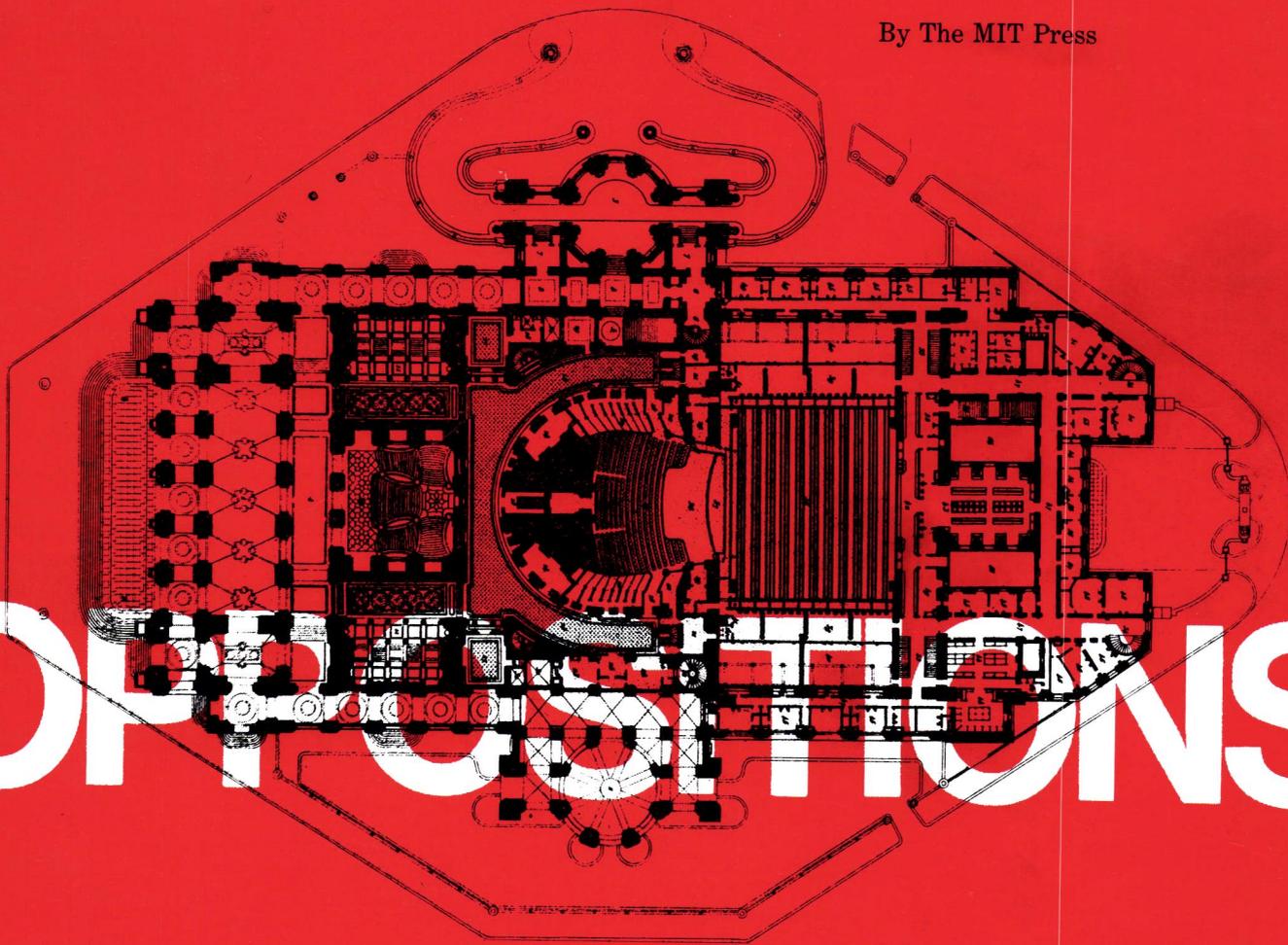


A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

Published for The Institute
for Architecture and Urban Studies

By The MIT Press



Spring 1977: 8

Special Issue

Paris under the Academy:
City and Ideology

Special Editor: Anthony Vidler

Anthony Vidler
Academicism : Modernism

Peter Brooks
The Text of the City

Richard A. Etlin
Landscapes of Eternity

Hélène Lipstadt
Housing the Bourgeoisie

Antoine Grumbach
The Promenades of Paris

Debora L. Silverman
The 1889 Exhibition

Anthony Vidler
The Idea of Type

Demetrius Porphyrios
The 'End' of Styles

Ann Lorenz Van Zanten
Form and Society

Quatremère de Quincy
Type
Introduction by Anthony Vidler

Chronology:
The Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 1671-1900
Compiled by Annie Jacques
and Anthony Vidler

Forum

A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

Published for The Institute
for Architecture and Urban Studies

By The MIT Press

OPPOSITIONS

Spring 1977: 8

Special Issue

**Paris under the Academy:
City and Ideology**

Special Editor: Anthony Vidler

Anthony Vidler
Academicism : Modernism

Peter Brooks
The Text of the City

Richard A. Etlin
Landscapes of Eternity

Hélène Lipstadt
Housing the Bourgeoisie

Antoine Grumbach
The Promenades of Paris

Debora L. Silverman
The 1889 Exhibition

Anthony Vidler
The Idea of Type

Demetrius Porphyrios
The 'End' of Styles

Ann Lorenz Van Zanten
Form and Society

Quatremère de Quincy
Type
Introduction by Anthony Vidler

Chronology:
The Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 1671-1900
Compiled by Annie Jacques
and Anthony Vidler

Forum

Editors

Peter Eisenman
Kenneth Frampton
Mario Gandelsonas
Anthony Vidler

Managing Editor

Julia Bloomfield

Designer

Massimo Vignelli

Forum

William Ellis

Production

Marlène Barsoum
Christian Hubert
Abigail Moseley
A. Raleigh Perkins

Editorial Consultant

Joan Ockman

**Trustees of The Institute
for Architecture and Urban Studies**

Armand Bartos, Chairman
A. Bruce Brackenridge
Charles DeCarlo
Arthur Drexler
George A. Dudley
Peter D. Eisenman
John Entenza
Frank O. Gehry
Edward J. Logue
Richard Meier
T. Merrill Prentice, Jr.
William Porter
Carl E. Schorske
Massimo Vignelli
Peter Wolf

Subscriptions: one year (quarterly)
Students (photocopy of I.D. required): \$20
Individuals: \$28
Institutions: \$35

Make checks payable to *Oppositions*
and send to:
The MIT Press Journals Department,
28 Carleton Street,
Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

All orders must be prepaid.
Add \$3 for postage for each foreign
subscription.

Please notify the MIT Press six to
eight weeks in advance of any change
of address in order to ensure proper
delivery of the journal. Where
possible, include address label.

Application to mail at second class
postage rates is pending at Boston,
Massachusetts, and additional mailing
offices.

OPPOSITIONS is a journal published for
The Institute for Architecture
and Urban Studies
8 West 40 Street, New York, N.Y. 10018
by The MIT Press
28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

© 1977 by The Institute for Architecture
and Urban Studies and The MIT Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

Anthony Vidler

The Modern Movement defined its progressive stance as much in opposition to the empty formulas of academicism as with any positive vision of the “spirit of the age.” Indeed, the shining purity of machine art was rendered the more heroic by contrast to the ornamentalism, eclecticism, and pattern making of the Academic tradition. Throughout the first quarter of this century the modernists, confronted and threatened by the ever-present forces of reaction and archaism embodied in the Academy, proclaimed the redeeming virtues of production and abstraction. This white crusade demanded a highly visible battleground and an identifiable enemy; it found both in the brown world of nineteenth century bourgeois kitsch, surviving almost intact within the dogmas and practice of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

1

Thus, underlying the programs and manifestos of the 1920's is a continuing and implicit attack on the Ecole; every modernist principle seems to have been framed with its negative counterpart in mind. The historical styles are defeated by their dissolution into abstraction, the unitary principle of modern expression; ornament, already characterized by Loos as decadent, is similarly pronounced redundant with the final triumph of stereometric geometry; the dots and lines of Beaux-Arts plans—those “recipes” for star patterns condemned so vehemently in *Vers Une Architecture*—are denied by the modernist “plan with intentions,” “plans of battle” as Le Corbusier called them, which summarize in their mathematical clarity the characteristic new structures of the new society.

This anti-Academic discourse, however necessary to the polemics of modernism, nevertheless encouraged the formation of a myth around the architectural production of the nineteenth century and specifically around the institution of the Beaux-Arts, and this myth has tended to obscure all subsequent attempts to analyze not only the conditions of that production but also those of the Modern Movement itself. The retrospective and apologetic history of modernism has seen only the struggle for the emancipation of geometry from ornament, new technology from old, a new functionalist ethic from Academic formalism. The social bases of the new architecture have similarly been traced from single currents of utopian socialism—technological utopia from Saint-Simon and social utopia from Fourier. For the rest, despite the real attempts of historians in the last decade, no easy way of comprehending the architecture of the nineteenth century in its entirety has been found. Thus the Gothic revival is more studied for its evidently proto-modern ideology than for its revived stylistic language; the work of the arts and craft movement is understood more readily in terms of social engagement than according to any aesthetic criteria. The modernist sensibility has so profoundly engaged our standards of criticism and modes of

perception as to render it all but impossible to *see* the nineteenth century with any clarity.

The Academy and the Modern Movement: Le Corbusier seeks Enlightenment.

2 The recent exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art has been heralded as an indication that this sensibility is changing. "Post-modernism," it is claimed, allows an appreciation, if not an enthusiastic espousal, of ornament, pattern, colors other than primaries, symmetry, monumental fantasy, even of the pure technique of rendering for its own sake; with the critique of functionalism, pure abstraction, and the machine utopia, realms of experience up to now forbidden by the stern purism of modernism are opened up. We are also shown evidence that a new generation of scholars is able to examine dispassionately the evidence of the previous century and to write its history for the first time without bias or second sight. The exhibition emerged in fact as the Museum of Modern Art's auto-critical act, exorcising in 1977 the Modern Movement principles it had so heartily embraced in 1932.

And yet the attempt to counter modernism by resurrecting its longstanding opponent seems merely to repeat, or at least to be blinded by, a similar historical mythology. The simple unrolling of student drawings, however elegant in themselves, is hardly more than to challenge the Modern Movement on its own terms and through its own flawed vision. To accept the mythological status of the Ecole as supreme enemy is in effect to confirm the ideology of modernism by accepting its terms of reference. A truly critical history of the modern period must be more than such a neat reversal.

It becomes increasingly clear that to accept the ideological rupture proposed by modernism itself as the instrument of its own interpretation is to deliberately obscure the circumstances of its origins and the nature of its production. If we are indeed entering a period of post-modernist sensibility, then a clear understanding of modernism should be sought, one that begins to establish the ontological bases of its project rather than one that repeats the ideological polemics of its intentions. For such an understanding it is impossible to accept the clear lines proposed as essential to modern architecture between realism and abstraction, between academicism and the avant-garde, between craft art and machine art, between historical styles and "style." The dissolving of these lines however implies a comprehension of the modern period as a whole, not as a field for tracing lines of influence but as a total condition of culture that, responding to the profound industrial, political, and social changes of the nineteenth century, resulted in a radical transformation of the concept of man in relation to his environment.

This issue of *Oppositions* has been developed as a counter to those kinds of historical interpretations of nineteenth century architecture that rest solely on stylistic or ideological models of explanation. The articles selected, while necessarily remaining partial in their scope, are all in different ways dedicated to an understanding of the pre-conditions of modernist architecture and specifically to a widening of the definition of "modern" to include ideologies and designs that without superficial formal or cultural similarity nevertheless constitutionally belong to the beginnings of modernity and its conscious self-formulation.

The self-conscious experience defined by the poets of the mid-nineteenth century as "modernity" was bound up with and a direct consequence of, the emergence of *metropolis*: the incredibly rapid transformation of the large