or the languages codified by critical analysis also ‘spoken’ through a series of censures, repressions, negations? Textual criticism, semantic criticism, iconological readings, the sociology of art, Foucaultian genealogy, our own criticism—are not all these so many techniques which only decipher by concealing the traces of ‘murders’ more or less consciously perpetrated? In other words, one could say that the language of criticism, the language which ought to ‘move and break stones’ is itself also a ‘stone’. How, then, can we use it so as to prevent it from becoming the instrument of a holy rite?

Perhaps it is clear now where the danger lies in the analysis of a Blanchot, a Barthes, a Derrida. Willingly assuming the plural aspects of objects which themselves are written in the plural—literary works as human sciences—the critical languages of these authors are prevented from ever passing the threshold that separates language from language, one power system from others. They can violate works and texts, construct fascinating genealogies, hypnotically illuminate historical knots otherwise hidden by an easy reading. But they have to negate the existence of a *historical space*. There is no doubt that the task of science is to dissect and not to assemble. And there is equally no doubt that the true supra-significant metaphor, so much so that it turns out to be impenetrable, is the linear nature of scientific discourse: a discourse which by statute has eliminated every metaphor by itself. It is not, therefore, the acceptance of metaphor and aphorism within the historical sciences that we protest. The real problem is how to design a critique able constantly to call itself into a crisis while forcing reality into a state of crisis. Reality, that is, and not merely its individual segments.

Let us return to Marx: if values penetrate into ideologies which displace initial needs, we can interpret such ideologies as ‘delirious representations’ in a Freudian sense. On the other hand, a delirious representation is a social



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11 Bruno Taut, sketch from *Alpine*
Architektur, 1920.

12 Bruno Taut.

13 Cover of *Die Aktion*, No. 4, Vol. 14.

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production. The history of German Social Democracy demonstrates how the myths of ‘fraternity’ and peace split in two the great Bismarckian strategy and the forces that opposed it. But this myth also breaks and reunites the strands of this same opposition as well as the different meaningful practices. Lasalle, Kautsky, the various Expressionist currents, the *Aktion* group, Spartacism, Berlin Dadaism, the utopianism of the *Glaeserne Kette*, and the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* turn out to be ‘spoken’ through instruments rich with interstices: interstices through which we can penetrate to the grotesque populist ideologies of Darré and Rosenberg. Should we really be astonished to observe the affinity between the supra-mystical anarchism of Taut’s *Alpine Architecture* and the horrifying ideology of *Blut und Boden*?²¹ Nevertheless, these delirious representations turn out to be historically necessary. Stitching up the ‘discomfort of civilization’, they permit the survival of civilization itself. But insofar as they act as dams restraining ebullient forces, if they are not immediately shattered they become obstructions. Historical analysis destroys such dams, but not to encourage improbable epiphanies of the individual or collective Subject, or to celebrate Masses for the floods of desire finally free to explode.

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12

Die Aktion

XV. JAHR. HERAUSGEBER: FRANZ PFEMFERT HEFT 4

INHALT: Heinrich Heide: „Gensackten“ (Lithografie) P. P.: Die Reichspräsidentenwahl als Probe auf die Ehrlichkeit der Deutschen. Bericht vom II. Kongress der J.A.K. in Amsterdam James Brack: Die Zukunft der KPD (Lithografie) Kautsky: Verhältnisse und soziale Wirklichkeit A. Kautsky: Die große Hungerkatastrophe der unterentwickelten Länder Das Tockamt in Lippitzsch und Mühlitz (Lithografie) Carl Schmitt: Die Verfassung des Reiches Oscar Müller: In der Wärfelstraße Das Eisenstein und die Masse Rolf Mayr: Notiz III: aggressive Schröder A. Gumbach und andere Dresden: Skulpturen und Denkmalbau: Diskussion zum Thema „Die Aufgaben der Kunst“ eines Systems zum Schutze der gelungener Revolutionäre R. Stahl und Franz W. Seiwert: Vom Führerprinzip Notiz für die Freunde der AKTION Die AKTION der ANGE: Reproduktion einer Original-Photographie Der Reichsrat: Messung mit Bolckowiken vermisst Zwei die von Hindenburg inkarniert (Photographie) Neue Bäckereien / Veranlagungsmäxster

Skizze für ein Denkmal, das sowohl für Herrn Ebert als auch für Herrn Hindenburg und die deutsche Bourgeoisie überhaupt paßt. Da die Gensackten das Typische darstellen, sieht das Denkmal von vorn und von hinten betrachtet gleich aus. (D. R. P. wird angemeldet werden.)

VERLAG: DIE AKTION / BERLIN-WILMERSDORF

As representation, history is also the fruit of a dismissal, a negation. The problem is to make this negation a *fixed abstraction*, so as to give theoretical work direction. It is no accident that Marx speaks of abstraction for the analysis of political economy.

Fixed abstraction is so only when it knows its limits, that is to say, if it continuously calls itself into question, if in transforming and rupturing the materials of its own analysis—its own ideological dams—it transforms and ruptures itself and its language. Criticism therefore is a labor in the true sense of the term, the more fruitful the more it is conscious of its limits. But it is illicit to be pleased with such consciousness.

After disintegrating the apparent unity of reality and displacing the ideological barriers which conceal the complexity of power strategies, we face the theoretical knot

of how to construct a history that will reach to the heart of these strategies, that is, their means of production. But here a further difficulty arises: means of production *neither explain nor determine*. They themselves are anticipated, retarded, or traversed by current ideologies. Once a power system is isolated, its genealogy cannot be offered as a universe closed within itself. Analysis must go elsewhere. It must make individual isolated fragments collide with one another and put on trial the limits which it has established for itself. As labor, in fact, analysis has no end, as Freud recognized; it is infinite by nature.²²

Here a new problem emerges: ideology never acts as 'pure' force. It not only 'soils' and is 'soiled' by praxis, it also intertwines with other, often antithetical ideologies. It could be said that ideologies act in groups and that they expand in a capillary fashion in the construction of reality. Negation of the subject, sacredness of the banal, Schopenhauerian mystical practices, devastation and reaffirmation of the material, celebration of the 'enigma of goods' and exasperation before it: all are indissolubly interlaced in the poetics of the negative avant-garde. The vision of the work ethic translated into ascetic images, characteristic of the 'radical' and constructivist architectural and figurative currents, displaces the factors that compose that interlacing; but the *Neue Sachlichkeit* sinks its roots in it, in that sublimated negative, in the macabre decompositions of Gottfried Benn's *Morgue*. The ideological implications are not a closed issue: they may become so once they have exhausted their historical tasks—as happens today—revealing a viscosity that must be combatted, but which first should be analyzed in its peculiar characteristics.

We do not want to be misunderstood. We absolutely do not mean to intone hymns to the irrational or to interpret ideological bundles in their complex interaction as 'rhizomes' in the manner of Deleuze and Guattari.²³ We are not being offhand when we say that it is necessary 'not to make rhizomes' with those bundles. However implicated historical criticism is by the objects and phenomena it analyzes, it must know how to balance on the razor's edge between detachment and participation. This is where the

'fecund uncertainty' of analysis itself is located, its interminableness, its need to return always and anew to the material examined, and at the same time, to itself.

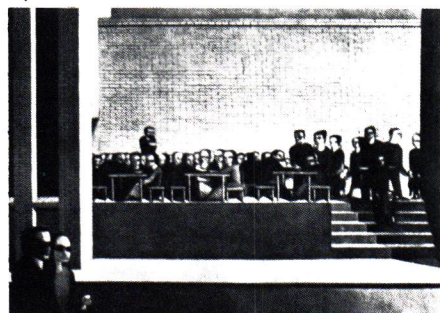
A new doubt occurs here. Recognizing that ideologies and languages—Nietzschean 'stones' and Freudian 'delirious constructions'—are social productions, one could fall into a low-level idealism and argue that their theoretical illumination through pure historical analysis is capable of an efficacious and operative dismissal.

It would be useless to tear into the methods of 'operative criticism'—it is more correct to label the latter 'normative' to avoid potential ambiguities about our real intentions—while leaving intact its basic principles. Any social production does battle with alternative social productions: this seems undeniable. Must we invoke a mystic, dialectical exchange between the 'collective intellectual' and restructured disciplines? Is not that path which we cannot be absolved from following perhaps again the traditional effusion of subjective experiences within institutions left unsusceptible to analysis and ultimately untouchable?

Perhaps it is not yet possible to offer valid and concrete responses to our question: but it is important to grasp its centrality for the present debate, and precisely to the extent that it is an exquisitely political problem. Anyone who does not want to mythicize 'theoretical' space today faces that unresolved question: the socialization and productivity of historical space. Analysis and design: two social practices divided and connected by a bridge that is for now artificial. And here the disquieting theme of *interminable analysis* returns. Interminable for its internal characteristics, for the objectives which as such it is obliged to pose. To enter into praxis, such analysis is forced to give itself boundaries, albeit partial and provisional ones. Historical work, in other words, is obliged to betray itself consciously: the final page of an essay or a study is necessary, but it should be interpreted as a pause which implies points of suspension. In any case, every pause is more productive to the extent that it is programmed.



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14 *Heinrich Hoerle, Zwei Frauenakte, 1930.*

15 *Karl Voelker, Mensa operaia, 1923.*

Such labor, then, needs to proceed through time, constructing its own methods as supports which undergo perennial transformation. What decides the mode of such transformations is always the material on which it operates. History—like quintessential Freudian analysis—is not just therapy. Calling into question its own materials, it reconstructs them and continuously reconstructs itself. So the genealogies which it traces are also themselves provisional barriers, just as analytic work is by no means sheltered from the conditionings of meaningful practices or means of production. The historian is a worker ‘in the plural’, like the subjects on which he labors. So there is a linguistic problem in history. As criticism of meaningful practices, it will have to ‘remove stones’ by removing its own stones. Criticism speaks only if it also turns the doubt with which it attacks reality onto itself. Performing its own constructions, history slices with a surgeon’s knife into a body whose wounds should not be healed. But at the same time, analogous unhealed wounds rend the solidarity of historical constructions and deny them the status of ‘truth’.

Analysis, then, reaches to the heart of a series of battles and assumes the character of a struggle: against the temptation to exorcise disease and ‘recover’, against its own instruments and against contemplation. Every analysis is therefore provisional. Every analysis only measures the effects which it sets in motion in order to change according to the intervening mutations. The certainties which history presents are therefore to be read as expressions of removal. They are no more than defenses or barriers which hide the reality of historical writing. They incorporate uncertainty: a ‘true history’ is not something which cloaks itself in the mantle of indisputable ‘ideological proofs’, but which recognizes its own arbitrariness, and sees itself as an ‘unsafe edifice’.

Such a characteristic of historiographical labor is measured, we repeat, by the processes it gives rise to. The processes determine the validity of the provisional construction, itself offered as something to be reinterpreted, analyzed, and superseded. But at this point the question of the materials of history reappears. Fields of artificially

pre-established inquiries stand out from history. They deal with sciences and techniques for transforming reality, power systems, and ideologies. Every one of these fields of inquiry presents itself with a language of its own. What this completely formalized language conceals is the tension of its melting into a universal language, of its *tendency toward another*. Are not the distance which separates words from things and the divorce of the signifier from the signified (Nietzsche calls this the “mortal silence of the sign”) perhaps instruments of differentiated power techniques? Is it worthwhile to limit oneself to commenting on them: Do not dissecting them and revealing their arbitrariness and hidden metaphors allow us to isolate new historical spaces?

Historical space does not construct improbable bridges between different languages and techniques remote from one another. Rather it explores what such remoteness expresses, sounds out what is presented as a *void*, trying to make the absence which seems to fill that void speak.

It is, then, an operation which descends into the interstices of techniques and languages. Operating within the interstices, the historian certainly does not aim to stitch them up; rather he intends to explode what is attested about the limits of languages. In this way historical labor calls into question the problem of ‘limits’: it confronts the division of labor in general, tends to expand its own borders and *designs the crisis of given techniques*.

History as ‘design of crisis’, then. There is no guarantee of ‘absolute’ validity in such a design: no ‘solutions’ in it. One must learn not to ask history for pacifications, nor to ask it to travel endless and rocky distances to stop in astonishment at the borders of the enchanted forest of language. The path must be abandoned in order to discover what lies between it and the other paths: the practice of power often occupies the unfathomable forest. This must be shattered, cut, and trodden endlessly. We have no illusions about the demystifying power of historical analysis in itself. There is no autonomy in its reshuffled deck of cards and its attempts to change the rules of the game. But as social practice—the practice of socializa-

tion—today it views itself as obliged to engage in a struggle which calls its own connotations into question. Within such a struggle history must be prepared to risk: to risk at least a provisional ‘unfeasibility’.

How does one establish such premises as these in the specific area of architectural writing? We have already pointed out that in this area it would also be useful to set up a “system of differences” and to identify a gamut of diverse practices, each with its own history to be pieced together by archaeological means. Let us go back to the beginnings of our discussion: only in more felicitous moments—at least, for the historian—do architecture, techniques, institutions, urban administration, ideologies, and utopias come together in a formal work or system. Such a coming together has often been called for by the intellectual establishment, especially since the Enlightenment, but only because the fragmentation of the classical *ordo* has dispersed and differentiated the separate approaches to the structure of the physical environment. Many histories come to be written, for just as many different disciplines. But as far as architecture is concerned, it is often found more productive to start with fragments and unrealized ideas, with the purpose of putting back in their contexts works which would otherwise appear to be without meaning.

Don’t failed works, unrealized attempts, or fragments all pose problems usually masked by the “finished quality” of works that have attained the status of “texts”? Don’t Alberti’s “errors” in perspective or the “geometric games” of Peruzzi actually serve more as examples of the difficulties inherent to a Humanistic utopia rather than as monuments in which one placates the anxiety that emerges from those unfinished attempts? And in order to fully understand the dialectic that shapes twentieth century avant-garde tradition, a dialectic drawn between the extremes of the tragic and the banal, isn’t it more useful to go back to the dazzling buffooneries of the Cabaret Voltaire than to examine works in which the tragic and the banal are reconciled with reality?

The manipulation of forms always has an objective that

68 transcends the forms themselves: it is this constant “beyond architecture” that triggers the breaks from the past by the “tradition of the new.” It is precisely against such a “beyond” that the historian is called upon to measure himself. To forget this criterion is to risk sinking into the quicksand of sublime mystifications on which rests the monumental structure of the Modern Movement.

We are therefore bound to the unremitting task of disassembly when confronted with the object of our research. And research of this kind presupposes a chemical analysis of that quicksand using reagents of an opposite nature.²⁴

All this means putting emphasis on the dialectic that in time comes to establish itself between *concrete labor* and *abstract labor*, in the Marxian sense of both terms. In this way architectural history may be read on the basis of historiographical parameters relative to both the development of intellectual labor and the development of the modes and relations of production.

Architectural history thus comes to assume diverse responsibilities. On the one hand, it takes upon itself the task of critically describing the processes that condition the “concrete” face of planned invention—that is, it describes the autonomy of linguistic choices and their historical function as a specific chapter of intellectual history and its modes of reception. On the other hand, it becomes part of the general history of the structures and relations of production: in other words, it takes shape “reacting” according to the development of *abstract labor*.

In this light, architectural history will always seem to be the fruit of an unresolved dialectic. The consideration of the interrelationship between intellectual foresight, modes of production, and modes of consumption ought to make the apparent synthesis in any given work ‘explode’. It is precisely where this synthesis is presented as a completed whole that it is most necessary to expose the disunity, fragmentation, and “dissemination” of the work’s internal unities. From these dis-aggregated components it will then be necessary to proceed to a separate analysis. Consumer relations, symbolic horizons, avant-garde hy-

potheses, linguistic structures, methods of restructuring production, advanced technology—all should then present themselves stripped of the ambiguity ingrained in the synthesis “demonstrated” by the work.

It is clear that no single methodology, when applied to separate components in this way, will be able to take into account the “totality” of the work. Instead, separate fields such as iconology, political economy, history of thought, of religions, of sciences, of popular traditions, will each be able to make use of individual fragments of the disassembled work. The work will have something to say for each of these disciplines. For example, by taking apart a work of Alberti, I should be able to shed light on the foundations of bourgeois intellectual ethics in formation, on the crisis of Humanistic historicism, on the structure of the fifteenth century’s world of symbols, on the structure of a particular commercial relation, and on the consolidation of the new division of labor in the building trade. But no single above component will serve to account for the whole work. The critical act will consist of the ‘reassembly’ of the separate fragments once they have been historicized. Jakobson and Tynjanov, and later Karel Teige and Jan Mukarovsky, spoke of the continuous interrelation between the linguistic and extra-linguistic series.²⁵ The final *historicization* of the multiple ‘non-linguistic’ components of a work will have, in this sense, two results: that of breaking the magic circle of language by obliging it to reveal the foundations on which it rests, and that of permitting the recovery of the ‘function’ of language itself.

But with this observation we have returned to our initial assumption. To study how a language ‘acts’ means to examine its incidence in all the individual extra-linguistic spheres touched upon by the ‘dissemination’ of the text. At this point we are faced with two alternatives. Either, like Barthes and *la nouvelle critique*, we will take the trouble to multiply the metaphors within the architectural text, dividing and varying to infinity its “free valences,” its specific “system of ambiguities”;²⁶ or we will resort to factors external to the text, extraneous to its apparent structure.

Both methods are legitimate; it depends only on the goals one sets for oneself. I could choose to put myself in what we defined as the magic circle of language, transforming it into a bottomless well: this is what so-called “operative criticism” has been doing for some time, serving up, like so much fast food, its arbitrary and pyrotechnical hair-splittings of Michelangelo, Borromini, and Wright. But in so doing I would have to be very clear that my objective is not to write history, but rather to give form to a neutral space in which I would have floating, above time, a heap of metaphors devoid of substance. In this case my only concern should be to be charmed, that is, pleasantly deceived.

In the contrary case, I would have to measure the real incidence of the language on the extra-linguistic series to which it is connected. That is, I would have to measure, for example, in what way the introduction of the concept of measurable figurative space is a reaction to the crisis of the Renaissance bourgeoisie; or in what way the disintegration of the concept of form corresponds to the formation of the new metropolitan universe; or in what way the ideology of an architecture reduced to the status of a “negligible object,” a mere typology, a plan for reorganizing the building industry, fits into a true perspective of “alternative” city planning.²⁷ The interrelationship of intellectual labor and the conditions of production will serve, in such a case, as a valid parameter for recomposing the mosaic from the separated pieces scattered by the preceding analytical disassembly. Putting architectural history back into the area of the history of the division of labor does not in any way imply a regression to a “vulgar Marxism”; it does not imply neglecting the specific characteristics of architecture itself. On the contrary, these characteristics will be emphasized by a reading that would situate—on the basis of verifiable parameters—the real import of planning decisions within the dynamic of the production transformations that they either set in motion, retard, or attempt to prevent. It is clear that an approach of this nature should in one way or another respond to the problem posed by Walter Benjamin when, in *The Author as Producer*, he gave secondary importance to that which a work *says* about the relations of production, while giving

primary emphasis instead to the function of the same work *within* the relations of production.²⁸

All this has two immediate consequences:

a) With respect to classical historiography, it necessitates a review of the criteria by which we reconstruct historical periods; the above-mentioned dialectic (concrete labor/abstract labor) presents itself in a new light only where it triggers a mechanism integrating intellectual foresight with modes of production development. And it is the responsibility of historical analysis to recognize such an integration, with the goal in mind of constructing *structural cycles*, in the fullest sense of the term.

b) With respect to the debate over the analysis of artistic language, the proposed method diverts attention from the area of immediate communication and directs it instead to that of underlying meanings. That is, it makes it necessary to measure the ‘productivity’ of linguistic innovations and to subject the domain of symbolic forms to an analysis *capable of calling into question, at all times, the historic legitimacy of the capitalistic division of labor.*

The need for such a revamping of analytical criteria is in any case implicit in the central theme of our research: that is, the historic role of ideology. Although it is usually taken for granted, the role of ideological superstructures in the writing of history remains relatively unexplored; there remains, in fact, an open field for investigating the historical interpretations of ideology’s concrete interventions in the real. And it seems to be of pressing urgency that the ambiguous face of the super-structure not be left to itself. That is, it must be prevented from multiplying *ad infinitum* in the absorbing game of mirrors that it presupposes as its own specification. But this is possible only if we succeed in entering the enchanted castle of ideological forms armed with a filter that functions as an efficient antidote to hypnosis.

The parameters proper to a history of the laws permitting the existence of architecture are thus proclaimed to be capable of unraveling the intricate, traveled routes that lead to utopia—for the purpose of tracing, in outline form, “the horse’s moves” institutionalized by poetic language.

70 Indeed, it is precisely this that Viktor Shklovsky emphasized when, in discussing the course of poetic language, he spoke of “the horse’s moves.”²⁹ Like the zigzag movements of the horse in a game of chess, the semantic structure of the poetic process “swerves” away from the real, sets in motion a process of “alienation” (as Bertolt Brecht well understood), and organizes itself like a perpetual “surreality.”³⁰ All the energy of a philosopher like Max Bense is concentrated on defining the relations between such a “surreality” and the technological universe from which it issues and to which—the case of avant-garde art is a prime example—it returns as the stimulus to continuous and permanent innovation.

But here it is also necessary to make clear distinctions. To define ideology *tout court* as the expression of false intellectual consciousness is useless, to say the least.

No single work, not even the most failed or pedestrian, succeeds in ‘reflecting’ a preexistent ideology. What with all the theories of “reflection” and “mirroring” the game has been over for a while now. But the ‘swerving’ that a work carries out with respect to all that which is other than itself does in fact smack of ideology, even if the forms that it takes are not clearly articulated. But it should be possible to reconstruct the specific structure of these forms—bearing in mind, however, that between the ideologies incorporated into the work’s signifiers and the current mode of ideological production there always exists a margin of ambiguity.

The recognition of how this swerving ‘functions’ with respect to the real will instead be more immediate: that is, we should recognize both the means by which the work maintains its “artistic distance” from the real world and the conditions which permit the existence of this distance.

To all this should be added a further consideration. The most outstanding accomplishment of the greater part of avant-garde art and architecture has been that of reducing, to the point of nullifying, that “swerving” or distance between the work and all that is other to it—between the object and its conditions of existence, production, and use.

Once again, the ideologies invoked in support of, or underlying, the practice of architecture break down into many facets, inviting a detailed critical operation. In opposition to a purely documentary ideology that shapes itself upon the existing order, at least three other types of ideology present themselves in history:

a) a ‘progressive’ ideology—typical of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century avant-gardes—which advances the theory of a worldwide embracing of the real: namely, the avant-garde ideology which refused any sort of mediation (and of which Fortini has spoken³¹) and which, in the final outcome, found itself fighting the mediation of consensus (consensus came to regard this approach as pure “propaganda”);

b) a ‘regressive’ ideology: that is, a “utopia of nostalgia,” expressed most accurately, from the nineteenth century on, by all the different forms of anti-urban thought, by the sociology of Tönnies, and by the attempt to oppose the new commercial reality of the metropolis with proposals tending to recuperate mythologies of anarchistic or “communal” origin;

c) an ideology which specifically calls for the reform of primary institutions necessary to urban, territorial, or building management, and which anticipates not only veritable structural reforms, but also new modes of production and a different order to the division of labor: here we are speaking of, for example, the American progressive tradition, the thought and works of Olmsted, Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Robert Moses.

The above classifications are not based on abstractions but on historical example. To repeat, ideologies always exert their influence in relation to one another, often overlapping each other, and sometimes they reverse themselves completely as they run their historic course. A typical case is that of anti-urban ideology which, through the work of Geddes and Unwin and their confluence in the Conservationist and Regionalist trends in the America of the 1920s, takes an unforeseen course with the establishment of the modern techniques of territorial planning.

In this way, also, a single body of works—the example of Le Corbusier is particularly apt here—can be judged ac-

ording to a number of diverse criteria, presenting itself at once as one chapter in the whole development of the avant-garde and as an instrument of institutional reform.

But it is rather important not to confuse different levels of analysis. That is, we must examine with differentiated methods products which exert an influence in different ways on the productive order. Let us specify further: one could always perform a purely linguistic analysis of settlements like Radburn or the Greenbelt cities of the New Deal. But a method such as this—the only valid one for giving a factual account of the work of Melnikov or Stirling—would prove to be inadequate for the task of correctly placing these ideas in their proper context, that is, within the relationship between the institutional revamping of the economic management of public workers and the manifestation of this revamping within the building industry.

To those who might accuse us of methodological eclecticism, we should respond that they are unable to accept the role of transition (an ambiguous one to say the least), which by now has become an important part of the fragmented and multifaceted discipline of architecture.

Again, all this implies the adoption of an extremely broad sense for the term “architecture.” It is clear that the validity of the analyses we propose is most evident in the modern and contemporary periods—from the crisis of feudalism to the present day—where they may be applied to the multiple, changing meanings attached to the term “intellectual labor,” which are the result of transformations within the building industry and are irreducible to any single common denominator.

Thus difficulties might be avoided by attributing a relative and flexible meaning to the concept of architecture. That is to say, it will be necessary to destroy the artificial mythology attached to the concept of “the work.” But not, as Foucault proposes, for the purpose of establishing the ineffable preeminence of the anonymously uttered *word*, nor for the purpose of resuscitating the slogans so dear to the first years of the Modern Movement.

The history of contemporary city planning does not at all coincide with the history of avant-garde hypotheses. On the contrary, as several recent philosophical inquiries have ascertained, the tradition of city planning rests on foundations that have nothing to do with the avant-garde; it rests, instead, on such factors as the *medicalisation de la ville* so integral to physiocratic thought; on the late eighteenth century taxonomy of service spaces; on the nineteenth century theories of Baumeister, Stübgen, Eberstadt; on the accomplishments of the American Park Movement, and on English and French regionalism. These factors make necessary a radical reassessment of the interrelationships between city-planning history and the parallel history of the ideologies of the Modern Movement. By following this method, many myths ought to crumble of necessity.

In order to disentangle this skein of artificially confused threads, we shall have to place many independent histories alongside each other so that we may recognize, when such is the case, any mutual interdependencies, or, as more frequently is the case, any conflicts in their natures. The “beyond,” to which modern architecture tends by definition, should not be confused with the reality of urban dynamics. The “productivity of ideology” is measured only by its concrete results in the history of political economy as manifested within urban history.

The phenomena which permitted the direct comparison between artistic writings and real productivity point to an extremely complex process whose beginnings cannot easily be made to coincide with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Robert Klein has delineated the steps in the process of the “loss of referent” for the course of modern art, and André Chastel has correctly noted the affinity between Klein’s approach and that of Benjamin. “This contradiction [the death of objective reference and its kaleidoscopic transformation]”—writes Klein—“is in the final analysis an epistemological contradiction, comparable to the aporiae of the object of consciousness. How can one affirm, beyond the image, a non-figurative norm, a *telos* of figuration according to which one measures the image? Sooner or later this referent must be made to descend

72 into the work itself; we must have done with any thought that posits outside of itself a subject and an object, and whose final word, already uncertain because of its initial postulate, was psychologism in philosophy and impressionism in art.”³²

The relation between referents, values, and *aura* is immediate; no history can be given of the actual attempts to reduce the work to the pure presence of the act that mimes the artistic process, nor can any historical account be given of modern architecture’s successful attempt to break down the barrier between the language of forms and that of existence, except in dialectical juxtaposition with the historical cycle of classicism. To “actualize” this cycle would entail recognizing its structural depth and individuating, diachronically, its closed systematics. But it would also entail the understanding of a dual characteristic within the cycle: the emergence of a mode of intellectual production that we have still not yet fully reckoned with, and the appearance of a conception of language directed solely toward “referents,” which the “dialectics of the Enlightenment” would undertake to destroy. For this reason, the history of classicism itself reflects the difficulties of modern art; for this reason, also, the method we are trying to elaborate must be able to apply itself, with timely adjustments, to the prehistory of bourgeois civilization. In other words, the cycle begun by the visual rationalism introduced by Tuscan Humanism may act as a rear-view mirror—in which are reflected the ghosts of the present day’s bad conscience—for a history intent on researching the beginnings of capitalist *civilization*.³³

And in this regard we may even accept the warning formulated by Adorno: “The theory of the aura, when handled in an undialectical manner, leads to abuses. It permits the falsification, through trends and fads, of that disjointedness in art which is finding its own place in the era of mass-technological reproduction. The aura of a work of art is not only its here and now, as Benjamin would have it, but everything within the work that transcends its contemporaneity. . . . Even works that have lost their charm contain more than would seem proper to their lot. The “expository value” of these works, which in time

should take the place of their aura-induced “cult value,” is a mature stage of the exchange process.”³⁴

The result of such reasoning does not really modify by very much Benjamin’s original thesis, which could readily allow that the “expository value” might be the mature stage of the exchange process, but only in works which haven’t already incorporated this process within themselves. From Adorno’s proposition there emanates a nostalgia that becomes more evident at the end of his passage on “expression and construction”: “the category of the fragmentary,” he concludes on the subject of the contrast between the wholeness and disintegration of a work; “is not that of contingent singularity: the fragment is that part of the work’s totality which resists totality itself.”³⁵

Beyond such nostalgia, there remains the problem of “handling the theory of the aura in a dialectical manner.” That which a work “exposes,” even when the work starts from the desire to lay bare the artistic process in the making, is only the less vulnerable side of its structure. The semiological approach may be able to turn the laws behind the production of images back on themselves;³⁶ but shedding light on their implications is the task of another method of dissection.

The unawareness of the need to combine more analytical methods has led to a historiographical impasse: instead of clarifying the real resistance posed by the institutions of the capitalist system against the hypotheses of the worldwide renovation of the territorial order, historians have preferred to trace accounts from within the development of their respective ideologies.

It is no accident that the jeremiads on the “crisis of architecture” as well as the unrealistic proposals for “anti-classical languages” are seeming increasingly arbitrary and inoperative. If one desires to understand the meaning of the real transformations that have come about in the field of planning and design it will be necessary to write a new history of intellectual labor and its transformation into purely technical labor (into “abstract labor,” that is). Besides, haven’t the productivism of Rodchenko, Mayak-

ovsky's work for Rosta, and Le Corbusier's and (on the other side of the coin) Hannes Meyer's predictions already pointed out the problem posed by the transformation of artistic activity into *labor* that is directly channeled into the productive order?

It is useless to lament a *fait accompli*; ideology has become reality, even if the romantic dream of intellectuals who set themselves the task of "guiding" the productive universe has remained, logically, within the superstructural sphere of utopia. As historians, our task is to reconstruct lucidly the course followed by intellectual labor through modern history, and in so doing, to recognize contingent tasks that call for a new organization of labor.

The influence of physiocratic thought on eighteenth century ideas of urban reform; the birth and development of company-towns in the nineteenth century; the birth of city planning in Bismarck's Germany and in laissez-faire America; the experiments of Sir Patrick Geddes and Raymond Unwin, and later of the social-democratic and radical administrators of German cities; the theoretical work of the Regional Planning Association of America; the organization of Soviet cities during the first five-year plans; the contradictory reorganization of territory realized by Roosevelt's New Deal; the urban renewal of the Kennedy era: these are the separate chapters of a succession of events involving a diversity of experimentation, all of them directed toward finding new roles for the work of the architectural technician, who remains a traditional architect only in less significant cases. And if anyone should remark that there often exists a gap between the traceable history of the above succession of themes and the *forms* of the Modern Movement's architecture, we will respond that it is precisely the same gap that avant-garde ideology places between its own demands and their translation into *techniques*. It is a gap which historical writing does not have the power to fill, but which it must instead emphasize and make the tangible object of widespread knowledge.

Source Note: This text is translated from the Introduction to Manfredo Tafuri's book *La sfera e il labirinto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1979). It originally appeared in a shorter form in Casabella, 429, October 1977.

Editors' Note: Diane Ghirardo translated the first part of the text, pp. 55–67, and notes 1–23. Stephen Santarelli translated the remaining part of the text, pp. 67–73, and notes 24–36.

1. Carlo Ginzburg, Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza. Un seminario sul "Beneficio do Cristo"* (Turin, 1975), p. 84. The reference to this exceptional volume, which, in its stages, its labyrinths, and the errors it overcomes, exposes the doubts and incidents which characterize historical research, is not casual. The present study, like that of Ginzburg and Prosperi, is the fruit of the teamwork of author, Franco Rella, and the students of architectural history at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura in Venice. They are, in some way, co-authors. Franco Rella has offered his conclusions about the team-taught seminars of the academic year 1976–1977 in his article "Il paradosso della ragione," in *Aut aut* (1977), no. 60.

2. Here we accept the reflections which Emilio Garroni has been elaborating for several years on the theme of artistic language. Cf. esp. Emilio Garroni, *Progetto di semiotica* (Bari, 1972); *Estetica ed epistemologia. Riflessioni sulla "Critica del giudizio"* (Rome, 1976); "Per Marcello Pirro. Sul sentimento, la bellezza, le operazioni e la sopravvivenza dell'arte," in *Pirro* (Udine, 1977). It is extremely interesting, we believe, that Garroni, starting out with Kant, achieves results related to the fruits of our reflections on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* or on Freud's *Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse*. "The problem is precisely here," writes Garroni, "in this particularity and infinity of modes in which particularity is presented. Things are not given to those who would know them as already beautiful and finished . . . the world is not presented as already known and analyzed prior to every cognitive and analytical intervention . . . rather things from this point of view are 'inexhaustible' ('unerschöpflich,' says Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) in the sense that they can be determined and organized, to cognitive ends, only to the extent that we assume a 'point of view', and 'organizing principle' suitable with respect to a certain scientific consideration."

3. On this point, see Massimo Cacciari, "Di alcuni motivi in Walter Benjamin (from 'Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels' to 'Der Autor als Produzent')," in *Nuova Corrente*, no. 67 (1975), pp. 209–243.

4. Franco Rella, "Dallo spazio estetico allo spazio dell'interpretazione," in *Nuova Corrente*, no. 68–69 (1975–1976), p. 412. But see also Rella, "Testo analitico e analisi testuale," in the edited volume *La materialità del testo. Ricerche interdisciplinari sulle pratiche significative* (Verona, 1977), pp. 11ff., and the introduction to *La critica freudiana* (Milan, 1977).

5. From *Wille zur Macht* (Leipzig, 1911), p. 489; and Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, K. Schlechta, ed., vol. III (Munich, 1969), p. 860.

6. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (Paris, 1971).

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Umano troppo umano" in *Opere*, G.

- 74 Colli and M. Montinari, eds., vol. IV, II [Milan, 1965], p. 16.
8. Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," p. 95.
9. Ibid., p. 103.
10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Aurora*, 429, in *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 215–216.
11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 39, in *Opere*, pp. 45–46.
12. Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir* (Paris, 1976), esp. pp. 123ff.
13. Georg Simmel, "Zur Metaphisik des Todes" (1910), in Dino Formaggio and Lucio Perucchi, *Arte e civiltà* (Milan, 1976), p. 67.
14. Georg Simmel, "Zur Psychologie der Mode. Soziologische Studie," in *Arte e civiltà*, p. 19.
15. Simmel, "Psychologie," p. 21.
16. Karl Marx, *The Class Struggle in France*, from the Italian edition *Lotte di classe in Francia* (Rome, 1961), pp. 172ff.
17. Nietzsche, *Aurora*, p. 40.
18. Massimo Cacciari, "Il problema del politico in Deleuze e Foucault. (Sul pensiero di 'autonomia' e di 'gioco')," report to the seminar on Foucault's analytical method (M. Cacciari, F. Rella, M. Tafuri, G. Teyssot), held in the Department of History at the Istituto Universitario de Architettura in Venice on April 22, 1977. Cacciari's criticism is based principally on the Foucault of *Surveiller et punir* and on the dialogue between Deleuze and Foucault contained in the volume *Deleuze* (Cosenza, 1977). For further articulation of the theme see the introductory essay and the concluding remarks in Cacciari's *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* (Padua, 1977). Starting out with Cacciari's considerations, which are worth further specification, the theses expressed in Jean Baudrillard's pamphlet *Oublier Foucault* (Paris, 1977) seem in large measure to be arbitrary.
19. "Philosophical language," Jean-Michel Rey wrote, "has not been able to be presented as 'autonomous' or 'univocal,' except by way of a far larger omission, which is to say a decisive dismissal, of its production, its metaphoric tissue, its loans, its debts, the complex of its trauma. The effects of this massive omission are that Nietzsche re-inscribes in his text, through the practice of *double inscription*, a redoubling/re-effusion, a productive translation. This work is entirely analogous to Freud's decoding operation." Jean-Michel Rey, "Il nome della scrittura," in *Il Verri*, n. 39–40 (1972), p. 218.
20. Sigmund Freud, "Moses and Monotheism," in *Gesammelte Werke*, XVI, p. 144.
21. In any event we maintain that it is fair to reject such linear interpretations of many characteristic themes of the Expressionist and late Romantic ideologies flowing into the praxis of National Socialist propaganda as appear, for example, in John Elderfield's essay, "Metropolis," *Studio International*, v. 183, no. 944 (1972), pp. 196–199 and in George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movement in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York, 1974). Far richer and more articulated is the reading offered by Giancarlo Buonfino, *La politica culturale operaia. Da Marx e Lassalle alla rivoluzione di novembre, 1859–1919* (Milan, 1975), although limited to the beginnings of the Weimar Republic.
22. Freud, "Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse," *Gesammelte Werke*, XVI, and the comment of Franco Rella in his introduction to *La critica freudiana*, p. 45ff.
23. Deleuze and Guattari, *Rhizome (Introduction)* (Paris, 1976). "The rhizome," they write, "is an anti-genealogy. The rhizome proceeds by way of variation, expansion, conquest, capture, injection. In opposition to graphics, design, or photography, in opposition to tracings, the rhizome is reduced to a paper that has to be produced, constructed, is always able to be disassembled, is connectable to multiple entrances and exits with its lines of escape . . . the rhizome is an a-centric system, non-hierarchical and nonmeaningful, without a General, without an organizing memory or central automaton, solely defined by a circulation of states," p. 56. See also M. Cacciari, "Razionalità . . ." in *Aut aut*, 1977, no. 161, pp. 119–133.
24. A further observation of Foucault responds in some way to what we have just said: "It is necessary to conceive of discourse as a violence which we inflict upon things, in any case, as a practice which we impose on them; and it is precisely in this practice that the results of discourse find the principle of their regularity. Another principle, that of *exteriority*: to work not from the discourse itself toward its hidden nucleus, toward the heart of a thought or a meaning manifested in it; but, starting from the discourse itself, from its conception and from its regularity, to work toward its external conditions of possibility, toward that which gives rise to the aleatory series of those results, and which fixes their limits." Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris, 1970); Italian edition *L'ordine del discorso* (Turin, 1972), p. 41.
25. Consider, for example, the text of Jurij Tynjanov and Roman Jakobson, "Voprosy izucenija literaturny iazyka," in *Novyj Lef*, 1927, no. 12. The two authors assert that the correlation between literary series and the other historic series has its own structural laws, in their turn subject to analysis. Compared to Shklovskian formalism, here we have a recognition of the autonomy of the analysis of the "system of systems," to be correlated to the discovery of the value of the dynamic integration of materials as the foundation of the text. Cf. J. Tynjanov, "O Literaturnoj evolucij," in *Archaisty i novatory* (Leningrad, 1929), pp. 30–47, now in Tzvetan Todorov, ed., *I formalisti russi* (Turin, 1968). Also cf. Stephen Bann and John E. Bowlt, *Russian Formalism* (New York, 1973). The link between Mukarovsky's thought and that of Tynjanov and Jakobson is also commented upon in Sergio Corduas's Introduction to Jan Mukarovsky, *La funzione, la norma e il valore estetico come fatti sociali* (Turin, 1971). Also cf. J. Mukarovsky, *Il significato dell'estetica* (Turin, 1973); orig. ed., *Studie z estetiky* (Prague, 1966). It has in any case been observed that in these works (and in those of Karel Teige) the range given to the concept of "extra-aesthetic series" is completely restrictive and traditional (ibid., p. 259). Even more limited, however, seems to be Norberg-Schulz's utilization of Gestalt psychology, in addition to the theories of Piaget, Bense, and Ehrenzweig, in his attempt to define a comprehensive analytical method for architectural writing. Cf. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture* (London, 1963).
26. Cf. Roland Barthes, *Critique et vérité* (Paris, 1965), and

Serge Doubrovsky, *Pourquoi la nouvelle critique, Critique et objectivité* (Paris, 1967). But the limit (and at the same time the maximum expression) of Barthes' "sinking" into the metaphors of the text, is verifiable in the "all-too-true" statements made in Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte* (Paris, 1973).

27. See, on this subject, the chapter "L'architettura come 'oggetto trascurabile' e la crisi dell'attenzione critica" in Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e la storia dell'architettura* (Bari, 1976).

28. Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Der Autor als Produzent*, in *Versuche über Brecht* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971). An unacceptable critical reading of Benjamin's essay is in Jürgen Habermas's text, *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).

29. Cf. Viktor Shklovsky, *Chod Konja* (Moscow-Berlin, 1923). We would like to underline, on this subject, Shklovsky's significant remark on the "obliqueness" of the poetic process: "The horse is not free, it moves sideways because the direct way is closed to it beforehand."

30. See, in particular, Max Bense, *Aesthetica* (Baden-Baden, 1965), and *Geräusch in der Strasse* (Baden-Baden und Krefeld, 1960). Cf. the excellent volume by Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, *Avanguardia e tecnologia. Walter Benjamin, Max Bense e i problem dell'estetica tecnologica* (Rome, 1971).

31. Franco Fortini, "Due avanguardie," in *Avanguardia e neoavanguardia* (Milan, 1966), pp. 9-21. The contradiction and conflict embodied by the artist of the avant-garde, writes Fortini, "neglect dialectics." This conflict and contradiction are "juxtaposition or polar alternation between absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity, between abstract irrationality—that is, the refutation of the importance of discourse and dialogue in favor of association, involuntary memory, or dreams—and abstract rationality, that is, pure knowledge by way of discourse, especially in the positivistic and naturalistic sense of the idea of reason. The avant-garde takes refuge in one or the other extreme, or lives them both simultaneously, in a fashion well understood by all of the mystical tradition" (ibid., pp. 9-10). Also see F. Fortini, "Avanguardia e mediazione," in *Nuova corrente*, 1968, no. 45, p. 100. All of Fortini's argument cannot be related here; but we maintain that his interpretation of the avant-garde as absence of mediation—taken from an idea of Lukács—could be extended further. For the avant-garde, not only do refusal and absence not form part of a dialectic (often the one aspect is hidden under the disguise of the other), but they also avoid any sort of mediation with the real, from which they nevertheless claim to "erupt." This observation could give rise to important retrenchments in the study of the historic avant-garde.

32. Robert Klein, *La forme et l'intelligible* (Paris, 1970); Italian edition, *La forma e l'intelligibile* (Turin, 1975), p. 455. On the Benjamin-Klein connection, see André Chastel's introduction to the above-cited volume, pp. XI-XII.

33. A masterful diachronic analysis of this whole subject may be found in the essay of Massimo Cacciari, "Vita Cartesii est simplicissima," in *Contropiano*, 1970, no. 2, pp. 375-99.

34. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970); Italian edition, *Teoria estetica* (Turin, 1975), p. 66.

35. Ibid.

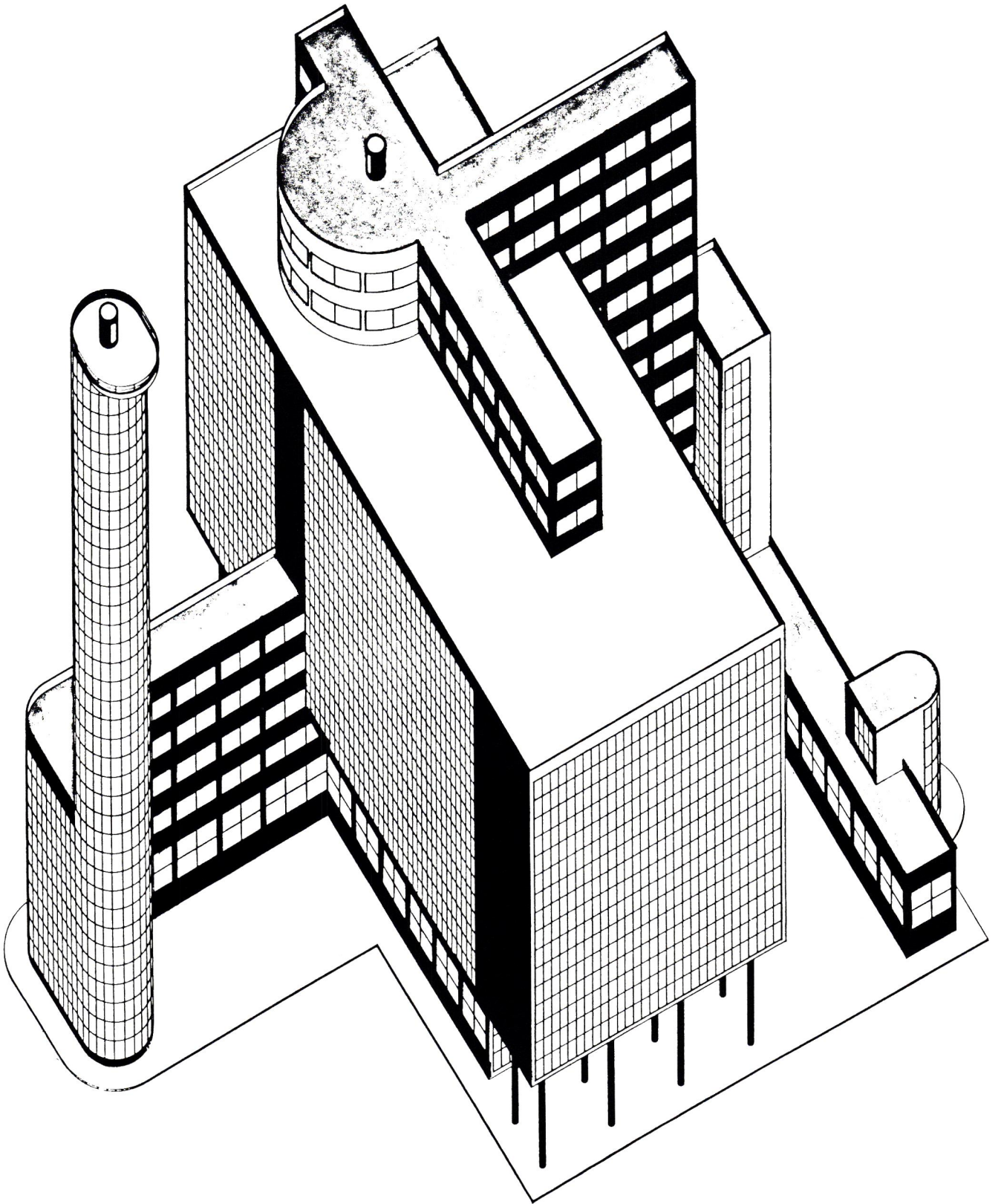
36. One should, however, keep in mind the extent to which

Kristeva was writing, several years ago, on the subject of semiological research. Even starting from a Marxism much less teleological than that of Ms. Kristeva, one may well admit that "semiological research remains a discipline that finds nothing at the bottom of research (no key to no mystery. Lévi-Strauss would say) but its own ideological gesture, so that it may take cognizance of it, negate its own efforts, and start all over again. By positing a precise knowledge as its final goal, at the end of its journey it arrives at a theory which, being itself a signifying system, sends the semiotic research back to its starting point: back, that is, to the model of semiology itself, so that it may be criticized or overturned." Julia Kristeva, "La sémiologie comme science critique" in *Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris, 1968), p. 83. Moreover, the question of whether semiological activity is "creative" is discounted by the greater part of French criticism. This is less the case in the attempts to introduce linguistics into the field of the analysis of architectural texts. Cf. again Garroni, *Progetto di Semiotica*, loc. cit. In agreement with some of his ideas on the inconvenience of the speaking of "language" when speaking about architecture, there is also the essay by Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas, "Semiotics and Architecture: Ideological Consumption or Theoretical Work," in *Oppositions*, 1973, no. 1, pp. 94-100. An evaluation of recent research efforts into architectural semiology may be found in the article by Patrizia Lombardo, "Sémiotique: l'architecte s'est mis au tic," in *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 1975, no. 179, pp. xi-xv. Also see Tomás Maldonado, "Architettura e linguaggio," in *Casabella*, XLI, 1977, no. 429, pp. 9-10; Omar Calabrese, "Le matrici culturali della semiotica dell'architettura in Italia," ibid., pp. 19-24; and Ugo Volli, "Equivoici concettuali nella semiotica dell'architettura," ibid., pp. 24-7. Also interesting, as the testimony of a practicing architect, is the interview with Vittorio Gregotti, "Architettura e linguaggio," ibid., pp. 28-30.

Figure Credits

1 From *Berggasse 19*, Edmund Engelman, photographer (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976).

2-15 From Manfredo Tafuri, "Il 'progetto' storico," *Casabella*, 429, October 1977.



Oriol Bohigas

Translation by Silvia Kolbowski

1 (frontispiece) *Notre-Dame du Phare, Fribourg Cathedral. Church and religious center. Alberto Sartoris, 1931. Axonometric.*

The recognition of Alberto Sartoris in the interpretation of the history of modern architecture has had disconcerting oscillations: he was forgotten as architect and as theoretician in the episodes whose protagonists were Zevi and Benevolo—of special significance since their points of view were informed by the local phenomenon of Italy; then considered sublime by the Spanish and Latin Americans who in the fifties and sixties received him as if he were the reincarnation of the pioneers; and finally reconsidered in historiographic revisions and exhibitions of recent years, ranging from the articles of Patetta¹ and Fagiolo² to the exhibition in Turin³ and the last (1976) Biennale in Venice. Such fluctuating recognition can doubtless be understood as a result of the typical theoretical interests of historiography, which are often independent of the possible value of the subject.

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In outlining here the revision of Sartoris, we do not intend to elude the specific critical interests and contemporary historiographies which permit his revindication as an interesting precedent of many current tendencies and preoccupations. But at the same time, we wish to emphasize the objective value of his work—architecture and writings—as a coherent whole whose quality and characteristic methods constitute an example of a certain personal independence in spite of his remaining within the cultural framework of the period in which he began his activity.

Tradition

One manner of interpreting the cultural role of Sartoris's first works is to present them as the bridge—almost the only bridge—between Sant'Elia and Gruppo Sette, that is to say, as the first example of the Italian avant-garde, the first effort to bring the Modern Movement emanating from central Europe to Italy. This is an accurate chronological and intentionalist interpretation, but clearly insufficient. It is true that in his first projected works—realized and written—and in his efforts for cultural promotion, we find constant reference to the incipient Modern Movement, a pioneering will and intent to break the relative backwardness of Italian architecture in order to integrate it with a modern international attitude. But, in addition, there is, even from the beginning, an intention to give an

78 “Italian” answer—not only by geographic but by ideological extension on cultural and political planes—and a “Mediterranean” answer; so Italian and Mediterranean were the antithetical movements to which Sartoris had to refer: the Novecento and Futurism. Both movements were mixed with a climate of national exaltation—their seeds had survived in Italy for many years and still provoke the nostalgic air of revolutionary models—but at the same time they refer indirectly or directly to the European avant-garde. From Futurism to Metaphysical painting and throughout the architecture of the Novecento, a similar new formal spirit is found, as is a profound surrealist vibration, which is the aspect interpreted best in the historical revisions—for example, the most memorable issue of *Edilizia Moderna* of 1963—and the one most reutilized, for example, in some aspects of Aldo Rossi’s work.

It must not be forgotten that Italian culture between the wars invoked reason and tradition from every ideological category, although in any one of them these concepts were interpreted in substantially different ways. For those of the Novecento the will to order and reason was understood as a Classicist, anti-avant-garde attitude which was translated into a language of stylistic simplification. For those who more or less subscribed to the international Modern Movement, it was a problem of functional rationality and of the restoration of a new language, the consequence of a new methodology. But, for both, tradition had apparent validity in its roots. Persico was one of the few architects who—as early as the 1930’s—protested against the myth of Mediterraneanism, accusing it of “a particular aspect of the decadence of our taste and generally of taste in all of Europe,”⁴ in his commentary on the “Programma d’Architettura” of *Quadrante* and on the First Italian Exposition of Rational Architecture of 1928.

But Sartoris was an active militant of reason and tradition, and what for many was a bungled compromise was for him an innovative effort: the search for the historical—and Classicist—roots of the Modern Movement. From a theoretical point of view, his effort was almost singular in the field of architecture, although others mirrored, often

equivocally, the most stylistic characteristics of his work. The case of De Finetti is important in this respect, for his direct reference to the ambiguous lesson of Loos. The curious house in Pescarenico (1929) of Nino Fiocchi is like a manifesto of superficial rationality laid over a traditional classical scheme: the changing succession of windows meant to express a particular functionality are cut out of a Palladian composition. But most significant are the architects who constitute the first group of Turin—among whom Sartoris himself figures—and who joined cohesively in the Exposition of 1928: Perona, Montalcini, Chessa, Cuzzi, the younger Pagano, etc.

Responding to the complexity of his cultural environment, Sartoris initiated, almost by himself, an operation in which he would consistently persist for most of his life: the interpretation of Rationalism—or of Functionalism, to use a term in whose invention he participated directly—as a constant in Mediterranean architecture, which in the twentieth century reaches a genuine expression, thanks precisely to the participation of Latin architects who maintain their rationality in the face of the challenge of the future. Sartoris is surely the first architect of the avant-garde who claims a historical base for the Modern Movement, a base which is none other than the tradition of Mediterranean Classicism, remodeled on the Futurism of Sant’Elia.

In 1932, he publishes his first book, which attempts to summarize the Modern Movement through the abundant use of theory and iconography: *Gli Elementi dell’Architettura razionale*.⁵ Up to that moment the only works published on the subject were the books of Gropius (1925), Hilberseimer (1926), Platz (1927), Hitchcock (1929), Taut (1929), and Malkiel-Jirmounsky (1930). *The International Style* of Hitchcock and Johnson is contemporaneous. Given the partisanism or programmatic character of the majority of the books mentioned, Sartoris’s work can be considered as the first complete summarizing effort of the panorama.

An enthusiastic and redemptive attitude characteristic of avant-garde pioneerism is at the base of all his reasoning.

His optimism with respect to the social role of design is explicit: "In renewing art and the art of construction, the civil spirit is renewed. In realizing the modern house, modern man is, in a certain way, defined"; an "urbanism inspirational to the will to form the new spirit of future generations." The new civic involvements, rationalization and the economy, and the priority of function are the slogans of this optimistic avant-garde.

But, "evident forms of beauty and plasticity will never be negated." Architecture understood primarily as a work of art locates Sartoris in a sector of the avant-garde which Le Corbusier himself defines in the prologue to the book: "among human needs there are, we agree, that of keeping the feet warm, but I am very sensitive to the need to experience that pleasure which derives from harmony, pleasure which is worth more than a lobster to an American, more than a glass of champagne or a fresh salad."

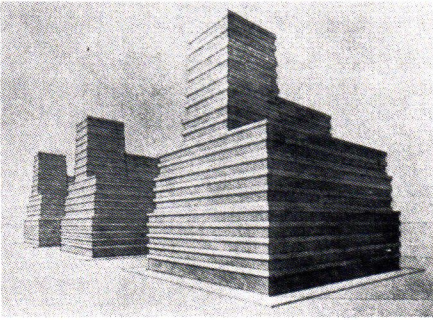
Artistic quality exists on a privileged plane, taking to the extreme the Corbusian position. The generalized qualifications of ambiguous significance, the reference to the "lyrical and spiritual longing of man," to geometric clarity, to the "principal rules of beauty at the service of utilitarianism," to "pure art" and "magical reality," take on, in Sartoris, a tone analogous to his critical texts on modern painting or sculpture, in which he defends with similar elements an art in which would be found a level of abstraction corresponding to his aesthetic judgments.

But the reference to geometric order and clarity goes beyond pure consideration of form and method, in order to comprehend a certain historical and ideological content. The new architecture is understood through a "Latin predisposition to geometry which resolves all external and internal forms of rationalism." The positive and authentic movement is "that of a return of rationalism to its European origins and to its Mediterranean Hellenic character." In the first issue of *Quadrante* (May 1933) the "Programma di architettura" (signed by Bottoni, Cereghini, Figini, Frette, Griffini, Lingeri, Pollini, Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti and Rogers) declares likewise, "Affirmation, in the heart of European rationalism, of a determined Italian

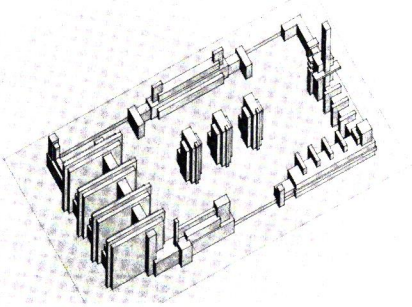
tendency . . . Affirmation of Classicism and Mediterraneanity."

These references are quickly converted into the beginnings of a lengthy attempt to historify modern architecture in the Mediterranean, and more concretely, in Italy. The invocation of no less than sixteen "isms" (among those a curious "Ultraism" credited to Garcia Mercadal y Aizpurua) is only a generalization of Sartoris's real aim: to locate in the Futurism of Sant'Elia the bases of Rationalism. But he does not stop there. In his articles of 1925 to 1936 collected in *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna*⁶ his historiographic process of modernity distances even the *maestri comacini*. As such, the *Encyclopédie*⁷—which begins with a chapter entitled "Perennité de l'art Moderne"—could have been called "Histoire de l'architecture moderne . . . à travers les âges" or "Histoire de l'architecture nouvelle . . . de l'antiquité à nos jours." That historical modernity pulls away from the *comacini* and marks a series of significant steps. Thus emerge Leonardo, Lodoli, Ledoux, Antonelli, Eiffel, and Futurism.

This attitude responds to two very concrete suppositions which are actually very new to his epoch. The first is that of the consideration of rationality as a propulsive constant of architecture. And this rationality is the fundamental contribution of Mediterranean architecture. The passing of rationalism onto a primarily stylistic plane is not, in other words, a rupture of modern architecture, since it is rooted in a revision of the architectural discipline as it appears in illustrative episodes from Lodoli to Ledoux. Such an effort to found the Modern Movement in history—the first symptoms of which must be found in Kaufman—is unusual among militant pioneer architects in the movement, who were mostly preoccupied with their "rupturist" role. Persico, for example, lavishes abundant attacks on Sartoris, and on those who invoke Lodoli or Ledoux, as contemptible chauvinists. *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier* is referred to as a marginal erudite elucidation, and Prampolini is considered as misguided because he takes into account the importance of Sant'Elia in the formulation of modern architecture, whose orthodoxies of radical newness and moralism should not refer even to Futurism.



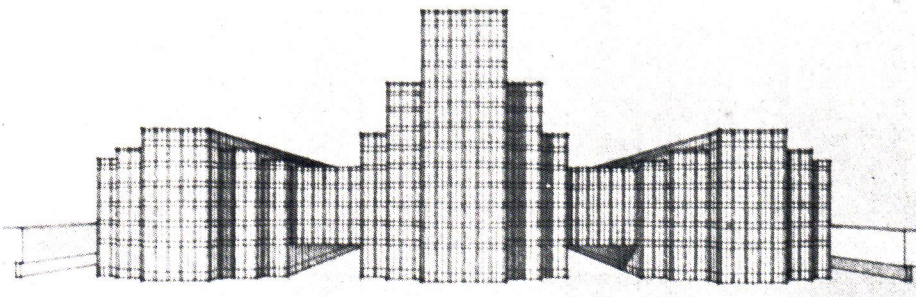
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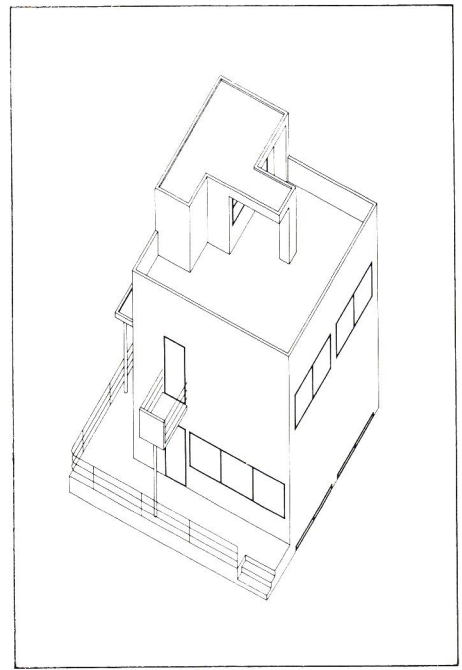
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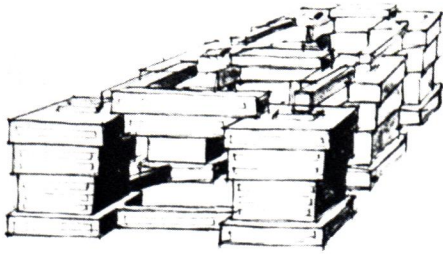
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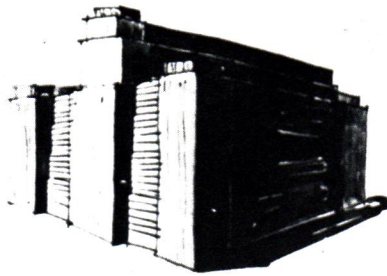
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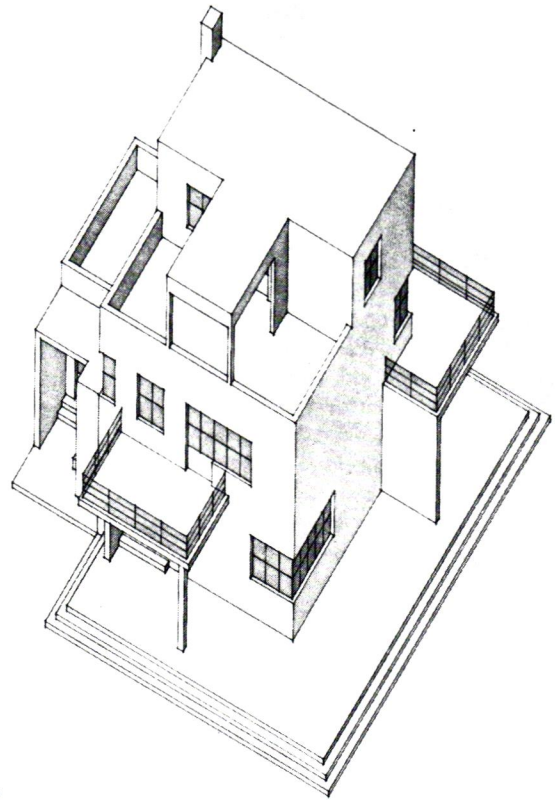
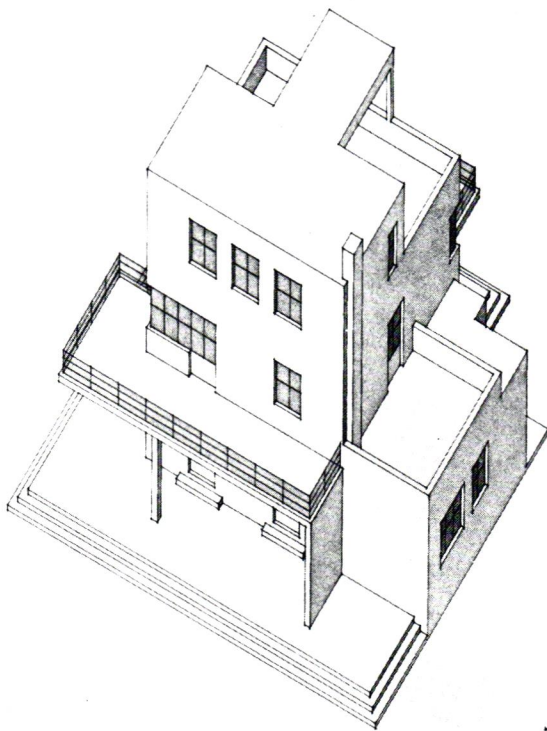
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2 Group of publishing houses, project. A. Sartoris, 1920.

3 Volumetric study for university buildings, Turin. A. Sartoris, 1923.

4 Study for the plaza of the Stadium in Turin. Steel structure for small and medium sized industrial buildings. A. Sartoris, 1922.

5 Chapel/bar, futurist project. A. Sartoris, 1920.

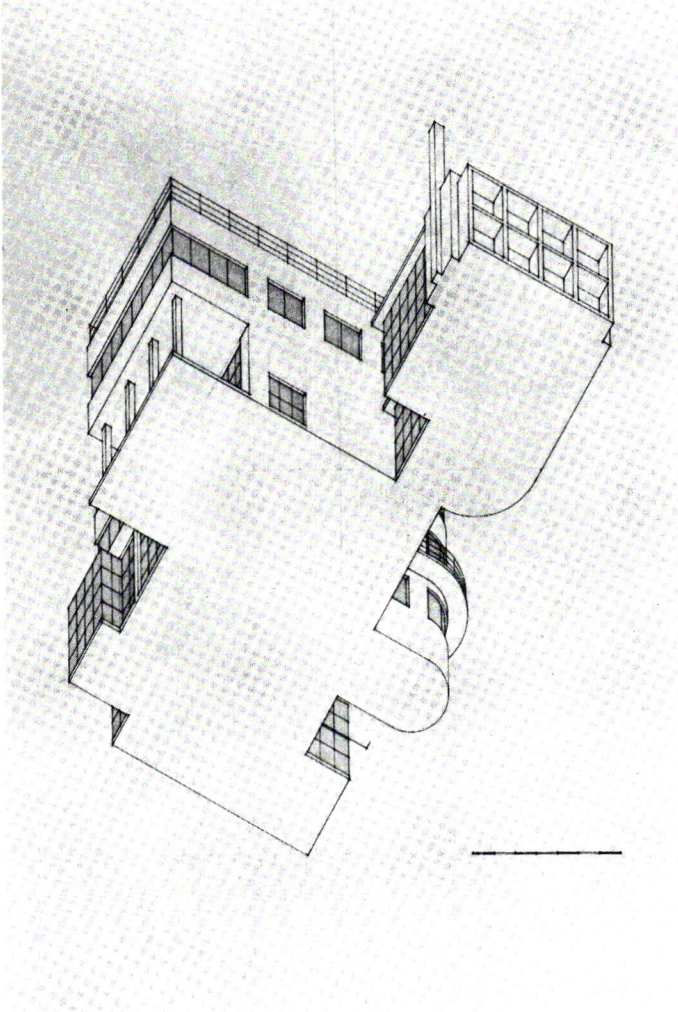
6 The "smallest house in the world" for five people. A. Sartoris, 1925.

This house was mass-produced in 1978 fifty-three years after its design.

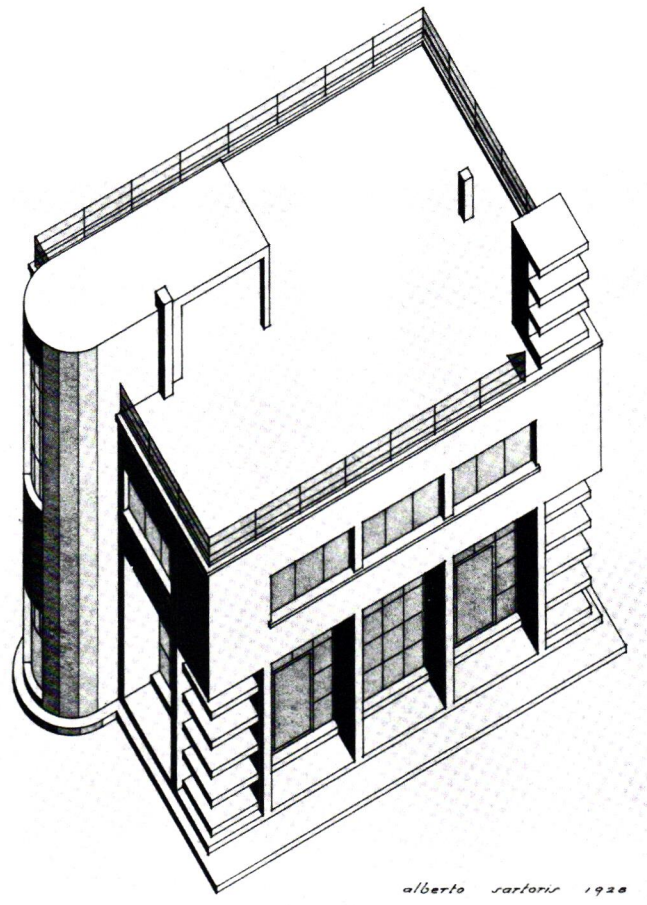
7 'Bridge' housing. A. Sartoris, 1921.

8 Supermarket, project. A. Sartoris, 1920. Third scheme.

9 Country house for a large family, Turin. A. Sartoris, 1926-1927.

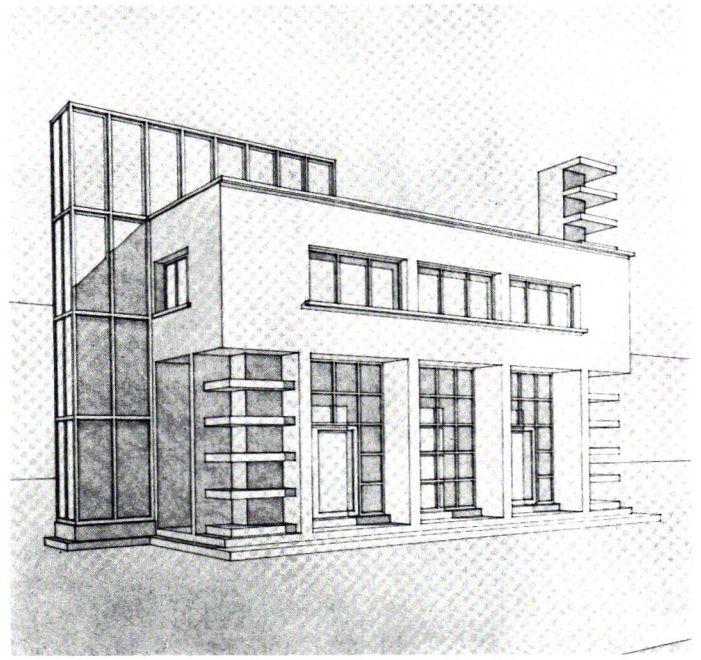


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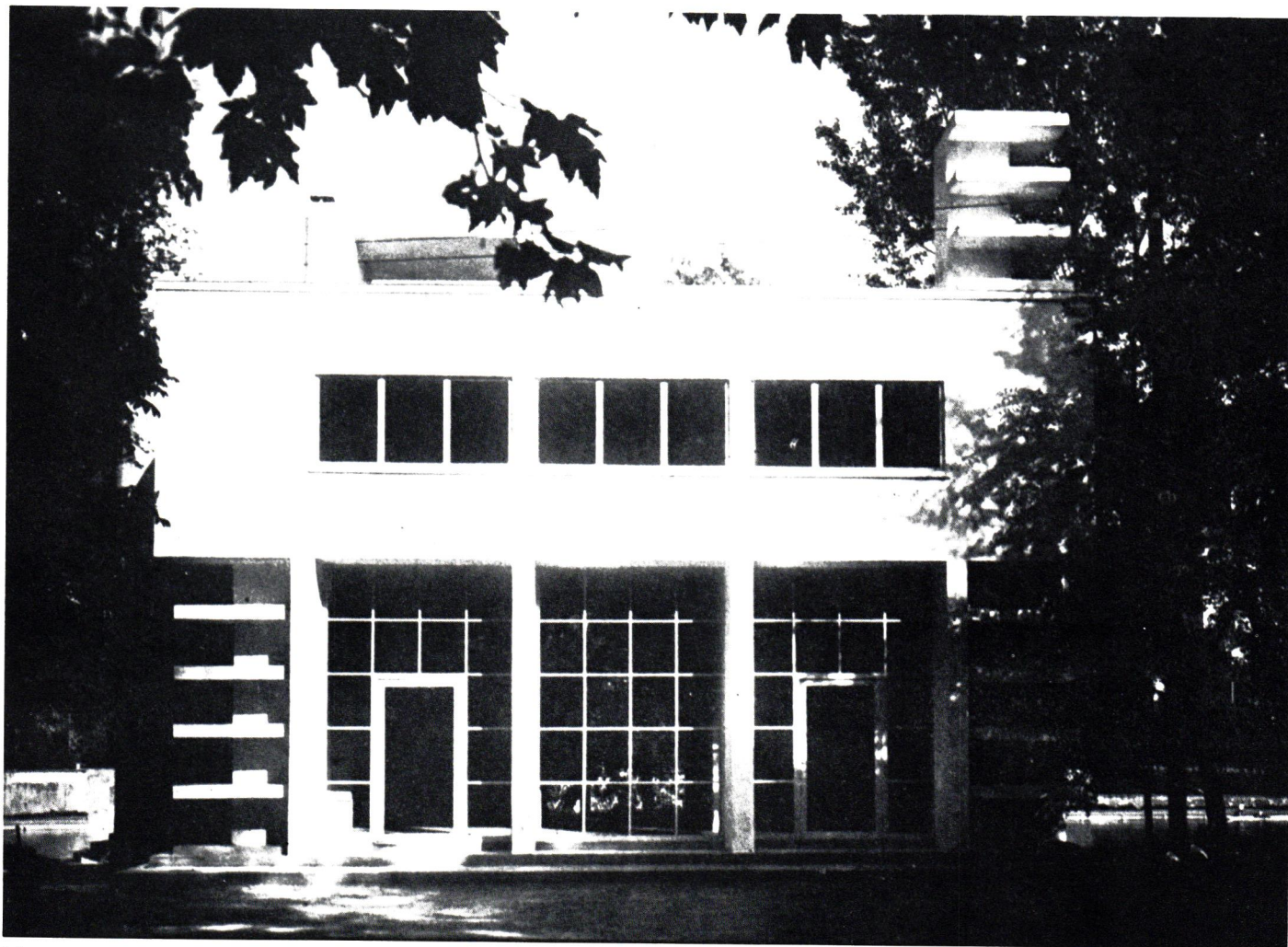


alberto sarloric 1920

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10 Artisans' pavilion, Turin.
A. Sartoris, 1926–1927. Second
scheme.

11 "Pavilion in wood and steel,"
Turin. A. Sartoris, 1928.
Re-design of the completed artisans'
pavilion.

12 "Pavilion." Re-design of the
completed artisans' pavilion.
A. Sartoris, 1928.

13 Artisans' pavilion (*Comunidades
Artisanas Autonomas*), Turin.
A. Sartoris, 1927–1928. The small
lateral wings were for product
exhibitions. This was the first
Rationalist building in Italy.

84 In Italy, Persico was the defender of a theory which was parallel to that of Pevsner, who discerned the start of the movement in Morris and the phenomenon of Arts and Crafts. This would be Sartoris's second supposition: the desire to negate possible Nordic origins, not so much for the possible chauvinism which made Persico indignant, as for an affirmation of Mediterranean Classicism against the mists of Romanticism and Nordic medievalism, and for a profound claim to aesthetic—and stylistic—preeminence over ethics and sociology. The *Encyclopédie* begins with a furious attack against the theses of *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, and when he focuses on the Ruskin theme, his virulence flares and he brings up the nineteenth century text of Eugeni d'Ors: "Ruskin has done with beauty what Bourget has with psychological adultery, and Singer with the sewing machine: made it cheaper. He is the inventor of a vanity case for travel. At present it is on sale in all the great department stores of the world. There is something worse than pianola music. I refer to the *aesthetic* of pianola. I mean that of Ruskin."⁸

The *Encyclopédie* begins with the attack on Pevsner and ends with a long and substantial attack on Zevi (such as we would expect considering the firmness and coherency of Sartoris's position). It is not only a matter of revindicating Mediterranean historicization as against Zevi the new proponent of the Morrisian bases, but of interceding violently against the alternative promotion of "organic architecture" as part of Zevi's proclaimed "post-rationalism," and even against the whole of the work of Wright, which he considers as a betrayal of the grand tradition—Mediterranean and Classical, one must not forget—of authentic architecture. The affirmation of a "national road" to rationalism thus opposes the "post-rational" regionalism of organicism: "Carlo Lodoli employs for the first time the term *l'architecture organique*." "To speak of Organic Architecture as a novelty is to break down a door that is already open, for one can already find it, for instance, in Assisi (Italy) or at Santa Pau (Catalonia)." "The expression *functional* naturally encompasses rational and organic." "For a functional architecture . . . to be valid, the universal elements used in it must attain a level of national and regional consistency." "Tradition, taken in the pure

sense of the succession of styles is the reservoir and crucible of the new. . . . It is not the weight of tradition that is to be feared, in other words that plastic and constructive acts become classicized, but rather the enslavement of academicism. The succession of styles is proof that tradition has never kept novelty from flowering."

Tradition as a fountain of rejuvenation ("all that is not tradition is plagiarism," was stated by Eugeni d'Ors); Mediterraneanism as Classical base and as origin of rationality; Functionalism as a total and coherent movement, from Futurism to Organicism, in which one cannot expect fissures, retrogressions, or "post" attitudes because in tradition the eternal truths take root which make possible a total and definitive revolution: these are some of the elements of Sartoris's thinking, constants which permit one to read, over the adherence to the European avant-garde, the permanence of the political-cultural exaltations of the Italy of his epoch, where the insuperable contradictions of the avant-garde were resolved dramatically in Futurism, the Novecento, and metaphysical painting—constants, based not solely on cultural convictions but on a strategy for bringing Rationalism closer to Fascism, making the two compatible in making Rationalism seem to coincide with nationalist and monumentalist obsessions garbed in historical tradition, and, above all, a relative cultural autarchy toward the *ordine nuovo*.

Style

"The succession of styles is proof that tradition has never kept novelty from flowering." This phrase directly suggests the themes of style and stylism characteristic of Sartoris and certain of his contemporaries.

There is no doubt that one of the principal intents of Sartoris's iconographic summaries is that of establishing the image, of fixing unequivocally the elements of the new style, the referent points of which are always the Classical and Mediterranean tradition, understood in the terms already defined. This stylistic conception has two precise levels: first, the demonstration that that tradition need not imply the acceptance of the "other" Fascist architecture, that of a Classicism made simplistic, anti-revolution-

ary, counter-innovative, a Classicism through which, for the most part, Garnier, Perret, or Le Corbusier can be read in a Mediterranean key; and second, a more comprehensive consideration of stylistic consistencies than of the ideologies or methodologies implicit in the Modern Movement. That is to say, on the one hand, Piacentini's *Architettura d'oggi* is proclaimed as a peremptory, polemical alternative, and on the other, major references to such attitudes as those of Taut, May, Hilberseimer, Klein, or Schumacher are suppressed, as are the typological and distributive conquests which in Italy had made known certain texts like those of Griffini. As a consequence of these attitudes, the Sartorian compilations suppress contributions which would conflict with their intent to present a stylistic consistency (is it not in this way that the absence of the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies, or the meager presence of Wright in *Gli Elementi* would be justified?), and the reproduction of factories and urban settlements is scarce in comparison with the abundance of photographs expressive of style.

Patteta⁹ observes that Sartoris's books and articles, in proposing the diffusion of a vocabulary and the formal adoption of a language, already indicate "the failure of the ideal and re-energizing character of the Modern Movement was precisely in the proof of its acceptance. . . . If it is true, as has been noted, that the political causes of dictatorial repression (Italy, Germany) or of bourgeois conservatism (France) have succeeded in cancelling out the architecture of the Modern Movement from the European scene, then the phenomenon of mannerist formalism in the years 1930–1940 had been undermined from the inside through its subversive capacity and ideological nature."

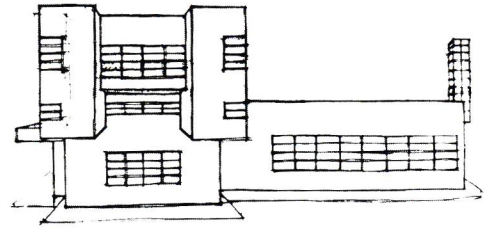
But if, from a certain point of view, this affirmation is certain, in Sartoris's case one has to admit that the stylistic pressure was justified, not simply as a strategy for confronting a Fascist architecture opposed to the Modern Movement, but as a conscious and polemical revindication of style as an innovative factor in the course of history and even as a method of "artistic" affirmation which in the polemical sayings of Le Corbusier and Gropius is reduced

to terms of ambiguous generalities. For Sartoris, style would be the normative end of a figurative thinking whose profound validity would find itself in the same essences as the Movement.

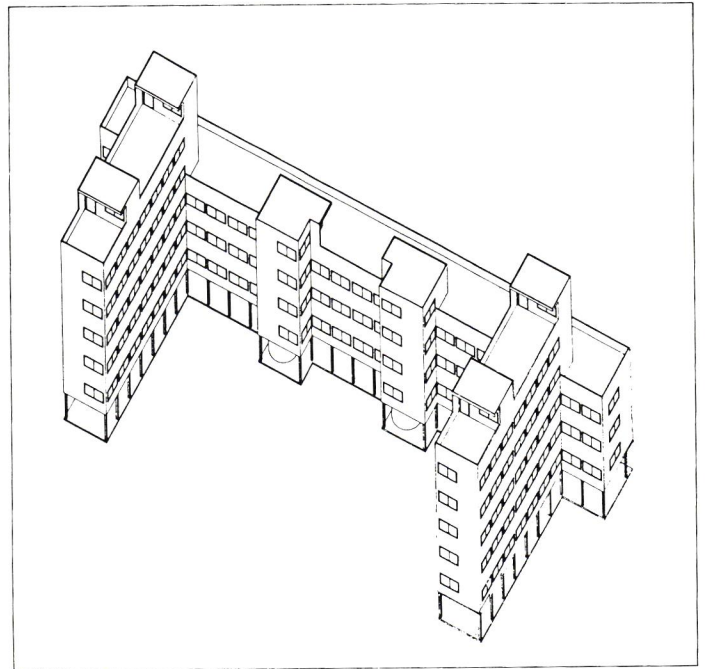
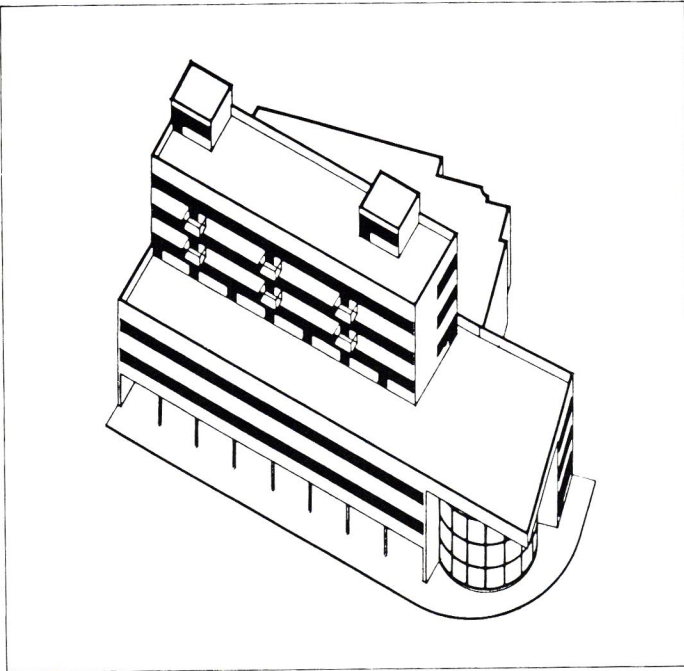
The concept of style to which we make reference in this interpretation is doubtless the same as that which underlies the texts and works of Sartoris. That is to say, its most traditional meaning, which resides definitively in the Renaissance and survives the first wave of the great treatises: "a homogeneous group of general principles, linguistic and formal-proportionist rules, and technical procedures, codified for use or tradition, and associated with a historical period, with an artistic culture, with a determined symbolic content."¹⁰ This does not even include the qualitative and personalized value which was introduced into the term—associated with "manner"—by the criticism of the sixteenth century.

This concept is maintained until the inception of the Modern Movement with two variants which can roughly be referred to as Art Nouveau and the Secession, respectively. The former is the will to create a new style with the character of a rupture, and the latter entails the belief that the new group of rules appears along a critical and evolutionary line with respect to the preceding historical experience. The first evidently has a somewhat normative strain, while the second attempts to maintain the methodological scheme of classical authors. The Modern Movement, however, in its role which we call orthodox, would refute the concept of style under a functionalist and sociological hypothesis, according to which a strict and revolutionary modernity is centered in the fact that form is generated by other causes and not by the establishment of that "homogeneous group of general principles, linguistic and formal-proportionistic rules," proclaiming the academic-didactic conception of compositional treatments ineffectual and *retardataire*.

But Sartoris, in spite of his association with the Modern Movement, does not renounce his fundamental Classical beliefs. He evidently agrees that a radical rupture has been produced, but believes that the normalization and

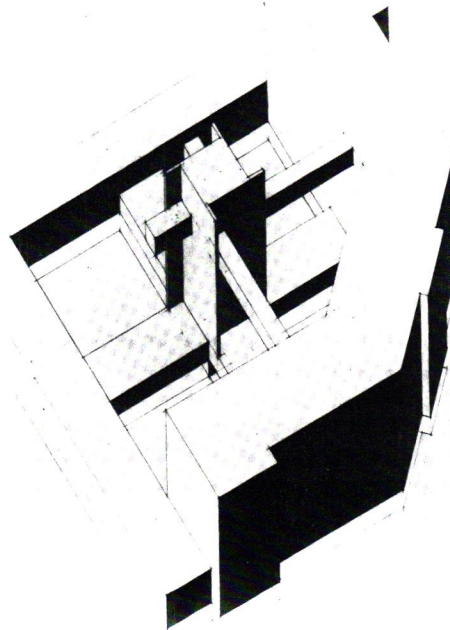


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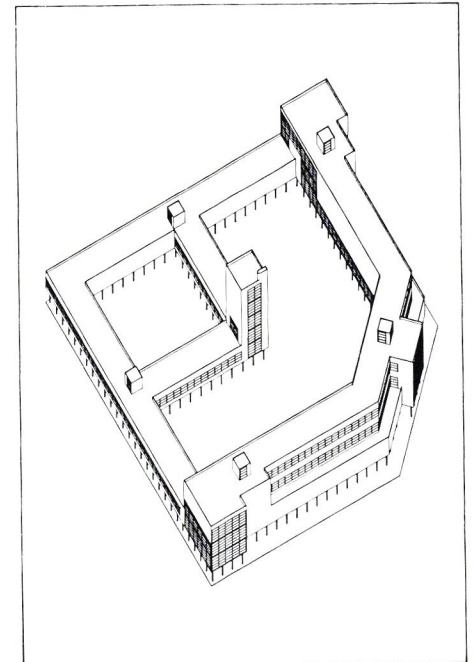


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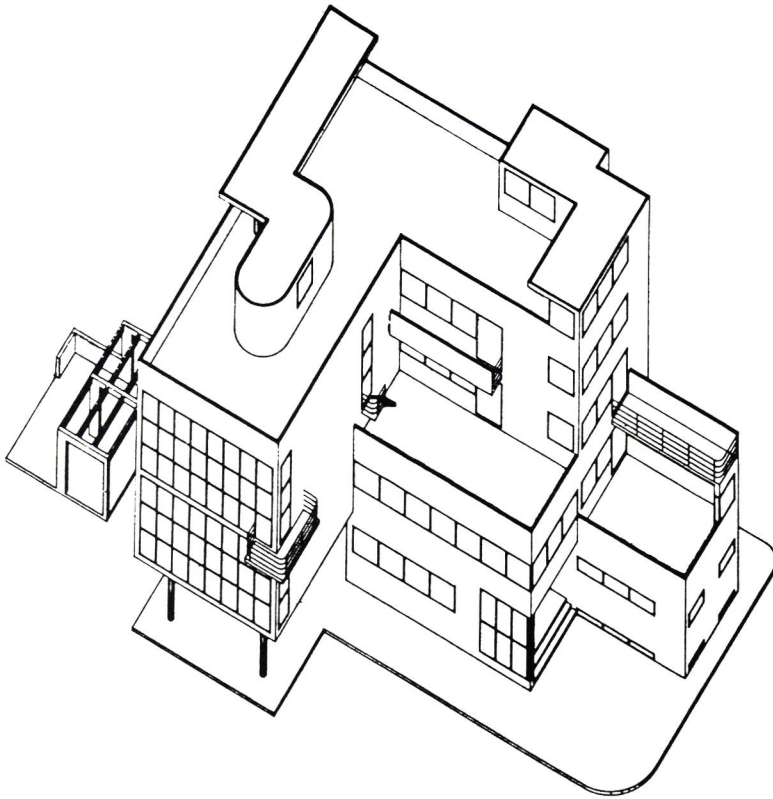
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 14 Ballet School, Geneva.
 A. Sartoris, 1929.
 15 Offices and studios including the
 Maison du Peuple, Vevey.
 A. Sartoris, 1927.
 16 Workers' housing units on
 pilotis, Geneva. A. Sartoris, 1926–
 1927.
 17 Palace of Fine Arts, Milan.
 A. Sartoris, 1928. First scheme.



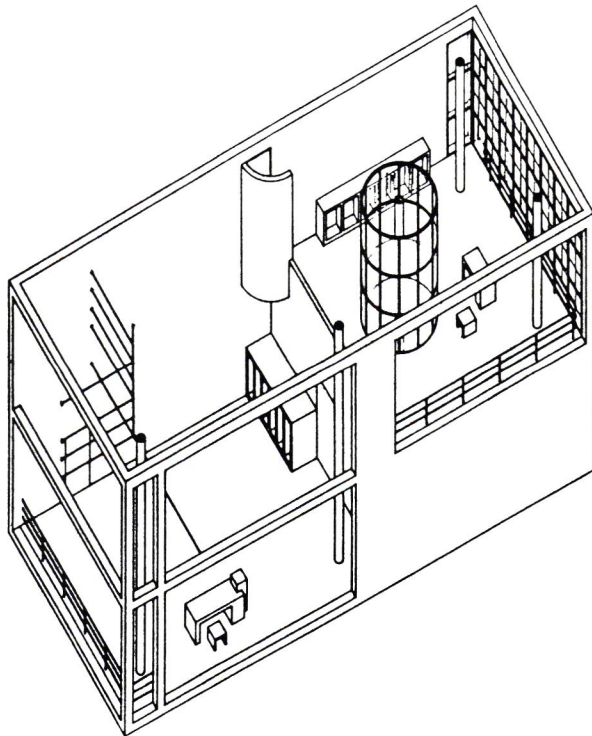
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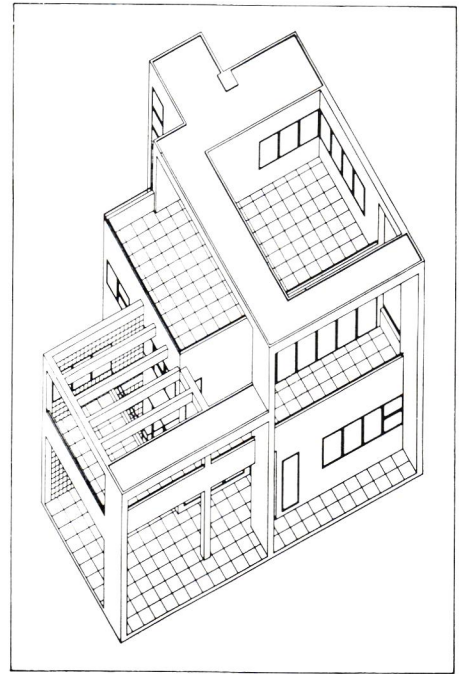
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18 *Palace of Fine Arts. Second scheme, 1929.*

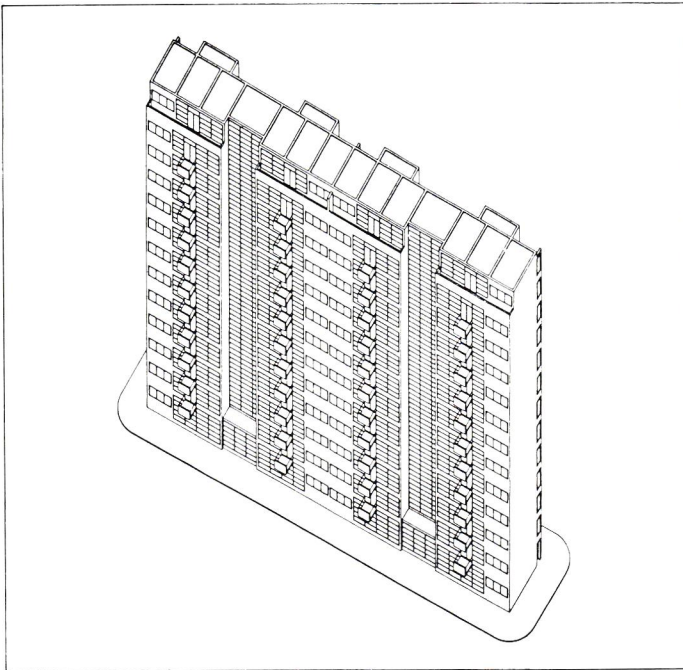
19 *Studio|house for Jean-Saladin van Berchem, Paris. A. Sartoris, 1929. A) second scheme, B) axonometric of the studio and mezzanine.*

20 *House for Henri Ferrare, Geneva. A. Sartoris, 1930.*

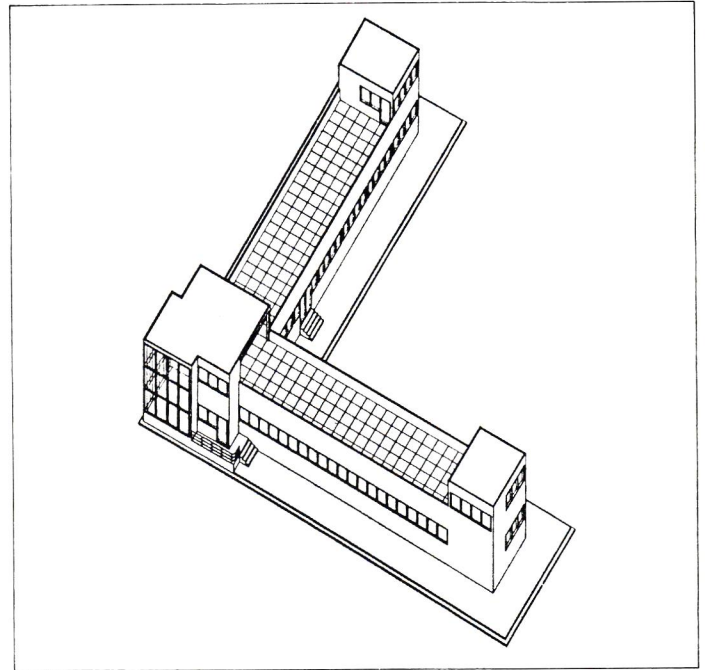
24 Catholic church in Lourtier.
A. Sartoris, 1932. Interior
axonometric.

25 Project for a church in Sarrayer,
Valois. A. Sartoris, 1932.
Perspective showing the suspended
dome.

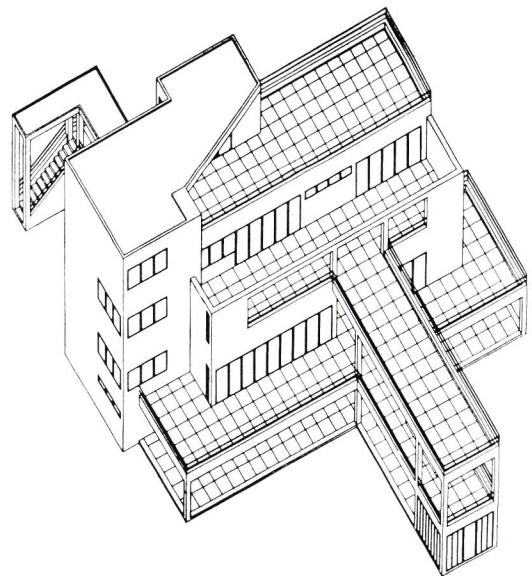
26 Project for a church in Sarrayer,
Valois. Plan.

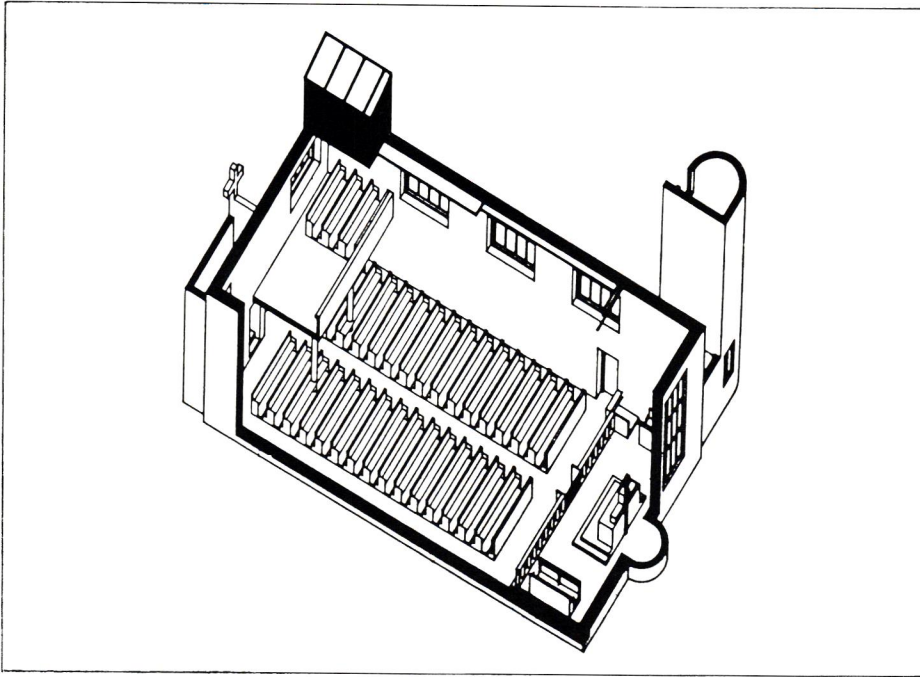


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21 Project for interlocking housing
units for professionals in the liberal
arts. A. Sartoris, 1931.
22 Villa Breuleux, Lausanne.
A. Sartoris, 1931.
23 Residence in Chexbres.
A. Sartoris, 1937. Axonometric.

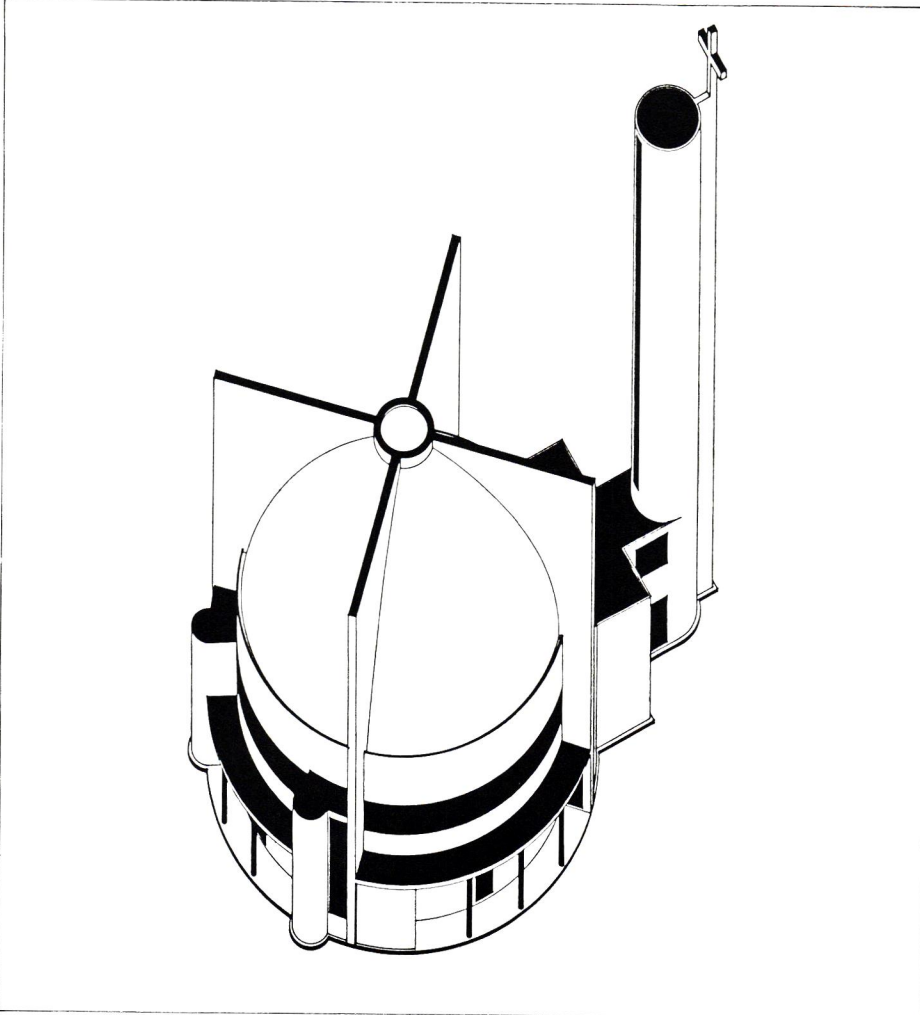


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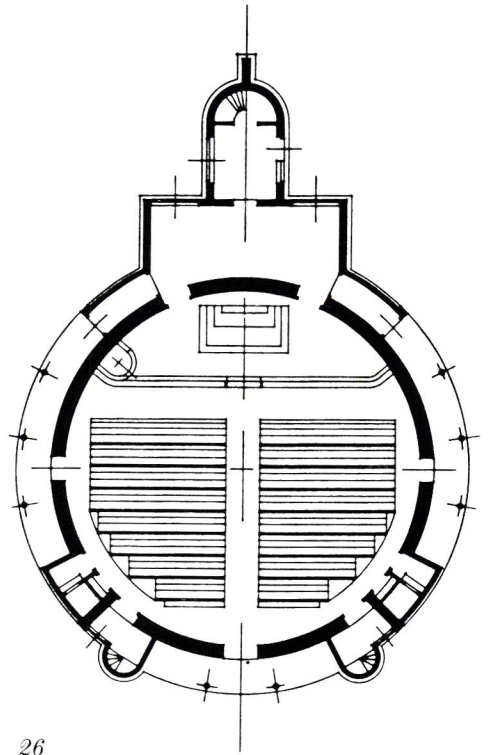




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90 codification of a new style are possible—codification as intended by the Secession, that is, accepting the permanence of some historical laws and even of some origins rooted in tradition, in structural permanence, but in addition to a revolutionary and inventive process such as that proposed by Art Nouveau. Thus, accepting the functional, social, and productive theses of the Modern Movement, he strove to emphasize the foundation of a new “homogeneous group of general principles” within a clearly stylistic scope, an effort which came to systemize certain partisan aspects of the Constructivist proposals of De Stijl and of Futurism, by submitting to a process of historicification.

Implicated in this was an affirmation that sounded heterodox: in the new architecture, in spite of everything, the consistency of a style could be defined, and the affirmation of this style was often more important than the considerations which justified it in extra-disciplinary terms. The acknowledgment of a “modern style”—in which were found, inclusively, many formal contributions deriving from unorthodox lines, which are often evident in Sartoris’s own work—and the necessity of a continued consideration of the laws of architectonic composition as a system either with a certain autonomy or else with an overtly cultural dependency are two affirmations which anticipated some of the critical interpretations which in the last few years have been stated in regard to the Modern Movement.

One must recognize, then, an attitude which, after having been labeled conformist, mannerist, and at times *passé*, can now be considered as much closer to recent preoccupations of young European and American architecture. The reinterpretation of neo-Classicism and the Lodoli reform as essential contributions to the formation of modern architecture—in opposition to Pevsner’s pioneerist thesis—and the attempt to concretize them in clearly stylistic terms by means of a norm which reclaims an academic tradition today give Sartoris polemical timeliness.

Eclecticism and Autonomy

The stylistic will—or rather, the Classicist codification of

the new architecture, the insistence on aiming at the formulation of a treatise—is also evident in all of Sartoris’s work, in which we can discern two fundamental aspects: eclecticism as a stylistically unified response and the autonomy of the architectonic object.

It is impossible to consider the work of Sartoris as belonging to the orthodoxy of the Modern Movement, understood within the parameters of the Corbusian and Bauhausian avant-garde, in spite of his having been its first disseminator in the Italian context. His continued and unwavering devotion to Futurism (Sartoris is “an architect who, after Sant’Elia, can be considered the most genuine representative of the Futurist architectonic concept,” according to Prampolini in the preface to *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna*), his intent to recompose the propositions of De Stijl, his casual encounters with Art Deco elements, and his ventures into Expressionism and Constructivism must be interpreted as counter to the will to unify and define a style. Likewise, his frequent recourse to the distributive and typological organizations which the Modern Movement was forming must be understood as an acceptance of the catalogue of its own abstraction of established models. We can almost call it an a-critical acceptance in the sense that there is more of a desire to divulge, codify, and make perfect, to determine production through style, than to question method or ideology.

The Futurist Capilla-Bar of 1920 (fig. 5) can be interpreted virtually as a matrix in which the elements and attitudes of all his work are already activated. The theme is as such already significant: the ironic double usage generated in the abstract image of an altar and the function of the hierarchical distribution of wafers and beers can be related to an attitude of ambiguous anarchism so characteristic of an Italian moment in which political and cultural positions all fall to the equivocal temptations of Futurism and Fascism. To thematic eclecticism—if such an ironic extension of the latter term can be permitted—corresponds a formal eclecticism. From the rustic Classical stylobate to the elements of Art Deco which are confused with De Stijl premeditations in an effort not to overlook

recent Futurist models, the whole project—significantly reduced to a colored perspective—indicates the preeminent position of stylistic factors as propaganda for a new architecture which applies the new concepts of an eternal artfulness.

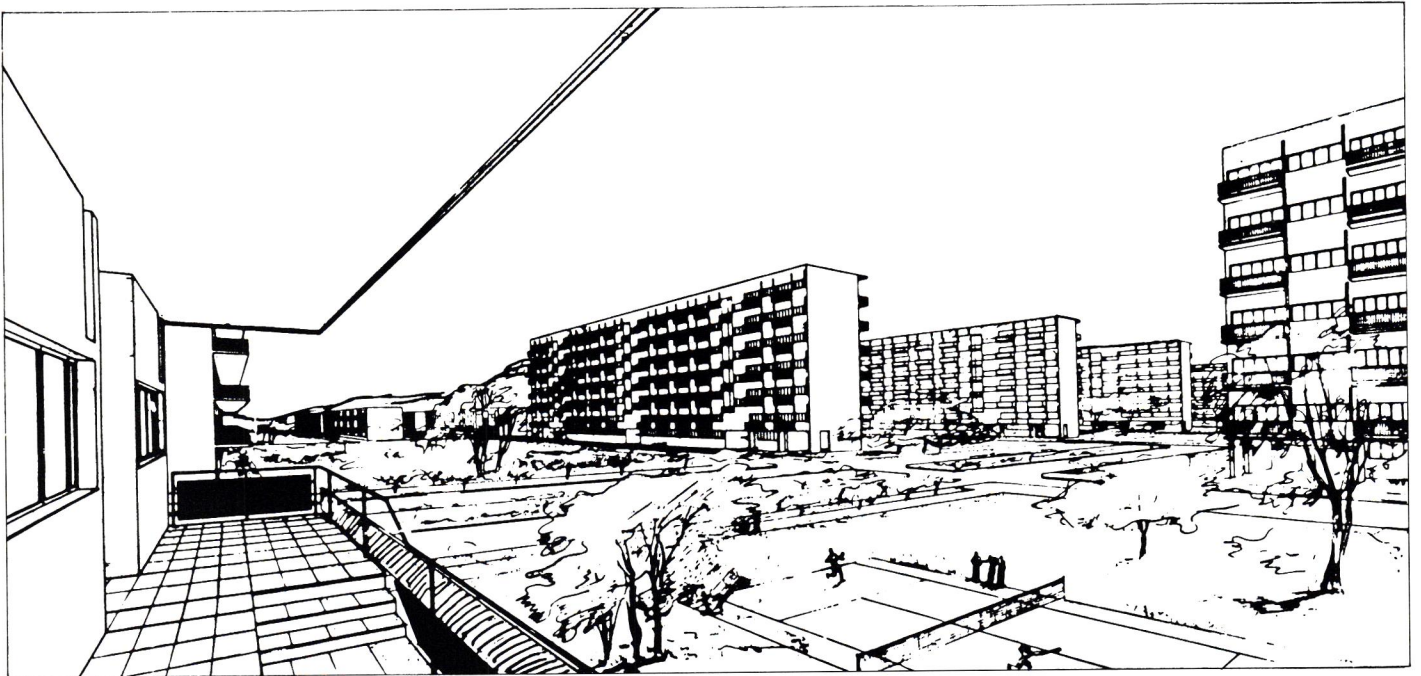
The curious group of publishing houses (fig. 2) of the same year seems to establish a theme already evident in Sant'Elia: a union of the formal dynamism of a wilful modernity with monumental traces taken from the composite methods of classical modernity and anticipating certain values of today polemically—polemically?—reconsidered of Fascist architecture. This same monumentality is magnified in the ordering of the plaza of the Stadium of Turin of 1922 (fig. 4) with metal-structured and continuous glass curtain buildings for small and medium sized industry. In these buildings certain compositional elements are established which subsist throughout Sartoris's work, such as, in part, as Fagiolo observed:¹¹ the bridge, the macle, and the stepped building. The three are always utilized in forming part of the same linguistic code which synthesizes—at times anticipating solutions—the stylistic formulas of Futurism, Constructivism, and the macle-shaped and pyramidal compositions of the American skyscrapers best realized in the Art Deco period. These elements are evident in the project for a supermarket of 1920 (fig. 8), the volumetric scheme for a university center in Turin of 1923 (fig. 3), the houses/bridge project of 1921 (fig. 7), the group of six towers in Anemasse of the same year, the studio for an academy of dance in Geneva of 1929 (fig. 14), the first stages of a project for the Palace of Fine Arts in Milan of 1928 (fig. 17), etc.

The type of macle which surely synthesized best the formal rupture of the Modern Movement in Sartoris's work is that of the prism and the cylinder. Fagiolo¹² has summarized the significant recurrences of this formal scheme: Sartoris's project for a group of workshops and studios and the Maison du Peuple in Vevey of 1927 (fig. 15), Golosov's project for a commercial center (1926) and workers' club (1928) in Moscow, and Terragni's Novocomum (1928). All of these are preceded by Sant'Elia's sketch for an electric powerhouse (1913–1914) where the large cor-

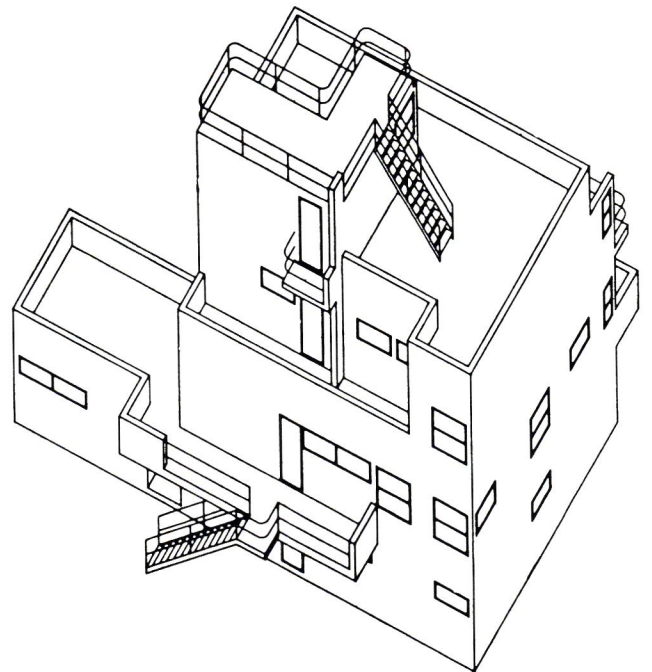
ner cylindrical chimney penetrates into a rectangular body. With more or less subtlety, Sartoris would continue to use this macle, which serves to reinforce the stylistic stamp of the closed cylindrical stairs, or of the independent bodies which float in a real or virtual space of another geometric order.

The cylinder in the middle of the interior of the house/workshop of the painter Jean-Saladin van Berchem in Paris of 1930 (fig. 19) generates, moreover, a whole system of cylindrical walls which resolve unions and which with functional rationales attempt to give space to that freedom so common in the work of Le Corbusier. But here it is not the inimitable and sentimental curve loaded with sculptural expressiveness; rather it is a rigorous geometric formula, a directly communicable model.

The game of asymmetries is also highly codified in Sartoris, we might almost say academic, indicating a method of design in which functional analyses resolve themselves in a rationality typified by the superimposition of a new artistic expression without the loss of its revolutionary liberty. The plan for Notre-Dame du Phare for Fribourg of 1931 (fig. 1 [frontispiece]) responds to a near symmetry which arises as much from an unadorned functional distribution as from the acceptance of types codified from Palladio to Durand. But the familiar axonometric of this steel and glass cathedral appears to contradict what the plan suggests: the axial monumentality is totally unpronounced in an interpretation of asymmetric volumes, as if searching for a game of macles which in plan did not exist. The same expressive liberty—contradictory, as value of that expressiveness—is to be found in almost contemporaneous works, like the Torre dels Ous of that other stylist, Jujol, where the reminiscence of that other style—Modernism—does not prevent the clear application of the same method. In this sense one must emphasize the difference between this project and that of the Futurist church by Fillia (1930) which, in spite of formal similarities, adheres to the suppositions proposed by the Neo-Futurist—and Constructivist—magazine which Fillia himself managed in Turin.

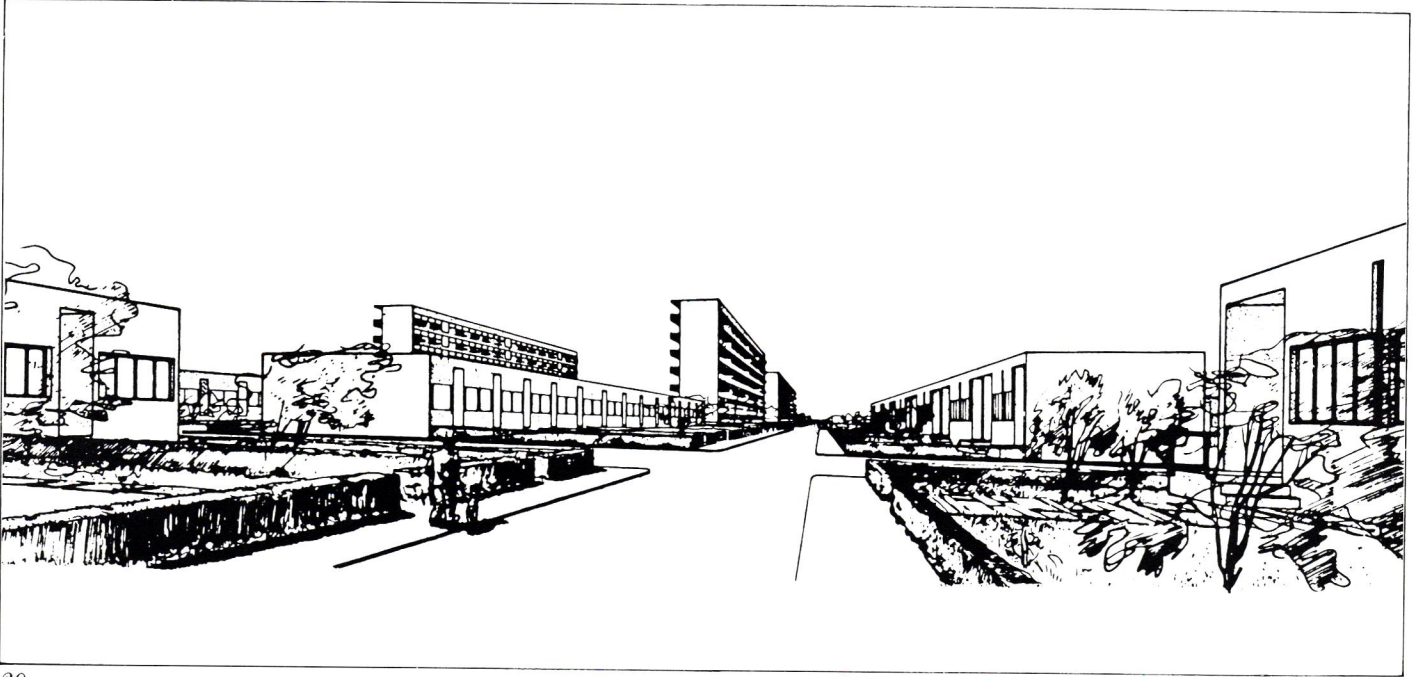


27
 27, 29 Satellite workers' city,
 Rebbio, Como. A. Sartoris and
 G. Terragni, 1938–1939. The
 housing is attributed to Sartoris
 while the casa del fascio,
 administration buildings, etc. are
 attributed to Terragni. The general
 plan was the product of their close
 collaboration.

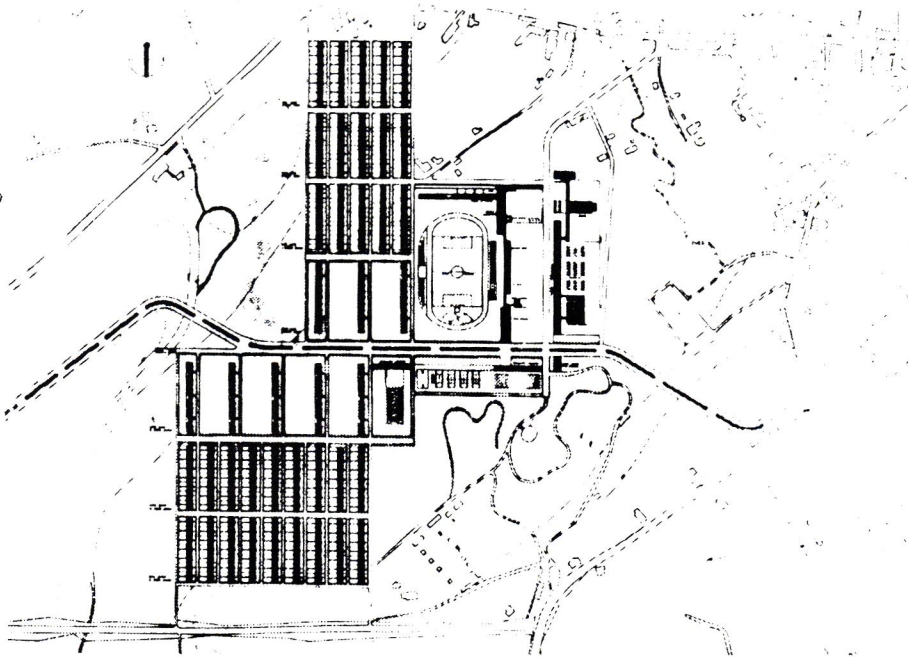




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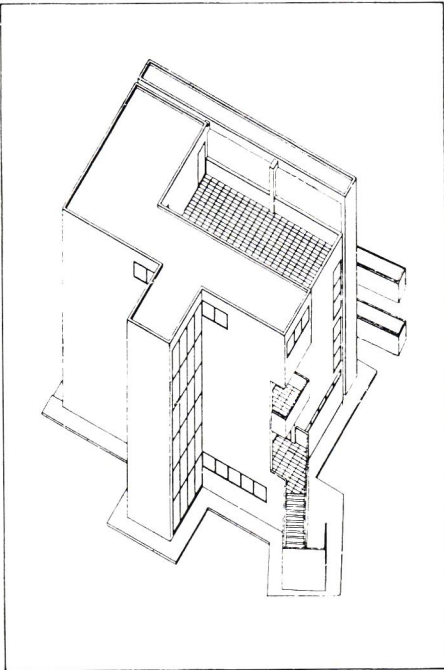


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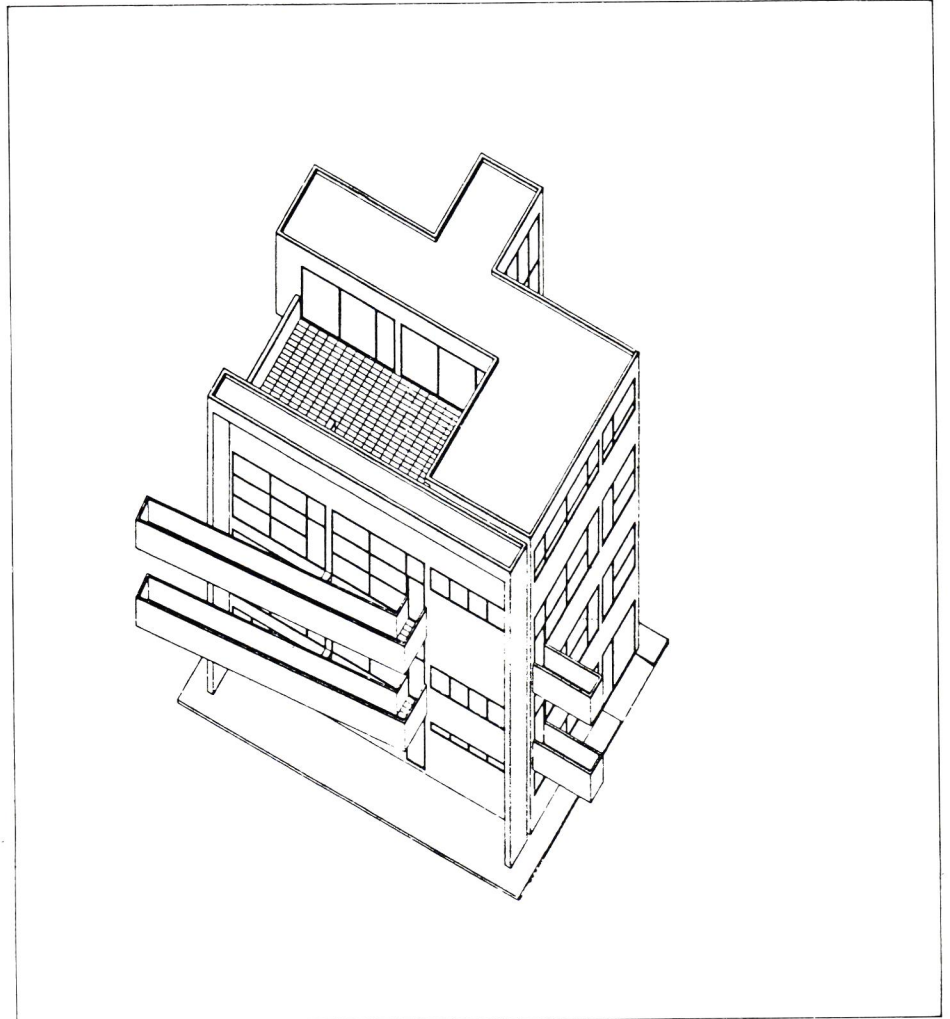


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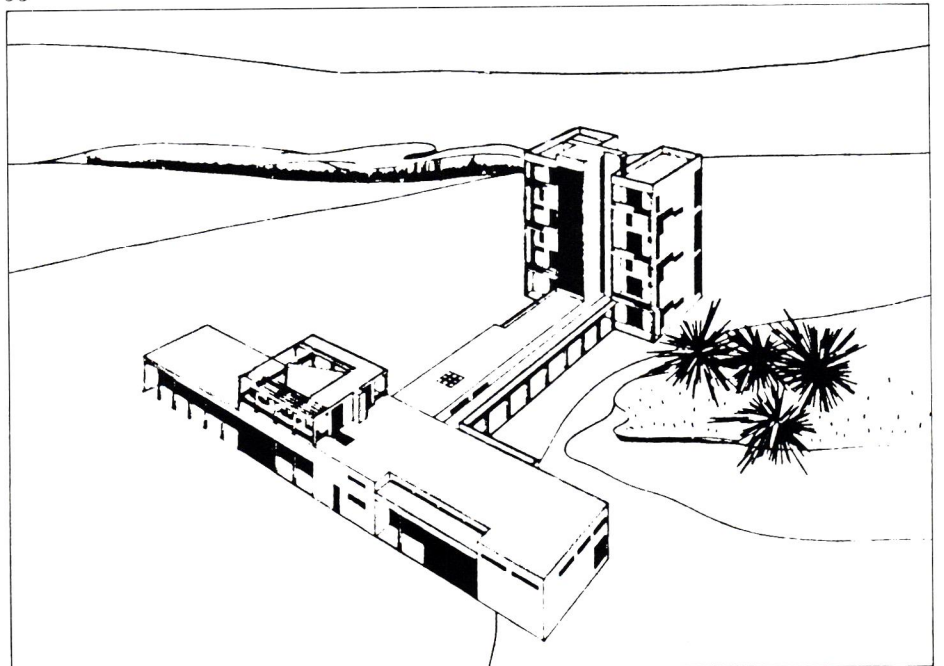
28 Residence Morand-Pasteur in Saillon (Vallese). A. Sartoris, 1933.
 30 Satellite workers' city, Rebbio, Como. Low and medium rise housing.
 31 Satellite workers' city, Rebbio, Como. General plan.



32

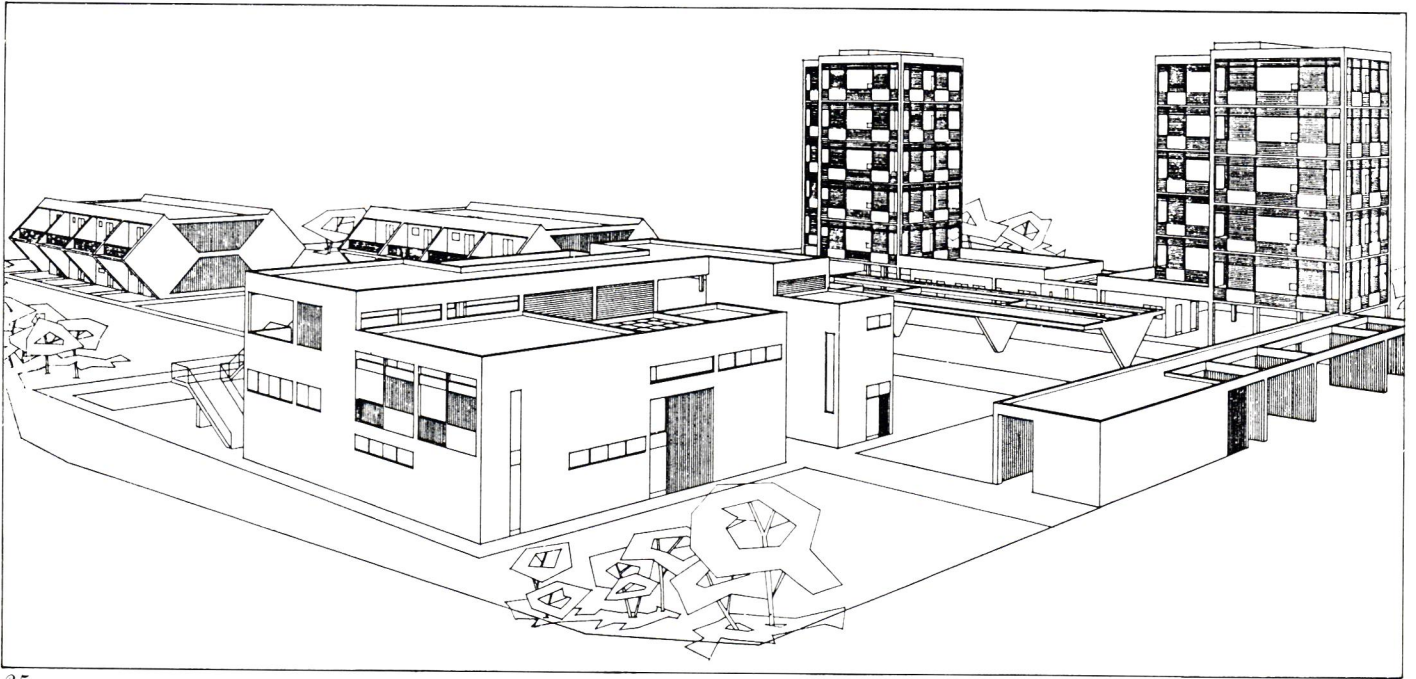


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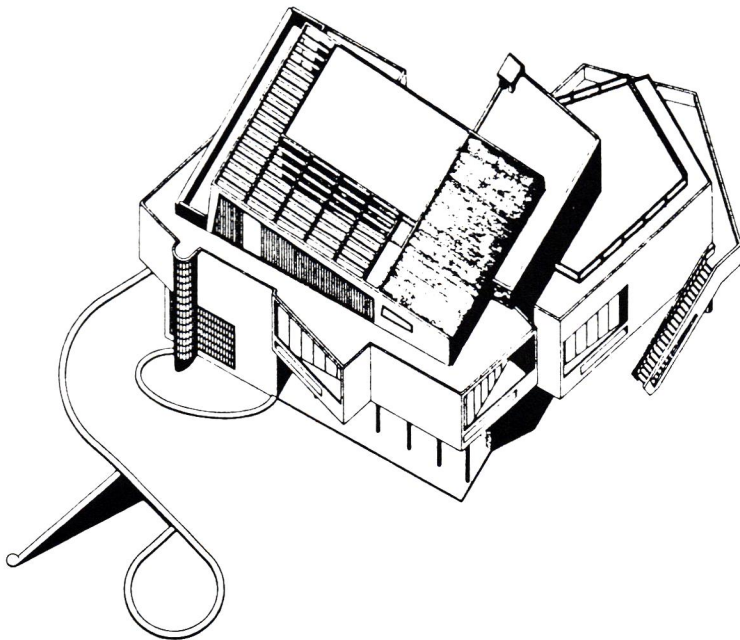


34

- 32, 33 "La mia casa ideale,"
 architect's own house in Florence.
 A. Sartoris, 1942. Facade and rear.
 34 Residences for artists in Puerto
 de la Cruz, Tenerife, Canary
 Islands. A. Sartoris, 1953.
 35 Motel at Cully, Switzerland.
 A. Sartoris, 1962–1963.
 36 House in Tacoronte, Canary
 Islands. A. Sartoris, 1952.



35



36

96 The symmetry of most of Sartoris's urban projects seems to be justified by a typological clarification, carried to the extreme of polemic, as in the case of the project for workers' housing units on *pilotis* in Geneva of 1926–1927 (fig. 16) where he establishes the model of the passage and dwellings repeated according to a strict module. This method, and often this same model, is repeated in other themes, such as the Villa Breuleux in Lausanne of 1931 (fig. 22) whose plan of diagonal symmetry is one of the most curiously radical proposals of modern architecture.

There are two extremely significant works in Sartoris's first epoch which clearly illustrate his role in the avant-garde: the pavilion for artisan communities in Turin of 1927–1929 (figs. 10–13) considered the first Italian rationalist building, and the Catholic church in Lourtier of 1932 (fig. 24) the first modern church built in Switzerland, which was considered a scandal. They are significant for the provocative role which they played, marking the characteristic avant-garde attitude of the author, but also because they express very cautiously and subtly the will to codify a Classical style inside the Modern Movement. If one compares the work in Turin, above all its principal facade, with the Villa Savoye, one understands well what the different features are. The *pilotis* here acquire another signification: they are part of a single skin, of the continuity of a solid layer over a pedestal which is simply punctured, in a poetic more closely related to other Classicist stylists like Terragni or Rossi. The shelves which shape the corners—ostensibly for the functional purpose of supporting the exhibit of handicraft products—suggest an interpretation which, following the example Art Deco, approaches the brutal proportions of the padded colonnades of Ledoux. The differentiated windows, in contrast to the continuous Corbusian window, recompose the plan of the facade into a consistent and expressive skin. The asymmetrical top of this clearly stylistic sign goes absolutely contrary to the spontaneous fluidity and functionalist expressiveness of the walls of the terrace-garden.

The elegant church in Lourtier could be analyzed with similar criteria, criteria which can be extended to more modern works, such as Keller, the industrial establish-

ment in Saint-Prex (1959), or the Motel in Cully of 1961–1963 (fig. 35).

The effort to make concrete a stylistic systemization which is resolved in compositional relations is also understood in the absolutely autonomous treatment of the architectonic object. More than autonomous, Sartoris's projects are indifferent to the environment, or in fact, to possible environments, insofar as they are already established as models. Architecture is understood as a compositional consistency, which finds its justification in history or in figurative suppositions more than in the situational response of the landscape or the city. For the Sartoris of the 1920's and 1930's, not only did the considerations of social urban structure remain distant, but also those of an architecture with a commitment to shape the city in the contemporary sense. Sartoris's projects betoken a new step toward the valorization of architecture as a work of art: the definitive abandonment of its pretended capacity to anecdotal and functional services in order to be elevated to a category whose presence determines without compromises the future of the environment which supports it.

In this attitude of indifference toward the environment one must also include the indifference to scale. The majority of Sartoris's projects expressly refuse any scale reference as determining their size. Any of his axonometrics could be interpreted as skyscrapers, as monumental sculpture, or as a *bibelot* or a paperweight. The faith in compositional autonomy rises above the anecdote of size and functional relation.

Drawing

If the drawing of architecture is always a substantial and expressive part of the idea of architecture which the work proposes, in Sartoris's case it is easy to deduce that the drawing is the maximum expression of his proposals of stylistic revisions. It is not strange that in the past few years, above all after the Turin exhibition, Sartoris's axonometrics have enjoyed a success which extends beyond the purely architectural world, serving almost as precedents of that "drawn architecture" which today attempts to conceptualize the discipline polemically.

Sartoris was a systematic practitioner of axonometrics in the style propounded by Theo van Doesburg and Cor van Eesteren around 1920. The debate over the impact of the perspective, and the open crisis on historical considerations and on the new forms of representation which the Cubists maneuvered polemically, provoked diverse, and innovative experiments in architectural drawing in the 1920's. The axonometric was intended to resolve the theme of the maximum objectivity of representation, approximating a Cubist simultaneity of resonances. The efficacy of the measurable and in general the quality of an instrument of technical and precise communication were other advantages of the axonometric. But for Sartoris, most important was its distancing of reality: the axonometric represented in a single act not a multiple reality, but the essential and categoric traces of that reality. As such, the architectonic object, autonomous, indifferent to any environment, to any circumstances, was defined solely as idea and as stylistic code, in a total and comprehensive manner, not so as to see, but to understand. To understand everything within the strict limitation of the shadowless line, which substitutes volumetric fragmentation: the line explains more because it does not yet contain any anecdotal reality.

The same occurs with the use of color. Many of Sartoris's colored drawings seem to follow the influence of Neoplasticism and, in reality, that influence cannot be denied. But there are essential differences. The first is that perhaps those colors should not be interpreted as part of the project, that is to say, as proposals to be realized, but rather as simple indications in the drawing emphasizing the essential traces which are meant to be communicated in order to convey significance.

Another difference can be found in the form and the planes on which the color is applied. There is not so much an effort at Neoplastic decomposition—which never appears in the structuring of planes in Sartoris's work, as it does appear, on the other hand, in the work of the Dutch or of Mies—as at finding an instrument for the qualification of surfaces, through a secondary process of autonomy of the component elements of the whole.

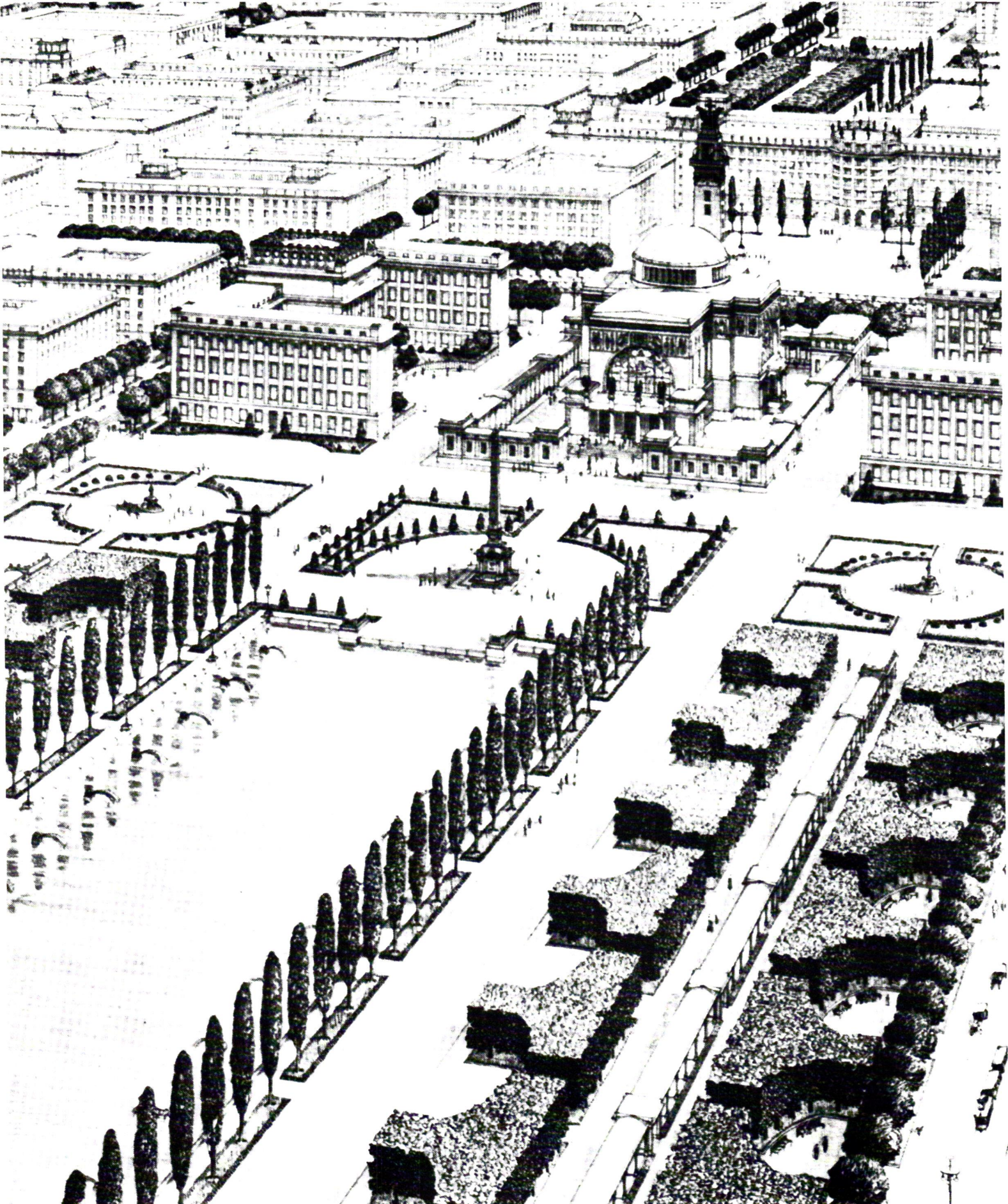
In the drawing is focussed, then, the final synthetic expression of Sartoris's overall attitude toward the Modern Movement, an attitude which—from the juvenile enthusiasms of La Sarraz, to today's professorial attitude, passing through an activist itinerary of conferences, expositions, cultural promotions, equivocal and complicated political compromises—has branded him as heterodox and marginal, at times causing him to be accused of a pseudo-conformist professionalism and perhaps of being a superficial commentator on architecture on behalf of those who persisted in making architecture an instrument of utopian redemption. This attitude has not permitted him to arrive at great achievements, not even to resolve fully his own architecture, but is today presented as a testimony which anticipates certain aspects of the critical revision of Rationalism.

1978

Notes

Source Note: This article was first published in Spanish in *Arquitecturas Bis*, 25, November 1978.

1. Luciano Patetta, "Alberto Sartoris critico e architetto razionalista," *Controspazio*, June/July 1970.
2. Marcello Fagiolo, "Alle origini del Razionalismo italiano. Disegni inediti di Sartoris (1920–1930)," *Ottagono*, December 1974, and "Sartoris: il magico Santuario del super-neo razionalismo internazionale," *Casabella*, 395, 1974.
3. Catalogue, edited by Alberto Abriani, of a show at the Gallerie d'Arte Martano, March/April, 1972.
4. Eduardo Persico, "Punto e da capo per l'architettura," *Domus*, November 1934.
5. Alberto Sartoris, *Gli elementi dell'architettura razionale* (Milan, 1932); the second edition, published in 1935, carries the title *Gli elementi dell'architettura funzionali. Sintesi panoramica dell'architettura moderna* (1935).
6. Sartoris, *Introduzione alla Architettura Moderna* (Milan, 1943).
7. *Encyclopédie de l'Architecture Nouvelle. I. Ordre et climat Méditerranéens* (Milan, 1948); *II. Ordre et climat Américains* (Milan 1954); *III. Ordre et climat Nordiques* (Milan, 1957).
8. Eugeni d'Ors, *La Vall de Josafat* (Madrid, 1944–1961; first ed. 1918).
9. Patetta, "Alberto Sartoris critico e architetto razionalista," *Controspazio*, June/July 1970.
10. R. Nicolini in the section on "style" in *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Architettura e Urbanistica* (Rome, 1968–1969).
11. Fagiolo, "Alle origini del Razionalismo italiano. Disegni inediti di Sartoris (1920–1930)," *Ottagono*, December 1974.
12. *Ibid.*



**“An Appreciation of the Author”
from *Architectural Record*, May 1912**

A. D. F. Hamlin



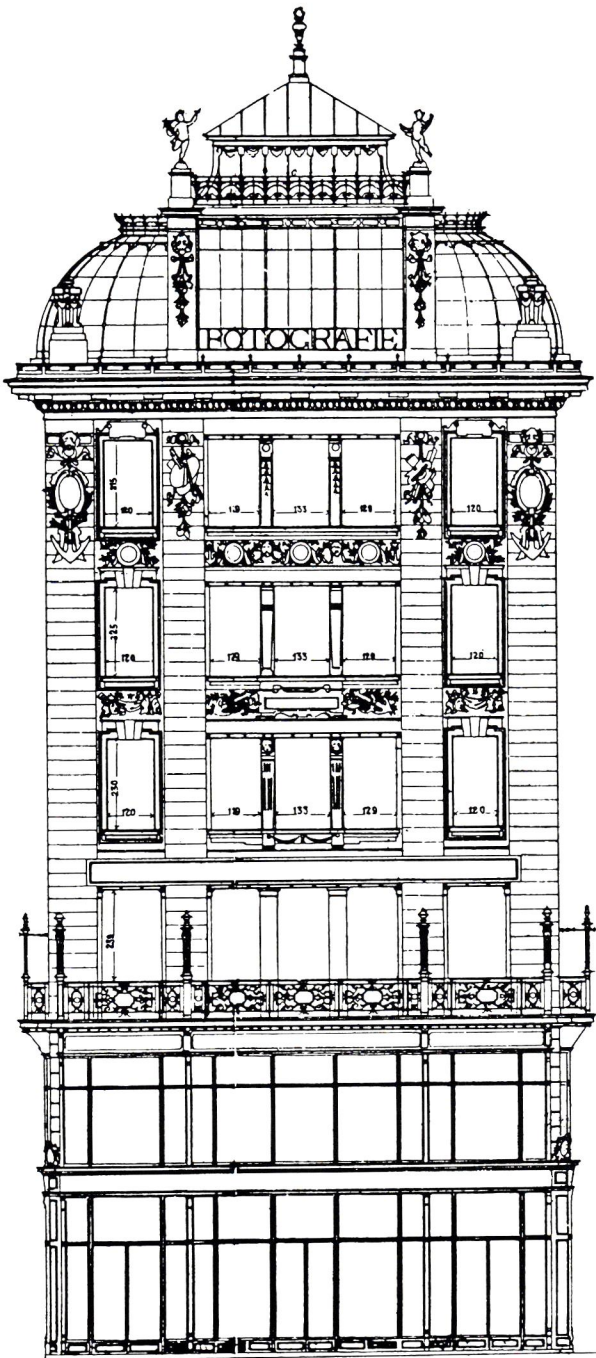
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Professor Otto Wagner, Imperial-Royal Surveyor-in-Chief of Buildings for Austria, and since 1894 Professor of Architecture in the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts at Vienna, is the unquestioned head and leader of his profession in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and one of the most fertile and original of modern architectural designers. He was born July 13, 1841, at Pentzling, a suburb of Vienna, and after a course of preparatory studies in the Ober Gymnasium of Kremsmünster, received his professional education in the Vienna Polytechnic, the Berlin Bau-Akademie and the Academy of Arts at Vienna. The earlier years of his professional career were spent in the office of Siccardsburg and Van der Nüll, the architects of the Opera House and of many other important buildings. From 1862, when he won the first prize for the “Kursalon” in the Vienna City Park,¹ until his appointment in 1894 as Professor of Architecture in the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, he was engaged in independent practice of steadily increasing volume and importance—the miscellaneous practice of a successful architect in a great city; but it is in these last fifteen years that he has won the preeminent position he now occupies. His appointment to the Kunst-Akademie, not only gave him a new outlet for his artistic activity and an occasion for formulating and giving to the world, both in print and in the more intimate converse of the classroom and studio, his thoughts on architecture, but also a new stimulus and direction to his creative activity. The result is seen in a series of remarkable buildings in Vienna and neighborhood, in an equally remarkable portfolio of “projects” or unexecuted designs from his office, and in a number of pamphlets and articles in which he set forth his ideas and conceptions of the art of which he was and is so enthusiastic a devotee. Every one of these productions bears the impress of a remarkable personality. They are characterized by a striking originality and an exuberant imagination held in bounds by a cultivated taste and a discipline of a thorough training in construction. For it is worth noting that during his years in the office of Siccardsburg and Van der Nüll his most intimate association was with the first-named, who was the practical man, the structural designer of the firm, rather than with Van der Nüll, who was the artist.

1 (frontispiece) Vienna municipality. Aerial view showing the open center from the 'Die Grossstadt' study.

2 Otto Wagner after a pastel portrait by Kempf (1896).

3 Ankerhaus, view from the Graben. Otto Wagner, 1895.



As everyone knows, the "Art Nouveau" movement was just beginning to make itself felt in 1894 or soon after. In Vienna its advocates took to themselves the name of Secessionists, and this movement away from tradition and in favor of freer individual expression in design rapidly acquired strength and spread through Austria. It produced much that was merely eccentric and bizarre and some things that reached the limit of extravagance. Professor Wagner, with his sound training and cultivated taste knew how to avoid the extravagances, while he hailed with enthusiasm and appropriated the merits of the new movement. A thoroughly scientific constructor, he designed nothing that does not appear to be rationally and soundly put together; and a certain dignity and simplicity of mass, silhouette, and proportion characterize all his works. The details of classic architecture he uses sparingly and as if they were plastic to the touch; he is not afraid of broad flat surfaces and ample walls. His details in general are highly original; it is in regard to these that his works offer the most frequent opportunity for criticism. Some will welcome their originality, their independence of all traditional precedents; others will consider many of them freakish and unwarranted, if adequate warrant exists only when and where the new and original feature is a manifest improvement upon the traditional feature which it is intended to replace. Thus the remarkable church at the Steinhof, herewith illustrated (fig. 9), will shock some and please others, but no one will, I think, deny the high artistic quality of the weir and gates at Nussdorf shown in another illustration (fig. 10), or of the admirable elevated structure of the Vienna City Railway, which so puts to shame everything of like purpose thus far erected in the United States.

Professor Wagner's fame rests in large measure upon his studies and teachings relative to civic design. When, in 1894, shortly after his appointment to the Kunst-Akademie I had the pleasure of visiting him at that institution, he put into my hands a *brochure* he had recently published, on the true principles that should control the improvement and development of his own city. It had been prepared to accompany his competition design for the improvement of the city plan and bore as its title the

motto inscribed on the competition drawings: "*Artis sola domina necessitas*"—"Art knows no mistress but necessity." His design had won the first prize, and this pamphlet embodied the artistic creed on which that design was based.

Professor Wagner was the President of the Eighth International Congress of Architects at Vienna in 1905 and has been the recipient of numerous honors from his own and other countries. His seventieth birthday, last July, was the occasion of an impressive tribute of admiration and affection from his fellow architects in Austria. He was invited to participate in a proposed congress on city planning in New York in 1910. This invitation was in part the occasion of Professor Wagner's writing the article which follows, and which will be read with interest by every student of the problem of city planning. It is interesting as much for what it contains that is inapplicable to American problems, as for what is of universal significance. It goes so far in the direction of what is sometimes called municipal paternalism, sometimes state socialism, as almost to take away an American's breath. It is based on conditions which can only exist under a strongly-centralized, not to say imperial, government. The topographical conditions under which alone the particular scheme it sets forth is possible exist in Vienna, but hardly in most American cities, and not at all in New York or any maritime city. It is doubtful whether in this country we shall ever—or at any rate within the lifetime of any now living who read this paper—reach the situation in which a municipality will expropriate the entire outlying territory for development on preconceived lines. And yet in the propositions laid down by the Austrian professor there is abundant food for thought for us Americans. The principle of excess condemnation, so blindly rejected by the electorate of New York State at the last election, is here shown clearly to be fundamental to any thoroughgoing and extensive civic improvement. Above all, it seems to me, this paper exhibits the importance of large views, of the long look ahead, of taking under rational control many forces and resources which we in America squander by abandoning them to chance or to speculation. And it emphasizes the fundamental importance of carefully planned tho-

roughfares and transit facilities, laid out ahead of the need, not long after the need has become acute; for public service rather than for speculative profit; facilities which shall guide urban development into favorable conditions and not follow the haphazard growth of ragged and unrelated fringes of speculative suburbs.

Perhaps fifty years hence Professor Wagner's propositions will appear less fantastic and chimerical to Americans than they will to some who read them for the first time today.

May 1912

Notes

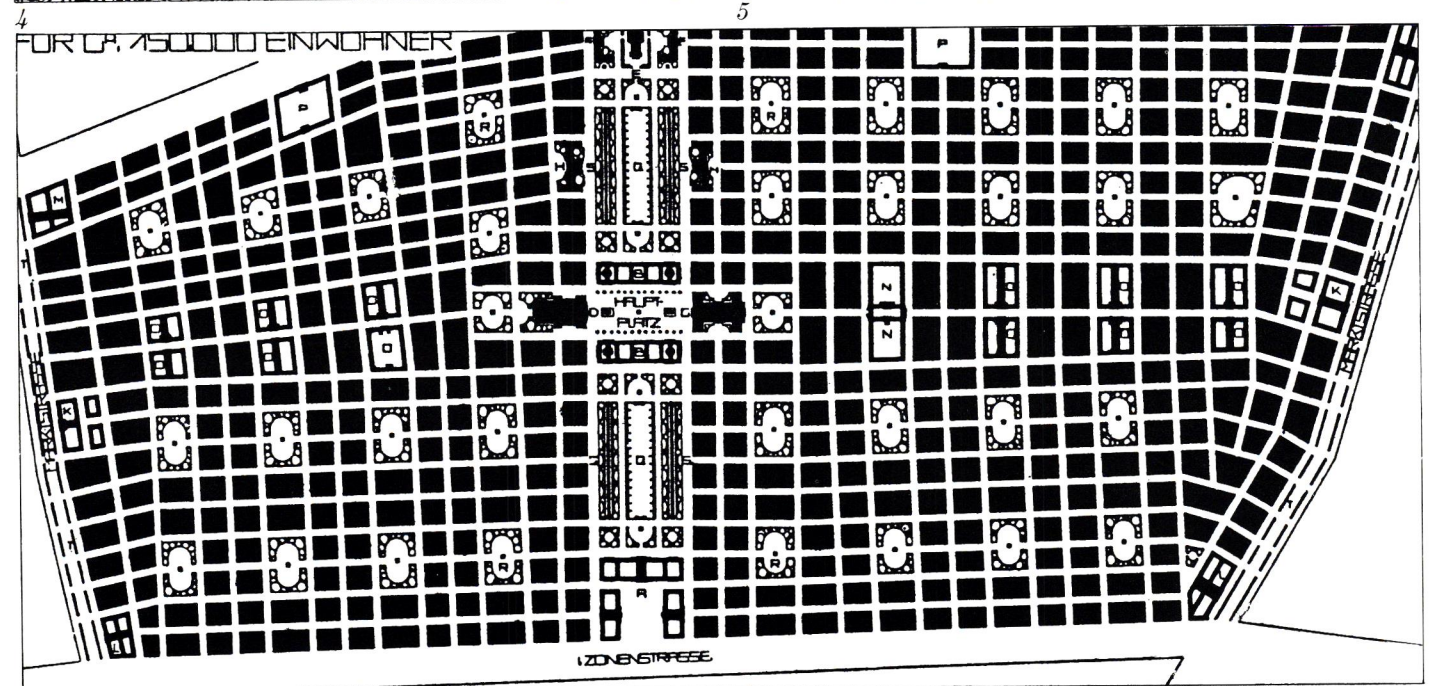
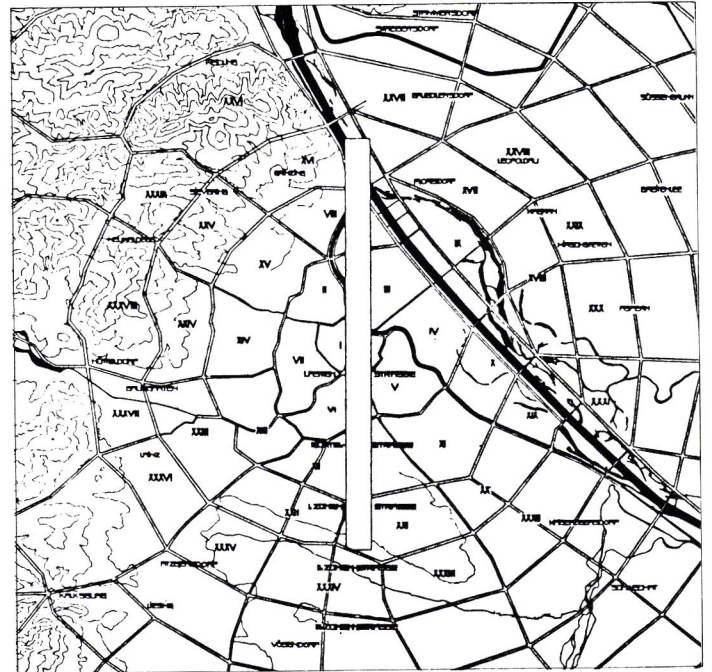
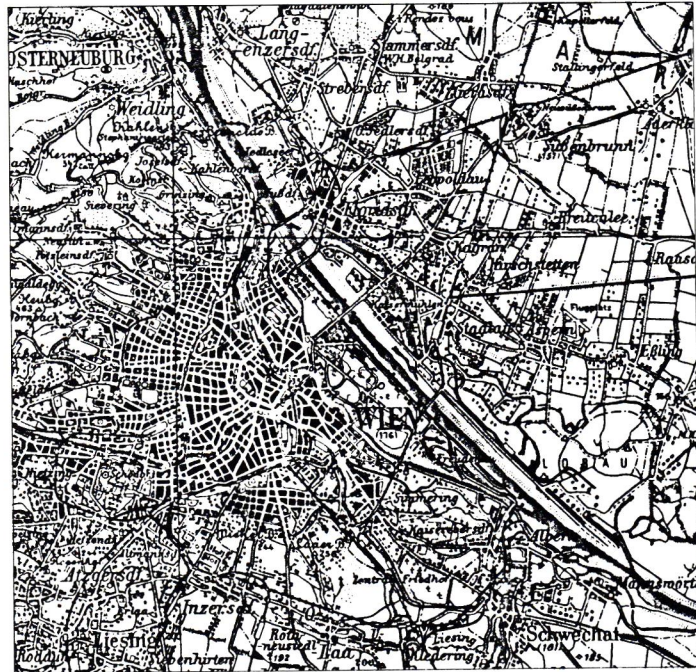
Source Note: This "appreciation" was originally published under the title "The Development of a Great City" by Otto Wagner. Together with an appreciation of the author by A. D. F. Hamlin in Architectural Record, Vol. 31, No. 5, May 1912, pp. 485-486.—Ed.

1. The prize did not carry with it the execution of the project.

4 Vienna today, same scale as Fig. 5.

5 Vienna as the endless 'Gross-stadt'
(1910/1911). Overall plan.

6 Vienna municipality, 22nd ward
(1910/1911). Overall plan from the
'Die Gross-stadt' study.



**“The Development of a Great City”
from Architectural Record, May 1912**

Otto Wagner

Foreword

A flattering invitation which came to the author in March, 1910, from Professor A. D. Hamlin of Columbia University, conveyed the request to prepare a paper for an international congress on municipal art, which it was proposed to hold in New York under the patronage of the City and State. This gave the first impulse to the preparation of these pages: while the repeated urgings of another committee to attend the city-planning exhibition in Berlin in 1910, and later the conferences on the Vienna Building Ordinance, finally confirmed the author's desire to give to the public his views on the subject of city planning; the more so in view of the contention of the Association of Austrian Architects that the Vienna conferences had failed to give adequate consideration to the artistic side of their problem as well as to the important questions of street circulation and building lines.

This paper contains certain propositions which the author feels himself bound to present because thus far all the exhibitions, treatises, and addresses on this subject have failed to produce definite results.

The considerations about to be presented apply to no one city, but to large cities in general, although there may be particular cities which stand out prominently by reason of their pressing need for the solution of the problems of future expansion as well as of the improvement of present conditions. What follows represents neither the radicalism of the iconoclast nor the wail of the traditionalist on the subject of city-planning, but proceeds from the fundamental assumption that the most important element in the solution of any such problem is the practical fulfilment of a definite purpose, and that art must impress its stamp upon whatever may result from the accomplishment of this purpose.

Since our manner of life, our activities, and our technical and scientific achievements are different from what they were a thousand years ago or even a short time since, and are the results of constant development, art must give expression to the conditions of our own time. Art must therefore conform its city plan to the needs of the mankind of today.

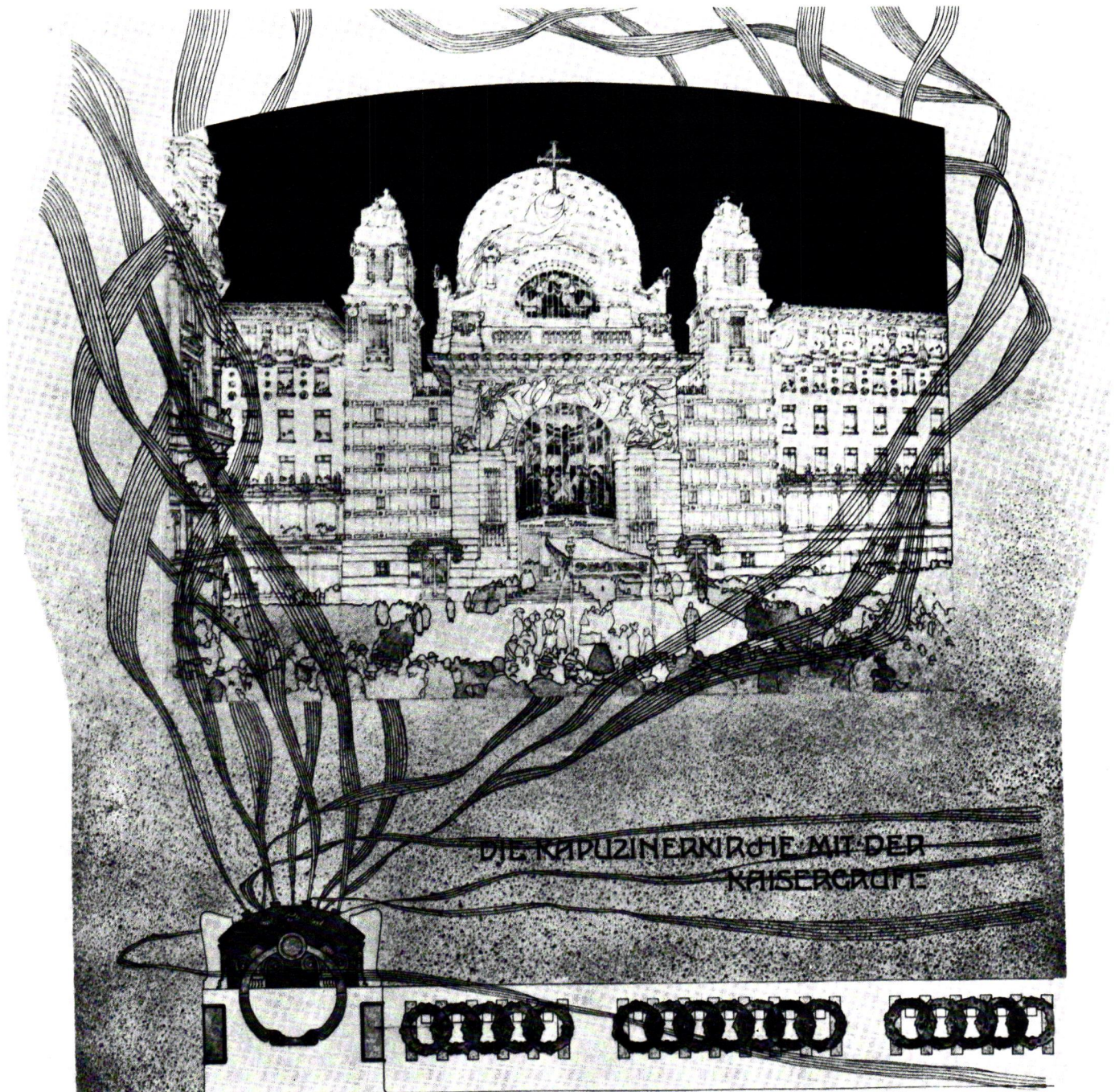
Those favorite catchwords—“the art of the home,” “co-operation in city-planning,” “sentiment in city-planning,” etc.—taken in the sense in which they are used by people who know and judge art only from textbooks, are empty phrases to which such people cling because they are destitute of ideas on the real problem of the city plan. Only the true architect can distinguish between what is old and beautiful, and what is merely old; he will favor neither the wanton destruction of what is beautiful nor the copying of the antique; nor will he care for the much lauded “embellishment” of a city; all architectural extravagance is foreign to his nature. 103

Our democratic existence, in which the masses feel the pressure of the necessity for economy in their methods of living, and call for homes at once sanitary and cheap, has resulted in a certain uniformity in our dwelling houses. This tendency will therefore find expression in the plan of the future city. Individual dwellings of like cubical contents and plan are cheaper in first cost and rental price if combined in houses of many stories than in houses of few; the cost of the lot, of foundations, and of roof entering into account but once. And since the proverb “Time is money” is truer today than ever before, the increase in height of residential and office buildings in the city's center to seven or eight stories, indeed, to skyscrapers (if the city permits) is a natural development.

In any given city the number of dwelling houses must greatly exceed that of its public buildings; and their contiguous multiplication inevitably results in long and uniform block-facades. But our modern art has turned these to monumental account by the plotting of wide streets, and by the introduction of picturesque interruptions of their monotony is able to give them their full artistic effect. There can be no doubt that when Art rightly handles such cases all talk about a “city-pattern” is beside the mark. This kind of talk is possible only when Art is left out of the question. Unfortunately the effort to avoid the uniformity of dwelling-house types which has resulted from practical and economic considerations, has led to an altogether objectionable and artistically worthless overloading of the exteriors of these utilitarian structures with

7 Kapuzinerkirche (church). Project
for a design in white granite blocks,
tiles, and bronze. The cross is
'carried' by the clouds and set in
bands of stars forming the cupola.

104



purposeless features, meaningless projections, turrets, gables, columns, and ornament; although wide streets serve to mitigate somewhat the effect of these ungainly absurdities.

Quite as unjustifiable and as objectionable from an artistic viewpoint are intentional but unwarranted curves and irregularities in the layout of streets and squares, intended solely to produce artificially picturesque vistas. Every large city possesses of necessity a greater or smaller number of winding and irregular streets; but these have artistic warrant only when they result naturally from conditions of circulation, traffic, topography, or the like.

The characteristic impression produced by a city results from its existing or inherent beauty and its potential beauty. The city's general "physiognomy" is the most important consideration in its plan. Upon it depends the success of the effort to make the first impression as pleasing as possible. This impression is furthermore dependent on the pulsating life of the city as a whole. With regard to this it must be remembered as a fundamental fact that the great majority of the community, including, of course, visitors to the city (we are dealing now with the general mass) are quite ignorant of artistic matters. Therefore Art, if she would arouse the interest of and give satisfaction to the average man, must seize upon every opportunity that gives promise of producing a favorable impression. Industry, trade, fashion, taste, comfort, luxury, all provide media for artistic expression, and must all be availed of to attract the attention of the average man toward Art, so that he may be disposed to bestow favorable judgment upon works of art. The uninterrupted vista of a main thoroughfare flanked by fine stores displaying the artistic products of the city and of the country to the view of the crowds hurrying by; other streets through which one may stroll for an outing and regale himself to the extent of his pocketbook; a sufficient number of good restaurants where one may find both satisfaction and relaxation; open squares where public monuments and buildings in artistic settings present themselves to the gaze of the beholder, and many other like factors not here enumerated—such are the things that give to a city its char-

acteristic physiognomy. To these may be added an efficient system of transportation, a faultless street-cleaning department, living accommodations provided with every comfort and suited to every social grade—all these are conditioning factors of a favorable impression on the artistically indifferent average man. In the application of a criterion of excellence to these things beauty, that is, artistic quality, is the deciding factor; this alone makes it possible to produce a satisfactory first impression on citizen and stranger alike. Thus impressed, both citizen and stranger will be better disposed toward the city; less moved by a hypocritical pretense of art-interest to martyrize themselves "doing" the art treasures and museums of the town.

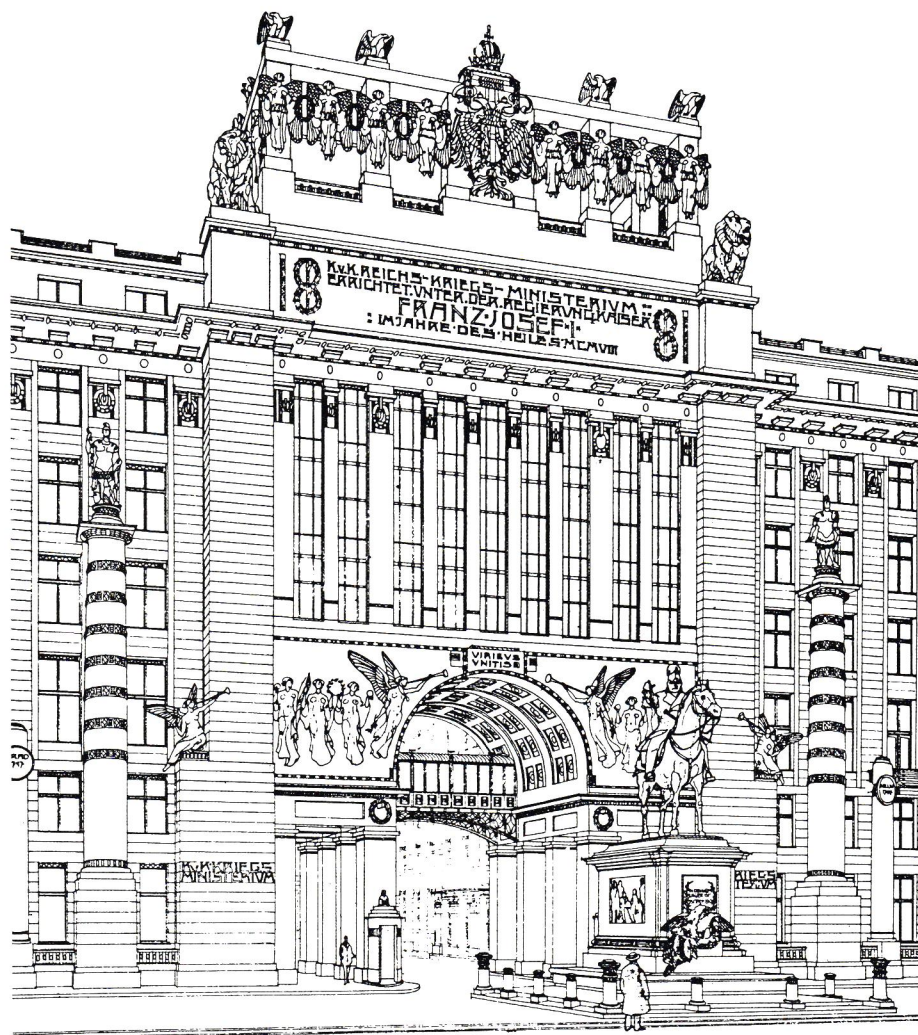
The more completely a city fulfills its practical ends, the better does it minister to the pleasures of its inhabitants; and the greater the part played by Art in this ministry, the more beautiful the city. Neatness and scrupulous cleanliness go hand in hand with Art; city governments please take notice!

One chance for the influence of Art on the development of the city, and hence upon its future aspect, is well-nigh closed in these days, not by the pressure of economy, but by the complete indifference of the masses to artistic work, and the consequent lack of artistic creativeness. The masses have been for ages accustomed to leave all matters of art to the ruling classes, and they overlook the fact that the autonomous community having now come into power, it devolves upon it to provide the necessary artistic initiative.

On the extreme periphery of a great city private boundaries, paths, water courses, small differences of level, a tree, even a manure pile, may determine the later location of particular structures. These in turn influence the position of roads, squares, etc., so that, at last, out of these chance beginnings the permanent plan of the city grows up.

It will never do, however, to elevate such things to the plane of determining influences in artistic development. For if they were so, what would become of our hopes and

8 War Ministry, competition project.
Otto Wagner, 1907-1908. Entry
facade showing the Radetzky
Memorial.



efforts for the ideal city plan, the carefully thought out placing of public buildings, of parks, of vistas? What would become of the scientific layout of circulation, the practical and economically necessary straight boundaries for building lots, and last of all, the control of building lines, so essential in any great city?

From this it may be seen that the forming of the city cannot be left to chance, but must be founded on well-weighed considerations. To determine these considerations and point the way by which this goal is to be reached are the aims of this paper.

There can be no doubt of the fact that the majority of mankind prefer living in a great city to living in a small one or in the country. A large proportion of the inhabitants of a great city are forced to do this by their occupations. Profit, social position, comfort, luxury, low death rate, the presence of all the spiritual and physical necessities of life, possibilities both good and evil of recreation, and lastly Art, are all factors in this tendency. Most of the forces which favor the growth of great cities are operating with constantly increasing energy.

Economic forces are potent in all this. It should excite no surprise that city councils favor the growth of large cities.¹ The exertion of the influence of every city administrator to encourage the influx of inhabitants and strangers is therefore a matter of course.

Regulation of the City Plan

The skeleton of a great city is formed by its lines of traffic, by its rivers, lakes or bays, its topography and like permanent conditions. The regulation or systematizing of the city plan can, as I have intimated, be carried out by following a definite principle and scheme. This scheme falls naturally into two divisions: 1) the regulation of the old, already existing part, and 2) the regulation of future development and expansion.

The regulation of the old part is limited to maintaining its already existing beauty and making use of it advantageously in the city plan.

Conditions of traffic, sanitary requirements, the circumstance that so much that is beautiful is in private possession, that many a work has reached the limit of age and usefulness, and finally social and economic relations—all these demand a special consideration of each individual case in the regulation of the old part.

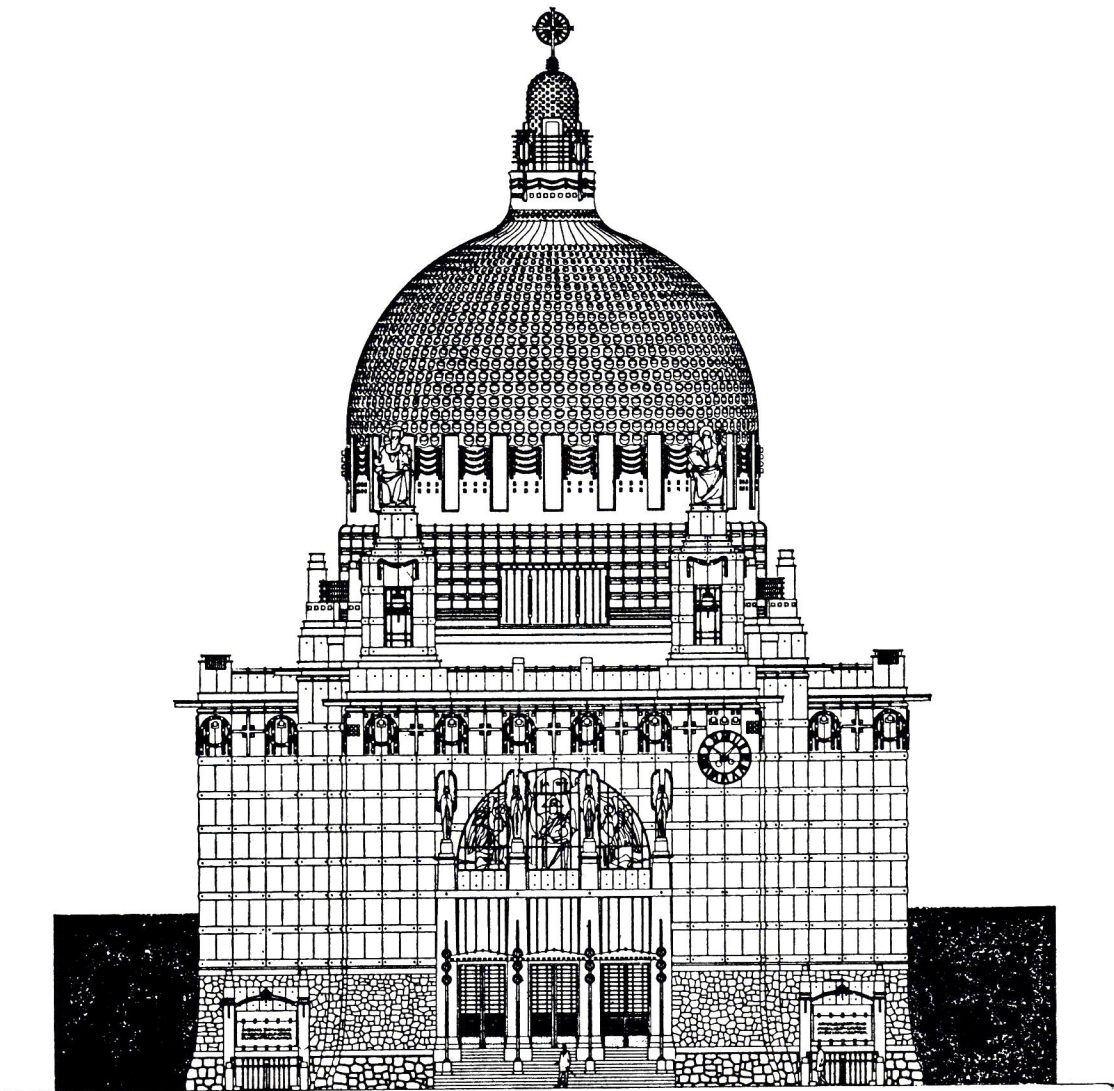
On these grounds the advance determination of future building lines in the existing parts of the city, however greatly to be desired, is scarcely practicable. It goes without saying, however, that in the case of new buildings or remodelings the city administration should avail itself to the utmost of any artistic advantages from their proximity to existing elements of beauty. But it is the new and undeveloped quarters that can and must be systematized, if coming events are not to bring the city authorities face to face with the unsurmountable "too late." Regulation on a large scale of the housing and living conditions of the future inhabitants, the possibility of conveniences and appliances at present unknown, the provision of "safety valves" for expansion, last and not least the development of the city's growth along lines of beauty, must all be taken into account in the scheme.

How important, how fraught with terrible responsibility this duty of foresight in regard to future conditions of living is, may be gathered from the fact that great cities double in size in from thirty to fifty years. Hence their governing bodies are forced to take care that houses, public buildings, main streets, sanitary arrangements, etc., shall be properly located in advance; otherwise, instead of the hoped-for ideal, a chaos would result, which could be restored to order only at enormous expense.

We may consider it axiomatic that the administration of a great city demands its division into wards. The situation and boundaries of the wards or boroughs form the foundation of the systematized regulation of the great city.

While it may be wise and proper to lay out each ward or borough with careful consideration of its schools, business centers, industrial requirements, and domestic conditions, there is no use in planning entire wards for particular

*9 Church at Steinhof. Otto Wagner,
1906. Front elevation.*



classes or purposes since workmen, employees of high and low rank, officials, and so on, will and must make their homes in their own particular wards. Certain things must however be common to all wards to a greater or less degree; for example, parks, (public) gardens, playgrounds, schools, churches, traffic routes, markets, municipal buildings (courts, police buildings, building department, borough hall), department stores, centers for the handling of inward and outward bound traffic, garages, morgues, even theaters, special museums, libraries, barracks, asylums, workshops, public halls, etc.—this on the ground that, since there are a great number of public buildings whose usefulness can scarcely be determined for more than a century in advance, future buildings for the same or like purposes can only be provided as new wards spring into being.

Naturally the wards will be arranged circularly in zones around the center of the city; whether the zones are closed circles or segments is of no consequence. The distance from the center of the city will always be the determining factor in regard to reaching the permissible building limits or the beginning of rural suburbs.

The division of the wards into zones in most cases naturally arises from the discharge or out-reaching of the streets that radiate from the city's center.

The maximum population of a ward may be taken experimentally at a hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand. It need hardly be mentioned that, until this limit is reached, two or even three such boroughs may have one administrative center.

A population of from a hundred thousand to a hundred and fifty thousand corresponds to an area of from five hundred to a thousand hectares,² if the houses are built to the allowed limit of height. The idea of surrounding the city center with zonal streets from two to three kilometers apart, and of laying out the wards in the resulting zones, is therefore in accord with this design.

In any systematic layout special care must be taken that

the chief radial streets have a sufficient width to meet all future demands of traffic, while the zonal streets should be planned so as to suffice for unlooked for and unknown requirements. The width of the zonal streets may be set at from eighty to a hundred meters (262 to 328 feet). The laying out of zonal streets in the already built-up portion of the city will present great difficulty, but they can be made in part to coincide with streets already existing, and need not measure up to the above mentioned dimensions.

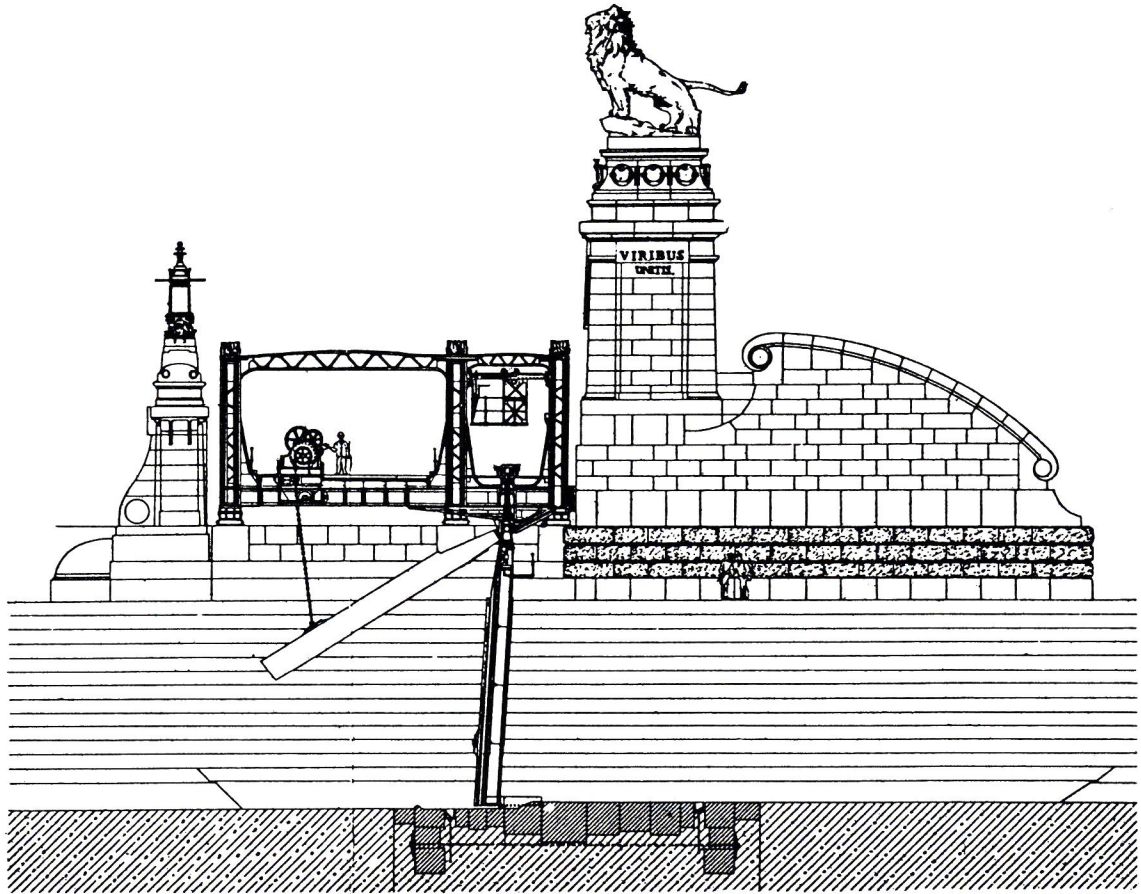
Since, as will be shown later, the separate wards or boroughs will be developed at exact intervals fixed in advance according to a well laid plan, and thus form a group of small cities around a center, it seems more advisable to give each separate division its own open spaces, such as parks, public gardens, and playgrounds, than to plan a belt of woods and meadows. Such a girdling of the city forms a hard and fast limitation that is certainly to be avoided. In the light of our present experience the expansion of a city must be unlimited. Moreover, such a belt would be spoiled by the inevitable building along the radial streets that must of necessity intersect it, and thus would fail of its purpose. The system of city building set forth in this article is illustrated by two plans and a bird's-eye view (fig. 1 [frontispiece]). The first of these plans (fig. 5) presents as an example the future Vienna with its zones and wards extended in every direction to the limit of a radius of fourteen kilometers (8¾ miles). It is however needless to say that the length of these radii can be increased at any time, and thus the addition of new zonal streets is unlimited.

A second plan (fig. 6) shows the proposed development of the future twenty-second ward of Vienna as it would be when completely built up. The height of the buildings is limited to twenty-three meters, exclusive of roof-story or attic, and the minimum width of streets is twenty-three meters (seventy-five feet).

By applying the propositions made later in this article, and by systematic planning, it is possible to determine the fundamental arrangement of each division or borough with regard to artistic, mercantile, and hygienic consid-

10 Weir and gates, Nussdorf. Otto Wagner, 1895. Section showing the sluice gates.

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erations before the city administration opens it to development. In this way a series of beautiful and at the same time practically convenient miniature cities will arise. They will present to posterity an uninterrupted plastic history of Art, and thus exclude all mechanical uniformity. A pleasing variety will be presented by such sections as are devoted predominantly to special purposes, such as art centers with their new collections and schools, or university cultural centers with a national library, and so forth.

The lots destined for public buildings in any ward or borough can, of course, serve other purposes temporarily until the actual construction begins.

Apart from buildings for state and national parliaments, and for great art collections which must be located near the municipal center, and apart from those buildings claimed by the several wards respectively, there will be in every large city many edifices whose location is absolutely determined by topographical conditions, water courses, harbors, local requirements, and so on.

In the same way there will be buildings which are suitable only for particular wards, such as warehouses and factories, the larger workshops, markets, bazaars, etc.; and finally, such establishments as must be located at a distance from the city, such as cemeteries, depots, balloon-sheds, barracks, fields for sports of all sorts (including aviation). Cemeteries are, on certain days of the year, so frequented as to tax all means of transportation to the limit, so that it is obviously better to have two or three. Distance in this case counts for nothing, for every large city will soon be in a position to limit the transportation of corpses to railroads, and it seems therefore proper to provide each ward with a mortuary station for this purpose.

It cannot fall within the limits of this article to clear up all questions pertaining to city design, especially that of the grades and levels of particular cities. This, however, is certain: that present day connections must in the future be either elevated above or depressed below the street

level, and that present water supply systems cannot be altered. In the same way it can only be suggested here that it is the duty of the city administration to obtain control of all transit facilities.

This being granted, rapid transit must be provided for in such manner that there shall be a constant circulation through the zones, and a constant movement to and fro through the radial streets, so that any desired point can be reached with a single change of cars. Elevators should provide the means of connection between elevated, subway, and street car lines at points of intersection.

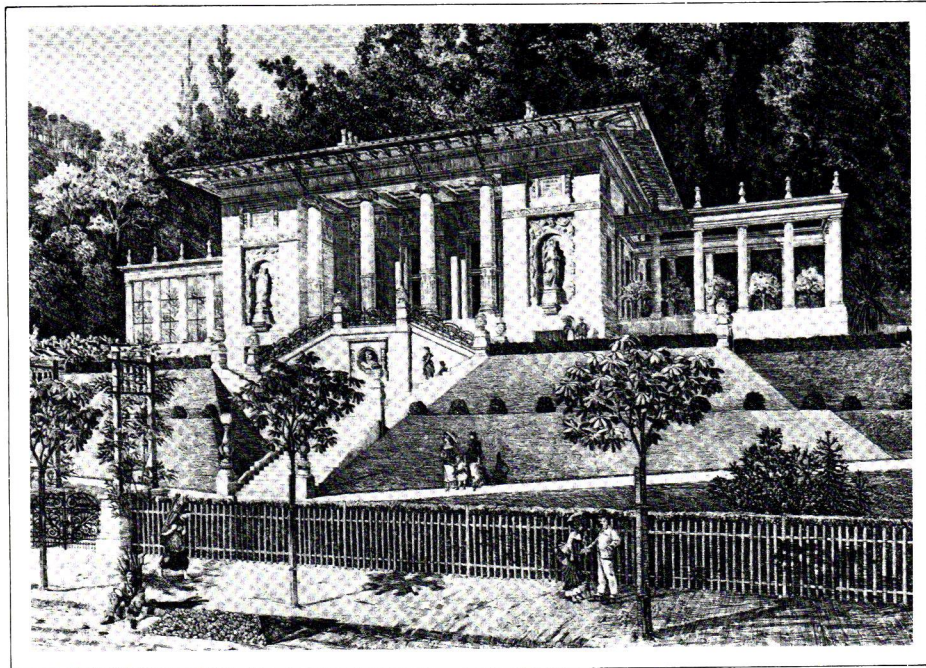
The carrying out of the proposals herein set forth insure to every city, through systematized regulation, an untrammelled development for all time, and the ominous "too late" vanishes from view.

There is one point, however, that must be emphasized in this connection. Art and the Artist must be governing factors, in order that the beauty-destroying influence of the engineer may be forever eliminated, and the power of the vampire, Speculation, which now makes the autonomy of the city almost an illusion, may be reduced to a minimum. The means of realizing this and the way in which it may be effected are illustrated in the following discussion of the proposals.

Economic Considerations

If the systematization outlined above, and the desired amelioration of the great city are to be realized, the undertaking demands abundant means. Economy in such an undertaking is not to be thought of, for the best is in this case scarcely sufficient. One might suggest a sort of competition of administrations in relation to the regulation and amelioration of the city plan. The late able mayor of Vienna, Dr. Karl Lueger, pointed the way most clearly, in that under his régime the city took over the ownership and operation of a number of public utilities, such as gas and electric plants, high-pressure water service, street railways and control of burials, from which it received large returns.

11 Villa Wagner, first project. Otto Wagner, 1886.



A further resource is suggested in the following remarks. A continuous increase in land values follows the growth of a large city. It is therefore logical that this increase should accrue to the general weal; that is, to the city. Movements toward this end have made the question of taxes on the increase of land values a living issue, and this tax has already become law in Germany. It is doubtful, however, whether the question can be solved in that way at all, for it is hard to find the right place to apply the lever with success, unless the taxes, as is already the case in Vienna, are to be raised to an enormous figure.

A simple method of attaining this end of raising sufficient funds for the city is offered by the very increase of the city itself, in the city's buying surrounding land which is little or not at all built up, and holding it until it is ready to be built on and incorporated into future zones. It is obvious that this land by being farmed out or leased immediately after its purchase can furnish a sufficient interest on the investment, while at the same time its increase in value will be in favor of the city.

It is certainly to be expected that the value of such lots, even if they at first paid scarcely sufficient interest, will in a short time have increased to such an extent as to far surpass the original investment and its interest, and to bring in a profit amounting even to hundreds of millions.

All the unoccupied land in the neighborhood of a city, it may be fairly assumed, can be obtained at a comparatively low price. The increase of population indicates, however, that a part of this land will have been built up certainly within fifty years, and will therefore have reverted to private ownership again (it is assumed that the city has obtained ownership by condemnation). This procedure is followed again and again. It is possible for the city by regulation of prices, allotments, etc., to direct its growth in certain directions, to reserve the necessary public lands in each ward, to limit the present flourishing speculation in real estate, and with the resulting profits to carry out plans for city improvement on a large scale. According to the illustration here (fig. 6), the future twenty-second ward of Vienna has, for example, 5.1 million square me-

ters;³ fifty percent of this is held for public purposes and hence there remains 2.5 million square meters (one square mile), which represents, at an increase of only twenty kroner per square meter, a gain of 50 million kroner.

This total may be still further increased, for the city administration is in a position to regulate the building up of the ward in such a way as to encourage apartment houses of many stories, whereby the land values will, of course, increase.

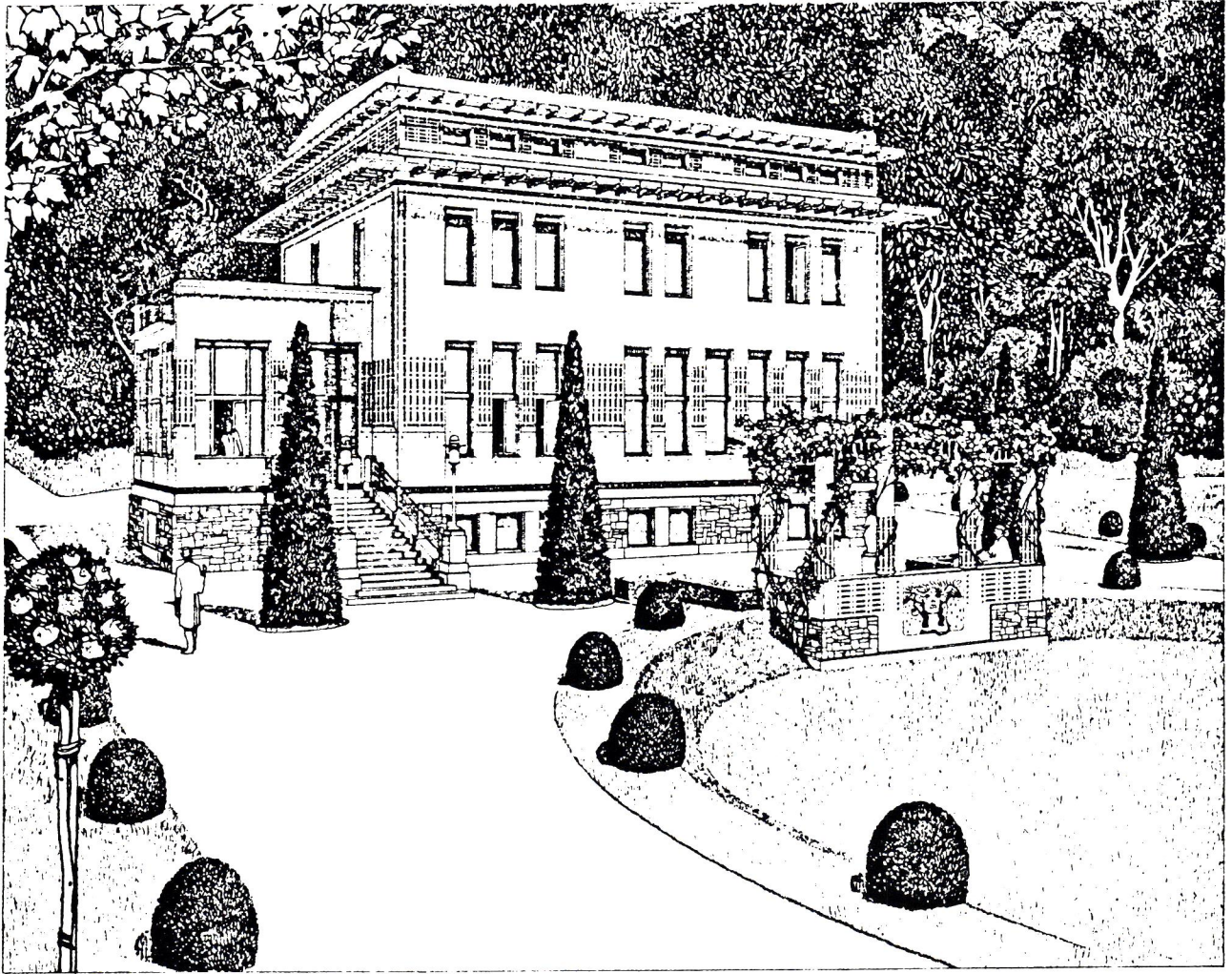
The possibility of maintaining municipal apartment houses and lucrative municipal establishments, such, for example, as city brickyards, is opened up—establishments which will be a further source of revenue to the city. Two things are necessary for the carrying out of such a scheme by the city: First, a suitable condemnation law, which is the more easily obtained since every city will support a movement for its own development into a metropolis; such a law is moreover the best and surest of tax-reducers; Second, the creation of a general municipal sinking fund (*Stadtwertzuwachs-fonds*) by which the house may be relieved of the risks and contingencies of protection, profit, and safety.

The advantages to be secured for the community by an expropriation law fall naturally into two categories: 1) The expansion of the city; 2) The improvement of the existing part.

With the proposed legislation to build on, the city authorities can seriously consider undertaking those projects which are in keeping with the development of the city and are imperiously demanded by a progressive culture.

The greatly increased income will put the city in a position to erect peoples' clubs and dwelling houses, municipal sanatoriums, city warehouses, promenades, fountains, observatories, or belvederes, museums, theaters, waterside pavilions, valhallas, etc., in short, things which are now scarcely thought of, but which cannot be omitted from the plan of the future metropolis.

12 Villa Wagner, second project.
Otto Wagner, 1912.



PROJEKT EINES WOHNHAUSES FÜR HERRN VON FRAY WILHELM XIII. BEZ. WIEN

Although the scale of this study is only that of a general sketch, yet it may justly be maintained that in these proposals the means are presented of enabling the city to satisfy the enormous demands of administration, commerce, hygiene, and art.

If one examines the plans and the picture presented here (they are not offered as models to be copied), even the layman will be convinced that houses built in city wards thus planned afford good, cheap, and sanitary dwellings, and that the further needs and wishes of the city dwellers can be fully satisfied. And one must admit also that only in this way is the problem of our future way of living to be solved.

The longed-for detached house in the still more longed-for garden city can never satisfy the popular need, since as a result of the pressure of economy in living expenses, of the increase and decrease in the size of families, of change of occupation and position in life, there must be constant shifting and change in the desires of the masses. The needs which arise from such changing conditions can be satisfied only by rented apartment dwellings, and never by the individual houses.

Last of all, it must be stated clearly and decisively that homes in buildings on city blocks divided into from four to six lots, each block fronting on a garden, square or park, and bounded on three sides by a street twenty-three meters wide, are in accord with the demands of our progressive culture, are healthy, beautiful, comfortable, and cheap, and are better fitted to our demands than those whose design is based on fundamentally false principles. To hark back to tradition, to make "expression" or picturesque the controlling consideration in designing homes for the man of today, is absurd in the light of modern experience. The number of city dwellers who today prefer to vanish in the mass as mere numbers on apartment doors is considerably greater than that of those who care to hear the daily "good morning, how are you?" from their gossipy neighbors in single houses.

However, it is self-evident that the single dwelling will

not vanish from the city plan; its presence, however, will be due to the wishes of the upper ten thousand.

The manner of life which our era has produced will yet bring to maturity many things of which we can now form scarcely a conception, such as, for example, the movable house, the portable house erected on land leased from the city, and many others.

When it is considered that Vienna, for example, in sixty years, in spite of the most favorable situation, has not produced a city plan of artistic value except Semper's outer Burgplatz (after the removal of the city gate and the remodeling of the castle) and the Schwarzenbergplatz, not altogether unobjectionable (the City Hall and Votive Church squares may be considered failures), while the Ringstrasse owes its existence to a lucky chance; and when one contrasts with this a future, artistic, rational planning and disposition of the several wards brought into systematic relations with each other, the thought must arise even in circles untouched by Art, that without that largeness of conception and breadth of vision suggested by these proposals, and without the constant hand and touch of Art upon every detail, a beautiful city can never be built.

It will not do to leave the expansion of a city to blind chance and artistic impotence as in the past, and to consider artistic efforts as superfluous, or to abandon the development of the city to the most miserable land speculations. The resulting injury to the inhabitants and government of a city is, from a politico-economical point of view, nothing short of colossal. It will continue to grow greater, for the onward march of time will make it ever more and more irreparable.

May the representatives of the people in city governments keep particularly before their eyes the fact that a great city can only fulfill its end—which is to be the satisfying dwelling place of a population counted by millions—when it is a beautiful city, and that this is only to be reached through Art.

116 *Source Note: This article, reprinted from Architectural Record, Vol. 31, No. 5, May 1912, is part of a text by Otto Wagner originally published in German in his book Die Grossstadt. Eine Studie über diese (Vienna, 1911).*

1. “Es darf daher nicht Wunder nehmen dass die Stadtvertretungen das Anwachsen der Grossstädte fördern.” I take this to mean that the representatives of every city desire the increase and expansion of their own city to metropolitan dimensions (witness the “Million Clubs” of certain sizable American cities).—Trans.

2. 1,300 to 2,600 acres, or about two to four square miles. This is equivalent to a population of from fifty-eight to seventy-seven to the acre.—Ed.

3. Five hundred and ten hectares, about 1,325 acres, or two square miles.—Ed.

Figure Credits

1–12 From Heinz Geretsegger and Max Peintner, *Otto Wagner 1841–1918* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1964).

Oriol Bohigas

Oriol Bohigas was born in 1925. He received his architecture degree in 1951 and his doctorate in 1963, both from the Escuela de Arquitectura de Barcelona where, since 1977 he has been Director. His published books include: Barcelona entre el pla Cerdà i el barraquisme (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1963); Arquitectura modernista (Barcelona: Ed. Lumen, 1968); Proceso y erótica del diseño (Barcelona: La Gaya Ciencia, 1972). He is in private practice with J. Martorell and D. Mackay. His built works include the Meridiana apartment building (1965), housing scheme (1965), Piher factory (1971), and the Thau school (1974).

Mario Gandelsonas

Mario Gandelsonas is a practising architect in New York City, an editor of Oppositions journal, and has been a Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies since 1971 where he also teaches design and an advanced theory seminar. His theoretical and critical work is developed parallel to his architectural practice, which includes urban projects and buildings. He completed his graduate studies at the School of Architecture and Urbanism in the University of Buenos Aires and his post-graduate studies in Paris at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and at the Centre de Recherche d'Urbanisme in 1967–1968. His essays and projects have been published in the major international architectural journals and anthologies.

Roberto Masiero

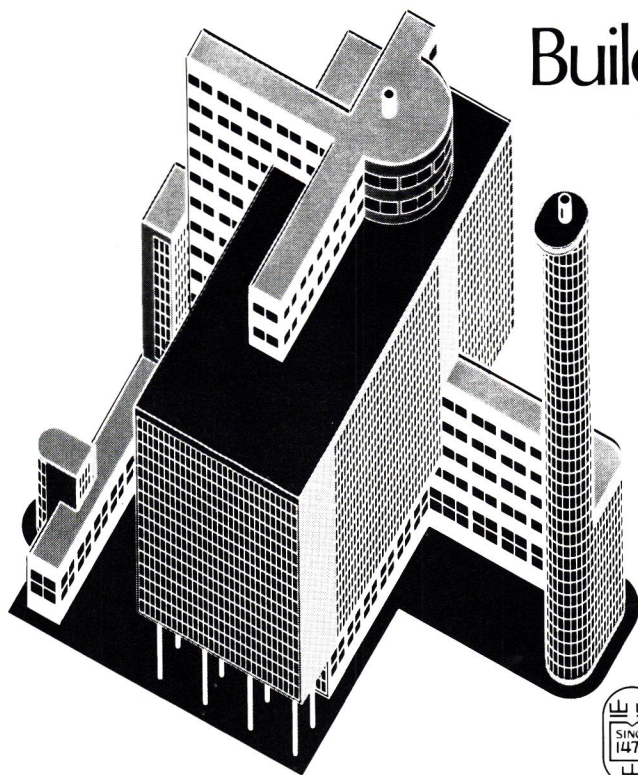
Roberto Masiero was born in 1944. He received his degree in architecture from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV) in 1971 where he also taught. His published work includes a study on Hegel's aesthetics (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1979) and on Adorno's aesthetics (Bologna: Cappelli, 1979). He edited Theodor Adorno's Parva aesthetica (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979) and is currently working on a concise history of the museum for the IUAV press, CLUVA.

Manfredo Tafuri

Manfredo Tafuri was born in Rome in 1935. He graduated in architecture in 1960, and has taught the history of architecture at the Universities of Rome, Milan, and Palermo. Since 1968 he has been Professor of History of Architecture and the Director of the Institute of History at the Architecture Institute in Venice. He is a member of the Scientific Council at the International Center of Studies of Architecture "Andrea Palladio" of Vicenza. His published works include: Teorie e storia dell'architettura (Bari: Laterza, 1968); L'architetture dell'umanesimo (Bari: Laterza, 1969); Via Giulia (in collaboration [Rome: Staderini, 1973]); Progetto e utopia (Bari: Laterza, 1973); La città americana dalla guerra civile al New Deal (in collaboration [Bari: Laterza, 1973]); Architettura contemporanea (in collaboration with F. Dal Co [Milan: Electa, 1976]); La sfera e il labirinto (Turin: Einaudi, 1980).

Anthony Vidler

Anthony Vidler was born in England in 1941. He was educated at the University of Cambridge where he received a degree in architecture. Since 1965 he has taught at Princeton University where he now holds the position of Associate Professor. He is also a Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.



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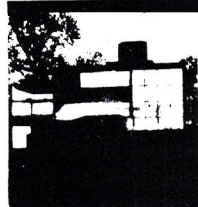
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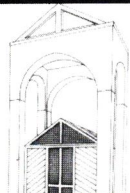
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Richard Weinstein
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Timothy Wood
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