

# ENGLISH

English translation by Paula Olmos

## The modern movement and beyond

Carlos Flores

With the somewhat relativist objectivity that time has conferred us, we feel now confident to ascertain how the Modern Movement's supposed (and to a certain extent real) failure was provoked by its own faults as well as by the frivolous and indifferent attitude towards it of those who came afterwards.

When, in 1958, the enormous bulk of the exaggerated Tower Velasca appeared over Milan's urban grid, dominating and somehow eclipsing it, its presence was interpreted, by most of the important architects, as a certainly positive sign, as a symbol of resistance towards and liberation from the rigid formalism, abstract and geometric, proposed by the supporters of the International Style. Today, we must admit that many of the theoretical issues and practical solutions promoted by the architects committed to the Modern Movement were the outcome of a certain dogmatism based on candid simplifications; but it is also true that, if we look at the essential texts of the most significant figures (specially Gropius, the most serious and deepest theorist of the architecture's renovation), we will notice how these proposals were presented in a most flexible and subtle way, so as to accept different interpretations from those which became official. In "The New Architecture and the Bauhaus" (1934), one of Gropius' most transparent and straightforward texts, he expresses his concern about possible mistaken interpretations that would make of his arguments something different from his own thoughts: "We had to fight those who identified any building or object devoid of ornament with a supposed Bauhaus style, and the imitators who prostituted our basic principles making of them frivolous fashionable traits. The aim of the Bauhaus was not to establish an style, a system or dogma, formula or fashion. Our teaching was not based on certain preconceived concepts about form but we looked for a living spark in the diverse and changing forms (...) To create a Bauhaus style would have been a failure would have meant a return to immobility to the lethal inertia we were trying to fight (...) Nobody who has really examined the origins of what I have called New Architecture can seriously affirm that it was based on a kind of irrational obsession against tradition, on technique for technique's sake, on a blind destruction of the deepest national roots".

The construction of Tower Velasca occurred a year before the last one of the CIAM's Reunions, celebrated in 1959 in Otterlo (Holland). From this moment more or less the architecture classified as "functional-rationalist-cubist" will gradually disappear and fade in order to give place to a new style whose first symbol was already erected in the enormous mushroom of Tower Velasca, understood as the emblem of the new avant-garde. The Modern aspiration (an aspiration supported by theorist

with sincere enthusiasm) of creating an architecture that would establish a link with social reality, capable of giving an answer to its most urgent demands was soon to disappear. The slogans and mottoes of the New Humanism gradually replaced the passionate manifestos of the Modern Movement that were left aside without any serious analysis of their premises, abandoned too soon, some of which conveniently adapted could have been still valid. An architectural language and architect's ethics were abandoned and the opposed positions were embraced. We do not have to wait till the emblematic Guild House by Venturi (1960-63) (the supposed first Post-modern building) nor till Jencks' books on the language of this new architecture (1984 and 1987). The menacing bulk of Tower Velasca, a built fact and therefore more efficient than two thousand words, facilitated with its only presence the way towards future, hushing any possible distrustful voices trying to save something of the immediate past. In any case, there would be some architects who (as individuals and with no theoretical support nor rational justification) will try to revise some of the principles of the Modern Movement, creating proposals that really go beyond the raw Rationalist Cubism without embracing the Post-modern. The extraordinary character of Alvar Aalto (so successful among youngsters all over the world, and specially among Scandinavians) can be pointed out as one of the most significant examples of this revision (I prefer to talk about Alvar Aalto and his school than using the inaccurate expression of "organic architecture", a concept that tries to establish unreal antitheses and divisions in contemporary architecture).

In Spain, as early as in 1922-24, Fernando García Mercadal with his studies and projects about Mediterranean Architecture, tried to go beyond modern dogmatism by making use of arches, pergolas, porticoes etc... while keeping his interest on modernity and avant-garde. Ten years later other Spanish architects as José Luis Sert, Torres Clavé, Arniches or Domínguez, will also incorporate into their own works some traditional and vernacular elements. During the fifties and sixties, so much more disengaged from pre-war theories, Coderch and Valls, Alejandro de la Sota, Fernández del Amo, Corrales and Molezún, García de Paredes, Peña Ganchegui, Higuera and Miró etc..., will create an architecture which, while assuming many particular features of the Modern Movement, eludes the raw schematism derived from it. Other similar cases can be found during the fifties in countries as Italy, Great Britain or Holland. But for all this and in spite of the creation of the Team X, a group that could have undertaken an effort to clarify theories and polemics, there was not to

be any real and serious revision of the Modern Movement nor a renovation of its concerns and demands regarding the relationship between architecture and society. After rejecting this critical and self-critical aim, the architects could embrace what according to Theo Crosby (a fashionable theorist in those days and afterwards rather eclipsed) was their main and unique mission: "to build monuments, that is, buildings with emotional contents".

Today, almost four decades later and after deserting what, according to Gideon, could have been the "beginning of a New Tradition", it seems that some of the fundamental changes introduced by Postmodernism can be rather useful, specially those regarding the use of language, form and space, some parameters that will be understood in a more flexible way enriching thus our architecture. Leaving aside boring Mannerisms (as the apparently inevitable horizontal stripes, alternatively dark and light, taken from Botta) or other excessive gestures as Hans Hollein's project for Vienna's Cathedral of Saint Stephen, post modern architecture has really offered us a refreshing contact with elements and techniques from the past that are obviously valid in spite of the opposite attitude of the twenties' and thirties' avant-garde. The square and the rectangle, the pillar and the lintel, the flat roof and the "fenêtre en longueur", the pure forms and plastered walls with no accidents, appear now as inevitably poor and restricted (even from a functionalist point of view) for architectural creation, without any real counterweight or convincing justification.

This more flexible attitude and conceptual openness, together with postmodern arguments about "a return to material feelings", recovery of qualities and textures, use of exterior finishes as stone, wood or industrial products (plastic, glass, metals, etc...), represent a step forward in relation to previous solutions (leaving aside aims and theories), which made most buildings appear as unvarying and obedient pupils with their inevitable white colored uniforms. During

the two last decades architecture has paid much more attention than did the modern movement to the interior spaces' arrangement and articulation as well as their scaling; a circumstance that can also be considered a positive and convincing improvement in relation to the previous period.

And, regarding Deconstruction or Deconstructivism (that peculiar alternative which appeared some time ago together with postmodernism), I would like to make a brief comment:

First of all, I want to point out the absolute lack of relationship between this architecture and Jacques Derrida's sociological-philosophical concept of Deconstruction. On the contrary, it is clearly related to Malevich's Suprematism (1915-17) whose compositions act as visual references for this architectural tendency's plans. Architectural Deconstructivism does not establish a clear relationship with Russian Constructivism, either, not even to negate it. And regarding Derrida's idea of deconstruction/construction, this deconstructive architecture is just something of a bourgeois nihilism that does not indulge into chaos but just expresses a kind of domestic mess during a cleaning day. It is even more difficult to understand their attempts to avoid verticality, a principle directly related to Nature's growth and constructive rationality, a motif that has been successfully used for more than two thousand years.

Finally, I want to point out a rather positive and influential consideration for future architecture: the lack of compromise with the orthogonal grid and regularity of Deconstructivist theory and practice, two basic principles of the Modern Movement. This transgression of the right angle laws (a figure that will always be important but will not be anymore unique) might be considered the greatest contribution of Deconstructivism to the necessary revision of the Modern Movement.

## Mies is more

Miguel Angel Baldellou

To be the last lecturer in a conference series dedicated to Mies van der Rohe in his centenary is risky business for at least two reasons: one can either indulge in establishing conclusions or in repeating previously heard arguments.

I will try not to. I will just talk about my own personal view in relation with Mies' works and texts. The supposedly objective explanations often tend to be contradictory.

I admit that this kind of reflection based on a personal reading can also be rather incongruous. In this lecture, I will consider Mies as a pretext to talk about other things as the very title seems to announce.

I have tried to look for what is essential

and not accidental in Mies; the practical quality of his proposals as independent from the "perfection" of some of his own solutions.

One of the first difficulties found by any researcher when approaching a character like Mies is his mythical quality. The extended rather simplified view of his work, moreover, somewhat aggravates this fact. In the case of Mies, he was probably the one who most promoted his own myth. His theoretical discourse, so brief, scarce, sporadic as well as his simple and schematic buildings have facilitated a superficial approach and the creation of a stereotyped vision of Mies.

To reestablish the complexity of his "theory" and architecture means, therefore, to



make a total and not partial assumption of his expression, to advance from a mystic appropriation of slogans to the acceptance of the ambiguity found in reality and experience.

It happens sometimes that a simplified analysis becomes axiomatic with time while the good "disciples" just replace knowledge with action. The cult references and "winks" are most likely to be automatically accepted when the reality behind them is less known, contributing thus to ignorance. This happens with some supposedly canonical analysis of Mies work. My intention is, therefore, to replace other's experience with my own to gain intensity while probably losing certainty.

Mies' architecture is mainly the result of an introspection of his own conflicts. This is, at least, the conclusion after taking a careful look at his sketches and this is precisely the opinion of his most important biographers. Consistently, only from introspection it is possible to understand his complex world. Mies suggests us an inner experience, therefore incommunicable, in which he tries to proclaim his thoughts to our sensibility.

That is, knowledge acquired by means of this experience must be the result of an inner assumption of his proposals, of a reflection upon his own work. This fact forces us to establish a distance in Brecht's mode while being conscious that Mies is not out of ourselves but inside. Mies worked in search of essence and we must look for it through his works.

In this way, Mies becomes a guide, a master. This is what he is, almost by definition. Regardless his own educative activity, his attitude itself was educative in his avant-garde beginnings as well as in his posterior professional career. The process of his instruction, mainly self-didactic, can show us how he progressively purified his criteria and assumed his reflections as experiences. During his years as an educator he tried to put into practice his own convictions leading his pupils towards his own cogitations. Although he sometimes referred to his own solutions it was his method to abstract from them a generally valid statement. He was a man of principles. That is what should be learnt from his didactic message.

Along the different periods of his life he did not renounce to this purifying effort applied to his expression as a consequence of introspection. The isolating quality of his own effort and his intellectual independence are more apparent than his own intention of being heard. It seems that, when he ruthlessly states his principles he is trying to drive away inquisitive people rather than recruiting disciples. Regardless his explicit didactic methods, a consequence of his diverse experiences, Mies' educational intention is more that of trying to understand than to explain. If we apply this same principle to his buildings, we will surely begin to understand them better.

In this context, it is particularly interesting to analyze Mies' role in the avant-garde movements with which he shared a historical period. Mies was rather away from any avant-garde historical commitment. He was committed to himself alone and his independence; his relationship with avant-garde was, thus, rather ambiguous. The mystical and narcissist renunciation of avant-garde to play society's farce becomes in Mies just a device to attract elitist clients regardless their ideology. The ambiguity of the

Expressionist message, the abstraction of the Stijl Constructivism and the sublimated conception of materials and nature found in Berlage or Wright, led young Mies to an architectural position full of conflicts which just a powerful intuition as was his could shape into a system that would nevertheless neglect reality as the realm of contradictions. The result will be a somewhat cryptic language which conceals so much as it reveals. This cryptic attitude will precisely nourish the above mentioned blind simplification and shallow critic.

American Miesianism is mainly based on this difficulty found in a cryptic and foreign language, strangely connected to power and glory. Probably this was Mies' reason not to unveil his message's profound meaning that was surely more of a doubt than of a dogma.

The Crown Hall is, in this particular sense, the paradigm of Mies' "classroom with no walls". The absence of partitions within such a large space dictates a rigorous discipline in the institution of limits; they will materialize as long as the statements are released. Panofsky's diffusion in this large school just means the ambiguity of an "ordered" debate.

There is nothing else so close to the big cathedral considered as a classroom, so faithful to the Tomist and Augustinian positions behind Mies' complex approach to principles.

But it is not just this specific educational space which reveals Mies' didactic intentions. The exhibition pavilions, the museums, the houses, talk us about the same things. The global character of his "voids", waiting for meanings, prepared for any personal experience, deserted, ambiguous, invite us to meditation. Thus, Mies' statements, as considered from their materializations in concrete spaces, appear in form of an stressed and ambiguous relationship between a global proposal and a necessarily partial construction. How far away from Venturi's explicit "ambiguity".

The different possible analysis of Mies' work have resulted in diverse groups of followers, all of them beyond simplistic imitation. Mies' supposed disciples are all those that want to replace him, either those who dissent from him or those who imitate him. And also some who try to think by themselves. In other words, Mies is an essential part of our images' culture. Individual reflections cannot ignore this heritage, we belong to the "great and honorable orphanage" as Sota said in 1969. Just by undertaking a rigorous analysis, we will be able to assume Mies' teachings. And yet, some who have just "decorated" Mies' work with arabesques, now try to claim the legacy for themselves. It seems, nevertheless, that it could be interesting to explore Mies' works in search of the different traits assumed by his innumerable disciples.

The first obstacle is precisely Mies' apparent transparency, when, in fact, it is difficult to accept a unique way of analysis without finding contradictory facts. If we try to understand his architecture neglecting its complexity we will notice how we progressively differ from truth. On the other hand the connection existing between all of Mies' works makes difficult any partial analysis. This assumption of an internal coherence, although it will be Mies' theme through all his life, was already settled around 1923 as was clearly understood by the international architectural critic. It was not easy, though, to assert the exact meaning of Mies' contribution beyond

the quality of his drawings and the Utopian character of his proposals. Although it might seem that the contemporary "city without attributes" was originated by Mies' labor, he was not really interested in it. Paradoxically, his purifying efforts gave birth to the most vulgar corruptions.

Regarding Mies' formal contribution, it also becomes paradoxical how he always insisted in ignoring spatial problems while centering on construction: "I do not recognize any formal problem, there are just construction problems". "We reject any formal speculation". It might seem that his work is not the outcome of any formal preoccupation but just if we identify form with fragments of inherent meaning, as it is common to do. In this sense, Mies actually rejects form. However, if we take into consideration his educational period with Paul, with Behrens, with Berlage, even in touch with Häring and we examine his long voyage towards elementarism, we will have to admit that he was not at all indifferent to form. We can even say that, for him, form was too basic in such a way that he could just look for it in the same way as Kahn did later on. The traditional dichotomy between Form and Design has no meaning for Mies, and thus, maybe, when he talks about form he means design and when he designs he just looks for the form by means of construction (formal) which, in his case is almost just structure.

Mies' main contribution to construction, traditionally identified with his famous sentence "God is in details", is not precisely in details itself. He did not just add a few more to the modern catalogue of building details. Mies' details have more to do with Gestalt and architecture. In any case, it rather seems that the "solutions" are implicit in the query, in the essence of materials. One just have to make an agreement about what the materials really are and what an artist can do with them, recognizing their nature. And this implies experience in and knowledge about materials and their expressive potentialities. Mies' learning period as a quarryman, a carpenter and just then as an architect determines his personal non-academic way, his discipline in making use of materials, his inquiry in search of constructive form. The merit of his own solutions is not really in themselves but in the way they have been found.

Generally speaking, functionality in Mies' architecture tends to reject pragmatism. In the same way as his forms cannot be recognized by using "Formalist" criteria, the usefulness of his buildings cannot be measured by "Functionalist" standards. Maybe this is the reason why his architecture is so difficult to classify from a typological point of view. Mies cannot be considered an inventor of types. However, his architectural work confirmed the viability of some specific types.

A different think is the fact that some of his most fervent disciples should make popular some of his solutions. It is not easy to find in his architecture any effort to encourage a conventional use of the built forms. Probably because Mies was trying to ignore certain conventions, thinking about different social customs, thinking about a different society. In the Barcelona pavilion, we can precisely notice how the absence of an explicit function can affect the form. But the pavilion's is not a unique case, though it may be the most exaggerated. Function must be created by use. As far as Mies eludes conventional uses, he is suggesting alternative ways that are not at all

arbitrary. To discover the "best" uses is something of a game as well as the outcome of sensibility. Analyzed in this way, Mies does not seem to be so elementary.

An exploration of Mies' work based on particular elements sidesteps the fundamental questions, the "something more" that is in knowledge. It is just from a universal point of view that his order, as Kahn's, becomes essential. This superior order includes every other part. But without it, the later become meaningless.

Trying not to fall in any simplification, we will try to look at Mies' architecture from an external point of view. We will firstly consider a somewhat previous question: the relationship between architectural works and historical time. Modern architects were obsessed with being so and to this end they constantly expressed their own temporality. A basic question, though, is what architecture really belongs to each period. That is, the fundamental question, the basic dilemma, is how to ascertain the real relationship between architecture and historical period. Regarding this particular problem, Mies acts as he has done when facing others. He places himself beyond time in order to allude his particular time. He is modern as long as he is classical. Mies' modernity is nourished by his own classicism.

Modernity in Mies' work is not related to any particular historical period, and in this way he can feel free to disobey any fashion. His interest in what is essential, leaves him out of the most temporal traits of the successive avant-garde epochs.

On the other hand, if there is any common trait to the different avant-garde architectural movements, it is precisely the exploration of spatial qualities. And Mies is not interested in space, but in void. Void in Mies depends on its own intelligibility, that is, void must be interpreted as spatial as long as space means experience. And it is precisely the void's intelligibility what gives it its emotional character, what makes possible its use. Analyzed in this way, the void suggests a conceptual tension between an apparent simplicity (this is precisely the point of those who say that "Less is simply less") and a latent and suggestive complexity. Because when we talk about complexity in relation with Mies' work we can just be talking about how his simplicity is, in fact, complex. In this particular sense, Mies' work is ambiguous because it admits so different readings. The subtle contradictions found in examining Mies' buildings are part of his proposed dialectical alternatives, but they do not lead us so far away from his own solutions. His seriousness in designing is just a translation of his own inner stress when he examines his dilemmas. I specially marvel at how he seems capable of keeping himself within so narrow limits with such a few principles. I feel very interested in Mies' rigor and coherence with his somewhat poor means, his personal means, his own cultural limitations and available technology, his own hesitant building experience.

To a certain extent, most appraisals and rejections regarding Mies' work have been based on simplified analysis. I think that it is good to make clear how Mies' work has a sense of completeness, how the basic question, what is kept through all this completeness, is a powerful formal structure conceived as a system of systems. That is the reason why it is so difficult to judge, because



of its abstraction. To understand Mies' work requires a greater effort than with any other architect. That is why it is so tiresome. The intellectual tension required to understand the formal structure implicit in Mies' work is enormous and is most times beyond our capacity to keep our attention. "I don't try to be interesting, I try to be good". With this kind of statements, obviously lacking some clarification, Mies avoided, or tried to avoid, reductionist analysis. He was also talking on behalf of a searching effort. The process of inquiring as the purest end.

Mies builds tangible objects, strictly delimited in time and space, yet, they are like provisional stages in relation to his complete works which become, as a whole, the main aim of all his efforts. Particular achievements are valuable both by themselves and as part of Mies' route towards a better knowledge of reality, not so much in search of individual solutions as interested in universal validity. In some sense, he is trying to approach architecture's essence, subsequently identified by Kahn with Form. The interest in being constantly creating a Design in order to undertake its perfecting means that perfection is an ideal aim, therefore unattainable. But the also constant effort in attaining it, forces the author to assume it, to work in search of the origin, to be original. The apparent immutability of Mies' works reveals a profound originality, what is just apparently contradictory. From this particular point of view, Mies can be considered a Mannerist, because he insists in looking for perfection, origins, truth and beauty, and thus he subtly infringes his own norms, in order to make them more sensible. This Miesian Mannerism is mainly interested in the perfecting process which finally results in the creation of particular objects. To go through this process means an intellectual effort whose main difficulty is its own intricacy. This can be precisely one of the reasons for so many desertions among his supposed followers who tended to just pretend meditation. The hardness of Mies' way, beyond his apparent simplicity, means that those who want to follow it must abandon all accessory things and radically face what is essential, from which it will be possible to produce personal proposals.

In any case, the analysis of Mies implies a certain kind of reflection in such a way that just by means of introspection we will be able to understand his position. All that which can be learnt from his architecture is really based on suggestions of our own mind after meditating on it. On the intellectual stress produced while discovering the process of designing forms. The dialectical relationship between the object and the subject becomes, in Mies, a kind of commitment.

In this sense, the existential time plays a fundamental role as the process of perception implies an spatial experience which, in Mies' case, means an intellectual effort. Time becomes intellectual stress while enjoying Miesian works, what does not happen with his "clarifying" followers.

The limits, the elements which create spatial stress are Mies' proposals for the user, present or absent, of his architecture. The limits of his architecture are a function of his own understanding, they are defined by presences or absences. Relationships as inside and outside, open and closed are not apparently taken into account, and are just

suggested. In the case of intermediate solutions, which are precisely his proposals, the position of the limits must be determined by the user himself after his own experience. To understand Mies' space as a labyrinth implies the ambiguity of the itinerary and the concretion of the limits, but more as an intellectual suggestion than as a physical possibility. The center, for Mies, is not the Minotaur; it is the spectator himself who creates the center by means of his own experience and around him objects seem to whirl creating a spiral form. Perception of Mies' space means the understanding of the spiral movement around the subject.

It is evident that Mies uses, among other artifices, modulation in order to arrange and clarify his spaces. But, for him, this tool is not an alienating element for his architecture. Mies' modulation is "really" exact and does not reside on magical formulas but depends on the architect's sensibility. It is a "more or less" modulation depending on each particular case. In fact, there are examples of different superimposed modular systems used in the same building depending on particular features. But his works seem to be perfectly and clearly regulated what is the result of his subtle use of this "more or less" adapted to reality.

To create an architecture which can be considered monument is not so much a question of size but of scale, that is relation.

It depends on form as long as form is what makes us establish relations, specially that of distance. Mies' works establish a distance, they flee us somehow. It is just after a ritual effort, a kind of adaptation/submission, that we come to comprehend his work. In this effort, limits have a main role, specially as they establish the absences, in negative. Redundancy does not appear in such a system where the main interest is in articulations which create evident and most times multiple relationships.

Mies' dilemma as an author, steady and unstable at the same time, is just how to make evident what is latent in a subtle and varied way. This "composition" labor is nothing else than an effort employed in controlling necessity and fortune by means of rigor and coherence. The stress established between the author and his works sways between a devotion to his own remembrances and a passionate search of posterity. From this point of view we can now consider an important factor in the architect's career: the trace left by his work in history. This concern explains the interest of many architects in playing their historical roles convincingly; they obviously want to leave distinct traces in order that their character could be understood according to their own desires. The analysis of his own work plays a fundamental role in this particular issue. But Mies seems to be an immutable spectator of History, he does not pay attention to events which he just considers as anecdotes, because he seems to aspire to other History. Mies is his own reference and he uses his time for his own recreation. His vital time, like Proust's, is made of his own duration which becomes a valid reference for anyone as it persists, immutable. He represents other's time better than anybody else. Mies' historical role is that of a main character of his time.

His concern about the relationship between architecture and history as expressed in his first texts, architecture as building History, make us think about the interest he had in his own epoch.

Those who are involved with their own time an reject others tend to invent, as individuals, that which can just be established by the whole society. But Mies' attitude is the opposite. Just by renouncing to meaning it is possible for architecture to become universal. That is why his architecture transcends his own historical time as well as appears as a distinct product of it. That is why it has become a classic. In order to express himself in a clear way within his own time, in order to facilitate the intellectual use of his architectural proposals, the architect must make use of rules which he shares with others for efficiency's sake. The wise, correct and magnificent play has obviously its own rules. To know and accept these rules is not the same as playing with the rules or practicing a game without rules. Mies' heterodoxy, Mies' mannerism is based precisely in his perfect knowledge of rules from which he feels confident to infringe them. He is, though, much prudent when he has to make explicit his transgressions. The real reason behind most of his decisions is not the announced technological, functional or aesthetical justification; it is based on more profound and obscure feelings. Forms are generated by examining what the things want to be. The apparent rationality of his decision is provoked by the coherence of the intuitive process, coming from the deep and "projecting" itself.

The deep inner thought related to apparent reality is Mies' secret to control the whole issue with an amazing accuracy. That is why Mies talks, in some occasion, about the necessity of self-construction. This self-creation process must begin with the isolation from the exterior world, through self-consciousness, one of Mies' characteristic attitudes in which he appears as concentrated on himself, on his own conflicts. "The large German Shadow" tries to eliminate, first from him and then from his works, any trace of superfluity or obvious device. In this sense, we may recall Scherbert's concept of "what is there and is not there" and if we think about it we will notice how the Mies' opaqueness becomes an ambivalent transparency in his work. Thus, we find material conflicts as the harsh brick of the Rosa Luxembourg's Monument before the polished steel and the reflecting and elusive glass of the Farnsworth House. Mies hesitates between his observing how things approach him, in Klee's words, and his trying them not to leave any trace on him. He chooses then a kind of discourse that can be just closed as Form when it is closed by experience. The collective unconscious is the realm in which an interchange between the object and the subject takes place.

Now, let us consider the anonymous subject before his own architecture. According to Loos, only primitive people tattoo themselves (horror vacui), civilized people eliminate tattoos. Their civilized architecture does also repudiate, as a sign of civilization, any superimposed garment. But as long as it eliminates additions, these are also erased from their historical recollections in a process in which traditional figuration is obliterated. Architecture becomes de-humanized from a historical point of view and is, at the same time, more human as it works in search of the essence of the human being, which is reason. It loses its local references and attains universality.

But, at this particular point, it would be interesting to consider how it is possible to

inhabit a house that does not assume History. To inhabit a place, though, is to bestow a meaning upon a void, and that implies a previous self-inhabitation and self-construction. Mies' architecture place us before ourselves, without any intermediary, without any reference to previous experiences. It is just as long as we are civilized people that we can seize his architecture. In order to understand it, we must encounter it in private. Privacy, as established by Mies' architecture, is something different from conventional shelter. We must distinguish between action's privacy and thought's privacy. Mies' option is clear. Privacy is accorded to thought in order that it be nourished by self-existence and Mies' architecture, in this sense, acts as a reference, as the guarantee of its possibility. Mies' boundaries, as Norberg-Shulz's guide-walls, force us to examine our own possibilities and, thus, establish a dialectic relationship with such an inexplicable object. Through his built architecture we can understand his relationship with society, a relation between that who proposes and those who use his proposals. Mies frequently talked about himself as an artist, sometimes contradictorily. It seems rather amazing as long as his works apparently reject any kind of personal self-reference, and enjoying them rather implies a deep meditation. His works need to be contemplated by a society composed of isolated individuals, capable of recognizing one another and living in a transparent way. A very different society from that composed of a crowd assuming conventional but uncomprehended references.

His architecture, conceived as a society's test, reveals us the contradictions established between understanding and use. The rejection suffered by Mies' works means resistance to order, to rational thought, to any absence of temporal, historical or figurative reference. The house is no more understood as the relief looked for by society in its cultural infancy.

The limpid Miesian technology, capable of modifying social habits, is then replaced by the rubbish's prestige, in other terms, by a convenient disorder. Kahn's attempt to bestow upon things what their essence suggests, that is, to make them what they should be, is the only proper answer to Mies' proposal. Against the eternal prevails conventional time. The harsh instead of the polished.

This opposition, though, is also evident in Mies' work. As long as he rejects any pretention game, he tries to make use of opposition, a practice originally related to Expressionism. But, in Mies, this game becomes provocative and subtle. The "it is there and it is not there" becomes a simultaneous "it is and it is not". Glasses which become mirrors, in Barcelona and, from then on, in the rest of his work, place us in an ambiguous position in relation to the exhibit. It is the same device as that used by Velázquez, that which Carroll did not want to see, that which Wells needed to destroy and Mies assumes in its most stressed variety.

If Utopia, in Mannheim's sense, does not take place it is not only because of its own characteristics but also because of the hidden interests of those in charge of its putting into practice. Mies' proposals require social change in order to be understood. A change of values. He tries to establish a rational and contemplative existence. The architect, then, would be a systematic thinker who would meditate upon inhabitation, conceiving, at the



same time, this inhabitation as meditation upon the essence of being.

This is one of the reasons why I like Mies. Because I think that he prefers gradual passing to happening, development to discourse. Because, for him, sensibility is intelligence's quality. Because, according to him, just by

means of "communion" we seize what is common and can transcend it, because architecture is a game which needs participation. Because in his architecture experience implies knowledge. Because he is part of our consciousness and inevitably Mies is more.

## Frank Lloyd Wright's drawings

Helena Iglesias

Much has been written on Frank Lloyd Wright, possibly too much in spite of the passionate defense recently made by Terence Riley on the occasion of the "year's exhibition" on this particular artist hung in New York's MOMA (1).

Too much because this "American Hero" that was Wright was built upon a real "corpus scripti" of every kind of studies and analysis (historical, appraising, critical, interpretative) (2) together with his personal writings, remarks, autos da fe, self-analysis, self-publishing of drawings and other works (3). This writing fever persisted during his lifetime and was replaced, when he died, with a flood or "careful editions" made by his voracious kin. And yet, beyond this written magma, so difficult to understand or classify, Wright has simply become the hero of a kind of novel (4) (or film), the purest "American hero".

When an architect is due such an enormous quantity of so variegated literature it usually happens that some critics try to classify the magma, order this chaos, and finally offer a "new and original interpretation" of the artist. And this is, precisely, the origin and motivation of the above mentioned exhibition and certainly of Mr. Riley's defense and of some of the articles published in this very issue. We have just said that this profusion of written documents is something that began long time ago, almost from the beginning of Wright's professional career, always so preoccupied with self-promotion (exhibitions in the Chicago Architectural Club, drawings published by the Ladies' Home Journal, the Wasmuth Portfolio,.... (5)). And was always supported by the publishing and exhibition of drawings.

From the creation of the F.L.L.W. Foundation, his drawings became a most precious object for fabulous investments within the American marketing system. Personal diaries and notebooks, with a drawing for each week or each month, published year after year (6). Calendars, pins, printed silk scarves, models of his original stained glass windows, lapel brooches, imitation jewelry, a full battery of every kind of "gadgets", created in the hero's honor with his drawings as motif.

But, as it has been said, there are not many studies on these drawings. Just the well known "Talliesin Drawings" (7), the Drexler's selection (8), the Naples' Exhibition (9), the Foundation's Drawings' Books (10), the Japanese edition of the drawings (11), the new mentioned exhibition at the MOMA and a few references here and there in writings not specially dedicated to drawings or included in monographies as "The architect's eye" or "Master pieces..." (12).

This is, precisely, one of the reasons why I have decided to write this lines. The fact that even in this year of 1994, the year of the MOMA's exhibition, nothing has been written about Wright's drawings has made me fall into the temptation of publishing this notes on the

issue, a brief reflection and an attempt to describe and classify his legacy.

To begin with the matter I have to refer to the controversy about the authorship's proofs. In all the calendars, in the Drexler's selection, in the Naples' Exhibition catalogue and, of course, in the not-about-drawings writings, Wright's authorship is clearly asserted; either as an implicit assumption (perhaps appearing as a brief note "Drawing F.L.L.W." not always repeated under each illustration), or as a repeatedly validated (with copyright) affirmation after each descriptive caption (13).

If we consider the amount of works ascribed to F.L.L.W., an incredible network, as published in a curious edition, that covers State by State almost the whole U.S.A. (14) with just a few States with no work by Mr. Wright (15), it is rather reasonable to have some doubts about the drawings' (obviously more than just one for each building) authorship.

But it is not just reason which tells us about this fact but even our very eyes. When one has a personal diary ascribing a perspective of St Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie Towers (Fig. 1) another of the Rogers Lacy Hotel (Fig. 2) to the same author, and looks at it every day during a whole year, one has to be really blind not to see different hands in each drawing.

The hand with draws the Saint Mark's, a "neat" graphite pencil over an sketching "grubby" background work, which just scribbles vegetation and then drags the colored pencils, lightly and yet steadily, over the Tower, leaving on each terrace a faint and artistic green stain, is certainly not the same one that just makes a fair copy, with no repent nor background work, neatly and obviously tracing, of all the cladding pieces of the Rogers Hotel, a hand that completely fills up the vegetation stains on the terraces and carefully rules lines over the background sky, not forgetting the mannered detail of the curved line, or arabesque, of a cloud traversing the sky and the tower.

And this is just an example of the important differences found between two particular drawings ascribed to F.L.L.W. and just chosen because of the fact that both represent tower buildings and are contiguously published in the Foundation's edition. But it is easy to find many other examples as pencil, watercolor or gouache drawings, neat or grubby, sketching or rigid, illuminated by primary or tertiary colors are uncritically attributed to the same author.

We can perfectly take one drawing, that of the Ward W. Willits House (Fig. 3) that has been published (even on the cover!) of some book dedicated to F.L.L.W.'s works. It is easy to notice the opaque gouache dyes and the distinct heaviness of the drawing as color extends over its whole surface, which cast reasonable doubts over its authorship.

We have to mention that the MOMA exhibition catalogue has been very useful to clarify these extremes, as it gives information about the size of and techniques used in each of the drawings (so difficult to find) and about the initials signing the drawing when they exist. When there is no signature, the book does not assume the drawing's authorship. Studying this catalogue, we can easily notice that the initials signing the St Mark's Towers drawing (F.L.L.W.) are not the same as those appearing on the Rogers Hotel's (J.H.H., standing for John H. Howe) or those of Willits House's (M.M., standing for Marion Mahoney).

The fact that these signatures are carefully concealed in older editions in order to ascribe everything to F.L.L.W. is probably due to that "deification" campaign of the architect promoted during his very life and after his death to which I have referred when talking about the "American hero".

A campaign mainly encouraged by his Talliesin disciples, on one hand, and his voracious kin, on the other, and obviously accepted and welcomed by F.L.L.W., that was the first one to publicize his work as the paradigm of a particular artist's expression. It is my personal opinion that there is nothing in this particular way of understanding Wright's work, so much embraced by historians, supporters and critics, that could really improve our knowledge about the transcendental importance of his architecture which is, thus, left unattended.

In this way, the drawings, "explicit and spontaneous" expression of the artist's personality, so much related to his architectural compositions and so easy to identify as "F.L.L.W.'s work", have been hypocritically reduced to personal labor, as characteristic of the author's temper as his censors have wanted them to be.

I want to make myself clear. I do not want to say that the drawings ascribed to Mr. Wright are not Mr. Wright's. I know that architectural drawings belong to that one who conceives them as much as to those who materialize them (16) in any case. And much more in this particular one as the drawings produced by F.L.L.W.'s workshop (by himself or the others) are among the most characteristic and related to a personal way to conceive architecture, in such a way that it is clear that all the drawings, his and the other's, are inspired and conceived by him, with his particular way to create images.

We can mention, as an example of this particular fact, the famous red square: a receptacle for the initials, when they appear, and just a trade mark when empty, a personal logo. This symbol appears in all the drawings by F.L.L.W. from 1893 to 1959. Firstly with an inscribed circle and after 1900 just as a red square. This symbol will become a kind of "approved" mark for drawings already revised and accepted by Wright and is, at the same time, an essential element in the composition, usually related to the plan's key (Fig. 4).

Going back to this article's main issue, the first think to be notice in these drawings is their 19th century flavour, their "fin de siècle" quality, intention and accomplishment.

I mean that they are drawings whose aim is to represent and replace real architecture, that is, they are faithful images of reality, but, at the same time, they have suffered a process of "artification" in order to select those particular features that can most clearly express and transmit their author's meaning. They are

planned drawings of planned projects in which it is easy to notice the architect's concern in preparing "the drawing" that will represent the project, enriching, thus, its architectural significance.

I also mean that they are carefully but unaffectedly accomplished drawings, voluntarily simplified, deceitfully simple in geometry and drafting technique.

Which are, precisely, the most notable characteristics found in 19th century architectural drawings: meaningful drawings which tell us stories, significant, carefully planned and accomplished drawings, deceitfully simplified, but yet strict representations of reality, faithful followers of the laws of descriptive geometry.

As well as many other 19th century architectural drawings, F.L.L.W.'s show a conscious interest in the image's framing, the edges, the keywords included in them, the angles and even the very paper's limits... Up to the point that some of them, of rather diverse origin, could be easily ascribed to the same author. I can mention as an example a drawing by Wunibald Deininger published in Der Architekt in 1906 that could be included in the Wasmuth Portfolio (Fig. 5).

F.L.L.W.'s drawings were also, specially at the beginning of his professional career, advertising drawings whose intention was to inform the public about the goodness of their author's architecture. The public could be the readers of the Ladies' Home Journal (17) or just Mr. M.H. Lowell, the visitors of the exhibits celebrated at the Chicago Architectural Club or the promoters of the Oak Park project (18).

The fixed style of these drawings was an early creation in F.L.L.W.'s professional career and remained unchanged during many years, with just slight variations mainly due to the progressive process of codification of the very "style" that finally came to be rather mannered and to the diverse hands working in their production.

One of the most surprising particularities of these drawings is that, being their author such a prolific, efficient and easy designer, they are nearly always made with the help of a rule. There are indeed very few extant freehand drawings by F.L.L.W., just some shapeless sketches and the informal drawings included in letters as the famous one addressed to Mr. Lowell. The linear perspectives, the majority of the extant drawings, are nearly always made with rule.

These perspectives have, nevertheless, a kind of loose quality due to the drawing techniques used in their production: colored pencils dragged over the paper and just slightly retouched over a graphite line defining the building's profile, or watercolor delicately applied, never overburdened with pigment, and even leaving some areas untouched in order to create an informal and loose image. The paper is not always white, but often brown or grey what offers a colored base that makes possible that scant use of pigment that is the secret to make the drawing appear as informally unfinished (Figs. 6 and 7).

But the most interesting characteristics found in F.L.L.W.'s drawings are two distinct but yet deeply interconnected features: the frame treatment and the definition of the "image's plane".

With this last expression of "definition of the image's plane" I want to point out the fact that F.L.L.W.'s drawings have always too much "ground" and often too much "sky". That is, the



real drawing is intentionally, almost arbitrarily, located in the upper half of the sheet while the lower half usually presents vegetation or other elements as tramways, cars, figures, in such a way that the drawing seems unnaturally extended towards the front of the image's plane. That is, the building is raised over too much ground, and not because of a low point of view used in the perspective (though this is often the case) but because of a mannered prolongation of the image's front.

This extension towards the front of the image's plane is usually conceived as a frame for the drawing which is, thus, enclosed within the limits of the prolongation. It is at this point that we can refer to the other main feature of F.L.L.W.'s drawings: the careful definition of the frame. In fact, his drawings are nearly always framed in spite of the fact that their frame is not always a complete and closed line. Moreover, it is the local absence of the frame what makes it so significant as it becomes a kind of proposal, just appearing at some particular points of its supposed location, just in one of the angles, or in two, sometimes interrupted by vegetation, sometimes conceived as a background plane to a drawing larger than itself which seems supported by it. There are even some capricious modalities as those found in, for example, the Hardy House drawing, where the frame is surprisingly elongated in order to enclose not just the nearby cliffs but even an important area of blank paper, or in the Bramson Dress Magazine's, enclosed within a semi-circle, or in others where we find complete circle (Figs. 9 and 10).

In this way, "unnatural" points of view, sometimes too raised, sometimes too low, are combined with artificial constructions of the image's plane and the drawing's frame. The three elements are intertwined by means of the drawn vegetation, always present in F.L.L.W.'s drawings (Fig. 11).

I would also like to point out a few things about this vegetation. Much has been written about the importance of the "site" in F.L.L.W.'s architecture, about his use of surroundings and his sense of location, about the relationship between site and landscape. In such a way that this vegetation so present in his drawings is usually understood as a kind of homage to his own conception of architectural "site".

But paradoxically, this vegetation is highly stereotyped and rather similar in all the drawings. Its function is rather that of filling and adorning the gaps and nearly never that of defining the real surroundings of the building. That is, the objects represented depend on the drawing, not the drawing on the real objects. A good example of this fact is the exaggerated bush growing just at the cliff's border in the Hardy House drawing included in the Wasmuth Portfolio, or the trees concealing the house at Fresno (Figs. 12 and 13). It is easy to make a long list of green elements almost exactly reproduced in different drawings representing rather different sites. Moreover, there is a curious story about these stereotyped vegetation. Rather similar trees and bushes appear in Michel de Klerk's drawings just by the time of F.L.L.W.'s journey to Europe. This influence between both architects is an interesting issue that should be more profoundly and extensively studied.

The frame, the ground, the sizes and voids, the proportions between the different parts of the paper are interesting elements in all his drawings. Their role is, nevertheless, much more important in drawings designed to offer a

particular image of their author. I am, obviously, talking about the Wasmuth Portfolio, made in a remote part of Italy, in Fiesole, in a personal and lonely effort to put on the paper what the architect wanted to show of himself. This drawings, all in black and white, probably because of the printing difficulties, include some combinations of different images in one sheet. Some of them rather unnatural and sophisticated, but always respecting the principle of a balanced symmetry accomplished by means of an analysis of masses (drawn masses, of course) and voids.

Other features visible in these drawings have a less personal flavour and are common to other productions of the same age. For example, the signs and keywords so admired as typically Wright's are rather similar to those used by the members of the Wagner School or by Eliel Saarinen. Another example is that of the multiple sections through one building combined into a unique drawing in order to show different aspects of the interior, a device used by many "fin de siècle" designers.

The diverse hands actually accomplishing the drawings are not such an essential element to the matter as it could seem at first sight. There are some curious exceptions, though, as the strange gouache spots on the drawing of the Ravine Bluffs Dev. Bridge (1915) (Fig. 14) and the Booth House's (1911), or the almost informal use of the colored pencils in that of the Falling Water House (1936) (Fig. 15). Other drawings, specially those of the latter years are rather mannered and artificial which means that they were done by less careful hands or in the presence of less exigent watchers. This, by the way, coincides with an architecture that is not at all as interesting as that of the previous years. The Marina County project is a good example of this fact.

But, to sum up, the paradox remains of how such an architect, so 20th century, has produced such drawings, so dear to 19th century taste. That is, how such a modern architect has given birth to such anti-avant-garde drawings. And this just reveals that there are many conceptions of what is being modern, many types of modernism and many possible analysis of 20th century architecture. In our own "fin de siècle", the next one to that which was F.L.L.W.'s, an era in which so much have been written about drawing as architectural work, it seems rather convenient, if not necessary, to point out the possibility of contrast between a same author's drawings and architecture.

## NOTES

- (1) I am, obviously, talking about the "Frank Lloyd Wright, architect" exhibition, MOMA, 1994 and its catalogue, with the same title, published by the MOMA's Publishing Department signed by W. Cronon, A. Alofsin, K. Frampton, O. Wright and T. Riley that could have been a good opportunity to undertake a deep revision of the conceptions commonly accepted about F.L.L.W.'s work and personality.
- (2) Bibliography on Wright includes about five hundred titles including books and articles published all over the world.
- (3) Wright began very early to publish his own works, drawings and writings, and we cannot forget the self-consciousness implied by his publication of an "Autobiography" and a "Testament".
- (4) I am talking about the novel "The fountainhead", by Ayn Rand, 1958, on which was based the film with the same title with Gary Cooper as the main character.
- (5) The first exhibition in the Chicago Architectural

Club took place in 1894, that is, when Wright was 25 years old, from that moment and until his European journey he organized almost one each year. The first house published by the Ladies' Home Journal came a little bit later, in 1901, also before his visit to Europe.

(6) I, myself, have used for years those F.L.L.W.'s notebooks published by Pomegranate Calendars and Books, California, in cooperation with the F.L.L.W. Foundation. That of 1988 bears on the cover the Unity Church drawing and the 1990's that of the Rogers Lacy Hotel which I will mention later on. The calendars found in most architectural studios are also published by Pomegranate, often with a brief text as dedication by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, the Foundation's Director of Archives.

(7) "Talliesin Drawings: Recent Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright Selected from his Drawings" New York: Wittenhorn, Schultz, 1952.

(8) "The Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright", Selected by Arthur Drexler, New York: Horizon Press of the Museum of Modern Art, 1962.

(9) "Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings 1887-1959" the exhibition organized at the Naples' Royal Palace (76/77) that also travelled to other cities and whose catalogue was published in Florence by Stiv, 1976.

(10) "Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings", by Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, who I have just mentioned as the Foundation's Director of Archives, published in New York by Harry N. Abrams Inc., in cooperation with the Foundation, 1990.

(11) I am talking about the volumes dedicated to drawing among those produced by Yukio Futagawa for A.D.A. EDITA, Tokio, from 1985, and which make part of the G.A. collection of F.L.L.W.'s works which includes 12 volumes.

(12) "The architect's eye", by Deborah Nevins and Robert A. Stern, New York, Pantheon Books, 1979

## Purism and Rationalism

Adolfo González Amezqueta

To talk once again about Le Corbusier and try to say something new or sensible is almost impossible. In the words of Stanislaus von Moos, one of his better known biographers: "(Pere Corbú)... is not, obviously, the only Father of modern architecture and contemporary urban planning. But it was him who, among his equals, created the most powerful images that would represent the intentions of the new architecture; and it was also him who made most noise, in the most vivacious and efficient way."

All this is basically true, but it is also true that those who have talked about him, in favor or against, with a serious knowledge or just superficially, have made even more of a noise. The most extensive bibliography on modern architecture is possibly that dedicated to Le Corbusier.

That is why it seems rather frightening to talk about him or his work. Because almost everything has been already said. Including the many texts by Le Corbusier which are surely the most interesting along with his own built works. I have always thought that the best tribute that can be offered to the great personalities of contemporary architecture is to have a deep knowledge of their works, go back to the main sources: looking at their architecture, reading their texts and trying to understand their circumstances. That is, after all, the reason why they did them.

And this is precisely the reason why I am going to examine, in the most careful way, some of Le Corbusier's most important texts:

and "Master Pieces of Architectural Drawing", by Helen Powell and David Leatherbarrow, London, Orbis Publishing, 1982.

(13) This happens with all things published by the Foundation or with some connection with it. Even in the above mentioned book by B.B. Pfeiffer where the number assigned to the drawing in the Foundation's archive it carefully indicated, but there is no comment about its authorship. Moreover, the notes on the drawings include the transcription of the brief texts or inscriptions or the signature of F.L.L.W., but no allusion is made to other initials when they actually exist.

The Japanese books do not even indicate the drawings' sizes nor techniques, and even less the signature or initials.

(14) I am talking about the text "The architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, a guide to Extant Structures", by William Altkin Storrer, published by himself in New Jersey, 1973 and 7 times reprinted.

(15) Just eight States within the U.S.A. have no extant building by F.L.L.W.

(16) There are many other examples of architectural drawings ascribed to a certain author with can easily be proved as worked by other hand. It happens with many famous architects: most of their drawings have not been made by them, specially in the last two centuries. I will just mention the names of some of them as J. Soane, O. Wagner, H.P. Berlage or W. Gropius.

(17) It is to be remembered that the houses published in the Ladies' Home Journal were examples and they even had their prices on as "5000 \$ House", etc...

(18) Wright, as it is well known, had to accept an excessive number of commissions in order to maintain his abundant family until he left it and traveled/fled to Europe.

those written and published in collaboration with Amedée Ozentant on the artistic programme of that avant-garde movement whose very fathers called Purism. These texts are very interesting, not just because they include an artistic proposal but also because they belong to a period that was for Le Corbusier a kind of turning point after his training years (well known for all of us through his Biographies). From them on he would be engaged in producing the kind of works that would made of him, in France and abroad, one of the unquestionable masters of contemporary culture.

I would like to excuse myself (above all before the scholars and profound researchers of modernity) for the fact that I will begin with what might be seen as a triviality: modern, modernity, is what is considered modern; but mine is rather similar to other definitions like the well known by Max Bense "A sign is what can be declared a sign" or Dino Formaggio's "art is what is considered art."

For a Historian or a sociologist studying a particular period, an interval considered modern, the main problem is to find the objective features that can define the fundamental structures of this historical time. For them, the characteristics of modernity might be something objective, verifiable, defined within strict limits. But for anyone who wants to be modern for his own time, modernity is the attribute of some particular facts or features considered as very significant and relevant among all the strictly



modern facts.

As I have already said, this is just a shallow trifle and is more or less inexact; but it might work as a first approach as Le Corbusier, together with Ozenfant, was, in the initial period of Purism, mainly interested in discovering and defining what could be the exact traits of modernity for his time and environment. Just as is the case with the other cultural and artistic contemporary traditions which we call avant-garde movements. That is why, as has been many times said, the so called "modern movement" cannot be analyzed as a unique version of modernity but just as the assembly of rather different approaches to this concept. Le Corbusier's was just one of them.

The very beginning of Le Corbusier as an artist (in those days he was still Charles Edouard Jeanneret), occurred after the European War when a new epoch seemed to start, a different world in many ways for European consciences. The apparition of Le Corbusier, together with Ozenfant, in the Parisian artistic world can be clearly located in the post-war context, in the French situation in that particular moment, the beginning of recovering, the return to order.

The ideology of this order regained after the war and pre-war uproar had an important influence in the artistic world of the Paris of those days. Jean Cocteau's famous "rappel à l'ordre" (an author that was very present in the pages of "L'Esprit Nouveau") was like the motto of a reaction in search of the lost order which produced a return to academicism and the recovery of aesthetic classicism. The very Cocteau, Picasso, Stravinsky, Satie and, above them all, Paul Valéry (whose "Eupalinos ou l'architecte" was published in 1923, the same year as "Vers une Architecture") where in those years the representatives of this movement that tried to recover the ideas of clarity and purified order that defined the environment in which Purism was born.

On the other hand, the French aesthetic school began to turn progressively towards formalism; from Charles Laló's Intellectualist Sociologism (frequently quoted by Ozenfant and Le Corbusier) to Matila Ghyká and specially the influential Etienne Souriau for whom the permanent ways of thinking and reasoning are the elements of the true life, the basis for a new science of forms "under Universal species". The title of his first main work, "Pensé Vivante et Perfection Formelle", also published in 1923, contains some expressions that can be identified with Le Corbusier and Ozenfant's language.

The opening words of Ozenfant and Le Corbusier's "Après le Cubisme" (1918), talk about this return to order. "Once the war has finished, everything is organized, everything is clarified and purified; factories are erected again and nothing is anymore as it was before war". It is rather evident that the European recovery (specially the French one) was not something unrelated to Ozenfant and Jeanneret's statements; on the contrary, it was a crucial fact perceived as a reference. There is a kind of relationship between these two simultaneous expressions and facts: "après la guerre" and "après le cubisme".

With his poetic rethoric, Amedée Ozenfant described in his Memoirs the period of the composition of "Après le Cubisme": "The book was printed in the afternoon of the 9th of november (1918); towards six o'clock I went out to send the letters announcing the publication of APRES LE CUBISME, I was

rather happy: ¡Our ideals will fly to Paris! I bought "L'Intransigeant" to a paperboy: ¡GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE IS DEAD! War was over, an era was over, the leader of the last expression of its art had disappeared. Cubism was just history as it was war."

This is precisely one of the opening arguments of this Book-manifesto: there was an art before war, whose culmination was Cubism and there should be a different art after war, modern and, as it is expressed in the above mentioned paragraph, organized, clarified and purified. It is not strange that it should be called Purism for all the possible ambiguities of the term. Ozenfant, in his Memoirs, wondered: "Was the term Purism a good choice? Any preexisting word would have clearly expressed a more or less precise idea. But Purism only said something about one of our aims: Purity and said nothing of the rest."

However, both fathers of Purism, Ozenfant and Jeanneret, were more explicit in "Après le Cubisme": "We use the term Purism in order to express the main feature of the Modern Spirit; the search of every efficiency".

The idea of war and its sequels as purifying elements, as difficult situations in which just the most prepared survive, as the highest expression of fighting for life, for commercial or industrial reasons, as so many other metaphors about war (certainly dangerous but rather "modern" ideas), are not casual thinking. They belong to the current ideology present in Le Corbusier's texts, with or without Ozenfant.

In "Vers une architecture", a collection of texts previously published in L'Esprit Nouveau and, no doubt, Le Corbusier's most important programmatic work, in one of its most successful chapters ("Eyes which do not see"), a chapter about planes, not intended for architects but, as its author clearly declares, for the public, specially for possible clients as the airplane industrialist Mr. Voisin) he says: "The War was an insatiable client, never satisfied, always demanding more and more. His emblem was triumph and death was only the inevitable consequence of error. We can, therefore, say that planes have encouraged invention, intelligence and courage: imagination and cold reasoning..."; and afterwards he adds one of his incredible paradoxes "it was this same Spirit who built the Parthenon", which is not completely untrue. It may sound as an irreverent sophism but the same reasoning can lead us to state the: the same Spirit might produce "a moving machine", "a flying machine" or... "a killing machine".

This unafraid idea of war is the same as that expressed in the Point 9 of Marinetti's "Futurist Manifesto" (1909), in which we can read: "We want to glorify War (the only hygiene for our world), Militarism, Patriotism, the devastating gesture of Libertarians, the ideals for which one dies". Of course it is not exactly the same discourse, but, without exaggerating, it is possible to make a comparison between these ideas and the cultural, artistic and architectural concepts built by Le Corbusier and Ozenfant during the period of their public presentation. Theirs is not obviously a strictly bellicist attitude, but their position in front of social and political reality is lacking some kind of moral judgement and ethical principle. Their attitude is somewhat aseptic and neuter but not marginal.

This is one of the most significant, though not of the most studied, traits of Le

Corbusier's intellectual and artistic labor during his period in Paris from 1916 to approximately 1925, when he finished with L'Esprit Nouveau and centered on architecture. The outcome of this intellectual operation is something that will be kept by Le Corbusier in successive years, although his language, his brilliant solutions and architectural proposals show us a clear advancement and development. However, the intentions of all his work in his social and productive context, the basis of his aesthetics, his "system" in short, were defined and developed during these years, in which he worked out most of his theoretical texts.

In 1918, in fact, Le Corbusier (then just Jeanneret) together with Ozenfant, published his first theoretical and programmatic text, "Après le Cubisme", which was to be completed in 1921 by the manifesto "Le Purisme", while, since 1920, he was already committed to "L'Esprit Nouveau" from which, a series of texts were published between 1923 and 1925 which included an ordered and classified account of his theoretical and programmatic productions. These texts were devoted to the different fields in which he thought he could work as an artistic professional and intellectual of a "modern" society: architecture, his first choice and the object of his labor in first place, in "Vers une architecture" (1923); Urban Planning, conceived as a necessary extension to architecture in "Urbanisme" (1924); Decoration, the issue of so many debates in pre-war Europe in "L'Art Decoratif d'Aujourd'hui" (1925); and Painting, a provisional but no accidental interest in the first years of his career in "La Peinture Moderne" (1925).

Examining subsequent publications - "Almanach d'Architecture Moderne" and "Architecture d'Epoque Machiniste" (both 1926) and "Une Maison. Un Palais" (1928) - it is easy to notice how his theories and ideals remain more or less the same. He does not repudiate them, but uses new reasonings and takes examples from his own works trying to prove them logical consequences of his previously exposed ideology. That is why these texts elaborated together with Ozenfant in Paris and around the project of L'Esprit Nouveau are so important. Le Corbusier's labor in all those years and that personal context has the sense of an inquiry in search of his own place, as a person and as an architect, as an artist and an intellectual.

A place Le Corbusier had not found yet instead of the time employed in personal experiences and contacts, travelling, changes of situation and career. In 1918, Le Corbusier, unknown and with no important work in view, in spite of many of his biographers, was already 31 and was in Paris since 1916 "for an uncertain period" trying to find a favorable and stable situation, in search of triumph, pressed by his own circumstance of being, in the words of Gabetti and Olmo, "an artist who came too late into international circuits" with the "frustration of a self-educated person" and "anxious as any adoptive Parisian".

In these circumstances, Le Corbusier's aim was to find theoretical justification for his work, logical and convincing arguments, sometimes rhetoric and, almost always supposedly "rational" that will support his artistic and intellectual choices and make of them the logical outcome of the "modern" environment (social and industrial) that was obviously yet

undefined.

His extensive conception of his own labor, this attempt of making himself a place, of creating an stable and convincing system, is clearly seen in his using the same arguments for all the fields in which he wanted to work: painting, decoration, architecture and urban planning. This is the reason why Purism, in first place a proposal about painting did also serve for the elaboration of the New architecture. And that is why "Après le Cubisme" and "Le Purisme" are also interesting for any analysis of Le Corbusier's architecture, and not just his paintings. At least in his first period, we cannot distinguish the architect Le Corbusier from the painter Le Corbusier. Painting is neither a first approach to architecture as it happens with other contemporary architects; painting and architecture are both coherent and necessary expressions of the same Modernity. The different names used by our author, Jeanneret and Le Corbusier-Saugnier or just Le Corbusier, do not reveal a double personality, but just a double activity.

Le Corbusier's basic axiom, shared with ozenfant and so many other contemporary artists, is that art must be consciously and voluntarily related to time, that it should take into account and express the particular features of its own epoch, and, therefore, first of all, it should try to recognize this features. It can be said, although it might seem trivial, that for them, the artistic quality was as important as the ability to identify this pre-requisites of artistic production in general. A debate about this theoretical issue could last for ages. We just want to point it out and try to explain how this general topic is taken up by Ozenfant and Le Corbusier/Jeanerret. In this particular case, it cannot be considered a dark point, and we do not have to employ complicated hermeneutics, it is enough to read the texts.

The first paragraph of "Après le Cubisme" (immediately after the above mentioned lines on the recently finished war) says in a certain emphatic and rotund style: "The Great Concurrence has proved everything, has destroyed senile methods and imposed those which has been proved the best in fight". The Concurrence (with capital C in the text) is not just the war, but industrial and social competence derived from the general transformation of productive methods, mechanization, industrialization and rational organization of work, all of them supported by scientific development. Science, technique, mechanization, efficiency and concurrence are the elements of the context in which "modern life" takes place, as expressed in the title of the second chapter of "Après le Cubisme".

A certain concern about the influence of mechanization on the productive structures and its consequences for art and architecture is not something new; Ozenfant and Jeanneret were not the first ones to raise the issue. During his training and travelling years, Le Corbusier had had some direct contacts with the movements of reformation of applied arts and the fundamental centers of debate about art and techniques. The "Arts and Crafts" movement, the Werkbund cultural world, Behrens' works, were all well known to Le Corbusier. However, Ozenfant and Le Corbusier's approach to the issue in "Après le Cubisme" and afterwards, though somewhat based on the "Arts and Crafts" and "Werkbund" concerns, really went beyond them and made a rather different choice.



Ozenfant and Le Corbusier were not interested in the problem of the machine, in mechanization, theirs was a concern about the structural, economic, social and political problem, the changes in the production relations acting over the essence of productive work and, consistently, over the complex chain of links between invention and realization. Moreover, the social and labor consequences of this transformation caused by mechanization, the origin of crisis and conflicts since pre-war times, are considered by Ozenfant and Le Corbusier as neutral and even as beneficial for the workers' life conditions. In "Après le Cubisme", in a paragraph entitled "L'Esprit Moderne", we can read: "Thanks to the strict programming within modern factories, products are made to perfection in such a way that the workers can feel a somehow collective pride. ...this collective pride can replace the old spirit of the artisan as a more elevated and general concept" and later on: "We consider this transformation and improvement; it is one of the main features of modern life".

This type of reasoning is not far away from the arguments discussed by the German pre-war manufacturers, as Rathenau from the "A.E.G." and Karl Benscheidt from the "Fagus", whose ideas were assumed by Behrens and Gropius in their particular search for an "Industrial culture". But at the end, Le Corbusier and Ozenfant are not really interested in a "qualität" that will preserve productivity nor in industrial leadership. They are just looking for the particular conditions of modernity that can support their own artistic and intellectual work, leaving aside economic or political polemics. Moreover, what for the Werkbund circle was only a "desideratum", was, for Le Corbusier, a given fact. In "La Leçon de la Machine", published in *L'Esprit Nouveau* in 1924, we read: "the human factor remains unchanged as machines are conceived by men for human necessities; that is why they are efficient and trustworthy: machines are based on the same spiritual system men have built for themselves".

It seems rather clear that this ambiguous idealist spiritualism latent in Le Corbusier's and Ozenfant's "Machinisme" is something completely different from the "Arts and Crafts" socializing slogans or the lucid and bitter analysis of alienation worked out by William Morris; but it is also rather away from the ideal of harmonious understanding between the conditions of industrial production and the artistic conception of objects so discussed by Muthesius and his Werkbund circle, and from Behrens' and Gropius' pre-war attempts to offer a cultural organization to industrial work, and also from Van de Velde's "anti-thesis" in favor of an autonomous art.

On the other hand, Le Corbusier and Ozenfant's position is also completely opposed to the Futurists'. That enthusiasm about factories and mechanisms, the iconographic and aesthetic inclination towards machines, their power and their scale, towards the perception of kinetics as present in the machines' movements, cars, boats and airplanes (so present, though, in Le Corbusier and Ozenfant), all this mechanical world so dear to Futurist ideology and iconography, is not exactly the modern world announced and expected by *L'Esprit Nouveau*'s Purist.

Ozenfant, who had been a car designer, tells us in his *Memoirs* how Jeanneret and himself: "learned from the beautiful things made by means of that industrial technique so

dear to his master Auguste Perret and to myself because of my own familiarity with speed machines". But in his own text "Art" (1920), afterwards published under the name "Foundations of Modern Art", he clearly avowed his disliking for machinist aesthetics so related to machines' images and forms. "First of all, I want to make myself clear. Mechanisms have often a certain kind of obvious beauty, because it happens that the substances which we use are governed by relatively simple laws and, as diagrams, they represent and show us these laws". And he continues with some considerations about the form of the objects industrially produced that are really anticipating: "The present tendency towards electrification, is making of our machines basically amorphous devices, 'moulds' containing meaningless reels. We will surely arrive to disintegrate atoms, but probably then they will not be worth looking at. Our mechanisms are primitive and that is why they are geometrically gratifying". He clearly explains then his point of view and Le Corbusier's as was frequently expressed by them: "There are some objects that are beautiful (leaving aside the problems of defining such a thing as beauty). But there is not an object, nor mechanism, nor piece of furniture, capable of inspiring such emotions as those produced by the works of art". And Ozenfant finally emphasizes his disapproval of machinist aesthetics by making the following considerations about this kind of formalistic and iconographic fondness: "Besides, it is rather amazing how these lovers of machines like to collect specially old and out of use tools. They imagine they admire mechanisms while, in fact, they just adore antiquities...and the aesthetic defects produced by the primitive techniques used in their fabrication. Because certain forms can be pleasant, others disagreeable, but anything produced by intellect should interest us. But going beyond this statement to assert that machines can be compared to sculptures is just blindness, ridiculous and stupid snobism".

The fashionable antithesis established between the sportscar and Samotraccia's Victory (or the famous one reproduced in "Vers une architecture" between the Delage Grand Sport 1921 and the Parthenon) of which the Futurists chose the first item is, in this case, clearly won by the sculpture, the monument.

The automobile, the transatlantic, the factory, the silos etc., so present in the iconography popularized by Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, are not for them aesthetic models, are not the new works of art nor the images of a modern art. Neither they are successful examples of organic functionalism, of a proper harmony between the production process and its essential characteristics and demands, as it happened in Sullivan's tradition as well as in Wright's. Machines, industrial or technical products are for Le Corbusier and Ozenfant objects which represent a scientific, precise and "modern" universe from which they come out and to which they are adapted, as it should happen, and does not in their opinion, with art in this same universe.

The link between the machine and the work of art, what should be shared by both, is the "spiritual system", "l'esprit nouveau", a spirit governed by the same laws as the mechanical industrial system. There is not, therefore, any opposition to the economic system, not a complain, nor marginality, not the art conceived as transgression or critic or appeal

to consciousness about the system's fractures and contradictions. Le Corbusier's bitter and fundamental complain is directed on one hand to art and architectural circles (either Cubist or Academic) which seem to be incapable of assuming the perfection and efficiency born out of the new technical and economic system; and, on the other, to social and industrialist environments which do not see (have "eyes which do not see") the new reality.

"Art before the Great Trial was not vital enough to excite the idle, or captivate the active; society was bored because the life's direction was uncertain, because there was not a great collective movement that would make work interesting for those who worked nor did encourage to work those who did not. A time of strikes, demands and complains in which the very art was nothing but an art of complaining. These hard times are over". (Après le Cubisme)

It is essential, in this particular sense, to notice how the criticism toward cubism as a surmounted stage in "Après le Cubisme" is really directed to Expressionism and Dadaism with their negative view of reality. A clear symptom of this fact, together with the bitter censure towards German Expressionism present in the pages of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, is the vanishing of Paul Dermée, one of the founders of the magazine, together with Ozenfant and Jeanneret. In his *Memoirs*, Ozenfant cannot conceal his contempt: "A poet and journalist (Paul Dermée), we have committed him to make the magazine's everyday tasks according to our own directions. But this brave boy was completely set on making a Dadaist magazine: we eliminated him." And it is even more explicit when he describes the situation thus: "Around this time, Cubism was not anymore an extreme avant-garde movement, the real avant-garde had simultaneously a negative side, Dadaism, and a positive one, Purism".

This "constructive" sense of Purism had in mind the complete organization of the intellectual and linguistic tools that would be used by the artist installed in this society so determined by the "esprit nouveau" of discipline, efficiency and scientific perfection and, thus, ratify the harmonious position of the intellectual artist regarding his aesthetic interpretation of the deepest basis of modern society. From a Purist point of view, the lesson that can be learnt from machines, from factories, from truly modern objects is their transparent obedience to the principles, rules and values which have produced them. "It is not possible to be indifferent to the intelligence behind certain machines, to the proportions between its parts so carefully calculated, to the accuracy employed in the production of its elements, to the honest beauty of its materials, to the exactness of its movements; there is a kind of projection of Natural Laws". (Après le Cubisme).

And afterwards, in the same text, under the title "towards a conscious art", we find a paragraph that is worth reading: "The most significant feature of our time (we must remember his choice for modernity) is the industrial, mechanical and scientific spirit. Art's solidarity with this spirit must not result in an art made by means of machines or just representing mechanical images. The conclusion is a different one: the estate of spirit produced by knowledge about machines results in a deeper understanding of matter, of nature after all. We should have an art as we

have a science, an industrial society. But art's means are different from science's: the link is in the same spirit..." and finally he says significantly: "the word science, for us and here, is nothing but a brief formula by which we mean one of the purest aims of modern spirit".

Technique and art, industrial and mechanical production and artistic production are different fields which do not interfere, and cannot be identified in Purist statements; they are both or should be, two products, coherent and synchronic of the same spirit of modernity, of the new spirit. Or, from another point of view, and, possibly, more simply expressed, the world of productive labor and the world of intellectual and artistic labor, can live together without contradictions and mutual rejections as long as they coincide in the group of values and determining features of their shared circumstances, their shared modernity.

However, in the whole Purist proposal as well as in the whole work by Le Corbusier, this looking for characteristic elements and values of modern world is undertaken by means of recognizing and accepting the given situation, within some particular limits determined by the productive and industrial world: this position can be labelled as "Taylorism". In 1912 Frederick Winslow Taylor's book "Principles of scientific organization in factories", was published in France, and it came to be a kind of purist Bible. The truly modern men, the "Enterprise Captains", the hypothetical and waited for and many times pursued Le Corbusier's clients (the Loucher in housing, the Frugès from Pessac, the Voisin in airplanes industry, the Batà) were the only ones capable of applying the true "taylorism" to production processes and therefore were the more or less direct representatives of an assumed social and political "Management" that should also be spiritual. In *Après le Cubisme*, we can read: "The present evolution of work lead us through utility to synthesis and order. This is called 'taylorism'. To be honest, it is nothing else than making an intelligent use of scientific advancement".

Some paragraphs of these purist texts define with precision their own programme: science, intelligence, utility and order, all intertwined harmoniously and systematically as the expression of the "new spirit" that must illuminate the future art and architecture; and which proclaims its own inner laws. It is at this particular point that the Purist endeavour to elaborate its own aesthetics begins. Its authors describe this process thus: "The instinct, the try and error, the empiricism, are replaced by the scientific principles of analysis, by organization and classification".

Ideas that, particularly in the painting field did not result in specially significant or quality works of art. Critics and art historians have usually discarded too soon and in a most shallow way Ozenfant's and Jeanneret's Purist Painting; possibly because of the posterior evolution of painting that has tended to avoid the experiences in which this technique was not completely autonomous nor exclusive. However, from the point of view of a common justification for the different artistic operations, painting and architecture and even urban planning, their practice was among the most interesting of contemporary and "modern" art. With no doubt, mainly because of Le Corbusier's work as an architect.

As we have already said, Le Corbusier's work after 1925, at least until the forties,



maintained most of this theoretical and ideological basis elaborated during his Purist years. Most of his ideas, methods, themes, many times transformed into slogans or tics and superficially interpreted through rational functionalism or, even, on psychological or biographical grounds, come from this "system" (a term explicitly used in the article-manifesto "Le Purisme") exposed in the first texts for the specific case of painting and afterwards equally applied to architecture. An example of this transposition of terms and principles can be found in this somewhat cryptic and ambiguous paragraph from "Le Purisme": "A painting is an association of purified elements, with interrelationships and a common architecture. Space is needed for architectural composition; space means three dimensions. Therefore, we think about painting as a space and not as a surface". The stress and ambiguous relationship between space and painted surface is something present in the Cubist tradition from which graphic purism takes most of its inspiration. But in Ozenfant's and Le Corbusier's texts it is easy to find this endeavor of applying the "modern" language (Purist) to all the fields devoted to aesthetics. The usual contents of *L'Esprit Nouveau* are a good example of all this.

In the text expounding the Purist system we find most of the fundamental issues posteriorly used by the movement, many of which will become popular (and misinterpreted) by Le Corbusier's subsequent work as an architect. Among them, we can point out a kind of slogan that through its popularization suffered frequent misinterpretations. I am talking about the famous sentence with the machinist analogy: "The house is a machine to live in".

In "Le Purisme" we can find a previous definition: "A work of art is an artificial object which permits its creator to locate the spectator in the estates he wants"; a sentence which, with its ambiguous scientificism, establishes a link with Fechner's experimental aesthetics through Charles Henry (a collaborator of *L'Esprit Nouveau*). In a brief note published in 1925 in *El Lissitzky's* and Hans Arp's "Die Kunstformen/Les Ismes de l'art/The Isms of Art" (repeated in 1927 in one issue of "L'architecture vivante" dedicated to avant-garde movements) we can read the following definition, a more elaborated and precise statement also signed by Ozenfant and Jeanneret: "Painting is a machine to transmit feelings. Science offers us a kind of physiological language which allows us to produce in the spectator specific physiological sensations: this is precisely the base of Purism".

As we have already said, this equivalence between a painting and a machine is not conceived as a formal or functional analogy, but as a parallel reasoning about both objects or the worlds represented by them, whose languages should be coherent, both following the scientific determinism expressed by Natural Laws and "invariant" elements (a dear term to Purists) of science. In *Après le Cubisme* we find a complementary statement: "Laws make possible for us to conceive Nature as a machine"; and, when this is expressed by means of a work of art: "it is the law what provokes the highest delight in spirit". Or, as in another paragraph by Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, "we look for the laws of order which are the same as those of harmony. The question is how to define the great axis of the

world's order and try to expose them; the wise man will do it by means of numbers and sometimes with geometrical curves; the artist with forms. Both methods are equivalent: induction, analysis, conception, reconstruction".

If we apply our method correctly (induction, analysis, conception, reconstruction) to any "modern" object, clearly expressing the law, the rule, the order, it will be the same to say with Le Corbusier that "a house is a machine to live in" as to continue with "an armchair is a machine to seat on... a bathtub is a machine to wash oneself..." etc.

All these machines that should be produced by modern aesthetics, according to Purism should be based on a series of laws whose proper application to the work of art would be a sign of modernity as harmonious with the scientific spirit that is proper to it. The Purist syntax is composed by the "application of building and modular methods" ("Le Purisme"), the use of geometry, the elementary forms and colors, most of what has been ambiguously called "rationalist language."

It is worthwhile to examine possibly one of the most original issues raised by Purism that, firstly exposed as exclusively applied to painting might be transposed to Le Corbusier's architecture with interesting results. I am talking about the "theme" of the work of art, in his own words. In other avant-garde movements, abstraction seemed inescapable in order to achieve the dissolution of traditional painting into architecture that would verify the possibilities of translating the language to different techniques. Purism, though, rejected the elimination of figurative painting, conceiving abstraction as mere decoration, and consistently proclaimed the necessity of a "theme" for any work of art, its link with real life. "A painting that is just a symphony of colors and forms, that only makes use of primary reactions of forms and colors, is nothing but a decorative arrangement, and it can be proved that although ornament is something pleasant, there is something lacking in its enjoyment, something we look for in art: an intellectual emotion and affection that is not present in purely physiological art...that is why Purism works with existing elements from which it takes their specific forms." ("La Peinture Moderne").

This fundamental disagreement regarding the abstraction was displayed against the contemporary Neo-Plasticism carefully examined by Le Corbusier and Ozenfant in those days. In one of his most significant articles published in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, "L'angle Droit" (1923) (afterward included in "La Peinture Moderne"), Le Corbusier criticizes Neo-Plasticism in this way: "A negative demonstration is what can be seen in a recent painting movement that has gathered in Holland and which seems to be avoiding the minimum necessary conditions of painting to be considered so (intelligibility and use of sensorial mechanisms), displaying just a few geometric signs, making use of perpendicular figures only. This restriction...forces a simplistic language which just allows babbling...It is possible, by means of a bare art, to approach a purer expression. But anyway, it is essential that the means chosen would allow some kind of expression to say something that would be worth saying".

This opposition is not just an academic discussion about the specific problems of painting; Le Corbusier tries, once and again to

establish new links between artistic labor, everyday life and the world of objects' production; trying, though, not to participate in the economic constitution of these objects nor in their design, but just looking at them from a parallel way of creation. Regarding these industrial objects, he is just interested in the "transparency" with which they display their own laws as a sign of modernity. Thus, in *Après le Cubisme*, we can read: "The chosen themes are precisely those whose laws can be easily read; it is possible to establish a hierarchical classification of items according to this criterion and the human figure is at its summit".

To the general laws about numbers and geometry (natural laws) we must add those of the really useful objects, objects produced by means of modern industrial laws. Following this comparison, we obtain a new law that can be conceived as an aesthetic criterion and which was called by Ozenfant and Le Corbusier "the mechanical selection law", a parallel and complementary law to the "natural selection law".

"Purism has revealed the Law of Mechanical Selection. This law says that objects tend to adopt a form that is determined by the general evolution of forms limited by the ideal of highest utility and the necessities of beneficial production that tends to keep the conservative natural laws; this double play of laws has finally resulted in the creation of a certain number of, so called, standardized objects, which are all of them properly related to man, to his scale and belong to the same family of forms and share the same laws of configuration". ("La Peinture Moderne").

Now, on these "objects standard", "object types", are also based the "thèmes pauvres", clearly related to the famous tobacco cartridge and the seat by Adolf Loos (one of the acknowledged sources of *L'Esprit Nouveau*). But the difference in this case is that, for Ozenfant and Jeanneret, these objects are not beautiful because they are useful and are correctly manufactured, according to proper procedures and with no extravagant artistic intention, but because these pieces have come out of industrial production and have been selected by means of functional and economic laws and can be taken by artists for aesthetic purposes in order to transcend their specific utility by understanding and expressing their superior values.

It is obvious that trivial objects as bottles, glasses and pipes so present in Purist iconography (taken from Cubism and its special concern about reality in painting), as well as other designed and manufactured objects as the well known Thonet chairs, are

good examples of this concept of "object type" and expressions of the "law of mechanical selection". The programmatic and functional "themes" as well, most of them repeated throughout Le Corbusier's architecture, whose definition and development was his main concern since he dedicated himself to concrete architecture, are also the outcome of this same selection which transforms into an object capable of enduring aesthetic operations what was just a result of the conjunction of "the ideal of highest utility" and "the necessities of beneficial production". The "Citrohan" house is just the most obvious example. But most of L. Corbusier's inventions, in spite of his own ambiguity in texts and self-propaganda, are more of artistic "themes" than of functional solutions or "Types" in the specific sense of the word. "Themes" imposed by the industrial environment, seen and imagined, only fit for an artist whose aesthetic capacity would be employed in making himself a place in this modern world of mechanization, concurrence and efficiency. It is in this sense that his passionate "defense of Architecture" (as an art) becomes meaningful. A defense which he undertook in 1929 in his polemic discussion with Karel Teige and indirectly with the other theoreticians of the "Neue Sachlichkeit".

To sum up, the ideological and methodological operation developed by Le Corbusier with the significant help of Ozenfant, through their renovation programme of artistic activities in a "modern" society is remarkably consistent and sensible. Their search of a proper place for intellectual and artistic labor based on the logic and order of a supposedly scientific, technical and efficient world, was undertaken in the most impeccably rational way. And that makes it even more attractive. Reason as a human capacity and a method, inductive and deductive logic, scientific certainty, "rationality", to sum up, as a basis is introduced by Purism in two differentiated aspects. First of all as a principle, fundamental reference (or spirit) of the modern world's production and social organization, a world of benefit and efficiency; and secondly, an appendix to the first concept, as a discriminating method for working means and artistic creation involved in elaborating an specific language, an artistic and intellectual "system".

An the unanswered question is what kind of Rationalism should be this and what previous premises should conform reality in order for this ideologic construction to become globally "rational". Because, maybe, as Ozenfant himself said in "Art": "Rationalism is also a kind of credulity".

## The modern movement's "Mise en musée" ON THE THIRD DCOMOMO CONGRESS IN BARCELONA.

Xavier Costa

One of the most ambitious tasks undertaken by the architects in the later twenty years has been that of ensuring the protection, renovation and restoration of Historical Heritage. As Victor Hugo anticipated in his novel "Notre Dame de Paris", the traditional architects' labor has radically changed since the invention of printing and modern publishing means, as it is not possible anymore to justify their work as the main way of transmitting a message. Hugo had already realized that architects could then

just take care of the old cathedrals, because they would not be allowed anymore to work in search of new meanings, a labor now bestowed upon printing and other mass media. This mix of historical devotion and romantic pessimism present in Hugo's sentence "ceci tuera cela" (this (the printed book) will kill that (the stone cathedral)) has profoundly infected the architecture of the later years.

The creation, in 1988, of a new institution



devoted to architectural conservation, in this case the conservation of the chief works of the Modern Movement, DOCOMOMO or Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement, made it clear that a revision of the preservation concept should be undertaken. Although it was born as a European project, DOCOMOMO has tried to offer a global and non-occidental perspective of modern architecture. The international expansion of the modern movement has been, thus, managed as one among many other colonialist influences of the Western World during this century. It is obvious that this new interest in modern architecture must also assume the critical attitudes towards it occurred since the post-war period as well as Hugo's remarks on mass media, specially in this case where the main aim is the documentation of projects.

Moreover, any conservation project must, nowadays, assume the way in which information about the architecture it preserves is to be present in modern mass media and the way in which it will become accessible to the public for cultural consumption in the form of museum or other touristic facilities. It is not possible, nowadays, to talk about architectural protection without taking into account issues as the access, exhibition, information and a certain touristic and educational technology that would ensure a proper knowledge of the object by the public. Although it may be revolting for elitist visions of the modern movement legacy, to undertake its protection means inevitably to use the immense power of the present cultural industry.

But the main interest of the DOCOMOMO project is to stimulate the debate about modern architecture. This was the main aim of the Third Congress held in the Palau Macaya, Barcelona, during

last september under the patronage of the Mies van der Rohe Foundation. The Congress' Manager, Carlos Martí, tried, above any other consideration, to promote a debate regarding a new analysis and interpretation of the Modern Movement. To this end, he invited Antonio Monestiróli, Dennis Sharp, Bruno Reichlin, Kenneth Frampton, Ignasi de Solà-Morales and Juan Antonio Cortés.

It was the Congress' Manager, Carlos Martí, who brought out the issue of the apparent contradiction of applying to modern architecture the curatorial management developed for historical styles, as one of the main features of the movement is, precisely, the abandonment of any historical responsibility. He, nevertheless, tried to lessen the modern movement's non-historicism by analyzing the concepts of site and memory which make possible for it to establish a non-destructive dialogue with past.

The modern movement's contribution to Urban planning, though scarcely documented in the work so far completed, was the theme chosen by Antonio Monestiróli, Dennis Sharp and Kenneth Frampton. The first one talked about the origins of the modern concept of city as found in the texts by Sitte, Howard and Stubben and expressed his interest in surveying what possible concept of nature was behind posterior proposals. Monestiróli explained the conflict between the traditional city and the modern proposals in terms of the tension between public space (the square) and a looked forward introduction of nature in the

city (initiated by Howard's garden-city). The use of the public square in the twentieth century urban planning is, for this Italian architect, one of the central themes to be analyzed in the modern movement's heritage.

Sharp, on his part, centered his discourse on the polemic between the CIAM and the MARS group (afterwards Team X) during the post-war years. He talked about the progressive weakening of the CIAM and increasing importance of Arthur Korn's Group, his main point being the transfer of the Urban Planning debate from the Continent to London after the Second World War.

Frampton's communication was the fruit of a careful analysis and research. He talked about the relationship between architecture and landscaping (urban) by means of the Megaform or Grossbauform. The contemporary disappearance of the city and progressive importance of other more disseminate ways of occupying the territory has made the architects think of their urban environment in terms of mega-operations that would modify the natural landscape around it. The first example can be Le Corbusier's Obus Plan (1931), conceived as a bird's eye view image. But there were many other examples afterwards in which the architectural volumes have a somewhat horizontal development, as the very terrain's roughness, architectures that should be understood as metaphors of the absent or invisible city, signs of the megalopolis' dispersion. In the large urban pieces designed by Fritz Hoeger, Eric Mendelsohn, Hans Scharoun and the first Mies van der Rohe, or the metaphors of landscape built by Alvar Aalto or Rafael Moneo, Frampton recognizes built symbols of the intangible modern city, which assume its global form in order to express and make available the experience of the disappearing traditional city.

Bruno Reichlin's discourse dealt with the values of modern architecture after the Second World War and the theoretical difficulties of renovating modern buildings. Immediately afterwards, Juan Antonio Cortés and Ignasi de Solà-Morales tried to take a look at the modern movement from a closer point of view. The relationship between the constructive methods of the artistic avant-garde and modern architecture was Cortés' theme, who analyzed the principles of fragmentation, collage, assembling and montage promoted by the avant-garde and the refusal of Rationalist architecture (Hannes Meyer, Hans Schmidt, Mart Stam, Johannes Duiker...) to acknowledge any aesthetic debt as it was supposed to be born exclusively out of functional order. Cortés talked about a third possible synthetic procedure that he traced in Le Corbusier's works and specially in Alejandro de la Sota's.

Solà-Morales, on his part, explained his views about the technical issue in relation with the Modern Movement and the recovery of modern principles undertaken by high-tech architects who seem to be rather optimistic and confident with the development of positive science and technical innovation. The assumption of modern techniques by the architects, an attitude that was originally that of the avant-garde movement, has lately become a kind of rhetoric glorification of technology. Solà-Morales mentioned the close relationship between the architecture and the *ars retorica* in relation with the expansion of new techniques undertaken by modern architecture. He cited the

examples of Gottfried Semper's theories in the 19th century and the contributions by Sigfried Giedion and Reyner Banham or the Archigram Group. Finally, Solà-Morales explained how this somewhat optimistic attitude developed by theoreticians related to the world of phenomenology has been replaced in later years by a critical analysis of the modern movement in the works by Jean Baudrillard, Gianni Vattimo or Gilles Deleuze.

The Congress' last session was employed in visiting some of the works by members of the GATCPAC as the recently restored Anti-Tuberculosis Dispensary, the Bloc House by Sert, Torres Clavé and Subirana and the rebuilt Pavilion of the Spanish Republic designed for the Paris' Exhibition. We also visited two buildings from the fifties: the apartment building in La Barceloneta district, by José Antonio Coderch and the Gustavo Gili Printing Press, by Francesc Bassó and Joaquim Gili. The visiting session finished with the splendid Villa La Ricarda, a work by Antonio Bonet Castellana.

The Congress included some other communications on particular aspects of the modern movement. In this section there were some pleasant surprises as the interesting study made by Susan Bower on the use of artificial lighting, Marieke Kuipers' communication on architecture related to flying or Anne Mäkinen's essay on hygiene and architecture in the Finnish Army during the thirties. The representatives of some geographical areas as Slovenia, Brazil or Indonesia brought also interesting issues on historiography and protection of modern buildings. In these sessions it was made clear that Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia are rather unknown but interesting areas in relation to the development of the Modern Movement. The colonialist use of modern language was, in these cases, responsible for important projects of cultural exportation, as was clearly demonstrated by Paul Rabinow in his book "French Modern", dealing with the political and cultural French colonization process in North Africa and the role modern urban planning and architecture played in it. In these cases, the supposed universalism of the "International Style" (as the Modern Movement was called by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson) appears as a colonialist

instrument used by the Western world, Europe and North America, to achieve the homogenization of its domain.

The Barcelona Congress has given us the opportunity to reconsider the meaning of modern architecture as a global phenomenon without centering ourselves once and again on the same masters and masterpieces, offering a more complete and international view of the movement. It has been useful to make clear that, beyond its particular stylistic features, the Modern Movement was an important political and cultural operation invading the world from the European Continent. The propagandistic function of modern architecture, its use of the mass media and modern publishing methods, cannot be separated from its architectural qualities. Our documentation project cannot, therefore, ignore the immense effort made by the very modern movement to "document" itself, to create its own image its own way of transmission by using contemporary mass media.

The DOCOMOMO project aims at what we may call the "mise en musee" of Modern Movement architecture. This term must not be understood as derogatory as we just aim at the inclusion of modern heritage in the contemporary documentation and preservation structures. This procedure will make possible that some chief works be known by the public in order to promote a desirable and well understood cultural consumption. Our labor cannot limit itself to the 19th century conception of preservation and maintenance of worthwhile artifacts, we must likewise "translate" this same artifacts to something suitable for transmission and education in order that it be accessible for everyone. Our Patrimony will remain, no doubt, as it is although we may exhibit it, publish or catalogue it or make it accessible according to the patterns of cultural tourism. Ours is not the patient and passive labor of cleaning and maintenance (which is, of course, necessary), but an active struggle for the interpretation, documentation and even "des-materialization" of the artifact in order to make it somewhat fluent and suitable for contemporary information channels. Thus, the Modern movement's "mise en musee" must be understood as its real "mise en scene" for a better knowledge on our part and the public's.

## The Modern Movement Architecture and History's interpretation

Carlos Martí Arís

Among the main questions to be considered by those working on designing, on architecture, today, is the definition of our point of view on the history of our own career. In other words, we have to find a standpoint such as to allow us to establish relations, whatever they might be, with architectural historical data. This position, always relevant, becomes crucial when what is in question -what should receive interpretation- is our recent history, our yesterday past: for us, the Modern Movement architecture.

As Lucien Febvre fairly expressed "history is written for the present"; thus, the way in which we write our recent history will condition the way in which we understand our present situation. History is not anymore intransitive -a problem for specialists, somewhat academic-

but a new problem -transitive- to action. A question everybody who tries to build his own practice on reasoning is interested about.

I would like to work on this subject but let me start with a little roundabout. I will start with an image: the demolition of the Le Halles market in Paris, in 1971. I remember clearly the pictures published at the time: some bits of the steel frame erected by Baltard around 1850, were still standing surrounded by a confusion of garbage and twisted iron bars already on the ground, conferring a greater dramatism to the scene as tokens of the imminent destruction of the rest and the no return quality of the process.

Along with Les Halles was disappearing not only an architectural masterpiece, but a part of the town, a monument legated by modern



culture. The demolition of Les Halles was obviously not episodic, after and before speculation and ignorance were causing enormous damages in that national heritage formed by the city and its environment. Nevertheless, Les Halles case due to its particular barbarism had an immediate effect on social consciences.

Specially over the architects of my time, that is, those then finishing their studies or newly graduated. The pictures of Les Halles destruction were to prove finally that the cultural crisis prepared and incubated in the 60's was at his deepest end. The necessity of creating a new attitude against those ignorants and arrogants that were making a massacre of our city became dramatically clear.

I will not consider here the different events of those years. What I would like to stress is the fact that the architectural culture born in the 70's is based on these problems and that its very existence is due to a new conscience about architecture and the city in the new light offered by events such as the demolition of Les Halles. We could even include here that, in some sort of a way, the situation 25 years later, is not that different (ways of aggression may be different but the effects are rather similar). That is, the deep roots of the 70's cultural waves are still tenable.

Anyway, what is clear is that all those 70's debates gave way to a new attitude more respectful to architecture historical heritage and a better understanding of the city as history's sediment and collective work resulting - dialectically - from different actions. But just as this renewed attention to the history of architecture was taking place, there was a growing suspicion that the very postulates of modern architecture, specifically because of its apparent disregard to history, did contain - implicitly - the origin of the destruction of the past, all along the century.

That was the origin of what we could name "anti-modern front" which starting at the generic indictment against modern culture of disregarding and ignoring history, went to accuse the Modern Movement of all the modern city evils.

From such attitudes grew a climate of indiscriminate rejection of the modern experience. Some attempted to isolate - to cancel - that experience trying to find the traditional thread of the architecture and the city, getting back to that mythical crossroad in which "modern extravagances" had departed with the right way. A rather peculiar way to denounce an attitude presumably opposed to history was to obliterate the complex and varied artistic and vital experience of modernity. Assuming the possibility of forgetting recent history and acting as if no twentieth century cultural experiences had ever taken place.

Although I would not like to stress this so called anti-modern attitudes - notorious enough as a result of their own actions -, I will try to confute them theoretically. I believe this criticism will result in a further clarification of the problem under consideration: the relationship to be established - from our point of view - between the Modern Movement and contemporary architecture.

I believe I can point out important mistakes on anti-modern front positions: the first - and the tougher - is mistaking modern culture with spurious speculations or devaluated caricatures, thus renouncing to the direct consideration of the thinking and facts of the makers of the modern values; the second - and

the most subtle - imputing a negative attitude towards the history of architecture to modern culture, although an extensive analysis shows the attention and reception of tradition and the greatest examples of the past; (we can find confirmation to these ideas on some masters of the Modern Movement travel notebooks, or considering the importance attributed to different regional traditional architectures).

I will insist on this second point as the first one goes by itself. I think that what has been taken as disregard to history is better understood as a certain interpretation of history, a radical criticism to the eighteenth century interpretation. So we should not talk about disregarding history in general, but disregarding that specific way of understanding history called eclecticism. (It should be kept in mind that when we speak about history we are referring to the history of architecture).

Eighteenth century eclecticism conceived its relation with history as a buyer entering a department store ready to get what he needs with a previous idea of what he will buy, knowing that through exploration he will get the right thing - the solution to his problem. Eclecticism transforms the history of architecture into a great stock, tidy and labelled, to be used at need following certain assembling procedures.

Eclectic thought is based in neutralizing historic materials; the only way to get to re-use them is leaving aside their valences, becoming neutral, aside from the values that relate them to a specific material culture; they have to become mere figures or signs to be used conventionally. The idea of character is central to the eclectic procedure. The choice of historic materials is to be done considering only the character of the work to be made (solemn, severe, funny, mysterious, strong, ...). It is character that will allow the translation of historic materials into a language of pure conventions: what will give them an specific meaning.

Against this eclectic interpretation pretending to show history as a neutral stock, modernity will defend a new interpretation than we will call teleological, through which history is a "talk with a sense", that is, a binding of periods which naturally lead one to another following a determinism whose laws can be discovered perusing the rhythms and constants than govern history.

The teleological position considers history as a diachronic flux flowing to predetermined destiny, attributing to the modern artist its accomplishment. We could describe this idea of history with the metaphor of a river flowing through different places (historical ages), a river always growing and following the way imposed by the geography (the evolutive line of progress). That is why history is considered by modernity as permanent process of improvement and that is also why we can find unlimited faith in progress and prophetic tones in their proclamations.

The crucial point in this teleological construction is the idea of Zeitgeist or spirit of the age. Each historical era is coherent thanks to its Zeitgeist. It can be detected in social, political and cultural facts. That is why it is taken as first criterion to establish the validity of a work of art. Any work of art that is properly so, must be a fair expression of the Zeitgeist. Only by means of a complete knowledge of the past and present history can we place our behavior in the right way for human evolution.

Consequently, modernity's point of view about history is by no means disregarding or ignorant but conscious and connoisseur. (Just

think about someone as Siegfried Giedion, his explicit teleological position never went against his important historical research works). It is simply a finalistic point of view that conceives history as a continuous progression to its aim, stressing the characteristic isolation of the different historic periodifications.

Since the teleological position as was taken by modernity grew from the criticism to the eighteenth century eclecticism, so can we place ourselves critically and create our own interpretation of history. The outcome from this criticism will be far different of the mere negation or dismissing of the modern culture.

To my believe, there is no way more fruitful of understanding recent architecture than this critical view of modernity. Critical thinking means a throughout knowledge of what you criticize and a decided will to overcome the faults revealed by your own work.

On the contrary, disregarding or dismissing modernity, gets us back to eclecticism or, at its best, to that disguised eclecticism which includes some bits of the "modern repertoire", typical of some postmodernisms (just a trick to include the modern experience, neutralized, with the eclectic ideas so that it becomes an extension of this stock, history is supposed to produce).

Moreover, I would like to insist in this final section of my speech on some critical arguments about modern postulates to reveal the Modern Movement ideas still acting as ferments for today's culture, and those ones already overcome or, simply, incoherent with today's views.

But first I must make myself clear about the rules of the game. First of all, we must consider the time limits for this network of events conventionally called Modern Movement. Secondly, the homogeneity or orthodoxy level employed to define what is and what is not Modern. I will use in both cases an inclusive and scarcely restrictive criterion.

We will consider that Modern Movement in Architecture started about the I World War times, extending with different shades up to the 60's. The 60's cultural crisis represents a break in continuity for this long process. The result of this crisis is already invested of different characteristics. Modern Movement is then considered as something afar, something you do not feel yourself involved in anymore and something you can see as external.

I believe that as far as the degree of homogeneity is concerned we should understand the Modern Movement in its most ample meaning, including any architectural experience related somehow to the modern culture. This criterion pretends to avoid the identification between the Modern Movement and some specific figurative stylemas which, if present, imply their belonging to that movement and, otherwise, place them out of it - or as unorthodox.

In front of the Modern Movement - understood as an homogeneous body or as a uniformed and disciplined militia - we would like to present a view of modernity as the confluence of different interests and contributions, as a complex and diverse ground with an specific identity as a summary of these different elements and ingredients.

We are aware that trying to criticize the theoretical positions of the Modern Movement implies an obvious simplification, but there is no way to proceed but to assume it on methodological grounds.

As we have seen, modern thought includes

the idea of continuous and unlimited progress for the arts and also the statement that expressing the Zeitgeist - in a work of art - is the guaranty for the progress to proceed. This confluence results in a cult to novelty as a value in itself and establishes an ontological separation between present and previous experiences. The past legacy is considered as something accomplished and different historical ages are seen as necessary, valuable - but for all the rest overcome - phases. So that they can not offer us any operative data for today's problems except their own quality of historical events. The Zeitgeist behaves as the jealous warden of today's land, building a neat border to it.

This procedure is also to be found in some of today's neo-avantgardes pretending to be far away from modernity postulates but, in fact, following them by admiring the novelty, the unheard, the syncopated stratification of history and in search of not today's but next year's Zeitgeist.

Contrary to this point of view we could understand history's legacy as a virtuality that may be actualized anytime by imaginative action. We should not imitate nor reproduce the past, or use it as a pre-built solution, but discover the potentiality of changing the past into a possibility for the present. If eclecticism conceives history as a flat and neutral stratum, disoriented and practicable in all directions, teleology interprets history as a decidedly vectorial space, oriented in just one direction, what I am suggesting here is to consider history as a complex topography land; a land which to a certain extent we cannot see but that can be explored and paced following different paths; a land in which new paths can be opened to connect previously isolated and unconnected points.

This understanding of history implies, paradoxically, a distant and relativistic attitude opposed to the pretended possibility of a total comprehension of the historical events. For this to be achieved we require to incorporate what we could call synchronic understanding. The synchronic understanding, by creating a temporary break in the chronological time understood as becoming, allows us to understand history as present. As Claude Lévy-Strauss unbeatly expressed it does not happen that "searching for intelligibility we arrive to history as a destination" but we can use history as "a starting point for any search of intelligibility".

Associated with the synchronic point of view there are two basic concepts: place and memory. In any particular place the different historic strata left by time overlap and cohabit in the space. Through the idea of space we can feel simultaneously the presence of all these different strata. An architectural project is just adding new components to the previously existing structure, so that those already there instead of being annihilated or deformed get into the new composition.

If the place is the condensation of history on the objective space, we may consider memory as the condensation of history in personal experience. That is why it gives us the possibility of activating the memory and traveling in the history of architecture establishing analogies among objects and events isolated in time and place.

Modern Movement architecture, by promoting this teleological interpretation of history in which the idea of progress implies, always, the obsolescence of previous phases,



tends to promote a total substitution of the human scenario, tends to rebuild the physical reality starting at its very foundations, defining ex-novo a rule of actions that overpasses the impositions of what preexists. That is why physical strata from the past are considered obstacles or impediments to the achievement of new values.

Concepts as place and memory are opposed to this attempt of *tabula rasa*, of total supplantation of reality. Through them, the project is considered as a new stratum suitable

for overlaying and cohabiting, for establishing a new dialogue with others. Synchronic thinking when in front of past legacy does not try to ignore or praise it, but reveals its present, materially incorporating it to its own project.

It is my belief that this way of understanding the relation to history may show us some important clues to the problem of conforming and characterizing today's cities; a problem that -for us- may be the most open, urgent and pending one after the Modern Movement crucial experience.

## High-tech: functionalism or rhetoric?

Ignasi de Solà-Morales

The merest glance around us is enough to reveal that, in recent years, one particular architectonic trend has enjoyed a monopoly of interest and attention. We are now living through the ascendancy of that architecture known as High-tech which provides the "serious" alternative to be banal and already worn out ordinariness of post-modernist classicism, or the laboratory experimentalism of the so-called deconstructivists.

Of course, none of the above terms is very precise, being products of the conventions which fashion and the latest critical tendencies are inclined to foster. Nevertheless, if we try to look at the facts from somewhat greater depth, we can see that amid the confusion and turbulence of the present situation those architectures which have chosen to adopt the content of high technology as their characteristic feature are gaining daily in acceptance and prestige, not only in professional circles but in the eyes of the wider public.

There is nothing new about putting emphasis on the technology-architecture relationship; nothing new either in the suggestion that the architecture of the present age can be characterized as the product of new technologies in the field of construction. In other words, there is a genuine tradition of the new, as Rosenberg would put it, in terms of which this innovation in architecture is manifested in the technical innovation on which it is founded.

From the progressive thinking of G. Semper or E. Viollet-le-Duc onwards, the relationship between technology and architecture has assumed, in the modern tradition, the character of a fundamental problem.

Having abandoned the discourse of style, it seems that architecture in modern times must be characterized by its capacity to take advantage of the innovations offered it by contemporary science and technology as the specific achievements of that same modernity.

The relationship between new technology and new architecture can be ratified, too, as a fundamental datum in what are referred to as avant-garde architectures; so fundamental as to constitute a diffuse yet dominant motif in the thinking of the innovators and the figuration of the new architectures.

The conceptual model on which this tradition of the modern movement seems to have been based would then take the following form: the new technologies are the starting point for the new architectures. Successive technical innovations would provide the spur to successive innovations in architecture. The so-called high technology - high-tech # - of electronics and

overall energy control would constitute the origin of the architecture of the same name.

It is worth indicating at the outset what this current of thought signifies. In the general context of the crisis of the modern project, with the disappearance of faith in innovation as manifestation of progress, it is quite exceptional to find a tendency in architecture in which confidence in that modern project, in progress and in technical innovation as the expression of that progress constitutes the basis of what it has to offer.

If, on the one hand, the Enlightened origins of the modern project now being called into question by thinkers such as Vattimo, Deleuze or Baudrillard contain the idea that it is science, that is to say the rational progress of man and society, which brings about technological innovation; and if, at the same time, it is technological innovation which underpins the progress of architecture, then we must conclude that the aims of high-tech architecture, today once more at the apogee of contemporary culture, are none other than a bringing up to date of that modern project - optimistic, scientific and supposedly rational - which has developed its ideas over two centuries within the context of western culture.

But the relations between technology, progress and architecture are not, nor were they ever, as simple as they might seem from the linear model we have just formulated.

Let us briefly analyse one of the central texts of the modern tradition in architecture. In 1923, Le Corbusier published *Vers une architecture*, "the most influential book in 20th century architecture", as Peter Collins described it in 1965. As we know, this book-cum-manifesto of the ideals of modern architecture is, in reality, a montage, compiled from a series of articles published by Le Corbusier during 1920 and 1921 in the review *L'Esprit Nouveau*. Throughout the course of the seven chapters which make up the book, Le Corbusier structures a complex meditation in which the problem of the new technologies occupies a central position in the definition of the architecture of our time.

The structure of the global discourse of the new architecture is posed by Le Corbusier in three clearly differentiated moments.

Chapters I, II and III concern the confrontation between engineering and architecture. In contradistinction to an apology for modern engineering's radical submission to economy and calculation, architecture is presented as pure production of the spirit. The forms and relationships established by architecture are distinguished from the strict forms of engineering, because in the latter,

innovation is permanently open to whatever science and technology may dictate. Architecture, in contrast, for all that it receives a call to learn from the engineers' way of working, should seek a different role for itself: to express the absolute. A cautious reaction to the radical technicism sustained by the materialism of the avant-garde - by the Russian Constructivists-Productivists and the new German objectivity - has been discerned in Le Corbusier's position.

Certainly what initially appears to be a pamphlet in favour of modern engineering as a guiding principle for the new architecture is immediately reappraised in the dialectic between identity and difference, between engineering and architecture.

Chapter IV V and VI are an apparent plea for a new architecture which should conduct itself after the fashion of engineering: the design of great machines and structures, and the production-line process. Ships, planes, motor cars, turbines, silos, mechanised furniture are presented in the pages of *Vers une architecture* as the icons of modern civilization. But Le Corbusier's position is immediately glossed by the sections on *The lesson of Rome*, *The dynamic of the Plan and Architecture* as pure creation of the spirit.

How are we to understand the architectonic difference to which Le Corbusier time and again refers?

We might say that for the architect of the *Ville Savoie*, architecture constitutes a mediation. An operation of signification through which the new technological universe is incorporated into, without constituting the ultimate objective of, architectonic manifestation.

We have to realise that in the text we are examining, architecture is not technology, nor engineering, yet neither is it the forms of the past. Both then and now, architecture is mediation between the techniques, the images, the panorama which culture presents at every instant, and which Le Corbusier calls the order or the universe. This is a more generic term, going beyond the technical or practical determination of each piece of work. It is a mediation between the technical environment to which the architect's eyes should be fully open, and the aesthetic end which constitutes the ultimate objective of the work of architecture. The mediation of architecture is not exercised, in the last analysis, on the practical, productive, particular plane of objects, but on the plane of discourse, expression, message which can be established on the basis of those objects as a manifestation of the present.

The objective of architecture is not the literalness of functions or techniques, but the eloquent exposition, the convincing presentation, the credible manifestation of the message of universality to be found in these techniques. These objectives of eloquence, credibility and conviction are the objectives of the art of rhetoric. A creative activity whose object is the effective communication of a message. Architecture as mediation is rhetoric, the art of communication, eloquence.

To understand the mediating effect of architecture in these terms is at the same time to propose a fundamental objective for architecture. The book we are analysing closes with a chapter which initially seems somewhat surprising: *Architecture or revolution*. We might regard the question as extemporaneous if we failed to appreciate the dichotomy Le Corbusier is putting forward here. Because the revolution is

not so much the social unrest or the violent change which can be produced by the masses as, above all, the insecurity and fear, the disorder and the threat represented by the forces of the technico-scientific revolution if they are not brought into line, if their blind energy is not mediated, to allow them to be socially assimilated, collectively disposed, phenomenologically pacified.

This dilemma between architecture and revolution is the translation of that optimism in which Le Corbusier glories, throughout his entire production; an optimism in which scientific and technical changes need not be regarded as threateningly inhuman, dangerously destructive of the individual and the life of society, but rather as beneficent products capable of reconciling subject and environment, introducing a mediate dimension between the one and the other by means of architecture.

Both art and thought in the years between the wars were, to a great degree, suspicious and fearful of the new technologies, of mass production and the increasing automation of vital processes.

If we consider the literature, the cinema or the philosophy of those years, we find a reiterated and obsessive preoccupation with the new mechanical and technical world taking shape with the unfolding of the new civilization. In Wells, in Orwell, in Huxley, the apocalyptic vision of the future is taken as the only conceivable standpoint in the face of the unstoppable process of technical sophistication of the social and private life of modern metropolitan man.

Even in writers such as Ernst Jünger, apparently convinced eulogists of the new man of technical civilization, it is impossible to overlook the profound emotional instability these new situations - in work or war - provoke.

What was needed was to find something that did not as yet exist in order for the new power to be not a threat but an instrument of individual and collective growth. This is precisely the attitude expressed by Heidegger in confronting the problem of *Technik*, which occupies a central position in his reflections in the years before and after the Second World War. The rupture between doing and being, between *techné* and *poiesis* is, in Heidegger, the expression, by means of the exploration of these categories in antiquity, of an essential malaise in modern man and society. A malaise whose cure lies in the direction of *arte*, of speaking, of constructing, of dwelling.

While in the German context Simmel or Rathenau, Martin Wagner or Peter Behrens, Giedion or Ernst May were proclaiming an inevitable adherence to the technified world of the 20th century, fear and dread were no less surely taking hold of artists and intellectuals, overshadowing the optimism of the intellectual and artistic avant-garde. Celibate surrealist machines, absurd Chaplinesque parodies of Taylorisms, architectonic expressionism set up against the horror of industrial society, provide some of the evidence that the relationship between the new technology and progress was not everywhere experienced as something evident and almost natural.

Even in the case of Le Corbusier, as a representative of an intelligent and sensitive position, this relationship was not an unmediated, unequivocal sign of progress. On the contrary, for Le Corbusier there was a need for mediation, a need to eradicate errors of every kind, between the new technology and the



social order, which for him was architecture; the subsumption of the data of the new technical and social situation by means of specifically artistic operations. In a word: rhetorics, in the terminology we propose here, giving the term rhetoric the sense which it has always had in the western tradition. A positive, apposite contribution to the creation of a language and the explication of a reality which refuses to be appropriated without its mediation.

In 1962, Alan Colquhoun, in an article published in *Architectural Design*, distinguished between the literal and the symbolic in the technical aspects of modern architecture. This distinction was in a sense parallel to the one drawn by Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, in another memorable text, when they established an absolute difference between literal transparency and phenomenal transparency in an essay written in 1956 and published in *Perspecta* in 1963.

In these two texts, each concerned with different problems—technology or transparency, both of them issues in modern architecture—the authors establish the difference between an immediate, obvious, evident signification and a signification only intelligible in terms of a mechanism of signification in which the technological or the transparent were such insofar as they expressed or manifested an intention or a purpose. To the immediacy of the literal signification they opposed the mediation of an entire linguistic system by virtue of which such typically rhetorical devices as metaphor, redundancy or eurythmics entered into action.

An example of the literal presentation of the relationship between technology and architecture in the period of transition between what Banham called the first and second machine ages can be found in the celebrated proposals of the inventor Buckminster Fuller.

This autodidact, in the tradition of Giedion's *Mechanization* takes command, hailed as a pioneer by present-day apologists for technological architecture, provides the best example of an immediate relationship between technology and architecture, if the term architecture can indeed be applied to the artifacts he produced.

By means of simplified exegeses of certain problems—urban movement, transport, flexibility, unitary control of climate, etc., etc.—Fuller created a whole repertoire of artifacts which were soon to constitute the finest imagery of recent technology.

Often with a not entirely casual application to the armaments industry, each of his inventions was a unidirectional response to a well-defined problem, by way of an effective simplification of the multiple inputs which could be derived from the problem itself.

The outcome was his houses, automobiles, compact bath systems, mobile housing units, all covered by the trade name Dymaxion. In all of these objects the qualities of complexity, permanence and the relationship with place were nonexistent. These were artifacts in which, as in war machines, the objective to be achieved had been deliberately simplified with the aim of presenting in the most obvious the immediate relationship between necessity and technological response.

But what might have been seen as an extension of that technico-scientific pioneering spirit exemplified by the inventions of Jules Verne, became instead the paradigm of a relationship considered to be the ultimate

expression of the modern ideal: the felicitous meeting of technology and architecture.

When, in the sixties, the Archigram group represented the development of an architecture free of inhibitions from the point of view of the incorporation of new technologies, Bucky Fuller was hailed as the guru of all the neo-avant-garde radicalisms which heralded the crying of the crisis of the Modern Movement.

Archigram enriched Fuller's schematism with the introduction to many other parameters into the invention of their projects. Probably the most important step was the fact that all of the formal repertoires employed by the group of architects gathered around the magazine of that name subscribed to a mediate conception of architectural production. These repertoires were drawn from the imagery of such state-of-the-art technologies as space rockets, deep-sea oil platforms, the motor-caravan as nomadic dwelling, the domestic appliance boom, the accelerated consumption of images produced by television. All of these ingredients were brought together in architectural proposals which, consciously "alternative" as they aimed to be, exalted mobility in counterpoint to the traditional stability of historic buildings; the colours and forms of pop culture in opposition to the repertoires and canons of conventional architecture, the multi-media message in place of the institutionalised communication inherent in the architecture of the past.

Accumulation, montage, container, change, multiplicity of impulses, tension, instantaneous duration, were some of the values put forward in the ironic and at times utopian drawings and projects of a series of architects for whom offering an alternative to the established architecture—not only the classical, by this time, but also the modern establishment—was a important as was the need to respond in this way to a social and cultural situation in which a new technical, mechanical and electronic age had irrupted throughout western civilization. Architecture, once again, was seeking to express the spirit of the time and a truly modern condition which was not to be achieved through any adherence to formal repertoires but through the perpetually renewed encounter between new technologies and architectonic artifacts.

The theorists of this renewed optimism between technology and architecture were to be found first in Britain in the circle which formed around the Independent Group, which included the Smithsons, Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi and the young James Stirling and Colin St. John Wilson. From the theoretical point of view, the most outstanding figure was undoubtedly Reyner Banham, his influence extending from the midfifties throughout the sixties.

With a solid academic background in the Courtauld Institute, Banham's doctoral thesis on the architecture of the first machine age specifically offered an overview of the fiasco of the programmatic intentions of the greats of the Modern Movement in their failed attempt to establish an architecture which would respond directly to the conditions of the mechanised contemporary world.

In criticising the lack of substance in that relationship during the first machine age, he implicitly proposed that it should be the second machine age, in other words, the period in which he was writing, that would finally establish an intimate relationship between machine and architecture. The position Banham occupied was that of a call for orthodoxy, if by orthodoxy we are to understand the need to

invent the architecture of the present age as the outcome of a mechanistic civilization.

Marshall McLuhan completed this theoretical picture with the affirmation of communication through images as the new core of reality in a culture which had moved from the production of objects to the production of messages. The call to pansemiotic conversion provided, in McLuhan, the theoretical support for the production of ephemeral, instant, changing, purely communicational architectures.

In counterpoint to this perspective, theorising the possibility of a newborn architecture directly sprung from the equally new technological conditions of the time, we find the more sombre analyses of that same technological situation provided by, amongst others, the Situationists and related groups such as Cobra and the International Lettriste. The only point of contact between these movements and the apologists of the new technical context was their common use of mass culture as the material for their reflections. But while in the pop climate of Archigram, or later in Venturi's McLuhanism, the new situation was assessed in a fundamentally positive manner, Situationism was concerned to expose the poverty and banality of what Guy Debord called the society of the spectacle.

In the same way that, in the years between the wars, the thinking of philosophers and historians of art and architecture had sought to rationalise the uncontrolled impact of mechanisation by focussing on its positive aspects as an alternative to the fear and terror it aroused; so too in the boom years of the fifties and sixties, the years of economic miracles and the great development of the western world, there was forceful criticism of the mass urbanism of the new suburbs, of the indiscriminate consumption of objects and images, of the alienation of collective life, in the form of calls for individual liberation, for the reconstruction of private living space and for the privileged experience of situations, instant events in which, within a limited timespan, it was possible for individuals to rediscover themselves.

In Situationism, the theory of the *dérive* represented the positive valorisation, not of some organised, clear and simple spatial experience, but the richness of an erratic drifting, of mobility with no predefined goal: possibilities for personal enrichment in the context of modern urban living. Another type of critique to emerge from this same situation, from what Alain Touraine has called the post-industrial society, was constituted by the growing ecology movement. In origin anti-urban and anti-technological, the ecologists directed their critical gaze at the part maudite of the affluent society, the misery of its detritus, the uncontrolled chaos of its waste products and the limitless consumption of resources and energy as harbingers of a new holocaust.

Perhaps the most immediate consequence of the ecology movement was the exploration of alternative energy sources, materials, and also architectures. However, it is beyond the scope of the present text to analyse all the consequences of the direct application of the theoretical propositions of ecologism in the architecture of the last twenty years.

What this article does seek to do is to indicate the theoretical context of light and shade which the new technological situation in the western world has provoked in certain recent architectures.

The mission which so-called high-tech architecture seems to have chosen for itself is precisely that of responding positively, with the optimism of the prophets, to the need for a reconstructed relationship between new technology and new architecture, as well as to the possibility, in certain cases, of taking up the critiques framed by Situationists or ecologists in the putting forward of clean, energy-controlled architectures which would, in short, offer comfort and happiness to the user.

It is surprising to note, time and again, that the observations made by Richard Rogers, Norman Foster or Jean Nouvel, to mention only the more famous names, express a far greater concern with demonstrating the ecological and communicative values in their work than in defending technology as an adaptation to the spirit of the modern age.

In the first place, these architects present their work as lying on the margins of that crisis which, from Habermas to Baudrillard, has been denominated post-modern. Theirs is an architecture in continuity with Gaudi, Mies, Le Corbusier and Aalto, but also, and equally easily, with Fuller and Archigram.

The innovation these architectures seek to offer is not merely in construction, that is in the application of new mechanical possibilities, but above all in communication of new mechanical possibilities, but above all in communication and management. In all the architects of this tendency the most marked emphasis is placed, on the one hand, on the effectiveness with which the new artifact explains its function, exhibits its objectives, reveals the logic of its technique. This is the triumph of communication by means of the images of an architecture of transparency and of increasing immateriality.

On the other hand, much is made of the approach to the running of the project which results in such sophisticated, such perfect artifacts. Business techniques, management techniques, interdisciplinary collaboration and the new approach to the division of labour would appear to be the key to explaining the novelty and modernity of these buildings. Ideologically, this whole conceptual apparatus results in a clearly defined rhetorical message. In a world full of conflict such as this one, in the final years of the twentieth century, these architectures present themselves, in the first place, as something obvious, evident, logical, rational and economical. What greater poignancy than that of the victory of wisely administered technique? A victory arrived at by way of paths signposted as clearly conservative: social integration, professionalism, a white-coated architecture. Here, complete felicity is consummated. All ecological imbalance seems to have disappeared, and high production and maintenance costs forgotten in favour of images of adaptation to the landscape, to people's work, to urban integration. High-tech architecture is not, on this reading, something closed in on itself, but rather the announcement of a path by which the social goals of a highly developed culture are attained through the application of the rationality of wisely utilised technologies. The result is always a rhetorical exaltation of the institutions. More specifically, of the big corporations, in whom the tremendously costly production of these great artifacts finds its staunchest allies. Much more than the public sector, or the private universe of house and home, the privileged space for high-tech



architecture is that of the great monopoly enterprises, the multi-national companies which represent the de facto powers of the most highly developed capitalist societies.

Paradoxically, what was in its origins a pioneering, avant-garde attitude has now come to constitute, in continuity with the discourse of the most felicitous modern tradition, a rhetorical exaltation of technology precisely as the road leading to personal and social pacification.

In this we see the fulfilment of the permanent vocation of technological rhetoric, in the positive sense we have proposed in the present text: the art of eloquence with which a message—here an integrating message—is framed by the creator of architectonic forms.

We are concerned here with a rhetoric which, once again, demonstrates the quality we have observed right from the origins of this aporia of the modern. A rhetoric which can be literal or mediated, an immediate translation of technological icons accumulated as a redundant call to their legitimation or an elaborated architecture in which the repertoires offered by technology are the object of a mediation in terms of rules, protocols and codifications which culminate in the construction of an elaborate system of communication through architecture.

It would not be difficult to uncover, in the most thoroughly elaborated of high-tech architectures, that of Norman Foster, a whole painstaking procedure by means of which his buildings are increasingly produced as genuinely mediate architectures.

Not exactly mediate by virtue of their use of the mass media, but rather because, between the gross datum of the state-of-the-art technology adopted and the final architectonic result, there lies an entire procedure—knowledgeable and elaborate—of typological definition, of hierarchical scale in the treatment of problems, in the recurring use of certain forms of static resolution which are as valid for

the large-scale decisions as for those concerned with details, furnishings or complementary elements.

Union, tension, lightness, provisionality, flexibility, juxtaposition of scales of intervention, overall atmosphere, continuity, transparency; these are the predominant criteria which seem to offer themselves as a metamorphosis of the Vitruvian principles of *utilitas, firmitas, venustas*. What in other architects addicted to this same continuation of the modern project never comes to more than an inarticulate stammering of mechanistic clichés has, in Foster's work, changing through time, grown in articulateness and richness of syntax.

There is nothing else in the present panorama so elaborate or so coherent with the principle of adaptation between new technologies and new architectures. What would be paradoxical, if it were not so evidently effective, is the fact that his architecture is ultimately the most refined manifestation of conservative ideology, and the most stable support of established society.

Perhaps the reason for this is to be found in the fact that his architecture stands in polar opposition to that critical pathos, to that disgruntled disagreement that runs through other currents in modernism. On the contrary, in Foster's case we are faced with the paradox that the most refined rhetoric of the world of technology presently offers us through the mediation of architecture should be precisely the most effective antidote to the fear and insecurity which unlimited technical development continues to arouse in the majority of individuals.

To assuage anxiety, as in the famous opening words of Manfredo Tafuri's book *Project and Utopia*: revolution or architecture, as Le Corbusier framed the question in 1923; this may have been from the outset the true objective of the appropriation of technology through architecture.

movement, to establish a kind of link with cultural and artistic centers of Europe.

We mean, therefore, that our Town Council is not an isolated case. To the contrary, it can be considered among other examples of the important cultural production of those years. Miguel Martín-Fernández was the author of many other rather interesting Rationalist projects as the Orphanage "Child's House", the Psychiatric Hospital or the ICOT Housing Development, all of them realized in his office that was always open to international collaborators as R. Oppel (1932-36) y R. Schneider (1933).

The site chosen for what was to be headquarters for the highest institution of the Isle's government, occupied the end of the axis connecting the historical center of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria with the old Gate of the city's Wall. It was therefore, to be aligned with the most significant buildings of the city (Cathedral, Literary Circle, Conservatoire,...). This significant site, on the city's boundary and occupying the place of the old wall was the first interesting feature of the project. The most public building of the city, as it was to be, would be erected to the back of the old town, facing the incipient new quarters of the expanding city. Moreover, it was to be designed by the same architect who was precisely planning those new districts and therefore the site's choice was not an arbitrary decision but a consciously determined feature of the project.

The Enlargement Urban Plan for the City of Las Palmas was a project that tried to articulate the different areas being erected along the large seashore in contact with the old city. To this effect, Miguel Martín-Fernández proposed a curious system of axis and tridents in which the main public buildings would be located.

The Plan had a modern hierarchical and strictly ordered arrangement and could be easily compared to other contemporary proposals as those by Eliel Saarinen and Burley Griffin for Canberra and Burnham and Bennett for Chicago or even to the geometrical sketches by Le Corbusier for his Voisin Plan or his "Contemporary Villa for 3 million inhabitants".

The coincidence of the urban Plan and the Council's project made both elements meet at the same point and, thus, the council was placed on the trident (a device proposed not only for hierarchical purposes, but also as a connection for the loose city).

As was current in those years, the proposal was that the urban space should open itself in order to make place for the public building that would be the focus displaying its emblematic character.

From this particular point of view, we can also mention the way in which the author makes use of other modern devices in order to emphasize the public character of the building, setting it back from the street's alignment, creating a sideways accessible raised platform as Mies or erecting a useless tower.

Regarding this tower, it is rather significant to notice how it does not appear in the first sketches, becoming more and more important (and higher) as design progresses, up to the point that it was even raised a story higher by the architect who directed the construction works (Eduardo Laforet) in 1938. It seems as though this hierarchical element would have gradually swallowed the whole project, with no more function than that of its own significance, its role as a sign, making of

the originally free and suggestive design a clear urban reference in relation with the mentioned trident.

Generally speaking, we can say that the building is composed of three, masterly articulated, bodies: the central one with the access, the Eastern one, attached to the adjacent building and the Western one assuming the non-orthogonal corner with the side street Pérez Galdós. There is an evident struggle between the necessary public significance of the building and the architect's attempt to assume modern forms and devices.

Our Rationalist project is clearly conceived as the focus of a urban space, the trident, and to this end it displays a series of mechanisms as the significant scaling of representative or monumental elements. In the Alejandro de la Sota's enlargement project, though, the public character of the building is rather differently handled.

### The project by Alejandro de la Sota (1994)

Alejandro de la Sota's enlargement project tries to manage the contradiction between its being an annex to an old building and its intention of becoming a new valuable architectural piece. It must be, at the same time, a fragment and a unit.

The fragmentation is mainly due to the analysis of the building programme undertaken by Sota: cultural and representative functions and everyday offices are the elements of the programme directly translated into built forms. The idea of architecture employed is the purest translation of the functional diagram into a form. As in the "César Carlos Student's Residency", Sota's statement when defining his own building is: "analyze the building programme, shape it into a form and then compose it".

The old Rationalist building, which will be dedicated to representative functions, keeps its unity but becomes part of a greater order. An order accomplished by means of the assumption of a recently added element, as is the body built on the roof terrace, which will be enlarged up to the adjacent building and by raising the skylight of the central axis to make it match with the new offices' volume.

But the union of both buildings is mainly established by the use of the same formal language and completed by the cladding of the whole complex with the same material: probably a white metal sheet.

This covering of an heterogeneous group of pieces with one material make us think of Juan Navarro Baldeweg's words when he talks about his project for the "Segura River Water Mills"; he says that the different forms rising from the mills' base become a unit by means of using the same cladding for all of them in the same way as, in the images of Brancusi's studio, the diverse artistic pieces become almost one with the presence of the white dust covering them all. He says: "Brancusi has a white beard, a white coat, a white dog and all his studio is covered by a thin layer of white marble dust".

Sota makes use of subtle devices in order to achieve the independence of each part within the complex. The volume dedicated to cultural functions is detached from the adjacent building as well as from the Rationalist complex by means of a thin slice covered with glass. In order to emphasize this airy condition of nothingness, in this separate element the facade's plane is also detached from the upper

## Centrality and multi-polarity Gran Canaria's Rationalist Town Council and Alejandro de la Sota's Enlargement Project.

José A. Sosa Díaz-Saavedra and María Luisa González García.

When it seems normal that someone would talk about the Endurance of the Modern Movement, it surely means that it must be with the suspicion that things have somewhat changed, that Modern statements are not anymore as valid as they used to be although they are, from time to time, revived by diverse people in different fields.

As we are also suspicious about it, we thought it could be interesting to examine the issue by means of studying the double case of Gran Canaria's Rationalist Town Council, by Miguel Martín Fernández (a project from 1929-32), and the recent Enlargement Project by Alejandro de la Sota (1994).

We have observed many lines of continuation in both projects, but also many discrepancies. There is a kind of continuity, for example, in the use of a certainly modern structure and formal arrangement, in the choice of a flexible or free plan or in the external volumetric appearance composed by articulated closed volumes. And yet, there are some particular aspects that make us think that

the essence or substance of a modern building is lacking in the new project.

Among the latter, probably the most significant is the consideration of the relationship between the city and the building, the different ways to understand the public character of the building in relation to its urban surroundings. That is, we wonder whether this two buildings, both undoubtedly modern in composition, have the same intention regarding their environmental response. Moreover, we wonder if the "modern" response is still valid.

### The rationalist project (1929-1932).

Miguel Martín-Fernández's work (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 1884-1980) can be included within the important cultural movement that took place in the Canary Islands in the avant-garde years. As contributors to this movement, we can mention, among others, Oscar Domínguez, Bretón, Agustín Espinoza, Eduardo Westerdahl, Sartoris and the people of the "Gaceta del Arte" who tried, from the earlier years of the modern



floor. The fissure is, therefore, continuous, and it circumscribes the white plane that seems to float over the floor and independently from the rest of the building.

This body congregates the visitors walking down Bravo Murillo St. by means of one of Sota's usual devices: weightlessness as a way to avoid chaos. The box containing the cultural building floats over a glass plane which allows the vision of the first basement including some parts of the programme as the exhibition hall.

This idea of raising the weighty volume over a lighter one was already used in the Maravillas School Gymnasium in which the brick wall seems to be supported by the basement's ventilation louvers. The idea of the suspended cube is also present in the building for the Civil Government in Tarragona. The Miesian conception based on interring the main parts of the building programme while making transparent those elements which contain the most flexible spaces is a device used by our author in his Pontevedra House in which the bedrooms, the world of sleep, are underground while the spaces dedicated to the world of ideas are raised over the rest. This raising of the elements related to the world of ideas is also present in the skull shaped bubble floating over the hall. This latter is, by the way, a somewhat strange design for Sota, perhaps more in tune with the production of other architects as the Archigram Group, Koolhaas or Foster.

In the offices building, though, independence is achieved by means of a set back in relation to the original building. This set back creates an enlargement of the Pérez Galdós St. that is used as an entrance piazza while emphasizing the role of the Rationalist tower.

The Tower that was just a representative element occupying the background of the corner becomes now an intermediate element between the old building and the enlargement while indicating the access to the interior street or communications' space of the new Council.

The new building is, therefore divided into three volumes: one dedicated to administration, another one for representative use and the cultural one which includes an auditorium, all of them intercommunicated by means of this interesting street shaped space. But there is a fourth space which is left significantly empty.

A. de la Sota's enlargement project presents, thus, a different approach to the relationship between the city's grid and the building.

The void, in the Rationalist city is conceived as a public space. The set back established in relation to the city's grid creates a platform for the access and solves the spatial conflict between the adjacent building and the crossing of streets. The public space in the contemporary city, though, tends to be absorbed within the building and, thus, an exterior void is just left without use.

The void in A. de la Sota's project is the interior street where all the inner circulations meet and is also used as a rear court from which the large party wall is visible. It is not a urban solution, it appears in the grid unexpectedly, in the place that should be occupied by a house and its only function is that of being a lung for the building.

Thus, as we have already said, the building absorbs the exterior void which becomes almost interior.

One of the main features of the contemporary city is the loss of the boundary

between the public and the private spaces in opposition to the main role of the latter in the Rationalist projects.

In our enlargement project, consistently, the public space penetrates the building creating an interior street connecting the different parts. At the same time, the building penetrates the public space by means of the suspended sunshade, the canopies and the wood flooring which is prolonged towards the street. This appropriation of the public space unifies our building with the one across the street containing the Insular Cultural Center, an institution controlled by the Council.

This is also the reason for the arrangement of the accesses to both buildings. In the building by Miguel Martín-Fernández, as we have already said, there is just one central and rather classical access, although its modern quality is represented by its being sideways.

The enlargement, though, pays much more attention to the contradiction between the classical condition of the urban environment and the open and free proposal of the new building. Sota's project has a more complex relationship with the city and this fact is mainly visible in the multiple accesses, each one designed for different purposes. This is a common feature to many contemporary buildings as the Jussieu's library or the Twentieth Century museum by Herzog and De Meuron.

The multiple accesses proposed by Sota are the result of an analysis of urban fluxes and a response to the idea of programme fragmentation. There is, on one hand, the above mentioned flux coming down Bravo Murillo St., which encounters the building through the cultural wing and comes out of it from the cafeteria towards the rear court and the Buenos Aires St.. On the other hand, the representative building, recovers the sideways access of the rationalist project located on the streets' crossing. Finally, the offices' building, set back from the street's alignment collects the pedestrians' flux coming down Pérez Galdós St.

The traditional city establishes a relationship between the monument and the urban grid which defines public and private spaces by means of an imposed hierarchy. The public building in the contemporary city becomes less of a monument and more of a current offices' building.

That is what happens with the new project for the Council.

Now, the Rationalist building has been swallowed by a global mechanism which includes cultural spaces, an auditorium and an exhibition hall. It is the common mix of uses so characteristic of latter building programmes.

The symbolic and physical connection, established by means of the suspended sunshade, with the Insular Cultural Center defines a new way to understand the city. The enlargement project, thus, can be understood as an scale model of the contemporary city where the main features are fragmentation, multiple interconnections, mixed uses, lack of definition and loss of boundaries between architecture and open space.

The Rationalist project established a relationship with the city based on its focal function, with strictly defined limits and a visible hierarchy. Alejandro de la Sota's proposal, though, presents us a contemporary project in which the relation with the city is multiple and varied, taking into account the diverse urban fluxes and vectors and assuming the loss of a strict boundary.

## Social Housing Development in Vallecas

**Architects:** Julio Cano Lasso, Diego Cano Pintos, Gonzalo Cano Pintos, Alfonso Cano Pintos and Lucía Cano Pintos.

**Collaborators:** Marién Brieve, P. Pisapia

This two new pieces try to "sew" in some way the urban grid by means of filling up a rather large lot, 129 m long.

We think that, in spite of the small width of the open space defined by them, its important length and the interesting intersections of planes create a panoramic perspective which may well define a meeting point whose image will be that of a green court in which the successive steps lead us to more closed spaces.

As we want to make clear the importance of this open court for relationship and interchanging, we have placed over it the rooms which are more related to this function as living rooms and kitchens in which we have opened large windows.

The court is accessible from every vestibule which fact guarantees its continuous use.

On the other hand the image visible from the street presents a more rigorous rhythm created by means of using just one type of window which, along the 129 m of wall, changes slightly and progressively its position in order to assume the street's pitch.

The upper floor with its manifest roof defines the cadence of the skyline cut in a series of steps, achieving a kind of rhythmic continuity.

The parking floor is composed of slightly pitched slabs (4%) connected by means of

14% ramps. In this way, it becomes almost a continuous plane parallel to the adjacent Monte Urgull street, avoiding excessive floor heights.

The concrete structural design tries to eliminate the highest possible number of supports in order to achieve a most unobstructed parking lot.

An, regarding the houses, we want to point out that all of them are located around a series of communal spaces which are sufficiently generous to be perceived as an extension of the different apartment's living rooms. In this way, we eliminate the inner corridor which in any case should be minimum in flats with an officially limited area.

With this communal circulation space located by the living rooms and adjacent kitchens, we are trying to built what the Modern Movement understood by "a continuous space", that can be as much transparent and permeable as the user may want.

The bedrooms are also opened to this communal space but by means of the "filters" which are used as storage. In this way we indicate the more intimate quality of these pieces.

The bathrooms are placed in a central position.

The building's corners are rather simple in form and the houses placed in them, fairly similar to the rest.

The development includes 97 flats of which 4 with 4 bedrooms, 42 with 3, 43 with 2 and 8 with a single bedroom.

The total areas and those of the different pieces comply with the vPOEMv Regulations.

## Industrial building at Alcalá St., 506

**Architects:** Julio Cano Lasso, Diego Cano Pintos, Gonzalo Cano Pintos, Alfonso Cano Pintos and Lucía Cano Pintos.

**Building technician:** Francisco Jiménez-Ontiveros Solís.

Our building is located in the old Avenida de Aragón, just by the margins of an industrial area that, after being absorbed by the city, is beginning to change its appearance thanks to the erection of quality buildings.

The site was a rectangle 80 m long (aligned with Alcalá St.) and 25 m wide. It would be used for light industry facilities and it had to envision the possibility of having three different lodgers at the same time what meant that we had to make a careful study of the security systems to maintain the possibility of independent use.

The building was designed as a large container that would take most advantage of the officially allowed building area above and below ground level. It has a total area of 12000 square meters with 6800 square meters above ground level divided into five floors (1360 square meters each). Basement area, divided into three levels (or six half levels), is used as a car park with room for 200 vehicles. This aims at improving the quality of the area where there is an endemic lack of parking space.

The industrial character of our building is

clearly expressed by its facades. The rear one presents a concentration of volumetric elements belonging to the industry world as the two solid towers which contain the elevators, the emergency stairs conceived as light and transparent elements built with a laminated steel frame and metallic mesh and the six powerful stainless steel chimneys with a diameter of 1.70 meters.

The 80 m. long facade over Alcalá St. has a more prismatic and serene appearance as it fits its urban character. A concrete plinth, interrupted at some points to allow the exhibition of items in showcases, supports a white painted metal sheet facade with horizontal glazing stripes which include openings in a pattern in which the proportion fixed glass/window is 2/1. The different levels are organized as free plans with just a central core which includes the elevators and shared facilities.

Its structure is reinforced concrete with two way concrete slab floors designed to bear a 1500 Kg/m2 dead load.

Materials have been chosen because of their adequate strength and sobriety, according to the use they are intended for.

We have carefully studied all the building's details using the aesthetic values of industrial language, with its diaphanous and luminous spaces.



## Town Hall at Torremolinos (Málaga)

Salvador Moreno Peralta y Javier Boned Purkiss

**Architects:** Salvador Moreno Peralta and Javier Boned Purkiss

**Project date:** June 1992

**Finishing date:** June 1994

We have designed a building with the intention of making a kind of monument-machine, an architectural object that will improve the institutional functioning of such a peculiar borough, so determined by tourism. Our bet was clearly on volumetric and plastic appearance, we tried to recover some particular features of "modern" architecture that, unfortunately, seem to have been rather forgotten in spite of the fact that they were responsible for the architectural enthusiasm showed at the beginning of the century.

On the other hand, we have also taken into account an architectural tradition definitely, though maybe unconsciously, present in the people of Torremolinos' minds. The context for this operation was, certainly, exceptional both because of its urban character and particularly because of the special inter-communicative and

future bound nature of our city.

Economic restrictions, always present in this kind of operation, have been surmounted by means of using space and color as main designing elements. Materials not usually identified with any concept of luxury can, nevertheless, attain architectural dignity, as in the case here introduced.

We want to state that we, obviously, expected the hostile commentaries bred by an inevitable cultural and perceptive inertia, as they always occur when a public building with a strong social character is designed with a purposefully architectural (inescapably polemic) intention, until its consumers/users come to accept it. It seems though that, after a period of habituation, of assuming "their" Town Hall, they are prepared to discover and understand its mysteries, its color and geometry. Our success will, obviously, depend on their capacity to enjoy spatiotemporal experiences.

An architectural, designing effort has been made; the public answer to that effort will just be known after a long time.

## The Guggenheim Museum Addition

**Architects:** Gwathmey Siegel & Associates

**Partners:** Charles Gwathmey and Robert Siegel

**Associate in Charge:** Jacob Alspector

**Project Architect:** Pierre Cantacuzene

The original design was an attempt to establish an architectural dialogue through juxtaposition and a reinterpretation of precedents. The cantilever "object" was consciously establishing a new "tri-partite" composition. It appeared to a number of people, to be an aggressive and unsympathetic resolution to the original Frank Lloyd Wright structure.

In our reevaluation, partially as a result of criticism from architects, historians and preservationists, and partially as a result of the absolute necessity for the Museum's expansion, we have dealt with two strategic issues, program and redesign: they are integral and interrelated.

The revised design refers directly to both the original Frank Lloyd Wright proposed Annex of 1949-1952 and the William Wesley Peters' existing annex which was originally designed as a ten story structure. History and precedence were regarded as primary.

The Wright design for the Annex was intended to present a background facade, thus integrating the objectness of the original structure into the context of the Manhattan grid in general and into the neighborhood specifically. The abstract, orthogonally gridded concrete and glass curtain wall was rendered as a referential plane in counterpoint to the organic, curvilinear forms of the original Museum.

It is critical to note that: 1. the dimensions of the Frank Lloyd Wright proposed facade were derived from the four and eight foot grid of the

original structure; 2. the site was the same as that occupied by the present annex; 3. the proposed building intersected the large rotunda and was integrated into the exiting southeast fire stair; 4. Peters' annex is wider (east-west) than the Wright design by 10 feet (35 feet vs. 25 feet) but equal in length (100 feet) and proposed height (133 feet); 5. the existing Annex facade is rendered in precast concrete, eight foot, recessed faceted octagonal panels, a reinterpretation of the Wright eight foot square grid, yet interpretive abstract and planar; 6. the foundations and the columns of the existing Annex were designed and constructed to accommodate a vertical, six story expansion.

The entire original structure, through the fourth floor of the small rotunda, as well as the existing Annex, will be devoted to permanent exhibition space with the exception of the restaurant which will be relocated at the upper level of the small rotunda, affording overviews of the vertical volume while accessing the existing terrace with views of the park.

New construction begins at the fifth floor, adjacent to the roof of the small rotunda structure. At this point, the existing annex columns will be extended vertically to accommodate the addition. The new fifth floor will house permanent exhibition space which accesses a new roof sculpture terrace. It is from this terrace, that one will perceive the forms of the dynamic Wright structure in a unique manner, being directly and simultaneously engaged with sculpture by sculptors and sculpture by sculptors and sculpture by the architect.

By reducing the total mass, both in area and in height, art storage was, in the end, the most logical function for off site consideration

as well as leaving the archives and library in their present off site location. However, in the new design, the permanent exhibition space being the primary programmatic need, was actually increased by another 1,450 square feet, making a total area for permanent exhibition space of 15,900 square feet compared to the existing 7,900 square feet.

The proposed addition is primarily solid with the major material being limestone, chosen for its immediate and historical contextual references to Fifth Avenue and adjacent neighborhood buildings as well as its sympathetic neutrality and color. The West (Fifth Avenue) facade is rendered as an eight foot tartan grid of cut limestone, forming two foot and six foot square modules. The grid reinforces the sense of plane and background while reinforcing the objectness of the original structure in relation to this abstract, integral and precedent generative facade.

The four recessed, two foot high horizontal windows exist at the office levels only, and reveal the existing Annex columns on their sixteen foot spacing, while referencing the deep cuts of the large rotunda's spiraling skylights. The overall window composition is also a square, thus reiterating the facade geometry and its matrix.

The 89th Street (North) facade, as well as the East and South Facades are horizontally inscribed limestone panels, with the vertical cut joints proposed on the West facade eliminated, to both respond to the street scale and the formal organization of the proposed scheme. The major window areas at the staff floors (eighth, ninth and tenth) are rendered in a two

foot grid, and the stair fenestration is rendered in one foot square glass block. Under the center zone, on 89th Street are the service alley and the staff entrance.

In summary the expanded permanent exhibition space, which would include the heretofore inaccessible seventh level ramp of the large rotunda, would make it possible, for the first time, to offer a sequential and chronologically comprehensive view of the collection, in a continuously integrated and accessible series of exhibition spaces within the original structure, the existing annex and the new addition. The public, for the first time, would experience the entire interior of the Frank Lloyd Wright monument and also experience new and revealing views of the building and the park from the proposed new sculpture roof terrace at the fifth floor. This important new space is pertinently referential and adds a new "sense of place" to the original structure.

Finally, the new proposed addition, addresses the context of 89th Street and the general neighborhood fabric, in both scale and materiality, while allowing a positive yet subtle mediation and transition to the original structure. The West facade, articulated as an edge on 89th Street becomes the neutral gridded plane of Fifth Avenue, presenting the original building as both a object in space, with its primary and overall image intact, while also for the first time, giving it a background of intentional and contextual response.

**Note:** The new design is 29 feet lower, 15 feet narrower, and 5,750 square feet smaller in area than the original scheme (23,250 vs. 29,000 square feet).

## Tate St. Ives

**Architects:** Eldred Evans y David Shalev

**Finishing date:** 1993

St. James is a small coastal town in Cornwall in the south-westernmost corner of England, six hours by train from London. It has glorious beaches and a fishing harbour where twice daily the Atlantic retreats leaving the boats grounded; and the sea and the magical light have long since attracted artist such as Ben Nicholson, Naom Gabo, Patrick Heron and Victor Pasmore to settle there.

So it seemed logical that eventually an art gallery should be created to house their distinctive work. London's Tate Gallery, which had already produced an offspring in Liverpool's deserted Dockland, now undertook to run the new gallery known as Tate St. Ives. The architects Eldred Evans and David Shalev, who spend much time in the area and had earlier built greatly admired law courts in the County, won the commission for the new work. The site offered was that of a former gas holder hemmed in by small houses facing Porthmeor Beach.

The different change of scale from domestic to civic has been sensitively handled. Connecting the building to the street is a circular loggia intended for public events and welcoming exploration of the galleries above. From here visitors pass through a vestibule dominated by a huge coloured glass windows specially

designed by Patrick Heron, though a Rotunda up a winding staircase festooned with a Terry Frost painted hanging, to the main gallery floor, five top-lit galleries encircling a hidden courtyard. The first long low gallery opens into the breathtaking double-height space that forms the upper part of the loggia, with views of land and sea forming a back-drop to sculpture by such as Gabo and Hepworth, and ceramics by Bernard Leach. Access from here is to the other galleries, gradually increasing in height, culminating in the double-height staircase hall from which you ascend to the coffee-shop and roof terrace and more views of beach and sea.

Because of the slope of the site, the building reads from three sides only (the rear elevation forming a retaining wall). It is constructed of concrete and masonry frame, finished in white marble dash render for the walls, with painted pre-cast concrete eills, lintels and cornices, and reconstructed stone pavings. Windows are in painted timber and are feversible for cleaning. The exterior follows the vocabulary of the town - shite walls, grey slate roofs, and small windows.

Inside, floors are finished in rubber in Galleries 1,3,4 and 5, and rustic slate in Gallery 2 and intermediate spaces. Walls are white painted board. Ceilings are moulded woodwork, and house air-conditioning and lighting.

The building was officially opened in May 1993 by the Prince of Wales and has since proved a Mecca for thousands of art lovers.

Mónica Pidgeon



## The "Europa" Movie Theater

M.A. Baldellou

**Architects:** Luis Gutiérrez Soto

**Project date:** May 1928

The "Europa" movie theater was designed by Luis Gutiérrez Soto in 1928 and built in Bravo Murillo St., No. 160, Madrid. Considered altogether with his abundant production, it might be seen as a decisive step taken towards Expressionism without deserting his somewhat eclectic Rationalism. It was designed just two years before the Callao Movie Theater and other two after the Barceló one and it can be seen as a turning point in his pre-war career. Analyzed as a work of the so called "1925 generation" (Gutiérrez Soto surly belongs to it as he graduated in 1923) it appears as somewhat marginal from an ideological point of view but essential in the sense that it assumes all the contradictions of this generation. Its author, educated in the eclectic tradition of monumental classicism, also influenced by regionalism, assumed the rationalist movement with facility as a new component of his general eclecticism. It was the innovative character of the Art Decó, recently imported from the 1925 Paris Exhibition, what made him choose it for the Callao Movie Theater while, for the same reason, the Europa building tended towards expressionism.

The first Rationalist works in Spain were designed around 1927 ("Porto Pi" Gas Station, Goya's Corner, Marquis of Villora House). That means that the Europa Movie Theater (1928), was a rather early and surprisingly distinct contribution; a contemporary work to the Vilaró House in Illescas and even previous to the Aizpurua and Labayen's Nautical Club at San Sebastián and Feduchi and Eced's Capitol Movie Theater.

It is curious to notice how the project was not really appraised as a valuable work in its time, its fame somewhat darkened by the success of another work by the same author, the Barceló Movie Theater. It was not published by the architectural magazines up to 1971 when I wrote an article on Gutiérrez Soto which appeared in "Hogar y Arquitectura". The authors of the "Complete Works", published by the C.O.A.M. in 1978, deplored that there would be no plans of the building in the architect's archive (then already deceased).

But, if it was not properly valued in its own

time, neither it was afterwards by specialized critics who did not pay much attention to Gutiérrez Soto's Rationalist epoch, probably because they centered too much on his posterior autarchic period and related him too much to his ideological position so disapproved of by the "intelligentsia". During the seventies Gutiérrez Soto's reputation was somewhat revived: monographic issues on our author were published by architectural magazines (Carlos Flores "Hogar y Arquitectura" in 1971 and Juan Daniel Fullaondo's "Nueva Forma" in 1972) and the C.O.A.M. produced the above mentioned "Complete works" (1978).

Our own interest in this building is provoked by its early assumption of European Expressionism and the characteristic freedom with which it incorporates elements of diverse origin.

It might be considered a surprisingly progressive work as compared with the Callao Movie Theater. According to Fdz. Muñoz it is the very building type what changes from one to the other. Although the inner spaces are simply juxtaposed (access, vestibule, hall), they are perceived altogether as a unit thanks to the curved parapet which becomes broader and broader towards the screen.

This piece is the leit-motiv of the building; it also appears on the facade, articulating a rear attic plane with the front and giving a somewhat horizontal image to a logically vertical element as it is the corner which is separated from the street's alignment in its short side. Gutiérrez Soto's ability in the use of compositive elements is equal to his capacity of assuming Expressionist or Art Decó ornament within an unmistakable Rationalist mode. A device, that of using extraneous elements, use by the author to show his own personality. The building's magnificent interior and its powerful and dramatic exterior, now dangerously abandoned, are not just a chief work but also a surprisingly early example of pioneering Spanish Rationalism.

The documentation here published, previously unreleased, has been found in the "Archivo de Villa" (ASA: 26/394/6 and 26/395/22) and it was gathered by the C.O.A.M.'s Historical Archive. The plans were presented to the Town Hall for the obtention of the building permission the 28th of May, 1928.

1978. And, finally, in 1991, I came to gather in Seville professors Calabi, Concina, Morachiello, Morresi and Tafuri, for a conference series on Renaissance Venice, who summed up the last one of the Research Teams organized by the Department of History of Architecture from the Architectural University Institute of Venice. It is not much, but all these facts are the sign of a sincere attraction towards the scholar life of the Historian Tafuri, which will remain as an example of vitality and intellectual readiness.

I do not consider myself capable of offering you the echo of his thoughts or the flavour of his findings. Moreover, probably this is not the place for academic dissertations and I am not the best person to undertake such a labor. But do not think my attitude as dictated by Epicurus' words quoted by Erasmus in his Praise of Folly. Epicurus said: "he would rather be considered inept and illiterate than wise and peevish". It is rather that I would like to follow Manfredi's advice in the last letter he sent me: "bisogna essere stoici ed epicurei insieme" ("it is necessary to be stoic and epicurean at the same time").

This is the way to overcome Erasmus' merciless mockery of stoic writers: those "who live constantly tortured: adding, modifying, suppressing, replacing, redoing, clarifying, showing their texts to their friends, improving them during nine years and are never satisfied". But we will neither join those who praise Morism as expressed by "that one would be the happiest who would say more incongruities".

Tafuri's Folly, half stoic, half epicurean, is rather that of Erasmus, More or our Benito Arias Montano. Last Sunday, I went to his Alajar Peak to encounter his tension and calmness, Flanders and Alajar, studying and writing, Philip the Second and landscape, his way of Morism that can teach us some things about happiness. Happy was Manfredi who was always involved in "lavoro con gioia e maggiore impegno" ("work with pleasure and increasing interest"). In one of his fruitful interviews, published by Mercedes Daguerre and Giulio Lupo in the Buenos Aires' magazine, *Materiales* (5, March, 1985), he talked about an autobiographic episode, when he began in Rome his studies on History of Architecture. He says: "I joined the Faculty of Architecture in the 1953-54 course and I had two textbooks: Bruno Zevi's 'History of Modern Architecture', published in 1950, and Giulio Carlo Argan's 'Gropius and the Bauhaus', published in 1951, which I consider an answer to Zevi's book. I think they are both great historical texts, admirable historical constructions which share a common characteristic, their complete lack of philological analysis... Argan quotes many paragraphs, what makes him appear as very scientific. It took me some time to realize that he quoted Gropius putting some lines from a 1919 text together with some from 1930, and then a bit from 1923 etc..., as if there was no evolution in Gropius' thought".

I would like this reference to young Manfredi Tafuri to introduce my following discourse. Because it is the evolution of his work, that is, his life, what I would like to point out as an outstanding witness to the second half of this century. I will not attempt, though, to disentangle such a rich legacy (those who would dare to, will surly have a lot of work). I will just try, taking advantage of this session's brevity, to make a brief account of what he taught me, of what I should have learnt, that is, if I had had the proper disposition.

I began very early to read Tafuri's works. Just when I was a student with an acknowledged interest in history. I read his first texts about

urban planning in Helsinki and city and territory, made in cooperation with Giorgio Piccinato, and then his "tesi di laurea" on Ludovico Quaroni (1964), his first book and the second one on Japanese architecture, translated in 1968 and published together with his commentaries on Amiens' cathedral (1966). They brought us a sense of inquisitiveness that was completely new in Spain. In 1966 a new interesting book appeared, "L'architettura del manierismo nel cinquecento europeo" (Mannerist Architecture in 16th century Europe), a work influenced by the interest in Mannerism showed by historians and other thinkers in all those years. Past and present were always the object of Tafuri's thoughts. The ISAUR Quaderni already showed this concern about philological analysis of authors as Borromini (1965); in 1969, moreover, he published his "Jacopo Sansovino e l'architettura del 500 a Venezia", his link with Venice became stronger. In this same year he developed what had been an entry (Rinascimento) of the *Dizionario di Architettura* into a separate volume called *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo*.

It was with some texts from those days, articles published between 1967 and 1973, that we made the book published in Seville: "Rhetoric and Experimentalism", essays on 16th and 17th century architecture. Rhetoric as general art of communication, scientific method to built any kind of discourse or discipline; experimentalism as self-critical method for artistic communication, as research about the limits imposed on what we consider linguistic expression.

His interpretations then were still influenced by many concerns and external stimuli. His attraction to practice, engendered somehow a theoretical distress. This unsatisfactory situation was taken as a challenge. The entire History had to be reinterpreted.

His new book, "Theories and History of Architecture", written in 1964 and published in 1968, became the starting point for a new attitude. He pointed it out in an interview with François Véry (1976); "one must create oneself in certain moments of life"; he was then somewhat lost, uprooted, "denied" by the Italian University, swinging from Milan to Palermo. Theories and History was an intent to offer a historically based answer to architects in search of a guide or programme. I read and read again that book in 1971 and 1972 (the year of the Spanish version), and I wrote a long analysis of it for the "Hogar y Arquitectura" magazine (1973). It would be later on, in 1981 (*Architectural Design*, 6/7), when Tomás Llorens would write a more conscious critic on Tafuri's work in those decisive years, inviting us to examine the book as a palimpsest.

"Theories and History" is a specially biographical book. It is a book written for the author himself. Furious against most of the texts he read, he just stated his unhappy discoveries were he could, in void spaces of a labyrinth which would become "Theories and History". A book that he himself would acknowledge as a turning point in his career. From then on, it would be necessary to face important specific studies. And that was purpose of the book "Via Giulia" (1973).

But this schizophrenic dimension of the historian's labor had not been overcome but just surpassed by reality. Tafuri could not surrender to a unique way of historiographic progress (that somewhat insane but astute obsession for what was specific). Theories and History would also be the base for another radical attitude (an also insane and somewhat childish flair for extremism). Its manifest would be the article "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica", published in *Contropiano* magazine in 1969

## Me-moriae Enconmum

LECTURES' SERIES "PER A MANFREDO TAFURI"

Víctor Pérez Escolano

"Good-bye, bright More, may you zealously defend your Morism". (Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, 1508).

"People consider mistakes a shame; but it is worse not to err. They are wrong, therefore, those who think that man's happiness lies in things. It rather depends on what their opinion is about them" (Ibidem, p.89).

To pay a tribute to Manfredi Tafuri, we have gathered here summoned by the Architect's College of Catalonia and Barcelona's Beaux Arts Circle. I would like, hence, first of all to acknowledge both institutions for their invitation to participate in these sessions. I pray you not to expect from my discourse more than a humble token of my

admiration and esteem for an extraordinary intellectual personality, my friend for more than twenty years, with whom I established a somewhat intermittent but never broken relationship, of which some well known episodes, very dear to me, have probably induced the organizers of these sessions to invite me. I am talking about the time, in 1974, when I invited him to the Architecture School of Seville to give a lecture course on the expansion of Renaissance Architecture. I obtained from his generosity the publication of a collection of essays (hitherto unpublished in Italy) about the architecture of the 16th and 17th centuries. I also translated his "Rhetoric and Experimentalism" and "Humanism's Architecture", both issued in



(translated into Spanish three years later and published in the collective volume "De la Vanguardia a la Metrópoli. Crítica radical a la Arquitectura"). This same article, with some additions (just those admitted by the publishing format, according to Tafuri), became, in 1973, a brief but powerful book, "Progetto e Utopia". A book which included some verifications and analysis of specific facts and circumstances by means of ideological critic. This method, firstly embraced by him in the previous decade, would be the basic argument of another book, made in collaboration with Dal Co, a more meditated and ambitious project that was to be published in 1973 under the name of "Architettura Contemporanea" (Spanish Edition 1978).

This was an example of global analysis of the whole cycle of modern architecture and was the first one among a series of studies elaborated by his Venetian circle. It also belonged to the contemporary current of heterodox marxist studies, among others those of Asor Rosa, editor in chief of the *Contrapiano* magazine. It was a time of critical confrontation with the great myths of "progressive" architecture. He faced it together with his first Venetian disciple, Francesco Dal Co, who wrote youthful and brilliant articles applying the critical analysis of ideology to different avant-garde movements (Bauhaus and Soviet Union). The contribution of a new member of the circle, Massimo Cacciari would orientate the inquiry towards concepts as class composition and development of the capital. More studies on artistic avant-garde movements would be undertaken and the method of ideological criticism would give birth to a collective work, "Socialismo, città, architettura. USSR 1817-1937" (1971).

Afterwards, they tried to transcend this kind of orientation by analyzing the role of professionals in the processes of development of capital. This new attempt made Tafuri's team study the inter-war period in the most advanced societies of the time: Germany and United States.

All these are examples of the educational system developed by the IUAV's Department of History. It is also interesting to mention the titles of some of Tafuri's lecture courses in the central years of the seventies decade: "Storia dell'ideologia antiurbana" (1972-73) (History of anti-urban ideology), "Struttura e architettura della città terziaria in America 1850-1973" (1973-74) (Structure and architecture of American Tertiary city 1850-1973), "Lo sviluppo urbano negli Stati Uniti (1780-1974) e il problema dell'housing (1974-75) (Urban development in U.S.A. and the housing problem), "Il grattacielo e la struttura della città terziaria in America e in Europa 1857-1975 (1976-77) (The Skyscraper and the structure of the Tertiary city in America and Europe). The book "La città americana della guerra civile al New Deal" (1973) (American cities from the Civil War to the New Deal), written by the team Ciucci, Dal Co, Manieri Elia and Tafuri, would be the most significant fruit of this system.

After all these collective works on contemporary architecture, the ideological critic seemed to be spent and Tafuri began to work in another fashion. The fact that Franco Rella had joined the Venetian Department of Artistic Literature was possibly one of the factors for this change. A new concept appeared

in scholar circles that would be very useful in the seventies, the concept of "transgression" assumed as the "century's cardinal institution", invading everyday life as the avant-garde invaded the very institutions it tried to defeat or replace. This new concept would be the leit-motif of a series of essays published by Tafuri between 1971 and 1977 and which would be gathered in

1980 in the book "The sphere and the labyrinth. Avant-garde and Piranesi's architecture in the seventies". What was the actual mission Tafuri intended for this new book? Just confront the post-modern "myth", a real "culture of simulation" that was, in those days, being strongly promoted by its powerful supporters and which was magnificently celebrated in the architectural section of the Venice's Biennale entitled "La presenza del Passato" (The past's presence).

One of the most brilliant interviews held by Tafuri was the one published by Antonino Terranova in the Roman University magazine "Rassegna di architettura e urbanistica" (No. 54, december 1982), with the heading "Alcuni temi e problemi tra progetto e storia" (Some themes and problems related to project and history). This interview was precisely held in the period of Post-modern enthusiasm in the Venetian Biennial. In it, Tafuri called the "Mostra" a "political act with a perfect Piacentinian style" and, in his attack to that supposed relationship between architect and history, he came to produce brief but sagacious comments on Alberti and Palladio.

History cannot just be an instrument for nostalgia, it is rather a complex labor whose end Tafuri describes in a masterly way. The historian's labor can be divided into two moments: first of all, he must "force" historical material and then try to "build" with its fragments a new assemble while being conscious of its provisional quality.

Tafuri, with his censure directed to the architects tried to confront what he called, at the beginning of the eighties, "an specific History of techniques".

This was a period of transition in which he got past the general history of structural production relations and began to work in describing the processes responsible for specific traits of poetical expression. He expressed himself in these terms in his 1975 article "Architecture and Historiography: a methodic proposal".

Other works as "Il dispositivo Foucault" (The Foucault's device) or "Le macchine Imperfette" (The imperfect machines) (both 1977), centered on the 19th century were the outcome of his labor in the so called (under the influence of the Dean Aymonino) Department of Critical and Historical Analysis, of which Georges Teyssot was to become a central figure.

During the eighties, this department became again of History of Architecture and Tafuri tried, but did not succeed in, to unify in it all the subjects related to History within the University of Venice. He could have torn apart even the name of architecture from the department's title. He just wanted to educate historians.

What was this all about? Tafuri himself has admitted that the university atmosphere has become more academic. It is not anymore the political center it was in the period between 1968 and 77. This changes in the structure should result in changes in the disciplines.

The French magazine *Annales* and its circle (Febvre, Bloch, Le Goff, Braudel) is seen as paradigmatic of modern historiography even though some of their assumptions, as the static notion of historical structure, may be arguable. We must neither forget the inductive capacity of Carlo Ginzburg's method.

Tafuri was in those days (1980-83) enthusiastic (he would be soon frustrated) about his working in collaboration with Antonio Foscari, with whom he was investigating Venetian Humanism. They published together "L'armonia e i conflitti. La chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna nell Venezia del 500" (1983) (Harmony and

conflict. The Church of San Francesco della Vigna in 16th century Venice) in the collection *Microstorie* of Einaudi Press (precisely initiated by Ginzburg's "Il formaggio e i vermi" (The cheese and the worms)). This publication in a historical collection not specifically architectural was rather satisfactory for Tafuri.

During the 1983 academic year, Tafuri Post-graduate courses were dedicated to 15th and 16th century Venice, the period of the so called "Renovatio Urbis". He also lectured on "Classical Myth and Mythology" and "The garden as a historical labyrinth".

An then, what happened with contemporary architecture? Tafuri was rather clear in the interview he held with Daguerre and Lupo: "We have finally understood that it is very difficult to become a thorough historian by starting with contemporary matters".

In 1982, Manfredo Tafuri, after a tiresome effort, finished his contribution to Federico Zeri's "Storia dell'arte italiana" (volume VII, II Novecento). In 1986, he made a new effort, and revised it for separate publication in Einaudi Press, his favorite publisher. This new edition, under the name "Storia dell'architettura italiana 1944-1985", included a final chapter called "La soglia e il problema" (The threshold and the problem). It is not a matter here of stating once again the announced death of architecture. He just concludes somewhat peevishly: "we cannot be sure about the future of what today just seems to indicate the possibility of new alliances".

Disenchantment is obviously present. In 1980, on the occasion of the exhibition "Das Rote Wien" (Red Vienna), he recovered some of his previous themes. The final sentence of the text, quoted from the novel "February street" (the date of the workers rebellion in 1934), by Anna Seghers, is not accidental: "Nothing is now as it was. Karl Marx Hof is not ruined, it has succeeded. But our faith in the Party... that is destroyed".

At the beginning of his "Ricerca del Rinascimento. Principi, città, architetti" (1992) (A research on the Renaissance. Principles, cities, architects), Tafuri recovers one of his favorite themes: "our architectural culture, just thinking on itself, has created a sense of guilt which it must overcome". A situation in which the possible getaways are based on the problems' oblivion.

Tafuri's abandonment of contemporary architecture as a matter of research in later years must not be interpreted as an abdication. In 1991 he was very clear: "I think that it is very difficult to assume a historical view of ancient matters if one has not learnt to live in the present and appreciate the processes in which values become changed". Or: "The significance of the old buildings will hardly be understood if the cities are not modern cities". But he also states his concerns: "It is essential for contemporary architecture to be admired not just by architects". And Venice is the paradigm of the troublesome situation: "Without the experience of contemporary issues, history becomes uncommunicative or just a personal fancy". His Departmental labor becomes more and more involved with Venice in these later years: Palladio e Venezia (1982), Renovatio Urbis (1984), Venezia e il Rinascimento (1985), among other books and innumerable articles, his or Concina's, Calabi's, Morachiello's, Morris's ... "An image for the men of the future", in Nietzsche's words. The election of Cacciari as Mayor of the city during the later Italian political crisis is not the lesser outcome of all this efforts.

Tafuri's prologues to his historical books relating past times are always full of

considerations about the present. In *Ricerca del Rinascimento*, the last one of his great books, Tafuri maintains this attitude. As he has almost completely abandoned contemporary matters as an object of study and embraced history and memory, he has felt committed to defend both from recent attacks: "the desertion of historical roots (as attributed to the avant-garde or a mythical "modern movement") can be cured by means of a "therapy of remembrance". Seldmayr's thoughts (based on the "loss of center" and "light's death") are, thus, pathetically revived. Seldmayr, Benjamin ("the loss of the aura"), Klein ("reference's agony"). Loss, death, agony...dramatic expression of the reference's fracture, the split between beauty and truth.

But Tafuri, from his renaissance watchtower is firm and resolute: it must be admitted that the nostalgia of the basis persists over the ages, figures and counterfigures of 20th century architecture. Meditations on the "new ways" in the 15th and 16th centuries prevail over the present "catastrophic spirit". His attitude as historian is now again that of previous years: "the "weak power" of analysis is considered just an instant within a general attitude that will leave unresolved the problems of the past, disturbing somewhat the present". Modern architecture is neglected and the historian is alive.

"Therapy of Remembrance". This concept is probably more clear in another interview, one of the last ones, held with Chiara Baglione and Bruno Predetti and published by Casabella in 1991. Its heading, "Storia, conservazione, restauro" (History, preservation, restoration). It shows us Tafuri's view on this serious issues. Preservation would be a matter of history, while restoration can be left to architecture. When a society takes a decision over a monument's value, it is not possible to think about its transformation or refurbishment. It cannot be accepted that the architect should supply with any personal view, nor any other institution, public or private decide over the object's destiny. Tafuri detaches himself from any concept of traumatic restoration. His Department, now clearly entitled "History of Architecture", will be dedicated to educate curators, new professionals whose mentor will not see at work.

We have to regret his death, so young, so lucid, knowing and prolific yet, not just because of the sorrow caused by his absence, the loss of his presence, but because it means that we will have no more of his contributions, so abundant, rich, rigorous and strict. His work in progress is now interrupted. This was the omen: the death of an excellent man and dear friend, the end of the fruit of his wisdom.

This words do want to be a tribute, a panegyric dedicated to an immoderate attitude, the intellectual's labor. I want to celebrate, thus, Tafuri's memory. In "The Praise of Folly", Erasmus includes his "Moriae Encomium, Stultiae Laus", a letter to More which I have quoted at the beginning of this, my humble discourse. It was not my intention to make a mournful elegy. Neither it was to spend this brief time expounding erudite thoughts. Perhaps I have mentioned too many books, articles and declarations which are surly above my capacity. I just wanted to offer you some light about my discovering of Professor Tafuri's life and work. He always knew, by means of his powerful insight and subtle discernment, all along his complex career, how to unveil for us the architectural universe. A continuous exercise of wisdom. This was his Morism.

Thank you.