A STUDY OF SIX CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL CRITICS

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study six contemporary architectural critics: Reyner Banham, Nikolaus Pevsner, J. M. Richards, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Joseph Hudnut, and Lewis Mumford. By the juxtaposition, in a single volume, of critical analyses of the most recurrent and dominant themes of each writer, their individual contributions to architectural criticism may be compared.

Architectural criticism is concerned with relating buildings, individually or in select groups, to an explicit or implicit set of values. One of the tasks of this thesis is to isolate the values that actually determine each critic's judgements, particularly when these values have not been specifically announced by the critic himself. Comparison between these six critics is complicated by the fact that the preoccupations of one critic may be totally neglected by another, and that for a given critic, a synthesis of points of view that are urged only separately must be tentative. Indeed, few of the critics reviewed in this thesis have developed their own theses to any appreciable extent. Their definitions of terms that are frequently used ambiguously can only be gauged according to the sense in which these terms are habitually applied. In different articles the use of a term is sometimes contradictory.

The value of architectural criticism is threefold. First, as the discussion of ideals, it indicates the ultimate
ends of architectural effort; second, as the practical discussion of means, it demonstrates the concrete realization of ideals in terms of buildings; and third, as the record of the critic's personal response to a particular man-made environment, the reader of criticism shares a vicarious experience of that environment himself.

In practise, an architect seldom has the time or opportunity to develop a critical theory for himself, but he is constantly required to communicate his ideas verbally to clients, actual and prospective, and to fellow architects. By studying those who are specialized and proficient in the field of architectural criticism, the architect may achieve precision and profundity in his own declamations, and discover general principles that illuminate his specific concerns.
II. REYNER BANHAM

A. BACKGROUND

Reyner Banham (1922- ) is an associate editor of The Architectural Review, architectural correspondent for the New Statesman, and a frequent contributor to the Architect's Journal. His voice is often heard as a formal speaker or obstinate question-poser at meetings of the Royal Institute of British Architects and at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, in London. His other interests include science, the literature known as Science Fiction, motor cars, and the trends of popular taste in music, design, literature and mass entertainment. Banham is inclined to make dramatic statements that are chiefly intended to shatter the complacency of established critics and architects, and because of this he has acquired something of the reputation of a literary enfant terrible. Unfortunately Banham has not yet published any books.
B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. General

Banham has been chiefly concerned with (i) re-directing attention to some of the less familiar personalities who pioneered the modern movement in architecture, (ii) charting the development of New Brutalism, and eclecticism in modern Italian architecture, and (iii) approaching the history of the modern movement by considering the determining figures and ideas that affected its course.

Since periodical articles are necessarily brief, it may sometimes appear that the habitual periodical writer, such as Banham, is over-concerned with relatively minor issues, and that his ideas are presented as fragments of a larger view.

Banham's articles, especially in the professional journals, often presuppose not only acquaintance with the standard texts and examples of modern architectural theory and practice, but also an awareness of what Banham himself has previously written and of issues which are topically conversational and controversial amongst present-day English architects. For instance, when Banham says: "the certainties of the thirties have run dry; they are no longer valid and alive," the certainties to which he refers are the confident,

optimistic, and prophetic convictions of architects of that
time—as expressed in Le Corbusier’s *Vers Une Architecture,*
and in sundry other publications—that modern architecture,
emancipated from the battle of the styles and allied with
science and the machine, was the harbinger of a glorious new
age of beauty and rationality. Many young English architects
feel that since the prophesied new age did not eventuate, the
origins, the aims, and the developments of the architects
who suggested that it would, are only remotely applicable to
our contemporary situation.

Because he writes so prolifically, and because his
style is so enthusiastic, so persuasive, and so urgent, Ban-
ham often forces a topicality upon subjects that may other¬
wise have remained undiscussed. By frequent references to
the same subject in different articles and in different
journals, he manages to convey the impression that his parti¬
cular personal interest is the interest of many others, and
that to be unaware of this interest is to be behind-the-times
or out-of-touch. Banham is a clever propagandist. For ex¬
ample, in 1953 Banham wrote a critical article on an Italian
apartment building, the Casa del Girasole, and in 1960 claimed
that this building had become a touchstone by which an archi-
tect’s taste could be measured.¹ Now except for a letter to

¹"Casa del Girasole," *Architectural Review,* February
1953, p. 73, and "Stocktaking 1960," *Architectural Review,*
February 1960, p. 95.
the editor directly following the publication of Banham's original article, the Casa del Girasole has not been referred to in any other obvious publications. Either the Casa del Girasole has had conversational attention, of which we are unaware, amongst Banham's acquaintances, or his estimation of the building's significance is a personal conceit. The fact remains that since the Casa del Girasole pushes the form-follows-function concept to the limits of reasonableness, the observer's reaction to this building will expose the extent of his adherence to the form-function discipline.

2. Personalities

Banham has a predilection to write about "architects who lie outside the respectable genealogy of the Modern Movement",¹ and this makes him more difficult to evaluate in comparison with writers who explore the more familiar figures, such as Gropius, Le Corbusier, Van der Rohe or Wright, about whom we have our own judgements to weigh against those put forward by others. Nevertheless, the apparently minor figures of whom Banham writes have, because of the significance of his preciously researched minutae, a disturbing habit of acquiring major significance, and of altering the whole structure of established notions of cause

¹Banham, "Mendelsohn", Architectural Review, August 1954, p. 84.
and effect in the development of modern architecture.\(^1\)

(a) The architect Eric Mendelsohn (1887-1953) has been conventionally regarded as an Expressionist, largely on the basis of the sensational and oft-reproduced sketches of the era of Einstein Tower, but Banham has propounded the thesis that Mendelsohn had "ceased rather than begun, to be an Expressionist in the twenties", and that this Expressionistic phase, though superficially novel and apparently *avant-garde*, can be related to a continuing Beaux-Arts influence which is more than skin deep.\(^2\)

The powerful plastic sensibility, which shapes the aggressive forms of the projects, often models them in a manner which seems quite alien to the nature and performance of the material which is supposed to compose them. The forms which he employs express a romantic feeling about the materials, rather than a technical understanding of them, just as the overall shape of the building is intended to express something about the process conducted within, but

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\(^1\)See Banham, "The Glass Paradise", *Architectural Review*, February 1959, p. 87, for recent information on the origins of the glass-skyscraper concept.

\(^2\)Banham, "Mendelsohn", p. 84. Note: The German school of Expressionism, during the first two decades of this century, included artists such as Ensor, Munch, Kokoschka, Marc, Klee, Feininger and Kandinsky. Some of the characteristics of the movement were "new nonnaturalistic, highly emotive, and even ecstatic forms," which were intended to create new experiences rather than to describe or reproduce previous experience. Considerations of structure, process and technique were subordinated to the Expressionists' *gebalter Schrei* (clenched cry): After Bernard S. Myers, *The German Expressionists*. Mendelsohn, in works such as the Einstein Tower, certainly created "highly emotive and even ecstatic forms"; and this led to his classification as an Expressionist.
seems not to be governed by any interest in the space or flow requirements of that process. This idea, of shapes being able to express certain emotions or attitudes, is the great legacy of nineteenth century academic thought to the aesthetics of expressionism, and this academic affiliation is unexpectedly confirmed by the symmetrical Beaux-Arts plans which are appended to some of these projects.1

In Mendelsohn's expressionist period, (1914-1922 according to Banham), his architecture is shown to be only quasi-technological in aspect, and formal, rather than functional, in its plan. This attempt to create a technological image, not necessarily derived from internal programmatical strictures, but superimposed as a visual symbol on an otherwise neutral carcass, is characteristic of much modern product design, particularly in the case of automobiles and domestic appliances.

Not only did Mendelsohn establish the theoretical attitudes upon which the approach of contemporary product designers was founded, and indeed, in some cases has floundered, but he also initiated much of the visual precedent, as Banham has shown with respect to Mendelsohn's designs for service station pumps. Banham suggests that it is to Mendelsohn that we should look for the father of the design idiom known as Borax2, about which architects usually

1Ibid.

2In his article on Mendelsohn, Banham defines Borax as "in general a bulbous pressed steel and/or moulded plastic manner, somewhat related to purely functional streamlining and normally enlivened by close-spaced horizontal or
manifest attitudes of horror and distaste, and affect doubts as to the legitimacy of its birth. However,

His ultimate responsibility for the formal language of American product design cannot be denied, but to hold him responsible for the enormities of its misuse is stupid.¹

By spreading his attention over the entire output of the man, Banham is able to convey a more realistic appraisal of Mendelsohn's work, and by this demonstration of historical scholarship, show that despite the diminishing significance of the Einstein Tower, our total estimate of Mendelsohn as one of the form-givers of the twentieth century is actually increased.

(b) Reviewing The Work of G. Rietveld, Architect, by Theodore M. Brown, Reyner Banham again confounds conventional history by challenging "the official de Stijl estimate, propagated by Theo Van Doesburg, that Rietveld was a native Dutch genius who profoundly influenced the course of modern German architecture."² After pointing out earlier and contemporaneous work similar to Rietveld's supposed precedents,

vertical striping, usually of chromium plate." Banham's opinion from the same article, is that "Whatever its faults, Borax is a valid design idiom whose strength derives from the fact that (pace Sigfried Giedion) its sources lie ultimately within the twentieth century technology—that it is a sort of peasant art whose strength lies in a popular science fiction admiration of the aeroplane and the sports-car."

¹Ibid., p. 82.
Banham concludes:

When these considerations are read into the record, much of Rietveld's supposed influence evaporates—he and, for instance, Mies van der Rohe appear as designers drawing on a common pool of ideas, and primacy in the use of a particular architectural device does not necessarily imply primacy in its conception.¹

This would place both Rietveld and van der Rohe as developers, not innovators.

(c) Many architects, if asked to name the painter who they believed to be closest to the Modern Movement in the visual attributes of his work, would name Piet Mondrian. To a degree they would be correct. Modern buildings display ample evidence of facade, plan, and structural patterns which bear witness to their inspiration—Mondrian's black-lined compositions, rectangular, serene, with the white rectangles occasionally filled-in with primary colours. This visual coincidence suggests that Mondrian and modern architects have similar motives, and it has been implied that the contemporary architect should study Mondrian's philosophy as a basis for creative design.² This implication is also derived from the idea that Mondrian composed his paintings in a manner similar to the way that early modern architects designed their buildings, by limiting

¹Ibid.
himself to a skilfully calculated geometric pattern, and that Mondrian's poverty of painterly means was a self-imposed plastic discipline, an endeavour to rid his personal creations of any symbolic, connotative or associative ideas. Banham believes that far from being meaningless visual devices, objective and primarily aesthetic in intent, Mondrian invested the horizontal and vertical elements of his work with a profound symbolical content. The vertical aspect represented, or symbolized, the male, the father, the sky; the horizontal element the female, the mother, the earth. On the resolution of these patriarchal and matriarchal tendencies the philosophy of the universe was to be understood (according to Mondrian), and resolved in visual terms, the vertical and the horizontal become a cross. His art, apparently exclusive of elements other than the visual, is intentionally inclusive—an abstract wedding of form and content, expressed symbolically. Banham's belief is based upon material recorded by Dr. H. L. C. Jaffe, who in his book *de Stijl 1917-1931*, traces Mondrian's metaphysical convictions to the influence of Dr. Schoenmaker, a Dutch theosophist, and draws many parallelisms between Mondrian's and Schoenmaker's writings—as well, the two men were close friends.\(^1\) Banham feels that Dr. Jaffe's exposition of the subjective and symbolic nature of Mondrian's art demonstrates that Mondrian's

\(^1\)H. L. C. Jaffe, *de Stijl 1917-1931*, p. 52-62.
approach is inappropriate when applied to architecture.

Banham concludes that:

Mondrian may well serve as a demonstration that an aesthetic may be logical, and yet entirely subjective. An architecture whose programme is functional, and rooted in technology, cannot afford to be subjective. . . . . to admit Mondrian's method to the philosophy of modern design is simply to block its development by proposing an ultimate term, the cross, beyond which it cannot pass.¹

From reports of those who had observed Mondrian at work; shifting, adjusting, and finally placing his elements by eye, without the aid of measuring devices or proportional rules, Banham comes to the opinion that

Mondrian may appear classical, but in fact he is random—in appearance and in process.²

Again, Banham maintains that if architecture is concerned with the systematic organization of spaces for rational purposes, then random and arbitrary processes of design are unsuitable. He does not argue that rules of proportion and classical appearances are the alternative approach. The purpose of the article "Mondrian and the Philosophy of Design", is to point out that theories of proportion that use Mondrian as evidence to substantiate their systematic rules defeat themselves, and that design theorists who make analogies between Mondrian's painting and the classical, trabeated structural grids of modern architecture have falsely concluded that like

¹Banham, op. cit.
²Ibid., p. 273.
effects are generated by like causes.

(d) Apart from a brief evaluation in Talbot Hamlin's *Architecture Through the Ages*, and a short illustrated note in Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*, very little documentary research had been done on Antonio de Sant 'Elia. Banham has attempted to remedy this deficiency by collecting all the extant drawings and writings of Sant 'Elia, and using them to discover what sort of man Sant 'Elia was, and what fundamental theory motivated his work. Sant 'Elia not only introduced "the futurist love of movement into his city as an artistic element", as Professor Giedion has pointed out, but prophesized, in drawings and in his *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture*, "architecture of calculation, of temerious boldness and simplicity: the architecture of reinforced concrete, iron, glass, cardboard, textile fibres," and cities in which multi-level circulation of vehicles and pedestrians would shape an environment that would be "active, mobile and everywhere dynamic."  

If fact, putting the total corpus of drawings against the text of his manifesto, we see that he (Sant 'Elia) was among the very first to combine a complete acceptance of the machine-world with an ability to realize and symbolize that acceptance in terms of

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powerful and simple geometrical form. The acceptance is more complete than Le Corbusier's, the forms more powerful than those of Gropius.¹

3. Movements

(a) New Brutalism. Intent on both recording and affecting current history, Reyner Banham has tried to draw up the family tree of personal contacts which initiated the movement known as New Brutalism, and to locate its original individual source; he has also been involved both as developer and advocate of New Brutalist theory, and its currency as an approach to architectural design owes much to his writings on the subject.

Were it not for the persistence of New Brutalism, in both theory and practice, if it had withered before it had taken root, it may have been possible to substantiate the charge that the New Brutalists were Angry Young Men (and Women) who, having missed the architectural revolution of the first few decades of this century, were intent on having a revolt anyway, simply because of their revolution-oriented personalities. In its infancy, there was a tendency to label the movement as a pernicious hoax, which would finish as peremptorily as it began, but even the most cursory glance at the competition entries for Churchill College would indicate that Brutalist aesthetic predilections are widespread,

and by now affect the established as well as the emergent architect.¹

The precise origins of the term New Brutalism are not determinable. Banham has been able to trace early uses of the term to two general sources, but not to specific persons. New Brutalism was used as a term of abuse by neo-Marxist students of architecture in England, in contradistinction to New Humanism—the presumed architectural-social motive of socialist countries.² In Sweden the term was used to describe the reaction on the part of some of the younger architects to an excess of sentiment in their national architecture.³

As a deliberate manifesto New Brutalism began in England, as the self-conscious declaration of two young architects, Peter and Alison Smithson. From then on, the idea of New Brutalism has been the focus of attention for many of the young English architects who object to the architect being reduced to the role of a cosmetician, and who refuse to

¹See Architect's Journal, September 3, 1959, p. 120-142.


³Cf. Eric de Mare, "Et tu Brute", Architectural Review, August 1956, p. 72. Mr. de Mare claims that New Brutalism was first used in "a mildly sarcastic way" by Hans Asplund, son of the late Gunnar Asplund, to describe a house designed, in Sweden, by Bengt Edman and Lennart Holm.
allow architecture to be determined by merely technological and functional requirements.

As an architectural theory, New Brutalism is chiefly expounded in Britain, though examples of architecture that the New Brutalists consider significant are spread worldwide. Peter Smithson, the assumed titular leader of the New Brutalists lists

Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation
the Hochschule at Ulm
the Heinz factory by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill
860 Lake Shore Drive
Tokio Town Hall

and almost certainly would include the Hunstanton school, by Alison and Peter Smithson; Le Corbusier's Maison Jaoul, the Convent, La Tourette at Evreux; and some of the work of Louis Kahn, such as the Yale Art Gallery and Museum.

For all the examples given, New Brutalism is recognizable more in attitudes of mind than in the product, it is the motive and intent behind the artifact as well as the artifact itself which decides its classification, though there are certain fundamental visual characteristics which promote the initial suspicion that one is confronted with a New Brutalist image. What is Banham's interpretation of the New Brutalist architectural thesis? It requires of buildings that they demonstrate:

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1. Memorability as an Image.
2. Clear Exhibition of Structure.
3. Valuation of materials as found.

In the last resort what characterizes the New Brutalism in architecture as in painting is precisely its brutality, its je-m'en foutisme, its bloody-mindedness.¹

To what extent the values that Banham finds in New Brutalism are projections of his own, and to what extent he has been simply the chronicler of these values must remain a matter of conjecture, since it would require psychoanalysis of both parties and a knowledge of even their most private discussions to enable us to discover who influenced whom. Nevertheless the sympathetic relationship between Banham and the New Brutalists is undeniable. Compare for instance the topics which Banham has observed hold special fascination for the New Brutalists and the "junior avant-garde":

... certain movements, such as Futurism and Expressionism, that were current before the white plague paralyzed architectural thought, ... admiring with equal fervour peasant houses on Santorin, and the chromework on Detroit cars; the Cutty Sark, Chiswick House, Camels cigarette packs and Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp; Pollock, Paolozzi, and Volkswagens.²

with the topics about which Banham himself has written in

the *Architectural Review*: Mendelsohn (Expressionism), Sant 'Elia (Futurism), and New Brutalism itself, as well as frequent references to Detroit chromework etc., under the general term of Borax.¹

Certainly Banham, more than any other architectural critic, has been responsible for keeping the New Brutalist movement going, by advocating its seriousness, by constantly keeping the phrase itself before the readers of the architectural magazines, and by documenting the history of the movement while it is in the very process of the making.² Of course published New Brutalist buildings and projects were not without their own persuasive impact, but it was Banham who gave them their literary respectability.

(b) Eclecticism in Modern Italian Architecture: According to Banham, Italian architecture since the end of World War II has been predominantly eclectic. As used by most modern architects, the label "eclectic" carries connotations of reprehensibility, yet such a value judgement is not implicit in the dictionary definition, (nor, by the way, in Banham's). From Webster's Dictionary we find eclecticism


²In reply to a correspondent, who had derided the *Architectural Review* for publishing New Brutalist material, Banham strongly defended Brutalist doctrines and works, and clearly demonstrated his partisanship.
defined thus:

"Eclecticism: Method or practice of selecting what seems best from various systems . . . ", if there is any value implied at all "best" indicates that eclecticism may well be a worthy proposition. ¹

In architecture, eclecticism as used generally seems to imply the selecting of compositional motifs from more than one historical style, or at least obtaining inspiration therein. It can also mean the expression, in a single work, (or in the case of an eclectic personality, in successive works) of characteristics which are normally thought to be contradictory or antagonistic i.e. the romantic and the classical attitudes; technological materials and homespun composition.

On the one hand eclecticism can demonstrate an uncertainty, a lack of intrinsic direction and purpose on behalf of its perpetrator; on the other hand, when employed by a master, eclecticism can demonstrate a breadth of accomplishment, a refusal to accept preconceived notions of aesthetic restrictions. According to Banham,

Eclecticism is a style based upon styles, but the styles on which it is based must themselves be pure, and draw on non-stylistic considerations.²

By this, Banham means to imply that an eclectic who draws from the work of another eclectic is in grave danger

¹Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.
of complete confusion and of aesthetic anarchy, but pro-
vided that restraint is exercised in the eclectic's choice
of sources, there are no \textit{a priori} reasons why eclecticism
should be denounced. As an example of Italian eclecticism,
Banham describes the Palazzo Grande at Leghorn, by archi-
tect Luigi Vanetti, in these terms:

\begin{quote}
Forms which were once structure-shaped and
function-formed, like the auditorium ceiling,
are retained for decorative reasons even
though it (the ceiling) is no longer a self-
supporting slab \ldots \ldots . To architects
of this persuasion, the International Style is
simply one style among all the others, an
element in the vocabulary, not the whole lan-
guage.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}
\end{quote}

Banham judges another Italian work, the Casa del Girasole
by the architect Luigi Moretti, to be eclectic because (i)
the main street facade is divided into three separated
parts,---a rusticated stone plinth at ground floor level,
and above, two identical shafts of apartments that are
divided between themselves by a narrow slit of open space—
which seems at first sight to be a wilful attempt to incor-
porate classical compositional order in a building whose
accommodation is contemporary; (ii) along the facade at
right angles to the main entrance, and facing a minor street,
the windows of the apartments are projected out in a sawtooth
arrangement which seems formally analogous to the organic
architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. However, though the
form of the building appears to be eclectic, Banham points
out that for these apparently arbitrary elements of design it is possible to find:

...a structural or functional justification for every particular usage, and (it) exhibits a rigorous contemporary geometrical discipline. This is Eclecticism within modern architecture, and demands a high degree of self-control.1

The stone pediment lifts the apartments above the noise and dust of the street, the narrow slit of space between the twin apartment shafts helps to isolate them acoustically from each other, allows light to enter the common staircase, and emphasizes the point of entry to the building. The sawtooth windows are set at an angle to catch the rays of the sun, which they would not do to the same extent if they were kept flush with the wall. This kind of eclecticism, the use of various forms for definite functional and psychological reasons, meets with Banham's approval, provided of course that as a total composition, the design elements are skilfully arranged.

But more recently, an offshoot of this eclectic attitude, the movement called Neo-Liberty, has turned for inspiration to one of the relatively minor sources of the modern movement—Art Nouveau. In Banham's opinion, Art Nouveau precedes the revolution of modern architecture, and scarcely enters the twentieth century, therefore he finds

the attitudes of the Neo-Liberty architects to be particul-
larly frivolous and reactionary, for

... to abdicate from the Twentieth Century--
which may have purely personal attractions, like
going to live on a desert island... is no
help to one's fellow-men, and architecture, for
better or worse, concerns one's fellow-men.

Banham believes that there may be some value in reviving
interest in some of the ideas that influenced the modern
movement--e.g. Futurism, and de Stijl--for these ideas are
still applicable to our contemporary situation, and they
may suggest alternatives to the prevailing "Bauhaus-style."

Now the problem of alternatives to the 'Bauhaus-
style' is one that clearly exercises the minds of
the younger architects in many parts of the
world.

Clearly, this problem exercises Banham's mind as well, and
as we have seen, he considers New Brutalism to be one of
the most fecund alternatives, and Neo-Liberty to be one of
the most abortive.

4. The Lesson of History

In his re-appraisal of Mendelsohn, Rietveld, Mondrian
and Sant 'Elia, Banham is at work on one of his self-appointed
tasks: an assessment of the history of the modern movement
in architecture with due respect to all the forces and
counter-forces that motivated it. He considers the history

1Banham, "Neo-Liberty: The Italian Retreat from
2Ibid., p. 231.
given by Giedion in *Space, Time, and Architecture* to be quite misleading, for its suggests a steady development from the Crystal Palace, via the Bauhaus, to Lever House, which takes little account of deviant tendencies, such as Futurism, that were more invigorating to their contemporaries, according to Banham, than new structural principles. Banham's research indicates that some of the heroes of the modern movement have perhaps been held in esteem for the wrong reasons, being based on fragments rather than their total output of work, and in ignorance of their relationships to their contemporaries and predecessors. He believes generally, that individual ideas, and not technological facts, have determined the course of modern architecture.

(a) Individual Determinism. When Banham refers to designers as "drawing upon a common pool of ideas",¹ he does not intend to give the impression that these ideas were merely floating around somewhere, waiting for someone to reach out and grasp them, but that these ideas had been passed on from man to man until they became progressively more widespread. He is against the notion of spontaneous mutual occurrence, which is his definition of Zeitgeist.

The Zeitgeist is primarily a record of our ignorance of the communications that took place in any particular epoch—grandiose statements of the order of "Perspective was not the discovery of any one person,

¹"Elementarist", p. 143.
it was the expression of the whole era' are simply a roundabout way of admitting that we don't know to whom Brunelleschi talked before he talked to Manetti, and that we would rather not go to the labour of drawing up the family tree of personal contacts that runs from Brunelleschi to all the great perspectivists of the Quattrocento. We are a bit too glib in presupposing cultural forces that act upon creative minds like the weather or the common cold, and a little too chary of conceding that some one specific person at some determined (if no longer determinable) moment must have been the first to conceive of central perspective, the undulating facade, architecture without ornament.¹

Though advocating the necessarily individual origin of an idea, Banham must be prepared to admit that an idea, once initiated, may nevertheless lapse if external conditions prevent its circulation. The external conditions must be amenable. It is in this sense that we can say that the Zeitgeist was appropriate to this or that idea, and that the tangible culmination of an idea is determined by its location in history. Banham's interpretation of historical development, as the process by which individually-sponsored ideas become more widely current, places the architect in a position wherein he must accept the burdens of self-determination and personal responsibility for the total environment within which he must practise.

(b) Technological Determinism. Two forceful ideas

¹Banham, "Ornament and Crime", Architectural Review, February 1957, p. 85. This quotation forms the prologue to an extensive article on Adolf Loos and the effect of his ideas on the modern movement.
have dominated the development of architecture in this century: the idea of a machine aesthetic, and the idea of transparency.

The Banham thesis on the machine aesthetic can be interpreted thus: the pioneer architects of the modern movement expected the end-products of mechanization to be simple geometrical shapes, uniformly smooth-surfaced, and that architecture, to reflect the mechanized spirit of the age, should be composed of such units which would be repetitively turned out by mass-production methods. In accordance with this expectation, architects designed their buildings in the image of an ideal industrial product. They gave their buildings hard, crisp silhouettes, they used lavish amounts of the new materials, plate glass, structural steel and reinforced concrete, and preferred the surfaces of their buildings to be hard, smooth, and white, as hygienic and ostensibly as efficient as an operating theatre or an internal combustion engine. The paradox was that to maintain the appearance of machine perfection, the architects often had to resort to hand-craftsmanship. A final hand-applied coat of cement rendering had to be given to the rough natural concrete. As a result many of these buildings have weathered disastrously. Furthermore, the pioneers had made incorrect assumptions as to the inevitable nature of the machine product. Fortunately

or unfortunately, machine production does not necessarily result in simple forms, smoothly finished, "and to postulate them as necessary consequences . . . . is to give a false picture of the engineer's methods and intentions."¹ Under the impetus of satisfying the consumer market, the machine produces beauty and Borax with indifferent ease. Without necessarily preferring Borax to beauty, Banham suggests that it is about time that modern architects recovered from the idea that to be modern means to be mechanized, and to be mechanized means to be slick, hard, highly-polished, precisely-edged and crisply composed.

Banham has traced the idea of transparency to the literary vision of a relatively unknown German, Paul Scheerbart, who wrote in 1914, a book called Glasarchitektur, which contained fantastic descriptions of spaces enclosed by transparent and translucent planes, flooded with light.² Scheerbart inspired the architect Bruno Taut, whose Glass Industry Pavilion of 1914³ looks like an early model of one of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes, and precedes Mies van der Rohe's glass skyscraper projects by five years.

In contradiction of Sigfried Giedion, who suggests

¹Ibid., p. 225.
³At the Deutsche-Werkbund Exhibition, where another example of the use of transparent planes was Gropius' Administrative Building.
in his two works *Space, Time, and Architecture* and *Mechanization Takes Command*, that the course of modern architecture was determined by technological and scientific innovation, Banham has pointed out that, in fact, the vision of the artist was the spur to industrial production. The ideas of a machine aesthetics and transparent multi-level buildings that existed in the minds of artists in the first few decades of the twentieth century, were not realized until mid-century, by which time technology had provided the means for the fulfilment of these ideas in buildings such as Lever House, the Chase Manhattan Bank, New York, and the Seagram Tower. From this point of view the architect commands technology, and we can see how the architect's quest for an aesthetic rapport with the machine, led to the machine supplying the means for an artistically preconceived end. The curtain wall, which actually poses more structural, weatherproofing, and insulation problems than it solves, need no longer intimidate the architect who realizes that it developed as an industrial response to an aesthetic challenge.
III. NIKOLAUS PEVSNER

A. BACKGROUND

Dr. Nikolaus Pevsner (1902- ) attended St. Thomas's School, Leipzig, and the Universities of Leipzig, Munich, Berlin and Frankfort. He first visited England in 1930, on a research grant to study English architecture. In Germany, he had been assistant keeper of the Dresden gallery (1924-1928) and lecturer in art history at Gottingen University, specializing in English themes. In 1934, he settled in England, teaching first at Birmingham university, and later joining, for a while, a firm of manufacturers of furniture. In 1941, he became head of the department of the history of art at Birbeck College, and he was elected Slade Professor at Cambridge in 1949. He delivered the 1955 Reith lectures for the B.B.C., he has been the editor of many architectural books and journals, and he was honoured, for these services, by the award of a CBE. Dr. Pevsner is currently Art Editor of Penguin Books and Joint Editor (with J. M. Richards) of The Architectural Review.

His publications are The Baroque Architecture of Leipzig, 1928; Italian Painting from the end of the Renaissance to the end of the Rococo (In German), 1927-30; Pioneers of the Modern Movement, from William Morris to Walter Gropius, 1936 (revised edition: Pioneers of Modern Design, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1949; also a German edition); An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England, 1937;
German Baroque Sculpture (with S. Sitwell and A. Ayscough), 1936; Academies of Art, Past and Present, 1940; An Outline of European Architecture, 1942, most recent edition 1957 (also editions in Dutch, Japanese, Spanish, German); The Building of England, 1951 (16 volumes to date); Matthew Digby Watt, 1950; High Victorian Design, 1951; The Englishness of English Art, 1956; and Sir Christopher Wren (in Italian), 1958.
B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. General

Pevsner is perhaps best known for his historical books and articles, especially *An Outline of European Architecture*, and *Pioneers of Modern Design, from William Morris to Walter Gropius*. As textbooks in numerous architectural schools throughout the world, they have had considerable influence on the way in which architects look at history of architecture, both recent history and of the past. Pevsner's articles in the *Architectural Review* are more frequently concerned with the discovery of new facts relating to old buildings, of who built what, and where, than with criticism or with architectural theory. He has also written extensively on the visual arts, other than architecture, on painting, sculpture, and product design.

However, for the purposes of this thesis, Pevsner's historical and visual arts studies will be referred to only in so far as they contribute specifically to architectural theory and criticism.

Pevsner's observations on architectural theory are not set down as successive components of a totally-conceived architectural philosophy, but are made under the provocation of a specific topical set of circumstances. His comments on style are made with special reference to the Coventry Cathedral controversy; on originality, with respect to a newly-published book by Hugh Goodhardt-Rendel;
and on the Picturesque, as a reply to an attack on the Architectural Review during a B. B. C. broadcast by the art critic Basil Taylor. Even the introduction to A History of European Architecture, in which Pevsner briefly discusses his reasons for writing on certain works of architecture rather than others, is not intended to be a thorough and complete analysis, but simply a general orientation for the unspecialized reader. Throughout his other works, Pevsner’s general architectural convictions are mentioned only en passant, in a casual manner, within the content of articles dealing with particular situations or personalities. In attempting to synthesize these sporadic declarations, we run the risk of imposing a unity where none exists, and of systemizing a collection of independent declarations.

Nevertheless, for comparison with the other critics in this thesis, I shall organize Pevsner’s ideas topically, under the following headings: (i) the meaning of architecture, (ii) definitions of style, (iii) originality, and (iv) the buildings of England.

2. The Meaning of Architecture

The introduction to an Outline of European Architecture is a short, simple essay on the nature and importance of architecture. Moreover, it is the only instance in which Pevsner ventures to define architecture. He states that "the term architecture applies only to buildings de-
signed with a view to aesthetic appeal.\(^1\) The notion of
definite intention ("with a view to . . .") is important.
The best intentions of well-meaning architects have some-
times produced aesthetic horrors. The works of anonymous
architects, whose intentions we can only presume, have
sometimes had considerable aesthetic appeal. The inten-
tions of an architect are significant in evaluating archi-
tecture only in so far as they are concretely realized in
buildings. The building is the intention. There is no
such thing as unconstructed architecture. Accordingly,
Pevsner's definition could be simply: the term architec-
ture applies only to buildings with aesthetic appeal. If
the phrase "with a view to" were insisted upon, we should
have to exclude from consideration as architecture many
historical buildings and almost all vernacular architecture,
in fact all buildings in which we cannot know for certain
whether they were actually designed with a view to aesthe-
tic appeal.

Certainly Pevsner would not want to disqualify a
building as architecture because the aesthetic intentions
of its designer were unknown beforehand, but perhaps he
does wish to exclude so-called vernacular architecture, for
the opening sentence of the Introduction affirms that: "A
bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece

\(^1\)Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture, p. 24.
Now if we assume that the humblest as well as the most exalted building can have aesthetic appeal, the shed must be distinguished from the cathedral because it pretends no higher purpose. The bicycle shed, even though it may happen to be beautifully proportioned and shaped, is still merely a shelter for a mechanical contraption. The cathedral is a shelter for the worship of God. Thus the pretentiousness of the building programme influences architectural status, and in this manner intention can be said to affect the direct and innocently visual appraisal of a work of architecture. But the intentions of a cathedral are primarily religious rather than aesthetic, unless of course, the definition of aesthetic includes the notion of religion together with the notion of beauty.

Pevsner does not define aesthetic appeal, but he differentiates three aspects of architecture that may stimulate an aesthetic response; (i) facade arrangement, pattern and ornament, (ii) the manipulation of external volumes, and (iii) internal space. He does not mention intent to higher purposes as an aesthetic stimulus. The first of these media of aesthetic values can be achieved in painting, the second in sculpture, but the third in architecture alone, though architecture can encompass the previous two

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1Ibid. Cf. Hudnut, Architecture and the Spirit of Man, p. 88; "A cathedral is made more beautiful than a garage by merely being a cathedral."
as well. But surely it does not follow, as Pevsner claims, that architecture, because of its comprehensiveness, is superior to the other visual arts. In music, we do not claim that a symphony is necessarily superior to a quartet, we are content to recognize a difference in range and scope. Pevsner also claims a social superiority for architecture, because it is ubiquitous, and therefore everybody, sooner or later, runs into it, through it, or around it; whereas other fine arts like easel painting, can be easily avoided, and usually are. People can avoid going to museums or galleries, symphony concerts or plays. The architect cannot avoid affecting the public, for the public is his client. The affect of architecture on the public is more directly obvious than the affects of painting or music. Now ubiquity need not imply qualitative superiority, although we may be entitled to presume that an artist who has a social conscience should, if his talent allows, be occupied with architecture rather than the other visual arts.

Nevertheless, Pevsner does not emphasize the social aspects of architecture in *An Outline of History of Architecture*, but treats his history as "a history of expression, and primarily of spatial expression." ¹ With his stress on expression, Pevsner parallels Hudnut's thesis of expression

¹Ibid., p. 25.
as the supreme law of architecture, but unlike Hudnut, Pevsner does not develop any theory to support this contention. 1

3. Definitions of Style

The word "style" has always been subject to a wide variety of meanings, and informal writings or discussions of architectural style are usually confused because each participant has a different definition.

Nikolaus Pevsner did architectural theory a service when, taking a series of letters about the Coventry Cathedral from the correspondence columns of The Times, he analysed and evaluated the many interpretations of the meaning of style that were implied by the separate writers. 2

Proceeding cautiously, Pevsner selected from the twenty-eight definitions of style given by the Oxford dictionary, two groups of meanings that seemed most appropriate to style in architecture: "the manner of expression characteristic of a particular writer," and a "definite type of architecture, distinguished by special characteristics of structure and ornamentation."

From the first definition, Pevsner concludes that the style of an individual is the trace of his personality

1 Cf. Hudnut p. 75 this thesis.

in the work that he performs, and that regardless of
whether this trace is intentional or not, it cannot be
avoided. In the effort to avoid personal style, or to
adopt somebody else's style, the characteristics of the
individual who actually performs the work will be exposed.¹
Even so, it is axiomatic to this definition of style that
a totally mechanically produced artifact will have no
style. Style, in the personal sense, is predetermined by
the personality of the operator, but if the operator can¬
ot affect his product, the question of style simply does
not arise. This obliteration of style from art is one of
the accusations that has been made against machine aes¬
thetics and against literally functional architecture.²
Pevsner goes on to say that style is not the language in
which something is said, it is the way in which the lan¬
guage is organized, and the organization itself derives
from content, from what is being said. A split between
form and content "is according to pretty well all thought
of the past and present on matters of aesthetics, what no

¹Cf. Wordsworth, who maintained that Goethe's arti-
ficiality was the result of "aiming to be universal, and
yet constantly exposing his individuality, which his char¬
acter was not of a kind to dignify."--cited by Herbert
Read in "The Psychopathology of Reaction in the Arts",
Arts and Architecture, September 1956, p. 16.

²See, for instance, Peter Smithson's remarks at an
R. I. B. A. meeting, reported in the Journal of the Royal
Institute of British Architects, February 1957, p. 137.
valuable work of art can endure."^1

In the sense in which style is meant to refer to a group of things, rather than a person, we assume that style means something more profound than fashion. Of course in the jargon of dress-designing the terms fashion and style are often used synonymously, but in architecture the meanings are distinct. Fashion is predicated by a desire for continual change, fashion is self-consciously pre-conceived and determines its own obsolescence. Fashion is expectedly of short duration. Style, unlike fashion, is perceived after the event, style may span a decade, a generation, or a century. When certain distinguishable characteristics are found to link a number of disparate objects or persons, these similarities, if sufficiently profound, pronounced and prolonged, may be called the style of that group. When we are considering the collective meaning of style, as applied to the work of artists, Pevsner's definition and remarks provide a reasonable and intelligible frame of reference for discussion.

If then the definition of style as the aesthetic expression of the whole spirit of an age is accepted, then the style created by the twentieth century must have something in its favour which no other style can possess.2

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1"Canons of Criticism", p. 4.
2Ibid., p. 6.
Style is what ties together the aesthetic achievements of the creative individuals of one age.¹

There is a loophole in this definition. If style is connected with the whole spirit of an age, the age must have had some homogeneous spirit that was endemic to it. In our present age, we should be hard put to determine what that homogeneous spirit is. There are ideas current in our age and typical of it, that are contradictory. In architecture it can be said that both revivalism and modernism are part of the spirit of our age, though they are different attitudes in themselves. The neo-French Provincial mansion of a Texas millionaire presents a faithful account of the aspirations of his class, the search for a status-symbol that will acquire prestige and respectability through its association with an aristocratic past; and is no less part of the spirit of our age than the steel and glass Mies-cage of a successful advertising executive. Under what circumstances then, is it proper to consider the one type of architecture as being the 'modern style', that is, expressing the spirit of the modern age, and the other as not?

Pevsner is aware of this loophole and deals with it on two counts. The first is the notion of vitality or urgency. Compared with a twentieth-century style of architecture:

Second or third-hand Gothic or Classical cannot possibly express the same sense of urgency. And without urgency, not in the superficial sense of day-to-day topicality, but in the deeper sense of a direct application to present-century thought and feeling, there can be no fulfilment in art or architecture. . . . . Let a fourteenth century rood screen by Sir Ninian Cooper be ever so well meant, and ever so pleasing, . . . . it is not ours. It moves with a borrowed appeal. A rood-screen by Asplund, if such a thing existed, would perhaps be objected to as not helpful towards the right kind of emotions, but whatever effect it would have, would be direct and whole.¹

By association with architects who are generally acknowledged to be original and imaginative, modern architecture is preferable to revivalism.

What needed stating here is that somehow, in the last twenty years, regardless of what aesthetic argument postulates, all the active, the exploring and the consistent seem to have gathered under the banner which was first carried by Wright and Perret, by Garnier, by Loos and Hoffmann, by Behrens and Gropius and Le Corbusier.²

On the origins of a style, Pevsner threads an intermediate course between those who believe that the artist is the servant of his time and his Muse, and those who believe that every step in the development of a style is determined by the forceful activities of particular individuals. According to the former, style emerges incorrigibly and anonymously, to the latter, style is imposed by men of genius. Pevsner admits the plausibility of both these con-

¹"Canons of Criticism", p. 6.
²"Originality", p. 369.
cepts, but neither, on its own, conveys the whole truth.
The artist is not entirely at the mercy of his period, nor
is the period at his, but it assists his cause immeasur-
ably if he should happen to strike a chord of common feel-
ing which he catalyzes into an aesthetic revelation.

No style is established except by revolution, yet
for no style is it impossible to find pioneers
and a prehistory.

Much has been made of the so-called anonymity of
the Middle Ages, and scholars like Mr. Harvey
deny it and try to prove that every step in the
Middle Ages (as today) is thought out and made by
individuals. That is true but the concept of
anonymity is truer. It refers to the very mystery
of which we are speaking, the fact that what is
new in an age—historically, socially, philosophi-
cally now—calls for aesthetic expression, and
that that expression takes sufficiently similar
forms in the independent pursuits of a chosen few
to permit the use of the word style.¹

Reyner Banham, however, would be more sympathetic to the
view of history that considers every step to be thought
out and made by individuals.²

4. Originality

Now although he places a high priority on original-
ity as the "sign of the greatest mental and emotional
power",³ Pevsner is no advocate of originality as the ideal
to which all architects should strive. Like style, but un-
like novelty, inventiveness, or personal exhibitionism,

¹"Originality", p. 368.
²Cf. p. 22 this thesis.
³Ibid.
originality reaches its highest achievements when it is not
directly sought. Genuine originality is seldom found in
the work of a determined and self-professed non-conformist.
Originality is not a matter of proclaiming one's personal
neuroses in a public place. Pevsner would prefer that the
majority of architects, lacking that ruthlessness and pro-
fundity of conviction that is the mark of original genius,
should work with skill, taste, and conscientiousness within
the limitations of an appropriate vernacular, a universally
accepted idiom. He believes that twentieth century archi-
tecture has achieved such an idiom, and that there is no
longer the necessity, as there was in the first few decades
of this century, to approach the design of each building as if
for the first time. The possibility of experiment and
development is not hereby denied, and Pevsner invokes his-
torical precedent to prove his case.

What makes Bloomsbury Bloomsbury and Bath
Bath is acceptance of the pattern book.
What makes Oxford Street and Princess Street (London)
the muddle they are is individualism running riot.
Georgian doorways were designed by small builders
straight from engravings in volumes to which you
subscribed. Hillbrow is the outcome of this same
attitude and benefits from its advantages.¹

Hillbrow is an apartment block in Johannesburg; it is
an unpretentious, pleasantly attractive building, conceived
in terms of simple patterns of solid and void, undecorated

¹Pevsner, "Johannesburg", Architectural Review, June
1953, p. 361.
surfaces, extensive use of glass. It displays the repetitive nature of the units of which it is composed, which is a typical motif of modern apartment design. If it makes no new statements, and makes few concessions to any supposed regionalism, apart from its orientation and the use of a local brick, this, according to Pevsner, is as it should be. Better to admit that the nationality and pre-occupations of its inhabitants are more European than African, that the climatic differences between Johannesburg, Melbourne or Marseilles are not so extreme that they cannot be taken care of by mechanical equipment, without gross manipulation of the architectural form; than to admit the mental conceit that would seek to exaggerate all the minor variations from type that would make this building unique.

Because Pevsner extolls the virtues of a controlling vernacular he is not being doctrinaire, nor is he preaching subservience to an international style. He means rather that particular circumstances are more of a stimulus to creativity than schematic adherence to universals. In fact, Pevsner concurs with the theory of the picturesque, as employed by Uvedale Price and Payne Knight.

Their message was: Keep your eyes open. See, analyze what impresses you, and for what reasons. You will then realize that we have available an infinitely richer body of materials for artistic creation than classical theory would make you believe. Use it in your work. To this day we cannot do better than follow that advice. 1

Also, Pevsner would urge the architect to respect the genus loci, to which he gives two meanings:

One refers to the fact that each country (on the rich soil of its traditions) will find its own suitable variations on the theme of the universal style of a period.

The other refers to the fact that each individual task must be treated on its own merits, according to its own locus and usus.¹

Compare this last sentence of Pevsner's with that of one of his fellow editors of the Architectural Review, J. M. Richards, who, explaining functionalism, has said:

Functionalism itself, by its very nature, implies the reverse of what it is often allowed to imply: not reducing everything to broad generalisations—quality in architecture belongs to the exact not the approximate—but relating it ever more closely to the essential particulars of time and place and purpose.²

It hardly needs to be pointed out how closely these statements resemble each other, with their pragmatism, their refreshing freedom from dogma, their emphasis on creativity without theoretical constraints.

Reflecting the attitudes of its foremost editors, Pevsner and Richards, the Architectural Review, especially in its "Townscape" series, has demonstrated how these principles can be applied, always using particular architectural situations to illustrate incidents and sequences,

¹Ibid., p. 229.
rather than to develop comprehensive visual formulae.

5. The Buildings of England

Pevsner's monumental series of Guides to English Buildings is an architectural tour of the British Isles, at the rate of one volume per county, in which Pevsner lists, documents, and comments upon every building still standing that is considered to be of architectural importance. His remarks are acutely observed, well-expressed and often provocative—perhaps deliberately so, to excite the reader's interest and to entice him to inspect the buildings for himself. Unfortunately Pevsner gives the reader no explanation of the reasons why many of the buildings were included in the series, and the basis or bases of his selection remains undisclosed. In some cases, Pevsner's comments, though humourous enough, actually suggest that the building under consideration deserves no perpetuation, either in fact or in literature. Three examples illustrate this plainly enough.

TOWN HALL, Brixton, by Septimus Warwick, 1908, a cheery Edwardian brick and stone composition in an effective position. The angle tower with muscular allegories below the top. They represent Justice, Science, Art, and Literature, as hardly one passerby in a hundred thousand will have the

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wish to work out for himself.  

ST. MARK'S SCHOOLS, Harleyford Road, 1824, consists of a central part of three bays and little blocks added on the left and right for boys and girls.  

BROADCASTING HOUSE, Portland Place. 'It seems to me,' wrote Uvedale Price, 'that mere unmixed ugliness does not arise from sharp angles, or from any sudden variation, but rather from that want of form, that unshapen lumpish appearance, which, perhaps, no one word exactly expresses'. Broadcasting House is an example of this. It does again what the Langham Hotel opposite had done sixty-five years before, it casts a blight on the whole Georgian neighbourhood, and deprives All Souls completely of its subtle siting value. A specially unfortunate feature is the windows of Georgian shape. They make the grimness of the sheer stone walls twice as painful. Designed by Val Myers, 1931.  

In the same series, Pevsner has written a fine critical analysis of the Royal Festival Hall. His judgement here coincides with that of many other visitors, lay and professional, that  

Aesthetically the greatest achievement, and one which is without doubt internationally remarkable, is the management of inner space.  

Surrounding the inner mass of the Concert Hall itself, the areas for public circulation, waiting, and dining, are arranged in a highly ingenious, if at times over-contrived,  

2Ibid., p. 276.  
3Ibid., p. 335.  
4Ibid., p. 276.
manner which defies simplification. Proceeding from the entrance concourse to the various intimate foyers located at appropriate levels with respect to the internal seating of the hall, a continually changing array of vistas, glimpses and panoramas of the various restaurants overwhelm the perambulating observer with a richness of spatial enclosures, interpenetrations and transparencies. The only troublesome feature is that amongst this magnificent variety, there is a tendency to lose the sense of the ultimate destination—the hall interior—and that lingering to admire the spatial sumptuousness, the intending concert-goer runs the risk of missing the overture.

After such a skilfully handled approach, the interior of the Concert Hall is anti-climactic. In the vast open space of the auditorium, where spatial sub-division was no longer possible, intricacy and complexity have been maintained by a variety of motifs which "is perhaps carried a little too far." The most obvious and most obtrusive motifs, both visually and physically, are the four tiers of boxes;

These are singly cantilevered out diagonally in such a way that unobstructed view is obtained from every seat. This advantage and the acoustic advantage of broken surfaces are gained at the cost of a restless, though, it is true, highly original and lively pattern. Drawers pulled out in a hurried burglary raid, malicious critics have said.  

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1Ibid.

2Ibid., p. 277.
My own reflections on the aggressive modelling and dynamic tilt of these boxes, led me to suspect that the people seated in them were on the verge of a roller coaster ride. Again, as Pevsner observes, the undulating ceiling, though acoustically of great assistance, only serves to increase the visual unrest of the interior. What the auditorium lacks is a single unifying theme, such as the succession of spaces that controls the foyers, stairs and dining-rooms. There is too much emphasis on the identity of each particular part, even though this emphasis derives from functional stimuli. To clearly express each plane, almost all surfaces have been given their own decorative or textural treatment. Each change of material indicates only too clearly a change in position of the wall that supports it. A stronger visual discipline would have made the interior even more compelling, and the distractions far less irritating.

Similarly, the exterior facades suffer from an excess of decorative motifs. This was done in an attempt to lessen the apparent bulk of the building and to humanize its scale, but in fact, all that results is a confused pastiche of minor window patterns, tile arrangements and colour schemes. On the river facade, "the curious stone apron in the middle of the top storey",¹ has probably started more verbal arguments amongst English architects

¹Ibid.
than any other single element in the Festival Hall. "There are no sufficient structural reasons for it; it was an afterthought, quite evidently, because the smooth, dignified plainness of before was not considered enough."¹

This feature is significant of the total design of the building, the desire to extend the vocabulary of modern architecture to include ornament and a full range of visual effects not necessarily contingent upon explicit functions.

It is a bold, courageous answer, and it may well be old-fashioned to doubt its validity. Still, the doubt remains whether monumentality in terms of the twentieth century can be achieved by building a massive block and then applying busy geometrical patterns to it.²

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 278.
J. M. Richards (1907- ) studied at a school of architecture in London for five years. After four more years studying and working as an architect—in an engineer's office in London, in Canada, in the United States and in Dublin, he became a journalist and a critic. He was for two years assistant editor of The Architect's Journal, and in 1935 became assistant editor of The Architectural Review, later acting as editor. He held this post until 1942 when he joined the wartime Ministry of Information. In 1943 he went to Egypt for the Ministry, returning early in 1946. He is now in London, writing, broadcasting, working as a book publisher and as an editor of the Architectural Review.
1. General

Richards' contributions as a critic fall under four general headings. First he develops, from functionalist principles, a basic architectural theory which recognizes the unique accommodation requirements of each building, and the physical limitations of materials and technique, as the dominant factors in determining specific design. But if this theory were followed to a logical conclusion, observes Richards, the result would be a chaotic clutter of individual buildings, all urging their separate identities. Therefore he urges the architect to accept the discipline of an architectural vernacular, and to solve particular building problems within the range of a commonly acceptable vocabulary of forms. Accordingly, Richards defends the cliche as a means to this end.

Second, as an outcome of his theory of expressing the particular through the universal, Richards considers a contemporary building type—the monumentally-sized block composed of an aggregate of identical units—with respect to formal, compositional means of humanizing its scale.

Third, Richards' articles have covered a large number of individual buildings. One example given herein, the Royal Festival Hall, demonstrates the general pattern that Richards follows in these specific critiques. He begins, as a rule, by ascertaining the building's dominant composi-
tional theme and the relationship of this theme to the building content, that is, the purpose for which it was erected. He considers how this theme was reinforced or modified in actual construction, and then evaluates significant details, both as artistic devices in their own right, and as contributions to, or distractions from, the total theme.

Fourth, Richards has used his editorial position on the *Architectural Review* to influence re-building in the City of London, in terms of individual buildings and total environment. Vigorously, he has denounced as short-sighted, selfish, inefficient, and ignorant, the business interests that control building development in the City. The blame, he believes, rests with them, rather than with the architects who are their puppets.

2. Towards a Functional Vernacular

It is often difficult to know what an architectural writer means when he writes of functionalism in architecture, for in the widest possible sense of the word, all architecture may be called functional; that is, all architecture fulfils some need, whether the need be physical, psychological, experimental, commercial or simply personal expression. Functional architecture usually means, to the layman, architecture which efficiently accommodates the physical requirements of the activity under shelter, without attempting to satisfy strictly human cravings for beauty
or congenial atmosphere.

J. M. Richards uses the word in a somewhat wider sense, but still within the limitations of efficient performance with respect to its physical tasks. For Richards, functionalism, when applied to a particular architectural routine means:

... to signify the kind of architecture which only admits forms and structures based on the most economical satisfaction of physical needs, and is satisfied that an acceptable modern idiom can be derived from the somewhat negative resources to which this principle restricts the designer.¹

He also defends functionalism from the charge that it necessarily leads to sterile, stereotyped and inhuman buildings, and that functionalism leads to the mass-production of universally applicable prototypes. Functionalism should not be equated with mechanisation.

Functionalism itself, by its very nature, implies the reverse of what it is often allowed to imply: not reducing everything to broad generalizations—quality in architecture belongs to the exact not the approximate—but relating it ever more closely to the essential particulars of time and place and purpose.²

An ideally functional architecture implies a high degree of specialization, enabling every case to be treated exactly on its merits. It is therefore an architecture of the particular whereas a mechanized architecture, with its stress on repeti-

²Ibid., p. 181.
tive action, increasingly becomes an architecture of the general. We therefore have to distinguish between functionalism in the sense of an apt solution to a particular problem and functionalism as the subservience of all ideas to the expedient of mechanical production. The former definition is the only one proper to architecture.¹

Functionalism as an architectural philosophy had been falling into disrepute, its deficiencies and limitations were allowed to discount its general validity; Richards has restored functionalism to a position of respectability by stressing its recognition of the circumstantial and particular conditions of individual situations. In this light, the architect-designed custom-built house is likely to be more functional, in even the purely physical sense, than the prefabricated mass-produced dwelling unit that pretends to be satisfactory for a wide variety of families. Thus conceived, the value of the functionalist approach to architecture can hardly be disputed. Warnings are given by Richards, against pursuing functionalism to a logical conclusion, where each occasion would be allowed to perpetuate all its own uniqueness, for the "reductio ad absurdum of such an ideal is of course utter anarchy."² This applies to aesthetic as well as functional extremes, and we have seen, in Pevsner's criticism of the interior of the Royal Festival Hall, how functionally derived differentiations of form and

¹Ibid., p. 179.
²Ibid., p. 180.
surface, each given its own aesthetic expression, can result in an irritating plethora of conflicting distractions.

Historical examples of functional design are frequently reported in the Architectural Review and an entire issue has been devoted to a study of the functionalist tradition in English architecture and equipment. Richards uses these examples to show how in the process of design from the standpoint of a direct and economical (in the widest sense of the word) solution to a particular problem, a definite aesthetic character is often attained, which is recognizable as an evident and definite relationship between the problem and the design solution, that is, between purpose and performance. This recognition is both visual and intellectual, what the eye sees is confirmed by the mind.

Thus in the sense in which Richards uses it, functionalism is a method of working towards the end of desirable performance, it is not necessarily hostile to pre-conceived notions of beauty, to individual expression or originality, and in fact such ends can be considered as distinct from the process itself. Emotional factors are incidental to the functionalist approach and if they actually eventuate, they may do so as a kind of fortuitous bonus under the aegis of non-functional stimuli. Richards' functionalism is similar to Hudnut's engineer's aesthetics, for the design process of both is determined by impersonal forces, by efficiency and by economy. The architect directs these forces, but it is their influence, and not individual per-
sonalities, that controls the ultimate artifact. For Richards, functionalism is artistically fertile, but for Hudnut, the engineer's aesthetics is sterile, for it cannot account for expression.

Nevertheless, in the functional tradition there are no prototypes, for each solution to a typical problem will be differentiated from other solutions because of a-typical circumstances. In architectural practise, where no problem is ever the same as any other problem, the functionalist approach requires as much imagination as the romantic. Richards is not dogmatic enough to insist that traces of personality be consciously eliminated from design, as these traces often achieve a greater poignancy when found in an essentially functional article.

There is much to be learnt from this functional tradition, especially the endless possibilities, still to be explored, in the way of subtlety of form arising out of an emphasis on construction. The search for a contemporary idiom might do worse than begin where the age-old functional tradition leaves off. But that is a matter of means, not ends.¹

Both Richards and Pevsner have expressed the desire for a more particularized architecture, Richards on the basis of a functionalist theory, and Pevsner on the basis of a picturesque theory. In apparent contradiction, they have both also expressed the desire to de-emphasize personal

¹Ibid., p. 168.
originality, and to encourage the development of a contemporary architectural vernacular. Since particularized architecture produces the unique building, and vernacular architecture the typical, how can opposite tendencies be reconciled? In the pragmatic spirit of British compromise, Richards and Pevsner have given two reasons why they believe that both particularity and generality can be simultaneously put into effect.

The first reason is that the Georgian and functional traditions in English architecture have produced vernacular styles which have satisfied a wide variety of physical and spiritual requirements, and which have nevertheless allowed considerable creative freedom to the architect who works within their respective disciplines. Buildings designed under the influence of these traditions display a homogeneity, and at the same time, a degree of individuation that has made many English towns masterpieces of integrated urban design.

The second is that not all architects are of equal creative ability, nor are all buildings, by the nature of their programme, conducive to equally intense degrees of aesthetic expression. Since architecture is normally public, it is better that the unimaginative architect should control his desire to erect a personal monument; to give order and meaning to the familiar rather than the novel. There is, in this attitude towards architecture, a good deal of the
English concept of propriety, good manners, and decent social behaviour, and again, tolerance of the occasional eccentric. Accordingly, though Richards thoroughly appreciates Frank Lloyd Wright, he believes that Wright's philosophy and highly personal architecture set dangerous precedents for less capable followers. Indeed the dearth of disciples of Wright who have proved equal to or even approached the virtuosity of their master seems to vindicate Richards convictions:

Few men are innovators, and while it is vital not to inhibit those who are, it is equally vital to provide the others with a standard by which they can be guided; hence the need for a canon, for a contemporary vernacular, even for cliches. In fact, two antithetic movements are needed at one and the same time; an international standardizing movement, and a reaction therefrom in a strongly differentiated, individualistic direction.1

Richards has attempted to give respectability to that hitherto damnable artifice; the architectural cliche.2 In the literal sense, a cliche is defined as a "trite and hackneyed literary phrase",3 and we should therefore presume that in the architectural sense a cliche would be defined as a trite and hackneyed architectural motif. Trite and hackneyed are adjectives which intrinsically imply value

judgements, and are normally considered to be derogatory, therefore the direct transposition of the meaning of the word cliche, from a literal to an architectural sense, would ensure that the appellation cliche must always be a condemnation. As so often happens when the vocabulary of any one of the arts is transferred to another, the transposition is inadequate. For there is no single architectural motif that, considered in isolation, can be called trite, and for any kind of device to become hackneyed, it must have suffered countless repetitions. As Richards says:

> In one sense, after all, any classical building with its familiar array of columns, capitals, porticos and window architraves is a collection of cliches.¹

Evidently any architectural motif is not a cliche by nature, it depends on how it is used. A given motif, previously used with some justification, becomes liable to be called a cliche when it is used in circumstances which are inappropriate. For instance, a solar tile screen, used to protect the southern aspect of a building from the sun, becomes physically and financially unjustifiable if repeated on the other three sides of the building, for its use in this case would be inappropriate, and could well be called a cliche. Architects sometimes argue that a diversely-oriented solar screen gives a building a unified character, a homogeneous

¹"In Defense of the Cliche", p. 77.
aesthetic expression. We should be prepared to consider such an argument as trite. The unity gained by enveloping a building in a single pattern which has but the remotest claims to either fitness to purpose or emotional content is surely a naive achievement. In certain cases, the use of a circumferential solar screen has been given the explanation that it reduces glare and air-conditioning costs on all sides. Architects notoriously find plausible rationalizations for their follies. Nevertheless, the solar tile screen is not, in itself, a cliche, it depends upon how, and where, it is used.

The test presumably, is whether the cliche is integrated in the design—whether it is used purposefully or negligently.¹

But their proper role is not appearing up-to-date, but a means of ensuring a civilized standard of design, even in the absence of genius, by providing the journeyman architect with a range of well tried, culturally vital forms and motifs. Through their help too, he can benefit from shared experience, so that each design task does not mean a fresh start, they can begin to build up a recognizable contemporary style which can provide the basis of an interested public connoisseurship.²

Thus Richards presents the valuable aspect of the cliche. A cliche depends on the recurrence of circumstances, and although circumstances are rarely equal, they often have sufficient in common to permit identical archi-

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
tectural treatment. The cliche may become an acceptable part of an architectural idiom, and thus assimilated, it provides a means by which architecture, in practice and appreciation, becomes available to the ordinary members of the profession as well as the avant-garde, the man in the street as well as the artistic elite. By repetition, a cliche which is continually found in connection with a certain building type, or as a ready formal answer to a building programme's requirements, may acquire, by association, connotations of character and appropriateness that will establish a synthesis of form and content.

The purpose of content, of course, is that architecture shall have meaning for others besides architects, who would be perfectly content with an architecture of pure form. That is the basis of the search for style that seems to dominate the architectural scene in this self-conscious age.¹

For instance a steeply pitched roof and a tall spire immediately say to the observer, that here is a church. In our times, it is no longer necessary to use a steeply pitched roof, for new roofing materials can give perfectly adequate performance even if laid horizontally; but the spire created to elevate the church bells so that their sound carries far and wide to summon the faithful, has not been made redundant by electronic recording and amplifying devices. However, modern architecture has not as yet, produced any motifs,

or even cliches, that have the emotional and spiritual content of the traditional ecclesiastical forms.

3. De-humanized Facades

Other periods of architecture have erected buildings of tremendous size and monumental proportions, but a unique contribution of the twentieth century to the range of architectural types has been the colossi composed of vast aggregates of relatively small identical units—the modern multi-story apartment blocks and office buildings. Whereas once the appropriate sense of scale; diminutive, domestic, majestic or monumental, was achieved by a hierarchy of orders and motifs, by the judicious subordination of parts to the whole, and by manipulating the size of familiar elements such as doors, windows, balustrades and stairs; the democratic architecture of our era cannot afford such art for humanity's sake. Because there is no reason why any one, or any group, of the basic units should be treated in a different manner—with the exception perhaps of a few special offices for high executives—and because of the likelihood of changes in occupation, the units presented to the outside observer are generally identical. Faced with the prospect of entering and becoming immersed in this uniform monotony of anonymous repetitions, the individual tends to lose his sense of special identity and importance. Even if the single unit of which the mass is composed can be comprehended in relationship to the size of a human being,
(and often enough there are insufficient visual clues to enable even this comparison to be readily established) continual repetition of the same motif over a facade of considerable extent destroys the sense of human occupancy. In such a system visual and mental comprehension is scarcely possible. In architectural terms, the complex lacks human scale.

J. M. Richards is one of the few critics who has discussed formal means of overcoming the formidable aspect of a cellular building. He also recognizes a discrepancy between the building's content and its monumental form.

Their very bulk, moreover, has a disturbing effect on the townscape, all the more disturbing because their purpose—housing, finance, administration—does not entitle them to dominate over their surroundings as though they were cathedrals or courts of justice.¹

Not content, as most critics would be, to expose the problem, Richards suggests ways of solving it that have had some measure of success in existing buildings of this type. The first solution; as in Lever House, New York, and the Pimlico Housing Development, London, is to allow the major portion of the building to be the simple expression of its aggregate units, but at pedestrian levels, and from the normal vantage points from which the building is seen, to assert a definite human scale, to introduce, as it were, a comprehensible foreground, beyond which the bulk of

¹Ibid., p. 8.
the building is registered as a relatively calm backdrop of patterns and textures. The second solution is to superimpose a larger and independent pattern over the cellular facade, as in a block of flats in St. Pancras, London, by the architect Lubetkin. The larger motif must then be judged on its own terms, for coherence and visual scale, for such an exercise must inevitably be somewhat arbitrary, even wilful, and is not necessarily a reflection of any internal arrangements. In the hands of a less skilled designer, this kind of artifice can easily degenerate into the inappropriate, the meaningless and the ludicrous. The third avenue of escape is to refuse to accept such hugeness of size at all, to break the single complex up into separate buildings of a size more compatible to the limits of visual sensibility, or to keep the size under control by placing the block within a larger landscape, in which it can act as a suitable point of punctuation, as a larger incident in a variety of smaller buildings. The shielding or truncating effect of screens of trees or the use of changes in natural ground level can be of assistance in preventing the large building from dominating its neighbours, and in integrating it into the total order of a planned development. Examples of this kind of treatment can be seen at the London County Council housing estates at Roehampton and Hackney. At Roehampton the large multi-story apartment blocks rise dramatically from a growth of trees,
when seen at a distance, and at close quarters at ground level it will rarely be possible, when the scheme is completed, to see a single block in its entirety without the view being restricted by planting, by earth contours, or by lower-lying buildings in their immediate vicinity.

Richards has devoted a separate article to the purely visual problems of the grid facade, especially to its termination at the skyline, and to the roof shape as it is generally seen--in silhouette.\(^1\) From ground level the silhouette is usually as much as the eye can register over the distances involved.

When a building composed of identical units--window openings, balconies and so on--repeated one above the other, reaches the top, should it simply stop or should it be finished off with some treatment to satisfy the eye.\(^2\)

The classicist might retort that a stabilizing pediment, a fenestration pattern differentiated from floor-to-floor and an overhanging overpowering cornice would accomplish the task, but this begs the questions for it is just this visual hierarchy that is impossible under the building's internal accommodation requirements. Besides, the immensity of the buildings under discussion has not been matched in previous eras, and size itself precludes many solutions that would be effective in smaller works.

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\(^1\)"The High Flat Block", *Architectural Review*, May 1954, p. 341.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 342.
An easy solution is just to allow the pattern to stop. To the purist, this is sufficient; to those whose values are more visual than intellectual, this procedure leaves the problem unsolved, it is visually indecisive, and the level of completion is determined, as a rule, by economic rather than aesthetic factors. Richards gives the example of Mies van der Rohe's Lake Shore Drive Apartments, Chicago. Another alternative observed by Richards is the quasi-sculptural approach, as in flats at Birmingham by S. N. Cooke and Partners. Each wing of its cruciform plan is given a different height and the staircase towers protrude beyond the roof level. This treatment is less adaptable when the block is a simple rectangle in plan, and of course, as in all these suggestions, it depends on how well it is done. In a further example, in Glasgow, by the architect A. G. Jury, the solid pattern of tiers of balconies is terminated by an analogous but inverse pattern, that is, of delineated voids, by hoods over the stairheads on the roof.

For the usual clutter of elevator machinery, ventilation shafts, window cleaning tracks and so on that are found on the roof, Richards counts two current solutions. The first is to simply hide all this mess behind a cage which is a continuation of the ubiquitous facade pattern, perhaps differentiating it slightly however, as in the United Nations Secretariat; the second is to sublimate the various mechan-
isms into a vigorous sculpture, such as in the Unite d'Habitation at Marseilles by Le Corbusier. Provided that it is handled with sensitive artistry, Richards deems this the more satisfying solution.

4. The Royal Festival Hall

Writing in a period in which symmetry of plan immediately arouses suspicions of forcing a design into a preconceived geometrical pattern, Richards found it necessary to justify this arrangement in the Festival Hall on both symbolic and functional grounds. Since the ultimate focus of the audience is on the conductor's rostrum, and since this is achieved most satisfactorily by a symmetrical arrangement of seats, it is appropriate that this should be expressed in a strongly axial design.

The major theme of the design is the shaped auditorium mass surrounded by a glass walled enclosure: "a solid egg in a transparent box", a theme with obvious possibilities of spatial drama. As functional symbolism "the egg-like structure is opaque and heavy-looking, a logical expression of the great thickness of wall required to exclude noise." But the central theme, according to Richards, is

2 Ibid., p. 356.
3 Ibid., p. 355.
confused by the external facade treatment. As described elsewhere in this thesis, these are given a wide variety of decorative and patterned treatments.\(^1\) Whereas Pevsner seemed to have assumed that this was bad in itself (although perhaps limitations of space prevented a thorough exposition of his dislike of these very busy facades), Richards explains why and how such an elaboration of motifs is inappropriate to this particular circumstance. There is a conflict between the sculptural character of the egg-in-a-box theme and the surface intricacies of the elevations, a conflict of distracting visual interests.

The facade is treated as a frontal screen—as an elaborately worked out piece of architecture in its own right—and the eye is led, at least in the daytime, to explore its surface laterally rather than penetrate beyond it and apprehend the significance of the three-dimensional conception.\(^2\)

But, unlike Pevsner, Richards is not upset by the hanging stone apron that frames the top of the river facade. Whereas Pevsner found no structural reasons for this device and considered it to be mainly decorative, Richards maintains that it plays an important role in achieving a certain balance between glass area and plain wall surface. His contention is this, that when the area of glass begins to occupy too much of the facade, the remaining solid wall sur-

\(^1\)See p. 45 this thesis.

\(^2\)"Criticism--the Royal Festival Hall", p. 356.
face begins to register as a structural frame. At the opposite limit, when the wall surface dominates, the glass area tends to read as holes punched in a solid. To maintain the expression of this facade as a skin composed of both glass and solid, neither as a structural frame filled-in, nor as a punctured wall, but as a contiguous envelope, it was necessary to preserve a fine balance between the relative areas of different materials. "The hanging panel has therefore been designed to extend the area of plain wall surface sufficiently to restore its proper character." Since the stone is nothing more than a veneer, and it is expressed as such, the hanging panel does not require the kind of structural rationalization that would set Pevsner's mind at ease. In the foyers, Richards is as enthusiastic as Pevsner, and has similar reservations on the many different forms and textures in the Hall itself, though Richards would prefer that circulation should be more clearly emphasized by more visual definition of spaces. In general, Richards concedes an effectiveness that defies visual or logical analysis.

A concert hall stands or falls by its atmosphere or personality. In this respect the Royal Festival Hall is a triumphant success. Atmosphere, like musical quality, can neither be measured nor rationally explained.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 357.

\(^2\)Ibid.
5. Rebuilding the City of London

The City of London, the financial headquarters of the United Kingdom, and the centre of world banking, was heavily damaged during the bombing attacks of the Second World War. The task of reconstruction necessary to restore the area to its former glory, to solve the problems of traffic congestion and to provide an architectural inspiration to the rest of England, was a great opportunity for applying the principles of modern architecture and town planning. Due to the clash of vested interests, both public and private, and to architectural insensitivity and incompetence, the opportunity was lost. Through the pages of the *Architectural Review*, J. M. Richards waged an almost lone battle against the architectural blight that threatened to engulf the City. Richards pursued his argument with relationship to three main points.

(a) The buildings, considered individually, are poorly designed. Most, in fact, appear to be conceived in a kind of austere Neo-Georgian manner, and even apart from the fact that their massive brick facades belie their structural steel frames, and that Neo-Georgian is irrelevant culturally speaking, "Their very size precludes the successful use of an idiom evolved for more domesticated purposes and on a smaller scale."\(^1\) Such buildings are not even good

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\(^1\) Richards, "Rebuilding the City", *Architectural Review*, June 1954, p. 361.
exercises in the Neo-Georgian manner. Of one of them, Atlantic House, which is typical of many Richards observes,

The whole has an unnecessary massiveness, which effect is added to by the staircase towers, aggressively vertical in treatment, set in strident opposition to the horizontal lines of string-courses and parapets. The other complaint that must be made is of the absence of refinement in detail, and the insensitive relationship of parts generally.¹

(b) Considered in relationship to each other and to existing buildings, most of the new structures in the City either display a complete disregard of their neighbours, or attempt to preserve some kind of formal unity by petty means, such as lining up string course or window head heights with adjacent buildings. As Richards complains this

... ... raises the question whether the right way to pay respect to an historic monument is to embellish it with reminiscences of period style ... and to impose on it a disposition of window openings and a system of proportions that are clearly inspired not by the essential character of the structure but by a desire to be politely in keeping with tradition.²

(c) In the larger view of the total urban pattern that is being affected by new buildings, and especially in areas such as the immediate vicinity of St. Paul's, where


one of the planning schemes under consideration would clear a large bleak plaza around the Cathedral; "the idea is still too widespread that good planning means providing bigger spaces and being able to see the whole of every building at the same time."\(^1\) Townscape on such an open pattern is completely contradictory to the \textit{genus loci} of the City of London, for its character, in the visual sense, has always been one of restricted views, intimate, busy and even confused spaces, a pattern of a complex and intricate sequence of spaces between buildings, with which the urge to set off individual buildings as single showpieces is quite out of keeping.

Richards places the blame for this hiatus only partly on the architects, most of whom are "at best conventional and unimaginative designers; at worst they are quite illiterate", but the greatest culpability lies with the "New Patrons", the great business houses and public corporations.\(^2\)

Can complaints by critics . . . . do very much to halt the process while property owners continue to have their mind's eye filled with a picture of a city of classical palaces symbolizing their commercial solidity and prosperity, while architects continue to be chosen because of their capacity to produce such palaces quickly and expensively enough and while the City Fathers continue to encourage a piecemeal development, having it seems, in their anxiety to get construction under way, lost that

\(^1\)"Rebuilding the City", p. 119.

vision of a nobler, better planned city with which they—and we who trusted them—finished the war.\footnote{Ibid.}

Almost the only hope left for retrieving the situation seems to be, according to Richards, to agitate for carefully studied townscape and landscape activities which could, before it is too late, manage to incorporate the individual blunders into a larger scheme which would save the area as a whole.

A thesis, more sociological than architectural, could be written to account for the different national situations that have caused big businesses in the British Isles to build the red-brick Neo-Georgian calumnies that are defacing the country, whilst in the United States, similar patrons, their own interests equally at heart, have produced, perhaps fortuitously, the Johnson Wax Building, Lever House and the Seagram Tower.
V. JOSEPH V. HUDNUT

A. BACKGROUND

Born in Big Rapids, Michigan in 1886, Joseph V. Hudnut attended Harvard, 1906-09, and received a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1912 after study at the University of Michigan. Later degrees include M.S., Columbia University, 1917; and M.A., Harvard University, 1942. He began teaching as a professor at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute 1912-16, practised architecture in New York City 1919-23, and since then has held professorships at the University of Virginia 1923-26, Columbia University 1926-35, where he became dean of the School of Architecture in 1932. From 1935 to 1953 he was professor of architecture and dean of the School of Design at Harvard. Hudnut is now a lecturer in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Besides numerous articles, he has written two books: Modern Sculpture, 1929; and Architecture and the Spirit of Man, 1950.
B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. General

Hudnut does not pretend to be infallible, he cautions those who hear his lectures or read his works not to consider his suggestions as dogmatic and immutable laws, but as tentative principles which may be of assistance in determining whether or not a building may be called a work of architecture. He has written accounts of architectural principles, engineering principles, and historical principles, in their relationship to artistic creativity.

2. Architectural Principles

In a course of three lectures delivered at the College of Architecture and Design, University of Michigan, Joseph Hudnut declared the principles which have guided his criticism of architecture. The title, "Three Lamps of Modern Architecture: The Lamp of Progress, The Lamp of Nature, and The Lamp of Democracy", suggests comparison with Ruskin's Seven Lamps of Architecture, but whereas Ruskin intended his Seven Lamps to be positive guides that the architect should follow, Hudnut intends to demonstrate that the lamps of progress, nature and democracy are false beacons that should not be allowed to mislead the architect.

He disposes of them briefly in this way: technology progresses but not art, and art is not dependent upon technology, but upon ultimate values.¹ These values are the themes of architectural expression and are constant in any age; nature is not analogous to architecture, for nature lives and grows, and architecture, except in a metaphorical sense, does not; democracy concerns itself with majority opinion which is irrelevant to artistic creation and expression. These arguments are developed in his positive and negative principles of architecture.

**A. Positive principles**

1. "Expression is the supreme law of architecture, the themes of architecture are ideas related to men in societies; and the vehicle of expression is always plastic."

2. "Expression is the supreme law of art, and the origin of expression is a feeling or idea which exists a priori—that is, without calculation or argument—in the mind of the artist."

3. "The expressive character of works of architecture is rooted in their mere abstract form and pattern and may be independent of all other characteristics."

**B. Negative principles**

1. "Expression in architecture is not description."

2. "Expression, in the second place, is independent of social consciousness."

3. "Expression in architecture is independent of opinion."²

¹Hudnut's ultimate values seem to be, in church architecture, ethics, mysticism and romance, and in life, freedom, justice, progress (sic), and delight. See p. 81 and p. 77 herein.

²Cf. Richard Roud, "The Theatre on Trial", Encounter, July, 1958, p. 27. Speaking of Strindberg, Roud says,
Expression is the dominating term. Although these principles tell us the vehicle, the origin, and the character of architectural expression, the word expression is not defined. A dictionary definition of expression is:

The act of showing, manifesting or revealing; esp., indication of feeling, spirit, character, etc., as in the countenance or voice, or in artistic or musical execution.¹

Expression in architecture would then be the tangible evidence, through the medium of buildings, of qualities (feeling, spirit, character, etc.) that are usually considered to be intangible. This seems to be consistent with Hudnut's use of the word, although there is some ambiguity about the nature of the intangible qualities, or themes, that are to be expressed. According to Hudnut's first principle, the themes expressed must be "ideas related to men in societies," that is, social ideas, but one of his negative principles states that "Expression . . . . . . is independent of social consciousness." To reconcile this apparent contradiction we must postulate themes which can be related to man as a social animal, but not to just one specific society. The great themes of architecture will not be endemic, but universal; they will be consonant with

the aspirations of all mankind.

The worth-whileness of man, the dignity of his institutions, and his destiny on this earth ought to be the persistent themes of our art, more closely pressed than any other against the heart of the world. It is important that these meanings should be made eloquent in the buildings which we build and the cities which we plan.¹

In Hudnut's opinion, merely to express any idea as a theme is not sufficient, the idea must have intrinsic value.

Nothing today could persuade us of grandeur in the new architecture of Moscow or of dignity in the gilded vista of Ochre Court: not that these do not express social ideas but rather that they express ideas unworthy of expression.²

There are of course certain themes with which architecture cannot become involved. The themes of irony, satire, tragedy, and comedy permeate the arts of literature and music, but it is difficult to conceive of purposefully ironic, satiric, tragic or comic buildings. Association with events and situations that were in themselves humorous or tragic may lead us to project these qualities into the building's form, but with the exception of fun-fairs and cemeteries, (neither of which are usually considered to be within the realms of architecture), permanent architecture must eschew the expression of transitory


²"The Lamp of Democracy", p. 152. See also Hudnut, Architecture and the Spirit of Man, p. 75; "If we love a symbol we will call it beautiful; if we hate it, no art can make it less hateful."
themes.

The more a theme becomes involved in personality, or the relationship between personalities, the less apposite, the less available does it become for architectural expression.

Buildings, except in the metaphors of critics, are never honest, truthful, frank, free of fraud, or even mature of judgement, and if they give us any assurance of such respectability that is because we have accommodated scientific knowledge to an ethical analogy. The artist is honest and mature of judgement, not his building.¹

Artistic expression, to Hudnut, is the condition in which the singular intention of an individual is made overt. Expression is not accidental, but directed, and the extent to which the perceived intent of the observer and the actual intent of the artist are coincident is a measure of the successfulness of the expression. Nevertheless, since the plastic intent of the artist, in the final synthesis, is only evident through the work of art itself, it seems that correspondence between premeditated intent and observed intent is a difficult criterion to maintain. Elsewhere, Hudnut says that a knowledge of the physical intentions of a building, and its location in history, are not essential for its appreciation. A state of innocence, provided that it is coupled with an acute perceptual awareness, need not hinder the enjoyment of architecture.

¹"The Lamp of Democracy", p. 246.
Buildings are often most eloquent to those persons who are aware only of their shapes: who know little or nothing about material and construction. Our knowledge of history and utility, our analysis of structure, serve often to blur and confuse the uncomplicated art of architecture. When we allow them to do so, buildings speak to us directly and immediately.¹

To the observer who has previous knowledge of the work of architecture about to be appreciated, Hudnut advises that a willing "suspension of disbelief" in their preconceptions will probably increase their direct awareness of the building and sharpen their appreciation of it as architecture.²

Hudnut and Mumford seem to be in agreement that the worth, the dignity, and the destiny of man are the most important values that architecture can express. They do not agree when it comes to the point of recognizing these values in specific buildings. For instance, Hudnut has referred to Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp as "a cup of fine clay, richly wrought and overflowing with sentiment," but Mumford declares it to be "a sloppy abandonment of discipline." Apparently mutual agreement as to ultimate values does not guarantee that there will be agreement as to the way in which these values should be expressed.


At the moment of appreciation, Hudnut isolates the work of art from considerations which he regards as extrinsic.

I can be aware of technological circumstance and artistic fashionings existing together in a building, but I cannot hold the building in my mind as a scientific object and at the same time hold it there as a work of art. If it exists as scientific object (or historical or social document) the artistic elements become mere accessories to cognitive fact; if it exists as a work of art, the elements created by science must either exist also as elements of the artistic form or by some means be erased from my consciousness. Whether thus erased or thus merged into expressive pattern they cease to exist as fact and science.¹

Mumford, on the other hand, refuses to separate a work of art from its total environment, and he allows his appreciation of the work to be influenced by any and all of the characteristics that the work possesses. "But one must not, like Benedetto Croce and Geoffrey Scott, seek to separate the aesthetic moment from the practical, the ethical and the meaningful attributes of the same activity."² However there are times, when for the sake of clarity of exposition, it may be advisable to discuss separately the aesthetic, practical, or meaningful attributes of a work of art. This has been recognized by Mumford in his article on the Seagram building.


In appraising this design, I have confined myself to its manifest aesthetic qualities. I have not considered the practical and functional demands that must be integrated in any complete work of architecture, nor have I asked at what cost or sacrifice these aesthetic qualities were achieved.¹

There is only one article of Hudnut’s in which his principles are applied to a distinct building type: “The Church in a Modern World.”² Hudnut expresses the view that the Church need not be concerned primarily with technological, commercial, or even social programmes, but should seek to express directly in its buildings the ecclesiastical virtues of “ethics, mysticism and romance.”³

Ethics, says Hudnut, is the most important emphasis in the Protestant faith, it has also been an important tenet in the doctrines of modern architecture, and therefore, it has been possible to express the ethical content of Protestantism without departing from the established vocabulary of modern architectural form. Witness the First Lutheran Church, Boston, by Pietro Belluschi, with its simple, obvious forms and materials declaring association with the ethical principles of honesty, integrity and truth. There are no dark corners where dark unexplained mysteries of the soul can lurk. Religion is taken to be as self-evident as

1"The Lesson of the Master", New Yorker, September 13, 1958, p. 148.
3Ibid.
the building itself. Hudnut wants us to be sure to realize that this expression is not integral with the materials or shapes themselves, it is there by virtue of the fact that we associate simple objects with the simple life, the simple life with honesty and directness.¹

Hudnut observes that when the modern architect tries to evoke the mystical content of religion, he often does so by recourse to visual associations with historical forms that acquired their own mysticism first-hand. Since there is no mystical content in the material, aluminum (or for that matter, in any other material, except by association), the architects for the Air Force Academy Chapel have tried to evoke a visual reminiscence of Gothic architecture in folded aluminum sheet because Gothic forms have association with mysticism. However the change from the Gothic material stone to the new material aluminum, and from the vaulted bay to the folded skin belie the task, for the only associations of this new form are with such non-mystical objects as automobiles and missiles. Where this chapel fails, the Church of Saint Anna, near Aachen, by the architect Rudolph Schwarz, succeeds. Here the materials used, stone and rough-textured concrete, and "the dim religious light" are loaded with pre-established mystical overtones. The form

¹Archibald Alison (1757-1839), Scottish divine and author, was one of the first architectural critics to dwell extensively on the importance of association in the evaluation and appreciation of architecture.
in which they are used is not historically imitative, nor
is its construction; the building is modern, yet by associ-
ation, medieval and mystic. Likewise, the Chapel of the
Holy Cross, Sedona, Arizona, by Anshen and Allen, resorts
to the construction of a single huge cross, the unfailing
symbol of Christianity, backed by a concrete slab box of
completely neutral aspect, as a means of identifying itself
as a place for worship. Should the cross turn by night,
into a blinking neon advertisement, one would not be at all
surprised. The fact that architecture is, to some extent,
the art of evoking the appropriate associations makes it a
hazardous pursuit requiring a knowledge of more than abstract
formal relationships.

By romance, the third of the ecclesiastical values
to be expressed, Hudnut seems to mean literary reminiscence,
"the enticing store of legend" which surrounds "precept and
document". Again, the connection may be one of association;
a white spire "tells us more eloquently than words the faith
upon which it is founded". But the old stories can be told
in new shapes, new ways. As an example of this, Hudnut
gives Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp, which despite—or
because of—its unusual shape, recalls the nature of the
medieval hospice, beckoning to the traveller from afar, and
to the traveller or pilgrim arrived, ensuring him of security

1Ibid., p. 160.
and meditative seclusion behind strong walls. The association is more successful in that it occurs without recourse to imitative forms and that in the face of modern conventionality Le Corbusier has made a gesture of defiant independence; he has designed a building which is surely modern, surely ecclesiastical, surely non-traditional and surely non-mechanical.¹

3. Engineering Principles

Mrs. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy has reproached Hudnut's article, "The Engineer's Aesthetics", as being blatant technology worship.² This is a clear misinterpretation of the article in its entirety for though Hudnut says; "... in the greater part of their practice architects, less concerned with that search for form and meaning which occupied their tradition, will approach their problems of design with the method and in the spirit of the engineers"; he expresses this as his opinion of what in fact is the current tendency, without advocating that this practice should be


²Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture, p. 36.
encouraged.\(^1\)

Indeed, Hudnut's distinction between the engineer's aesthetics, and architecture as expression, is akin to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's distinction between architecture as design, and architecture as art (see p. this thesis). In addition, Hudnut believes that there are certain architectural themes, derived from institutions which require a symbolic as well as a functional consequence, e.g. the Church and advertising, which are incapable of ever being satisfied by the engineer's aesthetics.

Hudnut does not doubt that some engineered objects are beautiful and, "the tradition of engineering, like that of architecture, includes an ideal of beauty peculiar to itself and quite distinct from that of any other art."\(^2\) But achievement of beauty is not a necessary correlation of their functionalism, for Brooklyn Bridge is beautiful but the Queensboro bridge is "as hideous as anything this side of Hell", yet both satisfy the requirements of functional performance.\(^3\)

According to Hudnut, the beauty of engineering is a result of working according to three principles of method. The first of these principles:

\(^1\)Hudnut, "The Engineer's Aesthetics", *Architectural Record*, January 1956, p. 139.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 140.
...is that of purifying the patterns of structure from all emotional content other than that which is inherent in their actual and objective forms. The Germans, who give everything a name, call this manner of working materialgerechtigkeit. In England it is called purism.

Purism is recognizable in a direct expression of form by its simple geometry and emancipation from superfluities. Associations, connotations and traditions are considered to be distractions from the perception of sheer form. Purism is economical in the full sense of the word. It may be applied to painting as well as architecture. According to this doctrine the women who occur in recognizable (though distorted) form serve only to obscure the important issue of the painting, Demoiselles d'Avignon, by Picasso. Despite the painting's title its importance, to a purist, is in its composition of colours, textures, and angular planes, not in its iconography. In their own way engineers have habitually worked in this purist manner but were unconcerned with regarding it as an aesthetic doctrine. Architects recognized it, especially Le Corbusier, and saw in it a kind of morality based on the belief that engineering was the finest expression of our era.

The engineer, inspired by the law of Economy, and governed by mathematical calculation, puts us in accord with universal law. He achieves harmony.

1Ibid., p. 141.

2Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture, p. 17.
There exists a mass of work conceived in the new spirit; it is to be met with particularly in industrial production.  

The second engineering principle to which Hudnut draws our attention is the intellectual and empathetic delight in the display of the "action and inter-action within and among structural elements." Hudnut affirms that there is a beauty in construction, particularly when it is of large scale, but we should recognize it for what it is, "a proud solution of a technological problem," whose excellence is the excellence of engineering, not of architecture.  

In buildings such as schools, houses and hospitals, the content of humanity deserves primacy of expression over the physical shell or framework that provides the shelter.

Hudnut declares the Kresge Auditorium at M.I.T., by architect Eero Saarinen, to be an example of structural virtuosity that is exciting for its own sake and not because of the more architectural art of "the ordering of useful spaces." The roof of the auditorium is basically a dome, supported at three points, with large arc-sections of the dome sliced away between the supports. Now, as built, the complexities of construction that were the result of

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1 Ibid., pp. 7, 9.
2 "The Engineer's Aesthetics", p. 143.
3 Ibid., p. 144.
4 Ibid.
this apparently simple arrangement belie the first principle of the engineer's method according to Hudnut: pure, economic structure. The idea that the Kresge Auditorium is a structural triumph is a pretense.

Hudnut gives as the third engineering principle the creation and use of standards. It is important to realize the distinction that Hudnut makes between standards as a valuable engineering principle and standards as they apply to a work of art. Hudnut does not believe, as Le Corbusier does, that architecture is dependent upon standards, though both Hudnut's and Le Corbusier's definitions of standards are quite similar.¹

A great architect has defined a standard as 'that simplified practical exemplar of anything in general use which embodies a fusion of its anterior forms'--and he said that standards are one of the immediate prerequisites of civilization. This definition is clearly that of an engineer: no artist would willingly fuse his work with anterior forms. There is in it also the concept of progress and--if I have understood the author--he has identified a progress towards technological perfection with a progress towards beauty. That concept also could only be that of an engineer. The artist knows that the arts do not progress.²

Without denying the civilizing benefits of standards,

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¹Cf. Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture, p. 135. "Architecture is governed by standards. Standards are a matter of logic, analysis and precise study. Standards are based on a problem that has been well stated." By standards, Hudnut and Le Corbusier seem to have in mind repetition, in the physical sense, of units based upon a desirable prototype.

²Hudnut, "The Engineer's Aesthetics", p. 145.
Hudnut closes this article with a re-iteration of the principle that architecture is expression; standards, though they may have an aesthetic character of their own, are not, simply because they are standards, liable to the expression of the particular. Hudnut may be said to share J. M. Richards' desire for an increasingly particularized architecture but he does not have any of Richards' faith in the cliche or the use of basic standards to enable higher standards to be reached.

Hudnut observes an increasing tendency, amongst modern architects, to adopt the methods and goals of engineering. He believes that engineering methods and goals may lead to functional fulfilment and to beauty, but not to expression, and therefore not to architecture, for "expression is the supreme law of architecture."¹

Other tendencies, described by Hudnut, that make the achievement of architecture in our contemporary society more and more difficult, are the exigencies of mass production, commercialization, and the pressures of business corporations, under which the architect loses control over the practise of architecture. He may, under occasionally liberal conditions, be able to operate as a designer but mostly the architect is reduced to the status of a tasteful and tactful selector.

¹Hudnut, "The Lamp of Progress", Architectural Record, March 1953, p. 139.
A tact in selection, however exquisite, is not quite the same as a progression of design. This will be true even when a building is original in its initial conception. Individuality cannot stop with the statement of an idea.¹

Great architecture needs sympathetic clients or it may never be accomplished. In history, sympathetic clients have been found in the Church, the aristocracy and the financial entrepreneurs, all of whom were at times wealthy enough and sufficiently interested to inspire architects and architecture. Hudnut concurs with J. M. Richards in observing that, in our time, the new patrons of architecture are the affluent corporations who neither inspire nor expect inspiration in the architecture that they sponsor.²

There are notable exceptions to this rule such as the Lever Brothers and Seagram buildings. Nor can a group sustain collaboration with a creative artist, and when group meets group, when the building committee from a business house meets the design committee from an architectural company the expectations of any creative expression emerging are practically nil. Hudnut emphasizes in his individualistic manner that the creation of a work of art is a personal act though, in the case of architecture, this personal act must be conjoined with the intentions and requirements of


the patron. In the final analysis our epoch cannot "stamp its own countenance upon its architecture except through individual freedom and poetic response."\(^1\)

4. Historical Principles

Hand-in-hand with Hudnut's belief in expression as the supreme law in architecture goes his interpretation of architectural history as being the record of the spirit of an epoch, its Zeitgeist in tangible form.\(^2\) The Greeks, according to Hudnut, did not use trabeated construction because of material limitations, or because they knew no other; they did so because the simplicity of the horizontal beam and vertical column suited the simplicity, serenity and nationalism of their period. The Romans did not just discover the concrete vault, but they were prone to use it, in fact caused it, because in the vault was the ability to express power and magnificence, to achieve great scale and great spans.\(^3\) The pointed arch and the flying buttress did not provoke Gothic architecture but were invented by the necessity of constructing an architecture

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3 Cf. Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture, p. 25; "The Gothic style was not created because somebody invented rib-vaulting; the Modern Movement did not come into being because steel frame and reinforced concrete construction had been worked out--they were worked out because a new spirit required them."
symbolizing the earthly presence of the divine, expressed in terms of light. The structural process was aimed at eventually eliminating itself (which of course was never quite achieved) so that light and nothing but light, mysterious, intangible and omnipresent, evoked the spirit of God.¹

In this interpretation, the idea precedes the technological development which enables it to be expressed, and the idea, latent in the community, precedes the artist who happens to be the individually creative channel through which the idea emerges as form. "Scholars have spent no end of research to discover the inventor of the skyscraper without perceiving that the skyscraper was created by a people's need for an avenue of expression."² This theory supposes that some form of collective sub-conscious, or extra-sensory perception, enables contemporary individuals to hold identical, or at least similar, ideals which move some of them to perform certain similar acts or to produce similar artifacts in harmony with these ideals.

In Hudnut's version of history the architect is inspired by the latent aspirations of his society. This directly contradicts Banham's version wherein society reacts to the efforts of strong individuals. Pevsner, as we have seen, believes that these opposing views are simply

¹Cf. ibid., p. 179.
²Ibid.
extreme versions of the truth: that between society and the individual there is a constant interaction that may, at different times and in different circumstances, appear more favourable to either limit. Hudnut's emphasis on the architect's dependence upon society seems inconsistent in mood if not in logic with his previous statements on expression, in which he insists that expression—the supreme law of architecture—is independent of society or social consciousness. If the architect is driven by innate social feelings to provide tangible symbols that are expressive of those feelings his expression is certainly not socially independent.

But suppose that the architect must express the spirit of his age. What then is the spirit of our age? For Hudnut, whatever it is, it is not technology.

Nevertheless our age is not a technological age. Beneath these surface phenomena lie the great rhythms of freedom and justice, of progress and humanity, of eagerness and delight. These, too, are integral to that spirit which is the arbiter of architecture and which takes as its prime instrument the understandings and intuitions of its architects.¹

However, in the face of the evidence that our age presents: in the actions of men, their artifacts, and their recorded thoughts, it must be admitted that one of

¹"Architecture and the Individual", Architectural Record, October 1958, p. 170. See also Architecture and the Spirit of Man, p. 39, "Technologies are consequences, not causes, of ideas."
our major preoccupations is with technology. Technology cannot be ignored. Freedom, justice, progress, humanity, eagerness and delight are ideals for any age; moreover they are abstract concepts which exist only when they are expressed or made manifest in some demonstrable and tangible form. Since Hudnut does not regard art as a tool of social action, and it is through social action that ideals such as these are achieved, his directives apply to architects inasmuch as they apply to all men.
VI. SIBYL MOHOLY-NAGY

A. BACKGROUND

Mrs. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy was born in Dresden, Germany, and was educated at the Universities of Leipzig; Giessin; and Frankfurt. She arrived in the United States in 1940 with her husband, the late Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, who took charge of the Chicago Institute of Design where Mrs. Moholy-Nagy became head of the division of humanities and director of the summer school. She remained in this position from 1941-1947. Other positions she has held have been Professor of Art at Bradley, 1947-49; lecturer at the University of California, 1949-51; and currently she is Professor of History of Architecture at Pratt Institute.

Her publications include *Children's Children, Experiment in Totality*, and *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture*, as well as many articles, most of which have been written for the monthly magazine *Progressive Architecture*. 
B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. General

Although Lazlo Moholy-Nagy was one of the founding members of The Bauhaus, whose principles of integrating art and technology he endeavoured to perpetuate in the Chicago Institute of Design, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's attitude is quite antagonistic to the Bauhaus philosophy.\(^1\)

One of the major difficulties in interpreting Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's writing is semantic. Her curious literary style may be due to an incomplete mastery of the English language, for she frequently reverts to her native German to convey in one word ideas that would require whole sentences in English. Her observations are often emphasized by italics and by capital letters, which make her writing appear dogmatic and profound, but it is disturbing to find that however astute these observations may be in their particular context, they are sometimes self-contradictory if universally applied.

As a critic, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy has been mainly concerned with specifying the relationship between art and design in architecture, with advocating and pursuing the study of so-called anonymous architecture, and with giving critical reviews of specific buildings.

According to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy the First Cause of Architecture should be Art. She means by this that without artistic aspirations there would be no architecture but merely buildings, just as without artistic aspirations there would be no music but merely collections of sounds. This may be true enough but it is not the whole truth, for neither could architecture exist without buildings nor music without sounds, and these are in the physical sense first causes since without them the respective fields of architecture and music could not be achieved. Art may perhaps be more cogently termed a final cause of architecture, since it is the last in the chain of conditions that determine whether any artifact can be called architecture. Elsewhere, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy recognizes the "first cause of architecture as shelter", she has therefore ascribed a dichotomy of first causes which seems contradictory. This ambivalent attitude of Mrs. Mohly-Nagy is characteristic of her writing, she apparently does not check her new expressions of opinion against previous ones. Had she observed that art in architecture is the ultimate value, and shelter the immediate value, her two propositional first causes would be reconcilable. But if, as she claims, "Art


2Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture, p. 22.
can only remain Art if it is created for Art's sake," and architecture is art, then architecture, to be consistent within these terms, cannot be created for shelter's sake.¹

We reach a polemical impasse.

For demolishing art as the first cause of architecture, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy blames a number of groups of people. First the Futurists and Le Corbusier, for advocating technology and the machine as sufficient causal factors in producing a new architecture; secondly the Bauhaus and Gropius, for attempting to accommodate or compromise art and machine production in the expectation that the two would fertilize each other, and for accepting the group as a possible creator of art; and thirdly the Pragmatic Experimentalists, William James and John Dewey, from whom "art received its function as therapy and pedagogical expedient."² Art must be sufficient unto itself, art as a utility object or social force is contaminated art, seems to be Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's thesis. Art is incredibly precious:

It is native to a few chosen and haunted men whose lives should be fenced off from ours by barriers of respect and humility.³

This is bad luck for the art of architecture unless the few

¹"Architecture—Art or Design?", p. 14.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
chosen and haunted men are exceptionally prolific in their chosen work. Unless Mrs. Moholy-Nagy mitigates her conception of the artist-as-hero, she cannot hope to see a contemporary vernacular architecture that ranks as fine art, nor can the artist-as-noble-savage ideals expressed in *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture* be considered consistent with such a rarified outlook. However, architecture may be good as design without being art. Mrs. Moholy-Nagy has suggested two different criteria to which buildings may be referred. One is art; the other, design.

Art is identity of form and idea, Design is identity of form and function. Art is at its most powerful when it transcends reality; Design when it identifies itself with the standards of the beholder.¹

Art of course cannot transcend reality if it exists and is therefore real itself; function may be an idea, and surely the connection of identity is an equation that cannot really be satisfied. As a manifesto, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's bold statement has no common sense meaning, but strangely enough, the idea of a distinction between art and design is congruent with the distinctions that we often latently assume in practical experience. We do recognize a difference between the beauty of a Mercedes-Benz and the Mona Lisa, between a grain silo and the Taj Mahal. As Mrs. Moholy-Nagy observes, the Galerie Des Machines, the Eiffel

Tower and the Brooklyn Bridge are strong, harmonious, and beautiful forms, they are well-designed and undoubtedly expressive of a progressive technology "BUT THEY ARE NOT ARCHITECTURE."¹ The Brooklyn Bridge was required to exist because of temporal demands, and because it satisfies these demands, and also because the formal organization of its structure may be called beautiful, according to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy, the bridge is an example of good design. But architecture, as fine art, not only expresses "that which is time-required", but also "that which will remain valid beyond the passage of time."² The Brooklyn Bridge expresses its goal—to carry a traffic artery over a span of water, as economically and as efficiently as possible, but when traffic ceases, its reason for existence also ceases. As an abstract relationship of structural forms, the bridge would, of course, still exist, but abstract form is what Mrs. Moholy-Nagy seems to imply architecture cannot be. The themes that remain valid beyond the passage of time, and that architecture expresses are ideals and emotions, the aspirations and spiritual satisfactions of humanity. With this as her criterion of architecture, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's writing recalls Hudnut's principle: that expression is the supreme law of architecture, provided that this

¹Ibid., p. 16.
²Ibid.
expression is of human values that are universal and timeless. Neither of these critics seem to encourage the contemplation of abstract form for its own sake, they do however, encourage individualism and expressionism in the fine arts, and we may therefore call their attitude romantic.¹ Their common hope would seem to be that the majority of buildings will attain good design, and that the few masterpieces of inspired geniuses will achieve that expression of external values that is the hallmark of the art of architecture.

Both Mrs. Moholy-Nagy and Hudnut find well-designed engineering objects to be too self-effacing, and without evidence of felt emotion consciously expressed. Good design solves the problem of incorporating a number of divergent requirements into a single successfully functioning composition, but architecture goes beyond mere problem solving and excites us to a new awareness of life. Perhaps this is the way in which architecture, as art, "is at its most powerful when it transcends reality." If reality is not imagination, fiction, pretense, or idea, if it is that which exists now, and tangibly so, architecture transcends reality as it surpasses brute fact. There is another sense in which reality may be defined as that which is really real, that which is absolute, self-existent, and ultimate, as opposed to what

¹For a discussion of romanticism and its characteristics, see W. J. Bate, Prefaces To Criticism, p. 99-122.
is derivative or dependent; by token of which art could be considered not as transcending reality, but as reality itself.¹ As a reality which is ultimate, eternal, and unchangeable, art would not be subject to evolution, nor to regression.

Mrs. Moholy-Nagy believes that in art there is no progress, only a cycle of change. There may be periods that are more artistically productive than other periods in terms of total output, and there may be periods which produce a higher proportion of masterpieces than others, but taken singly, the masterpiece of any given period cannot be said to be superior to that of another, unless it is the work of a superior artist. The sculpture of the High Renaissance is not, in purely aesthetic terms, more progressive than Pre-Columbian sculpture; Giotto's frescoes are not (as art) more progressive or more highly developed than the cave-paintings of the Australian Aborigines; they are different because the society in which they were produced was different. Our present age of taste seems to be the first in which the artistic products of all periods and all nations are considered to be equally worthy in terms of their own aesthetic pretensions. Art, unlike the products advertised through Madison Avenue, is not better.

than ever. By the same token neither is it worse. With this in mind the architect who would practice his vocation as an art need not be concerned with being progressive. He can use any kind of building material, traditional or modern; or any kind of spatial theme, static or dynamic; indeed Mrs. Moholy-Nagy goes so far as to state that "the freedom with which an architect selects form and space combinations from the many at his disposal, is a gauge of his excellence", and eclecticism is no longer reprehensible.¹ Now if the contemporary architect who wishes to create a work of art is not, according to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy, to seek inspiration from notions of progress, technology, or function, on what basis can he establish his search for form?² Apparently the architect should aim for at least the level of good design. If it is within his character to produce art, this creative talent will be in no wise dimmed by the exercise of functional and structural disciplines.

Mrs. Moholy-Nagy agrees with J. M. Richards that architects generally should not "concern themselves with monumentality but with scale, not with immensity but with limitation, not with the universal but with the particular."³

¹"Architecture—Art or Design?", p. 25.
²Cf. Hudnut's "Three Lamps of Architecture".
We understand her to mean particular with reference to location and function, not to time. In particularizing his art, the architect should contemplate the existence in our society of "the sophisticated opposites of collectivism and freedom, a mentality equally unsuited to the cell-block divisions of the Renaissance and the naive lack of enclosure of the 'open' floor plan,"¹ although this would bind a building closely to its time, and make it invalidated by the passage of time. Also the architect should have the courage to use traditional building materials in conjunction with technological ones, and to use light and transparency "as an articulation of mass and space."²

3. Anonymous Architecture

For the most part architectural critics direct their attentions to buildings that are either the works of the acknowledged masters of the architectural profession, or to buildings which are self-evidently significant because of their size, their structural innovations, their visual uniqueness, or their political and social importance. Critics criticise, generally speaking, buildings that could hardly escape the notice of the architectural profession or the general public. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy is an exception to this rule. Her book, Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture-

²Ibid., p. 32.
ture, has the avowed intention of discussing buildings that are normally neglected by critics and historians, and of evaluating these buildings with respect to certain special criteria. The general descriptive characteristics that Mrs. Moholy-Nagy lists for anonymous architecture are:

One: The unsupplemented use of native building materials and local construction skills.

Two: Planning and massing as the result of specific unduplicable functional requirements and site conditions, regardless of symmetry or generally accepted taste canons.

Three: Absence of any ornamentation that is not part of the structure.

Four: Identity of enclosing form and enclosed space.¹

These are not values by which anonymous architecture is to be judged, nor are they descriptive attributes which are unique to anonymous architecture, for as Mrs. Moholy-Nagy admits:

These are characteristics which can be found in some modern buildings, but it is the purity of their expression that indicates the native builder.²

Therefore these four characteristics cannot be considered as definitive, and the degree to which a building must conform to them, in order to be classified as anonymous architecture is left unspecified. Most of the examples that are given in the book adhere fairly closely to the general

¹Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture, p. 44.
²Ibid.
prescription for anonymous architecture—especially the more primitive buildings such as the Lumberman's Cabin, Bald Mountain Range Colorado, and the Church at Trampas, New Mexico,¹—but other examples are less consistent. The Church at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, exhibits planning and massing which does not seem to be the result of "specific unduplicable functional requirements and site conditions," rather it is apparently a typical wooden Gothic Revival building of its period but it is valued by Mrs. Moholy-Nagy because of its dominant position on a slight rise in an otherwise level plain.²

The cast iron balustrades and ornamental columns of the Rhinelander Gardens, New York, are neither made of native building materials, nor are they structurally essential and thus this building fails to satisfy characteristics one and three of the descriptive list.³ The virtues of this building, according to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy, are the balcony which insulates the rooms against cold and provides outdoor living space in favourable weather, and the internal arrangement of rooms which permits cross-ventilation and deep penetration of sunlight. These are virtues of sensible planning and of course not restricted

¹Ibid., p. 84 and 47.
²Ibid., p. 66.
³Ibid., p. 78.
to anonymous architecture. As a third example, the Abandoned Wholesale Store, Bay City, Michigan, obscures its simple pitched roof behind a false three-part gable crowned by a carved wooden cornice and frieze.\(^1\) It thus fails to satisfy the requirement of "identity of enclosing form and enclosed space"; the fourth of the characteristics of anonymous architecture. Mrs. Moholy-Nagy praises the workmanship for its soundness and the variety of effects obtained from changing the direction of the clapboard siding.

The three buildings described above are recommended to our attention for their respective qualities of apposite location, functional planning and sensitive craftsmanship, but these qualities are in no instance woven by Mrs. Moholy-Nagy into a systematic architectural theory.

However, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy suggests that behind the separate reasons for praising individual buildings lies the general principle of coherence, and that an anonymous building is good of its kind if it demonstrates "a union of parts."\(^2\) The Possum Run Cabin, Alabama, with three different roof pitches, four different systems of wall construction in wood, two different kinds of window opening, and a chimney which begins as stone and finishes as brick, is used to illustrate

\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 190.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., p. 107. In the sense in which Mrs. Moholy-Nagy uses it, coherence as an architectural value seems indistinguishable from the more commonly-used term unity.
lack of coherence.¹ The Henry Whitfield Stone House, Guilford, Connecticut, has an obvious coherence achieved by the use of a single wall material, a shingled-roof of constant pitch, and windows which are either dormers or simple rectangles of similar proportions when located in the walls, each glazed alike with diagonal lead-lighting.² We cannot conclude that a minimum number of materials and shapes is all that is required for coherence, but simplicity and consistency of form and material contribute directly to the achievement of coherence.

In the final chapter of Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture, it is said that we may recognize quality in architecture by "evaluating four features of a house, and finding in them a certain measure of success or failure of the builder's intentions."³ The four features given are the roof, the corner, the base, and the access. Now if we are to judge the total building according to its coherence, we must also be prepared to examine it in detail. However it is the unity of the parts, not the parts themselves that should be emphasized. The consideration of any particular detail of a building may give a clue to the builder's intention with respect to that detail, and reveal his skill in a specific situation, but the detail need not be indicative of

¹Ibid., p. 108.
²Ibid., p. 114.
³Ibid., p. 207.
the building as a whole.

It is an unfortunate blemish on Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's pioneer work that the meaning of anonymous as applied to architecture is not made clear. From common usage of the word anonymous we should expect it to imply, in this sense, architecture which has been erected by unknown builders or architects, but many of the examples of native genius in anonymous architecture cannot qualify under this classification. The Fortress Le Ferriere, Haiti,¹ is completely documented; architect-client, engineer, date of commencement of construction, date of termination, location, materials, structure, labour force, building programme, and motivation are all mentioned in the text accompanying its photograph. Similar though less complete knowledge is given for the Cloisters, Ephrata, Pennsylvania²; Rhinelander Gardens, New York³; House built by a Retired Sea Captain, St. Croix, Virgin Islands⁴; and Henry Whitfield Stone House, Guilford, Connecticut.⁵

Despite Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's esoteric vocabulary, and her flexible interpretation of the criteria by which she

¹Ibid., p. 68.
²Ibid., p. 70.
³Ibid., p. 78.
⁴Ibid., p. 92.
⁵Ibid., p. 114.
suggests architectural values are determined, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture* serves to remind us that architecture is not the sole preserve of magnificent and pretentious buildings, but can be found in the most humble and unsophisticated structures.

Although her various judgements defy systematic organisation, one negative principle controls her persistent remarks: that architecture is not necessarily determined by technological skills or by the ambitious scope of the building programme.

An indigenous and intuitive work of architecture is, as Goethe said of folk art, 'like a work of God, spoken this instant.'

Such architecture is comprehensible to everybody, not just the initiated and the artistically-trained, and the architect who learns its lesson should be ensured of popular recognition.

4. Specific Critiques

(a) In a brief report on the Brussels Exposition, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy condemns the German Pavilion for no other reason than its obvious indebtedness to the architecture of Mies van der Rohe, she considers Le Corbusier's Philips Pavilion and the French Pavilion to be nothing more than displays of structural virtuosity, boastful but meaningless.2

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1*ibid.*, p. 184.

These buildings failed as art because they expressed no timeless values, and as design because their form was neither related to their physical function as shelter nor to the psychological function of expressing national character. It does however depend upon one's personal idea of national character. It seemed to me that the German Pavilion, if derivative, paid a compliment in this way to one of the greatest German architects of this century—Mies van der Rohe, whose own personality and work still bears the trace of his nationality.

Mrs. Moholy-Nagy praises the Italian Pavilion because it provides a vicarious experience of pedestrian and urban spaces without recourse to direct imitation of existing Italian buildings. The Pavilion derives inspiration from Italian peasant architecture and from traditional materials, but nevertheless acknowledges that these are only theses to be interpreted according to modern insight and to a special building programme: to evoke an image of Italy. This is exactly the kind of architecture that we should expect the writer of Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture to delight in, for the Pavilion eschews the easy modernity of steel and glass and relies instead upon materials which have past associations of warmth and joy.

Likewise, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy appreciated the British Pavilion, on the grounds that it displayed a sense of national character and symbol. Paradoxically, to many Englishmen
the king-size chocolate-box type portrait of the Queen, the ceremonial robes, the ubiquitous Elgar music and of course the fatuously contrived crazy English garden with its fountain constructed of domestic watering cans, represented the outmoded stances of monarchy and self-consciously self-inflicted jocular eccentricity: the very essence of Establishment sentimentality. This was official vernacular at its most cloying level, a plastic projection of the popular myth of the pre-occupations of the British character. To use a Cockney phrase, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy "was taken in."

Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's favourable reaction to the Dutch Pavilion was also based on its efficacy in demonstrating national temperament, in this case Dutch determination, stolidity, and sensible practical achievement in using science to wrest agricultural land from beneath the sea. The wave machine that demonstrated the constant pounding of the sea was indeed, to those who saw and heard it, unforgottably insistent and dramatic, but the impact of the Dutch Pavilion was oral rather than visual.

For these three Pavilions Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's criterion is not based upon beauty but upon the expression of national character.

(b) In a critique of a Medical Group Center, Hempstead, New York, by Basil Yurchenko, architect; Mrs. Moholy-Nagy gives a list of "three basic questions that should be asked about any building claiming to be more than
mere shelter.\textsuperscript{1}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
Site Planning: Where does it stand? \\
Esthetics: How does it look? \\
Function: How does it work?\textsuperscript{2}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Where the building stands is a fact that can be verified by empirical observation. Since the Medical Center is located so that a landscaped garden in the rear is sheltered from the sounds and sights of street traffic the site planning is successful according to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy. The functional workability of the Center can also be demonstrated by experience which in this instance indicates that the building is efficiently planned for the medical treatment that takes place within it. These are judgements that are more or less independent of personal interpretations or subjective tastes. Mrs. Moholy-Nagy avoids the aesthetic question by pleading that aesthetics is personal, and that the values of one observer will be different from those of another when it comes to judging appearance. Aesthetics, if it is subjective according to Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's usage, does not pertain to the consideration of pure form, but to an egocentric emotional response, directed by memory, to the field of visual stimuli. Mrs. Moholy-Nagy is satisfied with the interior of this building, with its restrained use of colour, texture, and form, which she also considers to

\textsuperscript{1}"The Doctor-Patient Relationship Restated", \textit{Progressive Architecture}, March 1959, p.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
have therapeutic value. Some misgivings are expressed about the proportions of the windows, the incongruous stone cornice and the lack of continuity in the street and garden facades. Finally Mrs. Moholy-Nagy states that Yurchenko has succeeded in his intentions, and that he has "re-affirmed that a building receives its meaning from enclosed space."\(^1\)

\(^1\)Ibid.
Lewis Mumford (1895- ) was born in Flushing, Long Island, and grew up in New York City. He was educated at Stuyvesant High School and later at City College, New York University, Columbia, and at the New School for Social Research. His writing career began at the age of fourteen with contributions to popular technical magazines. During the First World War he was a radio operator in the Navy, and afterward he became associate editor of the fortnightly Dial; in 1920 he was acting editor of the Sociological Review (London). In 1921 he married Sophia Wittenberg. Their son Geddes, born in 1925, was killed in Italy in 1944, in the Second World War; their daughter Alison was born in 1935.

The writing career of Lewis Mumford has a broad background of practical activity, which besides editorships includes service on the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York and on the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council of Education. He was consultant on planning for the City and County Planning Board, Honolulu (1938), and at Stanford University (1947), and on the United Nations (1951).

His editorships, besides those previously mentioned, include the one he shared with Alfred Kreymborg and Paul Rosenfeld on The American Caravan (1927-36), a series of
volumes which gave non-commercial writing the encouragement of publication. His teaching has included lectureships and professorships at the Geneva School of International Studies, at Dartmouth College, and at Columbia University, Stanford University, the University of California and the University of Pennsylvania. Since 1959 he has been Ford Research Professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Lewis Mumford's work has appeared in magazines throughout the world. His books, which have also had world-wide publication are: The Story of Utopias, 1922; Sticks and Stones, 1924; The Golden Day, 1936; Herman Melville, 1929; The Brown Decades, 1931; Technics and Civilization, 1934; The Culture of Cities, 1938; Whither Honolulu?, 1938; Men Must Act, 1939; Faith For Living, 1940; The South in Architecture, 1941; The Condition of Man, 1944; City Development, 1945; Values for Survival, 1946; Green Memories: The Story of Geddes Mumford, 1947; The Conduct of Life, 1951; Art and Technics, 1957; In the Name of Sanity, 1954; and The Transformations of Man, 1956.
B. CONTRIBUTIONS

1. General

Lewis Mumford is a comprehensive critic. To him, architecture and the society that spawns it are not separable entities. Architecture exposes, ruthlessly and inevitably, the thoughts and activities of the society in which it appears.

Mumford has been less concerned with evaluating architectural incidents than with assessing the contribution of architecture, en masse, to the social milieu.

In Sticks and Stones, one of Mumford's earlier works, he maintains: "... there is little use in discussing the needs and promises of architecture without relating the shell itself to the informing changes that may or may not take place in the life of the community itself."

Though architectural form may command our curiosity—one usually finds that the most criticised buildings are the best-looking buildings—we should value our architecture in terms of the social conditions that it presupposes, that it refuses, or that it tries to modify. This is the key to Mumford's architectural criticism.

However, if works of art are separated from other artifacts by reason of their aesthetic value and if the values by which the work of art is rated as great, signifi-

1Sticks and Stones, p. 193.
cant or important are ethical, moral, or social, then one set of values has determined our selection of the aesthetic group, and another set of values determined evaluation within the group. Surely selection and evaluation should be made on the same terms. The way out of this dilemma is either to specifically separate aesthetic criticism from all other kinds of criticism, or to assume the equal value of all fields, aesthetic, ethical, or social, so that the critic "will in judging a book attempt to keep them all in mind without being dominated by any one of them."\(^1\)

Mumford, in his writing on architecture, often makes this clear distinction between the aesthetic content of a building and any other values it may happen to possess.\(^2\) However Mumford differs from most art critics to this extent, that the premises upon which he selects a building for comment are sociological rather than aesthetic. That is to say that Mumford does not write about buildings whose terms of reference are those of an artistic elite. The art with which Mumford is concerned is not the art inside museums. Even works of art which might be considered sufficient unto themselves, such as Naum Gabo's sculpture outside the Bijenkorf department store in Rotterdam, are treated by Mumford as documents of profound social significance, as well as aesthetic-

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\(^2\) Although Mumford has said elsewhere that separate judgements of aesthetic and practical content are not to be recommended. Cf. p. 123 herein.
tic importance, if by both location and intention they participate in the life of the community. Because of Mumford's education and vocation, primarily as a sociologist, the social bias of his architectural criticism can be both expected and respected.

It is not my intention to discuss Mumford's philosophy in its entirety, but to indicate how, in action in the field of architectural criticism, it pragmatically deals with concrete situations.

Of course his philosophy and his criticism cannot be cloven apart, and at least some of Mumford's philosophical values and intentions are self-evident in his criticism. Insofar as it is possible to condense these values at all, into a single statement, they may be said to be distinctly humanist and optimistic (though more desperately so in later years as the condition of the world incites Mumford to greater urgency); his values are individual-centered in the sense of self-determination, social-centered in the sense of individual and corporate achievement through community participation, anti-mechanistic though not anti-scientific, and at their root, religious.

There is a chapter called "The Fallacy of Systems", from The Conduct of Life, which Lewis Mumford has said "gives the essence of my philosophy, and is a key to my whole thought and life." Its message is that any system at all, because it is a system, will neglect some aspects of man's
nature in favour of others which more easily fit the system being expounded. Mumford does not argue from this that we should do away with all systems, but that we should recognize their limitations, and use the disciplines of now one system, now the other, according to the situation in hand.

If no single principle will produce a harmonious and well-balanced existence, for either the person or the community, then harmony and balance perhaps demand a degree of inclusiveness and completeness sufficient to nourish every kind of nature, to create the fullest variety in unity, to do justice to every occasion.1

Between 1874 and 1878, Louis Sullivan, in France, had been given a similar edict by his mathematics teacher, M. Clopet, who observed with respect to a textbook in which theorems were presented and followed by exceptions-to-the-rule and special cases; "our demonstrations shall be so broad as to admit of no exceptions."2 For Mumford there is not one architecture of design and another of art, one of use and another of expression.

Those qualities that differentiate architecture from building cannot be derived from the mechanical requirements of the structure; they spring from the character and purpose of the user, as these are interpreted and remolded by the architect. When the whole personality is taken into account, expression or symbolism becomes one of the dominant concerns of architecture; and the more complex the functions to be served, the more varied and subtle the form will be. In other words—and this is the second modification—expression itself is one of the primary functions of architecture.

1The Conduct of Life, p. 180.

if mechanical functions, taken alone, do not fulfil all human needs, so subjective expressions, divorced from practical considerations, may become wilful, capricious, defiant of common sense. Accordingly the more sensitive the architect is to expression, the more capable he is of transforming "building" into "architecture", the greater the need for his own self-knowledge, self-control, self-discipline: above all, for subordinating his own inner wilfulness to the character and purposes of his client.1

As a philosopher and sociologist, and architectural connoisseur, Mumford's insistence on the retention of essentially human values, the dignity of the individual and his responsibility to society, has been of enormous contribution to the evaluation of not only architecture, but all of man's pursuits.

If we are to have a fine architecture, we must begin . . . . not with the building itself, but with the whole complex out of which architect, builder, and patron spring, and into which the finished building, whether it be a cottage or a skyscraper is set. Once the conditions are ripe for a good architecture, the plant will flower by itself.2

2. Specific Critiques.

For the purposes of discussing Mumford's architectural criticism four examples have been chosen: (a) Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation, which Mumford considers under two headings: as a work of sculptural architecture and as a functioning living unit; (b) Mies van der Rohe's Seagram building, New York, which Mumford chooses to criticize mainly

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1Mumford, "Function and Expression in Architecture", Architectural Record, November, 1951, p. 110.

2Sticks and Stones, p. 199.
from an aesthetic viewpoint, but which, with Le Corbusier's Unite, raises the question of the scope of the architect's responsibility to society; (c) an Olivetti showroom, by architects Belgioso, Perusutti and Rogers, which has no significant social role, and problems of human occupancy are of little relevance; and (d) Naum Gabo's sculpture, outside the Bijenkorf building, Rotterdam, which, though of architectural dimensions, is neither inhabited nor used, but simply exists as an aesthetic object. Finally, we shall consider the procedural method that is typical of Mumford's critiques.

(a) Consider first, Le Corbusier's huge construction at Marseilles; the Unite d'Habitation\(^1\); or, as Mumford likes to translate it: "Unity House".

Mumford never has been particularly sympathetic to Le Corbusier's architecture, and as one reads through the article a note of archness, of subdued mockery, is introduced. By treating lightly such Corbusian devices as the pilotis, the *brise-soleil*, the *béton brut*, the roof sculpture, Mumford manages to convey doubts as to Le Corbusier's sincerity and to the profundity of his motivation. This technique prepares the reader gradually for Mumford's ultimate ridicule of the entire "Unity House" project.

The skill of Le Corbusier as a sculptor is not to be

\(^1\)Mumford, "The Marseille 'Folly'", *New Yorker*, October 5, 1957, p. 76.
gainsaid, and Mumford, separating aesthetic from social judgements says:

... the outside of the building not only registers the interior functions but gains aesthetically by their architectural expression. However ineffective the structure may be as a living unit, it serves as an organic architectural expression in which structure and decoration, through the architect's faithfulness to his medium, are one.¹

Mumford then proceeds to condemn Unity House for its inability to function as a living unit: the building fails to take advantage of its height, for the view from each apartment is obstructed by balcony balustrades and sun screens; there is no satisfactory provision for car parking, as a result a clutter of automobiles at its base obscure the freedom of ground space that was the reason for elevating the building on pilotis; there are no satisfactory spaces for hanging washing, consequently the housewife uses the balconies, and thus mock the architect's elevational compositions. Internally, the common access corridors, conceived as high-level streets are barren, gloomy and monumental. Activity, the essence of a street, is not encouraged by such an inhuman space.

When one gets to the interior, one's praise for Le Corbusier's plastic achievements must come to an end, and since it is architecture, not sculpture, that is being considered, the value of his achievements on the outside is seriously diminished.²

¹Ibid., p. 84.
²Ibid., p. 86.
Mumford exposes ruthlessly the inadequacy, for human habitation, of the individual apartments. Privacy, daylight, and circulation suffer and in some rooms are practically non-existent. The shopping center, located on the mid-floors of the building, failed. The population was not large enough to support it.

Mumford is astonished and dismayed that Unity House has set a precedent; that it has so, he concludes, is the mark of a society bereft of a sense of human and humane values.

The vices of Unity House have become the virtues of the new monumental package designers, whose aim is to dazzle the spectator, to publicize the artist, and to sell the product.\(^1\)

Finally, Mumford contrasts the living conditions of Unity House with those of Neubuhl (a suburb of Zurich) the work of a group of architects—amongst them Weiner Moser and Alfred Roth—erected some thirty years ago. The comparison is all in favour of the single and three-story buildings of Neubuhl, which as a living unit, is both beautiful and functional.

To achieve their beautiful communal form, the architects of Neubuhl sacrificed nothing. But in designing Unity House, Le Corbusier betrayed the human contents to produce a monumental aesthetic effect.\(^2\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 93.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 95.
(b) The article on the Seagram Building begins with the approval of its location on its site, its conception as a huge shaft set back from the street to allow a forecourt of pedestrian space, an urban space, a grand relief from the normal continuous cliff of tall buildings along Park Avenue.¹

He commends its masculine sense of structure, the logical treatment of the curtain wall, the harmonious blend of bronze structure and warm-toned glass, the simplicity, consistency and sobriety of the total concept. By this description Mumford already predisposes the reader to a favourable judgement.

Of the plaza in front of the building, Mumford mentions as incongruous the choice of weeping beeches for trees, faulty workmanship around the pool and the lack of places to sit, minor defects but all the more annoying where all other parts of the design are so immaculately controlled. As a segment of New York Townscape, the plaza excites Mumford by its dignity and pertinence. Like Lever House on the diagonally opposite corner, the Seagram building rejects the normal building line, and prevents the street from becoming a canyon walled with continuous cliffs of glass and steel. As early as 1931, Mumford had expressed his disenchantment with the skyscraper, and called attention to its

¹"The Lesson of the Master", New Yorker, September 13, 1953, p. 141.
defects:

. . . . the dubious economy of vertical transportation at the magnificent maximum rate of nine miles per hour: the waste of cubage in the unused sections of express elevator shafts—to say nothing of the shutting out of sunlight and air, and the intensification of congestion on the streets and in the subways.¹

Moreover, he had suggested that Louis Sullivan's skyscraper designs were at fault because:

More than anything, the mischief lay in the notion that on the foundation of practical needs the skyscraper could, or should be translated into a 'proud & soaring thing'.²

For the Seagram building, Mumford has either changed his earlier opinions on skyscrapers, or suspended them temporarily when faced with a work of architecture whose formal aesthetic qualities over-ride practical considerations and pre-conceived notions of appropriate expressive symbolism. In fact, Mumford congratulates the architect, Mies van der Rohe, for returning, in the Seagram building, to the Sullivan concept of the skyscraper as a 'proud and soaring thing.' Mumford, in his sociological role, deplores however, that all the creative energy and skilful craftsmanship that centered on the Seagram Building, do so merely to glorify the name of a gin-manufacturer, and to enhance financial profits. This, says Mumford is part of the inverted sense

¹The Brown Decades, p. 139.
²Ibid., p. 153. Cf. Hudnut's notion that the skyscraper did not arise as the solution to practical problems, but as the spatial symbol of cultural aspirations.
of values of "our whole civilization, which now sacrifices on the altar of the bureaucratic functions and engineering services what it once gave, in awe and exultation, only to divinities." But Mumford does not direct this complaint to the architect, but to all society which manoeuvres the architect into accepting his position as the maker of commercial idols.

Many architects would argue that, like Mies van der Rohe with the Seagram building, in their daily practice as professional specialists they are unable to effect the social situation which commits them to follow a client-dictated programme, and that to attempt to alter it may mean loss of the commission to design the building at all. With no commissions, the social disengagement of the architect, architecturally, is complete.

Mere recognition of his social responsibility may not enable an architect to act, that is to build, in accordance with his convictions, for as Mumford himself realizes,

Our mechanical and metropolitan civilization, with all its genuine advances, has let certain essential human elements drop out of its scheme; and until we recover these elements our civilization will be at loose ends, and our architecture will unerringly express this situation.²

Why does Mumford absolve Mies van der Rohe from the social deficiencies of the Seagram building, and not Le Cor-

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¹Mumford, "The Lesson of the Master", p. 151.
²Ibid.
busier from the social deficiencies of "Unity House"?

In the first place, Mies van der Rohe was not the initiator of the building programme viz.: to provide multi-story office accommodation in a building that would add prestige and profit to the Seagram organization, but he succeeded in implementing this programme and creating an architectural tour-de-force besides.

Le Corbusier, in Unity House, invented the programme himself viz.: to provide multi-story living accommodation in a building that would satisfy the social, physical and psychological requirements of its inhabitants; to indicate a solution to the housing problems of communities everywhere; and to contain the whole within an aesthetically worthy structure.

To believe Mumford, it is only in the last part of his programme that Le Corbusier came anywhere near to a success, elsewhere the building has proven to be a failure.

Both buildings, according to Mumford, share the conceptual basis of a pyramid—"a building that exhausts every resource of art and engineering to create an imposing visible effect out of all proportion to its human significance"—this is said with respect to the Seagram building—but whereas the Seagram building's human significance is small, it does not attempt to create a total environment for living; Unity House attempts a profound and universal significance;

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1Ibid., p. 150.
and to the extent that it misses its more ambitious mark, perhaps Le Corbusier is the more culpable.

But is Mumford being entirely fair? Mies van der Rohe, for all the accomplishment of his design, has remained the client's tool, he is socially uncommitted, and therefore socially impotent. Whether it be a manifestation of a super-ego (as Mumford seems to think it is) or a genuine desire to improve humanity's lot, Le Corbusier has interested himself, as an architect, in improving society by re-shaping its physical environment. That on the basis of Le Corbusier's architectural virtuosity we expected at least social competence is unfortunate, but failure in this regard is not singularly his. Even the New Towns of England, that Mumford found so satisfying, even inspiring, to visit, are now under re-assessment and have been judged by some critics, both architectural and social, to be failures.1

Despite the fact that Mumford's criteria of architecture are predominantly sociological, and that he has elsewhere insisted upon the integration of social, practical, functional, and aesthetic aspects of an architectural whole, he finds it necessary when confronted with architecture as fact, to separate these aspects for purposes of discussion. Also to some extent Mumford seems to find reasons for aes-

thetic approval in building programmes, e.g. the New Towns, that have sociological premises consonant with his own, and reasons for suspending social assessments of buildings e.g. the Seagram Tower, that have aesthetic qualities of strong personal appeal.

(c) The third example is the Olivetti showrooms, 584 Fifth Avenue, New York, by the Italian firm of architects Belgioso, Persutti and Rogers. It would be expected that in a showroom, function could be taken for granted. But it is on just this point, the "function" of a showroom, that Mumford's criticism challenges the entire plausibility of the design.

The one purpose of this showroom should be to give a buyer a chance to study the Olivetti machines in peace, without the competition of many other objects.1

The showroom is packed with eye-catching objects, unusually shaped display pedestals, a sculptural floor and wall, a rotating wheel to serve as both display and conveyor from a lower floor, striped and irregularly shaped lamps, an unexpected and dramatic colour-scheme, and an entrance door that is high enough to admit three or four people at once, standing on one another's shoulders. This profusion of curious devices does certainly impede the concentration of attention on the raison d'être of the show-

rooms: Olivetti typewriters and adding machines.

So the diversity of the articles prevents their acting effectively as a collection.

Individually, Mumford judges some of these articles as deficient; the lamps are not "lovely", the stairs have no "aesthetic reason" in their position, they are also "clumsy".

The Nivola wall sculpture is too literally attractive—either it or the typewriters deserve less competition in the visual range.

The colour of the ceiling, blue, and the floor, green, are considered symbolically irrelevant if they do suggest, as to Mumford they do, the sky and the sea.

These judgements of the individual articles are highly personal, anyone of different taste from Mumford could disagree with him on any of these points—which anyone with their eyes open could scarcely do with his major issue of too much distracting confusion.

Outside the showroom, a typewriter is mounted on a pedestal, to be used freely by the public. "This fully justifies the otherwise not too legitimate device of the bowed-in shop window."

Now not too legitimate is simply a polite way of saying illegitimate, and what can be illegitimate about a bowed-in shop window? Is not this a reasonable device, at all times, to allow window shoppers a chance to

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1Ibid., p. 115.
observe without being jostled by passers-by? Mumford seems to think not, but he is using some covert code of architectural parenthood which is not commonly known.

This manipulation of words with emotional-associative content is a familiar trick of Mumford's. In apparently detached description, such words tend to lead the reader into accepting the writer's point of view without being really aware of the grounds on which this point of view is submitted.

In this criticism of the Olivetti showrooms Mumford has primarily applied functional criticism in the terms of purpose fulfilled, and this is pragmatically verifiable, but in his criticism of the shapes and colours of individual items his standards are personal, their basis is undeclared, and they are not subject to any verification, one can only consent or not. If it should seem harsh to expect a short article to carry a declaration of the basis for all its personal points of view, let it be said that nowhere else has Mumford declared this basis, nor his concurrence with some other person's aesthetic theory. It is this lack, in Mumford's formal criticism, that prevents him from having much influence on the spatial characteristics of architecture.

(d) For Mumford's criticism of an object whose intentions are entirely aesthetic, we shall consider his descriptive analysis of Naum Gabo's abstract sculpture out-
side the Bijenkorf Department Store at Rotterdam. The sculpture is located in the Coolsingel, a midtown thoroughfare, to provide a partial interruption to the long vista, and to counterbalance a projection of the Atlanta Hotel, which juts beyond the new building line for the Coolsingel, which is being widened. Mumford thus points out that Gabo's sculpture is not simply art for art's sake, but a significant and purposeful addition to the Rotterdam townscape.

Mumford describes the sculpture, but his description is not simply an account of its size and the placement of its parts; though these are certainly mentioned; it is also a qualitative description, by which Mumford conveys to the reader some of his own personal reactions and makes these reactions infectious.

Something of the impressiveness of the sculpture is registered by the description of the way in which it was constructed, the technical difficulties that were mastered, both in conception and erection. From the realization of the work in a Rotterdam shipyard to its journey through the streets and placement outside the Bijenkorf, accompanied by a throng of two thousand people, one cannot help but be thrilled and share vicariously in the triumph of the artist's creation. Why is this abstract of metal shafts and strings so inspiring? In Mumford's words, it is because:

As a constructive achievement, as a symbol, and as a pure aesthetic form, this noble and beautiful image is in a class by itself—peace to those who flinch from these unfashionable words!—proclaiming the dominance of the human spirit, through technology, over the forces that would cripple man and even nullify his technology.¹

Gabo has come close to creating a work of architecture, for it is possible to "penetrate within the space he creates and behold the form from the inside, looking outward and upward, as one inspects a work of architecture".²

If the sculpture fulfilled the functional purposes of shelter and suitability for human occupation, it could indeed be considered as architecture, and it would then, I believe, fulfill Mumford's criteria for an architectural masterpiece: not just a building with certain aesthetic qualities; but a symbolic, affective space in which the finest activities of mankind can be carried out.

3. Critical Procedure

Although not always carried out in the exact order indicated below, Mumford's critiques cover a multitude of possible judgements with respect to the object under consideration, its content and its environment. For certain objects not all of these judgements can be made. Gabo's sculpture cannot actually be entered. The nature of the activity that the object seeks to accommodate will stress

¹Ibid., p. 105.
²Ibid.
some judgements more than others, for instance scale is more important to a huge living unit like Unity House, than to an Olivetti showroom. The sequence of judgements may proceed in this manner:

The building is approached, and regarded as a spatial incident sufficient unto itself, a mere object.

This object is evaluated in sculptural terms of form, colour, depth, materials and evident structure.

The sculptural object is considered in relationship to its setting in the landscape.

The building is approached closer, until the point where clues as to its size enable the observer to grasp its scale.

The building is entered, and is seen to be inhabited, a fact already established by the external scale. Being inhabited, and having an interior physically penetrable by human beings, the building is regarded no longer as merely sculpture, but as presumptive architecture.

The spatial (sculptural) arrangement of the interior is not only a visual phenomenon but the means by which the total requirements of the human being are effected, and the extent to which these requirements are achieved, is taken as a measure of the success of its interior.

The building is considered as a fulfilment of the professed intentions of the architect.

The intentions themselves are subject to enquiry and evaluation, in terms of the individual inhabitant, the
surrounding community at large, and as a precedent for all mankind.

A synthesis of these considerations decides the final questions

1. Should the building have been built at all?
2. Should the building have been built in this place?
3. Should the building serve as a precedent for further buildings?

Interpolating Mumford's answers to these questions:

with respect to Le Corbusier's "Unity House",

1. No, because of answers to 2 and 3.
2. No
3. No

with respect to Mies van der Rohe's Seagram building,

1. No, but because of the present state of society, some building was bound to be built.
2. No, the addition of yet another skyscraper only adds to the confusion and inhumanity of New York, but again, social and financial pressure dictated a skyscraper. Conceding this, the building is well situated on its site.
3. Yes, of its type, the building is "a masterpiece".

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1Tbid., p. 151.
VIII. COMMENT

Of the six critics discussed; two are British born, J. M. Richards and Reyner Banham, and Nikolaus Pevsner may be considered to be British by adoption and avowal; two are born in the United States, Lewis Mumford and Joseph V. Hudnut, and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy is one of the group of European exiles who, having fled Fascist persecution just prior to the Second World War, have remained to make the United States their home--this being one of the typical ways in which the United States has enriched its growing domestic culture. Indeed in Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture Sibyl Moholy-Nagy is mainly concerned with vernacular architecture in the Americas, and apart from occasional lapses into German terminology, is refreshingly free from the touch of condescension that frequently pervades the work of European scholars in the New World.

We may safely say then that both English-speaking sides of the Atlantic are represented in this thesis. Are these critics typical of the countries in which they write? Banham, Pevsner and Richards all pursue research into art, architectural history, and town planning besides writing criticism; the ex-European Sibyl Moholy-Nagy has opened new fields of research in her writings on vernacular architecture, Mumford's historical analyses of city development are well-known, and Hudnut too, devotes half of his book Architecture and the Spirit of Man to town planning. The
difference in attitudes and emphases that each of the six critics display is due more to their own individual personalities than to national prejudices, to their personal education than to the larger social structure in which they find themselves placed. There is more difference between Mumford who was trained and practises as a sociologist; and Hudnut, who was trained and practised for a short time as an architect; than between Hudnut and Richards, who also was trained and briefly practised as an architect before becoming a journalist and critic.

The greatest difference between English and American architectural criticism arises from the different opportunities that are available for its publication in the two different countries. Besides the professional journals architectural criticism is brought to the English public through broadcasts on the B.B.C., through occasional television programmes, and through the normal channels of the Press. Banham writes an architectural column for the weekly New Statesman and Richards is architectural correspondent for the London daily The Times. The Sunday Observer, the daily Guardian and Daily Telegraph report significant new buildings and projects, and at the time of writing, a Royal Commission is in progress to discuss a new office building planned for Piccadilly Circus, London; over which there had been a public as well as professional outcry. Banham, Pevsner and Richards are editorial staff members of
the *Architectural Review* which has a tradition of haranguing both private and public bodies who indulge in architectural pursuits. The smaller, more self-consciously *avant-garde* architectural magazine, *Architectural Design*, is no less forthright in condemning what it believes to be travesties in the name of architecture. A weekly, *The Architect's Journal*, both in its editorials and in the column written by someone with the nom-de-plume of Astragal, constantly makes provocative statements on architectural matters, and the mysterious Astragal is a master of the shattering phrase, his style being a vitriolic combination of Pevsner's humour and scholarship and Banham's lively topicalities. It was Astragal and a student group from the Royal College of Art; calling themselves the *Anti-Uglies*, who both carried out informal public displays of mourning in front of particularly unattractive buildings, and made a formal presentation of their case to the Minister of Housing; who were largely responsible for stirring up public interest sufficiently to warrant the Royal Commission on Piccadilly Circus. In this vital atmosphere of rebuke and counter-rebuke, Banham, Pevsner, and Richards are all quick to leave the contemplation of eternal architectural truths, aesthetic mysteries, and historical data, to become involved in particularized criticisms of individual buildings and topical social issues.

Of the American critics, only Lewis Mumford has a
comparable flexibility. He has written profoundly and at length on both general and particular social problems, and his brilliant series of articles in The New Yorker are an outstanding example of a discriminating, if highly personal, aesthetic sense allied with a humanitarian concern for the inhabitants of the buildings and cities that are supposed to be designed for them. The New Yorker is also the only non-professional periodical in the United States that pays more than the scantest attention to architecture in terms other than those of real estate. The weekly news magazine Time, in its Arts section occasionally rates an architectural feature, if the architect involved is a newsworthy personality, or if the shapes lend themselves to sensational analogies with biological anthropomorphic or zoological forms. There are some architectural programmes on television, but none on radio. The American architectural student body is dormant on social and aesthetic issues and, if there is a reaction as Sibyl Moholy-Nagy and Joseph Hudnut suggest, against group design, standardized expression and an inhuman technology, it is pretty well masked. The articles that Sibyl Moholy-Nagy contributes to Progressive Architecture and Hudnut to Architectural Record are more usually concerned with the general state of society and architectural theory than with the assessment of particular buildings, and Mrs. Moholy-Nagy's articles are often unmercifully cut up and distributed throughout the advertising sections. It may
or may not be significant that the particular groups of buildings that she has criticized in print have all been located outside the United States.\(^1\) However, both *Progressive Architecture*\(^2\) and *Architectural Record*\(^3\) have expressed editorial doubts as to the value of architectural criticism. A third American magazine, *Arts and Architecture* publishes articles on architectural theory from time to time, but has no regular policy of criticising specific buildings, which is perhaps strange for the music and art sections are usually concerned with specific performances and exhibitions, and not with general theories except as they apply to a particular case. Perhaps, and it is only an assumption, one of the reasons why these magazines do not publish criticism of architecture is the fear of loss of revenue from advertisers, who may withdraw their support if a building which features one of their products is subjected to derogatory remarks. But, in the United States, criticism of architecture is becoming a live issue, as even the editors of *Progressive Architecture* and *Architectural Record*

\(^1\)See "Hansa" (Berlin), *Progressive Architecture*, August 1956, p. 89-93.


\(^3\)Editorial by Elisabeth Kendall Thompson, (Western Edition), *Architectural Record*, March 1960, p. 32.
Record admit with regret.

The initial impetus to this revival can be traced to an article which appeared in the October 1958 issue of the Architectural Forum, under the editorial section "Criticism", and entitled "Temple on a hilltop--almost", by Richard A. Miller. In blue italic typography the following expression of a new editorial policy was presented:

In virtually all the arts, a piece of significant new work—whether the first-night performance of a play, the premier of a musical composition, or the showing of a painting—is subjected to critical evaluation. The one exception is architecture. Perhaps because architecture is also a profession, and a business, the art of architecture is seldom criticized. To help remedy this situation, here is a Forum criticism of an individual effort in the advancing art of architecture.

Then follows a critical analysis of the Guarantee Mutual Life Company's new headquarters building in Omaha, Nebraska; designed by architect Leo Daly and Co. This article was a notable example of formal criticism. It accepted the status quo of the building programme, the physical requirements of accommodated offices, the desire for a building which would be a prestige symbol, and the use of both technological materials (glass, steel, aluminum), and traditional materials (stone walls and wood paneling). The building was attacked on the basis of simplicity, coherence, consistency and also practicality, in detail and in total concept. As later pointed out in a letter from Eero Saarinen, the building was so easy to criticize in these terms that it was like "picking out a little schoolgirl in, say, Ashtabula, and
pointing out to the world the faults she has made in sentence structure and spelling. What was really remarkable was the response of the architectural profession to this article. Congratulatory letters were received from Gropius, Belluschi, Perkins, Saarinen, Yamasaki and others less well known, with only two dissenters; one of whom, Charles A. Spears, President of the Grayson County State Bank, Sherman, Texas, remarked, "The results obtained by Daly and Co. can be compared to Mies van der Dough and Spendmore, Owings and Merrill only after dollar analysis," and the other, C. W. Durham, an architect, thought that "this type of article serves no useful purpose and in my opinion hurts the architectural profession."

However, it would appear that most architects are prepared to accept architectural criticism which will help them in the pursuit of their art and which will awaken a sense of discrimination amongst the profession, students, and public.

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IX. RECAPITULATION AND EXTENSION

Architectural Attitudes

Architecture is concerned with buildings. Banham is the only one of the six critics who would dispute this. He admits that, conventionally, architecture is concerned with "roughly speaking, carefully balancing horizontal things on top of vertical things." But in another sense, architecture in a technological age is concerned with the shaping of a total environment, in which buildings may play, but not necessarily, a dominant role.

Architecture, as a service to human societies, can only be defined as the provision of fit environments for human activities... Environments may be made fit for human beings by any number of means. A disease ridden swamp may be rendered fit by inoculating all those who visit it against infection, or bathing beach may be rendered fit by removing land-mines left over from the last war, a natural amphitheatre may be rendered fit for drama by installing lights and a public address system, a snowy landscape may be rendered fit by means of a ski-suit, gloves, boots and a balaclava. Architecture, indeed, began with the first furs worn by our earliest ancestors, or with the discovery of fire—it shows a narrowly professional frame of mind to refer to its beginnings solely to the cave or primitive hut.2

Whether Banham's extended concept of architecture


2Ibid. Note. This article of Banham's, representing a radical departure from his previous attitudes, and indeed, from any conventional theory, became available too recently to enable it to be assimilated into the text of this thesis. Its implications are wide and various, and deserve separate treatment.
will gain currency, or whether it will proceed under a new name, such as environmental design, remains to be seen. For the purposes of this thesis the traditional view, that architecture is concerned with buildings, has been maintained.

Certainly none of the six critics discussed herein claim that all buildings are architecture. How do they separate and distinguish architecture from mere building? Banham hardly faces the issue, preferring to evaluate individual buildings in terms of their relationship to architectural history, to personalities and movements. If the aims of a movement meet with Banham's approval, so do the buildings that belong to it, in greater or lesser degree, meet with his approval. Banham is more concerned with the location of influences than with objectively evaluating them, with provoking than settling arguments. He discusses the existence, but not the value, of style.

We can only arrive at J. M. Richards' convictions inductively, for on the definition of architecture he has made no deliberate observations. The pre-condition for architectural recommendation seems to be the overt presence of a spatial theme appropriate to the building's purpose, or in other words, a clear relationship between form and function, function in this sense being used to cover a wide range of physical and psychological phenomena. For instance the massive egg within a transparent box is a spatial theme which is appropriate to an acoustically
isolated auditorium surrounded by public space e.g. the Royal Festival Hall, but would be inapposite for a multi-story apartment building composed of democratically similar living units. However not only must the spatial theme be appropriate and recognizable, it must also be recognizably human. If the direct expression of the cellular apartment block is the cellular façade, it is the architect's responsibility to interrupt, if necessary, its homogeneous pattern, and by the mark of his personal intervention, give the façade a scale which indicates human content. In the functional tradition, that Richards espouses, the spatial theme is always the most efficient and forthright composition of available means that will satisfy the demands of performance. Richards' pragmatic and rational outlook on architecture is in keeping with the persistent traits of English thinkers.

To Pevsner, the aspect of architecture that distinguishes it from the other arts is internal space occupiable by human beings. This aspect marks architecture distinctively from sculpture though the formal compositional values that apply to sculpture apply equally to architecture. However Pevsner considers that our evaluation of architecture must take into account the nature of the activity that is sheltered within its structure. If we hold that religion is the highest activity of mankind, then architecture that houses religious activities will
be the greatest architecture—provided of course that its spatial quality is equal to the task of expressing the religious intent.

The means by which Hudnut and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy distinguish architecture from mere engineering structures are in fact similar to each other, though differently expressed. The expressive power of the building itself, its ability to touch the heart and soul is a poetic concept, and avoids rigorous logical analysis. Mrs. Moholy-Nagy finds the expressive quality of architecture to exist in the most humble buildings, and although Hudnut nowhere explicitly denies the possibility of an architecture of meagre aspiration, the tone of some of his remarks indicate that, like Pevsner, Hudnut expects the greatest architecture to derive from, or be inspired by the highest philosophical values of mankind.

Mumford clearly finds it difficult to consider any building to be architecture that houses a social activity that debases man's individual status, although if the activity neither contributes to, nor seriously inhibits social development, that is if it is socially neutral, Mumford's criterion is spatial expression. For him, the greatest architecture seems to be the expressive spatial realization of admirable social programmes.

**Architecture and Society**

To what extent can the architect make his buildings
a social force? Banham answers this question by urging the architect to consider the total environment as his province, and to use all the means at the disposal of contemporary man to affect this environment, to stop thinking of environment in mainly spatial terms.

Pevsner and Richards hold common cause in suggesting that, with all due consideration to location, genus loci, specific function and particular expression, the architect can make his art more comprehensible to society, and therefore more meaningful and effective, if he forgoes the temptation to erect monuments to his personal imagination. Instead, if the architect restricts himself to an acceptable vernacular, he assures himself of relevance and continuity. The challenge of new situations, new problems, will be sufficient to suggest new forms and experimental building types. Society is not static and has room for the minor caprice and the occasional stroke of genius but this is not the architect's common lot.

Mumford and Richards agree that the vital decisions that determine a society's physical environment may not be in the hands of the architect but in his client's. The architect should, however, use his influence and knowledge of spatial construction to prevent a client from indulging in short-sighted practices that are motivated by financial expediency, and to point out the harmfulness of ugly buildings, inconsiderately situated.
On the level of design, at least, Mrs. Moholy-Nagy would seem to concur with Pevsner and Richards in preferring a socially-minded vernacular architecture to the wilful display of personality, but on her transcendental level of art for art's sake, the artist-architect is answerable to no other discipline than that of his art.

Hudnut, though he declares architecture as expression to be sufficient unto itself, and champions Le Corbusier's Chapel at Ronchamp, (surely the most ruggedly individualistic and heretical architectural statement made since the beginning of the modern movement), believes that the architect should not totally abdicate his social role. There are themes in society, such as freedom, religion, and the dignity of mankind, that are worthy of the highest expression.

**The Practice of Architecture**

The architect of a building is he who makes the decisions that determine the location, disposition, and dimension of materials, their colour, texture, and shape. These decisions are influenced by the activity that is to be housed, by the strength and durability of the materials that are to be used, and by the amount of money available. But these influences only suggest a range of possible alternatives of material and shape within which the final decisions are made. The client, of course, also exerts his personal influence, indeed he may even usurp the
architect's role and dictate to the professional designer exactly what the position and size of materials and shapes should be. In this instance the client virtually becomes the architect, and the professionally-labelled architect, his draughtsman.

Amongst these diverse influences that affect the process of architecture, the architect must assign to each influence its relative importance and significance. He must evaluate each determining factor. Now it is patently impossible that the exigencies of a single situation will be sufficient to compel the architect to act according to their dictates. For example, in designing a house the specific site conditions, geographic and climatic, the availability and price of building materials, and the manner of living of the prospective inhabitants do not irrevocably suggest only one suitable spatial organization. Between the a-spatial conditions of architecture and its spatial realization lies a gap that only the architect can bridge. To bridge this gap the architect must have recourse to an explicit or implicit general theory of architecture. His theory will be based upon previous personal experience and on the experience and theories of others. By scrutinizing the writings of architectural critics who have made it their specialized activity to evaluate the achievements of other architects and to suggest general theories upon which future architects may act, the individual architect strengthens his own ability
to convert the demands of humanity into a work of architec-
ture.

An Approach to Architectural Criticism

The remarks that critics make when confronted with a
work of architecture may be considered to fall under four
general headings: architecture as an object, architecture
in relationship to man, architecture as the locus of content,
and architecture in relationship to society.

Criticism which treats architecture as an object, a
physical construction isolated from its temporal and spatial
environment, may make statements concerning objective
properties of shape, configuration, arrangement and distribu-
tion of the object and its constituent structure. Distinc-
tive parts may be discussed as separate entities and as con-
tributory components of the total complex. This kind of
criticism is often called formal criticism. It is criticism
which limits itself to the discussion of spatial order. The
vocabulary of formal criticism includes words such as propor-
tion, rhythm, harmony, contrast, dominance and unity.
Certain qualitative experiences may be assumed by some
critics to be necessarily connected to particular measurable
spatial quantities. Renaissance architects believed, for
instance, that certain proportions were inherently beautiful.

However, when we introduce the consideration of human
response to observed properties of an object, we have intro-
duced architecture in relationship to man. As the scientific
theory of relativity supposes, the introduction of an observer into a field of phenomena affects the conditions of that field. When we introduce man, the physical size of the object and especially its physical size in relationship to man—which we call scale—affects the judgement of the formal composition of the object. We are differently affected by a doorway which is eight feet tall by four feet wide than by a doorway which is sixteen feet tall by eight feet wide, even though the proportion of the doorway is constant. Man's reaction to a work of architecture is determined by its scale. When the scale suggests beings that are mightier than man, man may be overawed and be fearful or respectful. When the scale suggests beings that man may dominate, man feels secure and safe, though he may also feel that it is beneath his dignity to become involved in such minor affairs.

But man's awareness of architecture does not cease when he has noted its physical description, both in isolation and with respect to himself. Architecture is space which is inhabitable by man, his activities and his artifacts. The purposes that architecture accommodates may be referred to as its content. Content includes not only the purpose of the building, but the way in which this purpose is satisfied. When the spatial attributes of a work of architecture demand our attention we are naturally curious to discover the content of the work. Once discovered, content affects our judgement. Architecture which shelters the sick we regard as being more worthwhile than architec-
tured which shelters an industrial plant, even though both works of architecture may be equally-well conceived in spatial terms. At least this preference will be declared if we consider medicine to be more worthwhile than industrial production. But why more worthwhile? A hospital is more worthwhile than a factory if we consider the aim of the hospital: to produce a healthy society, to be superior to the aim of a factory: to produce an affluent society.

Architecture does not exist simply for an individual, and architecture is not separable from its content. Architecture exists for man and man exists in society. Whoever builds architecture commits a social act, and social acts are to be judged according to the kind of society we wish to achieve.

The total criticism of architecture should make us aware of architecture as a human creation which affects the human condition, and ultimately, criticism depends upon the answer to the reason for our existence.
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