

A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

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After a New Architecture

History

Kenneth Frampton:
Apropos Ulm

Theory

Manfredo Tafuri:
L'Architecture dans le Boudoir
Translation by Victor Caliendo

William Huff:
Symmetry

Documents

Anthony Eardley:
Giraudoux and *The Athens Charter*

Rem Koolhaas:

The Architects' Ball—A Vignette,
1931

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Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown
and Steven Izenour, *Learning
from Las Vegas*

Kenneth Frampton:
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Editorial Statement

OPPOSITIONS 3 attempts to widen the basis of our discourse by publishing theoretical developments taken at different moments in history from Germany and France; specifically through our presentation of two articles, one dealing with the evolution of critical design theory at the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, the other dealing with the part played by Jean Giraudoux in “national socialist” circles in France. Of particular import is the article on Giraudoux which throws new light on the development of CIAM ideology both before and after the publication of *La Charte d’Athènes* in 1933.

The historical side of OPPOSITIONS 3 is complemented by a theoretical essay by the Italian critic Manfredo Tafuri, by Charles Moore’s criticism of Werner Seligmann’s housing in Ithaca and by two further theoretical pieces—a little known study on symmetry by William Huff which we have reproduced here in facsimile and a short essay by Rem Koolhaas which attempts to capture something of the bizarre climate that attended the heyday of the Art Deco in New York.

It is probably some measure of the general cultural predicament of the twentieth century that architecture, whose traditional object has been largely lost, should have also become a convenient scapegoat for the disfunctions of society. Hardly a day passes but that the practice of architecture is not taken to task for its manifest failures, and it makes little difference whether this criticism

comes from the liberal right or left. For where the former in the name of an assumed populism will level the charge of elitism against design; the latter, in the name of social injustice will challenge architecture *per se* as the traditional agent of repression. At face value, this criticism of the time honored role of architecture can hardly be refuted, but at the same time, the preemptive nature of this attack affords little indication as to how the human environment is to be structured in a significant way.

Given that the dominant mode of production and consumption has little use for architecture in any profound sense, we are more than commonly aware of the need to justify the existence of a magazine, which persists in attempting to offer a critical discourse on a subject matter whose essence and meaning are only too marginal to the basic interests of the society at large. A prevailing sense of skepticism compels us to question and re-question where we stand in respect to such a dilemma both collectively and independently and to ask ourselves what, if anything, constitutes the common factor of our editorial position.

It has gradually become clear to us that we are sharply divided as to the importance which each of us attaches to the relationship of architecture and society. While even those of us who tend to stress this factor are split again as to the editorial stance we should adopt in respect to such an issue. In the last analysis there are perhaps only two factors that hold us together,

apart from our mutual awareness of the marginal role played by architecture in a society dedicated to consumption: firstly, a faith in the importance of architecture as a poetic manifestation and secondly, a belief in the importance of criticism as a necessary force set in perennial opposition to the established values of an empirically oriented society. Beyond this limited area of agreement our respective positions as editors are of more consequence for the way in which they differ than for what they have in common.

In short we have become increasingly aware of the impossibility of writing a joint editorial with the result that we have come to the resolution that this will be our last common effort. Given that from now on editorials will be written and signed individually, all we can do for the moment is to identify the issues which each one of us will take up. The following points may be taken as defining a common area of debate:

1. As a preliminary to formulating a model for the relationship of architecture and society, we will each try to indicate in turn the way in which different cultural and ideological circumstances have shaped our divergent views as to *the nature of architecture and society*.
2. We will each attempt to formulate in turn *the role of theory in relation to practice* and the manner in which this relationship is able to exert an influence over architectural production.

3. We will also attempt to establish *the essence of the nature of architecture as a critical agent* and the degree to which this critique is affected by an opposition between the human lifeworld and the idea of “progress.”

4. Finally we will try to engage the issue as to whether architecture is subject in the last analysis to an overriding cultural or existential determinant or as to whether it is limited solely by a universal construct of the mind.

In subsequent editorials various and different aspects of this discourse will be examined in detail by each of the editors in turn. The presentation of a divergence of opinion united only in a common belief in the value of architecture as a critical agent mitigating the dominating influence of empiricism.

Peter Eisenman
Kenneth Frampton
Mario Gandelsonas

**After a New Architecture:
The Best Shape for a Chimera**

Charles Moore

The Elm Street Housing by Werner Seligmann for the New York State Urban Development Corporation has already been widely published. Our intention here in publishing it once again is not so much to record, as it is to provide a critique of the work in its own terms. But further, in selecting Charles Moore to attempt this critique we were proposing that architects themselves not only should provide such critiques but also should see this work as an essential part of their ongoing activity. The fact that Moore has in the past done work which on the surface seems ideologically opposed to the Elm Street Housing seemed an initial basis for such a critique. Yet while Moore's text displays his own modesty of style and gentleness of manner as well as unquestionable insight, it fails to address certain issues over which we feel Moore and Seligmann stand opposed.

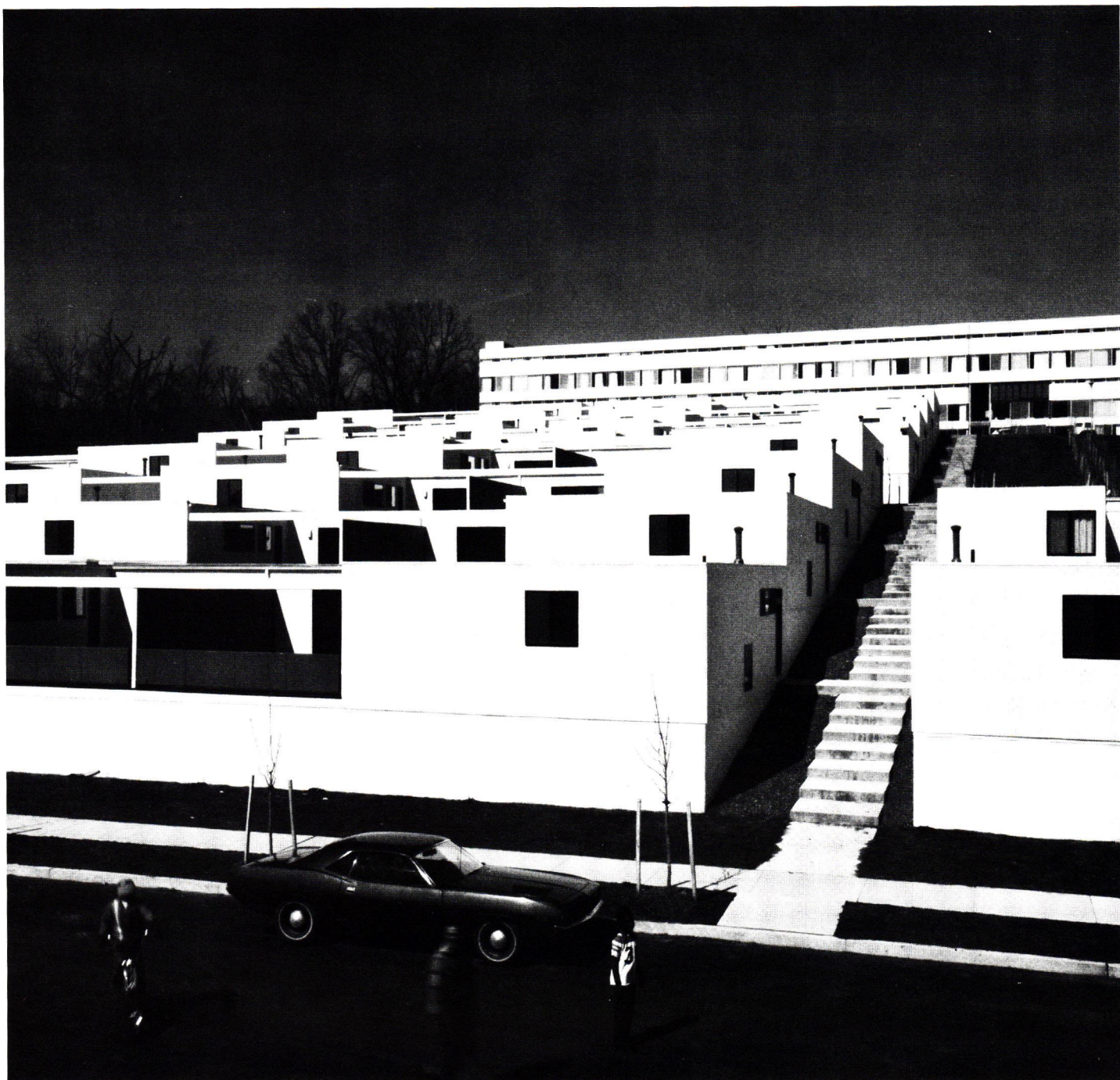
First, Seligmann's housing makes its appearance as a cultural object against the backdrop of recent housing which could be used to situate it in a critical framework. Second, the housing makes a strong statement about the nature of a suburban lifestyle and posits an alternative. Third, the housing is an evocative image which certainly raises the issue of metaphor and symbol—both public and private—and the potential for housing to play a part in the iconic realm.

Here, despite the general validity and the evident sensitivity of much of Moore's criticism, all of these issues are still regrettably left unjoined.

Charles Moore was born in Michigan in 1925. He received his M.F.A. and Ph.D. at Princeton University. He taught at Princeton University and the University of California, Berkeley, and was Chairman of the Department of Architecture at Yale University (1965-68); Dean of Architecture and Planning at Yale (1969-71); Professor at Yale University (1971-74); and is currently Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has been in partnership practice since 1961, forming his own practice in 1970. His recent built works include Church Street South housing, New Haven (1970); low-cost housing, Middletown, Conn. (1970); housing in Orono, Maine (1972); Kresge College, University of California at Santa Cruz (1973); and housing at Huntington, Long Island (1974). He is co-author with Donlyn Lyndon and Gerald Allen of *The Place of Houses* to be published this fall.

Figure 1. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Stepped pedestrian walkway through atrium units.

2



1.

Werner Seligmann and Associates of Cortland, New York have lately designed and very lately gotten built 235 units of moderate-income housing in Ithaca, New York, for the New York State Urban Development Corporation under the Federal Housing Authority's 236 program (not presently active). During the last years of the Great Society, this provided a federal subsidy which in effect reduced interest rates to 1 percent to allow people of limited income to rent new dwellings they could not have afforded on the open market. The project, called the UDC Ithaca Scattered Site Housing Project, Elm Street site, has attracted considerable attention, with a cover on *Progressive Architecture* magazine and a lot of spirited discussion among architects and, I gather, the residents of Ithaca, due to its powerful but controversial (that is to say suspect) images.

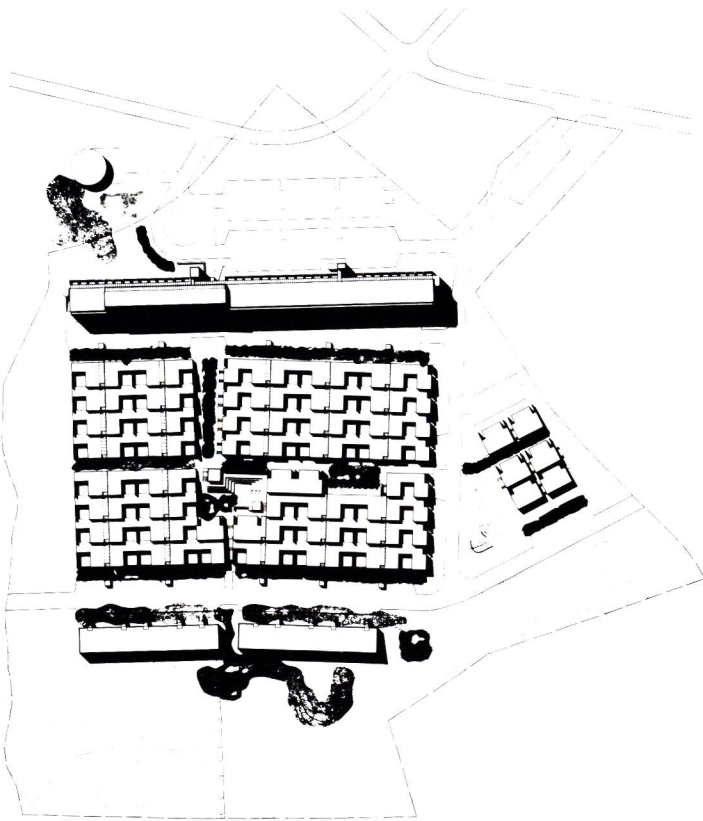
The editors of *Oppositions* asked me to write about the Elm Street housing partly because I have also been the architect of moderate-income subsidized housing projects, one of which made it as well to the cover of *Progressive Architecture*, partly because my projects look altogether unlike Seligmann's, and because some of my published attitudes have revealed some hostility to the kind of modern architecture orthodoxy he espouses. I said I would write about the project and went to Ithaca (where I had never been before) not knowing what to expect, nor even if I would be a sympathetic observer. I had read the piece in *Progressive Architecture*, admired the handsome photographs, been angered by the site plan, and confused by the critique, which seemed at once a paean, a plug (for the UDC), and an apology ("It is unfortunate that budget limitations do not allow more amenities in publicly assisted housing.")¹ My journey added more layers of conflict: I enjoyed my visit, and felt altogether sympathetic to the concerns Seligmann described as he showed me around; I was astonished at the vigor with which some other (obviously anonymous) architects in town loathed the project; and I kept on realizing that I couldn't, or wouldn't make the formal choices Seligmann's group had. I then wrote a paper saying rather vaguely about architectural language that purity is bunk, and *Oppositions'* editors asked me please to say what I really meant. This is an attempt to do that, confused by the suspicion that though the battle lines have been so badly drawn and often seem not to

exist, they really are lying about somewhere.

I shall arrange my reactions in three parts: first, some wonder about the subsidized housing project as a type; second, some concerns about the images and influences present in this one; and third, a look inside the project itself.

First the format. For something like forty years, the Federal Housing Authority has been guaranteeing mortgages on single-family houses in the suburbs for middle-income people, in what amounts to a giant subsidy for those rich enough to qualify. Now this has had some desirable effects if you like suburbs, and some disastrous ones, helping as it did to bring on the death of the cities with the separation of subsidized middle-income, single-family dwellers from those too poor to merit subsidy, who were abandoned in the city's heart where mortgages were not available. After urban renewal had delivered the coup de grâce to the city center, and the poor seemed restless, a rather pallid system of supports was designed (FHA 221(d)3, 235, 236, and others) to dole out mortgage subsidies for rental or co-op housing, exacting as return for the gift a set of agreements meant to prevent the poor from profiting from their houses, as their economic betters had. (Thanks to long-range inflation, of course, a little house bought for \$500 down in 1947 might have been worth \$30,000 in 1967 when the mortgage was paid off, so the fortunate owners might retire to Florida, while a family who hadn't qualified for the FHA mortgage insurance, having spent about the same monthly amount for rental housing, could "retire" with nothing.)

Thanks to this bad new deal there is a lot of "antsiness" about nomenclature. "Project" is a mildly dirty word, hinting at the separation of the people locked in this bargain from their home-owning neighbors, who may object to their color or their kids. "Village" is an okay word, with overtones of permissible, even laudable ethnicity, and the expectation of some kind of rich connections among neighbors. Seligmann and I both use "village" and are dismayed when, for instance, the laundry rooms we had seen as a kind of village pump are vandalized by the tenants' children, then locked up by the management whose real desire is for a board room.



2.

This snarl about what I think is an unfair and unworkable system is not directed at Werner Seligmann. Students of '68 would of course have said that it is wrong for him or me to build within such a system instead of burning down its buildings. I disagree, and applaud any attempt to make a better environment with the architectural means at hand. But I have to note that any 236 project, even the best, is not a happy autonomous village, with quaint festivals on its green, nor is it a seamless patch on the urban fabric. What, then, *is* the best shape for a chimera?

It may seem a bit bizarre, this search for an image for a program we scarcely admit to and don't believe in; and more than a little disquieting to suspect that it is (or was, until the subsidized programs were cut off, in favor of nothing), the closest thing to a socially responsible commission an architect is likely to get. Response to the problem certainly seems (to me, anyway) to call for all the complexity and contradiction one can summon up. My own responses veer toward what Vincent Scully has called the "Belgian village" approach, after the entertainment areas at some World's Fairs, where special efforts are made to fray or disguise the edges (between the real and the unreal?), and to cook up as rich a stew of images as possible. Seligmann heads in the opposite direction, toward the simplest and clearest images he can muster. That is either very cool, or is some kind of embarrassment. I wanted to think it was cool; all the Ithacans I talked to were of the other opinion.

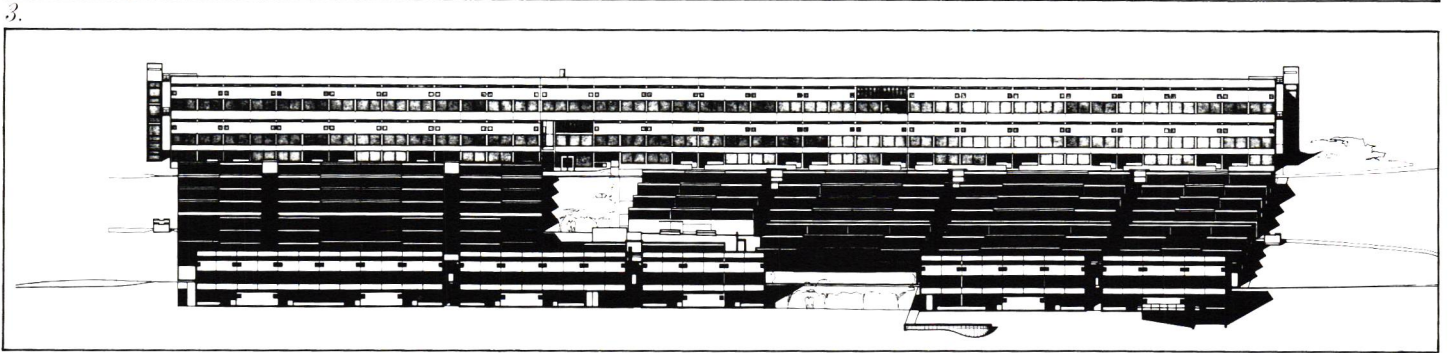
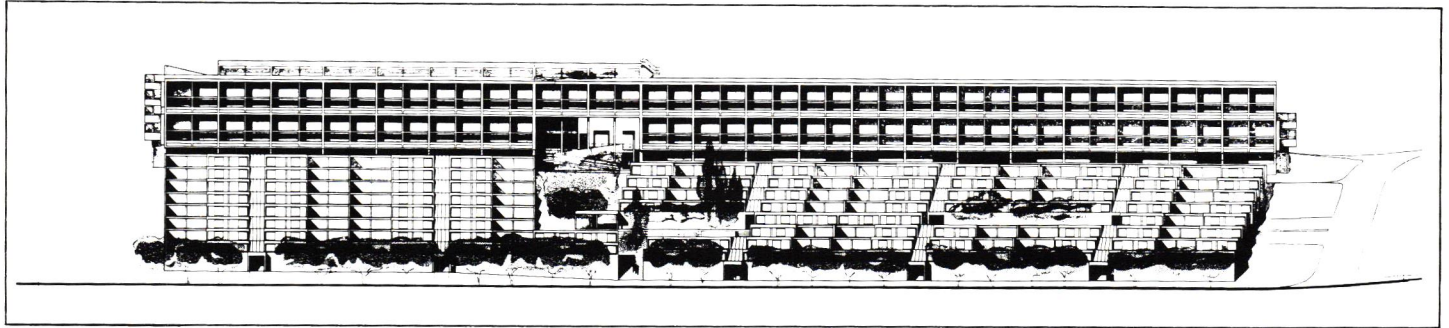
The Elm Street housing connections back in time are clear enough, documented, in fact, by the editors of this magazine who have limned, in The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition "Another Chance For Housing", a lineage from Le Corbusier's Roq et Rob housing of 1948 at Cap Martin through Atelier 5's famous Siedlung Halen of 1962 near Bern, past a 1966 competition entry for the Portsdown Housing Competition by Brawne, Gold, and Jones (fig. 6). The present case renders them strong homage. But this proud lineage is a new thing, high above Cayuga's waters. Ithaca is a slightly grubby town (at least in the early spring), but a very picturesque and highly regarded place whose separate, darkish, rather high houses sit among their trees overlooking the splendid valley with an indifference which seems studied and is, at

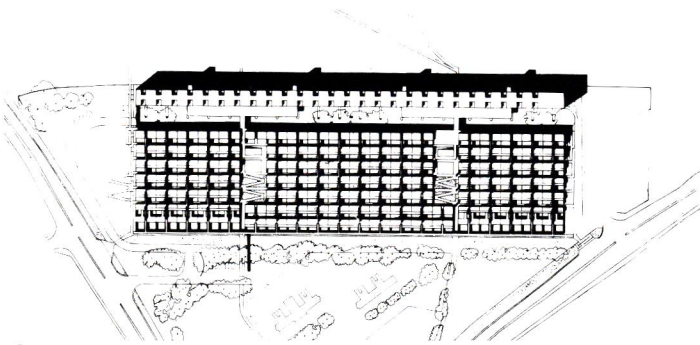
Figure 2. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Site plan, original scheme.

Figure 4. Elevation, intermediate scheme.

Figure 5. Model, original scheme.

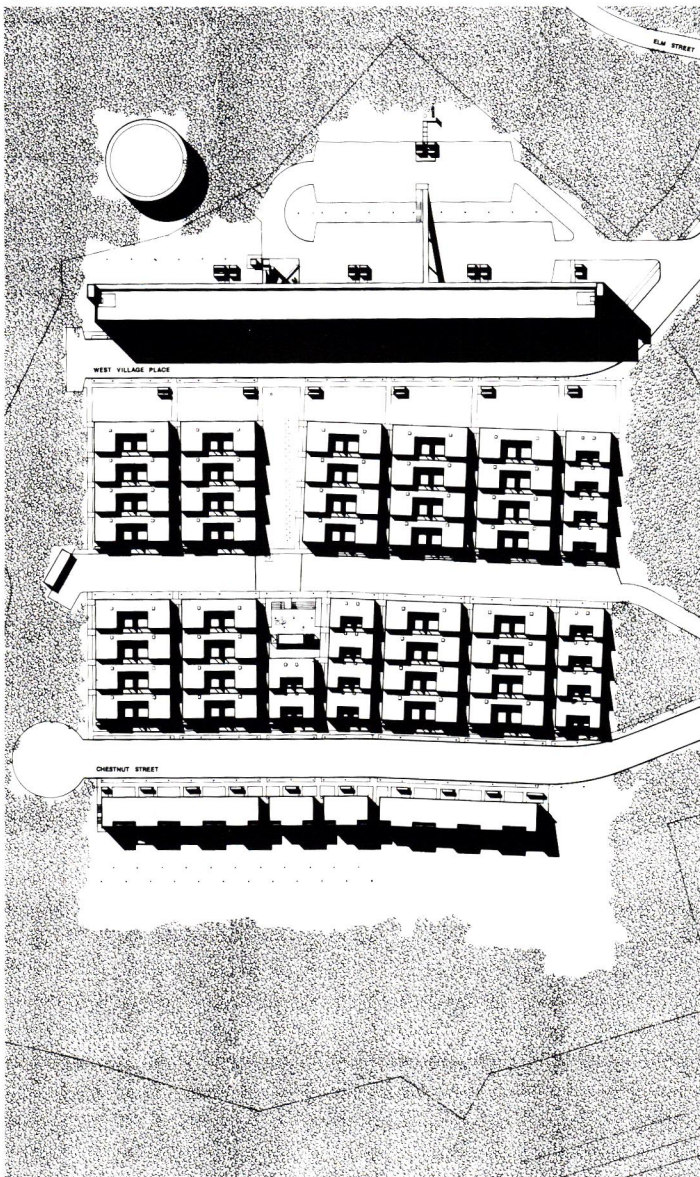
Figure 3. Elevation, original scheme.





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7.

least in spots, being carefully preserved. The enthusiastic appearance on a part of that hill (visible from all over town) of a white rectangle of exotic descent, known to be a project full of poor people, was greeted, one gathers, with about the same enthusiasm that had met the advent of the Dutch Elm blight. One of the problems, I suspect, is that the scheme, quite clearly bordered top and bottom by special buildings, is scarcely modulated from side to side, so that it looks (though this look is belied by a closer look at the contours) as if the white rectangle could—and is about to—spread sideways.

I had come to Ithaca in a small airplane which had flown low over some rock outcroppings in the hills to the east. They were, like the housing, almost white and were visible for a considerable horizontal distance, giving an architectural order to the landscape that I was excited about. I imagined that the open-sidedness of Seligmann's housing was meant as a kind of signal, however abstracted, that this work too could grow into a more organic relation with the landscape. (The white patch is a short stripe, not a square; it does have a strong directional implication.) I gathered that the implication, intended or not, was a source of fright for the hostile observers on the facing slope.

My own problem is not that I fear the extension. Indeed, as a compositional as well as a social matter, I would welcome a longer stripe. The present area is so small to be visually as well as socially set *against* the landscape around. The decisions to make it so regular, so white, so unstopping in the sideways dimension, give it, from the distance it is so often seen, the qualities of a machine (a *machine à habiter*, if you really want) which just can't help, in our science-fictionalized world, scaring almost everyone. I think Seligmann's special problem has been his attempt to incorporate in this work both the machine metaphor and the altogether disparate village metaphor I mentioned earlier. It occurs to me that this mixed metaphor could be taken as a really advanced example of complexity and contradiction. But I don't believe it was meant to be, and in any case the village metaphor is not really operative, because the provision of shared "village-like" amenities in a place where the social institutions are not developed (there are not present, at least yet, the shared concerns that would make this a real com-

Figure 6. Portsdown Housing Competition, Portsdown, England. Brawne, Gold and Jones, architects, 1966. Site plan.

Figure 7. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Site plan, final scheme.

Figure 8. Elevation, final scheme.

Figure 9. Section through pedestrian access to medium-rise building, final scheme.

Figure 10. Floor plan of two-bedroom duplex, medium-rise building, final scheme.

Figure 11. Section through apartments, medium-rise building, final scheme.

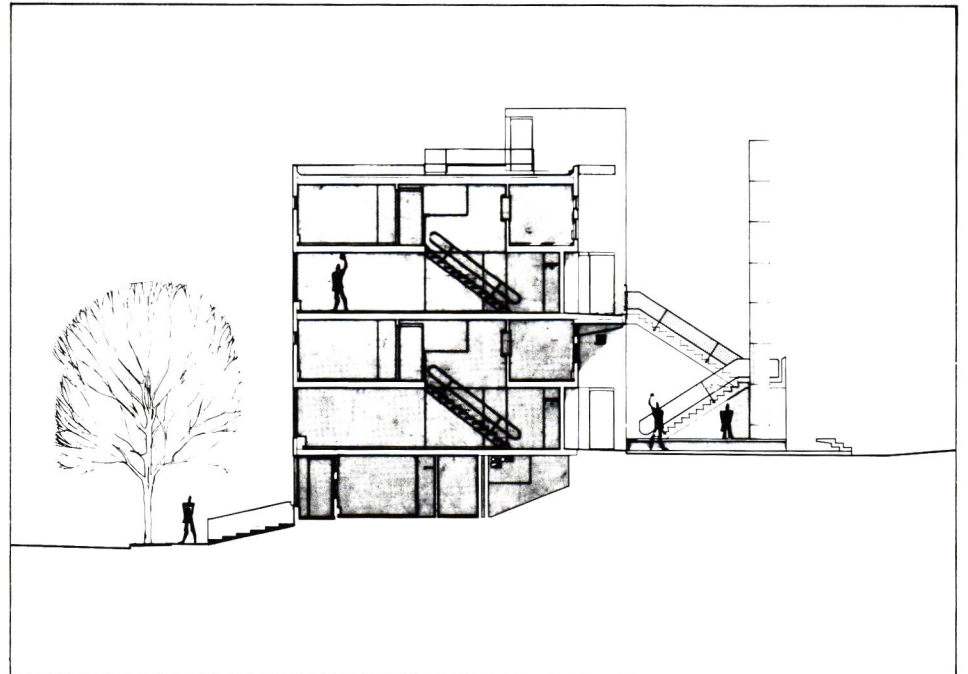
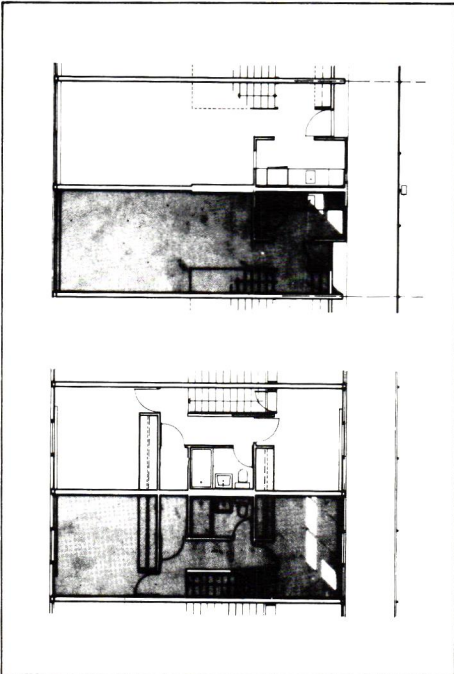
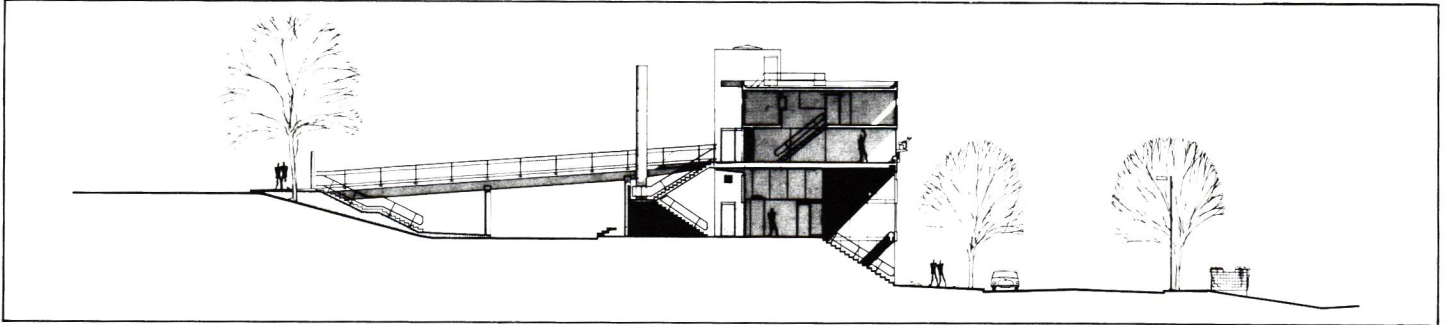
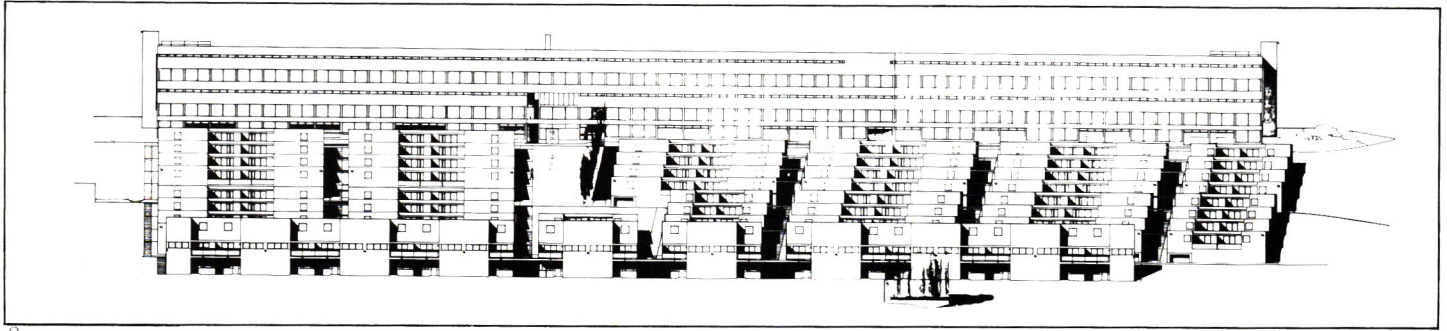
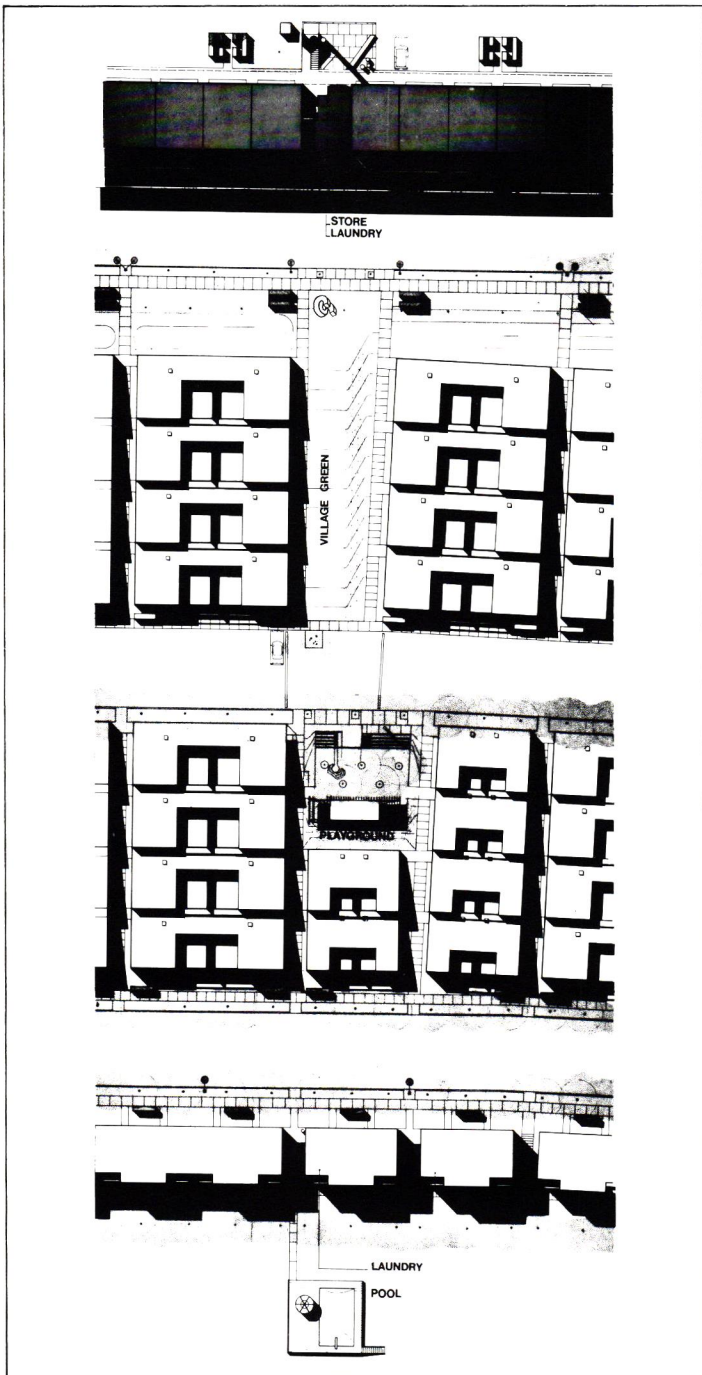


Figure 12. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Partial site plan showing structure of central community space, final scheme. Note axial interrelationship of store, village green, playground, laundry and swimming pool.

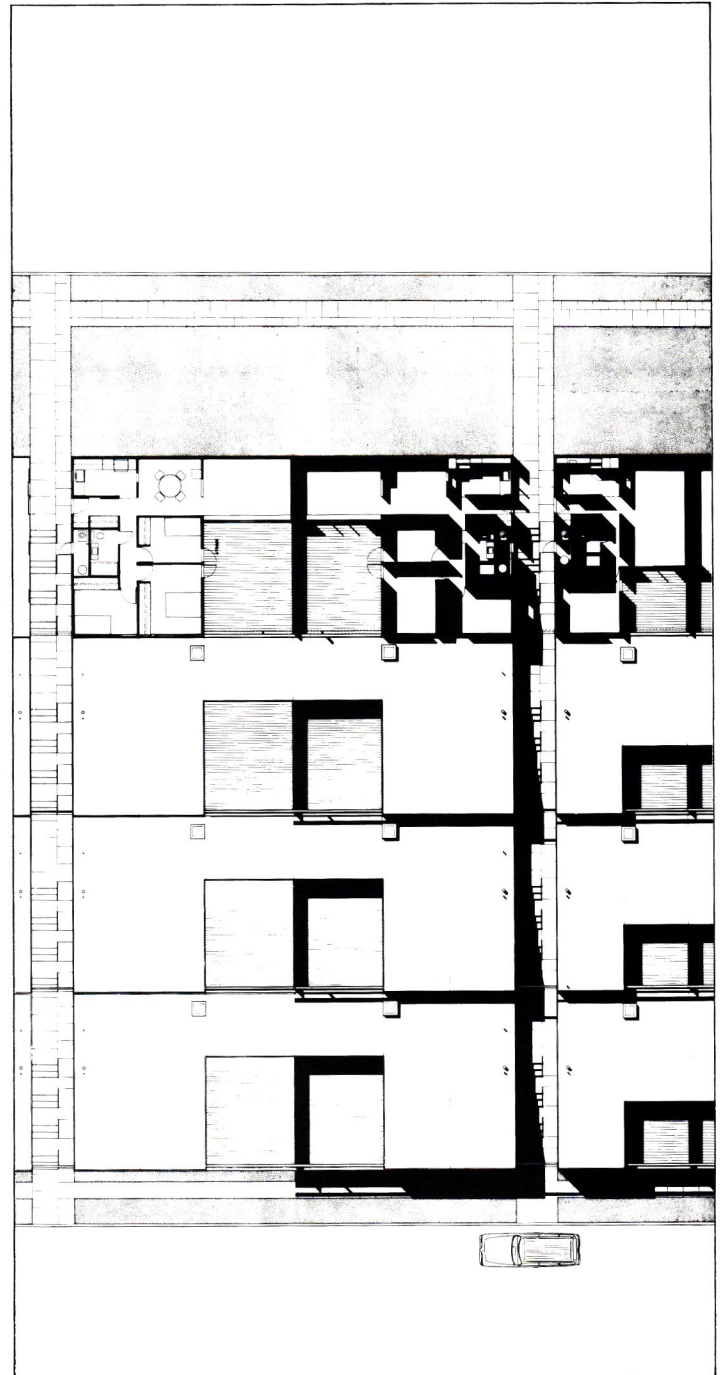


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Figure 13. Partial site plan showing the organization of atrium unius and their interrelation to site accessways.

Figure 14. Axonometric showing systems assembly, medium-rise building.

Figure 15. Floor plan of one-bedroom unit, medium-rise building.



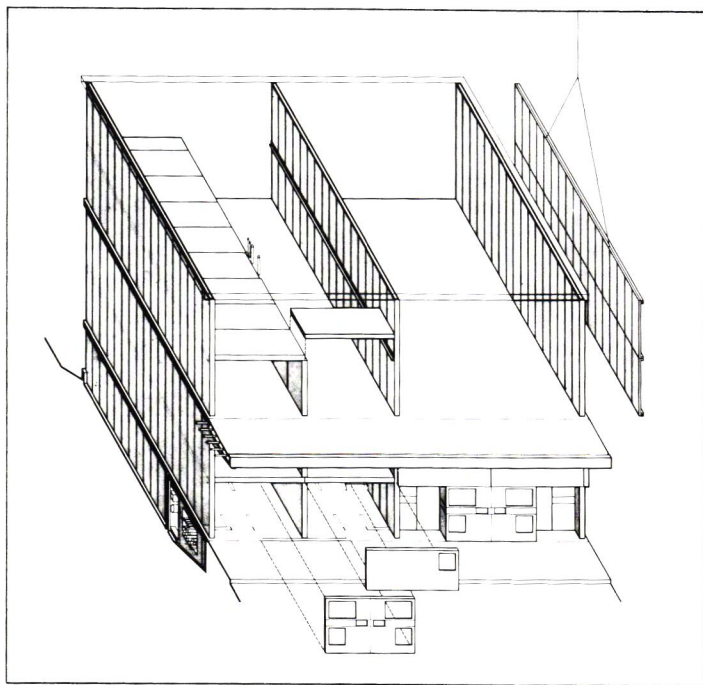
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munity), has to be accompanied by a strong architectural inflection toward those provisions, to render them especially visible and important. That inflection comes into conflict with the machine metaphor, which would be dimmed if the regularity of the parts were messed up. And the machine wins.

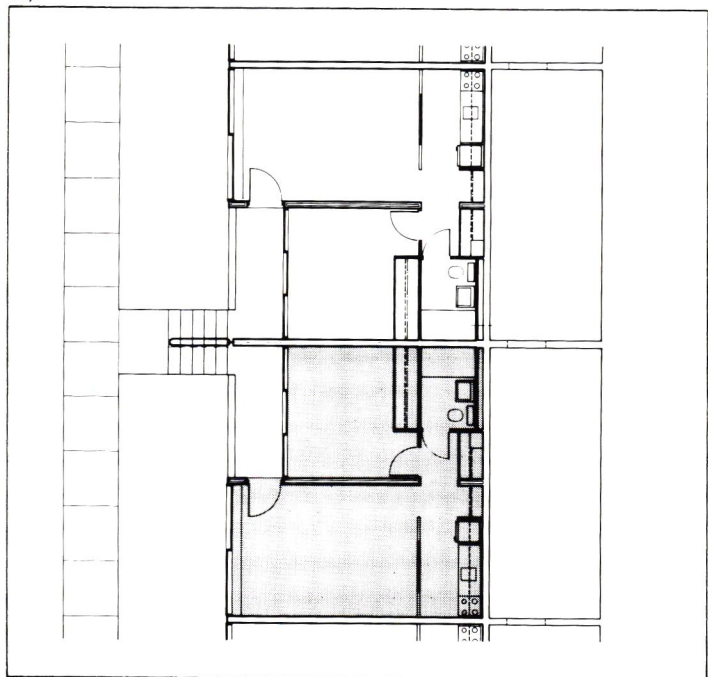
I take it that architecture occurs at the point of collision between a system of thought and form and a complicated set of special external circumstances. There is, that is to say, a distance between the diagram and the building. My practitioner teachers—Enrico Peressutti and Lou Kahn especially—have used, it seems to me, much of their attention to develop their buildings *away* from their diagrams. Teacher-historians, on the other hand, like Colin Rowe, who has been important to Werner Seligmann's development, seem to me to press the building back toward the diagram or polemic. I certainly admit to the coexistence of these attitudes, with the possibility of emphasis on the system, or the circumstances, or of many positions in between. The regular machine metaphor in the Elm Street housing works for the system, and external circumstances seem not very well represented—whether they are the northwest winds of winter sweeping onto the unprotected ramps and open balconies of the high upper building, or winter's ice and snow on the railingless, unsheltered, stepped streets, or the ravages of time on the thin and peelable plywood which faces the pure crisp forms.

But there *are* responsive acts here when the architects can escape from architecture. Those stepped streets, for example, have each been planted with a different kind of flowering tree, and 2,000 evergreens have been planted around the site. My disagreement, then, with the not-quite village as a too-fixed object is a fairly simple one: that I think the system inherited from Le Corbusier and others is too rigid to be adequately responsive either to the surrounding specifics or to the expectations of the people affected.

So much for the image. A look at the dwellings, one by one, shifts me firmly onto Seligmann's side. Here at last, he is free of *L'Oeuvre Complète*, partly, perhaps, because he is up against a more specific problem, is taking arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing them, is to an astonishing degree



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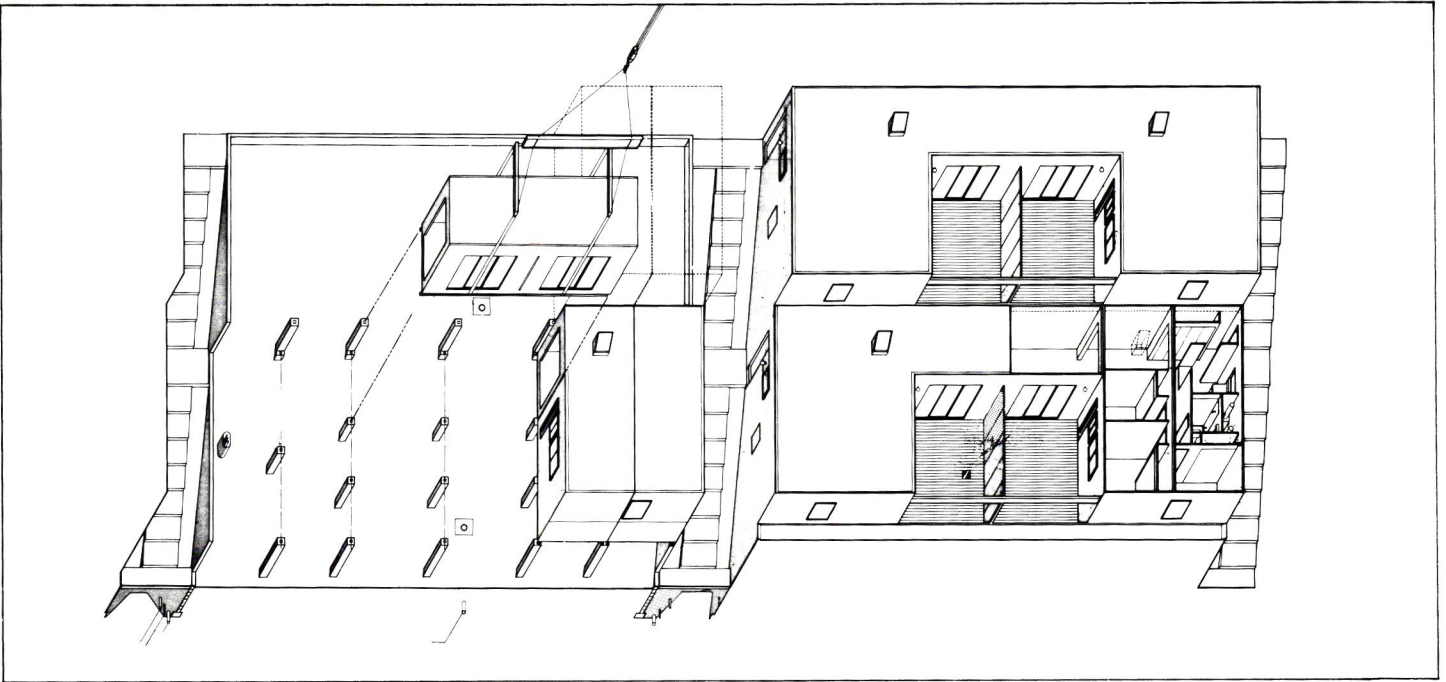
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Figure 16. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Axonometric of atrium units showing mode of assembly of prefabricated parts.

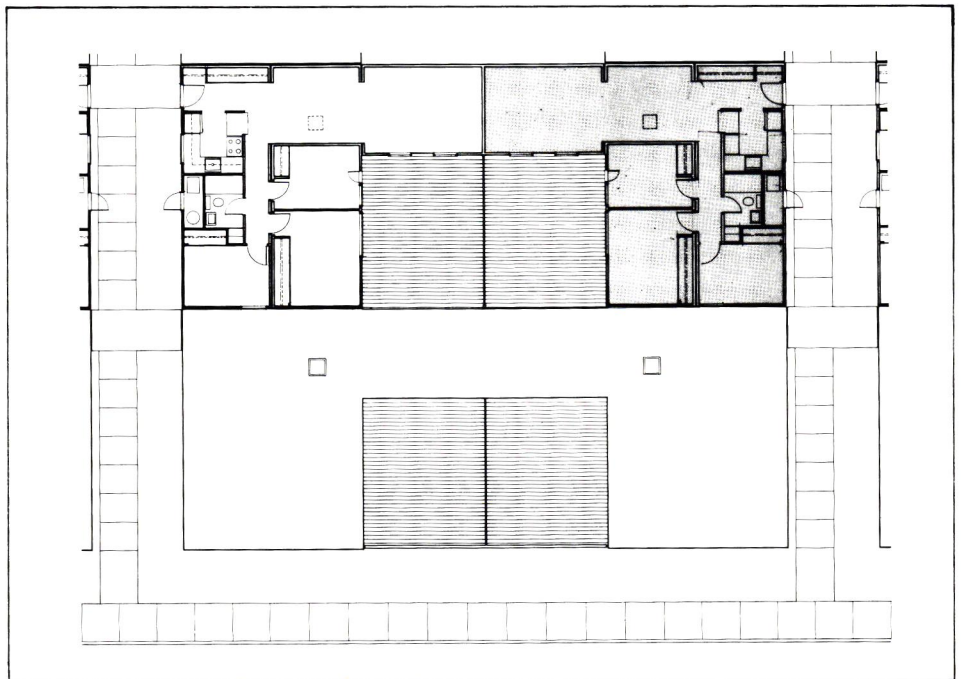
Figure 18. One-bedroom floor plan, atrium unit.

Figure 17. Three-bedroom floor plan, atrium unit.

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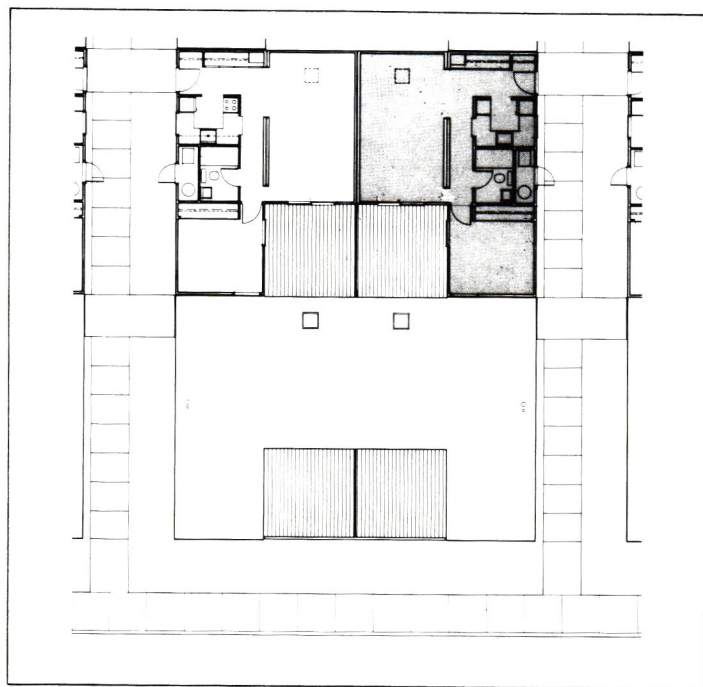
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17.

ending them. The “troubles” are the unreal FHA minimum property standards, a set of middle class images squeezed to the point of absurdity, but steadfastly required. Seligmann, in what I regard as a brilliant set of moves, subverts them to the point of making sense of them (and of the whole project). The two-bedroom duplexes in the upper building (about whose wintertime entry I have complained) are rendered extraordinarily spacious and attractive by just two devices: an expensive but critically important sliding window that extends from wall-to-wall in the living room, and a carefully detailed open stair. My particular enthusiasm, though, is for the houses down the slope, especially the ones made of 12-by-32 foot mobile units, packed tight together around atria. Other modern architects I know, working within the box, are trapped by the box and give up; but Seligmann’s group gets past it, to a beautifully lit, spacious, efficient, pleasant plan. The photographs with their “Corb” lithos and their show-off furniture don’t do these spaces justice. They are very nice, even exciting places to be, and full enough of victories over official proscriptions to be on the way to establishing a new iconography based just on that victory. The window at the end of the corridor, with its intimations of space beyond, overcomes all the fussy fenestration in the kitchens of the upper duplexes. Victory over the limitations of the modular boxes seems, to me, far and away the most exciting aspect of the place. Look at how, in a climate which demands an expensively-deep perimeter footing, the stepped atrium scheme is given lots of light and outlook, while the foundation wall is minimized. Or how the plumbing is only in some modules, and how the corridors never, as they do in a trailer, reduce bedroom dimensions below a comfortable size.

I don’t think these genuine victories are trivial, or unworthy to be considered, next to the larger problems of image or influence. I even believe, as I’ve intimated, that the mental muscles developed in the triumphs over the absurd standards of the FHA and the primitive technology of the modular unit builders are likely to be as useful in the undefined future as whatever powers are required to divine the best shape for a contradiction. I wind up an admirer of the *intelligence* of Seligmann and his group. And intelligence, I should think, would be the best base for gathering images sufficiently contradictory and complex to consort with chimeras.



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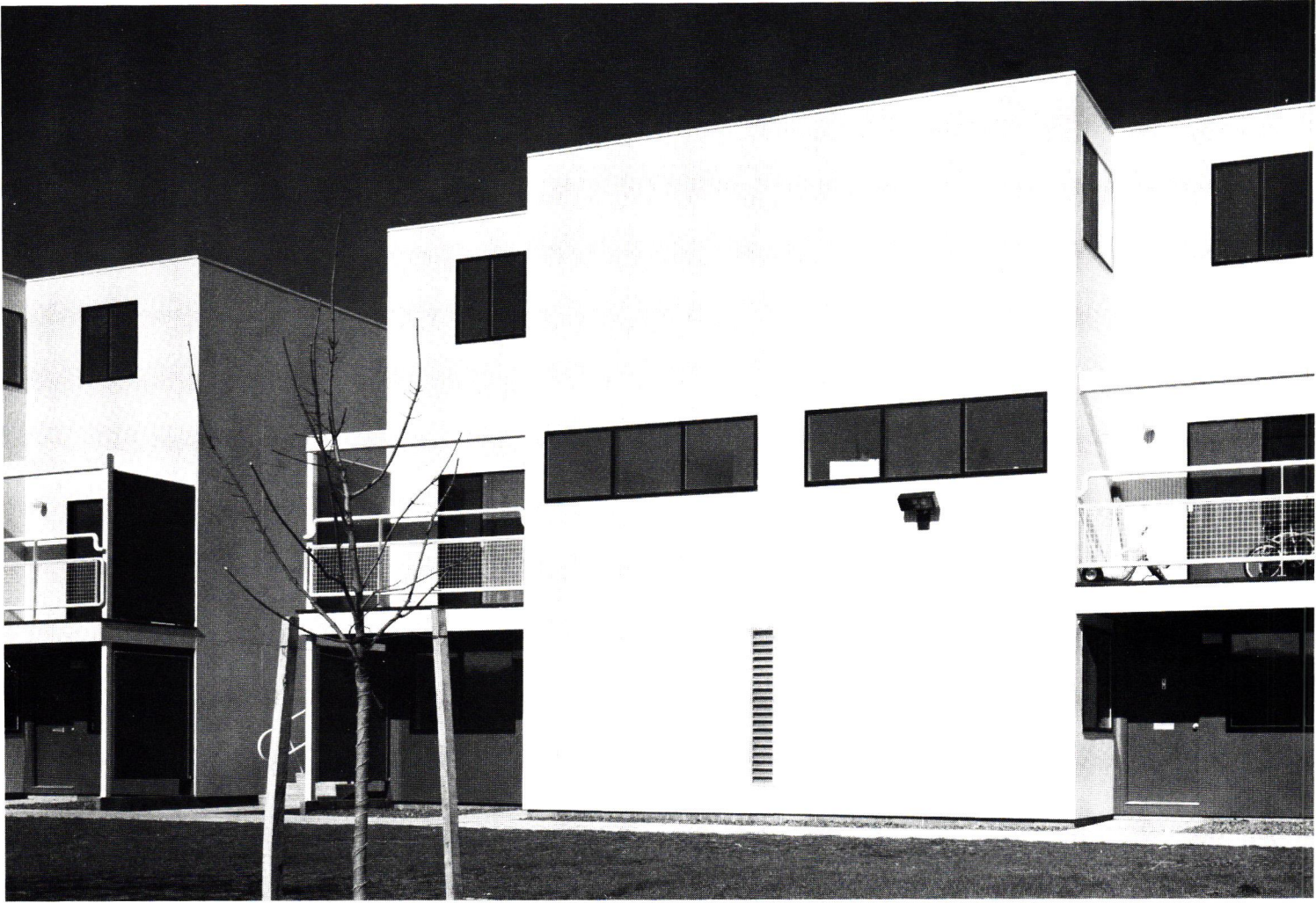
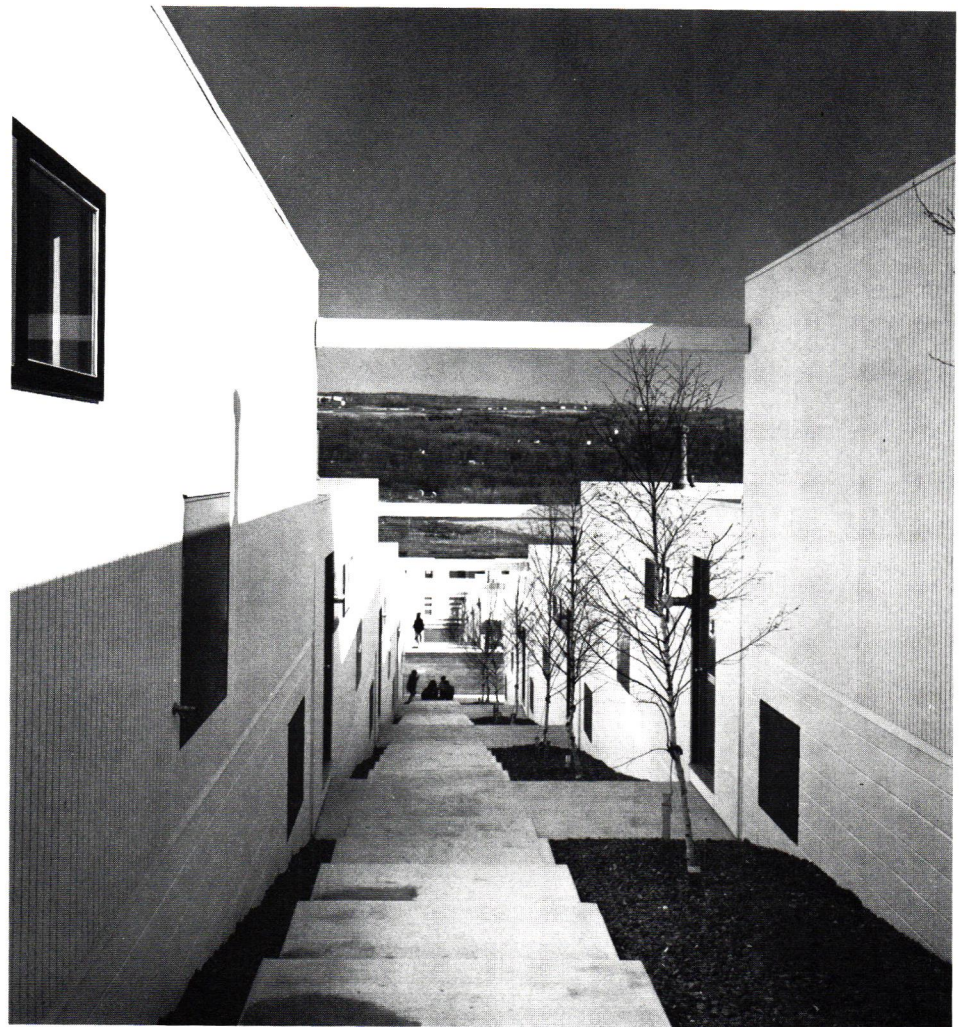
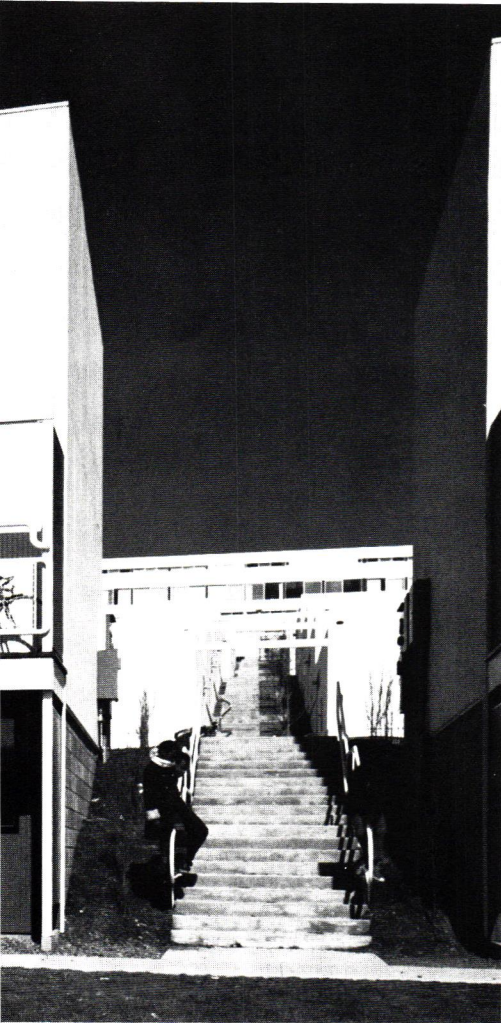


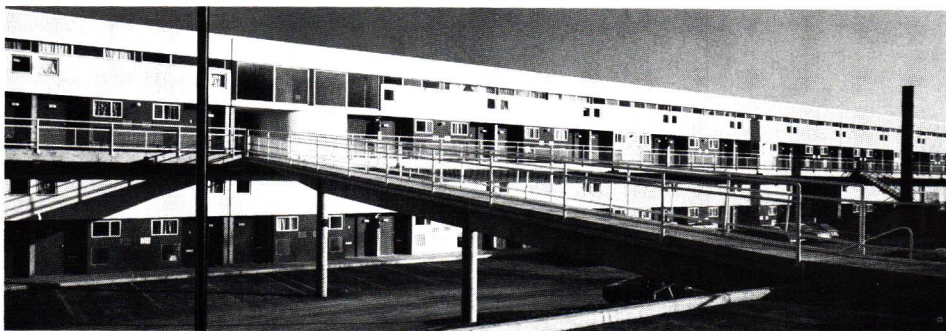
Figure 19. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Townhouse units near the end of the site.

Figure 21. Pedestrian ramp access from carpark, medium-rise building.

Figure 20. View down stepped walkway between atrium units.

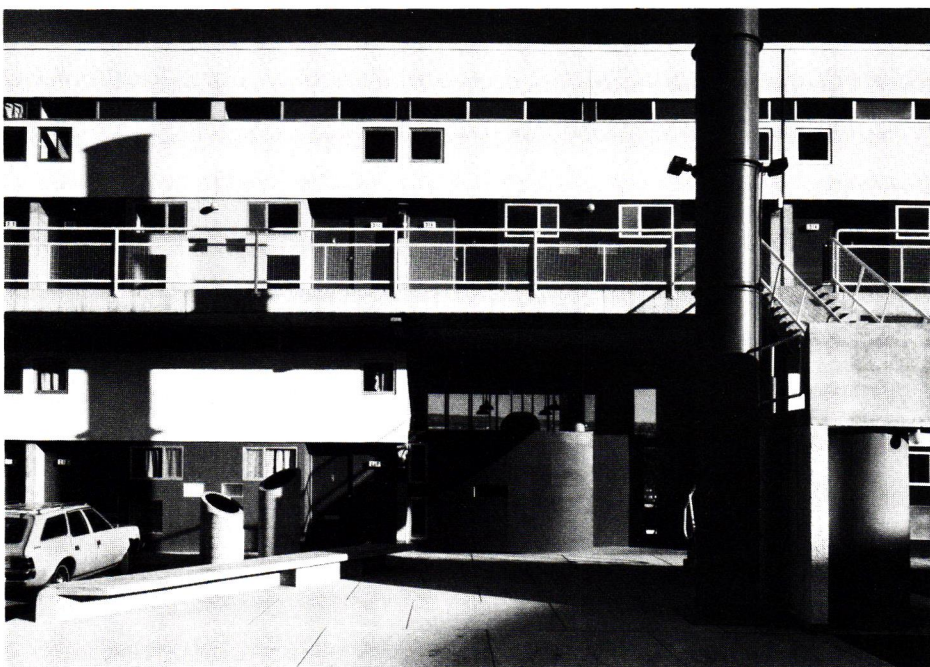


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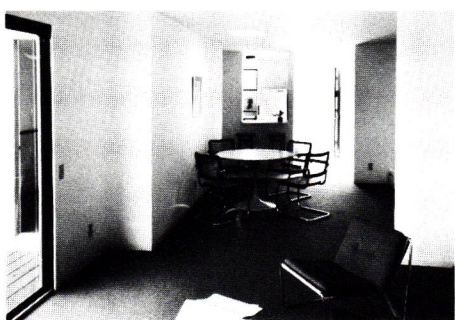
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Figure 22. Elm Street Housing, Ithaca, New York. Werner Seligmann and Associates, architects, 1971. Frontal view of medium-rise building showing gallery access.



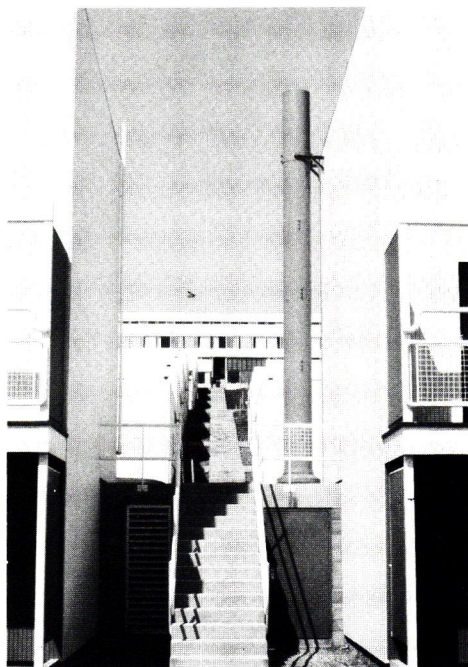
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Figure 24. View of living room, dining alcove and kitchen entry in atrium unit.



24.

Figure 25. Private outdoor terrace in atrium units.



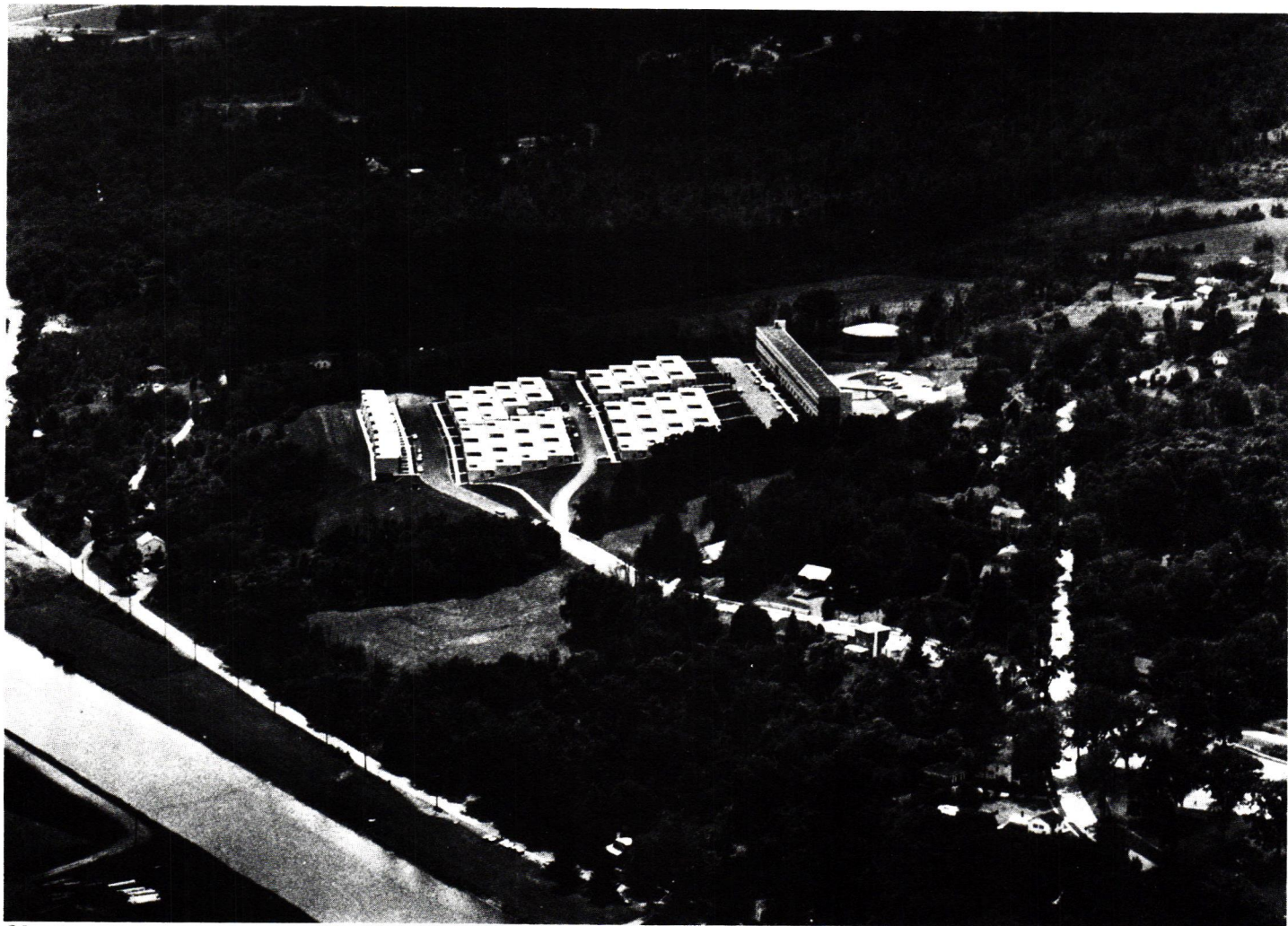
23.

Figure 23. Stepped pedestrian walkway between atrium units. Metal cylindrical flue from heating chamber is shown on right.

Figure 26. Aerial view of complex from the north.



25.



Note

- 16 1. David Morton, "Scattered Site Hill Town," *Progressive Architecture*, May, 1973, p. 71.

Figure Credits

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Figures 2-5,7-19,23,26. Courtesy Werner Seligmann and Associates, Architects.

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**Apropos Ulm:
Curriculum and Critical Theory**

Kenneth Frampton

The Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm, occupies an important place in the recent history of design—as Kenneth Frampton suggests—more for its contribution to the raising of critical consciousness in the role of design in contemporary society than for its final products.

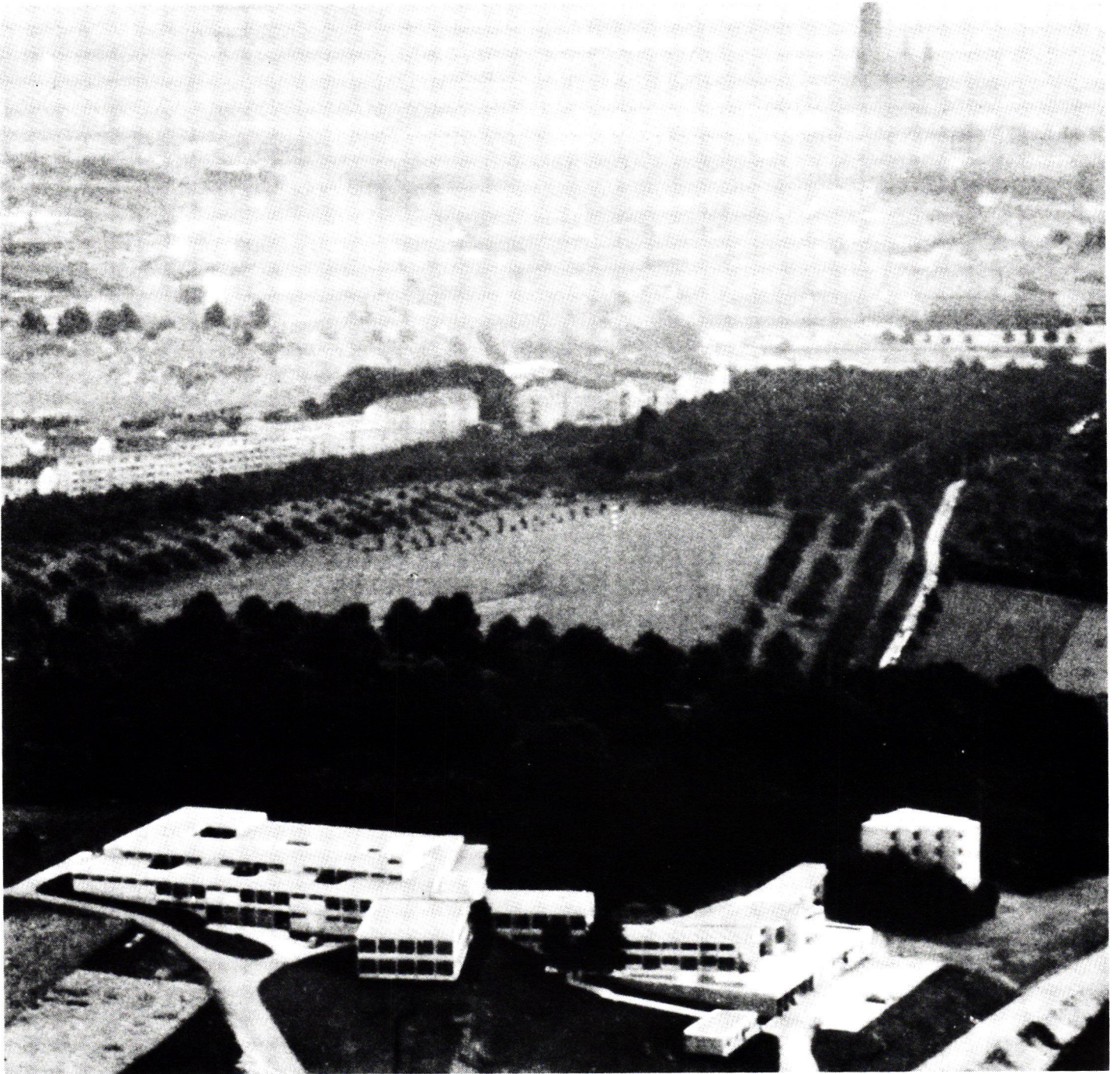
The analysis of the different systems of ideas elaborated during its existence becomes a central issue for a description of this particular aspect of the Ulm trajectory. The same applies to Tomás Maldonado's writings in that they show the displacement from the positivist ideology of the first years—of which a comparison with the Bauhaus becomes inevitable—to the critical approach of the last years.

Bonsiepe's and Schnaidt's contributions complement and provide a more complete understanding of the contradictions of the designer's situation when he consciously faces the social and political implications of his practice.

Kenneth Frampton was born in England in 1930. He is a Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York, and Associate Professor at Columbia University. From 1959 to 1965 he was an associate of Douglas Stephen and Partners, London. From 1962 to 1965 he was technical editor of the magazine *Architectural Design* and from 1966 until 1972 he was a member of the faculty of Princeton University. In the spring of 1973 he was a Loeb Fellow at the Graduate School of Design,

Harvard University. He has worked as an architect in England, Israel and the United States and he has recently collaborated in the design of a low-rise housing prototype for the New York State Urban Development Corporation. A developed version of this prototype is now under construction in Brooklyn, New York.

An earlier version of this paper was read at the annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians on 5 April 1974 in New Orleans.



The technical rationalism advocated whole-heartedly by the HfG constituted a progressive element particularly during the earlier years of its existence. Previously opposed, it has now gained acceptance everywhere. The socio-political factor associated with this rationalism is, however, less welcome; for it cannot be fitted snugly into the productive and reproductive process of society. Industrial societies need intelligence to remain alive. One brand of intelligence is favoured. Instrumental intelligence is taken into service but critical intelligence is desired to a lesser degree or not at all.

Gui Bonsiepe
Ulm 21
1968

The fundamental thing in judging the work of a bourgeois intellectual is not to determine whether it includes reactionary elements or not; rather one must ascertain whether these elements constitute a universe in expansion or in contraction. In my intellectual work, there is a constant attempt to reduce the reactionary components that could "invade" the theory it formulates.

Tomás Maldonado
Quoted in Roberto Segre's review of
Design, Nature and Revolution by Tomás Maldonado
Arquitectura Cuba 34
1973

Introduction

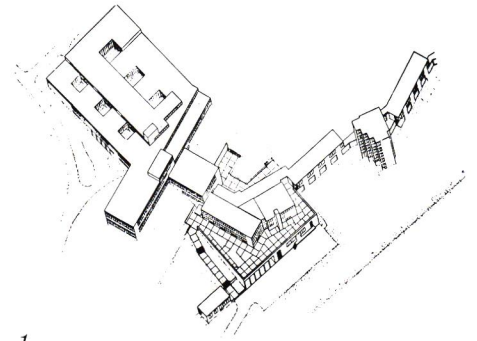
There is little doubt but that the Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm, has been the most significant school of design to come into existence since the end of World War II, not so much for what it achieved in terms of actual production, nor for the large number of designers it effectively educated, but finally for the extraordinary high level of critical consciousness that it managed to sustain in its daily work. In many respects the Hochschule was a pioneer, not only for its evolution of design methods and for the quality of the designs (fig. 2) it achieved with these methods, but also for the crisis of identity it suffered as a consequence of its dialectical rationality. The questions that the Hochschule began to ask, a decade ago, are now being asked, consciously or unconsciously, by every design and architecture school throughout the country, and the crisis of identity that befell the Hochschule has now become a universal malaise. For over the past ten years it has become increasingly clear that certain lines of rational inquiry lead very promptly to an abyss where the relation between the design product and the society becomes extremely problematic; or put in other terms, to a situation where the impossibility of an overall rational projection, under present circumstances, becomes clearly manifest.

Once design has reached this level of consciousness, it is inevitably confronted with a dilemma in which, in the broadest terms, it is usually faced with two choices. Either, as in the case of the famous Bertrand Russell paradox, it may choose to exclude a certain area of inquiry—a gesture which, although it sufficed to sustain mathematics, is difficult to maintain without rupture in the social world—or it may choose to continue to confront the immanent contradictions of the projection of rational human goals in relation to the dominant processes of the society. Should it choose the latter course, there is little doubt but that, as in the experience of the Hochschule, the liberal consensus of pluralism would be placed in jeopardy and relations with the establishment will become increasingly strained. This much is evident from the accounts of the development of the Hochschule given in the journal, *Ulm 1 to 21*, which have been the main source for the study that follows here. It is clear even from a most cursory reading of this publication that, contrary to popular myth,

20 there was never any monolithic position obtaining at the Hochschule, for the discourse that was carried on in its journal came into being solely through interchange of individual opinion. In this respect, by virtue of quoting extensively, I have largely let the protagonists speak for themselves, although, as always, the choice of text for excerption must inevitably support one interpretation rather than another.

In my treatment of the curriculum and the pedagogical method employed, I have only been able to outline the circumstances of a very complex development, partly because the material published in the journal is insufficient for an exhaustive analysis, and partly because this has not been my main intention. My aim has been to trace the evolution of the general ideology of the curriculum rather than to reveal the multiple vicissitudes of the teaching method, and in this, I should add, I have used throughout the term "ideology," in the non-pejorative sense, to mean, as in the Oxford English Dictionary, "a system of ideas concerning phenomena, especially those of social life . . ." I have also deliberately adopted the term "critical theory" to suggest that there was something more than just a casual connection between the critical consciousness of the Hochschule and the critical theory developed by the Frankfurt School of Social Research.

It is not generally realised that the Hochschule survived as an institution for a comparatively long time, at least as long as the Bauhaus, if one counts the terminal date for that institution as being 1932; and although the Hochschule was not as convoluted in its history as the Bauhaus, with its cryptic men of genius and enforced migrations, it nonetheless had its own complexity and richness, which only an archivist, with ample time and space at his disposal, will ever be able to master. Such a researcher would certainly have to meet as many of the survivors of the institution as possible, and this I have not even attempted. Thus many figures and incidents that no doubt featured prominently in the history of the school do not appear in this account, not only because of the limitations outlined above, but also because this was not my aim. In this context the extensive use of footnotes is meant as a primer for further research. In the light of that familiar and in many ways false opposition between "thinkers" and "doers," I have certainly placed the emphasis on the former,



1.

although it should be noted that all those quoted herein, with the exception of the philosopher Anatol Rapoport, not only taught regularly in the Hochschule, but also practiced as designers. The one exception to this last is the sociologist Abraham Moles who although he taught for quite some time at the Hochschule, never, of course, practiced as a designer.

Finally I have not attempted to deal with the complex of events leading up to the closure of the school, since, despite the fact this was surely the crystallization of the conflict with the establishment, it still largely remains the stuff of national, if not local, history, rather than the substance of the conceptual confrontation.

The Ideology of a Curriculum

In an indirect way, the Hochschule für Gestaltung was a product of the German resistance to the Nazi regime, for the Hochschule was created, in principle, in 1950 by the Geschwister-Scholl Foundation, in memory of two young members of the Scholl family, Hans and Sophie Scholl, who had been executed by the Nazis some seven years before. It was the purpose of the foundation to establish a school which would, in the words of the constitution, combine "as one entity, professional ability, cultural design and political responsibility."

According to Konrad Wachsmann, the Hochschule had its origins in a move on the part of the American High Commissioner for Germany, John J. McCloy, to sponsor, with considerable American aid, the foundation of a school of social research and political science as part of the American program for the postwar reconstruction of Germany.¹ It would seem that, if Wachsmann is correct, this initiative was officially channelled through the Geschwister-Scholl Foundation and that it was Max Bill who, on being commissioned to design the building (fig. 1), persuaded Inge Aicher Scholl, and presumably the American High Commission, to found not a school of politics, but a school of design. Nonetheless, a vestige of this initial political intent remained in the curriculum of the school, and this element contributed significantly to the shaping of its destiny.



Figure 1. Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm. Max Bill, architect, 1956. Axonometric.

Figure 2. Hotel stacking chinaware by Hans Roericht. HfG student diploma work, 1959. Prototype by Auftraggeber Porzellanfabrik Waldershof (Rosenthal AG).

2. Apart from this political legacy, the Hochschule was a conscious continuation of the German Applied Art School reform movement,² begun in the last decade of the nineteenth century, out of which the Bauhaus emerged in all its various incarnations. Even the name *Hochschule für Gestaltung* derives directly from the Bauhaus, since this was already a subtitle for the Dessau Bauhaus, before Walter Gropius's resignation in 1928.³ In any event the connection was made explicit in Max Bill's first public statement as the director of the Hochschule in 1953 wherein he wrote:

The founders of the Ulm School believe art to be the highest expression of human life and their aim is therefore to help in turning life into a work of art. In the words of that memorable challenge thrown down by Henry Van de Velde over 50 years ago, we mean "to wage war on ugliness," and ugliness can only be combatted with what is intrinsically good . . . "good" because at once seemly and practical. As the direct heir to Van de Velde's School at Weimar, the Dessau Bauhaus had set itself precisely the same objects. If we intend to go further at Ulm than they did at Dessau this is because post-war requirements clearly postulate the necessity for certain additions to the curriculum. For instance, we mean to give still greater prominence to the design of ordinary things in everyday use; to foster the widest possible development of town and regional planning; and to bring visual design up to the standard which the latest technical advances have not made possible. There will also be an entirely new department for the collection and dissemination of useful information.⁴

So much for Bill's rather idealistic, initial statement of intent. But was this formulation still the intent by 1955, at the time of the formal opening or by 1958 when the first issue of the Hochschule quarterly journal, *Ulm 1*, was published? There is a decided shift in both the language and the emphasis of this journal as we may clearly appreciate from the following opening statement.

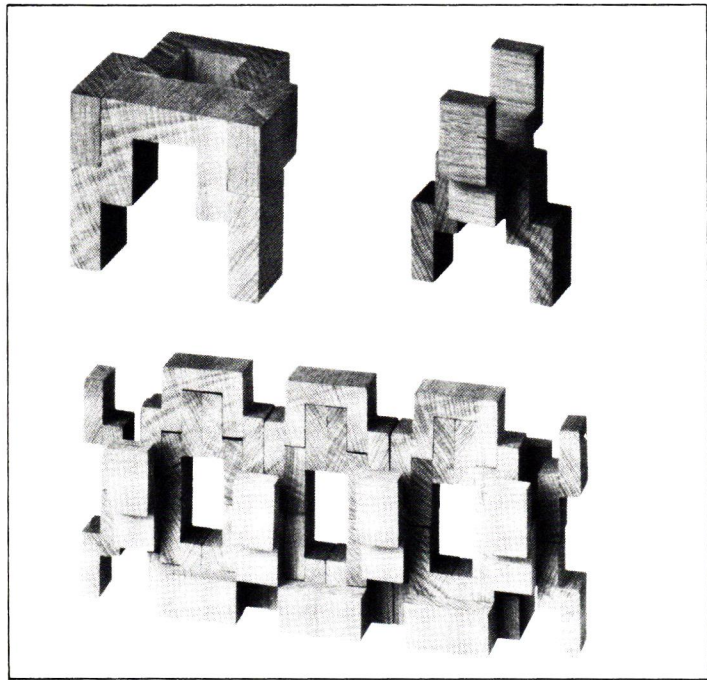
The Hochschule für Gestaltung educates specialists for two different tasks of our technical civilization: the design of industrial products (industrial design and building departments); the design of visual and verbal means of communication (visual communication and information departments) . . . The school thus educates designers for

the production and consumer goods industries as well as for present-day means of communication: press, films, broadcasting, television, and advertising. These designers must have at their disposal the technological and scientific knowledge necessary for collaboration in industry today. At the same time they must grasp and bear in mind the cultural and sociological consequences of their work.⁵

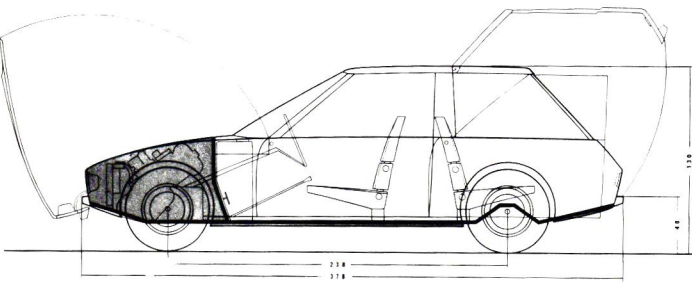
The resignation of Bill in 1956 and his replacement by a triumvirate found its reflection in these discreetly formulated goals from which any reference to city and regional planning had been eliminated. It also found reflection in the four year curriculum outline that followed, above all in the foundation course which was mandatory for all first year students. This course, which was established as a *Grundlehre* by the Argentinian painter/designer Tomás Maldonado,⁶ ostensibly comprised the following subjects: visual method, workshop practice, presentation methods, design methodology, sociology, perception theory, twentieth century cultural history and a remedial course in mathematics, physics and chemistry. Judging from the highly schematic exposition given in *Ulm 1*, this course attempted to place a distinct and unusual emphasis on mathematics; first, on the creative and manipulative use of mathematical constructs in pragmatic design training, and second, on mathematical logic as the conceptual basis of design method. At the same time, the sociological and cultural aspects of the course emphasized western superstructural transformations since the industrial revolution. One should note in passing that the workshop practice was markedly different from that of the Bauhaus; its emphasis being entirely away from any kind of craft production and towards the photo-reproduction of material and the making of prototypes. In fact, training was only given in wood (fig. 3), metal, plaster and photography.⁷

That there had been a major shift in orientation between Bill's brief tenure and the triumvirate rule of 1958 is also reflected in the curricula of the four departmental courses of industrial design (fig. 4), building (fig. 5), visual-communication (fig. 6), and information. If the heritage of the Bauhaus, initially acclaimed by Bill, still manifested itself in the recreation of a common foundation course and in the importance attached to some form of workshop practice, the

Figure 3. Basic design exercise in modular stacking elements. This problem encouraged students to work with formal systems rather than isolated forms.



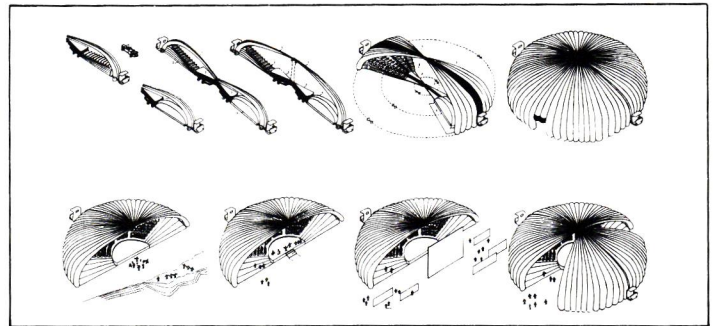
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Figure 4. Car body design by Pio Manzoni. Industrial Design Department, 1962-63. Rodolfo Bonetto's course in body design. This design attempted to make the best use of a limited interior space.

Figure 5. Mobile theater design by Willi Ramstein. Building Department, 1960-61. Teacher: Herbert Ohl.



5.

Figure 6. Title page for a newspaper by Gerd Zimmermann. Visual Communications Department, 1964-65. Teacher: H. W. Kapitzki.

Donau Zeitung

Donnerstag, 16. Mai 1965

10 Pf. — 20 Pf. — 40 Pf. — 60 Pf. — 80 Pf. — 1.00 — 1.20 — 1.40 — 1.60 — 1.80 — 2.00 — 2.20 — 2.40 — 2.60 — 2.80 — 3.00 — 3.20 — 3.40 — 3.60 — 3.80 — 4.00 — 4.20 — 4.40 — 4.60 — 4.80 — 5.00 — 5.20 — 5.40 — 5.60 — 5.80 — 6.00 — 6.20 — 6.40 — 6.60 — 6.80 — 7.00 — 7.20 — 7.40 — 7.60 — 7.80 — 8.00 — 8.20 — 8.40 — 8.60 — 8.80 — 9.00 — 9.20 — 9.40 — 9.60 — 9.80 — 10.00

Diplomatische Beziehungen zu Israel — Bruch mit Irak

Deutschland-Erklärung des Westens zurückhaltend

Koalition in Niedersachsen

Deutschland - England 0:1

Vietnam-Politik in Sackgasse

Kurz gemeldet:

Kommunique der Kompromisse

Mehr Rente für Kriegssopfer

Lüne 5:1 ist ein Meist

Berlin-Mitwochen

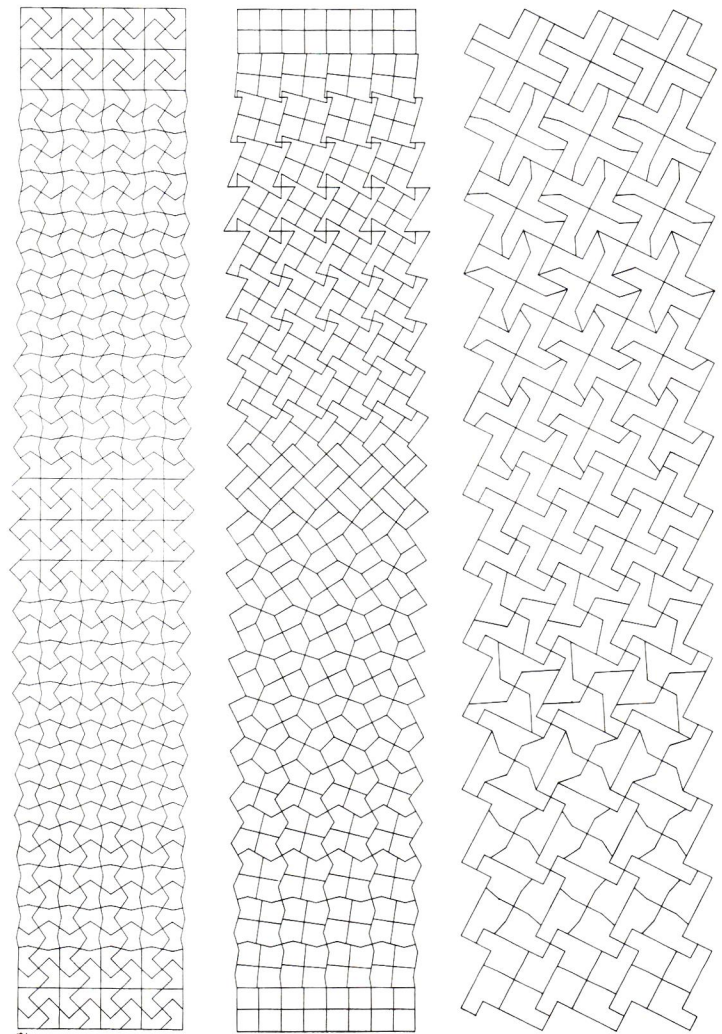
6.

Figure 7. Parquet deformation by
Richard Lane. Basic Design course,
1963. Teacher: William S. Huff.

departure from the Bauhaus tradition found clear expression in three sets of academic courses that were common to all four departments. First, in the return to *socio-cultural history*, a subject which had never been regarded as having any kind of validity within the millennial perspective of the Bauhaus; second, in a course known as *operational research*, comprising group theory, set theory, statistics, and linear programming; and finally in courses dealing with the theory and *epistemology of science*, branching out into behavior theory and the theory of machines.

Irrespective of the level initially attained in this ambitious program, there is no reason to doubt but that this curriculum served not only to structure the pedagogic program, but also to publicly proclaim the ideology of the school; and, lest there should be any doubt as to the changed nature of the school, this schematic statement of intent was followed in the same month by the second issue of the journal, *Ulm 2*, which was largely devoted to a transcript of Tomás Maldonado's address to the Brussels World's Fair, given in September 1958, under the title, "New Developments in Industry and the Training of the Designer." This, as far as I know, was Maldonado's first public declaration; the range and complexity of the argument warrants a brief analysis of its salient points, particularly as this discourse clearly exerted a major influence on the formation of school policy. In retrospect, one cannot see that either of the other members of the triumvirate—neither the graphic designer Otl Aicher, who in any event betrayed little taste for intellectual discourse at this time; nor the sociologist Hanno Kesting, whose critical sociological position could not have been very far removed from that of Maldonado, and whose studies into the nature of industrial society had been published in the previous year⁸—would have much cause for disagreement with Maldonado's position.

Given the inescapable, almost fatal orientation of the Hochschule towards an updating of the Bauhaus, the initial point of interest in Maldonado's 1958 address lies in his measured critique of that legendary institution, and in particular for the distance he took in placing this legend in its proper historical context. Thus, of its dependence on the Arts and Crafts heritage, Maldonado observed that:



7.

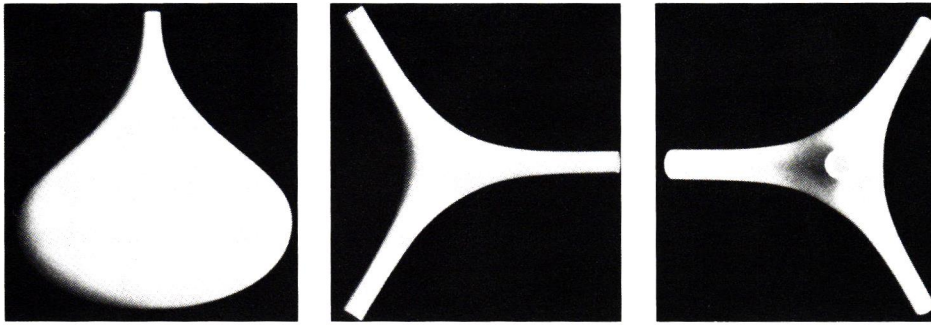


Figure 8. Street lighting by Peter Hofmeister, Thomas Mentzel and Werner Zemp. *Industrial Design Department, 1965-66. Teacher: Walter Zeischegg. An example of the impact of topological studies on formal design.*

24 8. The inaugural manifesto of the Bauhaus in 1919 at Weimar, announced—not without declamatory élan—the union of the arts and the crafts and their future integration in a higher entity: architecture. It is a typical “arts and crafts” manifesto, which Ruskin and Morris could have signed without contradicting themselves

While of its problematic influence, in the period that followed its demise, he argued, with unusual insight into the ambiguities of its achievement, that:

The American economic crisis of 1930 gave the day to styling—a new variation of industrial design whose influence has in fact extended up to the present day. The Bauhaus, its followers and its sympathizers, denounced from the start the commercial opportunism of styling, its indifference to artistic and cultural values. But the problem was no easy one: from time to time the stylists created products which could not but have been approved by the partisans of the Bauhaus. Stylists such as Henry Dreyfuss and Walter Dorwin Teague were sometimes damned, at other times, deified.⁹

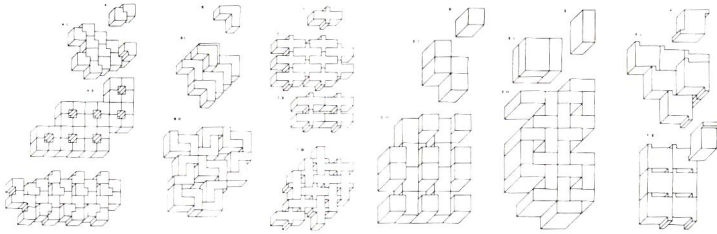
That American styling since the thirties had stolen much of the Bauhaus thunder and that, in any event, a good deal of Bauhaus and post-Bauhaus design could be regarded justly as some form of neo-academic formalism, that is, as the substitution of one aesthetic formula for another, was a position equally shared at that time by both Maldonado and Reyner Banham. At the same time, Maldonado could not accept Banham’s acclaim of fifties’ industrial styling as the manifestation of legitimate folk culture. In refutation of such “consensus” populism he stated: “I am not convinced that the aerodynamic fantasies of vice-president Virgil Exner, responsible for the design of Chrysler automobiles, coincides with the artistic needs of the man in the street.”¹⁰ Maldonado was to dismiss as irrelevant, Banham’s analogous characterization of the difference between elite design and pop art, as a distinction between “rare” and “wild” flowers, arguing that:

Neo-academism is a right wing aestheticism, an aesthetic for but a few people, “rare flowers”; styling is a left wing aestheticism, an aesthetic for many people, “wild flowers.” The metaphor is doubtless pleasing, but I hold that the new tasks of the designer will have nothing to do with ar-

tistic horticulture, be it from the left or from the right The aesthetic factor merely constitutes one factor among others with which the designer can operate, but it is neither the principal nor the predominant one. The productive, constructive, economic factors—perhaps, too, the symbolic factors—also exist. Industrial design is not an art nor is the designer necessarily an artist. The majority of objects exhibited in the museums, and in the exhibitions of “good design,” are anonymous and often executed in technical offices by subordinate employees who never imagined they were producing art.¹¹

Maldonado followed this dismissal of liberal populism with an equally critical rejection of radical idealism as represented by Gregor Paulson’s position on styling of some ten years previous. Paulson had argued that the proper task for the industrial designer was one whereby the aesthetic factor becomes integrated into the *use value* of the product, rather than being assimilated by virtue of the function of style in the marketing process, into the *exchange value* of the product. Maldonado’s refusal to be persuaded either by liberalism or by this latter-day *neue Sachlichkeit*¹² formula gave him the opportunity to pose the interrelated issues of his later criticism: firstly, under what circumstances will industrial production be capable of freeing itself from the rhetorical demands of neo-kitsch marketing? and secondly, how may we rationally determine the phenomenon of consumption in relation to need? In 1958 he was to state: “Neither the psychoanalysts nor the professional critics of our civilization can give us a comprehensive explanation of all the phenomena of the world of consumption. The Marxists themselves do not succeed. One of them, the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, recently wrote: ‘By the side of the scientific study of the productive relations which effect political economy, there is . . . room for a concrete study of appropriation: for a theory of needs.’”¹³

Aside from these complex issues turning on the nature of industrial production and consumption, Maldonado praised the progressive aspects of the Bauhaus for its commitment to the “learning through doing” approach of Hildebrandt, Kerchensteiner, Montessori and Dewey, and for its pragmatic opposition to the verbal emphasis of the humanist tra-



9.

dition. Nevertheless, it was clear that this particular pedagogical approach had now outlived its usefulness and that a new philosophy of *praxis* was needed. To this end, Maldonado proposed scientific operationalism, of which he remarked, “. . . it is no longer a question . . . of knowledge, but of operational, manipulatable knowledge.”¹⁴

By “operationalism” Maldonado seems to have been referring to that philosophical system developed in the early fifties by Anatol Rapoport and published by him, in 1953, under the title *Operational Philosophy*. Given the persistence of the Bauhaus heritage, it is hardly surprising to find that Rapoport’s philosophy was really a methodological updating of John Dewey’s pragmatic-instrumentalism. The appeal of Rapoport’s method lay in his attempt to provide a precise system for the evaluation of alternative courses of action. It is a measure of his discretion that, despite his dependence on mathematical logic, Rapoport was at pains to distinguish both his and Dewey’s system from that of the logical positivists, with their belief that philosophy should become a purely analytic discipline, akin to mathematics. Instead, Rapoport thought of his operationalism as being a *synthetic* action-oriented discipline. In 1953 he wrote that operationalism “. . . is the philosophy of action-directed goals. It starts with logical analysis but transcends it by relating this analysis to society.”¹⁵ At the time this seems to have been relatively close to Maldonado’s own notion of scientific operationalism, of which he has since written: “By scientific operationalism I intended then a model of action oriented towards overcoming the dichotomy between theory and practice. Later on, following Kotarbinski, I preferred to call it ‘praxiology’—and even more recently, the ‘philosophy of praxis,’ as seen in Gramsci.”¹⁶

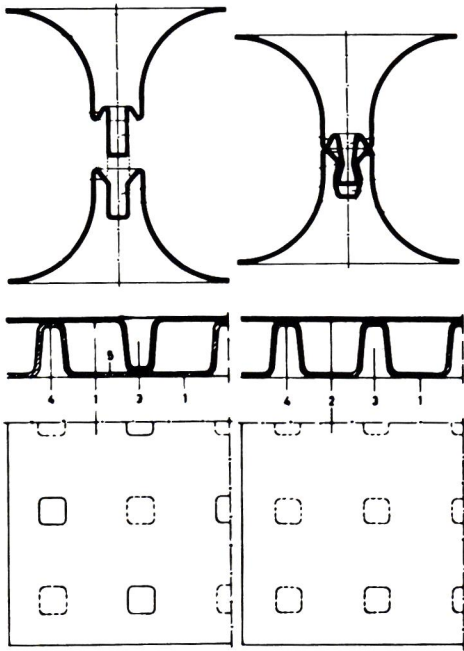
Rejecting its Arts and Crafts origins and ever conscious of the perspectives of Marxist analysis, the Hochschule, bound to the service of neo-capitalism, had little choice in the fifties but to look beyond the limits of these traditions for a mediatory ideology from which to develop not only a satisfactory heuristic method, but also a theory of design. A theoretical basis seems to have been proffered by Rapoport’s operationalism, save for its incapacity to deal in an adequate manner with the intrinsic significance of form itself. For this

Figure 9. Volume configurations made from three or four student elements by Michel Ruffieux. Building Department, 1966-67. Basic design course by Gunter Schmitz.

the Hochschule seems to have turned first to Max Bense, whose communications approach to the determination of aesthetic need was first outlined in his book *Aesthetica*, published in 1954;¹⁷ and then to the writings of Charles Morris, whose first semiotic works had appeared in the Unified Science publications of the late thirties.¹⁸ *Operation* and *communication*, these are the two “poles” that are to play major roles in the evolution of Hochschule theory.

One cannot complete an outline of the ideology of the Hochschule without some reference to its teaching methodology. It is evident that with the change in the directorship in 1957, the school began to take a more rigorous approach to the problem of both design and design training. That is to say, it encouraged a logical approach to the organization and generation of basic form, with the intent of applying such procedures to actual design problems. These operations varied from simple projections to three dimensional transformations, from matrices to the manipulations of lattices, from the progressive deformation of regular grids to the rotation of ellipses centered on such grids, (fig. 7) from the application of graph theory to topological studies, from exercises in solid geometry (fig. 8) to the development of three-dimensional modular components which were capable of being combined in alternative sequences (fig. 9). Where in the visual communications department these exercises were often decisive in determining the general approach to an informational problem, such as the design of a subway map, (fig. 10, 11) in the building department a modular method was invariably adopted as a way to approach a variety of problems, from the design of a diaphragm (fig. 12) for a building panel to the combinatorial range of a set of prefabricated elements (fig. 13).

But the pursuit of a mathematical methodology did not restrict itself to this rational, yet free manipulation of formal propositions. In the field of design programming, where initial criteria and alternative solutions have first to be established and evaluated, the rigor rapidly developed into a form of heuristic determinism and into a logical positivism of design that would often be tempted to forego a solution rather than arrive at a synthesis that could not be entirely determined algorithmically. In these instances, design method

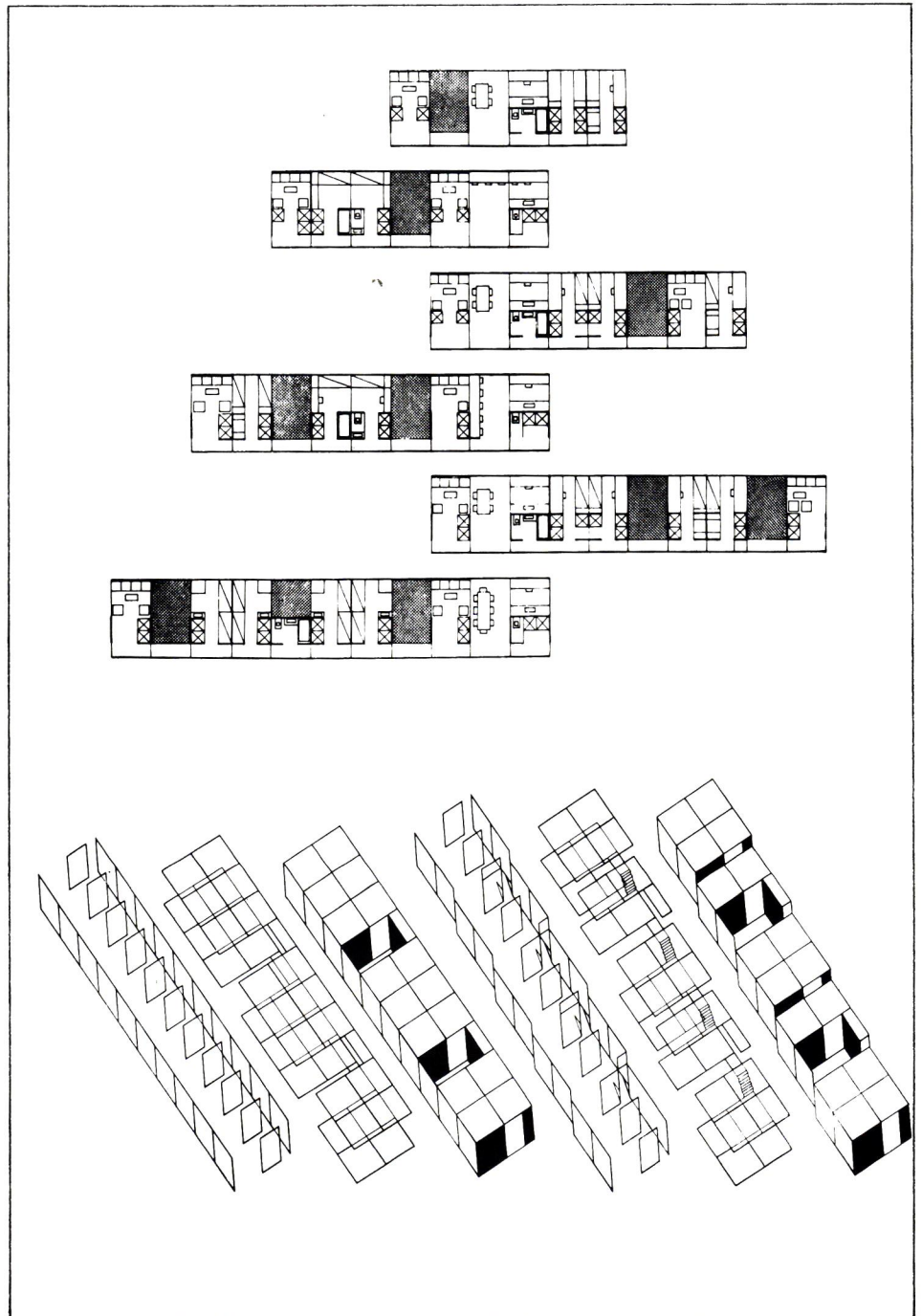


12.

Figures 10, 11. Redesign of a metro map. Visual Communications Department, basic design exercise using the visual restructuring of raw information through the use of regular lattices. Fig. 10 shows an abstraction of the existing map, Fig. 11, its gridded reordering. This exercise, typical of the positivistic design method of the late fifties, was accompanied by a caption

indicating that the teacher, Anthony Froshaug, had reservations as to the semantic efficacy of the adopted method.

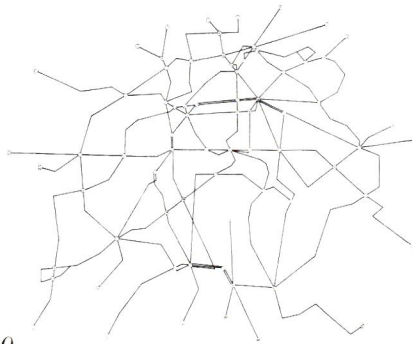
Figure 12. Sandwich panel research for Farbwerke Hoechst AG, under Herbert Ohl's direction. This example is built out of two interlocking plastic sheets. Variations of building elements



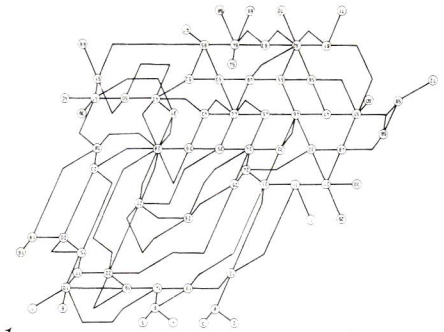
13.

are achieved by varying the external finish.

Figure 13. Courtyard strip housing designed under Herbert Ohl's direction. Building Department, 1961. Structural assembly of elements in various groupings.



10.



11.

rapidly degenerated into that which Maldonado has since characterized as “method-idolatry.”¹⁹ That Maldonado’s own attitude to the positivistic approach was at first somewhat ambivalent seems to be reflected in the endless controversies that arose inside the Hochschule during the early sixties, which amounted to a long drawn out confrontation between the pragmatic designers on the one side; epitomized in such brilliant figures as the late Hans Gugelot (fig. 14), and the methodologists on the other; the most extreme faction, according to Maldonado, being led by a guest professor at the Hochschule, the Swiss political economist and art historian, Lucius Burekhardt.

Although little mention of this conflict emerged in the quarterly journal, it is quite clear that it nonetheless took place. This much is evident from Gunter Schmitz’s paper on the Hochschule, read before the AIA/ACSA Teachers’ Seminar of 1968, wherein he stated:

From 1960 to 1962 a controversy over the evaluation of the theoretical courses in relation to practical design work engaged the school. At the base of this lay the question of the exact role that analytical methods should play in the design process. The tendency towards an objectification of creative activities had nourished the dangerous yearning for a methodology which would automatically lead to original and perfect results.²⁰

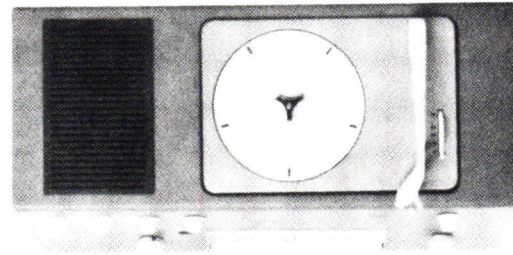
Schmitz then went on to briefly characterize the development of design teaching and practice within the school, from the beginning of Otl Aicher’s directorship to its closure in 1968.

Since 1962 the Hochschule has tried to balance the results and methods of the different scientific disciplines with the practical requirements of the design process, or, to put it another way, the Hochschule tries to avoid a mere accumulation of theoretical courses indigestible to the student. The concept since that time has involved an accentuation of the instrumental character of theory and the performance of practical design work on an experimental basis. As a consequence the number of general theoretical courses is reduced in favor of lectures which are more directly connected with design problems. On the other side the design problems stimulate prospective investigations,

where theory plays an important role.²¹

An idea of the Hochschule curriculum and educational policy at the time of its stability, so to speak, that is, just prior to its enforced closure in February 1968, may be best gained from the tables that Schmitz made available to the Montreal seminar, wherein the number of hours spent in various subjects and tasks during a four-year course in the building department was made quite explicit. Since this breakdown reveals the pedagogical emphasis in its prime, it seems fitting here to make a brief summation of the academic balance achieved at the Hochschule prior to its closure. By then it should be noted that the foundation course, or *Grundlehre*, had been discontinued, after Maldonado had been appointed as head of the industrial design department with the reorganization of 1962. After this year, students were channelled into one of three departments from the very beginning; that is, from the first year they entered directly into their chosen speciality, be it *building*, *product design* or *visual communication*. The department of information had been eliminated in Aicher’s reorganization. A certain communality of approach was now assured by common theoretical courses taken primarily over the first two years by students of all three departments. Very roughly speaking, for a student of industrialized building (fig. 15) (and it needs to be emphasized that this was the sole orientation under Herbert Ohl), the breakdown would have been as follows: in the first year, some 45 percent of his time would have been spent in basic design, some 20 percent in theoretical lectures and some 35 percent in technical courses—15 percent of the latter being devoted to workshop practice. In the second year, some 65 percent would go to studio work with some 23 percent going to technical courses other than workshop, while the remaining 12 percent would be spent in theoretical lectures. During the third and fourth years studio work occupied nearly 70 percent of the time available, the remainder being devoted to technical courses other than the workshop. From this we can see that workshop training was over by the end of the first year, and theory was largely covered by the end of the second.

It is clear from this that the highly ambitious educational program projected in *Ulm 1* in 1958 had been heavily trimmed in the Aicher reorganization of 1962, yet something of



14.

the unusual initial orientation remained in the curtailed curriculum, for all that, the term and even the topic "operational research" had been discreetly dropped. Thus we find the first year theory courses, taken by students of all three departments, with roughly 27 percent of their time devoted to mathematical techniques applicable to design, some 37 percent of their time to sociology, economics, political economy, psychology and ergonomics, and the remainder of their time to a very brief survey of twentieth-century cultural history, including architecture, industrial design, film, literature, painting, music and visual communication. In other words, the mathematical, political and socio-cultural emphases of 1958 remained largely intact, although by the end of the first year, cultural history was abruptly concluded, with the remainder of the courses then being broadly divided between systems theory on the one hand and political economy on the other.

Whether it was economically enforced from without or ideologically determined from within, this curtailment of the course work seems to have been indicative of some kind of theoretical containment within the school. This contraction of the program seems to have been accompanied by a loss of conviction in the efficacy of positivistic design methods, along with a good deal of skepticism as to the relevance of Rapoport's liberal pragmatism for the solution of socio-cultural problems. Whatever the repercussions of Aicher's reorganization, there was a discernible shift in the nature of the discourse appearing in the journal thereafter, a shift which seems to have reflected a retrenchment on the part of the theoreticians to a more radical position. In any event, after 1962 any hope of reconciliation between the Hochschule and the promise of postwar neo-capitalism, decidedly began to fade.

The Development of a Critical Theory

Despite the reorientation of the school under Aicher's stewardship, the socio-cultural criticism emanating from the Hochschule continued to grow over the next five years, most particularly through the contribution of Maldonado, Gui Bonsiepe and Claude Schnaidt. These three happened to announce their common critical attitude in the review section of

| SCHOOL OF DESIGN, ULM, GERMANY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING Courses 1967/68 | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|------|
| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 2 | Year 4 | Total | |
| Exclusive Courses of the Dept. of Building: | | | | | | |
| Basic Elements of Design (studio work) | 492 | | | | | |
| Studies in Industrialized Building (studio work) | | 672 | | | | |
| Research and Development in Industrialized Building (studio work) | | | 854 | 660 | 2672 | |
| Model, Presentation Techniques - Metal, wood, plaster, plastics, photo, type (shop work) | 160 | | | | 160 | |
| Analytical Presentation Methods | 44 | | | | 44 | |
| Constructive Geometry | 56 | | | | 56 | |
| Modular Co-ordination | (30) | (30) | | | 30 | |
| Technical Detailing (materials, construction, production) | 112 | 112 | 120 | 80 | 424 | |
| Structures 1, 2 | 56 | 56 | | | 112 | |
| Technical Physics | | 52 | | | 52 | |
| Mechanical Equipment | 24 | | | | 24 | |
| Economy of Building | | | 108 | 40 | 148 | |
| Management | | | 20 | 20 | 40 | |
| Organization of Building Processes | | | 16 | 16 | 32 | |
| History of Industrialized Building | | | 16 | 16 | 32 | |
| Elements of Urbanism | | | 22 | 16 | 38 | |
| Simultaneous Courses for all three Departments: | | | | | | |
| Mathematical Techniques for Design | 56 | | | | 56 | |
| Cybernetics and Theory of Systems | | 56 | | | 56 | |
| Programming Techniques | | | 28 | | 28 | |
| Sociology 1, (2) | 8 | (72) | (72) | | 80 | |
| Socio-Dynamics of Culture | | 28 | | | 28 | |
| Economics | 18 | | | | 18 | |
| Political Economy | 24 | 24 | 24 | | 72 | |
| Psychology 1 | 28 | | | | 28 | |
| Ergonomics (optional) | 8 | 8 | | | 16 | |
| Cultural History of the 20th Century (architecture, indus- trial design, film, literature, painting, music, visual commu- nication) | 60 | | | | 60 | |
| HOURS PER YEAR | TOTAL | 1152 | 1104 | 1228 | 848 | 4332 |
| This table gives a quantified overview of all courses (studio work, shopwork, lectures, and seminar) of the Dept. of Building. The numbers indicate the actual hours reserved for the course during the current year. Two courses have become bi-annual ones. Their values are shown in parentheses. | | | | | | |

Figure 14. *Hi-Fi set* by Hans Gugelot and Herbert Lindinger, 1957. Production by Max Braun, Frankfurt-am-Main.

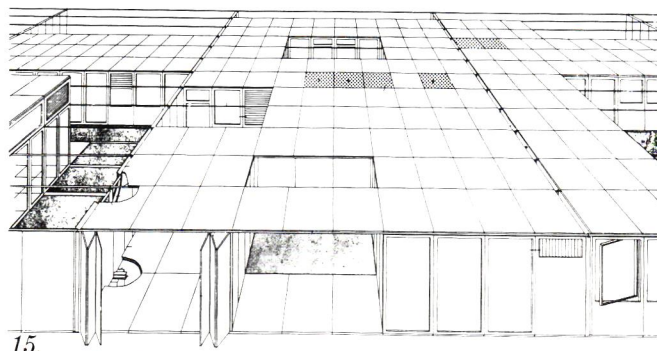
Figure 15. *Experimental flexible houses system with a tensile roof structure* by Willi Ramstein, 1963. Scholarship entry to the Swiss Federal Commission for Art.

Ulm 7, published in 1963, wherein their notes were respectively addressed first to a criticism of the intrusion of neo-Dada into the field of industrial design;²² second, to an appraisal of Leonardo Benevolo's *History of Modern Architecture*;²³ and finally to a review of Georg Klaus's critique of Norbert Wiener's information theory, which had then just appeared in Klaus's book *Cybernetics in the Light of Philosophy*. The aim of the Klaus study was to refute the Wiener reduction of information to a mere quantifiable assessment of its relative density and predictability. Rejecting the implicit Wiener split of *sign* from *import* and his classification of information as a mere quantum, akin to energy, Klaus argued that "All information must rather have a definite meaning, must be a carrier of some significance."²⁴

This apparently banal but nonetheless antipositivist statement had of course been the basic assumption behind the Maldonado seminars in semiotics, given as a regular course in the Hochschule from 1957 to 1960, the first fruits of which were the Maldonado essay "Communication and Semiotics" that appeared in *Ulm 5* in 1959, and the Bonsiepe unpublished text "Über formale und informale Sprachanalyse: Carnap und Ryle" that was written in 1960.²⁵ Strangely enough the only adequate publication of the work of these seminars did not appear in the journal, *Ulm*, but in a little-known publication entitled *Uppercase*, edited by Theo Crosby. Thus, *Uppercase 5* of 1963, dedicated in the main to work of the Hochschule, featured texts by Maldonado and Bonsiepe, a design case study by Walter Muller (fig. 16) and a semiotic glossary (fig. 17).²⁶

In retrospect the most significant aspect of this whole publication was the distance it implicitly took from a positivistic design approach and the corresponding stress it placed on form as a necessary communicative element. In his "Notes on Communication" Maldonado refused the positivistic split of operation from communication in a text that is remarkable for its perception of *function* as being an integral part of *culture* and vice versa.

Fallen or existing civilizations document themselves primarily by their material products, i.e., by the objects which they create and which under appropriate conditions succeed in surviving. The ethnologists and anthropologists



15.

usually classify these products in the following manner:

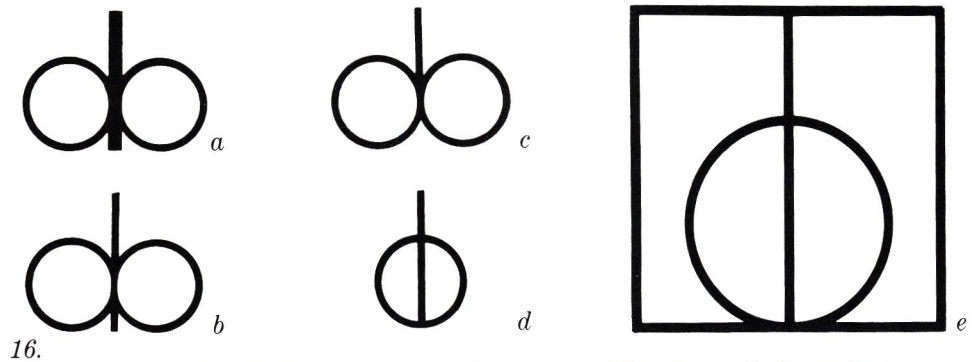
- 1) those which man has created with the aim to extend, strengthen or to consolidate his physical power over nature;
- 2) those which man has created with the aim of communicating with other men.

The first ones are called artifacts, i.e., objects made by man, as distinguished from natural objects (artifacts, e.g., tools, utensils, apparatus, machines, etc.), the second ones are signs or sign structures (e.g., pictographic inscriptions, writings, emblems, musical scores, traffic signs, publications and prints of any kind, discs, photographs, films, etc.). The classification of the products of a culture—operative world of the artifacts and communicative world of the signs—becomes less and less convincing. In reality, all these products of a culture belong to one common system. The artifacts are operable in the extension—and only in the extension, that they are capable of communicating a definite meaning unit to the operator; the signs of their part, are communicative in the extension—and only in the extension, that they can directly or indirectly influence a behaviour in an operative way.²⁷

Maldonado extended this argument to embrace the field of ergonomics and in particular the province of machine design, where the *operative* and *communicative* aspects become dramatically intermeshed and where the critical "man-machine" relationship of advanced industrialization acquires an undeniably concrete dimension. In this respect, the advanced ergonomic theories of Chapanis, Fitts and Taylor²⁸ were welcomed by Maldonado for the stress they placed on the redesign of the machine and for their mutual intent to resolve the "man-machine" couple in such a way as to liberate man as much as possible from the tyranny of the machine.

This measured critique was extended in the Maldonado/Bonsiepe essay, "Science and Design" that appeared in 1964, in *Ulm 10/11*. Broadly speaking, this paper was an attack on the simplistic borrowing of design methods from the field of "human engineering," beginning with a critique of the established methods of experimental psychology for their untenable lineality of approach and going on to upbraid that aspect

Figure 16. Evolution of trademark for Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft by Walter Muller. The design's five stages are (a) closing up of the initial lowercase letters, (b) the amalgamation of the common bar element, (c) and (d) simplification of Gestalt and (e) completion of the figure to make a closed Gestalt capable of being read against complex fields.



30 of ergonomics which grounded itself in a servomechanical model of the human being—a schema whereby the complexity of man becomes reduced (usually under conditions of *extremis*) to the so-called H-factor (fig. 18). The authors concluded their survey of heuristic methods, derived from the margins of applied science, with a highly skeptical appraisal of the procedures of market and motivational research and for the propensity of such research to convert “undifferentiated needs into definite demands.” The concluding paragraphs of “Science and Design” convey the irony of their attack. Referring to the categories used in motivational research they argued that:

The latter hardly appears convincing when one calls to mind that the clients of both market and motivational research are, in all cases, the very interest groups who influence on a large scale—on a far larger scale than psychological categories—the taste, wants and even dreams of the consumers. The motivational researcher sometimes reminds us of a detective with a two-sided commission: to seduce the wife on the one hand and to find out who is her lover on the other. To produce the motives and at the same time to find out what they are . . . [the authors conclude] In our society neither the world of merchandise can be easily penetrated nor, in many cases, can product design which influences this world of merchandise. Despite all these unfavorable circumstances one thing emerges: in the future, the function of the product designer should not consist of designing products according to an outlined demand, as is still the custom in our free economy. Rather, the product designer should be the one who contributes to the creation of demand; otherwise he will be able to play only a subordinate role and preserve the existing products with only superficial modification. The product designer should not consider his function to keep quiet but to promote disquiet.²⁹

Maldonado and Bonsiepe clearly felt they had no choice but to promote disquiet, not for its own sake, since there is little enough anarchy in their thought, but as a direct consequence of their analysis. While simultaneously practicing and teaching industrial design, they could not fail to become aware of the overall predicament of the designer in a neo-capitalist economy. Unlike the Pre-Raphaelites or the artists of the

Weimar Bauhaus, they were neither romantic iconoclasts nor Spenglerian critics of science. On the contrary, they sought, in accordance with the initial orientation of the Hochschule, to come to terms with the realities of industrial production and distribution. But it was precisely this determination to comprehend reality that led them into the uncomfortable lucidity of their analyses. In collaboration with their colleague in the building department, Claude Schnaidt, they saw all too clearly the present highly problematic situation of the architect and the industrial designer.

Maldonado's own views on the teaching and practice of industrial design have never perhaps been more clearly articulated than in the article he wrote (presumably late in 1963) for the education volume of Gyorgy Kepes's *Vision and Value*. In this text Maldonado defined the metier of industrial design in the following terms: “Industrial design is an activity whose ultimate aim is to determine the formal properties of the objects produced by industry. By ‘formal properties’ is not meant the external features, but rather those structural and functional relations which convert an object into a coherent unity from the point of view of both the producer and the user.”³⁰

This definition, which was and still is distinguished by its precise qualification of the term “formal” and by its insistence on the need to satisfy the user as well as the producer, appeared as the fulcrum of Maldonado's argument which, while it exposed the commercial limitations of industrial design in a competitive society, could not bring itself to condone the pathetic mimicry of neo-capitalist products in non-competitive societies such as the Soviet Union. Disturbed by the complacent claims made for Soviet design by Yuri Soloviev, at the Aspen Design Conference of 1961, Maldonado wrote:

Curiously enough, the industrial designer in the Socialist countries is not fully conscious of the new possibilities that his economic and social system—at least in theory—offers to his profession. If this were not so, how can we explain that the frankly pathological manifestations of American and European industrial design are adopted by the Soviet designers as models worthy of imitation and perfection? One does not expect from the Soviet designers the imitation of our weaknesses, but rather the full exploitation of

their own, specific possibilities. One expects them to tackle problems we are not allowed to tackle. For instance, technical products themselves require an urgent revision as far as their structural and functional properties are concerned, but in the framework of our competitive society, initiative in this direction cannot be imagined, because the main activity of our society is to merchandise these products The designers of a non-competitive society are in a favourable position for attacking this new kind of task, but until now not very much has happened. One can only hope that this cannot be traced to the same reason which in the past caused Soviet architects and urbanists to commit such mistakes as maintaining naïve confidence in a tradition in which no one any longer believes.³¹

Thereafter, in the same text, Maldonado added to his definition of industrial design the rider that its interpretation and application would be differentiated according to the following variables: “. . . (1) the social and economic context, i.e., whether the profession is exercised in a competitive or non-competitive society; (2) the degree of the structural and functional complexity of the objects to be designed; (3) the degree of dependence of the particular object to be designed on the traditions of craft and the traditions of taste.”³²

For Maldonado, *design* in general, after a dialectical overcoming of both the “degeneracies” of admass populism and the paradoxical “alienations” of bureaucratic socialism, has to be returned to a strict distinction in practice between puristic formalism on the one hand and formal order in its broadest sense on the other. In the last analysis, for Maldonado, this distinction can only be made in the context of preserving human values, an issue with which the second half of the twentieth century has yet to come to terms. Given the economic and highly abstract imperatives of our present society, this is understandable, since the reintegration of such values ultimately presupposes a dialectical definition of “needs” which would have to transcend, without excluding them, the primary demands of production and use. Such a definition would have to assimilate these basic criteria into a perspective that takes cognizance of the fundamental limitations of human life—*eros* and *thanatos*, hedonism and mortality.

The position taken by Schnaidt and Maldonado with regard to the particular predicament of architecture, as it was then being practiced and taught in the sixties, remains remarkably timely. Their views, now almost ten years old and strongly influenced by the conditions of the time, retain nonetheless a certain general validity that makes them as applicable today as when they were first written. In fact, in a decade, little has changed except that the opportunities for the architect to make a significant contribution to the society are possibly even more limited now than they were in the early sixties.

In his essay “Prefabricated Hope” that appeared in *Ulm 10/11*, Schnaidt attempted a comprehensive analysis of the failure of industrialized building. Schnaidt then argued the by-now-familiar sterility of treating this prospect from a purely technical standpoint. He wrote:

It is difficult to apply profitably industrial production-methods in the building of housing estates containing less than 500 dwellings. Given the current density of population, 500 dwellings require at least 2.5 hectares of land To create such sites one must acquire many small lots, paying the owners a surplus value estimated according to the expected value of the lot after main supplies and sewerage pipes have been laid. This is where speculation is let loose. The sale and resale of building sites to the profit of the few is a curse which is becoming increasingly ruinous to the community. On the outskirts of numerous major European cities, the price of real estate has increased ten-fold in the last ten years; in 1950, the ground rates represented about 10 percent of the selling price of a house; by 1960, it had risen to 45 percent. The reduction in the cost of housing which can be achieved by industrializing building seems ridiculously small in comparison with the increase caused by land-speculation [At the end of his text Schnaidt stated:] The future of the industrialization of building will depend on the solution found to all these problems. This is why it is erroneous, if not dishonest, to speak solely of technical matters when evoking decisions that affect this future. The choice is not, as they would have us believe, between so-called traditional building and prefabrication. It is between a disordered, slow and precarious development of technical progress in building as a whole and a

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Prosodic sign | Visual sign, which represents phonic properties of speech as length, accent and pause. E.g.: ? ! |
| Quasi-symbol | (→ symbol). |
| Receiver | Passive, i.e. sign receiving partner of a communication chain. |
| Reference | On molecular level: property of a sign or → sign aggregate, to emphasize certain aspects of a referent. Serves for the characterization of |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Semiosis | Process in which something is a sign for an organism. It is the research object of semiotics [44*]. |
| Semiotics | Science of signs. It is divided in → syntactics, → semantics, → pragmatics [44*]. |
| Sense | Reference on the molecular level. (→ reference). |
| Sign | A sign is always a sign 'for' something or 'of' something, which is at |

32 17. coherent, rapid and planned industrialization for the benefit of the community.³³

One need hardly add that this critique was, in many respects, an implicit attack on the work of the Hochschule building department in which Schnaidt himself functioned as a teacher. In a parallel criticism of architectural education given as the Lethaby Lecture at The Royal College of Art, in 1965, under the title: "The Emergent World: A Challenge to Architectural and Industrial Design Training," Maldonado was to argue that the up-grading of architectural school curricula had largely resulted in a shifting of the academic scenery, in which the fundamental pedagogical orientation had remained unchanged. A primary aspect of this apparent transformation had clearly been the universal adoption of basic design courses, along the lines of the Bauhaus, while the most common secondary change, largely unrelated to the first, had been the wholesale acceptance of modern architecture. Of this Maldonado remarked, "On the altar where Palladio was worshipped, Wright, Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Fuller, Louis Kahn or Kenzo Tange are now being honoured. The idols have changed but not the doctrines."³⁴ Yet for Maldonado not even those schools which had attempted to restructure their curricula along scientific lines were entirely free from criticism, for he could see all too clearly, after his own experiences at the Hochschule, how a naïve worship of scientific method could lead to designs, even more abstracted than before, from any legitimate form of socio-cultural reality.

It would seem that by 1966 the "critical theory" of the Hochschule had already reached the threshold of disputing by implication the viability of design schools *per se*, and there is little reason to doubt but that Otl Aicher's essay "Planning All Awry?" which appeared in *Ulm 17/18* of that year, was nothing but an oblique attempt to counter the auto-criticism of his "left wing" faculty; Aicher urging all designers, not only planners, to accommodate themselves to the power constraints of neo-capitalism. It is interesting to note that the antimonumentalism of his position would have been shared by Schnaidt, but not the ultimately apolitical, mystifying scientism of his conclusions wherein Aicher stated:

Viewed in this way, conventional architects still form the professional category which is best suited to satisfying the

demands of a planner. Only the days are past when the proximity of art shed some of the glory of genius on the architectural profession. The specific skills of the architect are today just adequate to enable him to elicit from the *facts assembled by science* a tangible plan tailored to *political objectives* [my italics], and then he must again leave it to the politicians to make the final decision as to its implementation. The planner loses nothing by recognizing in the development director a figure of political power who is set above him as regards both the definition of objectives and the assessment of feasibility. The planner loses nothing if he tolerates the presence of scientists who can make forecasts in respect of an applied development theory. He will undoubtedly be forfeiting his chance of a niche in cultural history because he will have surrendered his sole authority. But in return he will enjoy a special advantage: the prospect of seeing what he plans actually being realized. The prospect that is, of gradually narrowing the gap between plan and reality which today condemns the plan to impotence.³⁵

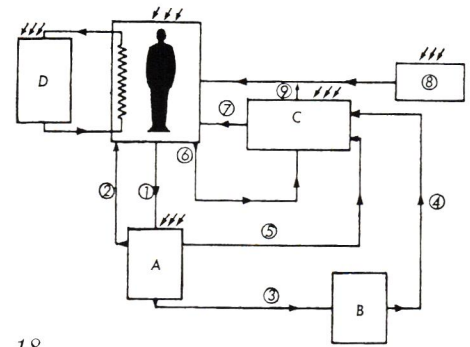
Aicher was apparently unable to realize the inadequacy of this position, wherein, irrespective of the "forecasts of science," the contradictions of society as they impinge on design are incapable of resolution through the "mythical" abrogation of power on the part of the designer. The *neue Sachlichkeit* architects of the Weimar Republic certainly had no taste for the "glory of genius," but this had little evident effect on the realization of their plans; particularly after 1933, when the figures of power chose to define the overall objectives in entirely different terms.

In any event Aicher did not go unanswered, first inadvertently by Maldonado, in the same issue of the journal, *Ulm 17/18*, in a text with the provocative title, "How to Fight Complacency in Design Education," and then in the penultimate issue of the journal, *Ulm 19/20*, in 1967, in a seminar report by Abraham Moles addressed to "Functionalism in Crisis," and in an essay by Claude Schnaidt entitled "Architecture and Political Commitment."

Where Maldonado, while pleading the case for C. S. Peirce's "university of methods,"³⁶ stressed conflict and disorder and

Figure 17. An extract from the glossary of semiotics compiled by Gui Bonsiepe and Tomás Maldonado.

Figure 18. The ergonomic H-factor as exemplified by a closed ecological system in use for long space journeys. The technological attempt to recreate the medio-cosmos.



18.

the reciprocal link obtaining in the Third World between violence and necessity, Moles went straight to the *raison d'être* of the Hochschule and argued in effect that its basis had been overtaken by the success of the “economic miracle,” since the pure functionalism it professed was no longer required by the economic system it was pledged to serve. While diplomatically evading the ultimate consequences of this argument, Moles presented his case with characteristic irreverence.

Affluent society as an economical theory purports that the machinery of production has to run permanently; therefore the consumer has to be stimulated to consume at any price. Consumption and production are linked into a combined system which runs at an ever increasing speed. Functionalism necessarily contradicts the doctrine of affluent society which is forced to produce and to sell relentlessly. Finally functionalism tends to reduce the number of objects and to realize an optimal fit between products and needs, whereas the production machinery of an affluent society follows the opposite direction. It creates a system of neo-kitsch by accumulating objects in the human environment. At this point the crisis of functionalism becomes manifest. It is torn between the neo-kitsch of the supermarket on the one side and ascetic fulfillment of function on the other side.³⁷

It was left to Schnaidt to articulate in unequivocal terms the consequences of this crisis in its wider ramifications, and in many respects his text was to be the last major contribution to the critical theory of the Hochschule before its self-dissolution in February 1968. His indirect response to the Aicher model of planning reality requires little comment, save that his arguments lead him to advocate regional decentralization.

While architects take refuge in aestheticism, fantasy and technocracy, man's environment and everyday life are steadily deteriorating. The megalopolises which are taking shape are stricken at the least failure of their over-burdened infrastructures. They call for prodigious amounts of money to function at all . . . The annual subsidy received by the Paris Passenger Transport Board is four times larger than all the allocations made to help the industrialization in Brittany during the past ten years . . .

33
The concentration of industries and their head offices in and around the metropolis and the continuous increase in rents which compels those working there to put up their homes far afield have made certain reductions in working hours a purely illusory gain. After all, a cut of 6 to 8 hours a week means very little when 2 to 3 hours a day are lost travelling to and from work. And all this lost time comes off the leisure which people are forever talking about . . . Apart from the loss of time, money and lives, the problem of home-to-job distance causes another kind of trouble, this time of a social nature with repercussions on both the individual citizen and the urban region. The latter has gone onto “half-time” and its inhabitants have followed suit. Thus a man sets off at dawn from his village, his suburb, his satellite town which provides the labour needed for the big city. He is away the whole day and he comes home in the evening depleted of energy and longing for nothing else but peace and quiet. And for this reason it is rare for him to contribute anything to the community in which he lives; he has no ideas, no criticism, no impetus to give it. As far as his environment is concerned he might just as well be dead . . . What is the basic cause of concentration? When a manufacturer sets up in a developed area he can use the existing infrastructure and equipment. And these—water, gas, electricity, telephones, sewage, communications, public transport services, public buildings—are paid for by the community. Thus the manufacturer is enabled to avoid the expenditure involved in setting up, renewing and adapting this infrastructure . . . He is thus able to increase his profit margin. Put differently, the community has to bear what has been called the “social cost of private enterprise.” Political commitment requires one to demand that the brunt of the social cost of private enterprise should no longer be borne by the community . . .³⁸

The unequivocal and sometimes simplistic remedies that Schnaidt proscribes for “Planning All Awry?” categorically reveals the radical nature of his own political affiliations, but this unfortunately in no way detracts from the general accuracy of his analysis nor from the pertinence of his revolutionary perspective.

The critical theory of Bonsiepe, Maldonado and Schnaidt was

34 fated to return the Hochschule to its point of departure. Having started its existence as a school of design, in lieu of a school of politics, it was paradoxically returned to its political destiny by men whose lives were dedicated to design. The vicissitudes that their respective theories passed through, over a decade, tend to confirm that this development arose naturally out of adopting a certain attitude towards design. For design as the self-determination of man on earth, through the exercise of his collective *consciousness*, still remains with us as a positive legacy of the Enlightenment. Despite the admissable absorption of the Modern Movement, the fundamental frustration of its *genuine* realization in every domain of life still testifies to the present containment of its liberating force. This much was stated by Schnaidt when he wrote of the historical co-option of the movement that: "Modern architecture which wanted to play its part in the liberation of mankind by creating a new environment to live in, was transformed into a giant enterprise for the degradation of the human habitat . . ."39 and by Bonsiepe when he wrote in the last issue of the journal, *Ulm 21*, the following text of resignation:

Admittedly there is little evidence of realization in training institutions that the communications industry is a consciousness industry, whether it is concerned with the engendering of truth or untruth in consciousness, with enlightenment or ideology. The more visual designers concentrated on the aesthetic perfection of the designs, the more the communications industry was able to keep its power out of sight. The insistence of the aesthetic as one aspect of design is undoubtedly warranted and was capable of retaining its validity over the years. But the aesthetic cannot be maintained in unsullied and apolitical detachment from the social. Formerly, the aesthetic figured as the anticipation of a state of affairs which implied liberation from the constraints of necessity. But the aesthetic met with a fate which could not have been foreseen. It was found that it could very readily be pressed into the service of repression. The forms of power have been sublimated. In the course of this sublimation the aesthetic—which was and still is a promise of the state of liberation of mankind—has been harnessed by the agencies of power and thus used to acquire and maintain power. No consequences have as yet been drawn from this change

in the role of the aesthetic insofar as it affects either the theory or practice of training in visual communication.⁴⁰

1. Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970), p. 700. Egbert makes it clear that John McCloy was involved in the founding of the school. It is evident that in the late fifties the HfG still received American financial support. "In the last few years the industry of West Germany gave an average of DM100,000 per year for further expansion of the school, for the scholarship fund, and to balance the budget. The Rockefeller Foundation donated DM40,000 for the completion of school buildings and workshops. The Ford Foundation gave DM65,000 for the establishment of an Institute for Visual Perception." (Appendix to *Ulm 2*, Oct. 1958.) If Wachsmann is correct in asserting that the original intent had been to found a school of politics then an interesting parallel would emerge with the Frankfurt School of Social Research, since this was reestablished in Frankfurt under the auspices of McCloy in July, 1949. See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973), p. 282.
2. The founding of the Grand Ducal School of Arts and Crafts at Weimar in 1906, under the directorship of Henry Van de Velde, was a direct outcome of the German *Kunstgewerbeschule* reform movement, as was Peter Behrens's appointment to the head of the School of Applied Art, Dusseldorf in 1903.
3. Hans Maria Wingler, *The Bauhaus* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), p. 125. The Bauhaus newspaper also bore the name *Zeitschrift für Gestaltung*.
4. Max Bill, "The Bauhaus Idea from Weimar to Ulm," *Architects' Yearbook 5*, Trevor Dannatt, ed., P. Morton Shand, trans. (London: Elek Books, Ltd., 1953), pp. 29-32.
5. *Ulm 1*, October 1958, p. 1.
6. Tomás Maldonado was born in Buenos Aires in 1922. Trained in the Fine Arts Academy of Buenos Aires from 1938 to 1942, he thereafter worked as a painter and a writer. From 1951, he was editor of the magazine *Nueva Vision*, an Argentine publication dedicated to art, typography, architecture and industrial design. He joined the foundation faculty of the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm in 1954 and became chairman of the triumvirate board in 1956. The initial contact would seem to have been established during the preparation of Maldonado's monograph on the work of Bill, *Max Bill* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Vision, 1955). Maldonado who was present at some of the earliest planning meetings with Inge Scholl has confirmed the Wachsmann thesis that the idea for a "new Bauhaus" had come from Bill. Maldonado's own position in the mid-fifties is evident from his text on the school published in *Nueva Vision* in 1955. "In the years following the First World War the necessity for a generic modern culture was strongly felt. This program now seems too vague and deficient: we could not use it as a basis for a current program, or at least, not without certain reservations The HfG we are building in Ulm intends to redefine the terms of the new culture. Unlike Moholy Nagy in Chicago, it does not merely want to form men who would be able to create and express themselves. The school at Ulm . . . wants to indicate what the social goal of this creativity should be; in other words, which forms deserve to be created and which do not. That is, generic modernity and creativity hold no place in its program An example can better clarify the nature of the phenomena to which we are referring. It is a widespread belief, at least, in certain circles, that the industrial designer, the planner who works for mass production, has only one function: that of catering to the sales program of large scale industry, while simulating the mechanism of commercial competition. In contrast to this view, the HfG proposes that the designer, even while working for industry, must continue to absolve himself of his responsibilities with regard to society." It is obvious that Maldonado sensed from the outset the contradiction of industrial design in a neo-capitalist society; although at this date, it is clear that the prime hope was to evolve a workable strategy for the mediating role of design.
7. For a detailed breakdown of the 1957 curriculum see *Ulm 1*, October 1958.
8. Hanno Kesting, *Technik und Industriearbeit* and *Das Gesellschaftsbild des Arbeiters* (Tubingen, Germany, 1957).
9. *Ulm 2*, October 1958, pp. 29-30.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
12. Since it was the left-wing Swedish art historian Gregor Paulson who largely introduced objective functionalism into Scandinavia, under the name *funkis* and who was thereby partly responsible for the *neue Sachlichkeit* style of the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930. In English speaking circles the importance of Paulson is still unappreciated. His untranslated text, *Die Soziale Dimension der Kunst* of 1955 was evidently a major influence on the structure of Christian Norberg-Schulz's book *Intentions in Architecture*.
13. *Ulm 2*, p. 35.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
15. Anatol Rapoport, *Operational Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1953).
16. "Colloquium con Maldonado e Ohi," *Design-Italia III*, September 1972, p. 32.
17. Max Bense, *Aesthetica* (Stuttgart: 1954); *idem*, *Aesthetische Information* (Krefeld/Baden-Baden, 1956). In a recent letter to the author Maldonado has attempted to clarify something of Bense's relation to the HfG. "As for Max Bense, I am convinced that he played an extremely important role in the first years of Ulm, with his tremendous interest in the application of scientific disciplines to the various areas which we dealt with. Probably for generation reasons he

- sided with Bill in our conflict, even if his own attitude—given his interest in the scientific approach etc.—should have placed him among the younger faculty members, of whom I was one.’
18. See C. W. Morris, “Scientific Empiricism,” *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. I, No. 1 (Chicago, 1938); idem., “Foundations of the Theory of Signs,” *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (Chicago, 1938).
19. From a conversation between the author and Tomás Maldonado.
20. Gunter Schmitz, “Education, Research and Development in Industrialized Building at the School of Design, Ulm, Germany,” *AIA/ACSA Teachers’ Seminar*, Montreal, 1968.
21. Ibid.
22. Tomás Maldonado, “Design-Objects and Art-Objects,” *Ulm* 7, Jan. 1963, pp. 18-22. Review of an exhibition of consumer products designed as though they were art objects.
23. Claude Schnaidt, “200 Years of Modern Architecture,” *Ulm* 7, Jan. 1963, pp. 24-26. This review concludes, “this recent book of Leonardo Benevolo offers modern architects a new opportunity to return to the origins of their tradition.”
24. Gui Bonsiepe, “Information/Machines/Consciousness,” *Ulm* 7, Jan. 1963, p. 24. Bonsiepe quotes from Georg Klaus’s book *Kybernetik in Philosophischer Sicht*, Berlin, 1961.
25. *Uppercase 5*, Theo Crosby, ed. (London: Whitefriars Press, Ltd., 1963), p. 60.
26. Ibid., pp. 47-60. In addition to the Maldonado text and the semiotic glossary, this special issue of *Uppercase* also featured an article by Gui Bonsiepe on verbal and visual rhetoric.
27. Ibid., p. 9.
28. P. M. Fitts, “Engineering Psychology and Engineering Design,” in S. S. Stevens, *Handbook of Experimental Psychology* (New York, 1951): F. V. Taylor, “Equalizing the System for Component ‘H,’” *Human Engineering, Concepts and Theory* (1959): A. Chapanis, “Engineering Psychology,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 14 (Palo Alto, 1963).
29. Tomás Maldonado and Gui Bonsiepe, “Science and Design,” *Ulm* 10/11, May 1964, p. 29.
30. Tomás Maldonado, “Design Education,” *Education of Vision, Vision and Value Series*, Gyorgy Kepes, ed. (New York: © George Braziller, Inc., 1965).
31. Ibid., p. 132.
32. Ibid., p. 133.
33. Claude Schnaidt, “Prefabricated Hope,” *Ulm* 10/11, May 1964, pp. 8-9.
34. Tomás Maldonado, “The Emergent World: A Challenge to Architectural and Industrial Design Training,” *Ulm* 12/13, March 1965, p. 6.
35. Otl Aicher, “Planning All Awry?” *Ulm* 17/18, June 1966.
36. Tomás Maldonado, “How to fight complacency in Design Education,” Ibid., p. 20.
37. Abraham Moles, “Functionalism in Crisis,” *Ulm* 19/20, August 1967, p. 24.
38. Claude Schnaidt, “Architecture and Political Commitment,” *ibid.*, pp. 30-32.
39. Ibid., p. 26.
40. Gui Bonsiepe, “Communication and Power,” *Ulm* 21, April 1968, p. 16.

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- Figure 1. *Casabella* 259, Jan. 1962, p. 2.
- Figure 2. *Ulm*, 1964, p. 24.
- Figure 3. *Ulm* 17/18, June 1966, p. 37.
- Figure 4. *Ulm* 8/9, Sept. 1963, p. 44.
- Figure 5. *Ulm*, 1964, p. 39.
- Figure 6. *Ulm* 14/15/16, Dec. 1965, p. 58.
- Figure 7. *Ulm* 12/13, March 1965, p. 28.
- Figure 8. *Ulm* 19/20, Aug. 1967, p. 61.
- Figure 9. *Ulm* 19/20, Aug. 1967, p. 44.
- Figures 10 & 11. *Ulm* 4, April 1959, pp. 66-67.
- Figure 12. *Ulm* 7, Jan. 1963, p. 17.
- Figure 13. Herbert Ohl, “Industrial Construction,” *Architectural Design*, April 1962, p. 185.
- Figure 14. *Ulm*, 1964, p. 23.
- Figure 15. *Ulm* 10/11, May 1964, p. 53.
- Figure 16. Theo Crosby, ed., “HfG Ulm,” *Uppercase 5*, 1961, p. 37.
- Figure 17. *Uppercase 5*, 1961, pp. 54-5.
- Figure 18. *Ulm* 10/11, May 1964, p. 25.

Manfredo Tafuri

Translation by Victor Caliendo

One of the recent and serious developments of theoretical work — the Italian movements during the sixties — is paradoxically one of the least known in the States. OPPOSITIONS begins the presentation and discussion of this important body of ideas with the publication of “L'Architecture dans le Boudoir” by Manfredo Tafuri, one of the more representative figures of this period.

Tafuri's work, profoundly marked by his philosophical position within the dialectic materialist approach, has been developed by means of modern theoretical concepts drawn from French and Italian structuralism. With this basis he has developed a personal position which he calls a “productive criticism,” which is rigorously grounded in history. Within his perspective, he is able to develop a critique of more traditional approaches to theory, this has led him from a central focus on a criticism of architecture to a criticism of ideology.

This initial presentation is important for the fact that it contains some of Tafuri's central ideas, discussed not only with respect to an Italian context but also in relation to the latest tendencies in American architecture. Tafuri develops and discusses a typology for different approaches to criticism, in which he distinguishes three possibilities for criticism. The first is the consideration of language as a technical neutrality; the second, the consideration of the dissolution of language, and the third is the consideration of architecture as irony

and criticism. A fourth possibility which is in essence his own position, recognizes the importance of the attempts to organize intellectual work in general and “architecture” in particular within the social process of production. For Tafuri the “general organization of the building process” becomes then the only valid object of analysis for a criticism that aims in this way to integrate itself within that process.

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 Chairman of the Faculty of the 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 and on the committee of editors of the magazine *Archithese*. His published works include: *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, Bari 1968; *L'Architettura dell'Umanesimo*, Bari 1969; *Progetto e utopia*, Bari 1973; *La città americana dalla guerra civile al New Deal* (in collaboration), Bari 1973. He is presently working on a book on the study of the relationship between the avant-garde and contemporary architecture.

This essay, published here for the first time, was originally a presentation in Italian, “L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: il linguaggio della critica e la

critica del linguaggio,” part of the lecture series “Practice, Theory and Politics in Architecture” held at Princeton University in April 1974.

38 To work with leftover materials, with the garbage and throwaways of our daily and commonplace existence, is an integral aspect of the tradition of modern art, as if it were a magic reversal of the informal into things of quality through which the artist comes to terms with the world of objects. No wonder then that if the most heartfelt condition today is that of wishing to salvage values pertinent to architecture, the only means is to employ "war surplus" materials, that is, to employ what has been discarded on the battlefield after the defeat of the Modern movement. Thus, the new "knights of purity" advance into the realm of the present debate waving as flags the fragments of a utopia which they themselves cannot see.

Today, he who is willing to make architecture speak is forced to rely on materials empty of any and all meaning: he is forced to reduce to degree zero all architectonic ideology, all dreams of social function and any utopian residues. In his hands, the elements of the modern architectural tradition come suddenly to be reduced to enigmatic fragments, to mute signals of a language whose code has been lost, stuffed away casually in the desert of history. In their own way, those architects who from the late fifties until today have tried to reconstruct a common discourse for their discipline, have felt the need to make a new morality of content. Their purism or their rigorism is that of someone driven to a desperate action that cannot be justified except from within itself. The words of their vocabulary, gathered from the desolate lunar landscape remaining after the sudden conflagration of their grand illusions, lie perilously on that sloping plane which separates the world of reality from the magic circle of language. It is precisely with a sense for a certain salvage operation that we wish to confront the language of criticism: after all, to historicize deliberately such antihistorical attempts only means to reconstruct single-mindedly the system of metaphoric ambiguities which are too openly problematic to be left isolated as disquieting beings.

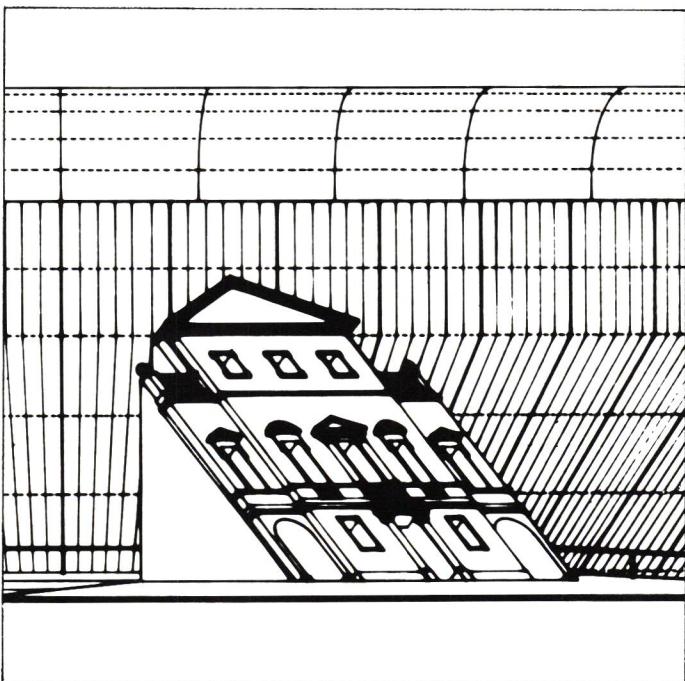
We must immediately warn the reader that we have no intention of reviewing recent architectural trends. Instead, we would like to focus attention on a set of particularly important attitudes, asking ourselves which role criticism must take. We will therefore examine: (1) those trends which re-

spond to language as a purely technical neutrality, which set themselves against the destruction of language as it is generated by a bureaucratized architecture; this will allow us to reveal the answers offered by the profession and on that research which tries to renew an awareness of linguistic processes and to link up with the experiments of the avant-garde which have been influenced by formalist methodologies; (2) research based on the dissolution of language itself, on the systematic destruction of form that is aimed at the total control of the technological environment; (3) research which interprets architecture as criticism and irony, as well as that which deliberately denies the possibility of an architectonic communication in favor of a neutral system of "information"; and (4) the emergence of an architecture which aims to redistribute the capitalistic division of labor, which moves towards an understanding of the technician's role in building—that is, as a responsible partner in the economic dynamics and as an organizer directly involved in the production cycle. All this we will do to locate with precision, yet without an easy optimism, the role of the difficult exchange between intellectuals and class movements.

We must, however, keep in mind that any analysis which attempts to grasp the structural relationship between the specific forms of the architectural language and the world of production of which they are a part must do so by violating the object of the analysis itself. Criticism, in other words, sees itself constrained to adopt a "repressive" character if it wishes to free that which is beyond language; if it desires to bring upon itself the cruel autonomy of architectural writing, and if, after all, it wishes the "mortal silence of the sign" to speak. As has been acutely pointed out, to Nietzsche's question "Who speaks?" Mallarmé has answered, "The word itself."¹ This would apparently exclude any attempt to question the language as a system of meanings whose discourse it is necessary to reveal. And where contemporary architecture poses, ostentatiously, the problems of its meaning, we must look for the signs of a regressive utopia, even if these signs mime a struggle against the role of language. This struggle is apparent if we see how, in recent works, the compositional strictness oscillates precariously between the forms of "comment" and those of "criticism." The best example of this is seen in the work of James Stirling. Kenneth Frampton, Marc

Figure 1. Derby Civic Center competition, Derby. James Stirling with Leo Krier, architects, 1970. An historic facade preserved at an angle as a bandstand shell roof.

Figure 2. S. C. Johnson & Son office building, Racine. Frank Lloyd Wright, architect, 1936. Bridge of Pyrex tubes over driveway.



1.



2.

Girouard, Joseph Rykwert, and Charles Jencks have distinguished themselves in their attempts to give meaning to the enigmatic and ironic usage of “quotation” in Stirling’s work.²

In his more recent works, including the Siemens AG Headquarters in Munich, the Olivetti training school at Haslemere and the housing for Runcorn New Town, we have wished to see a change of direction, a break with the disquieting composition of Constructivist, Futurist, Paxtonian, Victorian memories of his university buildings at Leicester, Cambridge, and Oxford, and of the Civic Center (fig. 1) designed with Leo Krier for Derby.³ The parabola which Stirling has followed has a high degree of internal consistency. It indeed reveals the consequence of a reduction of the architectural object to pure language, yet it wishes to be compared to the tradition of the Modern movement, to be measured against a body of work strongly compromised in an antiliterary sense. Stirling has “rewritten” the “words” of modern architecture, building a true “archeology of the present.”

Let us look at the design for the Civic Center at Derby. An ambiguous and amused reference to history is spelled out by the facade of the old Assembly Room, inclined by 45° and serving as a proscenium to the theater which is defined by the U-shaped gallery. The entire work of Stirling possesses this “oblique” character. The shopping arcade recalls the Burlington Arcade in London. It also brings to mind the bridge of Pyrex tubes at the Johnson Wax building (fig. 2) by Frank Lloyd Wright, and perhaps even more strongly recalls an unbuilt as well as undesigned architecture—the shopping arcade modeled on a sort of circular Crystal Palace which, following the description by Ebenezer Howard, was to have surrounded the central area of the ideal Garden City. The Civic Center in Derby is in fact an urban “heart.” It is, however, part of a real city and not a utopian model, and consequently the memory of Joseph Paxton takes on a flavor of a disenchanting but timely *repêchage*.

Unlike Paul Rudolph, for whom every formal gesture is a hedonistic wink at the spectator, Stirling has revealed the possibilities of an endless manipulation of the grammar and syntax of the architectural sign. He employs with extreme

Figure 3. Leicester University Engineering Laboratory, Leicester. James Stirling, architect, 1959-63. Axonometric.

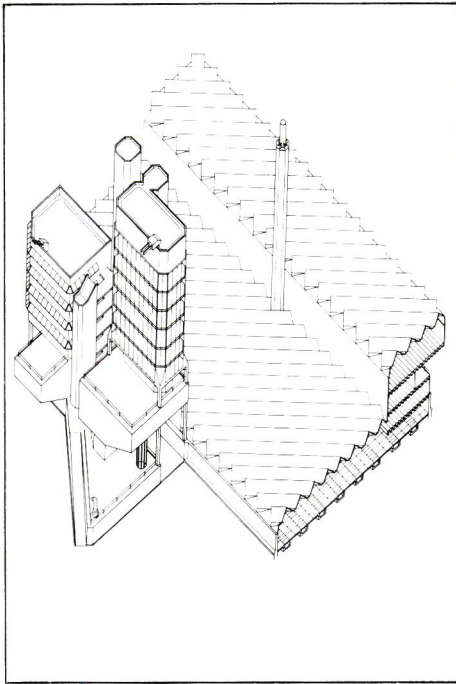
Figure 4. Palace of the Soviets competition, 3rd prize, Moscow. A. and V. Vesnin, architects, 1923. Axonometric.

Figure 5. Cambridge University History Building, Cambridge. James Stirling, architect, 1964-67. Axonometric.

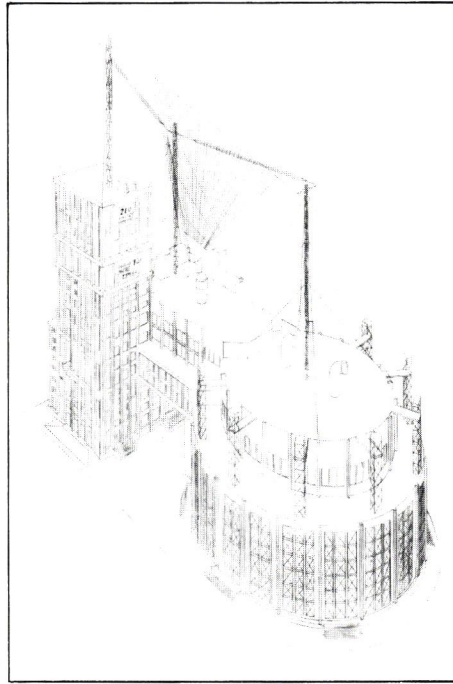
Figure 6. Spangenberg Housing, Rotterdam. Michael Brinkman, architect, 1921. Axonometric.

Figure 7. St. Andrews University residential expansion, Scotland. James Stirling, architect, 1964-68. Site plan.

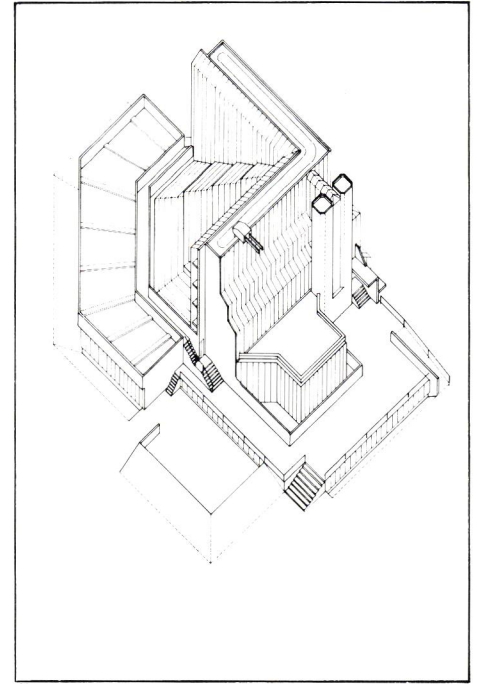
Figure 8. Housing commune, Munich. Moses Ginsburg, architect, 1927.



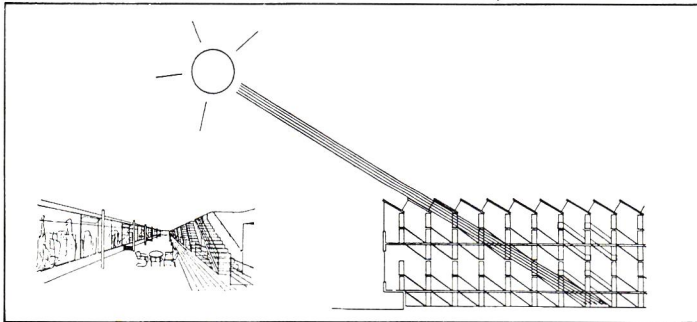
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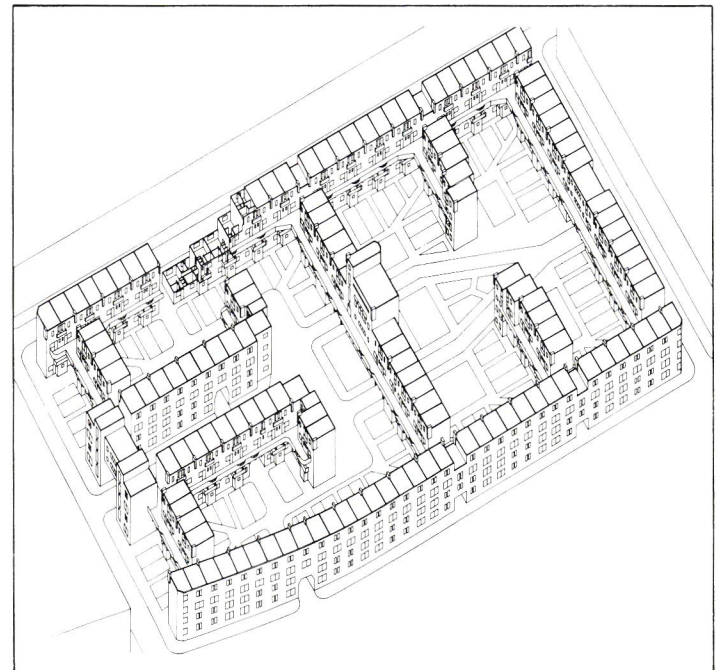
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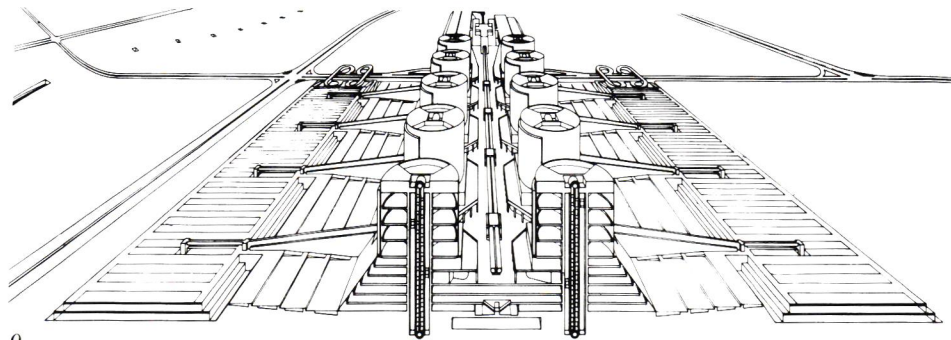


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6.

Figure 9. Siemens AG. headquarters, Munich. James Stirling, architect, 1969. Sectional perspective.



9.

coherence the formalistic laws of contrast and opposition of his language's elements: the rotation of the axes, the use of antithetic materials, and technological distortions.⁴ The result of such controlled *bricolage* is a metaphorical reference to something very dear to the English architect: the architecture of ships. "A dream with marine references"⁵ is the way Kenneth Frampton has accurately labeled the Leicester University Engineering Laboratory (fig. 3), a true iceberg sailing in the sea of the park into which it is casually set down, following an enigmatic course. Yet insofar as Stirling does not appreciate such "fishing for references," the porthole, which ironically comes up from the base of the laboratories at Leicester (next to the jutting Melnikovian halls), seems to confirm that constructivist poetics are a primary source—an almost too obvious reference to the design for the Palace of the Soviets (1923) by the Vesnin brothers (fig. 4). Yet the theme of the ship comes back, this time with proper literary references, in the terracing, the general organization and the common access ways of the Andrew Melville Hall at St. Andrews University (fig. 7). Again, it is Frampton who notes that here the marine metaphor takes on a more precise meaning: the ship, like the phalanstery, symbolizes an unattainable communal will.⁶ The ship, the monastery and the phalanstery are thereby equivalent. From a desire to achieve perfect communal integration, they isolate themselves from the world. Le Corbusier and Stirling themselves appear, at La Tourette and St. Andrews, to pronounce a painful discovery: social utopianism can only be discussed as a literary document and can only come into architecture as a linguistic element, or better, as a pretext for the use of language.

The charged atmosphere of the young rebels of the 1950s and of the Independent Group, of which Stirling was a member between 1952 and 1956, has thus a coherent result. The affirmation of language, here understood as an interweaving of complex syntactic valences and ambiguous semantic references, also includes the "function," the existential dimension of the work. Yet it only deals with a "virtual function" and not an effective function. The Andrew Melville Hall represents theatrically the space of communal integration which—from the time of the Spangen block (1921) of Michael Brinkman (fig. 6) to the housing commune (1927) of Moses Ginsburg (fig. 8), the postwar plans of Le Corbusier and

Alison and Peter Smithson, and the building of Park Hill and Robin Hood Gardens⁷—the orthodoxy of the Modern movement had hoped to make operable as spaces of social precipitation.

41

Suspending the public destined to use his buildings in a limbo of a space that ambiguously oscillates between the emptiness of form and a "discourse on function"—that is, architecture as an autonomous machine, as it is spelled out in the History building at Cambridge (fig. 5) and made explicit in the project for Siemens AG (fig. 9)—Stirling carries out the most cruel of acts by abandoning the sacred precinct in which the semantic universe of the modern tradition has been enclosed. Neither attracted nor repulsed by the independent articulation of Stirling's formal machines, the observer is forced in spite of himself to recognize that this architecture does indeed speak its own language, one that is perversely closed into itself. It is possible only to sink or swim, forced into a swinging course, itself just as oscillating as the perverse play of the architect with the elements of his own language.

As we have said regarding comment and criticism: the form of comment is a repetition in the desperate search for the genesis of the signs; the form of criticism is the analysis of the function of the signs themselves, a task possible only after one has renounced the search for the hallowed meaning of the language. The operations carried out by Stirling are exemplary; they point out the utopia intrinsic in the full realization of architecture as a discourse. In this light, the functional criticisms which are constantly leveled at Stirling are at once correct and unjust;⁸ once having artificially reconstructed an independent structure of language, the criticisms are inevitably resolved into a surreal play of tensions between the universe of signs and the domain of the real.

We are therefore led back to our initial problem; that is, in which manner may criticism become compromised in such a "perverse play" under whose ambiguous sign the entire thrust of modern architecture flickers? At the origins of the critical act are always found the acts of distinguishing, separating and disintegrating a given structure. Without the act of disintegrating the object under analysis, it is impossible to rewrite it. It is self-evident that there does not exist a criti-

42 cism that does not follow the process which generated the work itself, one which does not redeploy the elements of the work into a different order, if only for the sake of constructing typological models. Yet it is here that there begins what might be called the doubling of the object under critical examination. The simple analysis of architecture, which obliges one to speak of it in terms of its language, would be description pure and simple. Such an analysis would be unable to break the magic circle that the work in question draws around itself, and it would therefore only be able to manipulate within set limits the selfsame process that generated the work, thereby repeating its axioms. The only external referent of such an "internalized" reading would be found in the gaps inherent in the linguistic object itself. Thus this "doubling" created by criticism must go beyond merely constructing a "second language" to float above the original text, as Roland Barthes speaks of it.⁹ The creation of typological models, which Emilio Garroni has correctly seen as the only possible way to single out systems and codes of reference for architecture,¹⁰ may therefore have meaning if the models prove capable of: (1) defining a series of structural constants to form a base upon which to measure the degree of innovation in each architectural experiment (the typology of the Palladian villa as developed by Rudolf Wittkower is a prime example); and (2) allowing a dynamic comparison between the series of constants and those structures which determine the possibility of the very existence of architecture. In the above method there is no ordinary subdivision between structure and superstructure. There is only insistence upon completion of the analysis of a test of the "function" of the communications system. Yet the discourse on language requires further clarification. Criticism must point out with precision its role in relation to involuted architectural proposals, if only because these are today the most apparent.

At the borderline, the linguistic residues—that is, those aspects of the real which have not been resolved in form, as in the architecture of a James Stirling, a Louis Kahn, or a Victor Lundy—are suddenly eliminated; it is there that the absolute presence of form makes "scandalous" the existence of the casual, even in that casual behavior *par excellence*, human presence.

The research by Aldo Rossi provides an excellent example to illustrate a theme which inexorably divides the entire course of modern art.¹¹ Rossi answers the poetics of ambiguity of a John Johansen or a Robert Venturi with the liberation of architecture from any embrace with reality, from any interruption by chance or by any empiricism in its totally structured sign system. The "scandal" of Stirling's architecture is man, held as he is in an ambiguous suspension between architecture as a pure object and a redundancy of hermetic communications. The architecture of Rossi suppresses such a scandal. The invocation of form that it calls forth excludes all external justifications. The specific qualities of architecture are set down into a universe of carefully selected signs, within which the law of exclusion dominates, and in fact is the controlling expression. Beginning with the monument of Segrate (1965) to the designs for the City Hall of Muggio (1972) (fig. 13) and the cemetery of Modena (1971) (fig. 11), Rossi declaims an alphabet that rejects all articulation. As the abstract representation of its own arbitrary laws, it makes artifice its own realm. By this means such an architecture falls back to the structural nature of language itself. Exhibiting a syntax of empty signs, programmed exclusions, rigorous limitations, it reveals the inflexible nature of the arbitrary and the false dialectic between freedom and norms that are characteristic of the linguistic order. "Pure Art," the object of a famous discussion between Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, sets forth in such works its own principle of legitimacy.

The emptied sign is also the instrument of the metaphysics of De Chirico, of the dream-like realism of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, and of the astounded enigma projected onto objects by the school of the Nouveau Regard.¹² With these, Rossi shares only a sort of frustrated nostalgia for the structure of communication. But for him, it is a communication that has nothing to speak about except the finite quality of its closed system, wherein the cyclone of the "Angelus Novus" has passed, freezing words into salt pillars.¹³ Mies van der Rohe had already experimented with the language of emptiness and silence. Yet for Mies the translation of the sign still occurred within the presence of the real, that is to say, by contrast with the city itself. In Rossi, however, the categorical imperative lives as the absolute alienation of form, to the

Figure 10. Fagnano School, Olona. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1973. Sketch of site plan.

Figure 11. Cemetery competition, Modena. Aldo Rossi and Gianni Braghieri, architects, 1971. Perspective.

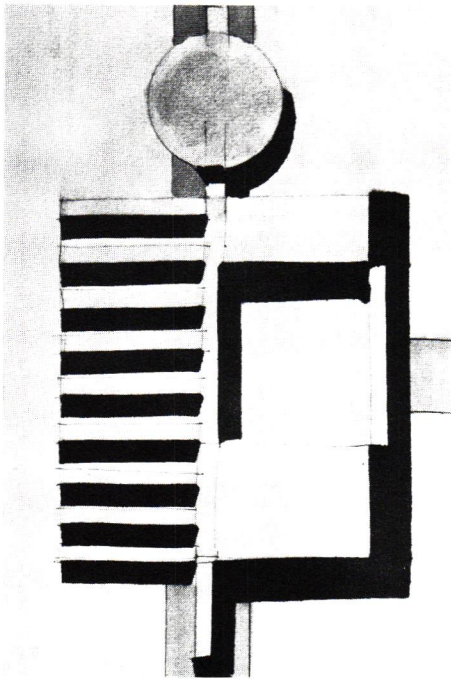
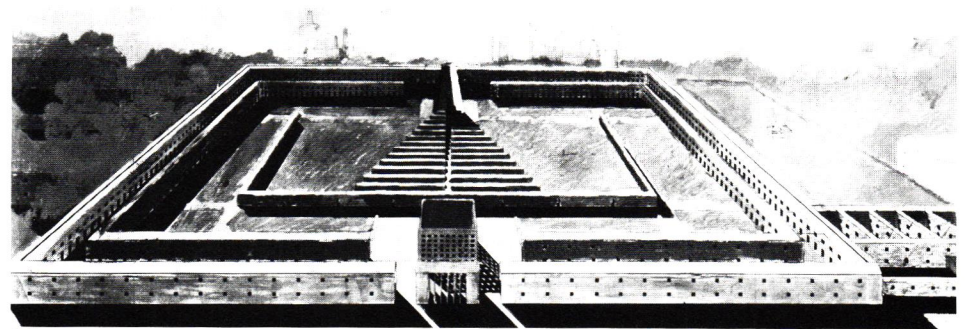
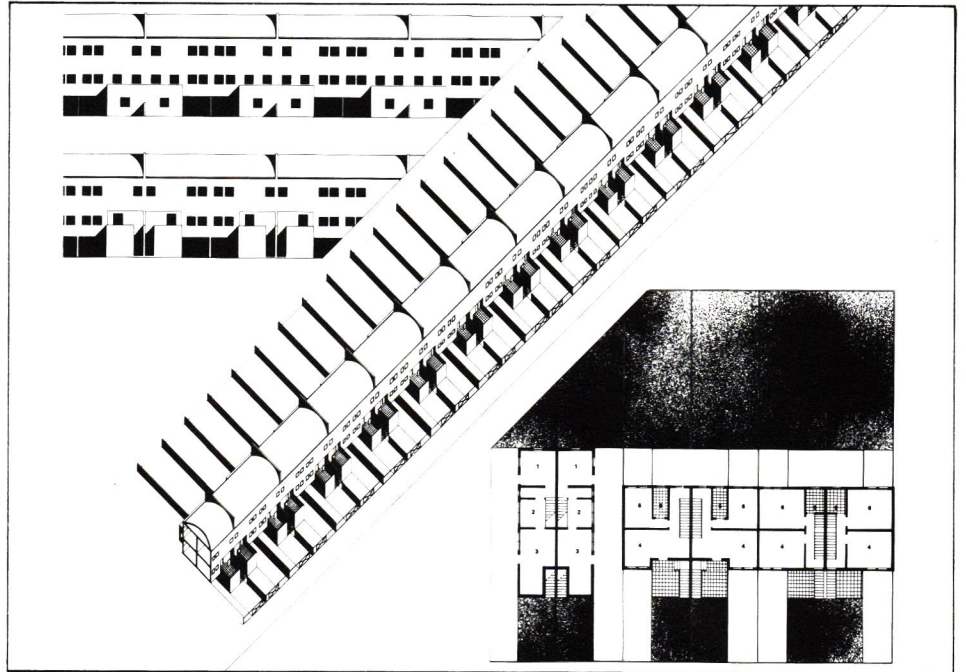


Figure 12. Single family housing project, Broni. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1973. Elevations, axonometric, plans.

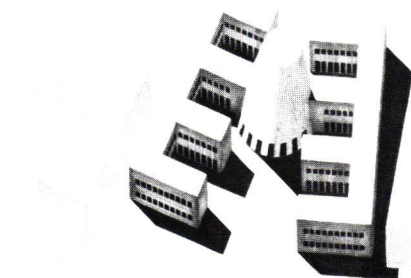
Figure 13. Muggio City Hall Competition, Muggio. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1972. Axonometric.



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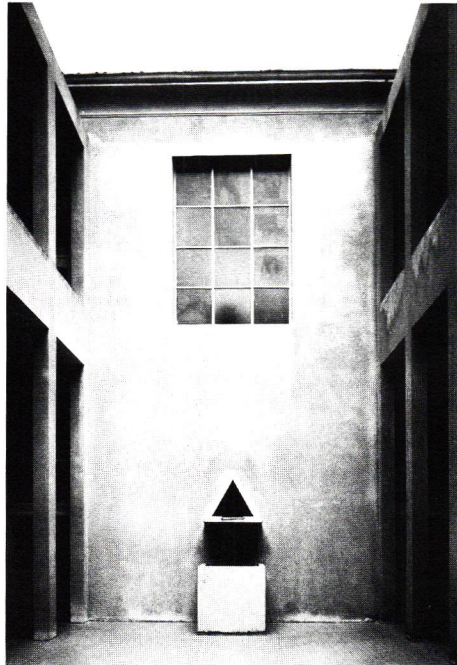
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Figure 14. Elementary School, Broni. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Detail of courtyard.

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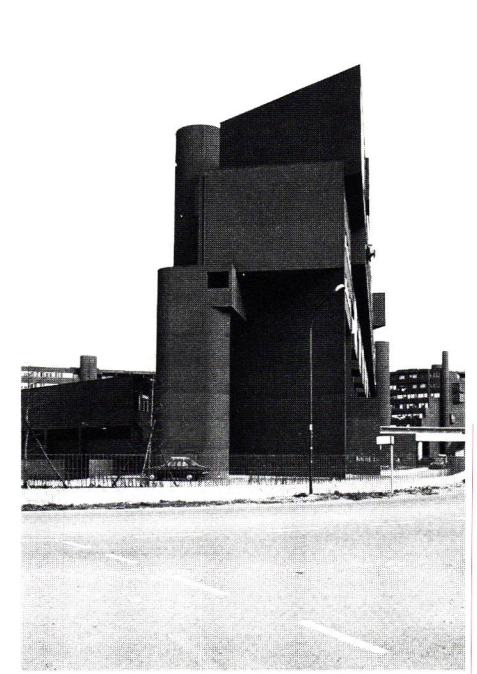
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Figure 15. Gallaratese 2 neighborhood, Milan. Carlo Aymonino and Associates, architects, 1967-73. View across plaza over the garages, showing the open air theater surrounded by residential blocks A2,B.

Figure 16. Gallaratese 2. Residential block A1.

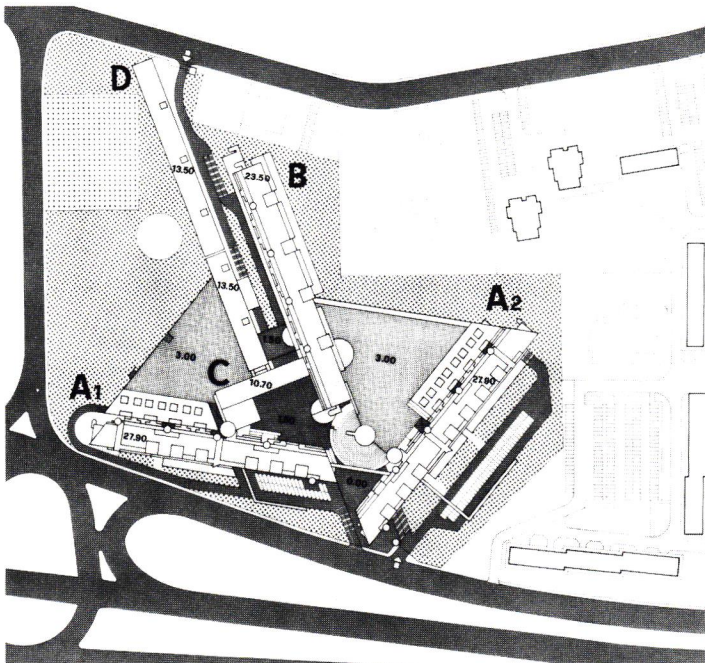
Figure 17. Gallaratese 2. View of entrance and residential blocks A1,A2.

Figure 18. Gallaratese 2. General plan.

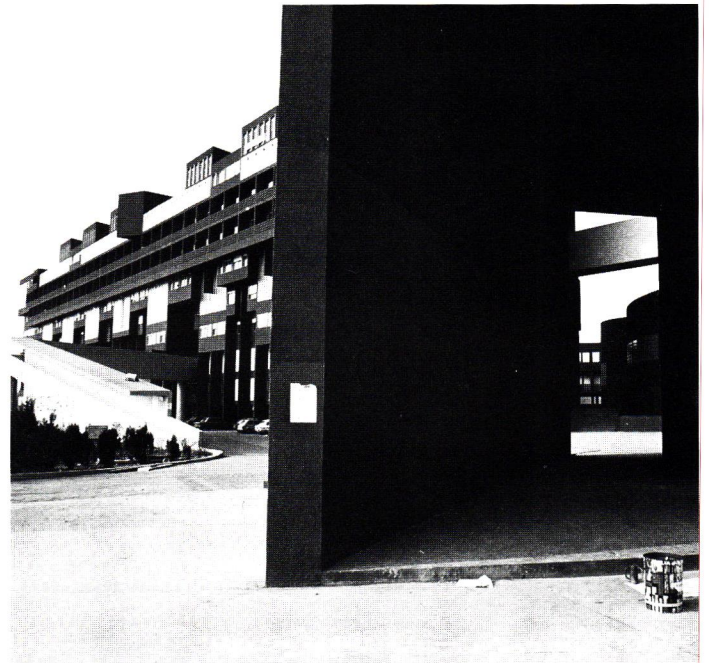


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point of achieving an emptied sacredness—an experience of the immovable and of the eternal return to geometric emblems reduced to being mere ghosts.¹⁴

There is a precise reason for this phenomenon. The result that Rossi approaches is that of demonstrating, without any chance of further appeal, that by his removal of form from the domain of daily experience, he is continually forced to circumnavigate the central point from which communication springs forth, yet is unable to draw from the source itself. This is not because of any inability of the architect, but rather because this “center” has been historically destroyed. If an attitude of neo-Enlightenment is found in Rossi, it is to be understood as a recovered example of an irreversible act of the eighteenth century—the fragmentation of the “order of discourse.” Only the ghost of that lost order can today be waved about. Yet the accusations of fascism hurled at Rossi mean little, since his attempts at the recovery of an ahistoricizing form exclude verbalizations of its content and any compromise with the real.¹⁵

In this manner such research loses itself in its extreme attempt to save the institution of architecture. The thread of Ariadne with which Rossi weaves his work does not reestablish the discipline, but rather dissolves it, thereby making true the tragic acknowledgement of Georg Simmel, “a form which is open to life, serves it, cannot give it itself.”¹⁶

A fundamentally important result springs forth from this, one which has in fact already been taken for granted in our contemporary culture, but which is continually cast aside. The refusal to manipulate forms, as Rossi maintains, in fact concludes a debate that was personally fought first by Adolf Loos, and which has in Karl Kraus its highest exponent.

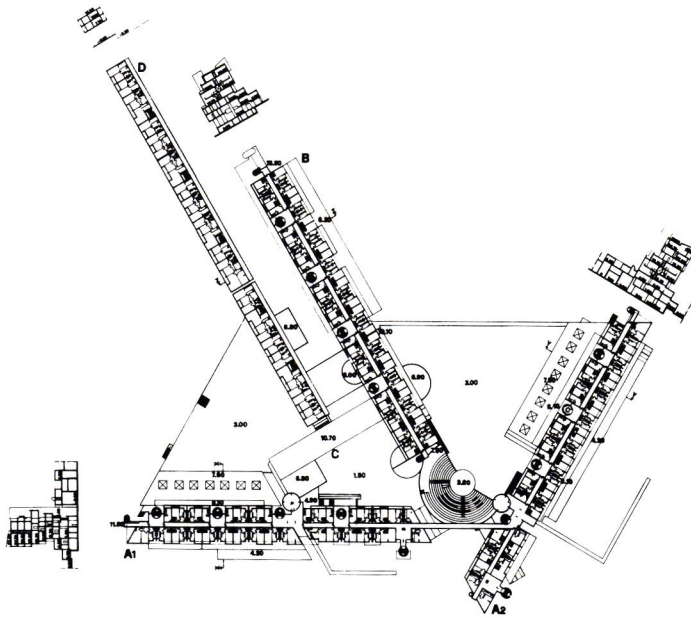
In this great epoch which I have known when it was still so small and which will again become small, if there is any time left . . . in this noisy epoch which resounds from the horrendous symphony of facts which yield news and news which is to be blamed for the facts. In this epoch one should not wait for any particular words from me, none aside from this one, which barely serves to preserve the silence of misunderstanding. Too deeply rooted in me is the respect for the immutable, the subordination of language to fate. With-

in the realms of the poverty of fantasy, where man dies from spiritual starvation without ever discovering his spiritual hunger, where pens are dipped in blood and swords in ink, that which is past ought to be fact, but that which is only thought is ineffable. Let them not await from me my word. Nor would I be able to speak any new word, for within the room where one writes the noise is so loud and if it comes from animals, babies or only trench guns, is not now important. He who adds words to facts defaces the word and the fact, and therefore is doubly despicable. This profession has not extinguished itself. Those who now have nothing to say, because facts have words, continue to speak. He who has something to say, step forward and be silent.”¹⁷

If facts possess the word, then nothing remains but to have facts speak and preserve, in silence, the spectrum of great values. Of these—and here Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos, and Ludwig Wittgenstein agree—“we cannot speak,” that is, without contaminating them, Loos expresses clearly. Yet to refuse to speak with architecture we may miss only that which evades life: the *monument*—that is, the artificial creation of a collective memory, true “parallel action” of “man without quality,”—and the *tomb*—the illusion of a universe beyond death.¹⁸ Only in the service of illusory functions, virtual ones, that is, is it now possible to build virtual spaces.

The aforementioned statement by Simmel is thus now inverted and thereby confirmed: the space of life excludes that of form, or at least keeps it constantly in check. In the Gallaretese neighborhood in Milan, to the moderated expressionism of Carlo Aymonino, who articulates his residential blocks as they converge into the fulcrum of the open-air theater in a complex play of artificial streets and nodes (figs. 15-19), Rossi creates an opposition in the sacred precision of his geometric block which is held above ideology and above all utopian proposals for a “new lifestyle.”

The complex as designed by Aymonino wishes to underscore every resolution, every joint, every formal artifice. Aymonino apparently wants to speak the language of superimposition and complexity, within which single objects violently strung together insist upon displaying their individual role within the entire “machine.” Yet, and quite sig-



19.

nificantly, Aymonino, by assigning to Rossi the design for one of the blocks within this neighborhood (figs. 20-22), must have felt the need to confront himself with a proposal radically opposed to his own. And it is here that we find, facing the aggregation of Aymonino's signs, the absolute sign of Rossi.

The position taken by Kraus and Loos is not negated; it is, however, made more ambiguous. Because facts have words, form may be silent. The simultaneous presence of objects constructivistically aggregated, obstinately forced to communicate messages or modes of behavior, and a mute object closed in its equally obstinate timidity, "narrate" in an exemplary fashion the drama of modern architecture. Architecture, once again, has made a discourse on itself. But this time, in an unusual way: as a colloquy, that is, between two languages which approach the same result. The complexity of Aymonino and the silence of Rossi: two ways to declaim the guttural sounds of the yellow giants—we recall here the expressionist drama *Der gelbe Klag* in which Wassily Kandinsky had personified the "new angels" of mass society.¹⁹

Throughout this discussion, we have deliberately established the analysis of a specific phenomenon with reference to a correct use of criticism. The examples of Stirling and Rossi have proven useful precisely because in their presence the very function of criticism is called into question and because, in part, we are dealing with those extreme situations which are important to the current debate on the architectural language, as seen in the work of Louis Kahn, Denys Lasdun, the "Five," and the Italian experimentalists, such as Vittorio De Feo, the Stass group or Vittorio Gregotti.²⁰

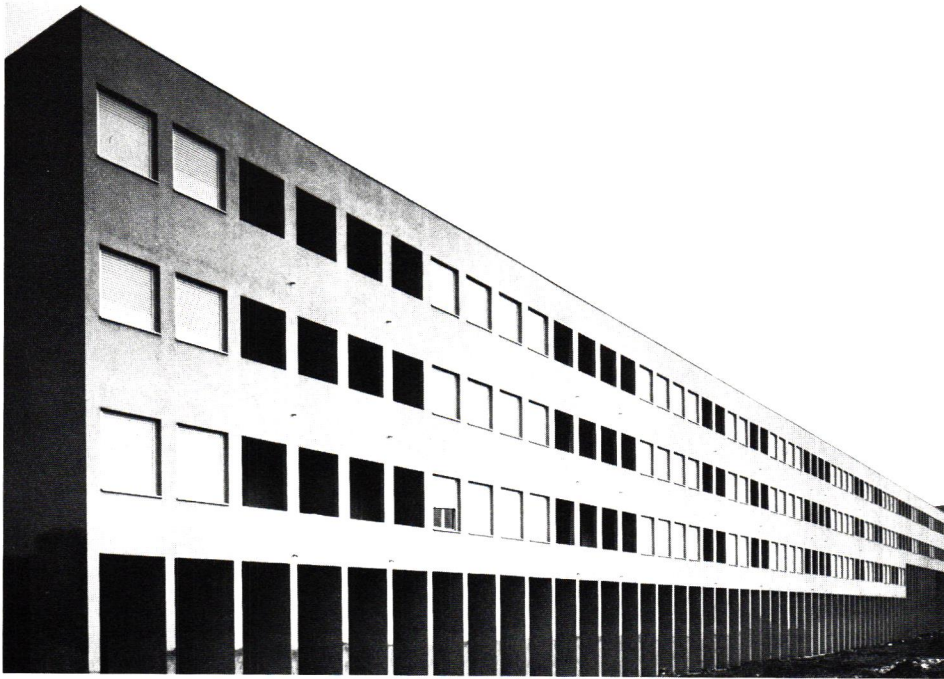
In writing about De Feo, Francesco Dal Co speaks of a "suspended architecture."²¹ And in fact, the works of De Feo—among the most remarkable of recent Italian work—oscillate between the creation of entirely virtual spaces and typological research at the level of the organism. The experimentation with the deformation of geometric elements is predominant, as seen in the project for the new House of Representatives in Rome, planned with the Stass group (1967); the Technical school at Terni (1968-74) (figs. 25-27); and the competition for an Esso service station (1971) (figs. 28,29). Here, De

Figure 19. Gallarate 2 neighborhood, Milan. Carlo Aymonino and Associates, architects, 1967-73. Site plan.

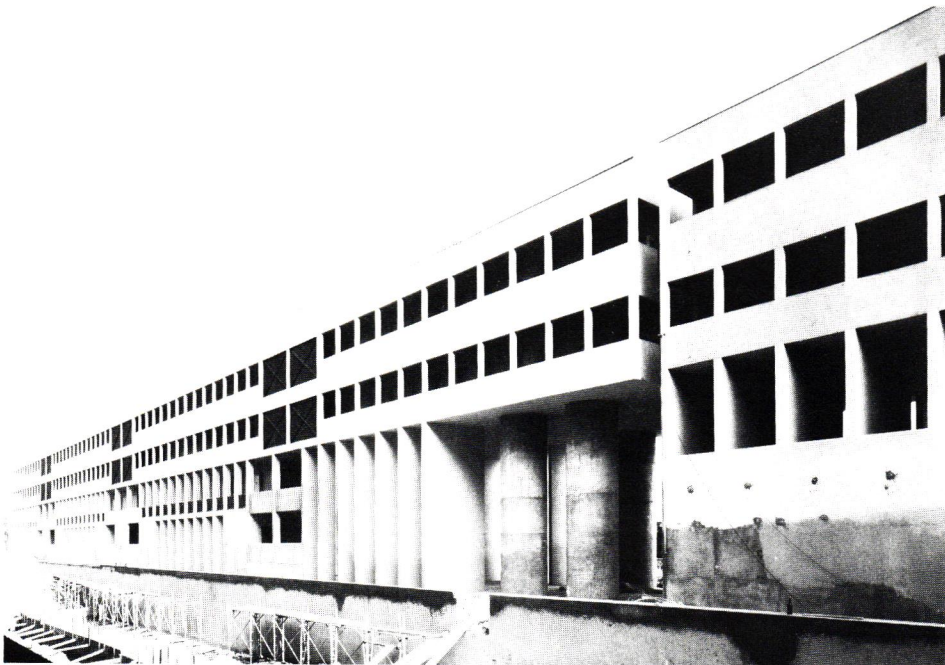
Figure 20. Gallarate 2 neighborhood, Milan. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1970-73. Residential block D.

Figure 21. Gallarate 2. Entrance to residential block D.

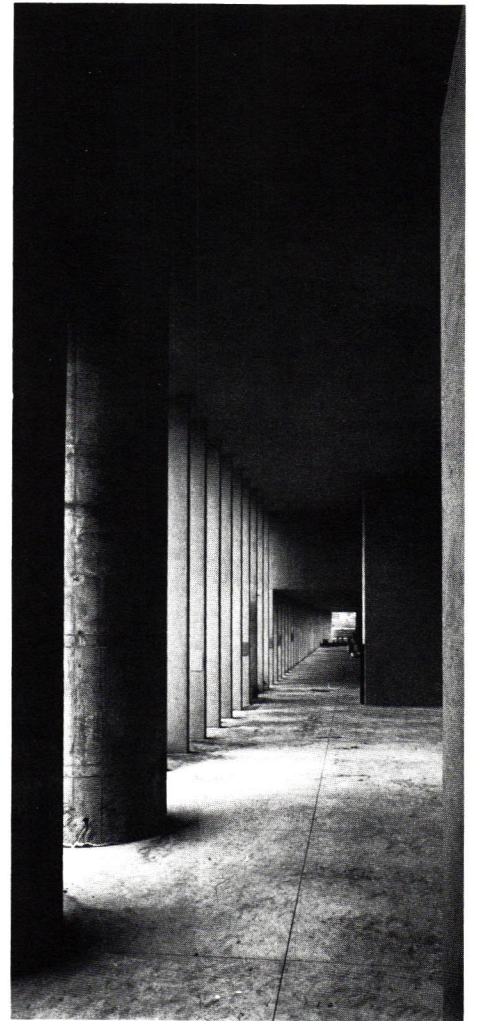
Figure 22. Gallarate 2. Residential block D.



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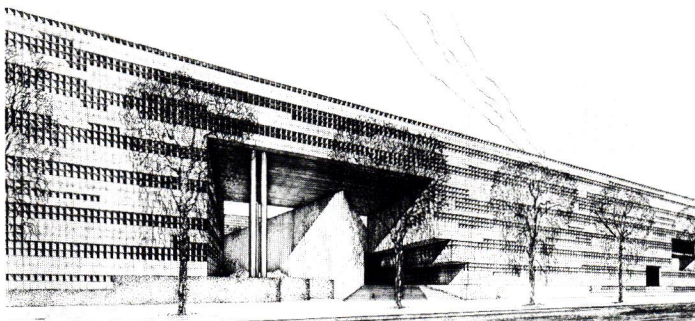
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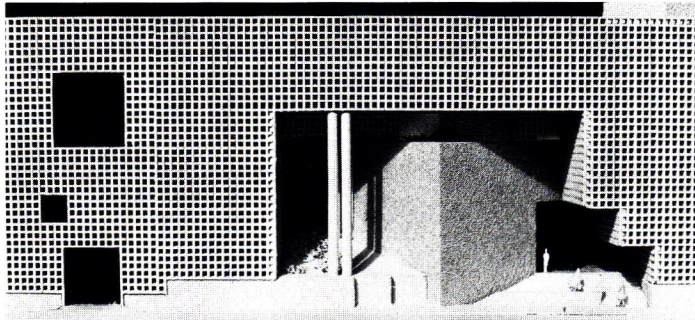
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Figure 23. Regional offices competition, Trieste. Vittorio De Feo and Associates, architects, 1974. Perspective.

Figure 24. Regional offices competition. Detail of model.



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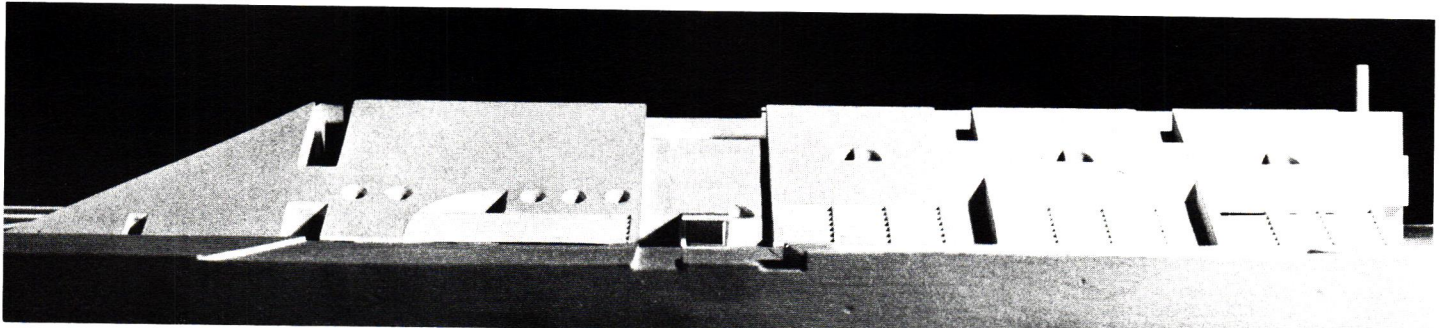
Figure 25. Technical school, Terni. Vittorio De Feo and Errico Ascione, architects, 1968-74. Model.

Figure 26. Technical School. Model in plan.

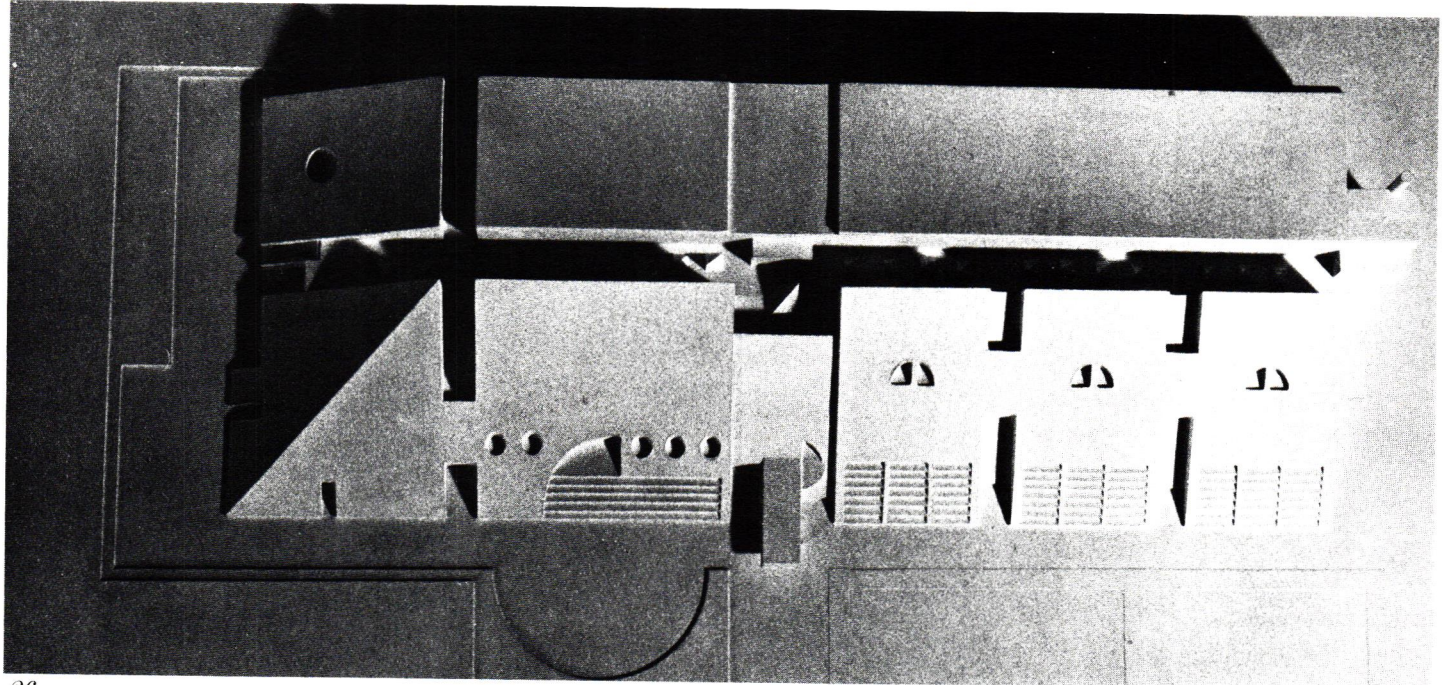
Figure 27. Technical School. Detail of building, near completion.

Feo treats geometry as a primary element, to be juxtaposed with the chosen functional order. Compared to the purism of Rossi, the architecture of De Feo, or for that matter of Georgio Ciucci and Mario Manieri-Elia, appears more empirical and casual. However, within its search for the pure and intrinsic qualities of form, it possesses qualities at once self-critical and self-ironic, which are revealed as a disenchanting pop image (and wherein the exasperated geometric play of the Esso station is resolved). It is possible here to find a warning: once the "form is made free;" the geometric universe becomes an uncontrollable "adventure." Without doubt, similar studies are historically born upon reflections on the themes introduced by Kahn; yet, for Italians in particular, each study of linguistic tools loses the mystic aura and simple faith in the charismatic power of institutions. We are therefore faced with an apparent paradox. Those who concentrate on linguistic experimentation have lost the old illusions about the innovative powers of communication. Yet by accepting the relative independence of syntactic research, we are then confronted with the arbitrary qualities of the reference code. Thus neither De Feo nor Manieri-Elia are able to link their choice of reference code to a suitable act of *engagement* (which in itself may have other means of self-expression).

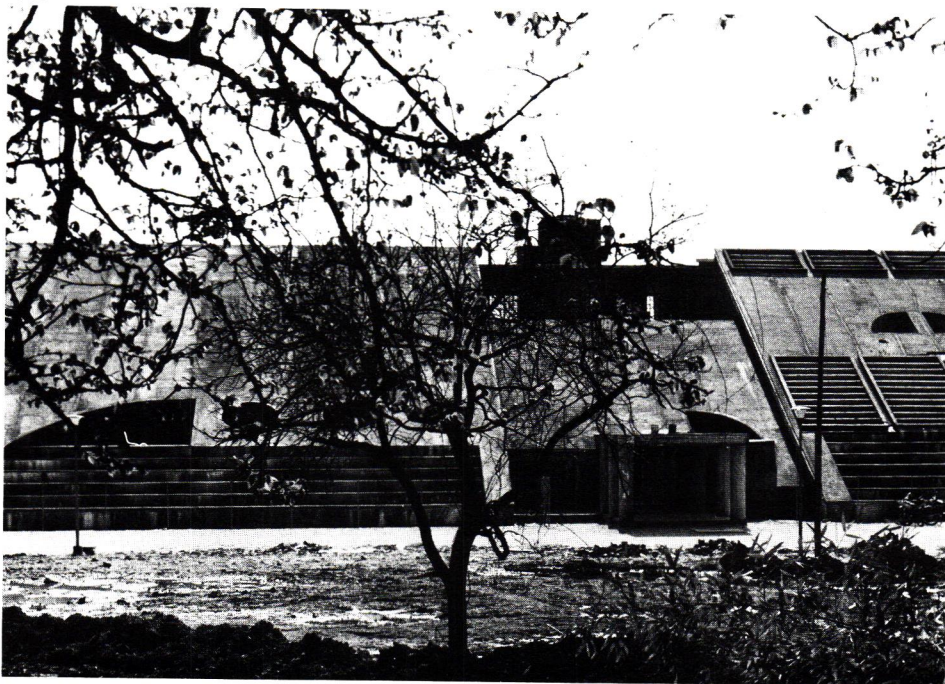
To what point then is this attitude comparable to that of the "Five Architects" who, in the panorama of international architecture, appear closest to conceiving of architecture as a reflection upon itself and upon its internal articulations? Is it indeed possible to speak of their work as "mannerism among the ruins"?²² Mario Gandelsonas has correctly singled out the specific areas of interest in the work of Michael Graves—the interest in the classicist code, cubist painting, the traditions of the Modern movement, and nature.²³ Yet we should be wary. We are again dealing with "closed systems," within which the themes of polysemy and pluralism are formed and controlled, and within which the *possession* of the aleatory is resolved in an institutional, or at best "monumental," format. (The only source which appears to defy such an interpretation is that which refers to the Modern movement; nevertheless, this is read by Graves as only signifying "metaphysical" and "twentieth century," thus permitting our schema to remain valid.) Having established a system of



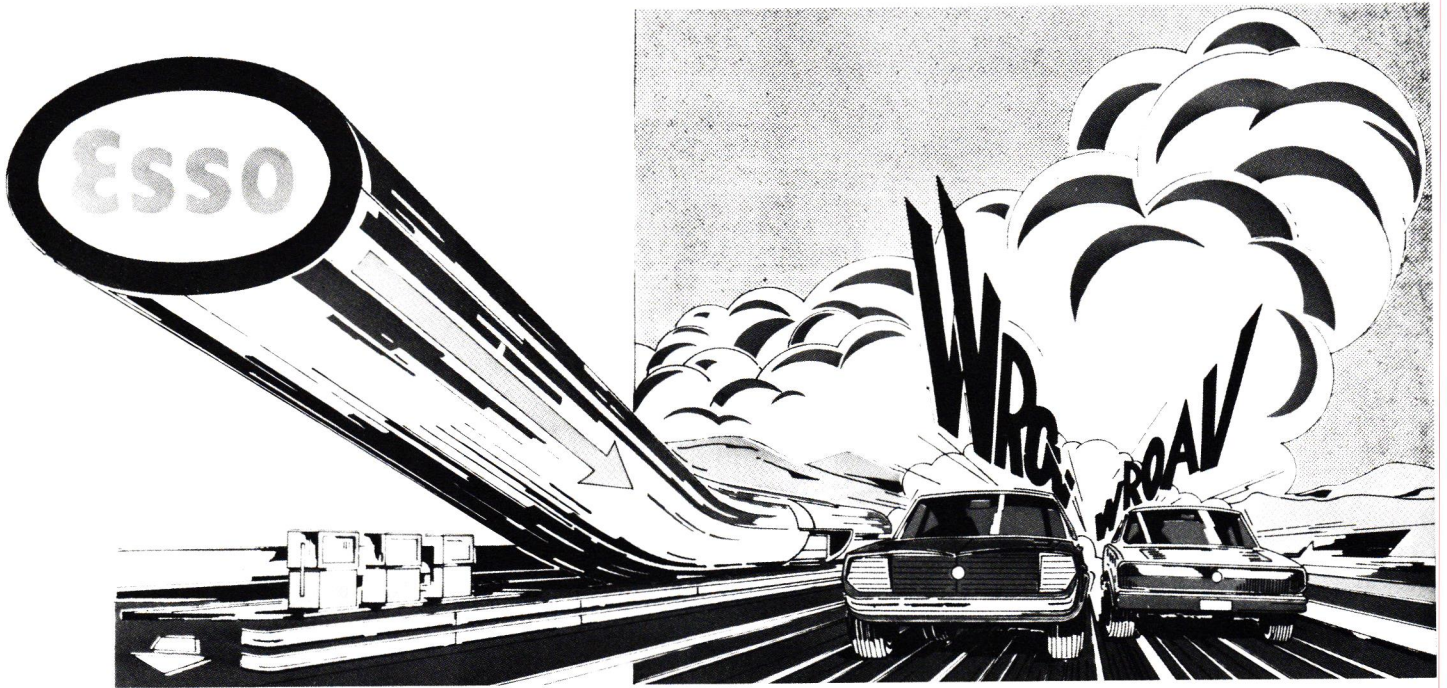
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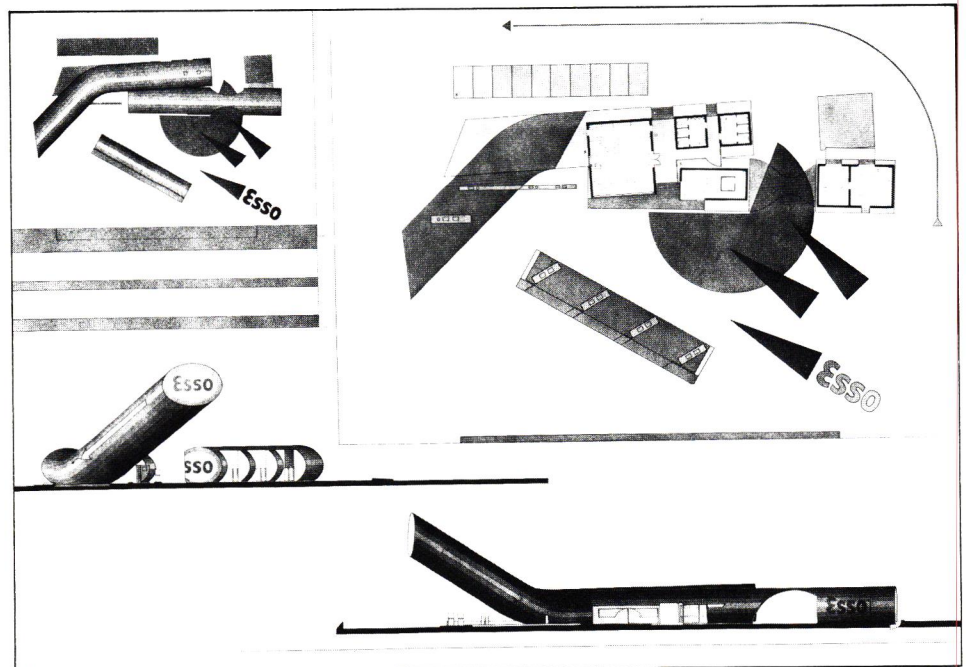
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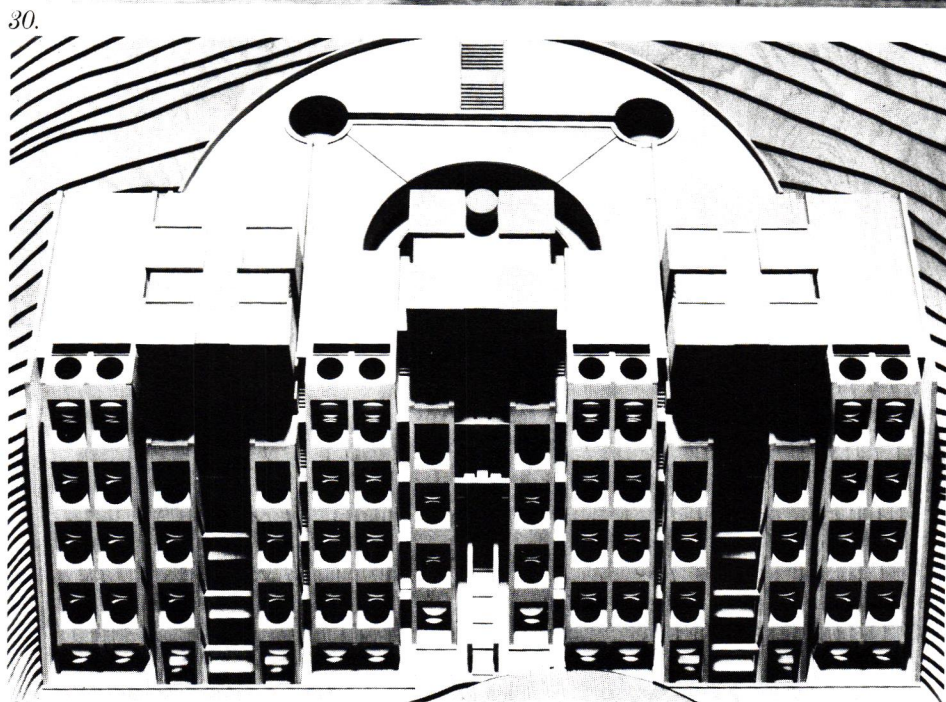
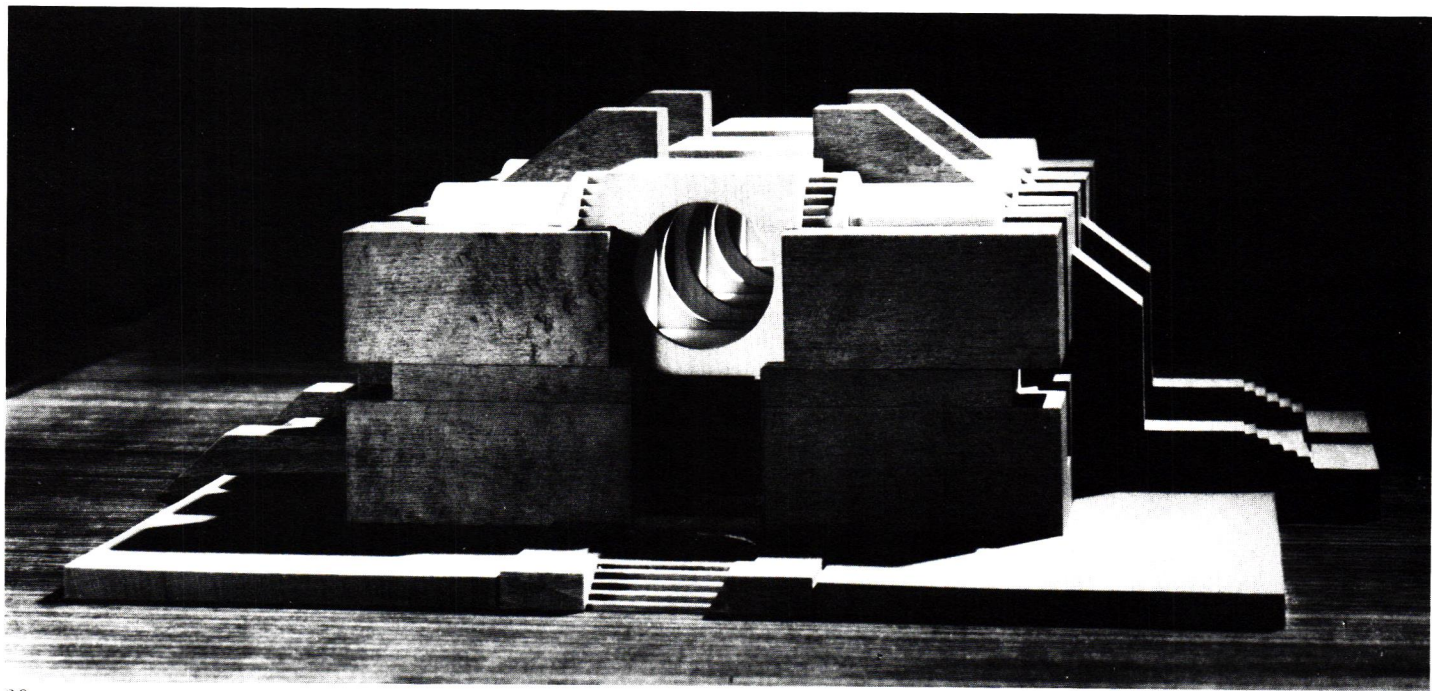
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Figure 28. Esso Service Station, project. Vittorio De Feo and Associates, 1971. Perspective.

Figure 31. Hotel, Santa Caterina, Nardo. Gruppo Stass, architects, 1970. Model.

Figure 29. Esso Service Station. Plans and elevations.

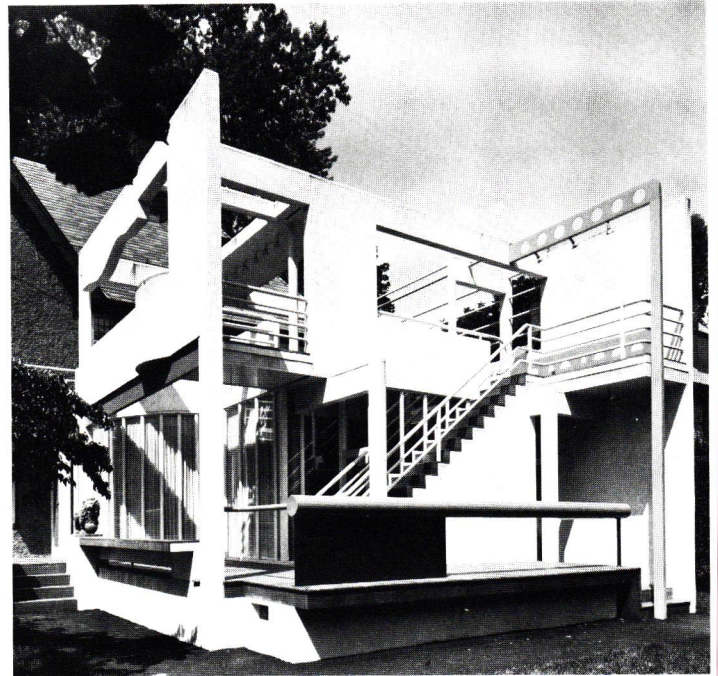
Figure 30. Project for a house, Fregene. Gruppo Stass, architects, 1968. Model.



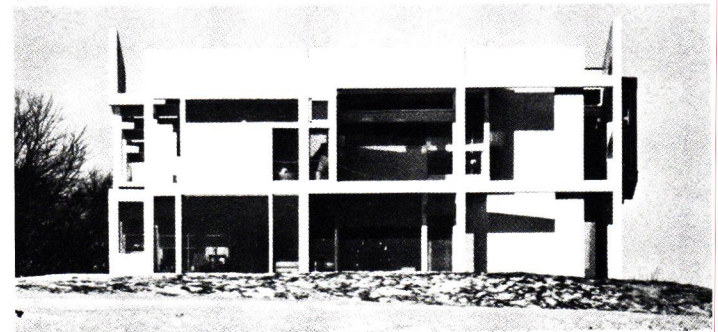
52 limitations and exclusions, Graves is able to manipulate his materials in a finite series of operations; at the same time this system allows him to show how a clarification or an explication of linguistic processes permits an indirect control over the design, *always within the predetermined system of exclusions*. In other words, Michael Graves, Peter Eisenman and Richard Meier give new life to a method which springs from the classification of the syntactic processes. It is the sort of formalism, in its original guise, which is perpetuated through their work (figs. 32-34). "Semantic distortion," the pivotal point of the Russian formalists, is thus brought to life again in an obvious manner at the Benacerraf House by Graves. Within this work, as well as in the more hieratic and timeless syntactic decompositions of Eisenman, we may see a sort of analytic laboratory devoted to experimentation upon highly select forms, rather than just a mere penchant for Terragni or a taste for the abstract.

It is of little interest to us to ask how such works may appear as a heresy within the American culture. However, their objective role is without doubt to provide a selected catalogue of design approaches applicable to predetermined situations. It is then useless to ask if their "neo-purist" tendencies are or are not effective.²⁴ As examples of linguistic structures, we can only ask that they be rigorous in their absolute ahistoricism. Only in this fashion can their nostalgic abandon be neutralized, and thereby acknowledge their need to remain in isolation (an acknowledgement, by the way, which would never be apparent from the self-satisfied stylistic gestures of Philip Johnson).

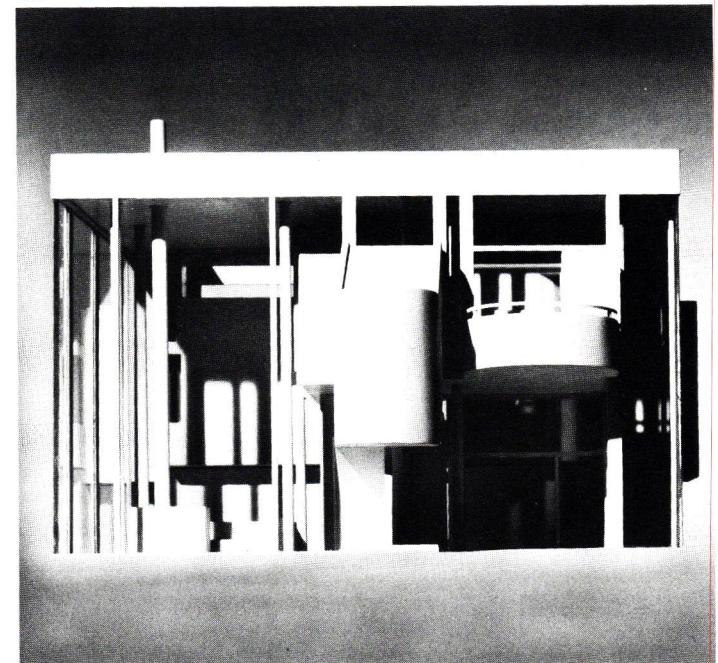
Let us attempt to reconstruct the analysis to date. It requires a specific reading of the languages employed as well as the use of different modes of approach to their analysis. To understand Stirling's work it is necessary to refer to the technological aesthetic and the theory of information. Only by so doing will it be possible to become completely aware of the rationale behind his semantic distortions. But the theory of information reveals little to us about Rossi's study of typological constraints. Indeed, Rossi's formalism appears to want to challenge even the original formulation of the linguistic formalism of Viktor Sklovsky or of Vsevolod M. Eichenbaum.



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Figure 32. *Benacerraf House*,
Princeton, New Jersey. Michael
Graves, architect, 1967.

Figure 34. *House in Pound Ridge*,
Connecticut. Richard Meier and
Associates, architects, 1969.

Figure 33. *House II, Hardwick*,
Vermont. Peter Eisenman, architect,
1969.

We do not wish to put forward a theory of critical empiricism. We rather intend to point out that every critical action is seen, in fact, as a composite of itself and the object being analyzed. Today then, a highly specialized analysis of an architecture, strongly characterized by linguistic sense, can have only one result—a tautology.

To dissect and rebuild the geometric metaphors of the “compositional rigorists” may prove to be an endless game which may eventually become useless when, as in Eisenman’s work, the process of assemblage is altogether explicit and presented in a highly didactic manner. In the face of such products, the task of criticism is to begin from within the work only to escape from it as soon as possible so as not to be caught in the vicious circle of a language that speaks only of itself. Obviously the problems of criticism lie elsewhere. We do not believe in the artificial “New Trends” within contemporary architecture.²⁵ Yet there is little doubt that there exists a widespread attitude that is intent on repossessing the unique character of the object by removing it from its economic and functional contexts and highlighting it as an exceptional event—and hence a surrealist one—by placing it in parentheses with the flux of objects generated by the production system. It is possible to speak of these acts as an “*architecture dans le boudoir*.” And not only because we find ourselves faced with an “architecture of cruelty,” as the works of Stirling and Rossi have demonstrated with their cruelty of language-as-a-system-of-exclusions, but also because the magic circle drawn around linguistic experimentation reveals a pregnant affinity with the structural rigor of the literature of the Marquis de Sade. “There, where the stake is sex, everything must speak of sex.” That is, the utopia of Eros in Sade—resolved within the discovery that maximum freedom springs forth from maximum terror—where the whole is inscribed within the supreme constraint of a geometric structure in the narrative. To regain an “order of discourse” may today prove to be a safeguard for certain subjective liberties—particularly after its destruction by the avant-garde through questioning the techniques of mass information and with the disappearance of the work of art into the assembly line. There are two contradictions, however. On the one hand, as with the Enlightenment utopia, such attempts are destined to reveal that liberty serves only to make a silence speak; that is, one

cannot bring voluntary action to oppose a structure. On the other hand, the “orders of discourse” are an attempt to go beyond this impasse and propose a foundation for a new statute of architecture. Such contradictions are actually theorized in the work of Kahn since the mid-fifties. Yet we have not escaped the hermetic play of language.

The questions criticism must now ask are: What makes such studies and research possible? What are the contexts and structures within which they operate? What is their role within the present day production system?

Some of these questions have already been answered in our discussion. We can add, however, that they are cast-offs of a production system which must; (a) renew its forms, submitting to peripheral sectors of professional organizations the task of experimenting with new models (in fact it would prove useful to follow the way in which the new form models, brought forth by the isolated form-makers, are to be introduced into mass production); (b) bring together a highly differentiated public by assigning the role of “vestals of the discipline” to figures whose task is to preserve the concept and role of architecture as a traditional object, an object that preserves intrinsic qualities of communication. Thus we abandon the object itself and move into the system which, in itself, gives meaning. And criticism thereby explicitly moves its inquest from a specific task to the structure that conditions the total meaning of the object. Our statement concerning the role of criticism as the violation of the object in question now becomes clear. From the examination of those opposing attempts which aim to bring architecture back into the realm of discourse, we have come to single out the role of the architectural discourse, thereby seriously questioning the place and scope of those attempts. We must now move further.

On several occasions we have tried to show that, in the vicissitudes of the historical avant-garde, the alternatives that appear as opposites—order and disorder, laws and change, structure and chaos—are in reality entirely complementary.²⁶ We have seen this exemplified in the Gallarate neighborhood in Milan, within which the dialectic between purism and construction is made entirely obvious. But the

historic import of such a complementary system goes beyond the specific example. To degrade the materials out of which communication is made by compromising them with the commonplace and forcing them to be mirrored in the anxious swamp of merchandising, thus reducing them to astonished and emptied signs, is the process which leads from the tragic clownings of the Cabaret Voltaire, to the Merzbau of Kurt Schwitters (fig. 35), to the pictures composed by telephone of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy. Yet there is a surprising result. This desecrating immersion into chaos becomes the premise for the existence of a new means, which having absorbed the logic of that chaos is now ready to dominate it from within.

Thus we have the *form of the informal*—as a victory. On the one hand we have the manipulation of pure signs as foundations to an architectural constructivism; on the other hand, the acceptance of the indefinite, of dissolution. The control of the chaos and of the casual requires this double attitude. As Rudolf Arnheim has accurately observed, “The precocious insistence on minimal forms of the maximum precision (as in the works of Jean Arp, which are for us entirely symptomatic) and in the subsequent manifestation of disorder appearing at opposite points, are in reality symptoms of the very same abandonment.”²⁷ The *papiers déchirés* of Picasso belong to this logic. But it is the testimony of Arp which makes clear the process that ties together the affirmation of the forms to its own destruction.

About 1930 pictures of hand torn papers were born. . . .

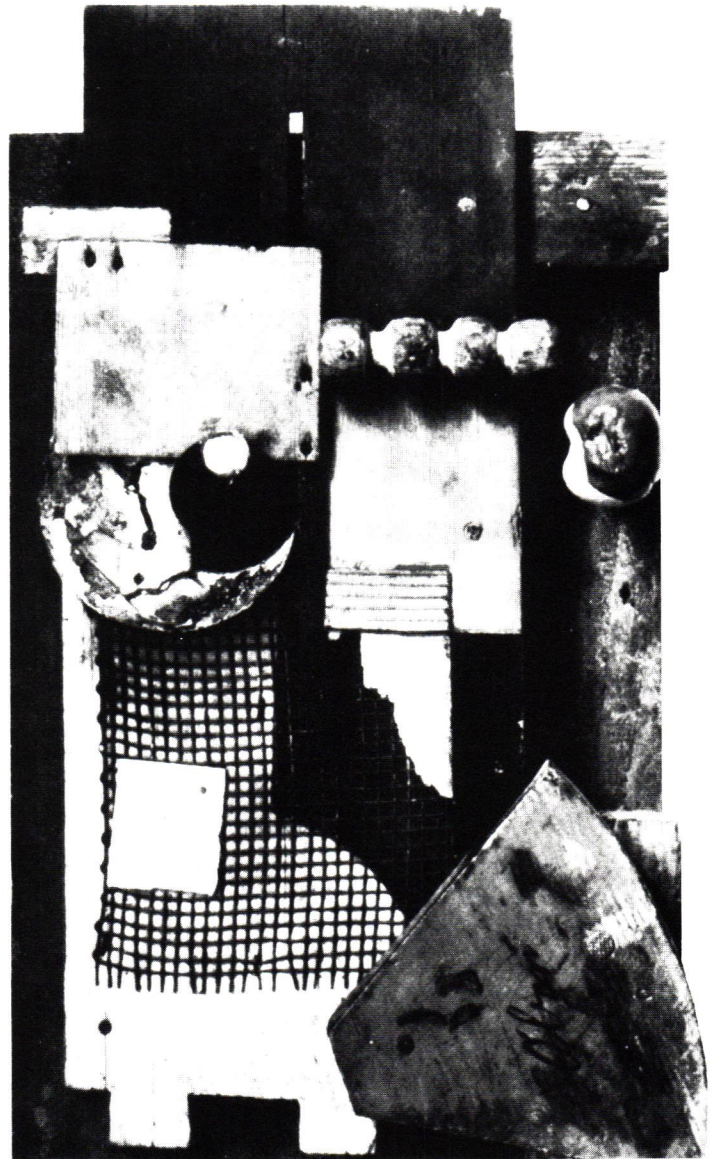
Why worry about achieving perfection, purity, when it can never be reached? I now welcomed the decay which begins no sooner than when the work is ended. The dirty man with filthy hands points and smudges a detail of the picture. . . . He is overcome by a savage enthusiasm and smears the painting with saliva. A delicate collage of watercolored paper is lost. Dust and insects are also efficient in destruction. Light wastes the colors. The sun and heat produce blisters, disintegrate the paper, crack the paint, disintegrating it. Humidity creates mould, the work falls to pieces, it dies. The death of a painting no longer drives me to despair. I had made my pact with its passing on and now it was for me part of the painting. But death grew, devouring both the painting and life. . . . The form had become formless, the Finite Infinite, the Individual the All.²⁸

The formlessness, that is, the risk of existence, then no longer creates anxiety if it is accepted as linguistic “material.” And vice versa, language may thus speak of the indeterminate, the casual, the transient. The happening gives credence to the observation by Jean Fautrier that art today “. . . may only destroy itself, and only by destroying itself can it continually renew itself.”²⁹ Yet this is but an attempt to give meaning to the phenomenon of mass consumption. It is not by chance then that a great many such celebrations of the formlessness take place under the banner of a technological utopia. The irritating and ironic metaphors of Archigram or of the Archizoom group, or of architecture conceived as an explosion of fragments by John Johansen, sink their roots deep into the technological myth. Technology can thereby be enslaved in the configuration of an entirely virtual space. It may be read, in a mystic manner, as “second nature,” the object of mimesis; it may indeed become the subject for formalist chit-chat, as in the part of the work of Soviet constructivism wherein the form self-destructs to make way for messages originating from the same self-destructive process. And there are those who, like Bruno Zevi, attempt to compile a code of such programmed self-destruction.³⁰ What remains hidden in all of these abstract furors is the general sense of their own masochistic disintegration. And it is precisely with reference to these experiences that a critical method, as inspired by the technological aesthetic of Max Bense or by the information theory of Abraham Moles, may be fruitfully applied. This is only possible because, in a manner even greater than Stirling’s, they seek a language truly fitting of the technological realm; they attempt to invest the entire physical setting with enlarged quanta of information in an effort to reunite “the word and the object,” and contribute to daily existence an autonomous structure of communication. It is not aleatory then that the already outworn images of Archigram, or the artificial and willful ironies of Robert Venturi or of Hans Hollein simultaneously amplify and restrict the field of intervention of architecture. They amplify it insofar as their goal is the dominance of all visible space, and restrict it insofar as they understand that space solely as a network of superstructures.

There is, however, a result to this which emerges in projects such as that by Venturi and Rauch for the American Bicentennial.

ennial Celebration (fig. 36) in Philadelphia.³¹ Here, there is no longer a desire to communicate; the architecture is dissolved into an unstructured system of ephemeral signals. Instead of *communication*, there is a flux of information; instead of an architecture as language, there is an attempt to reduce it to a mass-medium, without any ideological residue; instead of an anxious effort to restructure the urban system, there is a disenchanting acceptance of reality, becoming an excess of purest cynicism. (Excess, after all, always carries a critical connotation.) In this fashion, Venturi, placing himself within an exclusively linguistic framework, has reached a radical devaluation of the language itself. The meaning of the *Plakatwelt*, of the world of publicity, is closed in on itself. He thereby achieves the symmetrically opposed result of that reached by the compositional rigorists. For the latter it is the metaphysical retrieval of a “being” of architecture, extracted from the flux of existence. For Venturi, it is the non-utilization of language itself, having discovered that its intrinsic ambiguity, once having made contact with reality, makes illusory any and all pretexts of autonomy.

A warning to all: in both cases, the language does not deceive itself. If the protagonists of contemporary architecture at times take on the mask of Don Quixote, it is as an act that has a less superficial meaning than is readily apparent, for in fact it constitutes unconsciously, a veritable “language of disillusion.” Language has thus reached the point of speaking about its own isolation, as it may wish to trace anew the path of rigorism focusing on the mechanism of its own writing, or as it may wish to explode into the problematic space of existence. Yet does not such a path, which historically spans the last two decades, repeat a previous event? Is not the answer by Mallarmé, “It is the word itself which speaks,”³² analogous to the tragic realization by Kraus and Loos, “. . . facts have words, and it is only that which has been meditated that is ineffable”? And, after all, has not the destiny of the historical avant-garde been that of destroying itself over the plan—a historically frustrated one at that—of the intellectual management of reality? The return to language is a proof of failure. It is necessary to examine to what degree such a failure is due to the intrinsic character of the architectural discipline and to what degree it is due to a still unresolved ambiguity.



35.

56 Michel Foucault has observed how there exists a sort of unevenness among the ways of employing language: “The discussions ‘which are spoken’ throughout the days and exchanges which pass away with the very action which pronounced them; and the discussions which are at the origin of a certain number of new acts, of words which pick these up, transform or tell of them; in other words, discussions which remain indefinitely beyond their own formulation, and which *are said*, have been said, and remain still to be said.”³³ This is a displacement which is apparently not absolute, yet strong enough to be a functional discriminant among the levels of linguistic organization. The Modern movement had, in its entirety, attempted to eliminate such displacement (we are referring specifically to the polemical position of Hannes Meyer, to the precise rationalism of Hans Schmidt, to the stance taken by periodicals such as *ABC* or *G*, and to the aesthetic formulations of Karel Teige, Walter Benjamin and Hans Mukarovsky).³⁴ But it is Foucault himself who recognizes the outcome of such an approach. “The radical repeal of this displacement can only be a game, utopia or anxiety. A game after Borges, of a commentary which will be nothing more than the reappearance, word for word (yet this time solemn and long-awaited) of the object of the comment itself: the game, once again, of a criticism which speaks endlessly about a work which does not exist.”³⁵

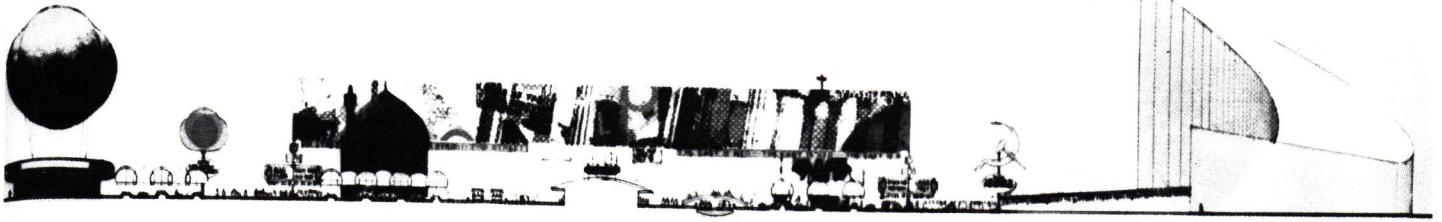
By no chance are we dealing with an approach upon which converge those whom Jencks has called the “Supersensualists”³⁶—that is, Hans Hollein, Walter Pichler or Riccardo Bofill—preceded as they were (and this Jencks does not bring out) by much of the late work of Lloyd Wright and the impotent prefigurations of the technological avant-gardists. The elimination of the displacement between those discussions “which are spoken” and those “which are said” cannot be realistically accomplished at the level of the language itself. The explosion of architecture out towards reality has within it a comprehensive goal which becomes evident if we understand the areas of research upon which the work of such men as Raymond Unwin, Barry Parker, Clarence Stein, Charles Harris Whitaker, Henry Wright, Fritz Schumacher, Ernst May and Hannes Meyer, is based.

What ties together the thread which is seen as an alternative

to the works just analyzed, is the preeminent position of structural considerations in this work. It is always possible to analyze linguistically the urban models of New Earswick, Pullman Town, Radburn or of Battery Park City. But we would have to be aware that it would be an artificial act: such as in the case of one who upon analyzing an assemblage of Rauschenberg would readily lose himself in cataloging the origins of each piece. In reality, and this can be proved historically, the current to which we are referring interprets architecture as an altogether negligible phenomenon. Of primary concern, however, are typological analyses—the introduction of the concept of the economic cycle as the determining variable for any proposed structure, and the completion of the intervention by a marshalling of productive capacities as well as by the development of a regional plan.

In all this there is an attempt at a radical modification of the social division of labor, and therefore of the task of planning and design. The abandonment of professional practice and the assumption of the post of Chief Architect in Rebuilding and Town Planning at the Ministry of Health (1918) by Raymond Unwin, the introduction of a new professionalism by Martin Wagner as Stadtbaurat of Berlin between 1925 and 1933, the technical-political activity of Rexford Tugwell within the Resettlement Administration during the New Deal era, and the technicians which today choose to work in contact with cooperative organizations or public agencies, without doubt make for alternatives other than those followed by people desirous of preserving a linguistic “aura” for architecture.

The latter do not fall into political misunderstandings and ambiguities, and they pay dearly for their wish for purity with an untimeliness—a not-altogether secondary reason for their charm. The second ones ask to be judged in terms of their political results, even if they have not been altogether successful. This is because in their work they have followed a logic which ambiguously straddles capitalistic development, the organizations and class movements. Under the best conditions they have tried to postulate an immediate coincidence between the objectives of urban and productive reform and the claims of the embattled strategies of workers’ movements and their organizations.



36.

Quite justifiably, this is the ideological side of these approaches, a mystifying aspect against which any polemic must undertake political characteristics. There exists, however, an underground current, which as such is removed from the architectural discipline—from form to reform—which perhaps may overcome certain ambiguities. In fact, at least one new tendency is discernible among all these various attempts—a role for the “new technician” immersed within those organizations which determine the capitalistic management of building and regional planning, not as a specialist in language, but rather, as a *producer*:

To think of the architect as a producer is to renounce almost entirely the traditional baggage of values and judgments. As an entire production cycle rather than a single work is desired, critical analysis must be directed towards the material constraints which determine the production cycle itself. Yet this is not enough. The specific analysis must be made compatible with the dynamics of the entire economic cycle, not to generate those misunderstandings brought about by an economic vision subordinated to the needs of architecture. In other words, to change the scope of what architecture wishes to be, or wishes to say, towards that which building construction is in reality, means that we must find suitable parameters which will allow us to understand the role of construction within the entire capitalistic system. It may be objected that such an economic reading of building production is other than the reading of architecture as a system of communications. We can only answer that, wishing to discover the tricks of a magician, it is often better to observe him from behind the scenes rather than to continue to stare at him from a seat in the audience.

It is clear then that to place architectural ideology into the production cycle, albeit as a secondary element, is quite simply to overthrow the pyramid of values which are usually accepted in the consideration of architecture. Once such a judgment standard has been accepted, however, it will be quite ridiculous to ask in which way a linguistic choice or an element of structural organization will express or anticipate “more free” ways of life. That which criticism must ask of architecture is in what way will it, insofar as it is a precise organization, be able to influence the relations of production.

We therefore find it important here to grasp certain questions which Benjamin posed in one of his more important essays, “The Author as Producer.”

Now instead of asking what is the position of a work with respect to the relations of production of an era, if it is in accord with them, if it is reactionary or if instead it aims at their overthrow, if it is revolutionary; instead of asking this question or at least before asking it, I would like to ask another. Therefore, before asking what is the position of a poem with respect to the relations of production of the era, I would like to ask what is its position within them? This question directly concerns the function of the work relative to the relation of literary production of an era. In other words, it is a question immediately aimed at the literary techniques of these works.³⁷

This viewpoint is for Benjamin, in fact, a radical step ahead of his own more ideological positions, such as those expressed in the conclusions to *Opera d'Arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilita tecnica*. Among the questions posed in “The Author as Producer,” there are no concessions to proposals for salvation by means of an “alternative” use of linguistic elements, no ideology beyond a “communist” art as opposed to a “fascist” art. There is only a structural consideration—authentically structural—of the productive role of intellectual activities, and therefore certain questions regarding their possible contribution to the development of the relations of production. There are certainly many obscure points in Benjamin’s text concerning the political value of certain technical innovations—we are thinking of the connections traced between Dadaism and the content of a political photomontage by Heartfield³⁸—considered “revolutionary” by Benjamin. Yet the substance of his argument is vital today, so much so as in fact to lead to a radical revision in the recognition of fundamental turning points in the history of contemporary art and architecture. Keeping in mind the central question—that is, what is the position of the work of art within the relations of production—many “masterpieces” of modern architecture take on a secondary if not altogether marginal significance, while a great deal of the current debates will be relegated to the periphery.

Our concluding evaluations concerning the present research

58 aimed at bringing architecture back to its original “purity” are therefore valid. These studies, whose sincerity is not to be faulted, are seen as “parallel actions,” that is, as proposals intended to build an uncontaminated layer floating above (or below) the truly determining forces. Art for art has been in its own fashion a form of upper class protest against the universe of *Zivilisation*. In defending *Kultur* against *Zivilisation*, Thomas Mann was formulating “. . . the thoughts of an impolitic man,” which, if followed to their conclusions, would but reaffirm the identification between art and play as set forth by Schiller—the “courage to talk of roses” may then be appreciated only as a confession of a radical anachronism.

Going beyond such anachronisms, the history of modern architecture will be rewritten, thereby favoring the moments and attempts which answer best to the questions set out by Benjamin. A new historical sweep will connect figures such as Friedrich Naumann, Henry Ford and Walter Rathenau—men whose intent has been to impose on architects a series of new organizational tasks within the capitalistic production cycle—with men such as Martin Wagner, Parvus, and Ernst May who have given concrete meaning to the Social Democrats’ plan to manage housing and attempts to practice land policies with lobby groups, such as those centered on Frederick Law Olmsted or on the Regional Plan Association of America. With these emerge a new attitude towards the role which intellectual work may undertake in its efforts to remove the capitalistic contradictions in building and in the planned utilization of resources.

Certainly, all these attempts are still held back by strong ideological ties. In the first place, they are inhibited because they aim towards the “solution” of unresolvable contradictions without reckoning with the concrete class movements (which are the only forces which may give meaning to the struggles for institutional reforms), secondly, because they consider intellectual work as autonomous, being an instrument which can only influence structural reforms by means of preserving and strengthening its own utopian character. This becomes apparent, as when the nature of the problem undergoes a change and creates a crisis of implementation, as seen in the impact between radical European architects and the

first Soviet Five Year Plans, or between the members of the RPAA and the contradictory politics of the New Deal, as well as when the very process of proposed development calls into question the role of ideology or of its utopian models. There remains, nonetheless, the fact that, notwithstanding all the possible distortions and ideological vices which these approaches convey, there does indeed exist a history of attempts towards a comprehensive organization of intellectual work within the relations of production. The task of criticism is then to recognize those attempts, to favor them in the field of historical analysis and to cruelly reveal their deficiencies and ambiguities, thereby making it readily known that those unanswered problems are the only ones worthy of “political” action. It is logical that the question criticism poses to that which we can no longer name architecture but rather a general organization of building processes, must be the same one it asks of itself; that is, in which way does criticism enter into the production processes? What indeed does it have to offer for itself at that level? How must it transform itself (once it has singled out as its own reference the class organizations)? And how has it chosen to identify itself as an instrument of these organizations?

These questions cannot be readily answered without seriously challenging the present-day crystallization of intellectual work and therefore without challenging our capitalistic division of labor. Yet these questions give us a precise sense of direction in action, a field of encounter and confrontation directed towards a greater knowledge of reality. The criticism of ideology—an ever useful weapon in overcoming the rearmost positions and in chasing away the danger of following as “revolutionary” those false paths laid out by the enemy that lead into the desert—may at this point be translated into an analysis of concrete techniques which will favor capitalistic development. And it may become a premise to further select topics to be used as weapons of an all encompassing struggle. In this context, the General Strike, which in 1969 marked a new phase in the Italian workers’ claims centered on the city and the house, becomes a fundamental chapter in the historical method we are proposing. It becomes so much more than the ideological contortions of the technicians who, “curved over the drawing boards continue to extract the wrong sums,” as Brecht would say.

The conclusions of our discussion cannot but be fraught with difficulties. Once again, the questions posed by Benjamin are the ones which, as obstacles along our way, must be confronted. And to the architect who accepts the new role which the difficult present-day reality proposes, we shall not tire from asking:

Will he be able to promote the socialization of the spiritual means of production? Does he foresee the way to organize the intellectual tasks within the production processes themselves? Has he any suggestions for transforming his work and role? However thoroughly he will be able to channel his work towards the end, then so much more just will be this tendency, and so much higher will be the technical quality of his work. On the other hand, the better informed he is of his position within the production process, the less willing will he be to pass himself off as an exponent of the spirit For the revolutionary struggle is not between capitalism and the spirit, but between capitalism and the proletariat.³⁹

1. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). Note, however, that the phrase "The mortal silence of the sign . . ." is attributable to Nietzsche.

2. See Kenneth Frampton, "Leicester University Engineering Laboratory," *Architectural Design*, vol. XXXIV, n. 2, 1964, p. 61; idem, "Information Bank," *Architectural Forum*, vol. 129, n. 4, 1968, pp. 37-47; idem, "Andrew Melville Hall, St. Andrews University, Scotland," *Architectural Design*, vol. XL, n. 9, 1970, pp. 460-2; Mark Girouard, "Florey Building, Oxford," *The Architectural Review*, vol. CLII, n. 909, 1972, pp. 260-77; this article, aside from the references set forth by Frampton concerning the images of Sant'Elia, Constructivism, Wright, Chareau, Brinkman and Van der Vlugt, establishes a definite relationship between the artificial geometrizing of Stirling and the Victorian impracticality of Butterfield. See also Joseph Rykwert, "Un Episodio Inglese," *Domus*, n. 415, 1964, p. 31; idem, "Stirling a Cambridge," *Domus*, n. 471, 1969, pp. 8-15; idem, "Stirling in Scozia," *Domus*, n. 491, 1970, pp. 5-15; Charles Jencks, "James Stirling or Function Made Manifest," *Modern Movements in Architecture* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), pp. 260-70. In his personal statement Stirling avoids dealing directly with questions concerning his sources, preferring to talk about the invention of the organism as a single complete structure: see in particular Stirling, "An Architect's Approach to Architecture," *RIBA Journal*, vol. 72, n. 5, May 1965, pp. 231-40 also in *Zodiac*, n. 16, 1967, pp. 160-9; idem, "Anti-Structure," *Zodiac*, n. 18, 1968, pp. 51-60.

3. This opinion is expressed, for example, by Frampton, "Andrew Melville Hall," pp. 460-2, and by Rykwert, "James Stirling, 4 Projects," *Domus*, n. 512, 1972, pp. 1-20.

4. We are referring, for example, to the "Melnikov-like" hall, tied sideways to the pilasters as well as to the girders in the tower of the Engineering Laboratory, Leicester University. But Rykwert has rightly observed that there exists a structural dissonance within the Olivetti Center in Surrey created by the truncation of the metal vaults as they come to rest on brackets in the wedged-shaped foyer. See Rykwert, "Lo Spazio Policromo: Olivetti Training Center, Haslemere, Surrey 1968-72," *Domus*, n. 530, 1974, pp. 37-44.

5. Frampton, "Leicester Engineering Laboratory," p. 61.

6. Frampton, "Andrew Melville Hall," pp. 460-2.

7. See Peter Eisenman, "From Golden Lane to Robin Hood Gardens; or if you follow the Yellow Brick Road it may not lead to Golders Green," *Oppositions 1*, 1973, pp. 28-56.

8. See Alan Johnson, Stephen N. Games, "Letters to Editors: Florey Building, Oxford," *The Architectural Review*, vol. CLIII, n. 910, 1972, pp. 384-5.

9. Roland Barthes, *Critiques et vérité* (Paris: Ed. Du Seuil, 1964). See also Serge Doubrovsky, *Pourquoi la nouvelle cri-*

tique: critique et objectivité (Paris: Mèrcure de France, 1967).

10. Garroni has severely criticized the attempts by König, De Fusco and Eco at reconstructing an architectural "language." He has however proposed an analytic model based on the identification of array on constant typologies. This model is in our opinion one of great interest. See Emilio Garroni, *Progetto di Semiotica* (Bari: Laterza, 1972), p. 95.

11. We shall consider Aldo Rossi only as an architect, and hereby point out that his theoretical works are but "poetics" in the strictest sense. It is perhaps useless to challenge his literary works: they have but one usage, to help follow the spiritual autobiography which the architect inscribes within this formal composition. The bibliography of Rossi suffers in all ways from partiality; we therefore will mention only three texts: Ezio Bonfanti, "Elementi e costruzione: note sull'architettura di Aldo Rossi," *Controspazio*, 11, n. 10, 1970, pp. 19-42; Massimo Scolari, "Avanguardia e Nuova Architettura," *Architettura Razionale: XV Triennale di Milano, Sezione Internazionale di Architettura*, ed. Franco Angeli (Milan, 1973), pp. 153-87; introduction by Martin Steinman, "Architektur," *Aldo Rossi, Bauten, Projekte*, catalogue for exhibition, Zurich Nov./Dec. 1973.

12. "The play of contradictions and the withholdings of meaning from the network of common relationships of and by objects is not just an ordinary technical expedient: it is the expedient par-excellence, the ritual that is, with its detailed and evocative preparations, the Epiphany as sublimation, the goals healing and miraculous. Sublimation par-excellence, as play hides further play and each slowly reveals the other, and painting stands by itself as a counterpoint to the crisis between appearance and matter, as an alternative as well . . . Having broken the line between reality and its objects the game is drawn: faith in action, in knowledge, in analysis becomes an object which is far more objective than the objects which it ought to come into play with, a truth more true than any emerging or of any relation—a thing in itself." Paolo Fossati, *La pittura a programma. De Chirico metafisico* (Padua: Ed. Marsilio, 1973), p. 24.

13. We are, of course, referring to the well-known passage from Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) used by Frampton as a heading to his essay in *Oppositions 1*, 1973. Yet the theme of Klee's "Angelus Novus" is present throughout the mature works of Benjamin: "the average European has not been able to reconcile his life with technology because he has remained faithful to the matrix of a creative existence. It is necessary to have followed the struggle of Loos with the ornament dragon, it is necessary to have heard the astral cry of Scheerbart's creatures or have escorted Klee's new angel—who would prefer to liberate mankind by taking from them what they have, rather than to

make them happy with gifts—to be able to understand a world which affirms itself through destruction . . . Out of the infant and the cannibal is born he who rules (the demon): not a new man, but an inhuman being—a new angel." Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (10, 14, 17 and 18 March 1931), reprinted in *Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), pp. 155-95; *Avanguardia e rivoluzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), pp. 100-33.

14. It may, in fact, achieve notable poetic results as at the Muggio City Hall (1972) where the "magic" bursting through of a truncated cone into the grid thereby forces it apart. This design perhaps begins to explain what Rossi is striving for when speaking of an "analogous city": a sort of "magical realism," based on a conceptual experience replete with echoing memories: "We can employ references from the existing city by placing them on a vast and smooth surface, and allowing architecture to slowly partake of new events."

15. See Aldo Rossi et al, eds., "La Triennale modello Starace," *Parametro*, n. 21-22, 1973, dedicated to the XV Triennale di Milano (Starace was a notable fascist henchman). See also Glauco Gresleri, "Alla XV Triennale di Milano," *Parametro*, n. 21-22, 1973, p. 6; Giovanni Klaus König, letter to *Architettura: cronache e storia*, XIX, n. 8, 1973, pp. 456-7; Joseph Rykwert, "15 Triennale," *Domus*, n. 530, 1974, pp. 1-15; for similar criticism with which we cannot agree. The IX Triennale is vulnerable from positions much more concrete than those taken in the above mentioned articles; no one, as far as we can ascertain, has noted how objectively "reactionary" were the city scale projects for Rome or Venice presented obviously by "non-academic" architects. Yet to attack the Triennale, to wound Rossi is to us intolerable, although the same cannot be said for his school. The historian's profession has little to do with that of a sports fan. It is a while since we have worried about skeletons in the closet, or since we have inveighed against too partial a judgement; even if Rykwert, with a superficiality which he does not employ in his research into Adam's paradise, is guilty of a double philological error, attributing to us ideas and preferences which we never expressed. (But why ever try to understand Tafuri through the texts of Scolari?) The point is quite another! If fascism is thought to be the dedication to the "scandalous" autonomy of the arts, then one should have the courage to break with such ambiguous and schlerotic judgements which directly influence the destiny of the modern movement. Yet once having accepted such a lower level of discussion, we should really remember that it was Gropius who tried to explain to Goebbels that only modern architecture would prove capable of expressing the supremacy of the Germanic race. And why has no one suspected that if the amazing symmetries of Rossi may be defined "after

Starace," then the constructivist volumes of the Kennedy era—of Kallman and Roche—ought to be viewed as the symbol of American democracy and its civil colonization of Vietnam? Only by refusing to employ such puerile parallelism is it possible to make history. We would certainly not prevent Rossi from teaching architecture: but not because of the fear of any historical and conformist ostracism, but rather to help him become more coherent in his fascinating, though superfluous, silence.

16. Cf. Gyorgy Lukacs, *Georg Simmel* (1918) reprinted in *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel* (Berlin, 1958), p. 173. See also Massimo Cacciari, *Metropolis: Saggi sulla grande città di Sombart, Endell, Scheffler e Simmel* (Rome: Officina, 1973), pp. 66-8.

17. Karl Kraus, *In questa grande epoca* (Vienna: 1914): cf. Walter Benjamin, *Karl Kraus*, pp. 103-4.

18. Cf. Adolf Loos, "Architektur," (1910 conference paper), in *Trotzdem* (Innsbruck: 1931), reprinted in *Samtliche Schriften, Adolf Loos* (Vienna and Munich: Herold Verlag, 1962), vol. I., p. 302. But Loos's place is anything but an isolated one: in a certain fashion it is tied to the teachings of Theodor Fischer and to the elementarism of his students, but much more so to the anguished purism of Heinrich Tessenow. Heinrich Tessenow, *Hausbau und dergleichen* (Berlin, 1916). Italian translation and introduction by Giorgio Grassi, Franco Angeli (Milan, 1974). Yet the position of an artist such as Georg Muche within the Weimar Bauhaus is very close to that of Loos: see Georg Muche, "Memorandum of 8.2.1922 to the college of professors of the Bauhaus," and "Bildende Kunst und Industrieform," in *Bauhaus*, vol. I., n. 1., 1926, pp. 5-6, in English translation *The Bauhaus*, ed. H. M. Wingler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 113-4. See also Marcel Franciscono, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar* (University of Illinois Press, 1971). For a study of the relationships among Loos, Kraus and Wittgenstein, see Basil Blackwell, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Oxford: 1967).

19. Wassily Kandinsky, *Der Gelbe Klang* (1909?), in the almanac *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1912): reprinted in critical edition by Klaus Lankeith (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1965).

20. It is clear then that a union of such disparate research work is simply a matter of convenience. Yet instead of a tendency they form today a rather ambiguous field, or climate of work.

21. Francesco Dal Co, "L'Architettura come forma sospesa," to be published in *Controspazio*.

22. Cf. Bruno Zevi, "Manieristi fra le macerie," *L'Espresso*, n. 15., 1973. Concerning the work of the "Five," see also essays by Colin Rowe and Kenneth Frampton, *Five Architects* (New York; George Wittenborn, Inc., 1972); Mario

Gandelonas, "On reading architecture," *Progressive Architecture*, n. 3., 1972, pp. 68-87; Robert Stern, "Stompin' at the Savoye," Jaquelin Robertson, "Machines in the Garden," Charles Moore, "In similar states of undress," Alan Greenberg, "The Lurking American Legacy," Romaldo Giurgola, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," *Architectural Forum*, vol. 138, n. 4, 1973, p. 46.

23. Gandelonas, "On reading architecture," pp. 78-9. We may note that what Argan has seen fit to recognize in the work of Louis Kahn is perhaps better suited to the work of the "Five": "The most profound currents today, those which are most aware of the crisis move towards a methodic analysis, almost scientific and always critical, of the structural components of the artistic phenomenon: to thereby establish whether it is possible for art to still become phenomenized, critically questioning why a surface is a surface, a volume a volume, a building a building, a painting a painting. By so doing they recognize that art cannot be defined by its placement or position, and from its role in the system they then try to see if it can be defined as a closed system, an autonomous structure." Giulio Carlo Argan, "I due stadi della critica," *Ulisse: Dove va l'arte*, vol. XII, n. 76, Nov. 1973.

24. Cf. Walter Segal, "The Neo-Purist School of Architecture," *Architectural Design*, vol. XLII, n. 6, 1972.

25. We are referring here to the "Nuova Architettura" (with a capital N and A) in Nino Dardi, *Il gioco sapiente* (Padua: Marsilio, 1971) and to the "Nuova Tendenza" (note the persistence of capital letters) of Massimo Scolari, "Avanguardia e nuova architettura," *ibid.* If the objective is to define a continuity with the abstract movements of the twenties and thirties, rather than defining what is "new," one ought to have the courage to speak of revival or of survival. If the intention is to establish the importance of linguistic consideration greater care should be exercised in the selection or exclusion of examples.

26. Cf. Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1973); *idem*, *Progetto e utopia* (Bari: Laterza, 1973); *idem*, "URSS/Berlin, 1922: du populisme a l'Internationale Constructiviste," *VH 101*, n. 7/8, 1972, pp. 53-87.

27. Rudolf Arnheim, *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order* (USA: University of California Press, 1971); *ibid.*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), p. 74.

28. Jean Arp, *On my way: Poetry and Essays 1912-1947* (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1948), p. 77.

29. Jean Fautrier, *Teorie della Pittura contemporanea*, ed. Jurgen Claus (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1967), p. 314.

30. Bruno Zevi, *Il Linguaggio Moderna dell'Architettura: Guida del Codice Anticlassico* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973).

31. *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n. 169, 1973, pp. 63-9.

32. See Note 1.

33. Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), p. 19. Inaugural lecture at the College de France, Dec. 2, 1970.

34. Francesco Dal Co, *Architettura e rivoluzione* (Padua: Marsilio, 1973). Frontispiece to the Italian edition of the writings of the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, is basic to an evaluation of his position. For an opposing position, see Massimo Scolari, "Hannes Meyer e la pretesa negazione dell'arte," *Controspazio*, I, n. 7, 1969. See also the well-known monograph by Claude Schnaidt. Cf. Hans Schmidt, *Beitrag zur Architektur, 1924-1964*. (Berlin and Basle: 1965); *Werk*, 10, 1972, partially devoted to the work of Schmidt.

35. Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du Discours*, p. 20.

36. Charles Jencks, "Dolce Vita or The Supersensualists," *Modern Movements in Architecture*, pp. 51-9.

37. Walter Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent, *Versuche uber Brecht* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971); idem, *Avanguardia e rivoluzione*, p. 201. This same essay was used by Paolo Portoghesi to answer our argument concerning the loss of function within architectural ideology. Paolo Portoghesi, "Autopsia o vivisezione dell'architettura?" *Controspazio*, 1, Nov. 1969, pp. 5-7. In fact, even here Benjamin is ambiguous and may lend himself to several interpretations. But it would be misleading to limit oneself, as Portoghesi does, to consider only the more traditional aspects of this text. In referring to the *neue Sachlichkeit* school, Benjamin says: ". . . this school has made a great deal over its poverty. In this fashion it has avoided the most important task of the contemporary writer: that of recognizing just how poor he is and how poor he must be so that he may be able to begin anew . . . Nothing will be stranger to the author who has pondered over the conditions of today's production, than the idea of expecting or even wishing new masterpieces which demonstrate the wealth, now adulterated, of the creative personality. His work will never be aimed at the ends but always towards the means of production. In other words: his products must contain *an organizational function above and beyond their character as works* (author's italics). Benjamin himself warns that such an organizational function goes far beyond any propagandistic intention.

38. Cf. Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," p. 208. A critical and acute examination of the contradictions in Benjamin's thoughts is to be found in Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, *Avanguardia e tecnologia: Walter Benjamin, Max Bense e i problemi dell'estetica tecnologica* (Rome: Officina, 1971). However, an unacceptable criticism of the above essay by Benjamin is found in the text of Jurgen Habermas, *Zur Aktualitat Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag,

1972) translated in *Comunita*, XXVIII, n. 171, 1974, pp. 211-45.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-8.

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**Symmetry:
Man's Aesthetic Response
Man's Contemplation on Himself**

William S. Huff

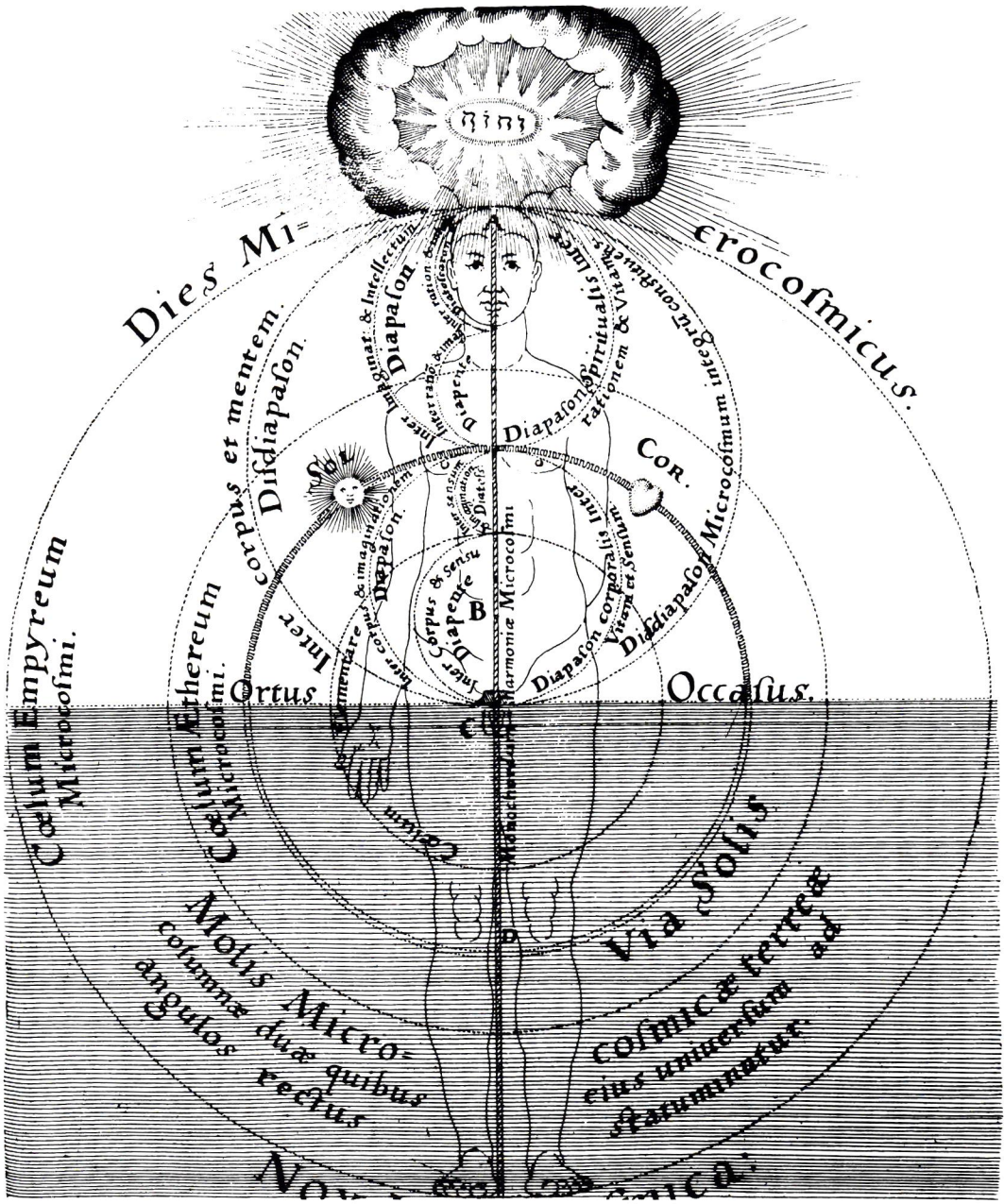
For the last ten years since his return from Ulm, William Huff has been working on a set of theoretical ideas about the nature of geometry and specifically, symmetry in the environment. Unlike traditional art-historical scholarship Huff uses image and metaphor in a kind of inscrutable, yet somehow poetic, manner to probe our awareness of the problem of symmetry.

For many Huff remains a complex iconoclast. With this publication of *Symmetry 6*, as it originally appeared, we hope to bring some of his energy and talent into a broader perspective. We hope in future issues to reproduce more of his little-known pamphlets.

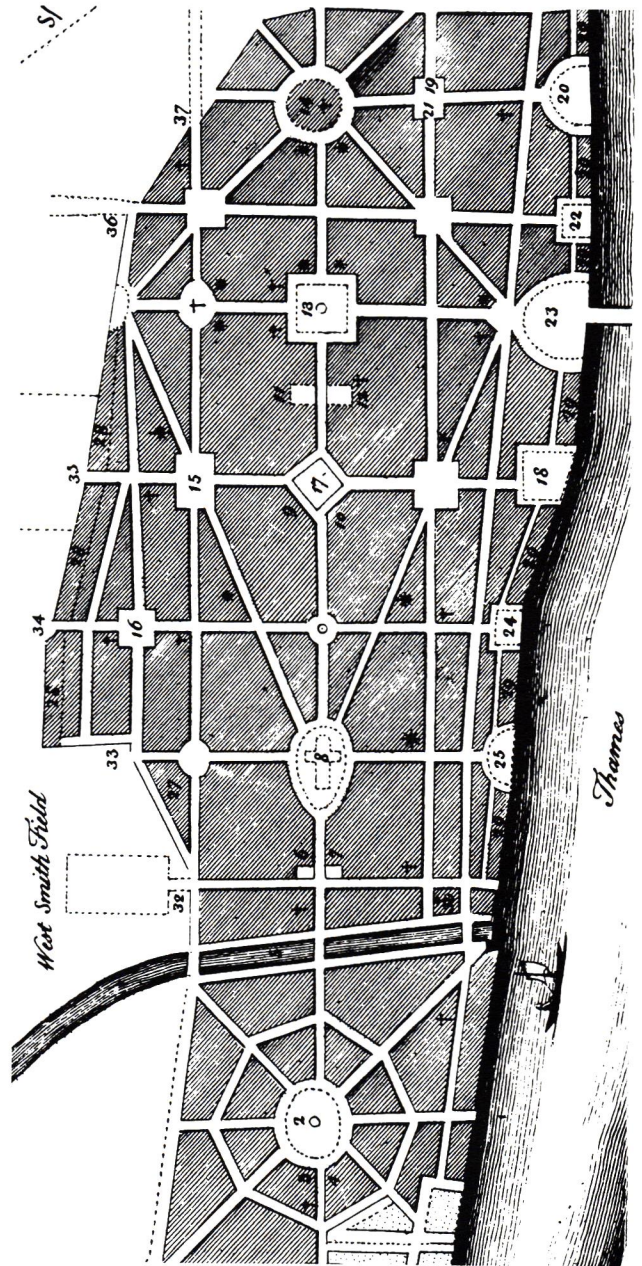
William S. Huff was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1927 and graduated from Yale University in 1952. He was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 1956 to the Hochschule für Gestaltung where he became a permanent guest teacher from 1963-68. From 1960-66 he was also assistant professor of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University becoming Associate Professor during 1966-72. His design projects include the G. A. Steiner Museum for Indian Baskets, Portersville, Pa., built in 1968. His written works include: "The Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm-Donau," (1957); "Richardson's Jail," (1958); "An Argument for Basic Design," (1965); "The Computer and Programmed Design: A Potential Tool for Teaching," (1967); *Symmetry: an appreciation of its presence in man's*

environment, Parts 4 and 6 (1967, 1970).

This facsimile reproduction has been taken from Symmetry 6 which was published by the author as part of an incomplete series of studies entitled Symmetry: an appreciation of its presence in man's consciousness.

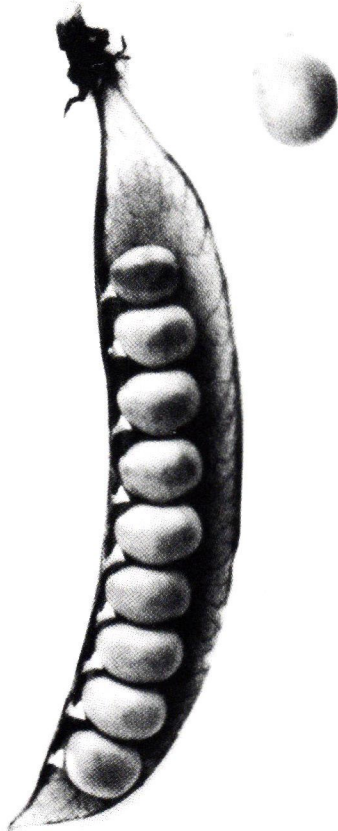


Man, professing to have been made in the image of his god, has, in turn, seen the universe replicated in himself. For him, the most persistent of symmetries is that one possessed of his own body—bilateral symmetry. His aesthetic preferences are intermingled with his corporal being, and his products often reflect that condition.



Were he a pea in a pod,
he might contemplate at greater length
the virtues of translational
or of rotational symmetry.

According to Plato's reiteration
of Aristophanes's myth,
original man was spherical and perfect—
in harmony with and a model of his universe:
*The primeval man was round,
his back and sides forming a circle;
and he had four hands and four feet,*



*one head with two faces, looking opposite ways.
He could walk upright as men do now,
backwards or forwards as he pleased,
and he could roll over and over at a great pace,
turning on his four hands and four feet,
eight in all, like tumblers
going over and over with their legs in the air.
Terrible was the might and strength of these
men,
and they made an attack upon the gods.
Doubt reigned in celestial councils.
If the gods annihilated the race with
thunderbolts,
then there would be an end of the sacrifices
and worship which men offer to the gods;*

*but on the other hand, the gods could not suffer
their insolence to be unrestrained.
At last Zeus discovered a way. He said:
"Methinks I have a plan which will humble
their pride and improve their manners:
men shall continue to exist,
but I will cut them in two
and then they will be diminished in strength
and increased in numbers;
this will have the advantage of making
them more profitable to us.
They shall walk upright on two legs, and,
if they continue insolent and will not be quiet,
I will split them again,
and they shall hop about on a single leg."*



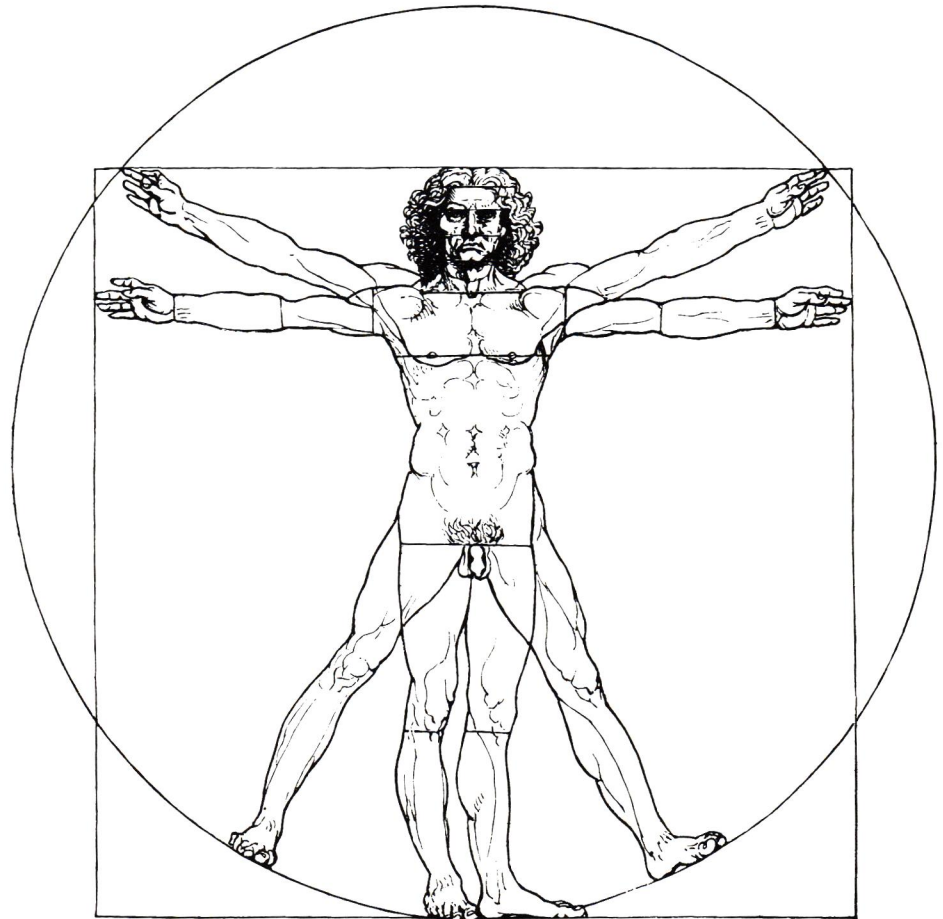
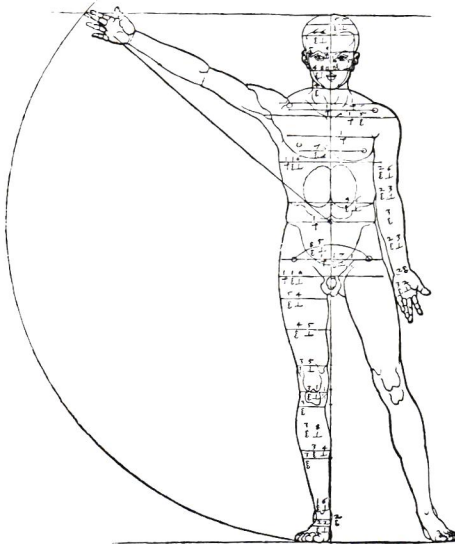
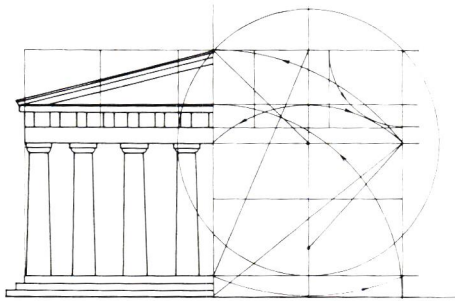
Rather than finding man's body demeaned, as Plato's passage indicates, Vitruvius found the universal laws of proportion in his bisymmetrical frame and decreed that these symmetries and proportions be employed as the measure for all perfect buildings—especially for the temples of the gods.

In the human body the central point is naturally the navel.

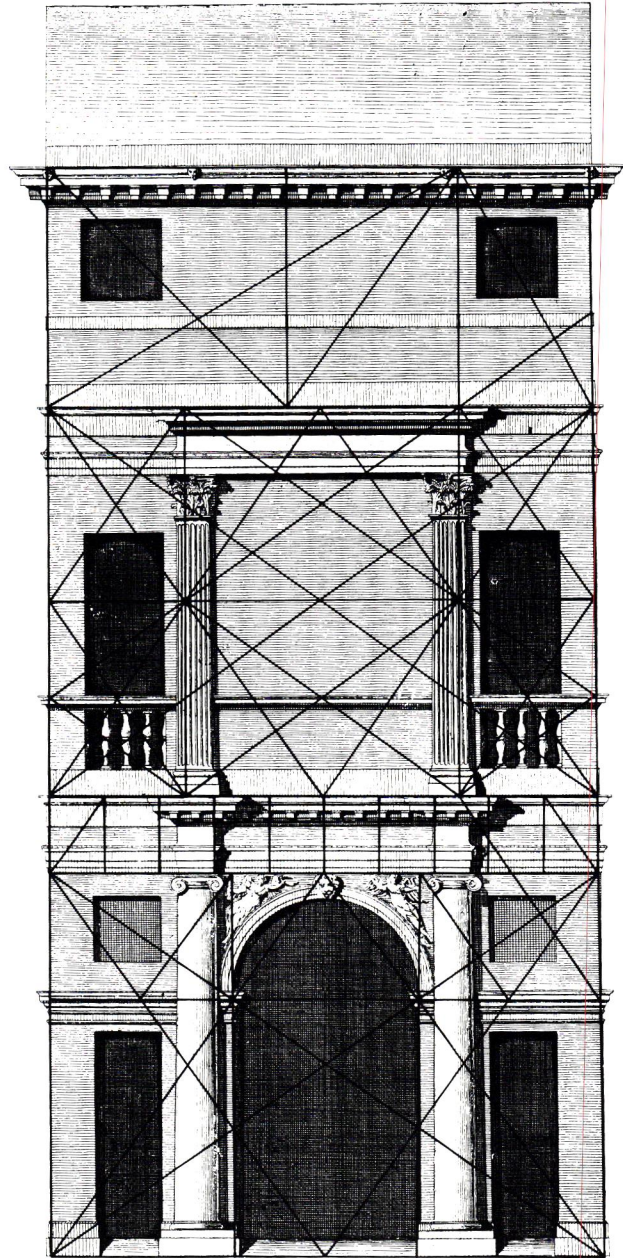
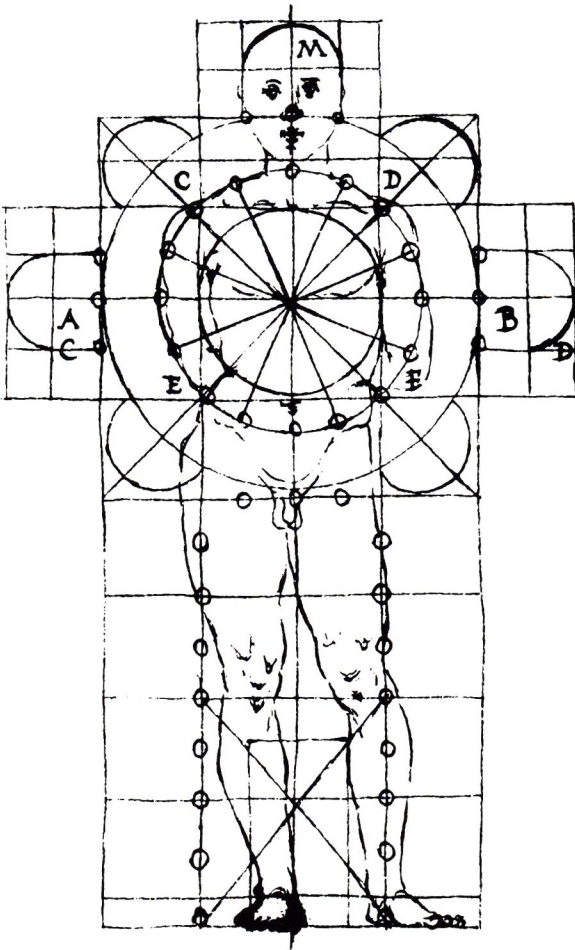
If a man be placed on his back, with his hands and feet extended, and a pair of compasses centered at his navel, the fingers and toes of his two hands and feet

will touch the circumference of a circle described therefrom.

And if we measure the distance from the soles of the feet to the top of the head, and then apply that measure to the outstretched arms, the breadth will be found to be the same as the height, as in the case of the perfect square.



The Renaissance masters, who rewrote Vitruvius's *Ten Books of Architecture* over and over again, were fond of the *Vitruvian man*: *From the human body all measures and their denominations derive and in it is to be found all and every ratio and proportion by which God reveals the innermost secrets of nature.*



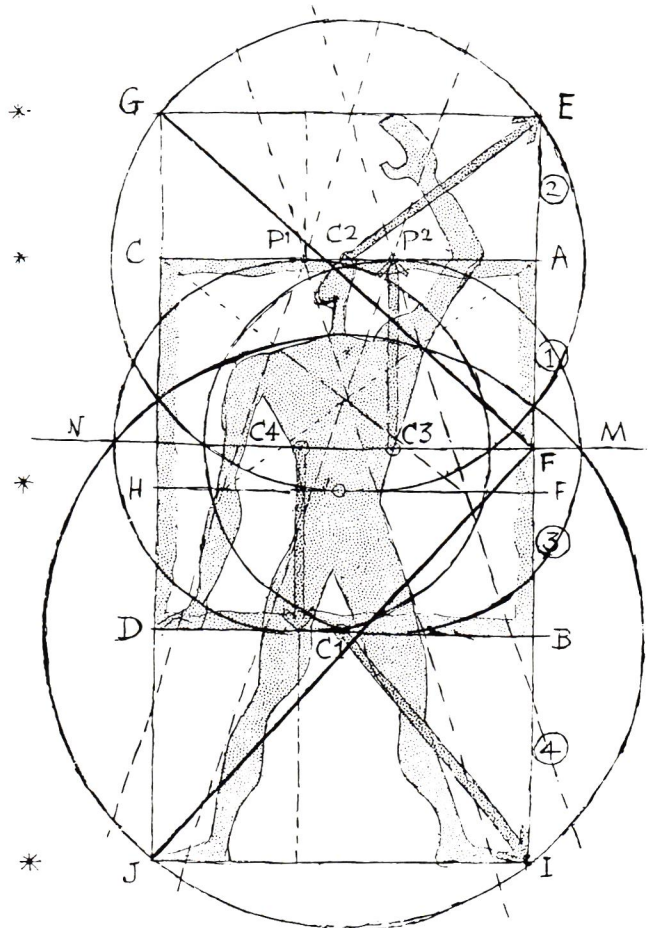
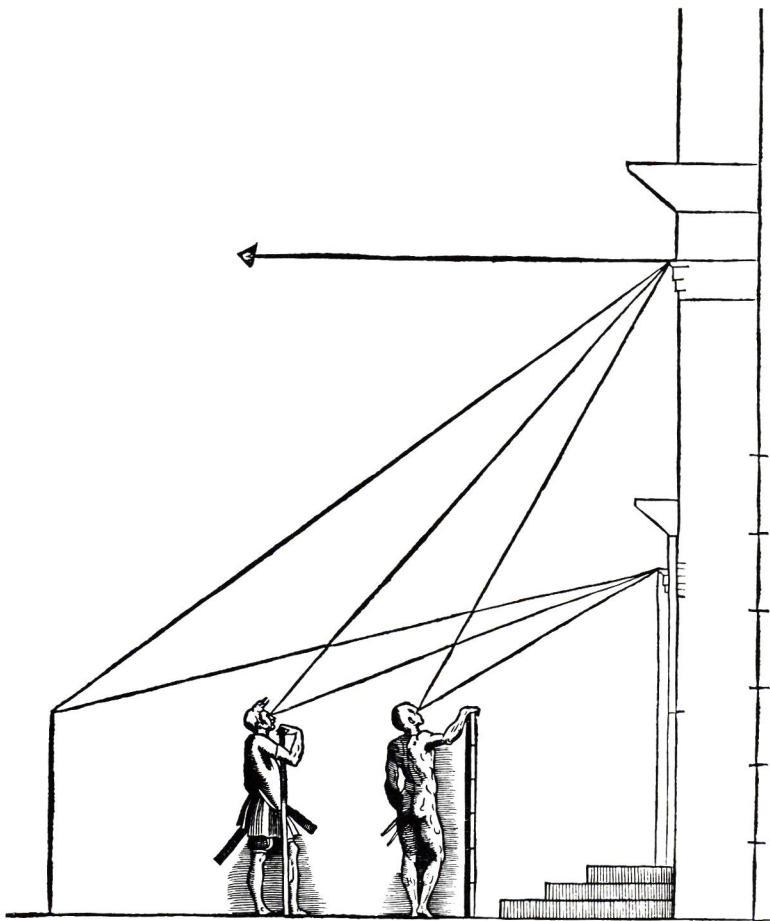
Beauty will result from the correspondence of the whole to the parts, of the parts amongst themselves, and of these again to the whole, declared Vitruvius and his Renaissance followers.

Though the Renaissance, as the Antique era, proportioned its buildings to man, it did not scale them to him. Le Corbusier claimed his *Modulor* to be: *a grid in which mathematical order is adapted to the human stature, a relationship which the Renaissance with its Divine Proportion left out of account.*

Pythagoreanism (or numerical mysticism) creeps into Le Corbusier's aesthetic concepts: *Nature is ruled by mathematics, and the masterpieces of art are in consonance with nature; they express the laws of nature*

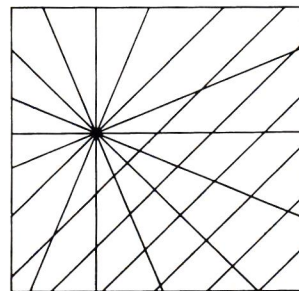
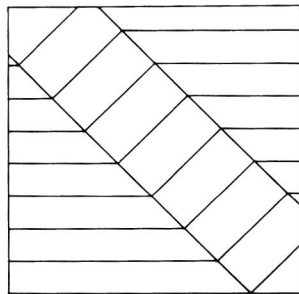
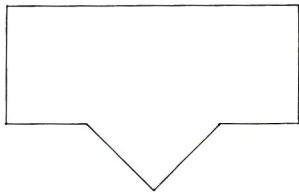
and themselves proceed from those laws. Consequently, they too are governed by mathematics, and the scholar's implacable reasoning and unerring formulae may be applied to art.

It is the physical forces, not mathematics, that rule nature—indeed, is nature; and mathematics is but a language that describes these physical relationships.



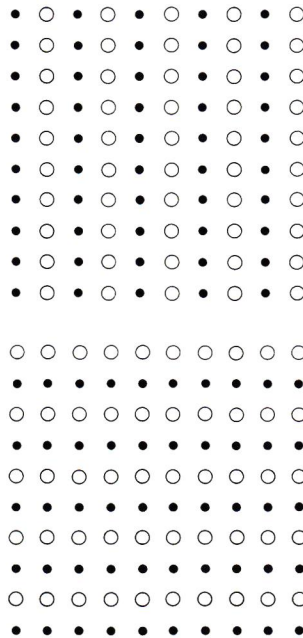
That which they had pronounced intuitively, the Gestalt Psychologists of the early 20th century put upon a scientific footing. Central to their concept is the so-called *good Gestalt* wherein our perceptions tend to modify perceived configurations so that they read in terms of simplicity, regularity, continuity, and symmetry.

The Vitruvian beauty prescription is virtually restated in the fundamental formula of Gestalt theory:
There are wholes,

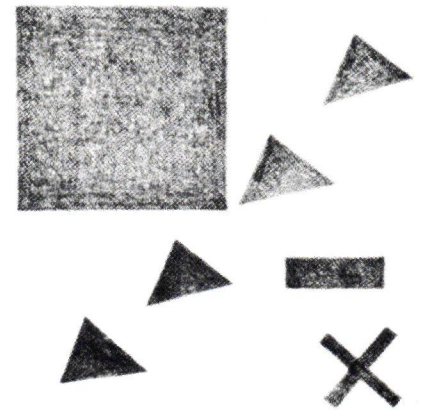


whose behavior is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole.

It would seem that the findings of the Gestaltists were more revolutionary to psychology than to aesthetics. Certainly it would have been of little surprise to the ancients that the second principle of Gestalt, called *The Factor of Similarity*, recognizes the tendency for our perceptions to bring together like parts.

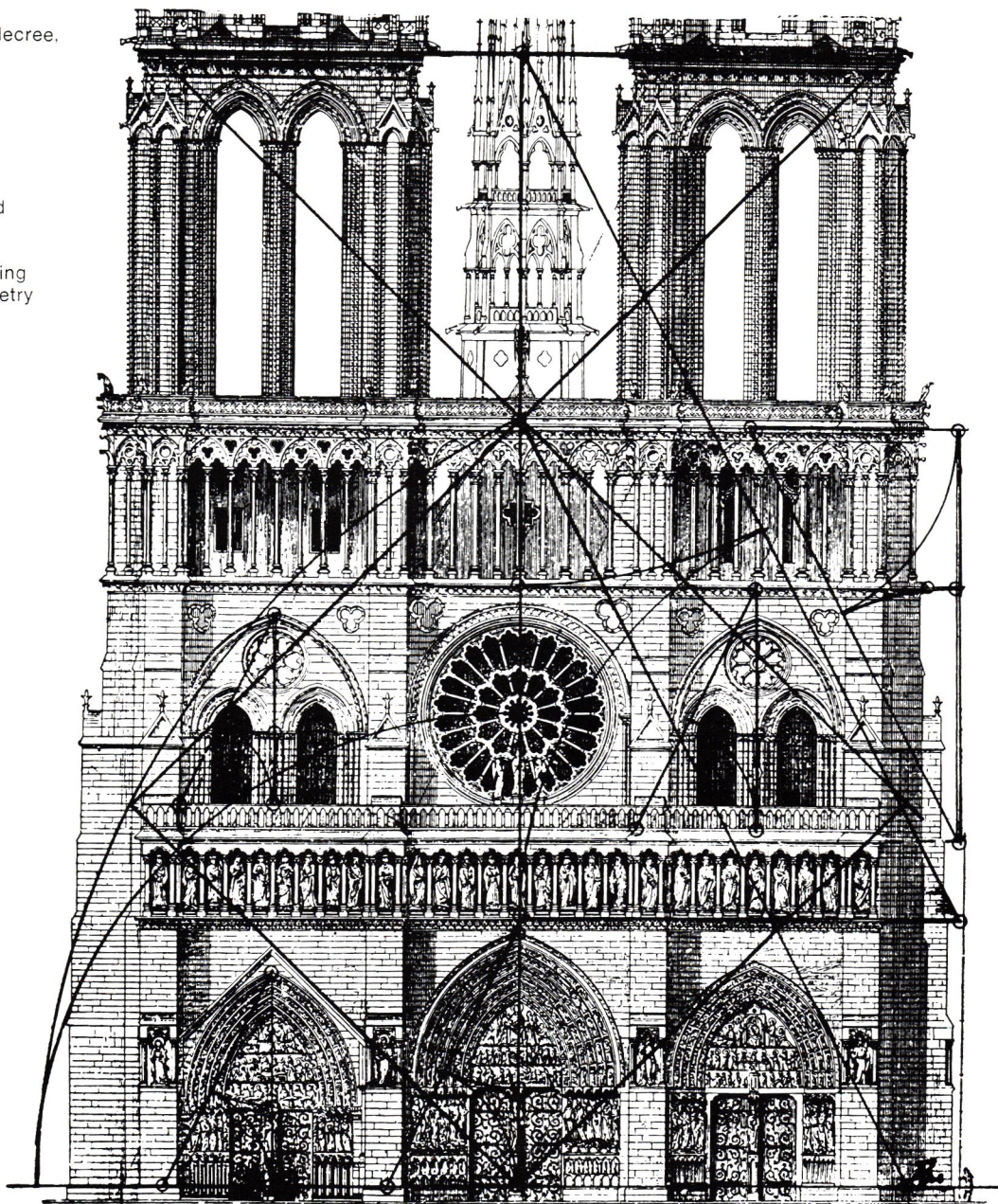


The post-Gestaltists showed that missing or implied parts could act as significant parts of the whole—creating dynamisms the Classicists had never considered.

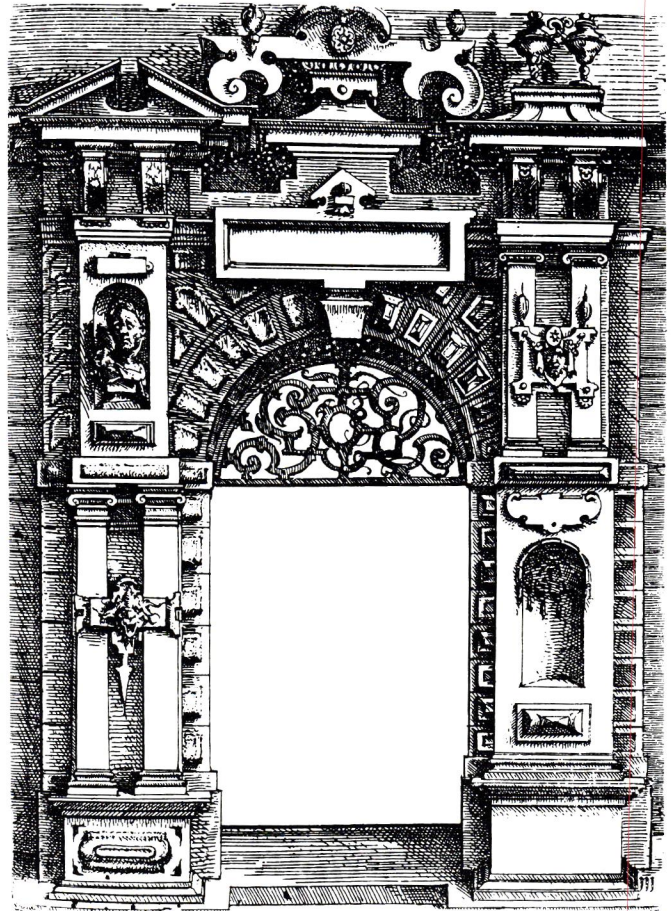
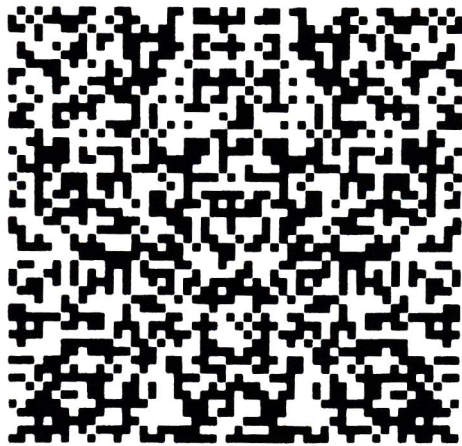


It is told by some that, in order to conform to a Church decree, the facade of Notre Dame, that most perfect of medieval works, was made imperfect with purpose since perfection was to be reserved only for the works of God—not to be displayed in those of man.

That the edict, if it be true, was obeyed by being manifest in ever-so-slight and virtually unnoticeable variations is another testimony to the overpowering mystical magnetism of bilateral symmetry which the builders of this edifice could not resist.

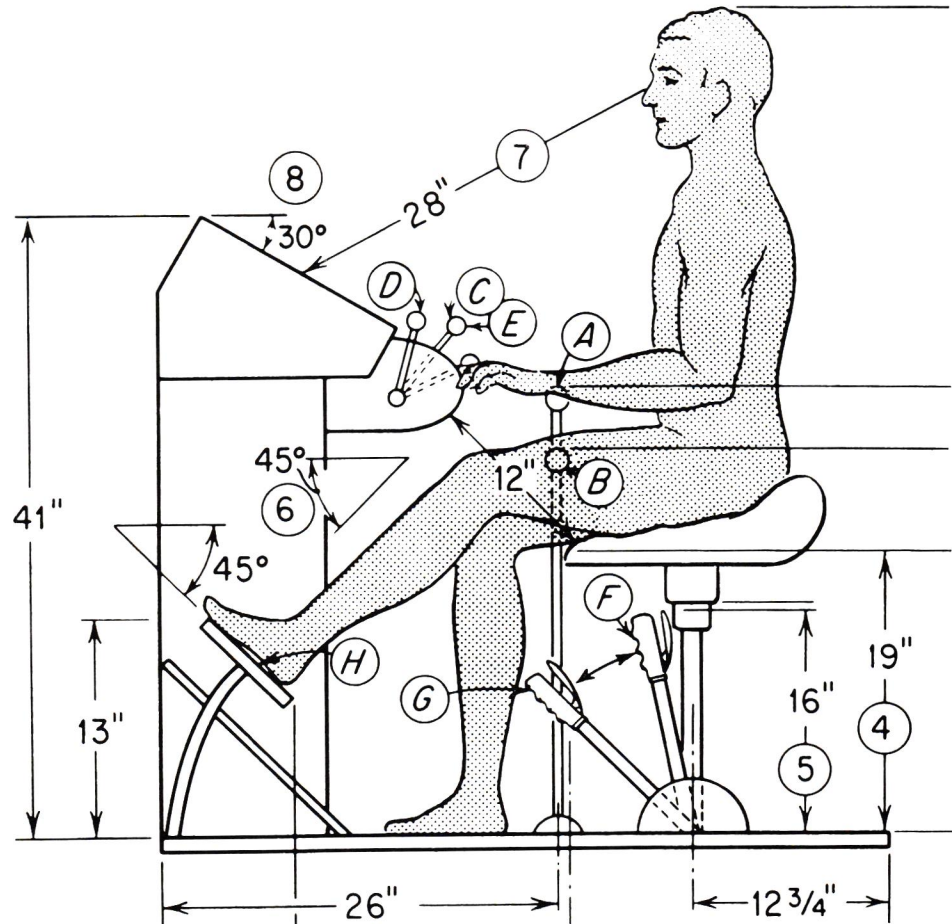
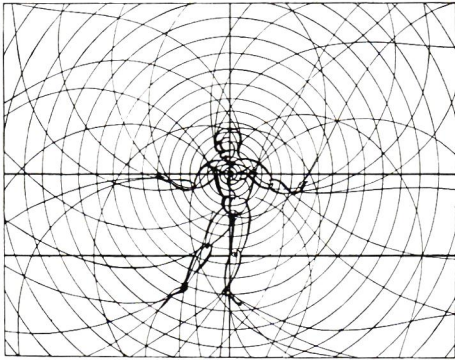


So it is that the bilateral axis
persists to act as a potent operative
in man's cognition of form.



Copernicus and Kepler, Darwin and Freud
displaced man from his ego-centric world.

Since man is, then, not,
the measure of the entire universe
or a replica of his god,
he, whose constant and central task
is to reshape his own environment,
is, at least and at last, the measure of design.



74 *Marcus Vitruvius Pollio 1st cent. B.C. (during the times of Augustus). b. Verona.*

Le Corbusier (née Charles Edouard Jeanneret), 1887-1965. b. La Chaux-de-Fonds, Canton Neuchâtel, d. Roquebrune, Cap-Martin, Provence.

Page 6.2 illustration

Man, conceived as a microcosm, possessing the proportions and harmonies of the universe and, in turn, displaying the proportions and harmonies of music: Diurnal (night and day) rhythms and diapasons, diapentes, and disdiapasons (proportions) of musical harmony encircle the human body and its parts. from Robert Flud (Robert Fludd) Ultriusque Cosmi . . . Technia Historia (Oppenheim: Johannis Theodori de Bry, 1619) Vol. II, p. 275.

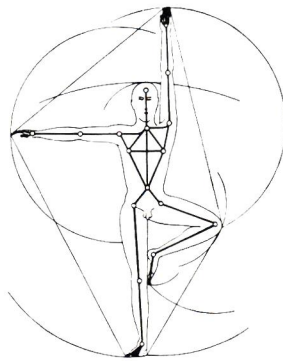
Page 6.2 note

What a piece of work is a man!
how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty!
in form and moving, how express
and admirable!
in action, how like an angel!
in apprehension, how like a god!
the beauty of the world!
the paragon of animals!
William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2 (1603?).

Page 6.3 illustration

Sir John Evelyn's plan for the rebuilding of London after the Fire of 1666. The scheme, as many of man's designs, displays decided anthropomorphic characteristics. from

Parentalia: on Memoirs of the Family of the Wrens (Franborough, Hants, England: Gregg Press, 1965) facing p. 276— (facsimile of ed. London: pub. by Stephen Wren, 1750).



Page 6.3 note

Coincidental resemblance between the London Plan and Oskar Schlemmer's human body displaying the geometry of calisthenics, eurhythmics, and gymnastics. Oskar Schlemmer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Farkas Molnar, The Theater of the Bauhaus (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961) pp. 23-24.

Page 6.4 illustrations

Peas in a pod and a pea. Photograph by Tomás Gonda.

Man with one foot: In Ethiope are such men as have but one foote, and they goe so fast it is a great mervaille, and that is a large foot so the shadow thereof covereth the body from Sun or raine, when they lye upon their backs. John Mandeville (1300?-1372?), The Voyages and Travailes of Sir John Mandeville, Knight (London: printed by William Stansby, 1632) Chap. LI—

(orig. manuscript of mid-14th cent.). The same one-footed man of the race of Skiapodes (Shadow-footed men) is depicted on a 1203 "copy" of the Osmia Beatus map (ca. 776) and was said to inhabit, along with other monstrous beings, the mythical southern continent, known as the Austral continent or the Antipodes: see Edna Kenton The Book of Earths, Morrow, 1928, pp. 199-201, fig. xxxiv from Hartmann Schedel, Liber cronicarum cu(m) figuris et ymagi (ni) bus ab inicio mu(n) di (Nuremberg: Anthonius Koberger, 1493) Folium XII.

Page 6.4 note

The primeval man was round . . . ; "Symposium," The Dialogues of Plato, trans. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937) Vol. 1, pp. 316-317 (section 190). In "Timeaus" Plato writes of the original round human, modeled after the universe, in a considerably more serious vein than the "Symposium" passage conveys to the reader: see "Timeaus," *ibid.*, Vol. II pp. 23-26 (sections 42-45). It seems inconceivable that the spherical man of Plato's engaging myth is not to be found (at least to this writer's knowledge) illustrated in any book from the Renaissance to the present— particularly in that representations of the one-footed man are so abundant. Perhaps he appears on ancient coins or amulets. Rabelais was disposed to describe this creature. The Emblem in his hat? Against a base of gold weighing over forty pounds was an enamel figure. It portrayed a man's body with two heads facing one another, four arms, four feet, a pair of

arses and a brace of sexual organs, male and female. Such, according to Plato's *Symposium*, was human nature in its mystical origins. *Francois Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. Jacques Le Clercq (New York: Heritage Press, 1936) Chap. VIII, p. 27.

Page 6.5 illustrations

A schematic drawing of the facade of the Parthenon with conjectured proportionings, based on double squares, circles, arcs, and diagonals. from Wolfgang von Wersin, *Das Buch vom Rechteck, Gesetz und Gestik des Raumlichen* (Ravensburg: Otto Maier Verlag, 1956) p. 64.

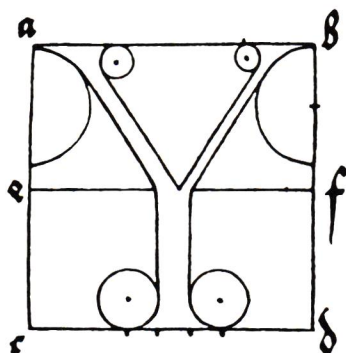
Dürer's *Vitruvian man*. from Albrecht Dürer, *Herinn sind begriffen vier Bucher von menschlicher Proportion*, 1528 (Arnhem?: J. Janssen?, 1605?).

Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian man* (originally drawn at Venice). from *The Bettmann Archive, Inc.*



Another manner of fitting a man into the geometry of the cosmic circle: his body, submitted to the Zodiacal ring in

virtual foetal state, has its parts governed by the twelve signs. from Ioanne Paulo Gallucio (*Giovanni Paolo Gallucci, 1538-1621?*). *Theatrum Mundi, et Temporis . . .* (Venice: I. B. Somascum, 1588) p. 221.



Dürer's version of the Renaissance method of forming Roman letters by geometric construction with squares and circles. from *Of the Just Shaping of Letters: from the applied geometry of Albrecht Dürer*, Book III (New York: The Grolier Club, 1917) p. 34 (facsimile of *Underweysung der messung/ mit dem Zirckel un richtscheyt . . .*, Nuremberg: 1525).

Page 6.5 notes

In the human body . . . : *Vitruvius, The Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan. (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1926) Bk. III, Chap. 1, p. 73 (orig. work *De Architectura*, c.a. 27 B.C.).

Albrecht Dürer, 1471-1528, b. d. Nürnberg, Bavaria.

Page 6.6 illustrations

A Renaissance church plan proportioned to a Vitruvian man,

inscribed within it. from Francesco di Georgio Martini, *Trattato di architettura*, (T) eupomo di Macedonia *ergeggio mathematico . . .* (manuscript in *Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence*: late 15th cent.) II, I. 141 (Magl. CI. XVII, num. 31) p. 38 reverse.

Facade of Palladio's own house with a reconstructed linear analysis of its proportions. The facade: from Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi, *Le fabbriche e i disegni di Andrea Palladio* (Vicenza: Giovanni Rossi, 1786) Vol. 4, plate LI. The linear analysis, redrawn after Cesare Bairati, *La Simmetria Dinamica* (Milan: Libre-Editrice Politecnica Tamburini, 1952) p. 87.

Page 6.6 notes

Leon Battista Alberti, 1404-1472, b. Genoa, d. Rome. *De re aedificatoria* (Ten Books on Architecture) Florence, 1485 (manuscript 1452).

Francesco di Giorgio Martini, 1439-1502, b. d. Siena. *Tratto di architettura*, (T) eupomo di Macedonia, probably written before 1482 and after 1495 at Urbino.

Andrea Palladio (née Andrea di Pietro da Padova), 1508-1580, *I quattro libri dell'architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture) Venice, 1570.

From the human body all measures . . . derive . . . : A quotation from mathematician Luca Pac(c)iol's *Divina proportione*, Venice, 1509. Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: Warburg Institute,

76 *University of London, 1949* p. 14.

Systems of proportions that employ circles, squares, Golden Section rectangles, radii and diagonals (from detail to whole composition) are organizations of homoeometric families (though not necessarily in series).

Page 6.7 illustrations

A Vitruvian man and friend viewing the proportions of a Renaissance facade. from Marc Vitruve Pollion (Vitruvius), Architectur, ou Art de bein bastir, trans. Martin (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1964) p. 35 reverse — (facsimile of ed. Paris: I. Gazeau, 1547).

Le Corbusier's Modulor man, set into 3 squares and 4 circles with golden rectangles. from Le Corbusier (Charles Edouard Jeanneret) The Modulor, a Harmonic Measure to the Human Scale Universally applicable to Architecture and Mechanics (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1954) p. 237, fig. 100

Page 6.7 notes

Beauty will result . . . : A quotation from Palladio's I quattro libri dell'architettura, Bk. I, Chap. I. Rudolf Wittkower, Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1949) p. 20.

a grid in which mathematical order . . . : Le Corbusier, The Modulor (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1954) p. 41; and to human stature, a relationship which . . . : Le Corbusier,

Modulor 2 (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1958) p. 16.

Nature is ruled by mathematics . . . : Le Corbusier speaking with Andreas Speiser; Le Corbusier, The Modulor (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1954) pp. 29-30.

Page 6.8 illustrations

How an entity can virtually lose its identity and be subsumed into a greater whole: A simple geometric figure is altered by the internal unity or figural cohesion of two constellations in which it reappears; only by a thorough-going disintegration of the total perception of the constellations is the figure seen. redrawn after Kurt Gottschaldt, "Gestalt Factors and Repetitions," A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology, ed. Willis D. Ellis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955) p. 117, figs. 6 & 7 (see also p. 114).

*Two groups of dots, maintaining an identical proximity but varying in color to create a vertical emphasis in the one and a horizontal emphasis in the other, display The Factor of Similarity, viz. the tendency of like parts to band together. redrawn after Max Wertheimer, "Laws of Organization in Perceptual Forms," *ibid.*, pp. 74-75, figs. xii & xiii.*

Malevich's Suprematist composition employing the triangular form. 1913: virtually exhibiting a catalog of Gestalt laws of organization, Malevich blatantly employed the Factors of Proximity, Similarity, Uniform

Destiny, Good Gestalt. Simple geometric figures all, four triangles, a rectangle, and an X, of similar sizes balance off against a large square. The square and the rectangle form a passive group; the triangles and X, an active one. The four triangles of like shape, size, and direction constellate strongly. The small X at one corner is opposed to and in contrast with the large square in the diagonally opposite corner; yet the X reflects the diagonal axes of the square—also, of the canvas itself. And these two opposites of the one diagonal vie with the repeating triangles along the other diagonal. from Kasimir Malevich, The Non-Objective World, trans. H. Dearstyne (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1959) p. 80, fig. 75.

Trademark for the BECH electronics firm by Karl Gerstner: Fitting to its purpose, pattern is heightened and legibility is lowered by the devices of a four-fold rotation of the letters, a shaving away and tilting of the original formation, and the interplay of figure-ground between the letters and their interstices; legibility is none the less retained through the preservation of the pregnant characteristics of each letter. Note that in the nonmutilated formation, the C would have weakened its corner of the square. from Hans Neuburg, "Recent Advertising Design as a Unity of Idea, Text and Form, illustrated by examples from the Agency Gerstner & Kutter, Basel," Neue Grafik 6 (Zürich: Verlag Otto Walter, June 1960) p. 25, Fig. 9.

Page 6.8 notes

Founders of Gestalt psychology: Max Wertheimer, 1880-1943; b. Prague, d. New York City. Kurt Koffka, 1886-1941; b. Berlin, d. Northampton, Mass. Wolfgang Köhler, 1887-1967, b. Revel, Estonia, d. Enfield, N.H.

good Gestalt: Gestalt, from the German language, means form or configuration. The concept of good Gestalt concerns the tendency for humans to modify the formal qualities of what is perceived into as “good” a form as possible. “Qualities making for ‘goodness’ are simplicity, regularity, symmetry, and continuity. Shapes which in themselves exhibit these qualities are easily and accurately perceived (and remembered); and shapes which do not possess them tend to become modified and to be perceived with more ‘goodness’ than they possess.” M. D. Vernon, *The Psychology of Perception* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1962) p. 51.

There are wholes . . . : Max Wertheimer, “Gestalt Theory,” *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, ed. Willis D. Ellis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955) p. 2.

post-Gestaltists: *Painting in Central Europe* was particularly affected by the development of Gestalt psychology—nonobjective Constructivism in the 1920’s disrupted by Nazi and Soviet neorealism, succeeded by Concrete Art in the 1950’s, and exported as Op in the 1960’s.

Page 6.9 illustration

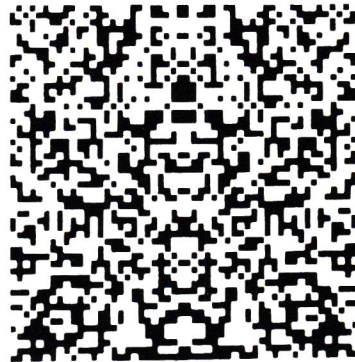
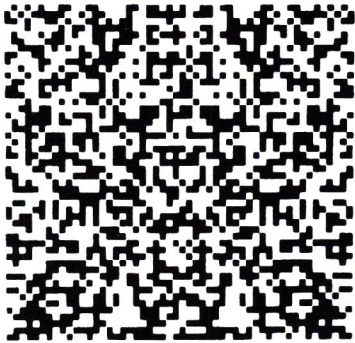
This writer was informed of the legend by word of mouth and has not been able to verify its existence in written form. Such attitudes of introducing (or of accepting) imperfections in deference to the gods are known to have existed with Oriental rug makers, American Indian weavers, and artisans of many other cultures. Greek gods and goddesses were often characterized as being envious of mortals who possessed too great beauty—possibly a warning against pride and vanity, possibly an apology for blemishes and flaws—the negative counterpart to Pythagoreanism’s equating of beauty with perfection. So, Notre Dame, that most perfect of medieval compositions, is not so perfect after all. The imperfections, however, are usually not detected by the eye until its attention has been directed to them. The major deviations appear: in the side portals where the northern door is slightly smaller than the southern and is surmounted by a gable—the most evident disruption of the order of the wall; in the Gallery of the Kings in which there are 7 statues on the southern flank and 8 on the northern; in the towers of which the northern one is larger, more open, and adorned with more abundant detail than the southern. Viollet-le-Duc’s drawing, exacting in detail, includes his own conception of the spires he considered to be missing (whose bases are showing here). A geometric construction was subsequently superimposed upon the rendering of the facade in order to demonstrate an analysis of a medieval composition in terms of the Golden

*Section; it is one of the innumerable attempts of late 19th- and early 20th-century scholars (Zeising, Birkhoff, Hambridge, Ghyka, Le Corbusier) to “rediscover” pervading patterns by which antique and medieval buildings were built, thus virtually extending principles of the Renaissance backwards into history. The particular employment of the Golden Section ratio as a proportioning device by the Ancients appears largely to be conjecture. There is to be found little or no historical evidence other than that the Greeks (Pythagoras, Plato, Euclid) had identified it. Vitruvius dealt with circles, squares, and such rectangles with proportions of one to two, two to three, etc. Even for the Renaissance period, the importance of the Golden Section (named the Divine Proportion by Luca Pacioli and entertained by Leonardo, Kepler) is quite likely exaggerated, since proportional systems were more usually associated with the human body and musical harmonics (the latter of which especially does not display the Golden Section—without gross distortions). from Fredrik Macody Lund, *Ad Quadratum* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1921) p. 193, fig. 189.*

Page 6.10 illustrations

A computer generated pattern with four strips of random elements running vertically through the center: The destruction of the bilateral symmetry along the axis confuses the eye enough that it tends not to recognize the exacting mirror symmetry of the rest of the composition. from Bela Julesz, Bell Telephone Laboratories,

78 Murray Hill, N.J. A comparison of the computer generated pattern (of the text) with its disturbed axis and a



similar computer generated pattern with perfect mirror symmetry. from Bela Julesz, *ibid.*

Design(s) for a portal(s): Wendel Dietterlin (1550?—1599?) employed a common device of contemporary draftsmen who presented two variations of details to the right and left of a bilateral axis. It might be construed that Dietterlin humored a mischievous intent to fool the eye in that the alternative details are subtle and virtually indistinguishable to the immediate right and left of the axis

and increase in deviations as their corresponding distances increase, thereby preserving an apparent symmetry. from Wendel Dietterlin, *Architectura von Ausstheilung-Symmetria und Proportion der Fünff Seulen, Das Dritte Buch Ionica, 1598 (Nürnberg: Pauluss Fürst, 1655) plate III.*

Page 6.11 illustrations
Man in "egocentric space": Schlemmer's man, in dynamic position, is still frontal. from Oskar Schlemmer, *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Farkas Molnar, Die Bühne im Bauhaus (Mainz and Berlin: Florian Kupferberg, 1965) p. 14— (facsimile of ed. of Bauhausbucher Band 4, Frankfurt am Main: Oehms Druck, 1925).*

The ergonomic (human factors engineering) man: the human body used as the measure for redesigning the controls of a diesel unit used in pumping chemical mixtures into oil-burning formations. This modern Vitruvian man, having lost his centered aspect, shows his profile—virtually sliced in half (as of Plato's one-footed man) and harnessed to a machine. from Ernest J. McCormick, *Human Factors Engineering (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) p. 421, fig. 12-15.*

Page 6.11 notes
*I have of late —
but wherefore I know not —
lost all my mirth;
this goodly frame,
the earth,*

*seems to me a sterile promontory;
this most excellent canopy,
the air,
look you,
this brave o'erhanging firmament,
this majestical roof
fretted with golden fire,
why, it appears no other thing to me
than a foul and pestilent
congregation of vapors.*

William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2 (1603?): as edited by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, Hair, Act 2, (1968).

Ironically man once placed himself at the central control point of the sun and stars but found his stature consistently diminished with each major advancement in knowledge of the natural laws; yet now, as he has begun to reestablish his scale more rationally and to develop his real capabilities, he is within reach of the moon.

Anthony Eardley

The historical commentary which follows Anthony Eardley's translation of Jean Giraudoux's Introductory Address to *The Athens Charter* was scheduled to appear as one of a number of explanatory notes, essentially for the benefit of the unspecialized reader, which were intended to accompany the English translation of *The Athens Charter*. The notes submitted by the translator were ultimately deemed to be too extensive for the needs of a commercial publishing house catering to the broad interests and unacademic tastes of the general public. Since they could not be readily abridged to a length that would be acceptable to the publisher without losing much of their purpose, the author withdrew them from the publication.

The notes pertaining to Giraudoux, Le Corbusier and Vichy are presented here in a slightly modified form, drawing upon some of the material contained in other notes that were originally expected to accompany it, and deleting certain references that might reasonably be assumed to be either already familiar to an architectural audience, or readily accessible to it.

Anthony Eardley was born in England in 1933 and received his architectural education at the Architectural Association, London, and Cambridge University where he was Nuffield Research Fellow from 1959 to 1961. He has taught in England at the Architectural Association and Cambridge University, and in the United States at Washington

University, St. Louis, Princeton University and The Cooper Union, New York. He is presently Dean of the College of Architecture at the University of Kentucky. His current works include an anthology of Purist writings by Amedée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, commissioned by The Viking Press, New York, as a volume in the series, Documents of 20th Century Art.

Introduction to The Athens Charter

Jean Giraudoux

Translation by Anthony Eardley

Introduction by Jean Giraudoux, originally published as "Un Discours Liminaire" in La Charte d'Athènes by Le Corbusier (1942). English language translation © 1973 by The Viking Press, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Grossman Publishers.

80 Let's not talk about Heaven, for its system cannot be challenged. But because every man possesses the Earth and possesses his Country with the same rights as all other men and citizens, there is no human and national polity except that with the aim of rendering unto him, and readily and really, the exercise of that equality. To every newborn child, the motherland owes the same welcoming gift—itsself, in its entirety, unreservedly; and it is not only by the greatness of its constitution and of its spirit, but also by the ease with which these can be approached and enjoyed, that a great country is recognized. Only on the condition, moreover, that its treasures be thus saved from shrines and places of pilgrimage, can it set its course toward the security of daily life and toward the risks of the future.

This axiom seems commonplace enough, and yet, to accept it is to earn the right to be both critic and judge in that debate of vital importance to humanity, which has for several decades brought about the adaptation of the world to its resources and to its modern forms, but which has never been of such acute and sovereign importance as it is today. In the light of this debate, the problem is no longer that of organizing for the citizen of every nation privileged with a future a life of substitution, of current civilization, common to all the peoples of the globe. The problem is to endow the citizen with all the opportunities and all the means that will enable him to participate, as much by instinct and habit as by will and reasoning, in the functions, the destiny, and the merits of his country. The task grows more arduous each day. It was at the very moment when the essence of each nation was becoming more distinctive and intensive, when a crisis that appeared to be growth caused new nations to spring up all over the world, that the essence of the citizen spoiled and evaporated. Across the most impenetrable frontiers we have known there infiltrated a traditionless and faceless life, deliberately base and mediocre, servile before the national entity, but dissolving all its foundations in the simple-hearted. Contrasted with a nationalism that had never been more aware or more ambitious, more mindful of its duties and its distinguishing features, there emerged in the majority of countries a popular soul and a popular body whose cares, pleasures, and sustenance were common to all men, men whose leaders had knowingly reduced to the level of their lowest denominator. By the force

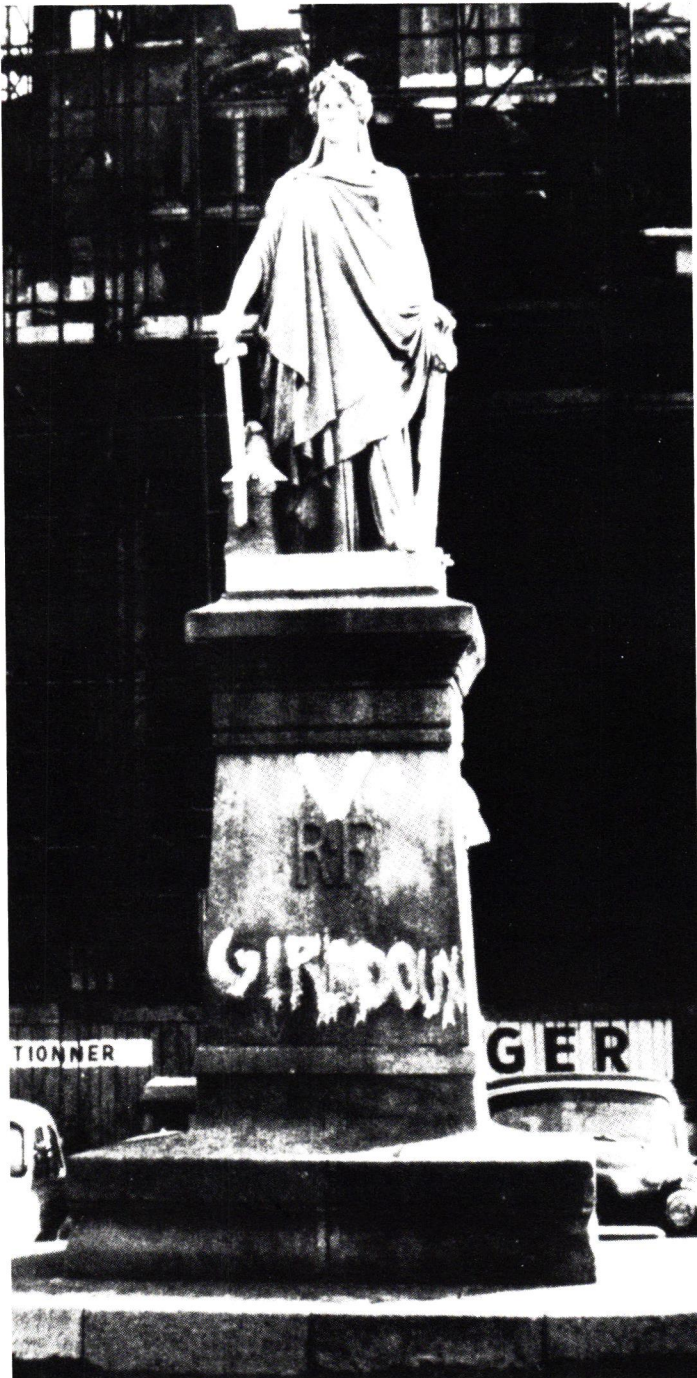
of the epoch, the nation gained all that the citizen was losing through progress, with the result that the danger that threatens our civilization is becoming more definable. Just as most peasants and craftsmen have relinquished their national costume to the two or three performers who wear it on public holidays, so most citizens ask for nothing more than to surrender their spirit and their national virtue to a few amateurs, a few fanatics, a few rabble-rousers. It is to be feared that the national consciousness and mission may become the exclusive prerogative of an increasingly select cohort in the midst of a country overtaken by universal banality and indifference. It is to be feared that the concern to preserve the nation's sanity may one day be reserved to a caste, an oligarchy, and that the country's spirit may no longer be a function of the country as a mass and an entity, may no longer be its sap, but the cerebral act of an ever more isolated intelligence that will no longer be able to impose its own virtues and its own character upon a people except by artifice or tyranny. There will be nothing left of our civilization but its chiefs of staff, or its vestal virgins. It will be a war, or a ritual. Its mind and its mask will become the more acute as paralysis overtakes its organs, and that will be the death of it, for though the historian claims the reverse, the great peoples have never died from the head down. It is, on the contrary, toward the time of their demise that they have at times found leaders best suited to the prime of their existence, and it is often to their greatest men that the spectacle of their death throes has been reserved. The great civilizations have died in a state of lucidity made all the more frightful by the fact that their surviving leaders had been their most polished and zealous products; and a nation reduced to an elite and a brain, to the generous or to the cynical pleasure seekers of what was once an instinctive life now become a life of supreme luxury, is simply the prefiguration, scarcely more vivid, of those extinct peoples, of that imputrescible and vain elite whose spirit and visage we can still perceive as they drift beyond oblivion.

What measures can be taken, what charms employed, what transfusion given to remedy this destruction of the national soul within a citizen whom our fears would astonish—since he is daubed over afresh every morning in his country's brightest colors—that is the question that all political fronts meditate upon at this point in mid-century. I am not about to

list their replies to it. But since the CIAM have done me the honor of urging me forward as a herald at the head of their phalanx, it behooves me to point out that their Athens Charter sets down the basic recipe unambiguously. It offers confirmation and support to those who have grasped the idea that the prime factor of longevity for a people is this: a people must be exactly as old as its times. No civilization, no matter how deeply rooted, no matter how regenerative, can afford to be outclassed or outdated by younger civilizations, even in fields of minor importance. At no time may it overlook or shrink from the increase of ease and facility by which mechanical or social progress enlist the citizen, and risk estranging him from his very nature. If the civilization does not grant him, unstintingly and in a form befitting its genius, the rewards of life that other civilizations enjoy, it will turn those rewards into lures, and no sooner will he have suspected their existence than they will entice him away from himself and alienate him from his civilization. Once he has become aware—with the help of the devil's primer, by which I refer to advertising and its billboard snares, with the help of the cinema, with the help of trade treaties, which are often nothing but a way of regulating the entry of suspect goods into the national territory, and with the help, also, of that instinct which makes the human being crave his most recently discovered resources—once he has been made aware of privileges dealt out to others, he will never again ascribe their absence from his own life to a mere delay, but to an incapacity. If he is inventive and given to trickery, he will find himself suddenly limited. If he leads a life of ease, he will feel himself diminished. Ultimately, the uneasiness he will experience after comparing his country's habits with those of countries better equipped for the age will be accepted with a sense of decline. Little by little, as he confronts those who enjoy a mode of life with a high rate of exchange, he will adopt the scoffing, renunciatory attitude of the citizen whose currency is cheap. And in point of fact he is in decline. He is deprived of the rudiments of his self-esteem, that is to say, the health, freedom of movement, conditions for work and leisure comparable to those of others. Each morning he sets out for work with a heavy additional burden. He returns home in the evening needlessly weary, late, and careworn. With this progressive drying up of day-to-day satisfaction, this adaptation to conditions of uncompensated mediocrity and to the

surrender of body and soul that it necessitates, his mind is induced to flee its inherent properties, its innate curiosity, replacing the sense of respect and gratitude that his country used to inspire in him with a sort of familial and familiar complicity. From that moment on, the question of the death of his civilization is raised. If we take as an example the country in which the Athens Charter is now being published, it is on this score, and on this score alone, that the question of our own death arises. It would be a mistake to attribute the loss of esteem experienced by the French people in 1940 to a common flaw. What had long been the personal obsession of a few Frenchmen had merely been recognized by the people as a whole. It happened that through certain errors, certain unpardonable errors, the French people had ceased to be directly contemporaneous with events. Instead of being viewed in perspective, these events remained a blur in the myopic eyes of the people. The people had retained their gifts, their temperament, their workmanship, but because of their delay or idleness in adapting their country to modern life, they failed in recent decades to capture the youthfulness that each year of mankind overlays on the age of the world. Hence a defeat that the French have not as yet been able to place in the reality of things. Hence, also, a revolution that has slogans but no date. France seeks its age, much more than its reason. It believed it would solve the problem by making a fresh start with its youth, but the youth of a country is young or old depending on the age of its country itself. Given an eye surgeon, the solution might not have been far distant, and the heart and liver surgeons might not have been needed.

This restoration of honor to an age does not, however, allow for hesitancy. That is the mistake of the half-educated leaders who imagine the modern and overall development of a people as a threat to its inherent virtues, and grant it only with sullen and infrequent concessions. If anything, it is through just this system of quibbling and makeshift repairs that a people's intrinsic or acquired nature incurs the risk of corruption. Every limitation placed on the way a citizen is granted his urban rights and allowed to enjoy them gives rise to a state of inequality which tends precisely to break up the body politic and to break down the country's overall functions. The coexistence in the same city, in the same life, of citizens equipped for the modern fray and citizens who are defenseless can



only give rise to disparities in temperament, habits, and taste, which mean, ultimately, disparities in condition and esteem. The harm will become all the more irreparable as it pervades each class; the brilliance of the epoch and its sordidness will effect both the bourgeois and the working man alike, according to the whim or the routine of the municipalities. There will be a sordid zone of work and thought and a brilliant zone, and, bound by a lamentable human and national protocol, luminous beings and opaque beings will rub shoulders on the same level. The country's honor is no longer a possession, an indivisible glory. Nor is it even reserved to a caste or to a State within the State, but to those who have chanced to be touched by the sun. And as it is with honor so it is with audaciousness. Daring individuals may abound, but the general audaciousness of the country is on the ebb; and on the pretext of giving civic rights and concerns precedence over urban rights, the worst inequality is created: the inequality of human dignity. Little by little, the peasant himself will be so imbued with the stench of his century that the protocol of nature will not be adequate to protect him. The Athens Charter makes the recognition of this truth the principle for any government action, carried out not by an administrator but by a leader. While it is possible for the individual to make up for a poor start with energy and luck, it is essential that a whole people be launched, as a mass and a force, into that adventure, somewhere on a course between history and legend, between sun and ice, between metals and water, between work and play, between necessity and fantasy, that its life can become—on the threshold of this new age.

Anthony Eardley

The reader may wish for some further elaboration of the events that led to collaboration on the *Charter* between Giraudoux and the French members of the CIAM, since this otherwise anonymous publication appeared not only at an extremely hazardous time for even the most courageous intellectual to be meddling in matters affecting politics, but it is also one of a disjointed series of publications which together form a sequel to two decades of intense, bitter and possibly confusing ideological struggle. This struggle began with a dawning of disillusion among several men of conscience and vision over the neglect of a concerted program for the reconstruction and re-equipment of France after the victory and the optimistic anticipation of 1918. It reached its most climactic proportions during the years of the Vichy government, which followed on the defeat of 1940.

In 1918 these men were young intellectuals who formed a link in the luminous chain of revolutionary manhood threading through old Europe and a hopeful new Russia, more crystalline and brilliant in Paris than anywhere before or since—perhaps, from the perspective of the present age of technocratic cynicism, a phenomenon never to be repeated again—who disguised beneath their apparent preoccupation with aesthetics, a passionate and persistent belief in their capacity to remake the soiled and dilapidated continent they had inherited into an harmonious and ineffably beautiful framework for the life of modern man.

Just as the youthful Ozenfant and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret had given expression to the reborn sense of optimism and to their own constructive determination in the opening lines of their first manifesto, *Après le Cubisme*, signed in the last days of World War I, a spirit which they sustained for as long as they might in the pages of *L'Esprit Nouveau*—the review of contemporary intellectual and artistic activity that they edited as a vehicle for their manifold polemics on art, architecture and urbanism—so too did Giraudoux, then an athletic civil service careerist and man of letters, returning as a much decorated hero to his old post in Berthelot's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, assured in the knowledge that his exquisite and enchanting literary style was already achieving renown, and ten years away from the dazzling and enigmatic theater that would come to dominate the French stage.

The engineer, Raoul Dautry, Blum's Minister of Transport, Daladier's Minister of Munitions and de Gaulle's Minister of Reconstruction, who became a firm friend to both Le Corbusier and Jean Giraudoux, recalls in his preface to the posthumous publication of *Pour une Politique Urbaine* his first conversation with Giraudoux in January 1918, in which they had agreed that:

everything has made it the duty of our generation to remodel, by rebuilding, our bruised and battered Motherland, to make of this nation that has grown old and obsolete an entirely new nation in which every citizen would draw his strength and resourcefulness of character out of constant lessons of strength, eloquence, and ease, furnished by the scene of life in a renewed atmosphere, by daily residence in houses and cities that would be endowed with all the advantages of civilization.¹

Although Giraudoux and Le Corbusier took somewhat different positions on the means to this end—one need not look far in the pages of *Vers une Architecture*, or, for that matter, in *Après le Cubisme* to find an expression of precisely the same sentiment—Le Corbusier with his never disclaimed faith in machinism and his often renewed appeal to industry, Giraudoux with his increasingly articulate distrust of the mechanized world and his opposition to the reign of the profiteers, *les gens d'argent* as he called them, whom he recognized as the real power behind the democratic facade of government. Indeed, Le Corbusier had left La Chaux-de-Fonds to settle in Paris in 1917 to work not only as an architect but also as a building constructor and components fabricator, ready to contribute his "Maisons Dom-ino" system, conceived in 1914, toward the rebuilding of devastated Flanders. It was not until 1921 that he was finally forced to relinquish his ambitions as a builder. His company in Alfortville became bankrupt, a victim of the continual economic crisis of the postwar period.²

More importantly, both Le Corbusier and Giraudoux were dedicated to the idea of the profound informative role to be played by the intellectual, whether inside or outside of government. At the same time they were equally "engaged" as citizens and Frenchmen. Each in his own way addressed the problems of the day with all the energy and ingenuity of his art and its discipline. It was an intellectual, athletic, gym-

84 nastic, acrobatic, classical engagement, in the formulation of viable poetic models for Europe's new France. Their separate perception of the simple but elusive fact that structurally valid models for a society only become truly viable when that society is moved by their poetic import, was undoubtedly the reason that these differently gifted men could come together.

Giraudoux may well have come momentarily to Le Corbusier's notice in 1920, when Jean Epstein referred to his work in a series of articles on contemporary literature in *L'Esprit Nouveau*. Maurice Raynal, a regular contributor to *L'Esprit Nouveau*, reviewed one of Giraudoux's most engaging young heroines, *Suzanne et le Pacifique*,³ in issue number 11/12.⁴

The time at which Le Corbusier came to Giraudoux's attention is not firmly identified, but with the fast increasing audience of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, with their substantial number of mutual friends in the intellectual *cénacles* of Paris, and with Giraudoux's interest in the problems of urbanism, it would seem reasonable to conjecture that each was at least in some degree alert to the existence of the other by the early 1920s.

Giraudoux had earned a substantial place in the literary world when his first play, *Siegfried*, a dramatization of an earlier novel and the first of the long series of plays to be produced in collaboration with Louis Jouvet, suddenly, and spectacularly, brought him popular acclaim. He was already prepared to address the issues that concerned him the moment he obtained the public eye. In an interview published in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* for 22 September 1928, he was asked of his plans for a new play or novel and said he had none.

On the other hand, [he volunteered] I am busy with an Urban League, whose purpose will be to watch over the planning of Paris, the creation of new districts. Here in our country there is almost no attention paid to urbanism, and the sum of money voted for the building of new cemeteries is much larger than that allocated for new parks for children. I haven't forgotten that before the war, I had founded a League against commerce and industry with the same goal in mind

Together with Raoul Dautry he attempted to found his Urban League in 1929 and persisted with the endeavor throughout

the 1930s.⁵ But the League was not to function effectively until after the liberation, and he himself was not to live to see it flourish. Giraudoux understood urbanism as "the body of measures by which a nation secures the rhythm and the battledress of modern life."⁶ He intended the League as an instrument to ensure that the duties, the obligations of his generation to itself, would be fulfilled. After a complete decade of peace, it was clear that the people of France were being denied all prospect of life in that "renewed atmosphere" which the victory of 1918 had held out to them. Reflecting with bitterness on the unfulfilled promises that the people had made themselves from the perspective of the defeat of 1940 he said,

By 1918 the suffering, the struggle, the sacrifice, had already given them the idea and the need of a modern conscience, of a happiness in practice; what they met with at the peace was only the negation or the caricature of it, and, at the armoury where they had turned in their weapons of war, they had received nothing in exchange but outdated and worthless arms for peace.⁷

While on a special diplomatic mission to Berlin in May 1930, his disenchantment at the urban ossification of France became altogether too acute, and his commentary is cutting:

All new Berlin, from Lichterfeld to Grunewald, is a spa without any special springs, a marina without a sea, but in Berlin, the idea of a vacation, which for the French bourgeois is squeezed in between the heat of July and the rains of September, is spread throughout every day, throughout every hour, and there, meals, three times a day, have the charm of wealth, leisure, and—we are in 1930—some victory or other.⁸

It is not surprising, therefore, that Le Corbusier and Jean Giraudoux should finally come together. Giraudoux's first contribution to a Le Corbusier enterprise was a brief article on one of his fondest topics, athletics, entitled "Et le Sport? Discipline, Choix, Grandeur, CULTURE" which appeared in the fifth issue of the international syndicalist review, *Plans*, in May 1931.⁹ Here he made the dry observation, which may be said to epitomize his personal outlook on life, that "Genius never owed anything to arthritis." Needless to say Le Corbusier, of course, was a member of the editorial board of

Plans, contributing regular articles which by this time were almost exclusively devoted to urbanism.

Besides Le Corbusier, there was Hubert Lagardelle, author, among other things, of *Le Socialisme Ouvrier*¹⁰ which is undoubtedly one of the chief documents of French syndicalism. Lagardelle acted as editorialist and chief political contributor to the reviews. Then there was also Dr. Pierre Winter, an old friend with whom Le Corbusier played basketball twice each week from 1920 until World War II. Winter was the former chief surgeon of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, a medical historian and public health specialist. He was a friend of the CIAM (mentioned by Josep Lluís Sert as a participant in the Fourth Congress in his introduction to the present edition of the *Charter*) who wrote extensively on issues of public health, athletics, and forms of urbanization.¹¹

Finally, there was François de Pierrefeu, deputy director of a major civil engineering company called Entreprises des Grands Travaux Hydrauliques. He was a leading syndicalist thinker of the time and among the first to recognize the significance of Le Corbusier's urban formulations. He wrote the first of the many monographs on the work of Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret¹² and his company became engaged in technical studies and financial projections for the major elements of the Algiers plans.¹³ Pierrefeu was to become deeply engaged in the subsequent struggles inside Vichy.

Giraudoux's little article finally establishes a formal bond between the dramatist and his urbanist colleagues. Thereafter, his name appears with some regularity in the pages of the review: *Plans 7* carries an excerpt from his *Aventures de Jérôme Bardini*¹⁴ simply for the literary pleasure of it; Pierre Winter gives him the place of honor with an introductory quotation to an article on the psychological conditions of work in *Plans 9*.

In July 1934, Giraudoux was named Inspector General of Diplomatic and Consular Posts with the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary. While the Inspector journeyed around the world, and the dramatist and novelist charmed his audiences with a luminous wit and fantasy, the public lecturer, also, was no less engaging.

Denied a government post that would have allowed him to be effective in urban affairs, he had taken to lecturing, examining the social problems of the times and the country "with a controlled passion that vibrates with the profoundest public concern."¹⁵ As Giraudoux complained later in *Pour une politique urbaine*,

No leader wished to understand that it was impossible for a Frenchman's soul to be enlightened and educated in a France that was falling into ruins and becoming choked with dirt. Rather, in the absence of a guiding will and vision, under pressure from big business and councils undermined by corruption, our rulers gradually allowed all supervision and responsibility to be withdrawn from the State, allowed its representatives to be repudiated, and thus left the coast clear for those in whose interest it is to put business before architecture, private developments before planning, and destruction before adaptation.¹⁶

He was even more bitter in *La Folle de Chaillot* performed posthumously in December 1945:

There are people in the world who would destroy everything. They have the fever of destruction. Even when they seem to be building, they are secretly involved in destruction. The newest of their building is only the mannequin of a ruin . . . They build quays and destroy rivers—look at the Seine. They build cities only to destroy the countryside—look at the Pré-aux-clercs. They build the Palais de Chaillot and destroy the Trocadero. They destroy space with the telephone and time with the aircraft. The occupation of humanity is only a universal enterprise of demolition . . .¹⁷

Early, in 1939, *Pleins Pouvoirs*¹⁸ presented a plan for the economic and social recovery of France. Paul Claudel in *Hommage à Giraudoux*¹⁹ said of this book that it was "one of the most reasonable and most warranted judgements passed by an expert on the defects of a regime that is letting itself go, or, to be more precise, that is going to pot. It is a document of major and lasting interest."

Writing in *La Lumière* for 27 January 1959, A. M. Petitjean embraced Giraudoux as "one of us, . . . the herald of the best in each of us . . . Giraudoux is one of the most perfect filters

86 which now dispense the French conscience."²⁰ And in the brief period remaining before the onset of a new war it seemed as though even the government would finally entrust Giraudoux with the duties he had been soliciting for years. On 29 July 1939 Giraudoux was named by the Daladier government to a newly created post—that of Commissioner General of Information, which André Morize, who became his staff assistant, describes as follows:

Actually, the point was to give concrete form to some of the ideas Jean Giraudoux had magnificently expressed in *Pleins Pouvoirs*: French publishing and the circulation of French books abroad, relations with the press and the various departments of the French broadcasting system, urbanism, popular education, art exhibits, performances of music, of drama, lectures and theatrical tours, the teaching of French as a foreign language and the welcoming of foreign students in France—in short, the presence of France in the world, including France herself As of August 23 we got to work, and we laid the foundation for that great pacific work of intellectual and spiritual expansion The awakening was swift and brutal.²¹

Only six days later, with the general mobilization, Giraudoux's office was put on a war footing. The work of peace was transformed into an organization for war, and Giraudoux, caught up in the machine, found himself responsible for censorship, his first duty being to suppress the Communist and dissident press. Despite his dismay at this awful dilemma he remained in his post, using the opportunities that were available in the brief interim of the "phony" war, the period before the *Anschluss*, to broadcast his reaffirmation of the convictions he had carried since 1918. In one of his official messages to the troops on the frontiers he said:

You must look forward to a France equipped for action and well-being on modern lines. While you are defending your country, you must feel assured that, when peace comes, you will find awaiting you not only the heritage of our age long civilization—which we shall do our best to keep intact for you—but also a larger freedom, a wider field of enterprise, more trustworthy guides and ample safeguards, at last made thoroughly effective against parasites and profiteers.²²



To begin to fulfill the promise of those messages Le Corbusier, in November 1939, asked Giraudoux to institute a Comité d'Etudes Préparatoires d'Urbanisme (the CEPU), so as to prepare the program of construction for the country in the period following the victory. But by then, June 1940 was a mere half year away. With the exodus from Paris on the eve of the defeat, Le Corbusier took refuge with his wife Yvonne, and Pierre Jeanneret, in an abandoned farmhouse in Ozon, a hamlet in the foothills of the Pyrenees where they had been commissioned with the design of a modest project at Lannemezan.

Giraudoux had followed the tottering government in its flight to Bordeaux. With Marshal Pétain succeeding Paul Reynaud on 16 June 1940 the Ministry of Information was disbanded, and Giraudoux left office immediately. He had only a few days to wait before he was to witness the armistice, and with it the anguish and the humiliation of his country. "I have not sinned," he said with passion, "I have no shame in this disaster. For my part I loved my house, my trees, my books, my frontiers, as they should be loved . . ." ²³ After journeying through southern France and Spain to Portugal in search of his son Jean-Pierre, whom he shortly ascertained had joined Général de Gaulle in London, he retired at the age of fifty-eight to his mother's old house in Cusset, which, as it happens, is just a mile or two northeast of Vichy, the lodging place chosen by the new French government.

Here, suddenly, Giraudoux found himself bereft of all remnants of his life of the past twenty years. For a time his plays were forbidden by the German censors as "anti-cultural," and he had refused the Vichy offers, first of a new Ministry of Information, then of the title of National Advisor and finally of the post of Ambassador in Athens. For the remainder of his life he had scarcely any official functions to perform save that of Director of Historical Monuments, a post which he accepted as one that was at least untainted, and which might further his interests in urban reform. By the fall of 1940 Marshal Pétain's Vichy regime had been in existence for several months, and had established some semblance of stability. In Ozon, Le Corbusier completed a little tract entitled *Destin de Paris* ²⁴ which makes some effort to meet the terms of Alibert's National Revolution. The main lines of the

proposed reform were by no means all unacceptable to Le Corbusier. Indeed, certain aspects of the Vichy aims—regionalism, a reinvigorated agriculture, industrial corporatism, youth organizations and so on—were not far removed as general objectives from those espoused by the *Plans* and *Prélude* group. ²⁵ Le Corbusier was, in any case, sufficiently inured to the vicissitudes of life at the mercy of practical politics, regardless of their theoretical complexion and, like most Frenchmen at the time, was faced with no alternative but to contemplate the reconstruction of the elements of his existence under the new regime. There was no other. To become an expatriate was inconceivable. For Le Corbusier the path of duty lay in France despite some tempting invitations from colleagues overseas. The question, as always, was answered in terms of architecture and urbanism.

In those early days of military defeat and political trauma, it was always conceivable that Pétain's proposals on national reconstruction might actually be carried into effect. ²⁶ In June 1939 Le Corbusier had learned from the Governor General of Algeria that his project for the office skyscraper on the Cap de la Marine in Algiers could be expected to become a reality in the fall. ²⁷ Under "the savior of Verdun," a decade of work on this project might not finally go to waste, and even the 1930s' proposals for Paris, in particular the Ilot Insalubre No. 6 project might possibly be revived. That is certainly the thrust of *Destin de Paris*.

By December 1940, he and Pierre Jeanneret had completed their work on the designs for Lannemezan, and the studies for Les Constructions Murondins—wall and log structures, a scheme for the systematized construction of a primitive form of temporary shelter conceived in April 1940 in response to the housing problems of the war refugees from Belgium and northern France—were also brought to a conclusion. With nothing left to do there, Pierre Jeanneret departed Ozon to work in Grenoble, and ultimately to join the Resistance. Le Corbusier remained at the farm, making his "Ubu" watercolors and awaiting events. Thus ended the most fruitful partnership of the Modern movement.

On 20 January 1941 a new law established a national professional corporation for architects. A ministerial decision au-

88 thORIZED the registration of three persons who were without a Beaux Arts diploma: Eugene Freyssinet, Auguste Perret, and Le Corbusier, and they were summoned by Vichy to make their application if they wished to continue in the practice of architecture.

On arrival at Vichy Le Corbusier came together with his old mentor, and with a number of his friends and colleagues, among whom were Francois de Pierrefeu, Professor Alexis Carrel, André Boll, old theater critic for the now defunct *Plans*, and Jean Giraudoux. Giraudoux himself was hard at work with his writing. He was also reviving and reorganizing the Ligue Urbaine et Rurale, preparing its manifestos and policy documents, and travelling extensively to collect information and spread his gospel. As Director of Historical Monuments he worked hard to preserve certain monuments and parks in the City of Paris in their original forms.

Marcel Peyrouton, Minister of the Interior, at one time Secretary General to the government of Algeria, whom Le Corbusier had known for many years in connection with the extensive series of studies for the city of Algiers, nominated Le Corbusier, together with Perret and other architects to a ministry commission on reconstruction. He decided to stay on in his quarters at the Hotel Carlton, which, appropriately enough, housed the Ministries of Justice and Finance, and join with his colleagues in the attempt to influence the direction of the new regime and to place the issue of the built domain firmly before it.

The work commenced with the texts for *The Athens Charter*. His proposal for Les Constructions Murondins became a thirty six page pamphlet and was published by Chiron in Clermont-Ferrand under the official auspices of the Secretariat General for Youth. *Destin de Paris* was published by Sorlot, also in Clermont.

Though Giraudoux was soon to discover that he and his ideas were denied access to the Reconstruction Commission, he had chanced to become acquainted with Minister Latournerie whose office was charged with the formulation of new urban building regulations. By the end of May a temporary appointment signed by Pétain had commissioned him in the creation

of a Committee of Enquiry on Housing and Building Construction.

Le Corbusier, André Boll, Alexis Carrel, and Francois de Pierrefeu, came together to perfect a doctrine for the built domain of France, renewing the idea of the CEPU project initiated with Giraudoux in 1939. Their thinking at that time became embodied in *La Maison des Hommes*,²⁸ a publication in which the text by de Pierrefeu and the images by Le Corbusier form two trains of thought in parallel counterpoint. This arrangement was not carried through in the English edition, *The Home of Man*,²⁹ which nullified the intent of the book through a senseless economic measure that separated the text from the drawings. This hopeful and naively optimistic little book was signed by de Pierrefeu in July 1941. It bore an emblem on the cover which was later to be identified as the emblem of ASCORAL (Assemblée de Constructeurs pour une Rénovation Architecturale), a more technically diversified extension of the CIAM-FRANCE group, founded in Paris in 1942, and it carried a single-page loose-leaf questionnaire soliciting the support of urbanists, architects, engineers, doctors and public health specialists, sociologists, industrialists, public officials, workers, peasants, and mothers of families.

The Athens Charter was to bear the same emblem, as were the entire series of subsequent ASCORAL publications. The explanatory text to the clauses of the *Charter* and the brief history of the CIAM activity which prefaced the original edition were in course of completion and Giraudoux had undertaken to write the introduction.

But the micro-climate surrounding the CIAM syndicalists in Vichy, not at all hospitable from the outset, was growing distinctly colder. The director of the newly formed government department which had charge of the Committee of Enquiry left no doubt about the fact that he desired no collaboration from Messrs. Le Corbusier and de Pierrefeu. By 1 November 1941, Le Corbusier is forced to take note of the level of hostility toward him in his diary:

I have edited *The Athens Charter* with [its] preface by Giraudoux. But this work will have to be anonymous. For the sake of prudence my text will be rewritten by Jeanne

de Villeneuve. The Minister of Agriculture [Pierre Caziot, one of the marshal's speech writers] has just written that the scandal of my presence must cease.³⁰

With this ultimatum Le Corbusier had to acknowledge his disillusionment and to find refuge for his quixotic spirit with Jean Badovici in Vezelay, that beloved vacation place of the years before the war, where he turned, undaunted, to a scheme for the rationalization of its immediate environs.

As is confirmed in the note appended to the Envoy-Postword in the concluding pages of the *Charter*, Mme. de Villeneuve did indeed rewrite the material that elaborated the clauses of the *Charter*. It was perhaps her good fortune that she had died by the time of its publication in April 1943.

By then much had happened. Le Corbusier's seventh plan for Algiers, the final outcome of eleven years of work, had been unanimously rejected by the Algiers Municipal Council on 13 June 1942 after a virulent campaign in the local press which successfully revived Alexandre de Senger's decade old accusations of communism against him, despite the fact that he had arrived in Algiers as the personal emissary of Marshal Pétain, and had been well received by Général Weygand, then Governor of Algeria.

With theoretical enquiry and preparation now the only avenue open to him, Le Corbusier founded ASCORAL. The newly constituted membership went strenuously to work in the dusty office at 35, rue de Sèvres.

By July 1943 Le Corbusier was informed that he was being sought by Darnand's "Milice," a supplementary police force modeled on the German Gestapo. Though he made no special effort to evade them, Le Corbusier had not reopened his apartment on the rue Nungesser et Coli on his return to Paris the previous summer, and he did not return to it until after the Liberation. The ASCORAL meetings at 35, rue de Sèvres were held without the benefit of heat, light or telephone—like many others in Paris at that time, Le Corbusier was living a rather obscure, even underground, existence.

Though his health was noticeably deteriorating, Giraudoux had remained incredibly active, both in his dramatic writing

and in his interest in urbanism, and he had become progressively more distasteful to the government and to the Germans. He had written for film for the first time in the early days of the defeat at Cusset. *La Duchesse de Langeais* appeared in 1941 and *Les Anges au Péché* in 1943. *Electre*, first produced in 1937, was welcomed by the Germans when it was revived at the Théâtre Hebertot, since it seemed to them to assist their case for civil order. On 11 October 1943 it was replaced, however, by *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Giraudoux's most bitter and apocalyptic play, whose meaning the Nazis began to comprehend only when it was too late to have it censored. Meanwhile, he was completing *La Folle de Chaillot*, in readiness for the Liberation, and his writings took a distinct stand in favor of the Resistance.

In addition to Giraudoux's work and writings in the cause of urbanism, he served France clandestinely in several ways, one of them being that he made himself a clearing house for reports of German occupation crimes and undertook their compilation. Naturally he was under surveillance. On 27 December 1943 he published in *Le Figaro*, the manifesto of the Urban and Rural League.

Giraudoux succumbed to uremia in the Hotel de Castille on the rue Cambon on 31 January 1944. According to Louis Aragon, his ailment was the aftereffect of an organic poisoning administered to him by the Germans. Published posthumously were a series of political and urbanistic essays: *Ecrit dans l'ombre*, 1944; *Sans pouvoirs*, 1946; *De Pleins Pouvoirs à Sans Pouvoirs*, 1950; and *Pour une politique urbaine*, 1947, prefaced by Raoul Dautry, old friend from 1918, and the Minister of Reconstruction responsible for commissioning the Unité d'habitation in Marseilles, architect, Le Corbusier. This last work of Giraudoux's republishes the "Introduction" to *The Athens Charter* with the title: "Nécessité d'une politique de l'urbanisme."

1. Jean Giraudoux, *Pour une Politique Urbaine*, preface by Raoul Dautry (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1947), p. 8.
2. See Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, eds., *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret, Oeuvre complète 1910-1929*, 7th ed. (Zurich: Girsberger, 1960), pp. 23-26; Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même*, Panoramas Forces Vives (Geneva: Rousseau, 1970), pp. 49-55.
3. Jean Giraudoux, *Suzanne et le Pacifique* (Paris: Emile Paul, 1921).
4. Le Corbusier's interest in Giraudoux at this time could not have been more than a passing one. Although his library contains substantial Giraudoux material, none of it is dated prior to 1930.
5. Several of his articles over these years were reprinted in: Jean Giraudoux, *Pleins Pouvoirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939); idem, *De Pleins Pouvoirs à Sans Pouvoirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950); idem, *Pour une Politique Urbaine* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1947).
6. Jean Giraudoux, *Sans Pouvoirs* (Monaco: Le Rocher, 1946), p. 93.
7. Ibid., p. 47.
8. Jean Giraudoux, "Rues et Visages de Berlin," *Berlin* (Paris: Emile-Paul, 1930), reprinted in part in Giraudoux, *Pour une Politique Urbaine*, from which this quotation is taken, p. 27.
9. *L'Esprit Nouveau* was published from 1920 to 1935, thereafter there could be no further pretext for optimism. *Plans* (1930-1932) and its costly successor *Prélude: Thèmes préparatoires à l'action* the monthly organ of the Central Committee for Regionalist and Syndicalist Action (1933-1938) were made of increasingly sterner stuff, as the composition of their editorial boards quite clearly indicates.
10. Hubert Lagardelle, *Le Socialisme Ouvrier*, Collection des Doctrines Politiques (Paris: V. Giard et E. Brière, 1911).
11. See Dr. Pierre Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret, Oeuvre complète 1934-1938*, Max Bill, ed., 2nd ed. (Zurich: Girsberger, 1945), pp. 13-15.
12. Francois de Pierrefeu, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret*, Collection les Artistes Nouveaux (Paris: G. Gres, 1932).
13. See Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City* (New York, The Orion Press, 1964).
14. Jean Giraudoux, *Aventures de Jerome Bardini* (Paris: Emile-Paul, 1930).
15. Yves Levy, "Giraudoux et les problèmes sociaux," *Paru*, n. 19, June 1946, pp. 7-14.
16. Jean Giraudoux, *Pour une Politique Urbaine*, p. 98.
17. Jean Giraudoux, *La Folle de Chaillot*, play, Act. II.
18. Jean Giraudoux, *Pleins Pouvoirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939).
19. Paul Claudel, *Hommage à Giraudoux* (Paris: Collection Comoedia-Charpentier, 1944).
20. A. M. Petitjean in *La Lumière*, Jan. 27, 1939, p. 6.
21. Andre Morize, *France Été 1940* (New York: Editions de la Maison Francaise, 1949), pp. 13-14.
22. Jean Giraudoux, *The France of Tomorrow*, trans. anon. (Paris: Centre d'Information Documentaires, 1940), p. 5.
23. Jean Giraudoux, *Armistice à Bordeaux* (Neuchatel: Ides et Calendes, 1945).
24. Le Corbusier, *Destin de Paris*, Collection Préludes: Thèmes Préparatoires à l'action (Clermont-Ferrand: Fernand Solot, 1941).
25. See Richard Griffiths, *Marshal Pétain* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1970), pp. 254-64. This provides an admirable summary of the National Revolution policies.
26. See Philippe Pétain, *Reconstruction de La France* (Clermont-Ferrand: Fernand Sorlot, 1940).
27. Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même*, p. 85.
28. Francois de Pierrefeu and Le Corbusier, *La Maison des Hommes* (Paris: Plon, 1942).
29. Le Corbusier, *The Home of Man* (London: The Architectural Press, 1948).
30. Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même*.

Figure Credits

Figure 1. Photograph by Chris Marker.

Figure 2. Photograph by Chris Marker from the collection of Mme. Jean-Pierre Giraudoux.

The Architects' Ball—A Vignette, 1931

Rem Koolhaas

This short vignette touches on a festive instant in that late phase of what may now be regarded as the Eldorado period of North American architecture, extending from as long ago as Sullivan's Getty Tomb of 1890, to the work of Wright in all its phases—from the pre-Columbian profiles of his "dawning civilization" that we first witness in the Oak Park Studio additions of 1895, to the hallucinatory aspirations of the Industrial Revolution as it "runs away," manifest in Wright's Gordon Strong planetarium and belvedere, designed in 1924 as an object for automobile pilgrimage in the midst of the Arizona desert.

Wright's Eldorado spirit, as much present in the Guggenheim Museum as it was in his Californian block houses of the twenties, now begins to fuse into a period of modern culture that was until recently regarded as "lost": that period of populist culture formerly known as the "moderne" and now generally known under the name of Art Deco. Between Wright's National Life Insurance Co. project of 1924 and Raymond Hood's Rockefeller Plaza of 1930, there is surely but a hair's breadth, so to speak, separating the genius of glass from the genius of masonry. In any event be it *Translux* in popular parlance or Usonian in Wright's more nationalistic coinage, the unbroken tie to the Jugendstil is constantly there—the drive to create an instant culture, capable of bestowing an identity upon the displaced "A Fantasie in Flame and Silver," and of breaking once and for

all that perennial Western dependence on the classic Humanist base.

91

Rem Koolhaas was born in 1944 in Rotterdam, Holland. He studied architecture at The Architectural Association in London. His projects include "The Berlin Wall as Architecture" (1970), "Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture," with Elia Zenghelis (1972) and most recently "Welfare Palace Hotel." He came to the United States in 1972 on a Harkness Fellowship and has worked on two books, *The Architecture of Ivan Leonidov* and *Delirious New York*. He is also a Visiting Fellow at The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York.

This article is part of a book Delirious New York, to be published by the Oxford University Press, New York, in 1976.

Charles Joseph Prince de Ligne

After eleven Beaux Arts costume balls in New York devoted to nostalgic historical tableaux—"A Pageant of Ancient France," "The Gardens of Versailles," "Napoleon" (in 1927, the year of the first CIAM Congress), "Northern Africa"—serving essentially as annual opportunities for the Beaux Arts graduates to reconsummate their love affair with French culture, the nostalgic flow is interrupted in 1931, when the organizers realize that the present cannot be suppressed forever and decide to use the ball format, this time to probe the future.

It is an appropriate introduction to 1931, the year that the reservoirs of historical styles are finally depleted; various versions of modernism are knocking on the door with increasing urgency and the collapse of the financial structure brings about an enforced pause in which to consider the future.

"Fête Moderne, a Fantasia in Flame and Silver," emerges as the theme for the twelfth ball, to be held on January 23, 1931. The theme is an invitation to the Beaux Arts architects and artists of New York to explore the unknown and to participate in a collective search for the "spirit of the age." It is, in other words, unselfconscious research disguised as a costume ball.

"What is the modern spirit in art? No one knows. It is something toward which a lot of people are groping and in the course of this groping interesting and amusing things should be developed."¹

Fearful of a superficial interpretation of their theme, the organizers warn that

The modern spirit in art is not a new recipe for designing buildings, sculpture and painted decoration but is a quest for something more characteristic and more vital as an expression of modern activity and thought . . . In the decoration, as in the costumes, the effect sought is a

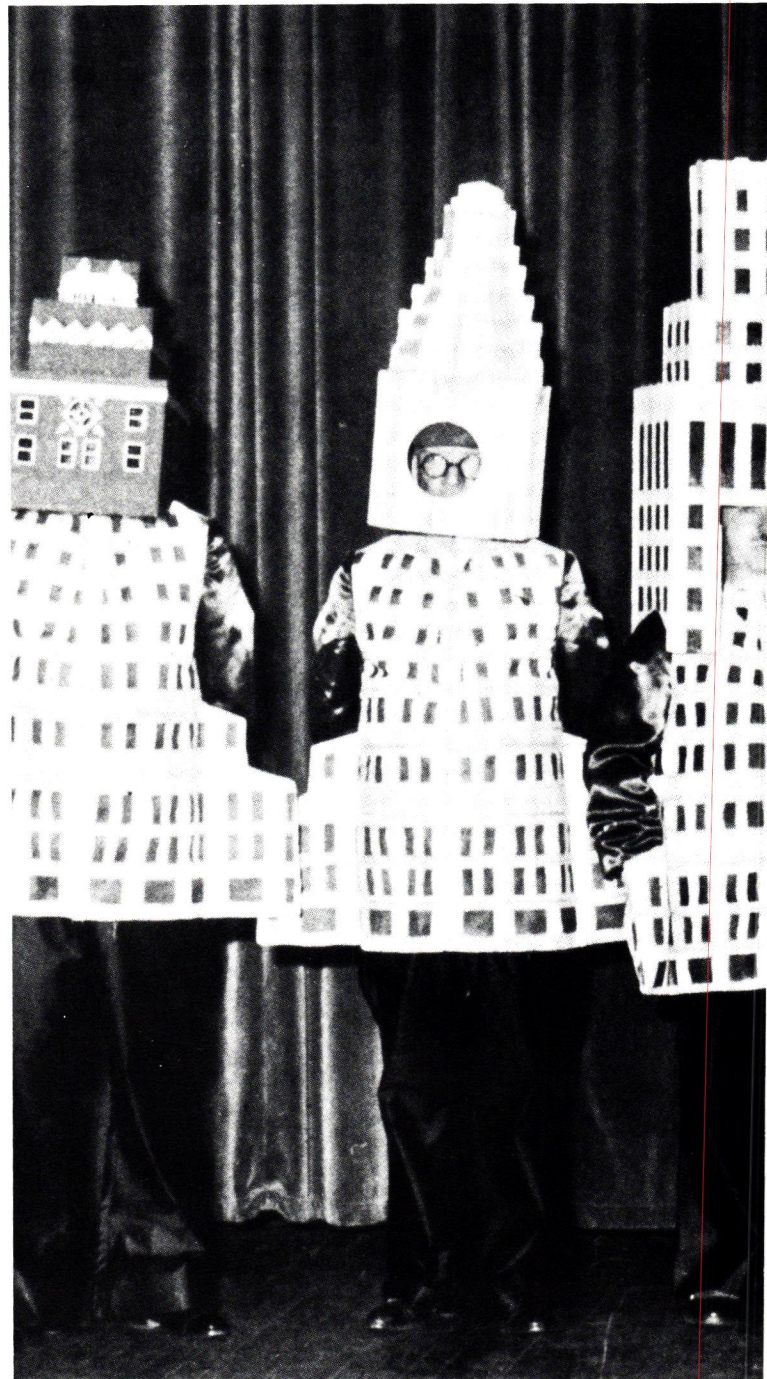


Figure 1. "The New York Skyline." Left to right: A. Stewart Walker as the Fuller Building, Leonard Schultze as the New Waldorf Astoria, Ely J. Kahn as the Squibb Building, William Van Alen as the Chrysler Building, Ralph Walker as One Wall Street, D. E. Waid as the Metropolitan Tower and J. H. Freedlander as the Museum of the City of New York.

Figure 2. Miss Edna Cowan as the Basin Girl.



94 rhythmic, vibrant quality expressive of the feverish activity which characterizes our work and our play, our shop windows and our advertisements, the froth and the jazz of modern life.²

Weeks in advance, the general public is informed of this program through an ambitious press release: "The Fête Moderne is to be modernistic, futuristic, cubistic, altruistic, mystic, architistic and feministic," adding defiantly, "Fantasy is the note, and originality will be rewarded."³

On the night of the ball, 300 guests come to the Hotel Astor on Broadway to indulge in a "Programme of Eventful Events and Delightful Delights."⁴ The familiar interior of the hotel has disappeared, replaced by a pitch-black stellar void suggesting the infinity of the universe through which the guests, in their two-tone silver and flame-colored costumes, trace rocket-like trajectories. Weightless pieces of decor are suspended in mid-air. One, a "cubistic Main Street" appears to be a broken-off fragment of a modernistic galaxy, a vision of a distorted U.S.A., removed only in time. In this universal medium, lamps become skyscrapers' negatives: "... from the darkness above prismatic lanterns stab the gloom like great projectiles falling from the sky."⁵

There are "Futuristic refreshments"—a drink which has to be a liquid metal and "miniature meteorites," flaked but edible (roasted marshmallows?)—are served by silent servants dressed in black and thus almost invisible. There is an abundance of abstract sculptures and paintings for sale at "introductory prices." Shreds of vaguely familiar melodies are heard now and then, tangling with the sounds of a frantic metropolis: the "... orchestra will be assisted by nine riveting machines, a three-inch pipe for live-steam, four ocean liner whistles, three sledge hammers and a few rock drillers. The music however will penetrate through all this on account of the modernistic quality of the dissonances."⁶

Certain subliminal but serious messages float around and can be isolated from the overdose of suggestive information. They remind the New York architects that this ball is in reality a crypto-congress; that this ceremony could be the Manhattan equivalent of CIAM on the other side of the

Atlantic—a delirious grope after the "spirit of the age" and its implications for their increasingly megalomaniacal profession.

Painted upon a great draped frieze, level with the third balcony, a vague procession of colossal figures rush as through space with silver arrows poised for flight. These are the guards of the void, the inhabitants of the upper air, charged with the duty of placing some limit upon the vaulting ambition of our builders whose works without are soaring ever nearer to the stars.⁷

This night, the inside of the Hotel Astor has become a Manhattan without gravity.

Do these architects know, by virtue of a carefully preserved pragmatic instinct, that the outrageous architecture of Manhattan is a substance that defies rational analysis and will explode in the face of every would-be objective observer? That it would be suicide to solve its problems? That its solutions can only be found in ruthless extrapolations of its freakish history? That its issues can only be defined through ritual and incantation? It seems so, as these builders gather in the wings of the small stage (in silence so as not to disturb an ongoing modernistic performance of the Albertina Rasch Dancers) to prepare for the climax and *raison d'être* of this evening: becoming their own skyscrapers, they will perform the "Skyline of New York" ballet. For a few moments, they will be an ideal, living city.

Like their towers, the men are dressed in costumes which are similar in essential characteristics (fig. 1), while their most gratuitous features are involved in a relentless competition. They wear identical "skyscraper-dresses," which taper towards the head in attempted conformity to the 1916 Zoning Law; "being different" occurs only at the top. This agreement is unfair to some of the participants; especially to the stoic Joseph H. Freedlander, architect of the low-rise Museum of the City of New York, who, not having a single tower to his credit nevertheless prefers the shared embarrassment of the "skyscraper-dress" to the lonely alternative of black-tie evening costume, in grotesque conflict with the colonial tectonics of his flat creation. Leonard Schultze, designer of the soon-to-be-opened Waldorf Astoria, is faced with the dilemma of representing that two-tower structure

in a single headdress. He has settled for one. The elegant top of A. Stewart Walker's Fuller Building has so few openings that veracity to it condemns its designer to temporary blindness. The close "fit" between headdress and "skyscraper-dress" on Ely Jacques Kahn mirrors the nature of his buildings: never straining for dramatic pinnacles, they are harmonious mountains, invariably reaching a squat conclusion. From this evidence, he can be tentatively identified as the author of the "skyscraper-dress." Ralph Walker appears as One Wall Street, Harvey Wiley Corbett as his Bush Terminal, James O'Connor and John Kilpatrick are inseparable as the twin Beaux Arts Apartments. Thomas Gillespie has managed the impossible: he is dressed as a void to represent an unnamed subway station. Raymond Hood has come as his Daily News Building. Day and night now he has been preparing for the unveiling of Rockefeller Center in six weeks time. It is a project so complex and ironically, so "modern" that it would defy transformation into a single costume.

Outshining all of these, as it has since 1929 on the stage of midtown Manhattan, is the Chrysler Building and its architect William Van Alen. He has spurned the "skyscraper-dress." Like his creation, his costume is a paroxysm of detail:

The entire costume, including the hat, was of silver metal cloth trimmed with black patent leather; the sash and lining were of flame-colored silk. The cape, puttees and cuffs are of flexible wood, the wood having been selected from trees from all over the world, (India, Australia, Philippine Islands, South America, Africa, Honduras and North America). These woods were teakwood, Philippine mahogany, American walnut, African prima vera, South American prima vera, Huya and aspen, maple and ebony, lace wood and Australian silky oak. The costume was made possible by the use of "Flexwood," a wall material of a thin veneer with a fabric backing. The costume was designed to represent the Chrysler Building, the characteristic features in the composition being carried out by using the exact facsimile of the top of the building as a headpiece; the vertical and horizontal lines of the tower were carried out by the patent leather bands running up the front and around the sleeves. The cape embodied the design of the first floor elevator doors, using the same woods as are used in the elevator doors themselves, and the front was a

replica of the elevator doors of the upper floors of the building. The shoulder ornaments were the eagles' heads appearing at the 61st floor set-back of the building.⁸

This evening is Van Alen's swan song, a fabricated triumph. Inconspicuous on this stage, but undeniable on Thirty-fourth Street, the Empire State Building already dominates the Manhattan skyline, outranking the Chrysler in height and virility. It is almost complete now, except for the shiny airship mooring mast that grows still taller every day in its shameless association with the clouds and the sky. It casts its shadow, even in the darkness of this ball. The Chrysler's status stands revealed: tonight it is easier to imagine it dancing with a man, than with a woman.

Between these buildings here hides one great incognito. It is Prometheus, domesticated totally as "Low Pressure Boiler"—a casual homage to "he who made all this possible."

Architecture, especially its Manhattan mutation, has been a pursuit strictly for men. For those aiming at the sky, away from the earth's surface and the natural, there is, traditionally, no female company. Yet among the forty-four men on the stage, there is a single woman to represent the down-to-earth: Miss Edna Cowan. The basin as an extension of her belly, she is there to symbolize the entrails of architecture, the continuing embarrassment of the human insides, of the biological processes which continue regardless of lofty aspirations and technological marvels: in man's race towards the nth floor, plumbing will always finish a close second, a tubular shadow. They euphemistically call Miss Cowan the "Basin Girl," but the program is more explicit: "Lavatory supplied by the J. L. Mott Company" (fig. 2).

In retrospect, it is clear that the laws of a costume ball have shaped Manhattan's architecture, and that this is the secret of its continuing metropolitan suspense. Only in New York, architecture had become the design of tectonic costumes, which did not even wish to reflect or reveal the true nature of its repetitive interiors, but rather to produce instead, "ideal" dream images which slip smoothly into the collective unconscious to perform their roles as symbols. The costume ball was a formal convention where the desire for in-

96 dividuality and extreme originality was not in conflict with collective performance and achievement; it was in fact a condition for it.

Together with the beauty contest, it is a rare situation where competition becomes the mirror image of collaboration. At the same time it exposes, as non sequitur, the expressions of languages that are too private: for a costume there is no impact without some "aha" of recognition. The "new" can only be registered if grafted on to the base of the familiar, as a modification which incorporates the rudimentary original. The architects of New York, making their skyscrapers compulsively comparable, turned the entire population into a jury. In the "real," moralistic, modern architecture, the buildings judged the people.

1. "Fête Moderne," *Fête Moderne: A Fantasia in Color*. (Program for The Beaux Arts Ball, 1931), p. 27.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Herald Tribune*, 18 January 1931.
4. *Fête Moderne* program, p. 29.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
6. *Herald Tribune*, p. 11.
7. *Fête Moderne* program, p. 27.
8. *Pencil Points*, February 1931, p. 145.

Reviews, Letters and Forum

On Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas*. 1972, Cambridge, Mass., The M.I.T. Press. 189 pp., \$25.00.

Fred Koetter

In the interests of convenience, the authors of this book are referred to collectively as "Venturi," "he," "the authors," etc. This is in no way intended to leave unacknowledged the contributions of the various authors.

This is a big, expensive, and for me a highly debatable book. Presumably it is a continuation of, or perhaps an annex to, the arguments put forth in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1967), for we are here dealing with an endorsement of as-found reality and a preference for the immediately possible. In addition to the Las Vegas study itself, the book contains a number of related polemical tracts and a battery of the authors' most recent projects, serving, apparently, not only as a record of works in progress, but as illustrative vehicles relating to the overall message.

The familiar Venturi attack upon modern architecture's less admirable aspects has here been expanded and given considerable coherence. And if most of this attack has been heard before, it can certainly afford to be heard again. For, it may be safely assumed, by this time, that modern architecture has not, for all its good intentions, turned out to be the means of immediate deliverance and well-being that it was advertised to be; that its largely messianic overtones and consequent disregard for a less than perfect reality, for context of any kind, has produced disastrous effects, not only within the mind of the architect, but in the physical posture of most of the world's primary cities.

Venturi proceeds to bring into question once again the modern architect's inherent taste for fact and program, technology and total design, for symbolic neutrality and stylistic innocence. It is against such a backdrop that *Learning from Las Vegas* is put forth as an attempt to provide refreshing relief, to propose serious consideration of previously unacknowledged themes. And if Venturi would prefer a maintained debate between high art and low art, "Vitruvius and vulgarity," the obscure and the obvious, it is

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by way of such preferences that he has come to discover the virtues of Las Vegas and the message of the popular landscape. And there is obviously much to be said for this activity, this intrusion into the world of the ordinary, into the world of ongoing reality and unencumbered life. For art, in its best sense, has traditionally gained vitality and spontaneity from the ingestion of popular, folk, and other supposedly unselfconscious forms, and has, perhaps, in this way, guarded itself against arcane detachment. Within this context comes the well-known interjection into modern architecture of nineteenth century industrial buildings, steamships, grain elevators, not only as lines of communication, but as stylistic masks and symbols.

But all of this has not been so readily acknowledged, and Venturi rightly questions the virginity of modern architecture with respect to, as it is the product of, an allegedly clean and unbiased process, a theory wherein not only the building appears as if by magic—as a straightforward result of neutral facts at work—but one also where it appears without style and without memory, without symbolic meaning, or meaning of any sort beyond the direct manifestation of its rationally stated social and "functional" determinates. These productions obviously had meaning, and this situation, this rift between public proclamation and private confusion, has, of course, caused many problems but very few admissions. Modern architecture's self-righteous and transparent rationale has become institutionalized, and after being put through several bureaucratic filters, has now become, at least in part, the doctrine of a planning and academic establishment.

So much seems clear enough, but there is, needless to say, more mileage than this to be got from Las Vegas, and it is here that an otherwise low-key and generally agreeable argument begins to elicit serious disbelief. For beyond charging up a stale architecture, beyond simply violating the established standards of "good taste," the Venturi interpretation of Las Vegas claims consid-

erably more. It claims for its admirers a much more literal and profound communication with the elusive and increasingly noteworthy predilections of the people. It provides a glimpse of what T.S. Eliot has called "those vast impersonal forces." While this may simply be the ironical juggling of populist fantasies within a much more diversified and comprehensive argument, or an indication that Route 66, like the odd facade, is just so much grist for the stylistic or polemical mill, there is, apparently, more to the message than this.

There is implied a certain "rightness" in this activity. For beyond the qualifications the authors make as to the limits of the Las Vegas study, there is lying, not so well concealed at its fringes, an idea that the world as found actually reveals the tracks of truth; that circumstance, unconfused by absolute judgement or abstract values, exists somehow in a condition of basic correctness. And we are led to believe that these banalities (the strip, suburban sprawl, etc.), as manifestations of the human continuum, should usefully lie, at least for the time being, beyond direct judgement. And if it is possibly too simplistic to detect in all this a plan for action, what seems to come across is a rather direct version of the current standard which suggests that we should help people to get what they want, rather than impose upon them what we think they should have.

Now for all its common sense and scrupulous good will, a prescription of this kind almost inevitably pushes a number of unmanageable questions to the surface. Does the current, so-called popular American built landscape justify itself by its very existence? Is this really what people want? Do people ever really get what they want, want what they get, or should they? Such questions, of course, are almost necessarily left open, and their presence perhaps only leads to an additional combination of related questions. Is the architect primarily or almost exclusively an interpreter of this passing scene? Should his fundamental stance really be one which is as wholly

preoccupied with popular justification as seems to be indicated here? Is the architect (or anyone else for that matter) really in a position to assume this stance or, in the end, to serve any great purpose by doing so?

Whatever the answers to these questions might be—whatever the potential attributes of found circumstance and allegedly popular desire—we are here dealing with an overt suggestion that these conditions, guided essentially by their own momentum, might usefully serve as the foundation material, not only for a theory of architecture but also perhaps for a theory of society. And we are thus projected, uncomfortably but necessarily, into areas of broader social and ethical concern, into a consideration not just of the values and reliability of popular impulse, but beyond this, into a consideration of the necessary relationship between these impulses and the sluggishness of abstract principle; or, perhaps more precisely, into a consideration of the relations existing between such things as private volition and public welfare, liberty and law, the individual and the state, etc. Needless to say, considerations such as these have produced, for the past two hundred years at least, enormous ideological and operational difficulties which, although not easily disposed of, are at least easily recognized.

The nineteenth century tradition of liberalism, for instance, while built upon a foundation of free exchange and laissez-faire economics, and upon the primacy of individual liberties, almost immediately manufactured for itself a conflict between these conditions and a felt need for philanthropy, for helping others. On the one hand, people were to live according to individual volition. On the other hand, people were to be provided with obvious contributions to their well-being, whether they wanted them or not—a curious but certainly wholesome dilemma. And thus the latter half of the nineteenth century may be seen as a running debate between these two contrary aspects of the liberal mentality. While there is little doubt that the interests of individual liberty were

significantly extended as a result of this process, there also occurred the massive imposition of assumed services and institutions for the greater good: improved sanitation, compulsory education and vaccination, etc. While these efforts might easily be classified as illustrations of progress, they were not conspicuously popular enterprises. The initial lack of interest on the part of the people towards most of these institutions (in fact both aspects of liberalism, the libertarian and the paternalist) is a matter of record. Compulsory education in England for instance, if put to a genuinely popular vote, would, without doubt, have been soundly defeated.

Versions of such difficulties might easily be extended to more immediate circumstances, even into closer proximity with the alleged "Americanism" of the argument under consideration. For in the United States, questions as to the necessity of abstract justice and the possible scope of practical or theoretical freedoms have presumably been under constant, if not always enlightened, consideration at least since the time of the Revolution; and whatever may lie brightly or dimly in the future, the Constitution not only continues to reinforce (at least theoretically) the tenets of individual liberty, but also continues to specify the capacity of abstract justice (law) to override the will of the people.

The flexibility of direct parliamentary legislation might seem, especially now, to carry immense advantages; or the current dreams of an ersatz Arcadia, where evidently everyone would just "naturally" be nice to one another, might, for those with a high capacity for self-delusion, seem preferable. But, as things now stand, at least in the context under consideration, the situation remains somewhat remote from these possibilities. If, for instance, the people of Alabama, in full recognition of local circumstance and the subtleties of tradition, elected to maintain or reconstruct a condition of absolute segregation, notions of abstract justice, of "inalienable rights," would certainly prevail.

These observations are, of course, obvious enough, as are the conclusions to be drawn from them. While popular opinion, dominant trends, and the like project important and dynamic aspects of practical reality, they hardly approximate a trouble-free or irresistible base of operation—their inherent “correctness” has conspicuous limits. Problems remain, and the architect, even under the hopeful but rather dubious banner of “give them what they want,” should be willing to speculate, far more than Venturi seems to be prepared to do, as to the possibilities of what society *ought* to be. Such speculation, apparently, cannot be simply limited in its possible conclusions to an in-line extension of what society already *is*. But if this optimistic notion concerning the possibilities of a popular directive persists, it is also equipped with another seemingly irresistible proposition, this time involving the *timeliness* of this venture. That is, not only might you “learn” from an observation of the popular landscape, but via such observation you, the architect, will be put into closer touch with a new and more pragmatic, and at the same time more symbolic, “spirit of the times.” “Because this is not the time and ours is not the environment for heroic communication through pure architecture. Each medium has its day, and the rhetorical environmental statements of our time—civic, commercial, or residential—will come from media more purely symbolic, perhaps less static and more adaptable to the scale of the environment. The iconography and the mixed media of roadside commercial architecture will point the way, if we will look” (p. 87). We are provided here, reluctantly to be sure, with slightly painful references to the irrational forces of the *Zeitgeist*. And, as with most epoch-identifying statements of this kind, we must assume, for want of firmer ground, a condition of sheer belief. We must believe not only in a particular interpretation of the times, but we must believe that this notion of “the times” is basically sound, that this imperative is, in fact, a moral imperative. Here Venturi comes very close not only to recreating one of the more dubious aspects of modern archi-

ecture’s theoretical base, but at the same time to unwittingly aligning himself with the neutral observations of that paragon of scientific responsibility, the analytical planner. In any case, if one is to believe the message, there is nothing to worry about, nothing to do but relax, listen to the small voices, assist and perhaps interpret the inevitable march of time. Obviously, Venturi does not really want to build such an interpretation into his argument, or so one would assume, and in any case, he would probably be better off simply to admit to willfulness and leave the imperatives of the times to his more compulsive and expressionistic colleagues.

In short, what appears to be happening here, in these areas of popular and temporal concern, is not only a flirtation with inevitability but the advancement of a number of convenient oversights and exclusions; and as the analysis of Las Vegas is dealt with specifically, this mode of operation seems to persist: “Las Vegas is analyzed here only as a phenomenon of architectural communication . . . so Las Vegas’s values are not questioned here. The morality of commercial advertising, gambling interests, and the competitive instinct is not at issue here” (p. 1). But, of course, to one degree or another it is at issue, for in a loaded context such as that which Las Vegas represents, an absence of analytical neutrality is inherently built into the choice of subject matter; and it seems obvious that Venturi enjoys not only the formal idiosyncrasies of the strip, but its message of popular commerce and public license as well. As the observations become more literal, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate the signs and symbols from what they are communicating. In any event, “architectural communication” certainly involves more than the impossible utterances of pure form; for architecture, even according to the authors, communicates more than itself. Its references are, in one sense at least, always explicit, as they are certainly explicit on the strip. The proposed lobotomy, with or without scientific precedent or the hope of synthetic reintegration, at least leaves some

thought processes intact; and peeping through the zip-a-tone, the straightforward search for analytical and communicative techniques, is the not so indirect endorsement of a rather dubious enterprise.

Without doubt, the strip itself is an exhilarating experience, and much can easily be said to its credit. But with observations on the credit side imagined, enthusiasm on the scale proposed is still difficult to maintain. All of the genuine vitality and violence of the electrographic “view from the road” combine, on the inside, with the quieter world of predigested sensation and thin mystery—Mickey Mouse for adults and “oldsters,” the pure product of a fast-buck industry.

The commercial entertainment industry in its provision of cheap thrills, escapist fantasies, and required social relief has, of course, rendered longtime service as a human institution; but in an increasingly consumer-oriented society, this industry has unfortunately become more and more the *baseline* of what was formerly identified as the cultural life of society. (It presents easy simulations of difficult and serious endeavors, and displays a precooked and thin substitute for reality which, presented as a basic diet, gradually breaks down the critical faculties, dulls the senses and increasingly points towards the imposition of a society where the real thing, and all the effort required for its understanding, are no longer necessary or even recognized. I think there is quite a lot of this happening at Las Vegas, and the physique of the strip cannot easily be detached for long from these questions concerning its underlying posture.

Beyond the not so difficult “order” of the strip, then, ultimately lie questions of social importance. After the fun, after the euphoria, after the diagrams and predictable points have been made, is the architect really serving society by the endorsement of such easy overtures to instant gratification? To be sure, the idea of strip development might certainly provide, by way of optimism, nimble abstraction and a variety of

useful “models” for the general “structuring” of an automobile-driven urban pattern; but, at a certain point, the limits of the reference must be ascertained and the question must arise: can the literal extension of the it’s-not-so-bad-if-you-look-at-it-right syndrome really transform obvious trash into a model for meaningful human environment? But assuming momentarily a condition of semi-analytical detachment, what about the formal lessons of Las Vegas and its abstract lessons in “architectural communication”?

In this area, Las Vegas displays the built form of unrestricted motive, of unencumbered private interest; it is spontaneity and unpredictability little hampered by the recognition of orthodox taste and abstract theory. And while the “order” of the strip is certainly there, the rule of the road, the auto scale, the big sign-flat building format and all the rest, then beyond these discovered references to known convention, and beyond the question of whether the strip is a good thing or a bad thing: What is the architect to do with all that vitality? Is he to simulate it? Is he to run it through his analytical sieve and learn to produce less than fully animated caricatures of it? May he, in a traditional way, use it to represent a version of “popular” vitality, to insinuate a recognition of front-line reality? May he, by way of such activities, not only revitalize his stylistic arsenal, but at the same time provide conversational material and studied commentary for voguish mannerism which may have little to do with the true cause of a popular culture?

However, given all the genuine reservations concerning the commercial landscape and what it represents, and ignoring that it is obviously possible and quite easy to accept it as an authentic slice of reality, even romantically to project aspects of the strip into a world of true spontaneity, imagination still fails at the point of its proposed institutionalization. For to speak of the advantages of the thing itself, is not its production and resultant vitality best left to its own devices? Venturi would certainly agree

that the real thing is more appealing than the architect’s studied version of it ever might be. Why, on a popular level, attempt to simulate spontaneity, or ever ponder the possibility, when it obviously manufactures itself without intervention?

Is there not here the schizophrenia of misplaced intention, which specifies, in its illogical conclusion, that the architect must have his fingers in virtually every environmental enterprise? But why this quest for universal involvement? The presence of an overt and well-established social conscience is here again, of course, central to such a question. And if the presence of this commitment may be rightly interpreted as an indication of genuine progress, much of its current form, or at least the form suggested here, might well lead to as many problems as it has the intention of solving. For while the architect has assumed responsibility, in turn this responsibility has assumed, at times, an almost limitless range.

While earlier on the modern architect exercised his convictions basically through the provision, perhaps the imposition, of the grand solution; the more recent forms of this commitment are, needless to say, involved with a more relativist and participatory posture. But, if the direct scale of operation has shifted, the psychology of a universal and comprehensive substratum has, it seems, remained emphatically intact; the validity and usefulness of the architect’s propositions still remain strictly related to their potential scope of applicability. Now whatever may be the advantages of something like “universal incrementalism” or “universal populism” as opposed to old-fashioned “total design,” the architect still proceeds in his efforts to effect as much of the built (or unbuilt) world as possible. If he predictably confronts a somewhat unreceptive reality, an alarming reality where very few people indeed readily resort to the insights of the architect or find them at all interesting, this condition, according to the directive, must be literally modified. The architect, in short, must continue to make himself increasingly accessible and in-

creasingly diversified. He must, so it would appear, work for, with, or on people whether they are interested or not. Not only his mission, but perhaps his very survival depend upon it. “Many people like suburbia. This is the compelling reason for learning from Levittown” (p. 106).

The architect is confronted here with a genuine problem. In his fight for universality and requisite survival, the twentieth century architect was first confronted with the potency of science and technology, with the cool rationality of the engineer. But if the situation has changed somewhat, his uneasiness has not, and it is evidently the sociologist rather than the engineer who now provides the fast company, the threat of extinction. Then in the confusion of his changing and expanding role, in the anguish of his improbable posture, the architect is apparently prepared not only to admit to former arrogance, but to effect a complete disguise. In one sense, of course, the adoption of this disguise is a great liberating presence. It not only releases him from the psychiatrist’s invoice, but also allows him considerable personal freedom. The informed architect no longer has to confine himself to obscure foreign cars and high design, high-taste items from Italy. He no longer has to paint his TV set mat black and, even then, hide it when other architects come around. He can pursue his trade without the necessity of looking like a bum, a cowboy, a reject from the Paris Commune, or other currently imperative and often enjoyable versions of self-conscious dandyism. The simulation can stop at “jus’ plain folks” and even if his transformation is less than complete, even if he still seeks approximations of the elusive good life, he can make his way to the A&P parking lot, take in the *parterres*, and get the best of both worlds.

All of this is, to say the least, exhilarating, and one appreciates the possibilities of a greatly expanded range of personal affectations. But there is more to the formula than this. The architect’s buildings, of much more importance than his personal trappings, must also assume a version of this contrived

ordinariness and while this charade is interesting and more than enjoyable, it hardly addresses itself to a popular imperative. And there is some question as to whether it ever will. The desire for a more universal form of communication and a related interest in the supposedly self-generated communicative devices of the "common man" have, for nearly two centuries at least, been the subject of an uncommon concern. But, if in terms of what was intended, not much has been resolved; if the artist has been constantly unable to place himself in the unlikely position of being someone genuinely not himself, he has at least been able to transmit his aspirations to an informed and equally self-conscious audience. The various ironies and incompatibilities involved in such activities have come, by way of at least one interpretation, to be identified with current definitions of mannerism; and in this context, at least, Venturi seems to realize the limits of plausibility and does not attempt, very energetically, to disguise his basic elitism.

So, perhaps, mannerism it is, but to borrow from currently available interdisciplinary terminology, there might easily be identified a finer range of mannered postures than the singular term could directly imply. There might, for instance, be imagined a condition of "deep" mannerism and at the same time a condition of "surface" mannerism. ". . . a duel between the artist and himself. The struggle goes on inside, hidden on the surface. If the artist tells, he is betraying himself." (Le Corbusier, *Sketchbook*, 1960, quoted in *Creation is a Patient Search*, p. 219.) "Rather than via a mean garage into a back door to the kitchen, you enter through a 'beautiful' garage (white glazed brick with black headers) into a 'grand' stairway and up to the *piano nobile*, as if from the carriageway of an eighteenth century Neapolitan villa. The sunken auto court has sloped sides to facilitate snow plowing. The swimming pool, sunken too, is on a side axis, to protect the bathers from prevailing winds, and it recalls the sunken gardens of a George Howe Norman house.

The pavilion at the end of the pool is a small parody of the big house. The bedroom on the top floor is vaulted in wood, like the Polish synagogues of the eighteenth century" (p. 165). While an observation of this kind is purely a matter of personal opinion, it says absolutely nothing about the quality of the work in question. In the realm of mannerism (at least), one instinctively prefers the rule of silence.

But aside from all this, even if one is prepared to equip oneself with innocence and optimism, and assume that this mannerism represents an attempt at the genuine accommodation of suburbia, there still remain some questions as to its validity. The suburb, like the strip, does not very much need this version of the accommodating architect. Operating from the "dominant social patterns" and the mythical collective will, the architect, in the end, provides a rather dubious service which the unimpeded developer with "in-house" design can provide without excessive pretense. In short, if the architect more or less uncritically accepts the basic logic of the American suburb, buys its implications with reserved judgement his activities there are almost certainly of limited value; and, in addition, it would appear that if he plays the ironical game of architect/non-architect in this context, he is perhaps destined to quickly become a bad and rather expensive joke. For as his products, to other than the scholarly eye, become increasingly indistinguishable from their less neurotically conceived neighbors, there is some question as to the advisability of paying the inevitable surcharge for the in-game nuance. Certainly the Venturis' so-called "houses of ill repute," for example, are every bit as valuable to a select audience as any number of equivalent polemical gestures might be; but, one imagines, they are hardly popular products at popular prices. They are, to no great surprise, essentially for other architects to look at. And if, in this necessarily limited sense, that is all well and good, the general confusion caused by a literal interpretation of such activities is not so pleasant. For while Venturi is, apparently, not

overly taken in by his own argument, perhaps others may be, and far from the thin line of esoteric commentary and the tightrope of mannered effects, there then appears in this picture the easy rationalization of any mediocre performance, the canonization not only of ordinariness, but also of uncritical license and, beyond this, the twinkle of a grinning self-indulgence.

But even assuming less dismal conclusions, even assuming the possibility of ingenuity at work, the situation appears less than bright. For in his contrived posture and distorted interpretation of social usefulness, it seems the architect might be unwittingly contributing to his own undoing. He has perhaps stretched his expanding jurisdiction beyond tenable and effective limits, and is now ironically, but literally, disguising himself right out of business. For it seems unlikely that architecture will ever serve very well as a direct litmus of popular phenomena, as a literal reflection of circumstance. The architect's direct range, so it would still appear, is inherently limited. While he benefits from the assimilation of popular spontaneity and provides images and demonstrations which influence and participate in common usage, his responsibilities to society (not just to other architects) are probably not so much involved with the further accommodation of what he finds as with the provision of an enlightened critical reference, which might suggest possibilities lying beyond the limits of readily available solutions or tuned-up status quo. That is, if someone has never known anything but a "ranchburger" or a tenement as a place to live, his known choices are probably somewhat limited; and the architect might conceivably be in a position to illustrate for him a range of positive alternatives. Such activities are, of course, not very labyrinthine, but they may be of some value.

But if Venturi demands a more complex or comprehensive role for the architect, his inclinations could well end in the area of personal predilection. For in a reasonable world, such inclinations, whatever they may

be, would surely be a matter of choice. Such latitude would be, after all, a version of the desired pluralism; and while the Venturi doctrine of "inclusivism" would seem to point in this direction, it also, on the broad level of taste and necessary preference, turns upon itself.

As an example of the inclusivist litmus, Venturi sets up a comparison between his Guild House in Philadelphia and Paul Rudolph's Crawford Manor in New Haven; and while there is a certain appeal in this comparison, there is also, given the ground rules, a certain breach of logic. For why would this prime proponent of "both-and" get himself involved with such a blatantly "either-or" enterprise? Indeed, how could he? There is here, in this mini-dilemma, what might be called the paradox of pluralism. That is, we are presented with a condition of assumed and expanded acceptance which necessarily, in the end, cancels all possibilities of objective criticism, necessarily suspends all questions of value. For, to be very brief, the literal "inclusivist" version of pluralist must, at a certain point, obviously include the exclusive. And so, in this context, why object to Paul Rudolph's building? He is, as an "exclusivist," adding to the desired variety and overall complexity of the environment. Is not this the ideal to be aimed at? Evidently it is not. There are at least two possible interpretations of this problem: 1. Venturi is not really making universal propositions, and insofar as the observed physical manifestations of any given point of view are clearly less than universal in their scope, we live in a world where a great number of biases are exhibited simultaneously, and this is a good thing too. And if this *is* a good thing, why object to the Rudolph building? 2. Venturi *is* making universal propositions, but they need *not* be taken literally and are basically preferred in that they admit to *more* than the principles indicated in the contrary example. Aside from this ultimately unverifiable question of degree, we are essentially dealing here with the replacement of one monolith, one however limited point of view, with another. So why object to Rudolph?

Neither of these interpretations is put forth as an endorsement of either the Rudolph or the Venturi building, but simply to indicate that perhaps this apostle of "inclusivism" and laissez-faire is merely operating monopolistically. Indeed, could it be that we are here merely in the presence of "total design" in reverse? Now all of this may be pressing a bit too hard upon what is, after all, a quiet and limited message of expediency; for we are evidently faced here with matters of degree as well as questions of basic attitude, with effectiveness as well as confusion.

Venturi has amassed for himself and others, by way of his observations, talents, and personal predilections, a refreshing and potentially important range of formal and symbolic themes and devices. He has demonstrated, as few others have, the possibilities of a meaningful break with the aesthetic and psycho-moral biases of modern architecture. He has recognized and illustrated, at least marginally, the values of context and the necessity of memory. This demonstration is not aided by extension into areas of such questionable value and untenable implication as have been briefly considered here.

Architecture, to be sure, does not exist solely for its own sake. Its meaning, to one degree or another, depends upon references to overriding questions of a social and ethical significance. The encoding and decoding of these references in any coherent way is, of course, attended with only the greatest of difficulty. And in this area, Venturi seems to oscillate between esoteric display and the hope of some genuinely popular and at the same time virtuous form of communication. Here, while the use of known models might well assist in the production, or at least the simulation, of a condition of desirable and publicly understandable stability, Venturi has attempted to subvert and energize this basically conservative activity through the use of supposedly novel models from the popular landscape. But, rather than identify a source of positive and potentially profound references capable of effecting that myth of

modern architecture which he would wish to supersede, he has unfortunately tended to celebrate and institutionalize a somewhat mundane and decadent status quo. And if decay itself is not an unpleasing condition and even perhaps an accurate manifestation of the status of society, it hardly needs endorsement. Its proposed institutionalization seems to be not so much an ironical exercise in social protest as a rather debilitating bit of sardonic humor.

These more recent activities, by and large, seem to represent a significant falling off from the potentials of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. "I welcome the problems and exploit the uncertainties. By embracing contradiction as well as complexity, I aim for vitality as well as validity." (Robert Venturi. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, p. 22.) A hopeful statement of this kind apparently has limited range. Perhaps an essential and somewhat desperate quest for "vitality" has placed the possibility of validity upon untenable ground. And in his search for this more vital form of validity, Venturi has unfortunately projected his argument into a condition of hopeless relativism—a condition which, in the end, virtually destroys the possibilities of necessary critical reference. It might well be that such references depend, for their maintenance or production, not so much upon an extended acceptance and manipulation of what exists, but in combination with this, upon a more serious consideration of what does *not* exist. For architecture, in its most optimistic sense, not only acknowledges the world *as it is*, but at the same time, provides a hopeful and critical glimpse of the world *as it might be*.

This necessarily unresolved dialogue between the real and the ideal, between circumstance and abstract value, has produced questions and incompatibilities which have constantly forced themselves upon the mind, and which continue to intrude upon the world of the architect. In the presence of these inconvenient and massive questions as to the limits of popular sovereignty and the difficulty, but necessity, of assumed ab-

**On Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver's:
Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation**

Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver.
Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation.
1972, Garden City, New York, Doubleday
and Company, Inc. 216 pp., \$10.00.

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104 solute values, Venturi seems to register little interest. While he obviously enjoys the incongruities and complexities of surface effect and the related pleasures of mannerism or the popular built landscape, he seems unwilling to consider the basic contradictions inherent in the ideas lying behind these conditions. In this way, not only does Venturi's argument lose some of its initial vitality, but he also seems unfortunately quite willing to exclude what might well be the very basis of a *genuinely* complex architecture.

While much of what has been said here perhaps relates not so much to this book as to the situation and climate of thought which surround it, this is no fault of the book. Although it does not present an especially lavish meal, this book delivers more fast food than its ironic coffee table format would initially indicate.

*The time has come, the Walrus said,/To talk
of many things,/Of shoes and ships and
sealing wax,/Of cabbages and kings,/Of why
the sea is boiling hot,/And whether pigs have
wings. . . .*

Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass
1871

This familiar passage from Lewis Carroll—surprisingly absent from this exuberant study of the ad hoc—serves as a fitting reviewer's epigraph for a book, which is nothing if not exemplary of itself. Of course, books have been jointly written before, but usually not as two separate parts that have little evident reason for appearing together, other than that they deal ostensibly with the same topic. Like the two ends of an ill-fitting pantomime horse, Jencks and Silver present their separate cases for improvisation; the scope of their joint discourse being as perplexingly digressive as that of the walrus. It is hardly an accident that this book should be written by two American architects living in Britain, in that perennial home of the ad hoc so lightly satirized by Carroll. The tradition of the Yankee tinker notwithstanding, it could hardly have been produced here, where the Constitution at least possesses the virtue of having been written.

Despite their fundamental differences, Jencks and Silver have sufficient in common to warrant an initial assessment of their mutual point of departure. Equally opposed to the so-called purist tradition of twentieth century architectural culture, they both advance adhocism (should that be one word or two?) as some kind of grass-roots guarantee of an ever-bountiful liberty in both life and art. This essentially romantic thesis, argued on the tendentious assumption—at least in Jencks's case—that modern architecture, until now, has been nothing if not classically repressive, leads Jencks to condemn Goethe for having repudiated "his own brilliantly romantic youth." Thus whatever arguments he may entertain in passing as to the legitimate

claims of classicism as an aspect of European liberalism, Jencks, ardent Bethamite to the last, will never waiver for an instant from his utopian faith in progress as it was conceived by the mechanist and vitalist philosophers of the nineteenth century. For Jencks, both life and art may be reduced, in the last analysis, to the pragmatism of Anglo-Saxon utility. Utility as "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," i.e., pluralism. Utility as the mainspring for the articulation of form, i.e., functionalism. To this end we learn, for example, the enthusiasms of pop art notwithstanding, that "Instead of the quiet, sleek hood of a car, it (adhocism) concentrates on the motor within." (p.75)

For Jencks, the "anarchist" ideology of pluralism requires no justification, since for him this task has already been performed, on behalf of liberal intellectuals, by *les événements de mai*, of 1968. Revolution, we are assured, cannot be anything but ad hoc. Functionalism, on the other hand, remains in need of rehabilitation. The essential criterion in this instance is improvisation, and thereafter, if we accept the Jencksian thesis, we shall celebrate the ad hoc as the good functionalism, liberating and expressive, and eschew the mainstream of modern architecture as the bad functionalism, restrictive and repressive.

Lest we should remain skeptical of such causistry, the argument is promptly provided with an aura of scientific validity, by virtue of our evident failure to model the cosmos in anything but an ad hoc manner. Determined to establish the ad hoc as the one true universal principle, Jencks moralistically advises us that "Since our view of the universe and our knowledge in general remains in a state of ad hoc amalgamation prior to some possible synthesis, it would be wrong to adopt a false and premature single-world view until this totalistic synthesis occurs." (p.33) Deriving from Jencks's apparent failure to distinguish adequately between culture as value on the one hand, and scientific truth as empirical fact on the other, this argument

leads to a head-on collision with the much-revered empiricist philosopher of science, Karl Popper. This champion of *The Open Society* and scientific reason cannot be drawn upon to sustain such curious reasoning. Faced with Popper's rejection of the ad hoc as an unacceptable scientific procedure, Jencks is forced to concede, with characteristic modesty, that "If Popper's objections are sound, then we would have to limit adhocism to a prescientific condition, . . ." (p.37) and to acknowledge that, "The idea of absolute truth as a terminus of research must be kept as a regulative idea if we are not to remain in ignorance." (p.37)

Nothing, in the realm of theory, could distinguish adhocism from Dadaism more clearly than this penchant for special pleading whereby the whole adhocist position is revealed as being fundamentally acritical. Its ideological stance is to gently absorb all societal contradictions rather than to reveal them—a diametrically opposite goal to that of Dada that surely revelled in such oppositions. Thus while acknowledging monolithic monopoly capital as being anything but ad hoc, Jencks still urges that we reconcile ourselves to our consumer democracy and redeem the impersonality of its corporate sub-systems through ". . . combining them ad hoc towards specific ends." (p.55) In short, a fundamental contradiction is not apparently a condition which the alchemy of adhocism is able to transcend.

The Candide-like optimism of the first half of this book is tempered by Nathan Silver's emphasis on adhocism as a particular sensibility, with its implicit recognition that such sensibility is able to manifest itself most freely and effectively not in architecture and design, but in theater, film, literature and art. Silver cites Marcel Duchamp as the Newton of this sensibility, with his "ready mades" of 1916 already anticipating the constituents of adhocism; ". . . the notion of adding-on, assembly, or improvisation; the continued recognition of the piece as parts; plurality; also the facts of availability, including chance; and, in one case, fragments (pieces as parts)." (p. 155)

Whatever exploitation of ad hoc sensibility was possible, say, for Carroll in his *Through the Looking Glass* of 1871, or for Duchamp that *marchand du sel*; in his "ready made" *With Hidden Noise* of 1916, or even for Buster Keaton in his film *The Navigator* of 1924, the attitude stubbornly resists its general adoption in architecture. Kurt Schwitters's *Merz* column, gradually built out of junk in the interior of his house in Hanover from 1918 to 1938, seems to dramatize the point. The artist-owner had no choice but to evict his tenants for the sake of his obsession. Thus despite its well-known ad hoc compilation it surely lacked the economic irony of his *Merz* writing—his poem *Anna Blume* for instance, particularly the arch lines that read, "Blue is the color of your yellow hair/Red is the cooing of your green bird." What is possible in poetry and in painting seems to elude expression in three dimensional form. By this token, Rodia's towers in Los Angeles or Gaudi's park in Barcelona, or Goff's houses in Illinois or, for that matter, Clarence Schmidt's clapboard fantasia in Woodstock—all cited by Silver as examples of the ad hoc—fall each far short of engendering those disjunctive ironies wherein random origin and assembly are jointly able to reveal the subversive potential of *bricolage*. Instead, each intends, and indeed realizes (be it folk or fine), the hermetic status accorded to works of art. No trace of the ambivalence of the "ready made" remains in any of them.

The trouble with built form is that it intrinsically gravitates towards "socializable" totalities even when, by definition, the initial orientation is supposed to be useless. In this, building ontologically constitutes a homogenization that, outside the high art of mannerism, is basically incapable of rendering disjunction as meaning. The playing of popular games in the guise of utility merely leads to the creation of infantile objects which, however witty and gratifying, soon becomes "absorbed," so to speak, by the banality of their potential use. Witness Mario Bellini's erotic station wagon, *Kar-asutra*, made for the recent Italian Design

show at The Museum of Modern Art, or Jencks's *Madonna of the Future*—an electric fire mounted on a headless black mannequin carrying a copy of Henry James's novel of the same title. Since the novel was added to the assembly anonymously, after the fact, this is the most pure piece of adhocism in the book—stimulating as art, but a bore as subversive design. To entertain an ad hoc sensibility seems to lead one implacably back to that mannerist mode where the whole explicitly intends a contradiction of itself. James Stirling's up-ending of a classic facade in his design for Derby City Hall thus appears as an ironic comment on the current liberal obsession with preservation. Christo's world famous "wrapped" structures or the endless impenetrable monuments of Superstudio, or Claes Oldenburg's giant windshield wiper projected for Grant Park, Chicago, are oriented towards similar "surrealist" ends. Are we, with these, that far removed from Etienne Boullée's unrealizable monuments of 1780 made in the name of neoclassicism, his impassable gateways and inaccessible stadia? I think not. For when it comes to the ultimate ostensible project of this book, namely the liberation of architecture through the adoption of an ad hoc sensibility (asserted by the authors as a comparable project to that proposed for art, by Dada in 1917), one finds oneself paradoxically returned to the metaphysical, to those formal juxtapositions that induce a *frisson* of terror—to those icons which, however unconscious, are essentially critical of man and his institutions. All else is folk art—hopelessly unattainable with any real spontaneity in an industrialized society—or conversely the mere iterations of a puerile creativity that, occasionally, as ad hoc built form, passes for art.

Such misleading irony about the theories of Americans living in England could only be expressed so consistently wrong by an Englishman living in America. At least inverted, neo-colonial condescension could explain why Frampton gets it wrong every time he has me holding an opinion. But there may be other reasons for his distortions and contempt—who knows? What is certain is that he has me taking positions—in favor of utilitarianism, functionalism, pragmatism, scientific truth, etc.—exactly opposite to the ones I hold and defend in the book, and in the single instance when he gives an example of what I wrote, he manages to quote selectively so that my position is falsified.

Frampton contends that I am “determined to establish the ad hoc as the one true universal principle,” whereas in the chapter he quotes from I really wrote the following: “. . . some of these objections are well founded and damaging to adhocism as a holistic doctrine And adhocism is not a unified world view in the manner of the more familiar ideologies or ‘isms’ which are offered as such. On the contrary, it is a transitional philosophy based on the premise that the future goal of man, a single destiny for the species, cannot be specified in advance” (p. 35, my emphasis). One has to concentrate hard to miss the point here, but in case any of the readers like a short nap I have laboriously hammered in the point on the next page: “In a very real sense adhocism is only a partial theory, one-half a philosophy, to be supported by other approaches which are complementary” (p. 37). I was trying to point out in this section that adhocism cannot be “the one true universal principle,” that it has inherent faults which have to be “carefully guarded against” such as a “relativity and pragmatism that are self-serving” (p. 36). Why else quote Karl Popper against adhocism, except to acknowledge its shortcomings and show one way it is opposed to science. So I could not be justifying it as a “true universal principle.” But Frampton may now think I am still confusing science and cultural value—in spite of

pointing out on these pages (35-7) how values and concepts must be held politically independent of science, or in an architectural example, how the Wells Cathedral lion (which swallows some errant ribs in the retrochoir) is “brilliant architecture, but bad science.”

Now having split science and value, function and form, “is and ought,” I suppose I am in danger of being branded a “formalist-idealist” or conversely a “mechanist empiricist-functional,” but I fear there is no airtight alibi or impregnable defense against the supercategorization of Framptonian inquisitionalism. So rather than go on countering abstract charges—on modern architecture, revolution, etc.—and defending myself personally for opinions I have never held (a waste of time), I would sooner try to answer two general points Frampton makes against adhocism: that it is acritical, accommodating, lax on “societal contradictions” unlike the subversive Dada and that there can be no radically adhocist architecture, because architecture is incapable of “disjunctive ironies” and because it “gravitates toward socializable totalities, homogenization,” etc.

I must say I am not at all sure Frampton actually holds these points because at the end of his article he makes some enigmatic comments about the metaphysical, “a frisson of terror,” which perplex me and he equates Stirling’s adhocism with Mannerism and thus with “disjunctive ironies” and also speaks about it as “critical of man”—but let us discount these inconsistencies.

Is adhocism acritical and accommodating? Is rationalism right or wrong? Is Christianity good or bad? Surely it must depend on the specific, because all of these methods and beliefs include opposite approaches. Adhocism varies from the subversion of Dada and revolution to the piecemeal tinkering of reformists and housewives reading Hints from Heloise. It is not a single cultural movement like Dada organized by a group of polemicists: there have been radical

and reactionary adhocists from the beginning of time. This can be shown with architectural examples.

The weakest forms of architectural adhocism are those where people add on or plug in new elements onto old, such as the window in Zurich, called, I believe, an *ercol*, or the medieval houses attached to a Roman amphitheater at Arles. In these cases the original meaning of the structure is only deflected, not subverted, except perhaps in the functional sense that housing is different from sport or gladiatorial combat. The people at Arles were not attacking Roman values but merely making use of an existing structure and accommodating it to them and themselves to it. This is the process of growth in most cities: piecemeal ad hoc adaption and transformation which is often called organic because it is slow, unconscious and responsive. I suppose it corresponds to the tendency, which Frampton contends is essential, of architecture towards “socializable totalities” and “homogenization.” But I do not think this integration is the whole case either for architecture or adhocism. There are more critical and subversive transformations: Bruce Goff’s use of “bomb-blisters” for light fixtures, fishnetting for railing and other Army & Navy surplus transformations not only make some pertinent comments about utility but also about consumption, and therefore society, in general. Goff is implying both a transformation of the living room and, in an oblique way, that of the military-industrial estate (“swords into plowshares”). His sensual use of natural materials and rock also implies a radical critique of urban living with its strict, packaged boundaries and repressive usage. One does not have to go as far as Wilhelm Reich in order to find such sensuality subversive of normal usage.

And yet it is really only in revolutionary periods when people intend to subvert and then do it that one can talk about a conscious critical spirit. The Turkish mosque built in and from the ruins of the Parthenon, or the

On Bernhard Leitner's *The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Documentation*.

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Alan Plattus

Cathedral of Notre Dame transformed into the Temple of Reason (as all Christian usages were so transformed during the revolution of 1789) are examples of this: strong adhocism, disjunctive, ironic and all those qualities Frampton finds hard to achieve in architecture. But what does one make of Mme. Lachat's bubble nursery plugged into her flat? Is this subversive of the International Style, bourgeois conformity, building laws, stylistic integration and the very notion of "total design"? No doubt it is useful and individual and therefore in danger of being branded by Framptonian "utilitarianopragnapluralism." But it is parallel with the weak adhocism of the ercol in another Swiss, bourgeois context. What is the difference between these two add-ons? The ercol is conventionalized stylistically and legally to fit in whereas the bubble nursery implies a radical change of zoning laws and urban living. Hence architecture can be disjunctive and critical at points, and adhocism, as the meeting of opposite meanings, as creativity in essence, is always subversive if only for fifteen minutes. As soon as the creative element is repeated and institutionalized it no longer is ad hoc or subversive.

One of the more intriguing interdisciplinary phenomena of the early twentieth century was the house that Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein built for his sister in Vienna. Not that this combination of architecture and philosophy is unheard of; architects have always suspected that what they do has certain deep-seated similarities to the activities of philosophers, and at least two philosophers, Peirce and Kant, have been obliging enough to make the connection explicit. Furthermore, more than a few architects have taken to heart Germain Boffrand's suggestion that reading the philosophers would sharpen one's architectural judgement—a prescription that has an illustrious genealogy going back to Vitruvius. Indeed, at various points in Western history the practices of architecture and of philosophy have appeared to stand in a particularly intimate relationship to each other. Panofsky's well-worn analogy between the structure of Gothic architecture and that of Scholastic philosophy comes immediately to mind, but perhaps more to the point in this case is the classic Renaissance amalgam of the most advanced architecture and the most profound (for that time) philosophy in the creative output of the same individual dilettante, for example, Alberti. Closer to home chronologically, one might mention the startling architectural tours de force which the quasi-mystical philosopher Rudolf Steiner built to house and symbolize the "philosophical" society he founded. Or, on the other side of the coin, it is certain that a good many modern architects fancied themselves the creators, or at least the followers, of philosophies of a considerably more universal nature than mere theories of design. But in the case of someone like Steiner or the more intellectually inclined architects of the Modern movement, it can in all fairness be said that the architecture of the one and the philosophy of the others hardly stand in any integral relation to the vanguard of development in those respective fields in the early twentieth century. (Nor can it be said that Steiner's rather idiosyncratic philosophy was very close to the mainstream of Euro-

pean thought at the time.) Further, one might note that in all these instances, from the Gothic cathedrals to, for example, the Bauhaus, cases can be and have been made for positing a more or less direct—almost isomorphic in the case advanced by Panofsky—relationship between the philosophy, perhaps ultimately conceived as cosmology, and the architecture. It is in the light of these observations that Wittgenstein's architecture provokes curiosity; for no one doubts Wittgenstein's central position in twentieth century philosophy, and yet his house was at least *superficially* similar to the most advanced architecture being built in Vienna at that time. Even more uncharacteristic for such enterprises, and in that sense refreshing, is the fact that no direct connection between architecture and philosophy, of any substantial depth, immediately forces itself upon us. Nor are we assisted or even encouraged in a search for such a connection by either Wittgenstein himself or by the first chronicler of his architecture, Bernhard Leitner.

Given the seemingly unique circumstance of an "amateur" architectural project with possible pretensions to membership in the Viennese architectural avant-garde, it might seem potentially fruitful to explore Wittgenstein's house in that context, as well as in the context of his own unusual personal history. But Bernhard Leitner, in his new "documentation" of the philosopher's architecture, begins by dismissing that very possibility and thus, if anything, reinforces the dense mythic structure which has grown up around the man and his work, isolating him from outside influences and, ironically, isolating his philosophy from his architecture. Recently, such books as Stephen Toulmin's and Alan Janik's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, have begun to dissolve that mythic aura and, at the same time, replace it with a more substantial integration of the man and his times. Leitner may have missed an excellent opportunity to contribute to that undertaking, thus also missing what may be the most promising way to establish that connection between architecture and

108 philosophy, which so far has only been the subject for speculative eulogy on the part of Wittgenstein's disciples. But it is precisely because he was the sort of philosopher, or rather the sort of man, who inspired *disciples*, that we have been largely unable to take a critical attitude towards the man, his philosophy, and even his architecture which, like his almost equally scarce writings, is in danger of becoming a thing-in-itself; a fate it does not deserve.

Certainly Wittgenstein's own life has been, as history, and was actually, as he lived it, a major contributing factor to his mythic isolation. Its *prima facie* fantasy is aggravated by the fact that we know too little of many of its most important portions, and what we do know is largely anecdotal. One might begin with Wittgenstein's rather dramatic "retirement" from philosophy at the end of World War I. He had just completed his brilliantly obscure *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the manuscript of which he carried in his back pack, along with a bible, as he served in the Austrian army. In the preface to that iconoclastic work, which he managed to mail to Bertrand Russell when he was taken prisoner by the Italians, Wittgenstein announced that he had discovered the definitive solution, or dissolution, of the problems of philosophy. When he was released in 1918, he first gave away all of his considerable personal fortune, and then spent the next seven years as a teacher of elementary school children in various small villages in southern Austria. For a brief while after that he worked as a gardener at a monastery near Vienna (and did, for a time, consider entering a monastery himself). But apparently neither his very personal quest for simplicity and solitude, nor his monumental effort to have done with the problems and profession of philosophy were successful. At times during his extended retreat, certain British and Viennese philosophers had sought out and made contact with the mysterious author of the *Tractatus*, and Wittgenstein was already initiating that severe self-critique that would eventually lead to a major revolution in

philosophy. But at the same time Wittgenstein had also been in touch with his friend, the architect Paul Engelmann. Engelmann, who was a student of Adolf Loos's, was beginning work on plans for a house for Margarethe Stonborough-Wittgenstein in Vienna, and Margarethe invited her brother to collaborate on the design. He arrived in Vienna in the fall of 1926. The collaboration rapidly became a total domination of the project by Wittgenstein, and until early in 1929 when he returned to Cambridge and to philosophy, he lived and worked in his native Vienna designing, detailing, and supervising construction of the three-floor, twenty-seven room mansion.

The design and construction of the house, as conducted by Wittgenstein, proves to be a further source of suggestive biographical/mythical anecdotes, complementary to the, by then, already developing Wittgenstein legend. Leitner has included in his documentation excerpts from the *Family Recollections* of Wittgenstein's sister Hermine, in which she relates several of these stories of her brother as Master Builder. We read of Wittgenstein spending a full year getting two radiators cast to his precise specifications; Wittgenstein reproaching a locksmith who had asked him if a millimeter's difference in the measurements of a keyhole was of any significance, and then "demonstrating" his sensitivity by raising the ceiling in the hall of the nearly completed house three centimeters; and finally, Wittgenstein entering a lottery with covert plans for spending his winnings on the alteration of a detail that still displeased him. The hall ceiling episode should, by the way, allay any suspicions that an "architect" as mathematically inclined as Wittgenstein would surely indulge in some elaborate scheme of proportions. In fact, his philosophical sophistication is obvious insofar as he avoided that sort of device. And he was later to make the following comments in a lecture on aesthetics: "Architecture:—draw a door— 'slightly too large.' You might say: 'He has an excellent eye for measurement.' No—he sees it hasn't the

right expression—it doesn't make the right gesture. If you showed me a stick of different length, I'd not have known.'"

Perhaps it is the influence of stories such as these that has provoked Leitner to lavish such meticulous attention upon every detail of the Vienna house, and to record each for posterity in such carefully considered photographs. We are even given, for example, a plan showing the location of each of Wittgenstein's almost embarrassingly bare single-bulb lighting fixtures. Indeed, certain aspects of the house are interesting in any context. The logical rigor of Wittgenstein's deployment of the columns, half-columns, and quarter-columns of the entrance hall with their recessed capitals; the unusual spatial effects of the double-layered glass doors and windows with their slim vertical mullions; and the complex coordination of the entire scheme through the hierarchical scaling and axial disposition of these elements of fenestration, are all original architectural solutions, and as such deserve more attention than they have received. But one suspects that Leitner wishes to treat these details and the house as a complete object, as part of that realm which Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, set aside as inaccessible to language: those things which cannot be said, but only shown. While one might perhaps appreciate the connection, whether intentional, accidental, or imagined, between the spartanly descriptive prose of Leitner's documentation and the style and doctrine of the architect's own *Tractatus*; there is surely more that can be legitimately said by way of interpretation and evaluation to stimulate some enthusiasm in the skeptic and discourage the rapt disciple (the latter having already been initiated by William Bartley's recent "revisionist" study of Wittgenstein, in which he rather summarily dismisses the house as being largely the work of Engelmann).

However, readers of Leitner's earlier article on the house (*Artforum*, February, 1970) will note in this book an even further paring away of any "unnecessary" in-

terpretation or attempt to relate the architect's philosophy to the philosopher's architecture. For example, with regard to any possible art historical context, we have here only the following offering: "The cubic forms of the building's exterior remind one of the architecture of Adolf Loos. The interior, however, is unique in the history of twentieth century architecture. Everything is rethought. Nothing in it has been directly transplanted, neither from any building convention nor from any professional avant-garde" (p. 11). One might add, but only at the risk of mitigating the force of the modernist myth of the autonomous creative individual, that Wittgenstein was introduced to Loos in Vienna in 1914, and that on the occasion of this meeting, the two Herculean heroes—the one who cleansed the stable of philosophy of its linguistic confusions, the other who purged architecture of its "criminal" ornament—reportedly engaged at once in a lengthy discussion of architecture. As for the interior of the Wittgenstein house, while it does not exhibit that peculiar Loosian contrast of an extravagant and rather sensual interior with a stark exterior; it does nonetheless exploit the split-level to enforce a volumetric reading (carried over into the details as well) that is characteristic of Loos's work. Furthermore, I would suggest that the entrance hall of the Wittgenstein house, certainly its most successful feature, may be favorably and instructively compared to the striking foyer of Loos's building in the Michaelerplatz. But more importantly, the connection between Loos and Wittgenstein, and eventually Karl Kraus and other contemporaries (such as the members of the Wiener Kreis), with their shared crusading fervor for precise grammatical correctness as the solution to moral, as well as philosophical and aesthetic problems, is a step towards providing a framework for possibly understanding the relationship between Wittgenstein's architecture and philosophy—a relationship that is surely a mediated one, the mediation being the man and his circumstances.

Now it is almost certain that Wittgenstein's attitude towards the supplying of that sort of contextual frame of reference for his house, would have been much the same as the attitude he expressed in a curious passage in the preface to his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*. Referring, so it seems, to the works of his students, which were already being published while Wittgenstein's own seminal work still circulated in manuscript and by word of mouth, he said: "For more than one reason what I publish here will have points of contact with what other people are writing today.—If my remarks do not bear a stamp which marks them as mine,—I do not wish to lay any further claim to them as my property!" But what Wittgenstein is saying here goes a bit deeper than any arrogant claim of a self-styled "original genius" for creative autonomy. In fact it is not a rejection of those "points of contact," but a recognition that, once a context has been supplied, any significant originality or similarity must issue from that profound relationship of an individual (or group) to his work which one might call "style." And if Wittgenstein did succeed in approaching his goal, which in one of its many formulations he expresses as "changing the style of thinking," then he hardly stands in need of the claims of his more eager disciples that he was doing something radically new—in the sense of having no roots in a familiar past or present. By the same token, a significant work of architecture is only superficially enhanced by a failure to recognize its ancestry or context; and Wittgenstein's architecture, if it is indeed an important object in its own right, can ultimately only be hurt by an exclusion of the *mise-en-scène* that renders it approachable.

Figure 1. Stonborough-Wittgenstein House, Vienna. Ludwig Wittgenstein, architect, 1928. Glass wall with doors to southern terrace.



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110 Semiotics, the theory of signs, has often led to the practice of bad communication or even systematic misunderstanding. This result is not without its irony since semiotics is often justified as a field which will increase understanding, not confusion. Yet the disagreements which exist do have their base on philosophical issues and ideology and it would be vain to suppose a unified semiotics could exist before agreement is reached on these underlying points. Generally speaking there is a broad split between Continental and Anglo-Saxon semiologists which parallels the old, even tiresome, quarrel between Rationalist and Empiricist philosophers. The former, following Saussure, like to treat the sign and signification as an autonomous area, whereas the latter, following Peirce, Morris, Ogden and Richards treat signification in a particular context—signs in action. The former tend to be Idealists, the latter Materialists, or at least Behaviourists. This basic polarity, however, is quickly complicated by other positions. At the First International Congress on Semiotics, held in Milan in June 1974, the Secretary Umberto Eco was attacked for the idealism assumed to be in his position because he insisted on the irreducible conventional and arbitrary nature of the sign. Not surprisingly, the attack was from a Marxist Materialist base (although, surprisingly, many so-called idealists claim to be Marxists).

In the first issue of *Oppositions*, George Baird and I are also attacked from a Marxist position for supposedly holding the exact opposite point of view to Eco: the natural and inherent theory of meaning. Ogden and Richards are also criticized for this alleged crime. The fact that none of us hold the positions attributed to us, indeed as far as I know we hold opposite ones, leads to several speculations. Is it a question of misreading or systematic misunderstanding? Perhaps, as I believe, it is more a question of the authors, Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelonas, wishing to establish a new semiotic position and in the process using us, rather unsympathetically, to do it. They hope to

find, or construct, a semiotic theory “outside” (p. 99) and against the ideology presumed to be in all our positions.

First of all they condemn the last five centuries of architectural theory (with Ruskinian abandon) as so much bourgeois ideology, overlooking the plurality and critical nature of this theory. One would never guess that William Morris and Hannes Meyer existed, nor Bruno Taut and the Goodmans, not to mention every modern architect who has espoused a utopian or alternative system of society. The crime of these bourgeois ideologues? They didn't touch the “real” and “true” nature of the class structure (p. 100, note 3) but merely played with its superstructure. The authors, Agrest and Gandelonas, assume they are in possession of a true theory (or approaching this) rather the way Copernicus held the right theory of the solar system—an analogy they draw. There are disclaimers and these are important (they hold true theory grows out of the false by dialectics) but by and large they hope to occupy a position which is unassailable and certain. This can be gauged by the tone as well as the content of their piece. They hypostatize entities such as “methodological reproduction,” they insist on exclusive precision of semiotic usage (stemming from its first usage by Saussure) and they want clear distinctions between terms (although, in contradiction, they also want more unclear distinctions between fields such as literature and architecture, p. 99). Those who make semiotic mistakes are guilty of “theoretical blockage.”

What are my mistakes? Apparently, I contend that all signs are motivated and natural, that functions are universal, transparent and obviously lead to a form and that the relations between signifier and signified are not arbitrary and conventional. Actually, only one sentence in my article, the one they quote, could lead to such misunderstandings as the rest of the article is concerned with attacking this position. What I was trying to point out in the paragraph

under consideration was that all form is motivated *after* an initial arbitrary relation is set between signifier and signified. This motivation may be caused by convention, feedback or habit and in that sense is arbitrary, a point which I share with Agrest and Gandelonas and reiterate by challenging the exclusive commitment to “intrinsic” theories of meaning. Stopping for a moment on areas of agreement, let me say that I find the authors' concentration on the concept of “value” a valuable emphasis and one we didn't stress enough in the book. The Saussurean notion that value comes from the relation between signs was only mentioned once or twice with respect to the semantic fields and syntagmatic meaning and did not gain as much centrality as it deserves. Our use of *context* and *semantic space* does not go far enough; indeed the whole, very important, concept of the code and subcode is not developed which would make sense of how value is introduced and exchanged.

Yet I think the authors still overrate the distinction between signification and communication which they use in defending the notion of value. While attacking Baird, they wish to establish a clear-cut separation between systems of meaning and how they are used to communicate. This is akin to separating structure and function in biology, or syntax and semantics in linguistics, a heuristic move which may bear some fruit in the beginnings of a science, but which ultimately sets up its own kind of “blockage” for the future. While signification systems exist independent of how they are used, it is equally true that they are created by and change through use, so there is no point in cutting signification (semiotics) off from utility. This attempt of the authors is shared by Eco, Barthes and other Continental semiologists and while one can see the point in making semiotics *mainly* concerned with signification, it cannot get rid of the referent, the function, or “reality” without (as now happens) these entities slipping in again through the back door in another disguise. This is why I used the Ogden-

Richards model which includes the referent (or “reality”) as part of the sign-situation (although it is not usually part of the sign itself). Architecture, as a sign-system, is made up from more iconic, “natural” signs than, say, language and therefore the referent and utility are of more importance than in, say, painting. This does not make me a functionalist, as the authors would have, and the large amount of quote marks should indicate that I too believe that iconic signs and “reality” are ultimately mediated by conventions.

Finally, Ogden and Richards are said to hold that meaning is “inherent to the word” as opposed to Saussure who contends that words get their meaning by position within a semiotic system. The authors quote secondary sources and if they had read *The Meaning of Meaning*, they would have seen the first two chapters devoted to attacking such “word magic” and nonsense.

But such mistakes, on whomsoever’s side, are not necessarily ideological. This is a point on which I actually disagree with Agrest and Gandelonas. They, following Marx, look for organic connections between all levels of society overlooking, in the process, discontinuities and separations between superstructure and structure. Some mistakes are random and no ideology has a monopoly on making them. Sometimes patterns can be found which may prove of ideological nature, but ultimately, like the sign itself, these rest on an “arbitrary” base. Since we share this commitment to the arbitrary, perhaps we can look forward, optimistically, to a social-economic theory of change that incorporates semiotics and Saussure at its base. Then we would have a truer science of signs; but it would never be certain.

Charles Jencks
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The First International Congress of Semiotics held in Milan served as a context for a discussion with Charles Jencks about our article “Semiotics and Architecture,” published in Oppositions 1. Inasmuch as the discussion developed several similarities and differences which are present in our two positions, we suggested to Jencks that he write a letter which might contribute to a better understanding of the issues developed in our article. It is not our intention to continue here the debate suggested in his letter, instead we will only respond to the questions which seem to clarify our initial text.

1. Jencks’s and Baird’s articles were chosen as examples because they were representative of both a certain period in the short history of the semiotic approach to architecture and a particular trend in that field. It is certainly true that to single out those articles for criticism was a convenient means to introduce a different approach to the problem. This procedure is often a part of critical work when criticism is used as a means to advance knowledge as opposed to mere criticism for its own sake—a common practice with dubious results.

2. Our omission of some politically committed architects was a conscious act in light of our definition of architectural production as having a particular ideological function that is the maintenance of the capitalist mode of production. A critical position with respect to society and ideology in general, does not guarantee the possibility of development of a politically committed position with respect to architectural ideology in particular. This is the case of William Morris who while being politically active, produced, in our view, a conservative architecture—perhaps because he did not have the conceptual means to bring these two attitudes together. The materialist dialectic approach to ideology—that is, ideology considered as one of the structural levels of the capitalist mode of production—is still today an underdeveloped theoretical area and only in recent years have serious efforts been directed to its development.

3. When we refer to theoretical work we do not “pretend to be in possession of a true theory,” as Jencks suggests. Instead we are merely asserting the importance of an approach (epistemological and methodological) which may lead to positive results in the development of theoretical work in architecture. Our own work seems to be within a theoretical and political context which proposes as a truth the historical concept of class struggle. Thus, in our approach, the introduction of this concept in theoretical work becomes not only theoretically but also politically necessary.

4. With respect to Jencks’s complaint about the out of context selection of his sentence on motivation, it is important to make clear that what we are attempting to criticize is not so much its substance, but rather his emphasis on this notion as “the most fundamental idea of semiology and meaning.” If this is true then semiology would be just repeating or suggesting existing notions—such as the direct relationship between form and meaning—with a new jargon. Instead, in our opinion, to focus on notions that are not obvious at all, such as value and signification, allows one to formulate theoretical problems “on” architecture in a new way.

5. The notion of communication in this context is relegated to a secondary role, emphasizing a “clear cut separation” from the notion of a system of signification. This theoretical procedure allows us to clarify the differences between communication and signification as a first essential step, prior to any consideration of their relationship.

All of these above procedures represent some of the potential means which can be used against the ideological determinations of the semiotic discourse on architecture.

Diana Agrest
Mario Gandelonas

112 I have just read "Semiotics and Architecture" by Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest, published in *Oppositions 1*. After appreciating the demythifying function of its theme, I am writing an opinion on the relevance of this piece in relation to the previous work of the authors and on its possible inclusion in a global theory of theoretical practice.

In addition I would like to make a contribution (beyond the analysis of the text) towards the correct appreciation of the degree to which the phenomenon of ideological consumption is predetermined and of the inevitable process of fragmentation through which the cultural system both transforms and nullifies the production of knowledge.

The central objective of the article does not need much clarification: its intention is to dismantle the ideological operation which underlies the partial use of a valid theoretical tool. In its development this procedure is clearly read as part of a strategy which, in the last analysis, pretends the justification of a system of norms that both structures the present mode of production of the built environment and regulates all of its specific practices. But it seems necessary to elaborate on the possible usefulness of this demythifying and subversive theoretical effort in a medium that in spite of its purported neutrality is inevitably bound by its condition of paradigmatic center for the processing and distribution of cultural information.

There is no one better than Gandelsonas and Agrest to evaluate the need for inserting this kind of effort into a general strategy of theoretical practice with concrete levels of political implementation. Although a lack of connection with these levels does not automatically invalidate the product in theoretical terms, the authors will be the first to admit a loss of efficacy in its conceptual transformation when their interlocutors do not participate with them in the same political project, and an even greater loss if they are compromised with an opposite project.

If this is the case, the dialectical development of this work, in that presumably aseptic milieu, will be replaced by an epistolar discussion like the one proposed by the editorial statement of *Oppositions 1*: a useless exchange in which the least important thing is to reach an agreement aiding in the reconstruction of the myth of an architectonic culture through the fiction of production, when the final objective of the article is precisely to contribute to its systematic dissolution.

This perhaps unexpected but nevertheless possible derivation of the fate of this work would be a more subtle form of ideological reworking of its transformatory potential. The discussion of the object itself will soften its edges and facilitate its digestion.

Perhaps the easiest error, and paradoxically the one that could bring about the worst consequences, would be to allow an easy takeover of ideas and models for the interpretation of reality that are the product of a long conceptual development whose patrimony must not be renounced.

This warning is doubly justified: first by the intimate knowledge I have about the author's previous itinerary; and second by the special concern that some of us have over the intellectual plunder that is only a complement of other, more evident kinds of plunder.

Six years ago Gandelsonas and Agrest inaugurated in the School of Architecture of the University of Buenos Aires an approach to theoretical work on the demythification of architectural ideology, with unexpected political and structural consequences.

This task began with a first attempt at the formulation of a semiology of architecture as a theoretical model for the dismantling and unmasking of the most explicit cultural traditions that constitute the "theoretical" support of architectural practice.

The work was developed within a social con-

text and determined by a specific political and cultural situation which it seems necessary to describe in order to understand its later strategical consequences.

The University of Buenos Aires had just been supposedly emptied of its intellectual capital as a consequence of the withdrawal of its most prestigious elements in response to the politics of fascist repression implemented by the government of the military dictatorship since June 1966. This hysterical military action, with a clear McCarthyist content, was both a complement and a reflection of the overall political situation. The consolidation of the mechanisms for economic control in defense of the interests of the dominant economy was achieved through the installation of a government controlled by its allied natives: the landowning oligarchy and the upper commands of the army.

But just as it had already happened in the case of the forced dissolution of the labor front (movement), the excessive force of the repression brought about a symmetrical potentiation of the consciousness of feasible political tactics to oppose the dominant project and of their most appropriate form of implementation.

At the same time the situation of intellectual impoverishment in which the university masses found themselves, obliged them in spite of their traditional betrayal of popular and national interests, to create their own mechanisms of conceptual development and political action. The overthrow of the prevailing technocratic, ill-fitting and falsely leftist doctrine, marks the consolidation of a politically coherent university front which for the second time in its history (the first was during the reform of 1918) fulfills a positive role in its effective contribution to the popular political project.

Within this framework, and within the specific context of the School of Architecture, the task initially stated in terms of the analysis of texts and architectural objects

developed by the chair of "Architectural Semiology" produced a double effect which, capitalized by the student movement, generated the conceptual basis and the human capital that would guide the complete restructuring of pedagogical and institutional conceptions.

This double effect consisted in promoting and massifying the use of a theoretical tool for the understanding of how the different levels of social practice are articulated and at the same time characterizing as ideological the cultural formations which had until then been accepted as "scientific." More specifically this work built and divulged an admissible interpretation of the real relationships between the practice of design and the historical social structure which produces it, and began the demythification of the ideological system that justifies that practice in its present mode of operation.

The political result of this theoretical development was the unconditional support that the mass of the students gave to the project for the structural transformation of the school proposed two years later by the alumni of the chair of architectural semiology.

In order to appreciate the strategical importance of this renovation it is necessary to take into account the absolutely unusual conditions in which university studies operate in Argentina.

The School of Architecture and Urbanism of Buenos Aires alone, not considering other schools of architecture in the country, has at the moment more than 16,000 students, while the University of Buenos Aires as a whole has nearly 180,000.

It is obvious that this quantitative reference inevitably becomes qualitative if we think that the total population of the country is 26,000,000. This pedagogical, cultural and economical absurdity has its origins in the lack of a national plan offering real alternative modes of productive insertion to an ex-

tensive petite bourgeoisie, itself the social product of a political centralism and an economic-cultural system of exploitation and dependency. Of course the possibility of controlling this professional alluvion completely escapes any known mechanism for university structure. Therefore this reality, impossible to grasp from an academicist and simply informative conception of teaching, required the definition of new objectives and methodologies for the present stage of National Reconstruction, and thus led to the expectation of new products.

This process has been started with the restructuration described above, and in a specifically architectural level marks the beginning of the construction of a "social theory of habitat" which should describe the conditions of production of a "design technology" of our own.

The theoretical task of the chair of Architectural Semiology directed by Gandelsonas, Agrest and Juan Carlos Indart performed the function of clarifying and instrumenting the gestation of this policy, as may be seen today in the constitution of the "Cast" for the present pedagogical endeavor and in the evident influence of their approach on the efficacy of the ideological system which the revolutionary tendency of Peronism elaborated in documents directed to the constitution of a university front.

The new project on theoretical work being developed at the School of Architecture in Buenos Aires needs both an incentive for the enormous student body to engage in the process of conceptual reproduction, and the development of research at the most abstract and advanced level, in order to insure a steady feedback.

It is at this level, the most difficult one to fulfill in any chain of production, that we encounter in this field one more limitation to the efficient and immediate renovation of cadres. A limitation based on the difficulty of ensuring a parallel development of the speculative ability and of the consciousness

of the political framework within which it is to be exercised. 113

Gandelsonas and Agrest once filled that void and they can fill it again. Their present withdrawal, based on a respectable conception of the exploitability of gaps in the system, must not become another proof of the strategically successful intellectual plunder to which we are subject.

Rafael Viñoly
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114 The article "Semiotics and Architecture" published in *Oppositions 1* involves a problem which although it remains unresolved, undoubtedly constitutes one of the most fundamental difficulties confronting architecture today, namely its theoretical formulation in respect of modern sciences. Despite the originality of the author's critique of the idealistic conception of the architectural sign and of the closed "form-function" system which fails to engage other determinants in the interpretation of the sign, the argument nonetheless touches on a number of points which demand clarification.

The theoretical production proposed by the authors as a prior moment to architectural production engages a set of conceptual and epistemological issues which are ultimately interrelated. A theory can only result from an ordering of concepts which are derived from the study of specific objects. "The praxis which lead to the elaboration of theory is a social praxis" (Althusser), and it is directly related to the historical development of production. Hence a theory does not arise, as the article suggests, in order to "adapt architecture to the needs of Western Social Formations," but rather it, itself, constitutes a level of production (architecture in this case), as social praxis.

Althusser brings us to question this proposed separation of the theoretical production from architectural praxis. Architecture, as an entity apart, appears at the outset of the author's thesis, as an activity whose object may or may not correlate to history. Two difficulties are raised by this issue; firstly, the affirmation of the existence of architecture as a "positive" fact belonging to the realm of nature; secondly, the recognition of the possibility of elaborating theories for the purpose of using them to assimilate architecture into society. The difference between architecture as an object and architecture as a social praxis ending in the production of the object and its theory, is not simply a difference in terminology, but involves a philosophical attitude towards the object and its realization. If architecture is

conceived as an *activity*, then its production has to be seen as a *social praxis*. The theoretical praxis, as Althusser explains in his introduction to *Lire Le Capital*, is at one and the same time both the effect and the social praxis of class struggle (i.e., production of goods and their appropriation). Whereas architecture interpreted as an object apart, leads to the claim of an independent status for its theory and to the possibility of epistemological break within this theory, this is presumably what the author intended by a "theory in the strict sense." The existence of architecture as such, and the priority thereby given to architectural theory over architectural practice, seems to logically presuppose the existence of architecture as a natural phenomenon before its cultural appearance.

The idea of the linear adaptation of architecture through "theoretical operations . . . to the needs of Western Social Formations," implies the identification of ideology as a monolithic body. At this juncture one needs to remember that since the reification of architecture into an "object" and the emergence of avant-garde, architecture has always been divided between, on the one hand, the projection of the bourgeois city, as received as an objective value, and on the other, the anticipation of "alternatives" in order to sublimate conflicts within "utopian forms." Indeed the very notion of avant-garde has always been inseparable from the dichotomy of this critical consciousness. As Tafuri has written in his *Progetto e Utopia* (p. 7), "The formation of the architect as the ideologist of the 'social,' the identification of an adequate area of intervention within the urban phenomena, the persuasive role of form vis-à-vis the public and the autocritical role of form vis-à-vis its own research, the dialectics between the role of the architectural object and the role of the urban organization; these are the constants that recur within the 'dialectics of Enlightenment'."

Ever since the formation of the bourgeois city, architectural production and its theory,

apart from reflecting the social structure, have always presented themselves in dialectical conflict with the dominant system. That this conflict never attained a radical critique of capitalism is related to the superstructural nature of art. Yet architectural formulations, be they actual or theoretical, far from always being functional to the interests of the dominant classes, have in several instances reached the point of self-destruction through an expression of anxiety in the face of contradictions that they cannot resolve.

The authors' intention to establish a "process of production of knowledge as a theoretical project which is aimed neither at adapting architecture to the needs of the social formations nor to maintaining the architectural institution as we know it," brings us once again to Althusser's objection to the reduction of the *theory of social to theory per se*, as it is found in natural sciences. In his *Reponse à John Lewis* (pp. 55-7), Althusser states that only natural sciences have a self-constituted object, a beginning (problematic mutation and epistemological break), and a history of their own (as opposed to social history). In this text, Althusser criticizes the *theoretic* attitude of interpreting social phenomena as though they were "natural" phenomena, and argues that it is impossible to reduce Marx's philosophical revolution to scientific revolution and hence to consider *Capital* as the *theory of economics*. Marx's critique of the capitalist economic laws and of the ideology built into them is the way he constitutes his *philosophy of history*. Althusser insists on this clarification when he says in his introduction to his book *For Marx* (p. 33), that "By founding the theory of history (historical materialism) Marx simultaneously broke with his erstwhile ideological philosophy and established a new philosophy (dialectical materialism). I am deliberately using the traditionally accepted terminology (historical materialism, dialectical materialism) to designate this double foundation in a single break Of course, if the birth of a new philosophy is simultaneous with the foundation of a new science, and this science

is the science of history, a crucial theoretical problem arises: by what necessity of principle should the foundation of the scientific theory of history *ipso facto* imply a theoretical revolution in philosophy? This same circumstance also entails a considerable practical consequence: as the new philosophy was only implicit in the new science it might be tempted to confuse itself with it. *The German Ideology* sanctions this confusion as it reduces philosophy, as we noted, to a faint shadow of science, if not to the empty generality of positivism."

Historical materialism distinguishes science from ideology not by eliminating the latter but by situating it in time and circumstance. The production of knowledge, as posited by the authors implies the attribution of a "scientificity" to social theory, which renders it a "theory of knowledge." What is this if not the elimination of the dimension *history* from the social phenomenon? As Habermas has written in *Knowledge and Human Interest* (p. 63) "Materialist scientism only reconfirms what absolute idealism had already accomplished: the elimination of epistemology in favor of unchained universal scientific knowledge, but this time of scientific materialism instead of absolute knowledge."

The "de-ideologization" that the authors aspire to in order to arrive at "theory in the strict sense" appears as a double idealization: on the one hand the assertion of architecture as a *natural* object outside the context of the history of production (technology and knowledge): on the other the elaboration of a theory so that it frees itself at once both from history and its own object, since it posits itself in terms of "general laws." "Naturality" and "ahistoricity" appear as but two faces of the same coin. As Roland Barthes has put it in *Mythologies*: "Myth is against history. It achieves its own mystification through dissimulating its artificiality in the guise of a pretended naturality."

In this context, the "naturality" of a corpus

which exists in the external world and demands a non-ideological method in order to reveal itself, must of necessity correspond to an ultimate *reality* depending for its elucidation on the self-realization of the positive spirit. The real, as Bachelard says, is nothing but the product of the objectivation of thought in quest of the real. Therefore the very notion of the "real," far from being a self-evident concept, carries within it an illusion of objectivity contingent upon the existence of an *external, positive, natural* real.

Although one may readily agree with the authors, that Western knowledge being ideological, serves to perpetuate the capitalist system, one cannot but fully understand their determination to represent society as an undifferentiated overall structure, rather than as a field replete with the antagonisms of class struggle, nor can one accept their tendency to subsume under a monolithic ideology that dialectical process which must of necessity generate numerous ideologies as part of this struggle. The authors seem to regard the world of ideology as having its own autonomous principles of intelligibility, and that this being so, the history of ideas (philosophy) may be reduced to science.

According to this, ideology, with its capacity to reproduce itself as a self-determining system for the creation of knowledge, can be a product of its own elements without being "committed" to the process of self-realization of the society through production. Since, in accordance with their argument, "reality" in its objective illusion stands apart from the realm of production, then theory does not result from the process of production (class struggle and technology), nor does it emerge from a critique of these processes. Rather theory produces itself on its own behalf creating its own object, subject, and purpose; proceeding self-referentially from abstract to abstract, verifying its own thought on its own postulate. "Any abstract concept," says Althusser in his introduction to the first volume of *Capital* (French edition, p. 10), "provides knowledge

of reality by revealing its existence. Thus abstract concept means a formula which is apparently abstract, but which in fact is terribly concrete by virtue of the object it is designating," and he continues, "basic concepts exist in form of a system, and this is what makes them a theory."

Any coherent system can be considered as a model. The consistency of this model depends upon the compatibility of its conceptual elements. It is not possible to develop a model into a theory unless its conceptual elements have a concrete object. The production of theory is conditional upon the *rationality of its commitment* to this object (Bachelard). The *functionality* of theory in respect of *reality* makes it necessarily ideological. It is only by establishing the relation between *science, ideology, theory*, that a committed model can be initiated. The elimination of any one of these elements either leads to a divorce from *reality*, or alternatively to positivist illusion about the possibility of *absolute knowledge*, or finally to the abandonment of theory for *empiricism*.

This divorce of theory from ideology is not only contrary to historical materialism to which the authors refer, but is also opposed to scientific thought as conceived by the philosophy of natural sciences. Bachelard in his *Engagement Rationaliste* explains the scientific impossibility of a neutral comprehension of nature; he states that, "reality is nothing but the consequence of what man does technically in order to assimilate it. . . . Thus science has to be committed to the object of its study." His procedure in *Epistémologie* is to show that the scientific revolution has generated an epistemological break and that therefore a "committed science" has no choice but to be a philosophy and a history of science as well.

The concept "committed real" coordinated by the three axis—science, theory, ideology—places limits on the utopianism of thought and defines the frontiers of eclecticism. The organization of thought in respect

116 of such limitations is the only guarantee of a correct methodology, for without such restrictions the hope for initiating “epistemological break” will only end in the creation of “epistemological obstacles.”

From the article’s diffuse schema in which ideology is idealized by virtue of its divorce from the object and from history, and theory is isolated from all three through its self-referential constitution; semiotics, liberated from the dualism theory-ideology, suddenly emerges to overcome “architectural ideology” by assuming its role as a “general theory of ideologies.” At this point one has to ask, firstly, in what field has it ever been possible to use one theory as a model for producing a second theory; and then, why semiotics and not anything else? In respect of this, two urgent questions arise: first, can one human activity be totally assimilated to another, and second, does architecture lend itself to semiological analysis?

Levi-Strauss in his response to the Gurvitch criticism that his work reduces society to language states, “. . . between culture and language there cannot be any correlations at all, and there cannot be 100 percent correlation either So the conclusion which seems to me more likely is that some kind of correlation exists between certain levels . . . thus, and in varying degrees, these systems [myth, ritual, kinship] are amenable to a structural analysis which is analogous to that applied to the system of language” (*Structural Anthropology*, p. 84). The study of architecture no less than any other area of culture has long since been a legitimate field for the application of linguistic tools. Francoise Choay’s urban analysis uses semiotic tools, but the city remains in her work at the “specific level” and the instrumentality of semiotics is respected. As she maintains: “there is no question of systematic transposition of concepts . . . even less, the constitution of a *corpus*, and determination of elements of pertinence.”

While the authors correctly question the transposition of semiotic concepts to archi-

tectural analysis, they go on to propose the production of knowledge of architecture on the basis of semiotic concepts. Here one is brought to question the status of architecture, since according to this thesis it itself has to be invented, and while architecture may be subsumed under Saussure’s definition of *semiology*, the presence of a logical rule according to which message units are structured one after the other (the character of pertinence) has yet to be demonstrated. A system of communication is not necessarily a language nor do a number of symbolic elements combined according to an order necessarily constitute a system of communication, unless the “criteria of pertinence” in the structure of its minimal message unit is assured.

At this point one fails to understand how the arbitrariness of the sign (Saussurian principle) offers to the authors a way by which to produce a “theory of architecture.” The architectural object previously left undefined in their argument now gives place to a *theory of architecture*. Rather than leading to the threshold of a *theory of architecture*, the Saussurian arbitrariness of the sign primarily points towards the dependence of sign on culture, for as Levi-Strauss says: “The arbitrary character of sign is only provisional. Once a sign has been created, its function becomes explicit, as related, on the one hand, to the biological structure of the brain and on the other, to the aggregate of other signs” (*ibid.*, p. 94). It follows that if there is no inherent “function” (or any other meaning) to the sign, and the meaning is the result of *sign becoming social* then a “theory on” architecture could not possibly escape its becoming social (ideological) as soon as it is exteriorized and thereby could only be a “theory of” architecture. Levi-Strauss stresses the illusory character of “neutral” attempts at an “absolute” understanding of social phenomena, and by demonstrating the correlation between the synchronic and the dyachronic, he reveals the presence of the historical axis in any social phenomenon.

Even though the authors’ comparison be-

tween the concept of production in Marx and the architectural object seems for a moment to redeem architecture from the “naturalness” attributed to it throughout the article, their concluding project of “. . . an abstract conceptual structure which explains the production of signification . . . which in turn will produce knowledge of concrete objects such as Western Architecture,” only serves to convince the reader that architecture, in its substance and as an activity has yet to be defined.

When all has been entered for the revelatory promise of semiotic and architecture, there remains the ever present testament of history, for as Tafuri has written in *Teoria e Storia dell’architettura*, (p. 51): “Today, structuralism and semiology are at the center of the debate, even in architectural studies. We can immediately recognize their positive contribution to the analysis of design; firstly because they meet the demand for a scientific foundation and as we know very well, in moments of anxiety and insecurity, objectivity is the prime need; secondly, because they postulate a systematic understanding of the phenomena which rationalizes the poetics of anxiety and crisis that have become, through consumption, evasive and non-operative. As methods of diagnosis, structuralism and semiology have already demonstrated their efficiency, but they have also revealed their dangers—the ideology concealed behind their apparent suspension of ideology. Once again, the critic is required to make his contribution, to choose, to bring back into the orbit of a solidly based historicism, the material of his study.”

Nasrine Faghih
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One interest in any reply to a critical letter which indicates problems and their possible solutions could be if the resultant dialogue had a productive character, possibly leading to the expansion of the theoretical problem being discussed. However, a letter based on gestures that only imitate a critical work is of little interest except if it is taken as a means to clarify this distinction between gestures and critical work. Why do we say gestures and not work? First, the ideas which are criticized do not belong to our argument. This implies that the author of the letter did not perform the "work of reading" required by the article. Second, the quotations supporting the argument do not follow a logical sequence, but rather are composed in a collage in which contradictory statements are mixed with incomplete arguments, sometimes even falsifying their original meaning. This implies that the author did not perform the "work of writing" a critique.

The problems on which the letter is based could be grouped as follows:

1. Issues which were supposedly not considered in the article, such as the concepts of history and philosophy. The letter says that in our article "architecture as an entity apart, appears . . . as an activity whose object may or may not correlate to history." However, the first paragraph of our article makes clear that the concepts used in our general approach to the problem of theory and ideology in architecture, are consistent with the historical materialist approach to the science of history as discussed by Althusser. First, architecture is presented as an ideological practice, that is, as a particular aspect of this more complex practice. Second, it is defined as part of a dominant ideology, as a "region" of this ideology; and finally, it is also defined in relation to the historical concept of a mode of production.

The above historical framework is proposed in the first paragraph and Notes 1 and 3 of our article where ideology is seen as one of the structural "instances" within the "over-

all structure" (structure globale in Althusser's and Poulantzas's work) of the capitalist mode of production, which may be analyzed in itself as well as in its relationship with economic and political instances. These are characterized by an unequal development within different time frames. Consequently each of the aspects according to its place and function in the matrix might be analyzed through the concept of a history of different time frames.

With respect to philosophy if we consider that it represents "politics in the realm of theory" (Althusser) and not "the history of ideas," the aim of our text is to trace a demarcation line between theory and ideology, between materialistic and idealistic notions, and thus it should be considered essentially philosophic as opposed to theoretic in its nature.

2. Issues concerning the notions of theory and ideology. The letter suggests that we do not take into account the fact that theory "constitutes a level of the production itself," even though Note 2 of our article indicates that "there are other functions of architecture and design theories to which we do not refer in this article, i.e., the theory that has the function of establishing a certain ordering of design operations within architectural practice." We believe that this is a misunderstanding of our argument about theory as a practice in itself—theoretical practice as a particular historical process of production—which can be opposed not to "practice" (repeating the ideological opposition theory/practice) but to many different historically determined practices, such as any ideological, technical or political practices; a misunderstanding that seems to develop from a misinterpretation of Althusser's theoretical work.

Firstly, his distinction between the object of knowledge and the real object, an idea developed in the last section of our article. The letter misinterprets our discussion as saying "architecture itself has to be invented." What we suggest instead is that the

theoretical object of a semiotic approach to architecture, as opposed to architecture as a real object, has to be produced. Althusser, referring to Marx's introduction to the Grundrisse "elements of political economy" points out the distinction between real object, that is the concrete real, and the object of knowledge, as seen as a product of knowledge. This distinction refers not only to both objects but also to their own processes of production. While the process of production of the real object occurs "according to the successive order of historical genesis," the process of production of the object of knowledge occurs within knowledge and according to a different order. Althusser continues, "the categories of thought that reproduce the real categories do not occupy the same place assigned by the order of the real historical genesis but . . . the places are assigned according to their function within the process of production of knowledge."

A further distinction should be made within this process, says Althusser, according to the degree of abstraction of the concepts, between formal-abstract objects and more concrete concepts richer in theoretical determinations which produce the knowledge about the concrete-real objects. The criticism of our use of the expression "theory in a strict sense" ignores the fact that this expression is used in Althusser's work to identify the discourse on formal-abstract objects, i.e., the theory of the different modes of production, one of the highest degrees of abstraction in Marx's theoretical discourse.

If we follow this line of reasoning we find that in Althusser's approach, theory itself is the result of a process of elaboration, transformation and more generally of production and not the result of "an ordering process of concepts" which is just one of the possible operations within the process of production.

Theory is not a question of "deriving concepts from the study of specific objects," rather, as Marx says, "it seems fair to begin from the concrete and the real . . . but . . . if

we examine this with more attention it reveals [as] being false. The concrete . . . appears within thought as a process of synthesis, as a result and not as a point of departure”—in fact the opposite of “derivation from specific objects.”

Something similar to this misunderstanding and/or ignorance of the concepts referring to the theoretical object and process happens with the concepts referring to ideology mentioned above. The phrase “the de-ideologization that the authors aspire to in order to arrive at theory” indicates that neither Copernicus’s example nor the definition of ideology as a structural instance of a mode of production were understood. The function of the Copernican example is to illustrate different moments in the complex and permanent relationship between theory and ideology both in history and in its relation to politics: ideology precedes and succeeds science (theory), their relationship being different in each of these moments. The notion that we are concerned with the elimination or disappearance of ideology can only result again from a misreading of our example of the role of absorption on the part of ideology of theoretical concepts (i.e., the Church’s fight against the Copernican theory). But above all, what has not been understood is the place we give to ideology as one of the objective structural instances of a mode of production and therefore of a concrete social formation (see Note 1 in our article). This thesis implies that a society with no ideology, one of its structural instances, is unthinkable.

3. *Issues concerning the semiotic approach in general and the semiotic approach to architecture, in particular.* The problem inherent in this letter does not reside exclusively in its misinterpretation of Althusser’s conceptual work but with theoretical production in general. This can be seen in the question “in what field has it ever been possible to use one theory as a model for producing a second theory”? We indicate as possible examples the recent use of concepts belonging to the theory of cyber-

netics in linguistics by Chomsky, and the use of communications theory and linguistics in genetic biology by Jacob and in anthropology by Levi-Strauss. In our case the “minor” distance that separates linguistics and semiotics (de Saussure and Barthes) seems to justify the further application of this procedure.

Finally, with respect to the criticism directed against the particular semiotic approach of our article, the letter’s definition of semiotic pertinence in architecture as given by the structuring of “units of the message one after the other,” manifests a misunderstanding of basic semiotic notions. First, because the notion of sequence is a secondary issue in a practice which is mainly developed in space (two or three dimensional) as seen in the work of Eco, Marin, and Damisch. Second, with respect to the notions of message and unit, at the present time, in the development of semiotics, it would seem that such concepts should not be used without a reference to their original conceptual framework for two reasons: a) because message and unit mean different things in different approaches such as Eco, Barthes, Metz, Levi-Strauss; and b) even the terms message and unit have been criticized by Kristeva as being of little theoretical value.

4. *Issues related to our use of “arbitrariness” as a theoretical construct.* As to the introduction of the notion of arbitrariness within our article as related to the notions of systems of signification—as opposed to communication—and to the notion of value, this was done to demonstrate one possible means of avoiding mechanical transpositions of a notion from linguistics or general semiotics to the specific context of architecture, rather than to “lead . . . to a theory of architecture.” Such mechanical transposition can be seen in the letter in the transcription of Levi-Strauss’s anthropological text on arbitrariness to the architectural context.

In the end this reply must ask two questions suggested by the kind of problem we have just analyzed.

What is the contribution of this letter to theory, that is, with respect to what we already know? Not only have the concepts developed in our article not been understood but the references to the body of theory on which they are grounded confuse the basic principles of that theory.

What is the contribution of such a letter to the political arena? It seems useless for an ideological struggle, but rather it places the context of this debate in a political and economical level. In this way the letter commits the same mistake, as orthodox Marxism did in the thirties, by negating the possibility of an ideological struggle, remaining defenseless in front of a rising development of fascism, which demonstrates in an extreme form the power of ideology.

Diana Agrest
Mario Gandelsonas

Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelonas's article, "Semiotics and Architecture" in *Oppositions 1* attempts to segregate ideology from theory through some kind of "objective" semiological analysis. The entire project smacks of positivism, transforming what is an intimate social and historical situation into a highly technical scientific masquerade. It seems that this is the ultimate "theoretical blockade" for a type of critical formalism which doesn't admit any ideology. Could this be the "silent" architectural theory for this age of consumption? It seems inevitable that the method of description one chooses to apply is in fact part of a theoretical system of explanation therefore being itself some value judgement.

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At last, *Oppositions 1* and *2* are in Paris.

Still too eclectic; the criticism is too unimaginative and alludes too much to a past continually being brought back into fashion, by this same criticism. Neither allowing CIAM nor the Bauhaus to die; even less Mies . . . why? Is there not enough material for intelligent, intelligible, contemporary criticism today? Yes, certainly, you have dissected A.+P.S.! Two monuments in one, but whose gods are dead. Our friend Antoine Grumbach, however, should be able to help you in the field of criticism. Also, it would be interesting, for once, to identify the architects each time they are mentioned. One would better understand their behavior and therefore, perhaps architecture will appear better linked to society.

And consider how architecture and urbanism alter or could alter the behavior of a greater number.

I await *Oppositions 3*, but Paris is far from New York.

I'll see it shortly, I hope; congratulations again and good luck.

Ionel Schein
Paris, France

Errata

The editors of OPPOSITIONS and Stuart Cohen profoundly regret the following misattributions that occurred in OPPOSITIONS 2 in the article "Physical Context/Cultural Context" by Stuart Cohen.

In reference to Guild House (Friends' Housing for the Elderly, Philadelphia), it should have been noted that Venturi & Rauch and Cope and Lippincott were associated architects. The Brighton Beach Project was designed by Venturi & Rauch in association with Frank Kawasaki. In addition, both Guild House and Brighton Beach should have been attributed to the firm of Venturi & Rauch, not to Robert Venturi alone. Again the ideas and theories quoted from Learning from Las Vegas should have been attributed to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, not to Robert Venturi alone.

Figure 1. Colin Rowe.

Figure 2. Elaine Lustig Cohen and Philip Johnson.

Figure 3. Ludwig Glaeser and Arthur Drexler.

Figure 4. Peter Eisenman introducing the Forum.



1.



2.



3.



4.

William Ellis

In May of this year, *Oppositions* held its first evening forum at The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. It was a gathering of the magazine's sponsors to mark the appearance of its second issue and was devoted to the work of Mies van der Rohe. Because it promised to be the first in a series of such evenings and because Mies's historical reputation is undergoing what could be called a bad period, it may have been anticipated with both hope and curiosity. In retrospect one imagines to have felt that it might produce expert analytical opinion to counter certain negative intuitions about Mies's relative decline which an architectural public might erroneously hold. The evening ultimately failed these expectations.

However, the fact that the forum took place in a strange and uncomfortable physical setting—the overcrowding, the extreme heat, the inability of the panel to be heard, or even seen, by an audience blinded by the glare of the sun bouncing off a foil covered table—none of this was necessarily basic to its failures. Nor can the fault really be laid to a panel without representation from Chicago or without more practicing architects. Arthur Drexler, Philip Johnson and Colin Rowe, with Ludwig Glaeser, Director of the Mies Archive at The Museum of Modern Art serving as moderator, constitute about as solid and well-meaning a group to be found anywhere. Even the format, which did not provide very well the promised setting for intelligent discussion and debate on architecture, cannot be entirely to blame. If the sponsors seemed uncomfortable in their expected role of participants rather than listeners, the reason seemed to lie at a deeper level, one affecting both panel and sponsors.

The evening suggests the possibility that what is often called the “problem of Mies” may have deteriorated for the present into what might be termed the “misfortune of Mies.” And the forum probably erred by ignoring this turn of events. Certainly, some such consensus seems to have been in the air,

with questions ranging from “What are we doing here?” (John Hejduk), to others more in the form of jokes than serious propositions.

The panel seemed to ignore important considerations of both the early and the late Mies which bear directly upon current judgement of his work. The leading propositions advanced by Glaeser and the responses by the panelists were kept mainly to a period corresponding to Mies's early maturity—the years roughly from 1923 to 1931—and the examples kept mainly to those that tied Mies most clearly to the “spatial revolution” which characterizes the High Heroic Period of European modernist architecture. Thus much of the discussion alluded to his particular contributions to that spatial revolution: his elegant renditions of the separation of the functions—structure and screening.

Within this, Rowe reminded us of several important essentials of that period: that the *Zeitgeist* and—or versus—Rationalism can be taken as its essence; that it was generally held by the early modernists that it would be necessary only to begin in terms of a Spirit of the Age, and then things could proceed on their own; that the free plan somehow emerged as the symbol of these sentiments, and in retrospect, appears to be “the only thing really new in modern architecture.” Finally, and importantly, that that symbol “is a beautiful thing that is almost useless.” Neither a technical necessity nor a functional inevitability, it was devised, as Drexler said, “for wholly conceptual purposes.”

These observations, which came early in the evening, allude to but do not disclose the probable source of whatever disenchantment presently surrounds the work of Mies. By some he is held responsible for his early paradigms of International Style space and by others for his later reversion to a neoclassical option. Still others seem to blame him for both. But everyone in a way seems to blame him, more than the other Heroic architects, for stubbornly attempting

to actually build—in his own fashion—what the Heroic Period itself was prudent enough only to promise; a heroic act in itself, but perhaps tragic in its imprudence. Thus, since his heyday in the forties and fifties, notwithstanding his subsequent holdout at Chicago Circle, his historical fortunes have experienced a precipitous decline that appears inevitable after the fact but nonetheless embarrassingly swift and drastic. Unlike Le Corbusier, Mies's post-World War II career was an extension of the polemic of the early Modern movement rather than a critique which implied any new directions. As such it can appear to be faintly retrograde and anticlimactic. However he may be posthumously carrying on through a reflex popularization by his largely unconscious following of general practitioners, his disciples in architectural academia have diminished. They have been replaced in part by those seeking to question the initial intentions and assumptions of the Modern movement, to which Mies can be said to have made such formative and apparently committed contributions.

Aside from problems of its format, the problem with the forum is that it chose not to address the complexities of our present judgement of Mies in terms of the difference between the early promise of the Modern movement and the deflation of expectation that occurs when confronted with the examples representing its “fulfillment.” Things have not “proceeded very well” on their own; Rationalism alone has not fulfilled the *Zeitgeist*. Perhaps, perceiving the Modern movement to have already passed, future forums will be more interested in searching for alternatives to enliven its lame results in the U.S.A. To do this they must attempt to make useful connections between Heroes and our present condition. And while this may be easier to demand than to provide, it nevertheless seems a reasonable goal for such occasions.

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122 OPPOSITIONS 3

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