

## ARCHITECTURE, CRITIQUE, AND LITERARY GENRE THE REALM OF THEORY IN THE ARCHITECT'S PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE

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We often talk from *hearsay*. If we were 'serious', we should admit that the usual *architect's discourse* is not profound, concise nor sound. It often lacks 'rigor'; revealing an extreme 'amateurism': missing systematization, methodology, and framework. It has scarce accuracy and consistency: needy of technical clearance. It reveals fickle and winky; and at times, even embarrassing.

**SPEAKING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE.** When an architect claims that "shape does not make the project" and "the project sprouts out of the idea" he understands himself very well. However, the unaware audience will find it hard to find the meaning of ordinary concepts such as 'idea', 'make', 'shape' or 'project'. It perceives it wrapped around impetuosity, suspiciously proportioned to its ambiguity. This phenomenon is meaningful.

Whoever listens something like "the opposite of a deep truth is another deep truth" will obviously experience the same feeling: it is not difficult to imagine the impact on alien ears of such emphatic statement, articulated in an implicit challenging mode. The reaction to it and its boastful grandiloquence. The foreign listener will have a hard time accepting is something more than a mere unsubstantial tautology, a *boutade*.

The experience is generalized. Identical amazement will engulf the layperson when hearing a professional say that a construction or building 'is not architecture'. The unaware audience will wisely understand this words are used here in an accusing and sobering manner: with certain added connotations whose meaning ignores, confirming the speaker's knowledge and the additional attention that must be provided if he or she will explain them.

The circle is soon completed: it all points out at the idea that if he or she talks about the 'modern regard', a 'contemporary attitude', a 'cold functionalism', the 'mystery of space', the 'built idea', the 'banality of language' or a 'superficial historicity', he or she knows very well what he or she wants to express and there are those who can follow and understand. The case of students before their professor or a prestigious author is not different.

Anyhow we must detain to observe this matter: Is it such language clear and unambiguous? Is it presentable and understandable? Does it seem ripe? Does it correspond to a reliable reasoning? Does it not enclose an endless amount of rather crude, blurry and contrived statements?

## THE FASHION POLICE

Mark Wigley

"The fashion has somewhat worn itself out, but to white the word fashion never can apply. White always has been used and probably always will be in some form or other, in every dwelling".

C. H. Eaton et al., *Paint and its Part in Architecture*, 1930.

When Le Corbusier reactivates the white wall, he attempts to mobilize it to the most modern of agendas while crediting it with some kind of trans-historical status. The white garment is meant to be at once up-to-date and timeless. The architect enters the fickle world of clothing to extract the seeming stable order of the man's suit. While all such type-forms are meant to be changed, the changes have to last much longer than a season. The white wall is meant to precede fashions rather than participate in them. At the end of *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui*, Le Corbusier argues that the "decisive" phase of his formative years began when he rejected the architectural fashions of the metropolis and headed off in search of the world as yet "unspoiled" by such suspect trends:

"This [phase] again finds me travelling abroad in quest of the lesson that will clarify my mind, and in an attempt to capture the source of art, the reason for art, the role of art. I acquainted myself with the fashions of Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Munich. Everything about all these fashions seemed to be dubious.... I embarked on a great journey, which was to be decisive, through the countryside and cities of countries still considered unspoiled.... After such a voyage my respect for decoration was finally shattered".

The discovery of white walls in the Mediterranean, the buildings "clothed in a majestic coat of whitewash," as *Le Voyage d'Orient* puts it, is the discovery of the

clothing that precedes fashion, the garment that enables the fashionable condition of all other garments to be exposed and removed. The garment that, if you put it on, allows you to appear undressed. Still, like Semper, Le Corbusier has to guard against the ever-present dangers of fashion that his understanding of architecture as clothing raises. If the decorative styles he wants to strip off are "no more than an accidental surface modality, superadded to facilitate composition, stuck on to disguise faults, or duplicated for the sake of display," the whitewash that displaces them is just as much a surface modality that exposes architecture to all of the same risks. By removing the authority of the structure and investing everything in the surface, the architect exposes architecture to the degenerate potential of the surface that modern architecture is meant to stand against. Drifting somewhere between the fickle world of fashion and the permanence of art, architecture needs to be disciplined against the dangers posed by its very means of operation. Because this discipline cannot be provided by the structure, the only role of which is to prop the garments up, a whole new regime of control has to be instituted to regulate the surface.

## PEDIGREED WATCHDOGS

Modern architecture was explicitly launched against fashion, and its white surfaces played a key role in that attack. Its very modernity was repeatedly identified with the rejection of architecture's nineteenth-century immersion in the world of fashion. As the architecture's most influential manifesto –*Vers une architecture*– puts it, the "styles" of nineteenth-century architecture are but "the old clothes of a past age," clothes that "are to architecture what a feather is on a woman's head; it is sometimes pretty, though not always, and never anything more." For Le Corbusier, it is not just that this feminine clothing is a superfluous accessory added to the body of architecture, a decorative mask irresponsibly changed according to the dictates of the latest fashion. Even the organization of the building's structure that such fashions mask has been subjected to the seasonal mentality of fashion, because "architects work in 'styles' or discuss questions of structure in and out of season." But with the relentless emergence of new technologies that both mark and instigate modernity, the old clothes no longer even fit the body: "construction has undergone innovations so great that the old 'styles,' which still obsess us, can no longer clothe it; the materials employed evade the attentions of the decorative artist." It would seem that modern architecture literally begins with the removal of the florid fashionable clothing of the nineteenth century. The first act of modernization strips architecture and the second disciplines the structure that has been exposed. Both are explicitly understood as acts against the suspect forces of fashion. Modern architecture disciplines itself against fashion from the beginning.

Each of Le Corbusier's polemics is framed by such a rejection of fashion. His original manifesto for Purism, written with Amédée Ozenfant in 1920, concludes by saying: "One could make an art of allusions, an art of fashion, based upon surprise and the conventions of the initiated. Purism strives for an art free of conventions which will utilize plastic constants and address itself above all to the universal properties of the senses and the mind." The seminal "Fünf Punkte zu einer neuen Architektur" (Five points of a new architecture), written with Pierre Jeanneret in 1927 to describe the thinking behind their houses for the Weissenhofsiedlung, begins by asserting: "Theory requires precise formulation. We are totally uninterested in aesthetic fantasies or attempts at fashionable gimmicks. We are dealing here with architectural facts which point to an absolutely new kind of building." Likewise, Le Corbusier's account of the overall trajectory of his work in the 1929 introduction to the first volume of the *Oeuvre complète* symptomatically begins by opposing fashion:

"As I believe profoundly in our age, I continue to analyze the elements which are determining its character, and do not confine myself to trying to make its exterior manifestations comprehensible. What I seek to fathom is its deeper, its constructive sense. Is not this the essence, the very purpose of architecture? Differences of style, the trivialities [frivolités] of passing fashion, which are only illusions or masquerades, do not concern me".

The text then literally applies this generic image of fashion –as the exterior mask of an age that contradicts or dissimulates its inner structure– to buildings. The inner truth of modern construction is opposed to the exterior lie of the decorative masquerade that conceals it. The mask worn by a building veils its construction by literally covering it and by misrepresenting it. But it is not simply the disorderly surfaces of ornament that pose a serious threat. Rather, it is their concealment of an

internal disorder. Le Corbusier goes on to cite his mentor Auguste Perret's claim that ornament "always hides some fault of construction." Indeed, it is not that the superficial ornament is necessarily disorderly. On the contrary, it is precisely by representing a nonexistent order that the ornament can most threaten order. As such representations are rapidly changed according to the whims of fashion and independently of the structures they appear to articulate, this threat is greatly intensified.

Fashion is therefore the greatest danger of ornament, the extreme case of the ever-present risk of "mere" decoration against which architecture must be constantly disciplined. Le Corbusier predictably describes his own work as proceeding while "the architects of all countries were still busy decorating" but adds in parentheses: "whether with or without the direct application of ornament." The crime of the architect-as-decorator is not simply decorating architecture by adding gratuitous ornament to it, but rendering architecture decorative by making it subservient to the fickle sensibility of fashion rather than fixed standards like those offered by the new means of industrialized production. The risk of decoration is nothing more than a certain mobility of representation, an instability of the surface that effaces the ancient sense of order that the latest technologies unconsciously revive. The modern is advertised as the return of the transcultural and transhistorical truth that Le Corbusier repeatedly associates with the architecture of ancient Greece.

Regardless of its particular relationship to ornament, the change to a "modern" architecture has to be disassociated from a change of fashion in every detail. It must be presented as a change of an entirely different order—a difficult claim to make and one that must constantly be reasserted because it is so vulnerable to the counter-charge that nothing could be more fashionable, more *a la mode*, than "the modern." Furthermore, once architecture has changed, there cannot be very much additional mobility. Each subsequent change, no matter how minor, has to be differentiated from fashion by being tied to the logic of a fundamental break necessitated by new materials and the technologies by which they are assembled. Construction and function must be seen to immobilize and thereby subordinate all the surfaces of architecture.

Indeed, the building must somehow exhibit this subordination. Or, more precisely, its surfaces must exhibit their subordination to something either hidden within them or displayed in front of them that is of a higher order. The inevitably time-bound surface must somehow exhibit timeless values. In the very name of modernity, time must be brought to a standstill. In the end, it is this exhibition of the subordinated surface, rather than an exhibition of the new means of production, that renders architecture modern. In a strange way, architecture can become modern before it fully engages with the forces of modernization. Its surfaces are not simply cleansed of ornament, the structure stripped of clothing, the layers of representation scraped off to expose the abstract forms of modern life, and so on. Rather, the surfaces are trained to represent the very process of cleansing, stripping, and scraping. The resistance to fashion is not so much achieved as constantly staged. Modern architecture is a kind of performance, both in terms of the specific details of buildings and the discourse that frames them. The white surface obviously plays a key role in this performance by announcing that the building is naked.

Much of the discourse around modern architecture can therefore be understood as an ongoing preemptive defense against the charge that it is itself a fashion. Fashion is portrayed as an insidious phenomenon that will inevitably return to contaminate the pure logic of architecture unless it is consciously held in check. To resist it requires a special vigilance. Most of the discourse of modern architecture is written by self-appointed watchdogs through which it constantly monitors itself, publicly censoring certain architects, building types, compositions, materials, and details as "decorative." The surfaces of both buildings and the texts that describe them are religiously scrutinized for signs of such "degeneration," "deviance," "contamination" and so on; each such term being explicitly mobilized in reference to suspect stereotypes of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. But it is the word "fashion" that usually marks the ultimate moment of excommunication. To be branded as "merely" fashionable is to be ostracized.

This watchdog mentality is exemplified in the writings of Sigfried Giedion, the leading promoter of the movement and the very active secretary of C.I.A.M. (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne), its at once promotional and defensive—if not

disciplinary—body. He describes modern architecture as the effect of an ethical refusal of the seductions of fashionable clothing in *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, a heavy book based on a series of lectures delivered at Harvard University between 1938 and 1939 at the invitation of Walter Gropius. The book was published in 1941 and immediately became the standard textbook on modern architecture for generations of architects and was regularly updated until a revised and enlarged version of the fifth edition came out 1969, a year after his death. Like Le Corbusier, Giedion identifies the styles of nineteenth-century architecture as fashion-conscious clothing, describing them as "the Harlequin dress of architecture." In so doing, he picks up the expression used by nineteenth-century critics to condemn stylistic eclecticism but argues that it refers to "a disease which is still malignant in our day," before adding, "nevertheless, beneath all the masquerade, tendencies of lasting importance lay hidden and were slowly gathering strength." Underneath the dissimulating and distracting layers of fashion that cover architecture, new technologies of construction were supposedly developing. The removal of fashion is again literally identified with the removal of ornamental clothing. Without fashion, there is "no disguise of structure." Relieved of the burden of carrying a mask, structure is able to develop freely and a new architecture emerges that embodies truths of material construction and functional utility independent of the vagaries of fashion.

This argument had already been put in place by Giedion's *Bauen in Frankreich. Eisen. Eisenbeton (Building in France. Iron. Concrete.)* of 1928, which, in turn, was based on a series of articles he had published in the Berlin art journal *Der Cicerone* over the two previous years. Again, nineteenth-century architecture is seen to wear a "historical mask," which veils the emerging forms of construction that are fundamentally changing a building's mode of operation: "the new system was shrouded in the old formal decorations." The endless search for style is dismissed as but "wrinkles on the surface," "academic encrustations," the "haut-goût" of "architectural appendages" that "suffocate the building spirit." The book attempts to "peel off an outer layer from the century" in order to expose the modernity trapped underneath this suffocating mask. It does so by looking at the various transformations of buildings that occurred before architects got a chance to wrap them up in fashionable clothes and those parts of buildings that architects did not bother to clothe because they thought no one was looking, the adventurous developments hidden, as Giedion puts it, "behind the scenes" of architecture. To go around and behind the architects, he examines everyday, anonymous, and temporary constructions that had been put in the hands of engineers. The architects are then measured against the engineers. Their role is simply to transfer the new engineering realities to the sphere of "living space" by subordinating all surface play to the rigors of structural work, smoothing out the prematurely wrinkled skin of the building's young body, then putting that attractive body to work on new tasks.

The book is highly selective of the architects, buildings, and details with which it makes its case, praising those who, like Henri Labrouste, "saw the construction as the intimate side of architecture—the outside of buildings being mere wrapping (envelope) or skin" and slighting those like the "elegant," "formalist" Rob Mallet-Stevens, who apparently concern themselves only with the skin and thereby assist architecture's regression into the decorative folly of fashion. The book everywhere discriminates between progressive and regressive developments, monitoring architectural discourse like some kind of surveillance device looking for small flaws, traces of decorative play that act as telltale signs of a recurrence of fashion. *Space, Time and Architecture* resumes this surveillance operation, but on a much larger scale, broadening the field of inquiry and adding more and more territory with each successive edition, while remaining just as selective, if not more so. Those modernists who were previously identified with fashion, like Mallet-Stevens, are no longer even mentioned, a gesture that, as Richard Becherer has argued, was faithfully repeated by subsequent historians. As the years pass, the book maintains its alert stance against any possible contamination of the cause by fashion.

It is crucial to note that this sense of fashion—operative, if not an organizing force, in so much of the discourse around modern architecture—is explicitly associated with a psychology. *Bauen in Frankreich* identifies the new reality hidden behind the dissimulating layers of ornament, which have been mobilized by fashion's obsessive logic of compulsory change, with the "unconscious" of architecture: "In the 19th century, the construction only played a subconscious role. On the outside the old-

fashioned pathos reigned ostentatiously. Underneath, hidden behind the facade, the foundations of all our present being took shape." The story of modern architecture is the story of how this unconscious constructive reality came to the surface and "leaked out." This quasi-therapeutic narrative is continued in *Space, Time and Architecture*, which again describes modern construction technologies as "the unconscious," and elaborates the point by tacitly associating the role of the historian with that of the psychoanalyst who patiently reads the surfaces, looking at the marginal traces of everyday life for the small and easily overlooked gaps, slips, and displacements that mark the relentless operation of a repressed system. The book attempts to trace the way these unconscious tendencies gave rise to a new architecture by eventually forcing their way to the surface.

It is only in the less obvious, usually overlooked, domain of anonymous industrial buildings, or the backs and hidden details of public buildings, that these developments occur. They necessarily take place out of sight, away from the eyes that would find them shocking and demand that they be covered with clothes. As Giedion puts it, "the moment the nineteenth century feels itself unobserved and has no longer to make a show, then it is truly bold." Unrestricted by ill-fitting clothes designed only to please a nervous external eye, construction is finally able to emerge and transform itself. As the new forms of construction gain confidence, they are able to gradually move from the back stage to the foreground, such that "the undisguised shapes... that mark the rear and unobserved portions of railroad stations and factories begin to make themselves felt in the front walls of buildings," particularly in temporary constructions like Paxton's Crystal Palace, which, symptomatically, "aroused feelings that seemed to belong only to the world of dreams." The dreamworld of architecture starts to become visible. Eventually, architects are able to take responsibility for this dreamworld in permanent buildings in a gradual process that begins with Peter Behrens's engagement with factory design in 1909 and slowly develops, until finally, when the sheer glass curtain wall of Walter Gropius's 1925-1956 Bauhaus building in Dessau wraps itself around the corner, the unconscious of architecture has become the consciousness of the enlightened architect. Modern architecture arrives as such when the details of Gropius's design are understood "not as unconscious outgrowths of advances in engineering but as the conscious realization of an artist's intent." It is not that the unconscious of architecture has finally been liberated, or even absorbed into the architect's consciousness. Rather, it has been relocated, accommodated, and disciplined.

This discipline is required because, for Giedion, the suspect desire to adorn architecture with fashionable clothing is not produced by a love of clothing but by an anxiety about what that clothing will cover. The historicist clothes are not simply old garments that are no longer necessary or fit the new body of architecture badly. Rather, they have only recently been put on to deny that there is a new body. *Bauen in Frankreich* specifically identifies the use of historical clothes as a mask that is worn to cover new anxieties about industrialization: "The nineteenth century disguised its new creations with a historical mask, indifferently in all fields. This is just as true for architecture as it is for industry or society. New building methods were invented, but they created a climate of fear which suffocated them with an uncertainty, relegating them to behind the scenes of stone." The apparently gratuitous changes of fashion are actually a form of nervous resistance to the real changes going on. Hidden by the apparently playful surfaces of eclectic decoration is the serious fear of mechanization. As a result, "all the century's buildings were put up with a guilty conscience or with insecurity, so to speak." Ironically, inasmuch as fashion is a symptom of the repression of modernity, it becomes, for Giedion, an inadvertent symptom of modernity. The more frenetic the changes in clothing, the more insecurity must have been produced by modern techniques, encouraging the historian to uncover their hidden operations. For the psychohistorian, the dissimulating movements of fashion end up pointing to the very reality they attempt to conceal.

This association between fashion and insecurity is elaborated in the article "Mode oder Zeiteinstellung" (Fashion or the condition of the times) that Giedion published in a 1932 issue of *Information*, the anti-fascist magazine he edited. It warns against again being "suffocated," as in the nineteenth century, by "complexes about the past" that cover up the nightmares of the present: "Insecurity and the need to come out in favor of second-hand issues only reigns everywhere. Fashion reigns everywhere in place of seriously taking sides on the issues of the age." People use fashion to "shield themselves on two sides." But this defensive layer of "surface appearance" is not

simply made up of old styles laid over new structures. It is also made up of new styles laid over old structures. Objects are chosen that look modern: "That is, the external formula of new products that really stem from their own time are borrowed and applied to the old body or the old mentality, just as one glues on ornament." Consequently, most contemporary objects are neither old nor new. They neither promote nor resist the modern age. Rather, they replace the "condition of the times" with a persistent code of "fashionable conduct" that affects all objects, including architecture and urban design. This "intrusion of second-hand fashion in all areas of design" produces and is produced by a profound psychological insecurity in which "we are internally divided." More precisely, "self-certainty has dwindled" and "everyone feels it in their own person." Giedion actually proposes that history is the only agent of recovery from this malaise because it can provide "an overview of our ego" that tracks the way in which modern developments have already, albeit slowly, "penetrated the general consciousness" despite fashion's concerted attempt to stall them. History is literally prescribed as the appropriate therapy for the neurotic addiction to fashion. By systematically uncovering the fundamental condition of modern life that lies beneath the dissimulating layers of fashion, the historian can facilitate the emergence of the "new order" without anxiety. Writing history is a form of construction rather than a commentary on it. As Giedion concludes: "Today categorizing is more important than inventing." New forms are produced by reclassifying old ones.

It is not surprising, then, that such a bond between fashion and the insecurity of the modern underwrites *Space, Time and Architecture*. Giedion's explicit attempt at such a therapeutic history. The text guards itself against the darker side of industrialization as much as it guards itself against fashion: "the destruction of man's inner quiet and security has remained the most conspicuous effect of the industrial revolution. The individual goes under before the march of production; he is devoured by it." Indeed, for Giedion, the threat to humanity is made emblematic by the figure of the automaton, the mechanized human, the unfeeling robot. Industrialization is seen to have produced a fatal split between feeling and thought, a split that would become the major theme of his extraordinary *Mechanization Takes Command* of 1948. The staccato attacks on fashion that punctuated Giedion's early essays were gradually propped up by a detailed analysis of the conditions that are seen to have forced the adoption of fashion as a kind of psychological defense.

This analysis was continued in Giedion's Mellon lectures, delivered in 1957 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He looked at the origins of the arts in order to find some prehistoric condition that could be found within contemporary artistic practices, grounding their radical explosion of space and time in some fundamental condition of the human psyche. The lectures attempt to find a fixed structure that underpins current changes and distinguishes them from changes in fashion. For some years, the lectures were elaborated into manuscript form and then summarized in the inaugural Gropius lecture at Harvard in 1961 under the title "Constancy and Change in Architecture" before being published in two large volumes: *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art*, which came out one year later, and *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Architecture*, which was published in 1964. The first volume begins by repeating the quasi-psychoanalytic claim that a history "of what has been suppressed and driven back into the unconscious," is needed to counter the "incessant demand for change for change's sake." The relentless and psychologically damaging logic of fashion can only be blocked by "restoring" these buried conditions. Giedion argues that while the historical avant-garde produced radically new work, effecting an "optical revolution" that launches a "new tradition," its very newness involves the recovery of transhistorical constants, such that by the sixties "a painting of 1910 does not hurt the eye as something 'out of fashion', something alien to the present day." Furthermore, such work is understood as a weapon against fashion to be deployed in the everyday battle for psychological security. The same argument underwrites the second volume, which attempts to isolate modern architecture from fashion by grounding it in prehistory, producing a history of three "space conceptions" through the millennia in which the third one, still being produced, is seen to recover much of the first one that "develops instinctively, usually remaining in the unconscious." No matter how high-tech it is, an architecture is only modern inasmuch as it reconnects anxious people to their pretechnological roots.

Giedion would go on to elaborate this history in his last book *Architecture and the Phenomenon of Transition*, the final manuscript of which he delivered the day before

his death in April 1968. His lifelong attempt to find a solid ground from which the restless movements of fashion could be distinguished from the necessary evolution of a new order had mobilized massive historiographic resources and produced a succession of monumental volumes that monitored a millennial field with a series of simple but globalizing arguments. The surveillance operation that began on the pages of *Der Cicerone* had covered an ever-increasing territory with a methodical sweep whose encyclopedic quality was already established with Giedion's barrage of articles for *Cahiers d'art* between 1928 and 1934 that systematically surveyed the production of modern architecture in each country of the world before being literalized when he was asked to do the architectural entries for *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1957.

But, as this sheer weight of material might indicate, Giedion had long been on the defense. It is not by chance that he was reaching back as far as the ancient Egyptians for security at the very moment that he was adding a new introduction to the final edition of *Space, Time and Architecture* that portrays contemporary architecture as having to purge itself of fashion in the same way as it had at the turn of the century. Modern architecture is seen to have regressed into a form of stylistic eclecticism resembling that of the nineteenth century it had worked so hard to displace. He condemns the new "fashions" of the architecture of the 1960s that, after the International Style "had worn thin," exhibit a "tendency to degrade the wall with new decorative elements." The purity of modern architecture has not merely given way to the immoral excesses of the 1960s that disfigure the smooth white wall. Rather, modern architecture has itself been appropriated as a fashionable style of "en vogue" superficialities. Insisting that modern architecture is "not a sudden, quickly devalued, fashion," Giedion defends the original polemic of his own textbook from appropriation as a set of fashion tips.

In so doing, he echoes his original defense of the first polemic on the subject—Otto Wagner's 1896 manifesto *Moderne Architektur*, which, like *Space, Time and Architecture*, was, as Giedion puts it, "soon translated into many languages" and "became the textbook of the new movement." Just as he had defended that manifesto against the critics who claimed when it was first published that Wagner was "a sensation-monger, a train-bearer of fashion," Giedion resists the possibility that his own attempt to detach fashion from architecture is nothing more than the preparation for a new fashion. In fact, he had already defended modern architecture against the threat of dismissal as a new fashion in a newspaper article of 1927 entitled "Ist das neue Bauen eine Mode?" (The new building, is it a fashion?) The argument about fashion written into all of his work is, from the beginning, at once an attack and a defense.

The double-sided quality of Giedion's engagement with the question of fashion is exemplary of the whole discourse. The same identification of fashion with a generalized psychopathology of insecurity in the face of modernity can be found throughout the promotion of modern architecture. And it is not that this generic argument is simply applied to the ready-made forms of that architecture, or even used to supervise their construction. Rather, modern architecture is constituted as such by that very argument. The argument produces what it appears to merely describe. Giedion, for example, does not pretend that his writing simply offers a commentary on an existing tendency, acknowledging, with his very first lines, that he actively constructs that tendency as such because the historian inevitably rearranges the past in the light of present conceptions and "the backward look transforms its object." In an extraordinary gesture, the reader of *Space, Time and Architecture* is first taken through a lengthy chapter on the active role of history in everyday life and in the production of architecture. But perhaps only the acknowledgment that this is the case is unique. The wider discourse about modern architecture and the events that it addresses, including the specific details of architectural designs, are likewise structured by particular arguments about fashion. In fact, the antifashion argument has a unique privilege, a special hold on the protagonists, a vicelike grip on the discourse that appears to employ it only occasionally, if not tacitly.

The grip has yet to be eased. Contemporary discourse about architecture continues to be organized around nervous but sustained attacks on fashion. If anything, the campaign has been stepped up. All forms of debate are punctuated by sermons on the complicity between architecture and fashion, the symptoms of which can seemingly be found everywhere. In addition to the traditional sense of architectural styles as fashions, there are the obvious symptoms like architects appearing in

advertisements for clothing designers and stores, the featuring of architects and buildings in fashion magazines, fashion supplements in architectural magazines, fashion designers branching out into architectural design, architects branching out into designing clothes and other fashionable objects, the signature architecture of fashion stores, the emergence of fashion magazines specializing in promoting architecture, and so on. But there are also the less obvious symptoms: the strategic role of architecture in fashion images, the architecture of the fashion show, the actual "look" of architects, the architectonics of clothing, the ongoing transformations in the language used by architects and critics, the oblique but critical role of architect-designed objects and spaces in establishing identity in the mass media, and so on. Indeed, a whole terrain of effects presents itself, if not imposes itself, and demands some kind of sustained reading.

The phenomenon is often referred to but its symptoms have rarely been examined in any detail. Rather, they are simplistically and repeatedly identified as unquestionable evidence of the commodification of architectural discourse that is by now routinely associated with "postmodernism." In the most developed of such arguments, architectural discourse is not understood as postmodern simply because of the concern some of its participants might have with eclectic practices of decoration. Rather, it is the way the discourse itself operates as a form of superstructural decoration in contemporary society—despite architecture's ostensibly structural relationship to the dominant economic forces, given the amount of resources it inevitably mobilizes. This decorative role is portrayed as a loss of political agency, or, more precisely, the loss of a critical political agency in favor of a relentlessly conservative maintenance of given power relations. The conservatism of the discipline is not identified with the static nature of its forms, its conservation of an aesthetic or technological tradition, but with its fluidity, its capacity to circulate and recirculate heterogeneous forms in response to the eccentric rhythms of a fickle market. Architecture's complicity with the most transient aspects of commodity culture is seen to parallel and support its apparently tangential cultural role—one whose very tangentiality masks a fundamental complicity, a passivity that actively preserves suspect socioeconomic structures. Its fashion-conscious concern for "the look" that can be sold to an empowered client assumes political force, sustaining the overt and covert mechanisms of that empowerment.

It is in these terms that the discipline of architecture is seen to participate in the general phenomenon of postmodernism, understood as a collapse of the millennial discourses organized around the unified subject, originality, authorship, identity, and so on. Each of these threatened values is identified with a sense of interior. The phenomenon is no more than a crisis of interiority in which a whole series of supposedly stable interior values are displaced onto seemingly ephemeral exterior surfaces. Indeed, it is often explicitly described as a fetishistic obsession with surface at the expense of (what was once understood as) a concern for material and economic structure. It should go without saying that this generic description becomes all too literally applied when architecture is described as postmodern inasmuch as it is dedicated to the production and reproduction of fashionable surfaces. But it is important to note that this generic account is not simply applied to architecture. On the contrary, architecture is its paradigm. Since around 1984, almost all the influential writers on the question of the postmodern, whether for, against, or sideways, have addressed architecture in order to elaborate their position, arguing that not only is it the field in which the term first gained currency but also that it articulates the phenomenon more clearly than any other. Architecture has become the vehicle of both the celebration and condemnation of the so-called postmodern condition.

Indeed, it can be argued that the construction of the very category "postmodern" turns on a certain account of architecture, or, more precisely, a certain account of "modern" architecture. Contemporary trends in diverse fields, trends that threaten the very identity of those fields, are contrasted with the rejection of decorative surface by modern architects in favor of fundamental social structure. Images of white buildings by Le Corbusier are used surprisingly often to exemplify this social project. The rejection of nineteenth-century eclectic styles in favor of the clean-edged smooth white surface is used as a model for the contemporary critic's own rejection of postmodernism. In a quirky, but common, form of transference, the apparent rejection of particular forms by a particular historical avant-garde is tacitly extended into a model for the contemporary rejection of the means by which forms are

reproduced, circulated, and consumed in the, by now, electronic marketplace. The white surface is deployed, as it were, against surface. It apparently neutralizes the seductions of surface exploited by postmodernism and thereby makes available the structural issues that the fashionable play with external effects is designed to cover.

These images of white walls are usually installed without discussion, as if they have a unique ability to exemplify the complex arguments they punctuate. Their pale, almost ghostly, surface haunts the discourse like a spectral guarantee of some unspoken order. The polemical struggle over the contemporary economy of fashion is somehow underwritten by these less than innocent images. And when that discourse, as it were, returns to architecture by addressing architecture's involvement in the postmodern economy, their already complicated role is, at the very least, further convoluted. Or, more precisely, some of the convolutions that already structure architectural discourse become evident. The strategic status of these images is transformed. Some of their already strange effects become even stranger, while others are normalized in institutionally crucial ways. Likewise, the argument about the general phenomenon of fashion that the images supposedly secure is displaced and other arguments emerge that, in turn, open up new readings of architecture.

To even begin to address the complex role that fashion plays in the contemporary commodification of architecture, we must return to the sense of modern architecture that is seen to precede it. In particular, we must return to the white wall and scratch its surface to see exactly what it is made of.

#### CLOSET OPERATIVES

If modern architecture haunts contemporary debates then it is itself haunted by the specter of fashion. Fashion provides the basic frame of the discourse, its limit condition. Although the phenomenon is rarely, if ever, analyzed as such, and the term is only occasionally invoked to reestablish the limits, the space of modern architecture is defined by its exclusion of fashion. Furthermore, fashion is everywhere inscribed within the very system it delimits. It is never simply excluded. Or, more precisely, the very gesture of exclusion is so institutionalized that fashion ends up being a vital part of the system. Throughout Le Corbusier's canonic writings, for example, the rhetoric of "eternal truth," "spirit," "work," "order," "vigorous," "erect," "virginal," "rational," "standard," "essential," "honest," "life," "deep," "internal," and so on, is routinely opposed to that of "disorder," "chaos," "congestion," "intoxication," "play," "dishonesty," "illusion," "weakness," "sentimental," "trivial," "lies," "prostitution," "caprice," "arbitrary," "dishonesty," "death," "cosmetic," "seduction," "superficial," "veneer," "fake," "substitute," "superficiality," and so on. Each of the latter set of terms, which are always used to mark that which his work attempts to resist, are, in the end, and at symptomatic moments (whose specificity needs to be carefully analyzed in detail), identified with fashionable clothing styles. Fashion is the key.

Still, these isolated identifications offer only a preliminary map of the complex network of associations between clothing and architecture that underpin Le Corbusier's texts, organizing them—even if often against their apparent grain. The line of argument about fashion only occasionally becomes evident because it is twisted, folded over on itself in an eccentric geometry, a series of knots that, in their very convolution, tie together the discourse on modern architecture. It is not the overt argument about fashion that structures the texts but the complications of that argument, complications that rarely become visible as such. These complications, which not only bind Le Corbusier's texts together but also bind them to other texts in architecture and in other disciplines, profoundly disrupt traditional accounts of modern architecture. It is only by actively neglecting them that those accounts have been able to sustain certain suspect institutional structures. And it is only by reopening the question of fashion that these structures can begin to be interrogated.

Clearly, the enigmatic argument about fashion that underwrites modern architecture needs to be patiently tracked through its conceptual variations and historical specificity in much more detail to comprehend its considerable strategic effects. But how exactly should this be done? Fashion is never simply an object that can be scrutinized by a detached theory. The phenomenon, if that is what it is, can never be detached from the way it is read. Just as Le Corbusier passes seamlessly from describing himself as a kind of archaeologist of his own time, who recovers the inner

logic of the age by going beyond the outer layers of fashion, to describing his work as being likewise stripped of fashionable ornament, Giedion's account of the modern architect is exactly the same as the account of the historian which precedes it. Supposedly, both the architect and the historian strip their objects of fashion. The opening chapter of *Space, Time, and Architecture* clarifies the therapeutic mission of history that had been prescribed in "Mode oder Zeiteinstellung?" by describing the task of the historian as clearing away the layers of fashion to discover the elemental truth they conceal and building a structure devoid of misleading superficial detail. The historian is an architect who must distinguish between the "transitory facts" and "constituent facts" that are usually "intermingled" in each site of investigation. Transitory facts are those with the seductive "dash and glitter" of fashions whose surface disorder must not be confused with the inner order of constituent facts, which, "when they are suppressed, inevitably reappear":

"[the historian] can tell more or less short-lived novelties from genuinely new trends... At first appearance they may have all the éclat and brilliance of a firework display, but they have no greater durability. Sometimes they are interlaced with every refinement of fashion... These we shall call transitory facts. Transitory facts in their dash and glitter often succeed in taking over the center of the stage. This was the case with the experiments in historical styles that went on—with infinite changes in direction—throughout the whole nineteenth century."

Giedion rehearses and elaborates the same point in *Mechanization Takes Command*. The historian's quasi-psychoanalytic reading is necessary because the surface play of fashion, the simulations of change with which each age nervously "drapes" itself, is actively involved in the suppression of the "fresh impulses," the constituent facts that have produced the nervousness because they are the possibility of real change. When these "repressed" impulses "come up again in man's consciousness," as they will inevitably do, they "form the solid ground for new departures," the ground on which the architect/historian can construct a new way of life. The book attempts to foster such changes by directing attention to the various coming to terms with the unconscious that have already occurred. Consequently, its concern for the "symptoms" that are "at work beneath the surface" is a concern for the "influence of mechanization where it was not hampered by fashion."

Here, as everywhere else, Giedion does not so much address fashion as invoke it. What is fashionable is, by definition, bad. The successive generations of historians of modern architecture have presupposed the same condemnation of fashion, sharing it with the historical figures they describe. It is in this way that they are, in the end, "operative" in Manfredo Tafuri's sense. In the very moment of asserting their neutrality under the guise of scholarly detachment, they insist on a particular ideological formation by projecting present values onto the past in order to project them into the future. Even Tafuri, for whom Giedion is the very model of the operative critic, is operative by virtue of the way he positions fashion as an unproblematically pejorative term. Indeed, it can be argued that the very concept of operative criticism is itself operative inasmuch as the strategic abuse of history it refers to is aligned with fashion.

When Tafuri's influential *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Theories and histories of architecture) introduced the category of operative criticism in 1968 precisely to counter it, a footnote identifies its most degenerate forms as those organized by fashion: "One cannot sufficiently condemn the naive or snobbish attempt to read historical phenomena by 'present' yardsticks of those, who, for the sake of feeling 'alive' and up-to-date, reduce critical transvaluation to exhibitionism and fashion." This opposition between history and fashion, which he symptomatically shares with the openly operative Giedion, is exhibited in the opening lines, which identify the book's task as that of mapping the specific obstacles facing "historians who refuse the role of fashionable commentator, and who try to historicize their criticism." These obstacles, in turn, are identified in the book's introduction with the unavoidable contradictions at work in the very idea of a history of the modern, given the ostensibly anti-historical stance of modern architects. When noting that contemporary architectural tendencies actually maintain this stance "behind the mask" of the new myths used to distance themselves from the historical avant-garde, Tafuri preserves the traditional opposition between a history that is critical in that it "digs deeper" and one "swallowed up by the daily mythologies," understood as fashionable masks: "The present moment, so totally bent on avoiding, through new myths, the commitment of understanding the present, cannot help turning even the researches that, with renewed vigor and rigor, try to plan a systematic and objective reading of the world, of things, of history and of human conventions into fashion and myth." Tafuri actively

resists the possibility, embedded within his own text, that what actually bonds contemporary practices to those of the historical avant-garde might not be what lies behind the fashionable mask but the fashionable mask itself.

This resistance is tested when the text later addresses the affinity between what seems to be a fashionably historicist use of “architectural images” by the Neo-Liberty school in Italy and the antihistorical stance of the modern movement it appears to emphatically reject. But the affinity is quickly described as being “underneath an immediately fashionable phenomenon” rather than at the same level. The “garish” “farce” of Neo-Liberty that the text symptomatically identifies with Art Nouveau, the Baroque, and Fellini, and whose “equivocal quality” supposedly parallels the bourgeoisie’s “own evasive costume,” is seen to occur on the “fringe” of the modern project rather than contradicting or opposing it. But it is seen to participate in that project because it only “flirts” with history and fails in its attempted “fetishism” of the architectural object, while leaving unquestioned the avant-garde’s own fetishistic flirtations. Furthermore, what Neo-Liberty merely appears to reject is not the avant-garde itself but the consequence of its transformation into a fashionable form of eclecticism with the so-called International Style. In this way, modern architecture is doubly immunized against prosecution on the charge of fashion.

Likewise, the book attempts to negotiate the specific terms of the same immunity for the historian, looking for the ways in which research can avoid becoming “another transient fashion under the flag of evasion,” even if that involves a sustained silence. The historical avant-garde acts here, as it does for so many contemporary writers, as the model of Tafuri’s own practice. Consequently, it is exempted from certain interrogations that might threaten that practice, even in the middle of such a comprehensive and nuanced reading. Despite the book’s constant call for a vigilantly self-critical stance like that supposedly assumed by the avant-garde, its analysis is, from the beginning, vulnerable to its own arguments about operative criticism. It is surprisingly reluctant to acknowledge the institutional practices it leaves intact, if not tacitly defends, most of which have survived the subsequent transformations in Tafuri’s work. Despite the invaluable insights of his at times explicitly Nietzschean accounts of the ruses of history, his equally sophisticated accounts of the complex economies of the mask operating in different historical sites are never quite extended to his own practices as a historian, or even those of his practices that he later, emphatically, rejects. While it can be demonstrated that his most Nietzschean account of history turns around, if not emerges out of, a certain account of fashion—to such an extent that it is illustrated with an image of a woman in a fashionable nineteenth-century dress which is polemically opposed to an image of a naked body which is in turn opposed to an image of a body without skin—Nietzsche’s own refusal of a distinction between fashion and history is never mobilized. On the contrary. Ten years after he distances himself from the final edition of *Teorie e storia dell’architettura*, Tafuri is still able to criticize the work of postmodern architects because “history has been reduced to fashion” and, like Giedion, he associates this with “anxiety” and “the sense of insecurity.” The term “fashion” retains its old disciplinary role in his argument, as it does throughout the economy of architectural theory that he is analyzing.

Indeed, later generations of “critical” writers have preserved this role for the term, deploying it at key points in their analysis without ever subjecting it to that analysis. The critical writer is understood to be, by definition, detached from fashion. Alternative modes of scholarship that are skeptical of the possibility of such a detached position are often dismissed as “fashionable,” “chic,” “modish,” and so on by proponents of well-established modes of research who presuppose that fashion is inherently bad and have difficulty recognizing that their own adherence to one mode among others, let alone acknowledge the structural role of fashion in those sections of the archives that they privilege. As a disciplinary concept, fashion necessarily remains untheorized. It props up theory rather than subjects itself to theoretical analysis. To address the question of fashion and architecture here will inevitably be to address the curious role of theory in the constitution of architecture.

But can one suggest that any inquiry into fashion must reform or deflect the modes of inquiry, if not tease the limits of a discipline that constitutes itself by ostensibly rejecting fashion, whether that discipline be that of architecture or scholarly argument in general, without having that very suggestion either uncritically embraced by certain well defined groups of readers or uncritically censored by other groups as too

fashionable? Probably not. And would not a rigorous interrogation of fashion, whatever that might mean, be rigorous only insofar as it confused the distinctions between such groups? Probably.

Anyway, it goes without saying that no discourse can simply isolate itself from fashion. At the very least, one is bound to ask here whether the question of fashion necessarily succumbs to what it addresses. To what extent does the very posing of the question commit us to a particular fashion regardless of our ostensible position on the subject? Either way, a more detailed (and fashion is, of course, always a question of details) account of fashion and its multiple and often conflicting relationships with architecture is needed. In the end, it is a question of the precise way that fashion is usually “intermingled,” as Giedion says of the “dash and glitter” of transitory facts, with what seems to be its other. To scratch the white surface here will be to look for the ways in which it is constructed out of the very operations of fashion whose exclusion it supposedly confirms. To show, that is, that the supposedly neutral white surface glitters—dazzling its audience in a way that fosters a series of bizarre, but extremely influential, collective hallucinations.

## BLOQUE LAS FLORES, BY SECUNDINO ZUAZO

Carlos Sambricio

Secundino Zuazo provided Fullaondo at the time with an extensive list of works, informing about his professional life, in view of the publication of the number that the Madrid journal *Arquitectura* brought out on his work. The surprising thing was the important number of social housing projects that appear on this list and, furthermore, that this aspect of Zuazo’s work had never been studied.

In different works, I have pointed out that at the end of the twenties and beginning of the thirties, Zuazo’s professional studio went into a convulsion with the incorporation of Garcia Mercadal, or the tandem of Arniches and Dominguez, as well as an important group of German architects, including Michael Fleischer who would shortly become the Studio Manager.

Zuazo’s projects adapted to a new type of client, which was no longer the white-collared worker who, until then had occupied the rented housing developed by the *Compañía Urbanizadora Metropolitana*, but a new middle class who no longer wanted to live on the edge of the Ensanche but rather, in privileged areas within it; this required a different type of housing programme. Consequently, the unique aspect is not the adoption of a new architectonic language, but the definition of an urban action where the different types of housing mix together in a new way, forming the blocks.

Concerned from the start about publicising “Las Flores” block project, there were many “scripts” or “indices” of publications that never saw the light. Aware of how much that project connected to the proposals formulated in Germany on how to redefine the closed block, the surprising thing, however, in those notes, is that back in 1928, Zuazo already proposed that project as an example of both “European modern architecture” and based on the reference of El Escorial.

The observations made of the “Las Flores” block project, which appear here, were personal notes written not so much to be published, but rather with the aim of defining and clarifying ideas. Likewise, the sketches of that project that are presented now are more an exercise of reflection—as shown by the spontaneity of the lines and the fact that they are sketches—and not notes to be published. But, and above all, they help us understand that Zuazo’s work was not so much linear, but that it was characterised by looking for and trying out solutions.

## ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS IN SPAIN THROUGH THE *BOLETÍN DE LA DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE ARQUITECTURA* (1946-1957)

Víctor Pérez Escolano

After the II World War, Franco’s Spain adapted to the geostrategic recomposition process. In 1953, the Alliance was signed with the United States and the Concordat with the Holy See. Architecture, as a symbolic expression and response to social needs, covered the transit from autarchic isolation to economic developmentalism, cultural and technological transformation. Between 1946 and 1957, the *Boletín de la Dirección*

*General de Arquitectura* the events of architectonic renewal, its modernisation and internationalisation. The architects who upheld that instrument were Francisco Prieto-Moreno, Director General, and Carlos de Miguel, also responsible for *Gran Madrid*, and for the *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura*, later *Arquitectura*. Together with them, the architect, José Luis Arrese, a historical figure of Franco's regime, closed the period with his move from Secretario General del Movimiento (General Secretary of the Movement to Ministro de Vivienda (Minister of Housing). The architectonic mutation was irreversible and crossed the political chessboard: from "the adventures of architectonic Falangism" to capitalism without freedoms.

## LE CORBUSIER READ COMIC BOOKS. NOTES ON THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND GRAPHIC NARRATIVE

Luis Miguel Lus Arana

Tied to their early encoding as a children's' medium, comics –comic strips, funnies, comic books or, more recently, graphic novels– have made their way throughout the XXth Century devoid of the intellectual legitimacy which other visual media, such as cinema, or photography, rapidly gained within the cultural scene. Consequently, comics have seldom been approached as an academic object of interest in architectural scholarship. And even when they did get featured, occasionally showing up in articles and exhibitions –especially after the 1960s, when authors such as Umberto Eco prompted their entrance into Academia–, their presence was always that of a mere curiosity. Comics are looked upon with a combination of fascination and despise, bound to be periodically rediscovered by those interested in exploring the visual production located in the periphery of the discipline and regarded as a decidedly minor, unserious by-product of popular culture and consumerism by the architectural establishment.

However, this has not always been the case. In the earlier decades of the XXth century, Gertrude Stein and Pablo Picasso were usual readers of *The Katzenjammer Kids* (Rudolph Dirks, 1897), and George Grosz mentioned them as a great influence on his own work. Picasso, Joan Miró and Willem de Kooning were great fans of George Herrmann's *Krazy Kat* (1913-44), as well as Walt Disney or Frank Capra, and both Picasso and Dalí, René Magritte and André Breton used the language of graphic narrative at some point. But this interest in comics was also present in the early stages of modern architecture, through such a seminal figure as Le Corbusier. As Stanislaus Von Moos has noted, Charles-Edouard Jeanneret grew up fascinated by Rodolphe Töpffer, a teacher, painter, cartoonist, and caricaturist best known as the Swiss father of bande dessinée. Jeanneret had discovered Töpffer through a children's book, *Voyages en Zigzag*, where Von Moos locates the origins of Le Corbusier's later passion for travel. This fascination for Töpffer did not fade with time, and in the following decades Le Corbusier became more interested in the histoires en estampes that the Swiss pedagogue had started producing in the 1830s, writing the first article on comics to be found in an architecture magazine, "Toepffer, précurseur du cinema", in *L'Esprit Nouveau* (1921), and even expressing his interest in writing a doctoral dissertation about him. Töpffer's shadow can be found in the Swiss architect's sustained evolution towards a sort of ligne claire rendering style, and even more so, in Le Corbusier's use of the techniques of graphic narrative in his earlier years, both on different occasions in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, or in his atypical, storyboarded *Lettre a Madame Meyer* of 1925.

Le Corbusier's early interest in the ability of graphic narrative to represent and imagine architectural space and in comics, notably absent from architectural publications until the recovery of the medium spawned by the publication of *Archigram 4* (May 1964), contrasted with the fascination that architecture provoked in comic authors since the very inception of the medium. The works of Winsor McCay (*Little Nemo in Slumberland*, 1905) or Frank King (*Gasoline Alley*, 1918) illustrated, with the medium barely a couple decades old, the potentialities of the graphic sequence's spatialization of time for the rendering and reinvention of architectural space. One century later, already in the age of digital reproduction it is architecture which looks back at comics, either trying to use their –still– transgressive aura (Koolhaas) or communicative qualities (BIG), because of their ability to capture architectural essence (Neutelings), or in the work of new generations of architects such as Wes Jones Jimenez Lai, who look at comics as a tool for architectural research.

## EDOARDO PERSICO AND GIUSEPPE DE FINETTI: INCONSISTENCY AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE ITALIAN DEBATE ON LOOS

Francesca Fiorelli

Three occurrences between 1933 and 1934 denote the convergence of unprecedented attention by the Italian cultural establishment for Adolf Loos's work: firstly, the exhibition of his work at the V Triennale di Milano –inaugurated a few months before the demise of the Austrian architect– followed by the writing of an important memorial article in *Casabella* by Edoardo Persico and Giuseppe Pagano, and, only a few months later, the publication of the article "Ornamento e delitto", that appears for the first time in Italian on the pages of the same journal with a translation attributed to the Milanese architect Giuseppe de Finetti.

The critical enterprise of Edoardo Persico, often centred on the educational role of architecture, recommends Adolf Loos's work through a treatise not lacking in varying evaluations. On the other hand, Giuseppe de Finetti, the only pupil of the Austrian master, tries to enliven the interest of Italian critics with regard to Loos through the first Italian translation of his most influential theoretical writings and through the publication of hand-hitting writings, aimed at releasing the effectiveness and stability of his precepts in the modern architectural debate. In De Finetti's opinion, Adolf Loos was a proposer and a pioneer whose works of architecture led to the birth of a new "style", destined to be perpetuated in the postwar period in many countries thanks to his followers' activity.

After the publication of the latest polemical articles by Persico, Loos's work was doomed to fall silent between the pages of specialized journals; this silence lasted almost twenty-five years until the "critical revival" of the monograph edited by Aldo Rossi and published by *Casabella-Continuità*, directed by Ernesto N. Rogers. The republication of Persico's writings made him the leading reference for the work of the Viennese master, and represented a type of special operation that aimed at legitimizing the authenticity of the journal's historical-critical policy, which neglected –whether deliberately or not– the operation led by Giuseppe de Finetti.

In retrospect, however, the monograph dedicated to Loos paradoxically caused the ultimate coming together of Persico and De Finetti's assumptions. Thus, although both had sometimes contrasting opinions about Loos's work, their critical contribution can be reread in a complementary way regarding the crucial aspects of the Italian architectural debate focused on openness to modern European. In this sense, Persico's ideas, that emerged from his own critical perspicacity, offered Rogers a starting point for a new re-reading of modern architecture –that differed from the ideas of the Masters of Modern Architecture– and in which it is possible to trace the awareness-making activities with regard to Loos's work which De Finetti conducted until just a few years ago.

## FROM FIGURE-GROUND STRATEGY TO NOTHINGNESS IN THE EARLY PROJECTS OF ALEJANDRO DE LA SOTA

Jorge Losada Quintas

1952 was a pivotal year in the career of Alejandro de la Sota. In a moment of reflection and supposed inaction –prior to the final construction of his character– Sota designed a number of retail spaces. Though small, humble and mostly unbuilt, these five shops are interesting insofar as they anticipate the foundation of his body of concepts. In these interiors the architect found freedom and got over the excessive liability he had suffered before. This program allowed him to unleash frivolity, something he would judge then necessary. The research in his personal archive has revealed a line that parted from the figure-ground strategy and came to nothingness –to the disappearance of architecture– in pursuit of an ideal display solution.

This article completes the information we had on two known shops and provides three unpublished ones. In the first two cases Sota responded to the exhibition problem from the figure-ground strategy. The influence of Aalto and his New Yorker "Northern Lights" can be tracked easily in "La Casa del Niño". As a matter of fact, Sota repeated the warm and vertically hatched background once again in "Dodó" shortly thereafter. In the following two projects Sota changed the way objects were underlined and chose curved surfaces to deny corners and isolate products, liberating them from the presence of architecture. The plan of the glove store in Santiago de Compostela shows clearly

expressive and sensual traces dominated by an energetic hand drawing. The interior is folded upon it and points to a scenic background. This procedure was continued and further developed in the "Pueblo Español", a group of seventeen interiors devoted to Spanish arts & crafts where hand drawing acquired an extraordinary importance. The denial of corners gave way here to hiding the whole structural inheritance behind a voluptuous curvy plan. However, the truly zenith of this evolution was the watch store in Madrid. In this small project Sota intended to introduce the visitor to an illusionist empty space, "the interior of a coconut". Plan and section discover a complex artifice that annuls perception and, consequently, makes objects look as though they were floating in nothingness. In conclusion, these interiors advance his work on nothingness, emptiness or silence, in other words, on disappearance as an architectural strategy. Despite the fact that these first attempts in disappearance were literal Sota defined his authorship from these concepts. The Galician architect detected the key questions of exhibiting, and attacked its core decidedly. Although these projects are far from the rationalist register we are accustomed to associate with the Spanish master, they share the poetic essence of his masterpieces. Therefore, it could be said that nothingness was the link between the young Sota and the mature Sota.

### TOWARDS MODERNISM: ADAPTATION OF SPANISH GARDEN TO RATIONALISM

Juan J. Tuset

The adaptation of the Spanish Garden to the rationalist architecture was an attempt to avoid the dehumanization of architecture at a time when this same dehumanization was being incorporated into the principles of urban planning and modern architecture. Garden space stands as an example of a driving force of popular expression that satisfies both historical heritage and the needs of a citizen who felt alienated within the functionalist city.

The four proposals for private gardens that Sevillian gardener Javier de Winthuysen made for the residential colonies Parque Residencia and El Viso in Madrid from 1932 to 1934 are attempts to approach the concept of a Spanish modern garden type. The influence of theories and recommendations on garden design and the projects built in Spain by the French landscaper J.C.N Forestier impacted on Winthuysen's project to undertake the renewal of Spanish garden art in a cultural context characterized by the slow modernization of public and private landscaping in Spanish cities. The gardens described in the text –the Julio Blanco garden, Salvador de Madariaga garden, José Ortega y Gasset garden and José Olarra garden (four outstanding men of the Spanish cultural revival of the early twentieth century–, have specific differences regarding the suitability of their architecture, design elements and vegetation to the shape of the plots. But all have two common characteristics and invariant elements: a continuity of the Castilian and Andalusia popular tradition, and the vocabulary of an eclectic design with which Winthuysen developed his model of Spanish garden.

This new garden architecture was defined by harmonically arranged vegetal and construction elements: walkways covered with trellises and tree-lined boulevards, benches and floors made of stone, brick and ceramics, and all accompanied by abundant annual flowers and shrubs shaping parterres and flowerbeds stirred with fountains and small channels. It is a type which is subordinated to the architectural order so that the geometric composition allows the gardener to introduce new aesthetic resources through gardening and simplified design to better adapt the conditions of modern life. The concept of a modern garden proposed by Winthuysen is a way of idealization of our nature from his personal interpretation of the Spanish-Moorish garden. This allowed him to continue considering garden art as a stronghold of man's aesthetic expression in a time of profound transformation and social changes in the modern city.

### LE CORBUSIER'S BATHROOM FITTINGS: THE FREE DISPOSAL AND THE RADICAL EXPOSURE IN THE IGLOOS

Sung-Taeg Nam

This paper is a study of the bathroom design of Le Corbusier, particularly his purist period in the 1920s. A bathroom is a domestic service room, invented by industrial civilization and often considered an ignoble work of anonymous design, exactly like

its plumbing fixtures (bathtub, washbasin, bidet, toilet, etc.). Nevertheless, this little room has historical significance because of its indispensable presence in the habitat and its considerable impact on changes in the plan composition and typology of housing architecture, as noted by Sigfried Giedion.

Among modern architects, it was Le Corbusier who was more sensitive to the issue and more interested in the question of bathroom design. He manifested its function (hygiene of the human body) representing modernity, declared that its physical condition should be bright and spacious as a living space –like a traditional salon– and brilliantly exploited the potential architectural qualities of this utility room in a singular and progressive manner. As an architect, he ennobles the bathroom.

As shown in the development of the series of Citrohan house projects from 1920 to 1927, the disposition of sanitary objects in the bathroom plan is made increasingly dynamic. The bathroom also obtains a free form, responding to the free disposition of sanitary objects and also to their free forms produced by anonymous industries. Through *Mariage d'objets par un même contour commun*, the pictorial technique of Purism is applied. The form of the bathroom wall converges with the outline of a commercial bathtub, for example in the Weissenhof house of the Citrohan type or in the Garches house, both constructed in 1927.

The bathroom of Le Corbusier is similar to the space for the exposition of *objets trouvés*. The best example is given by the villa Savoye (1929). Left open completely, its bathroom invites a look inside completely and appreciation of the sculptural quality of its objects under light. The washbasin, lonely and exposed in the vestibule of the villa, shows another interesting operation. The sanitary object is removed from its place of daily intimacy and put into another place, clearly more public. This process enables all spaces of the house to be transformed into a potential museum. Both architectural and artistic, the exhibition of the architect is not only appreciated by the visitors of his architectural works, but also by the readers of his written publications, through his photographic reproductions *mise-en-scène*.

### ALCUNI DEI MIEI PROGETTI, AN UNPUBLISHED BOOK BY ALDO ROSSI

Victoriano Sainz Gutiérrez

The paper reports on the discovery of an unpublished book by Aldo Rossi, which original is kept at the MAXXI archive in Rome. This manuscript, written during the 1970's, belongs to the long-awaited book on the analogous architecture, of which the Milanese architect talked frequently in this years and tried to publish in Buenos Aires towards the end of this decade, with Mario Gandelsonas's help. Without changing his structure, the book named *The Analogous City* in a beginning at the end was titled *Some of my Projects*.

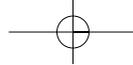
The writing process of this book is complex. The first plan goes back to 1970; two years later, at 1972, Rossi promised to bring it out in a collection directed by Massimo Scolari for the Milanese publishing house Franco Angeli, giving a major boost to the writing. However various circumstances led Rossi at 1975 to give up that editorial project and not picked it up until 1977, after his first journeys to the United States, where Gandelsonas asked him for a book to publish in Buenos Aires. Between 1977 and 1978 Rossi finished to write the book and sent it to the Argentinian publisher Nueva Vision. But again there were difficulties and the book was never published.

Examining the content of the manuscript, it realizes that the unpublished *Some of my Projects* is on the borderline between the two books published by Rossi. The central chapters, dedicated to the problems of urban topography, housing and monuments, go into some topics of *The Architecture of the City* (1966) in any depth from other keys. However the initial chapter on the analogy and the final on the abandon advance some main questions of *A Scientific Autobiography* (1981), that Rossi had stated in his lessons and lectures of the first half of the 1970's.

### JAVIER CARVAJAL, IN MEMORIAM

José Manuel Pozo

Javier Carvajal Ferrer passed away on June 14, 2013. He had been chair of the Design Department at the Architecture School of Navarra University for over twenty years. In *Ra's* last issue we published an article about the First Carvajal Prize, created by



Navarra University's Architecture School to honor the excellence in teaching and the defense of Architecture, awarded to Kenneth Frampton.

In this number of *Ra* it seems compulsory to mention two other important events regarding Javier Carvajal that occurred this year. In the first place, the award of the Architecture Gold Medal, on March 20, 2013, a few days before his death. His son Javier Carvajal collected the prize in his name, awarded by the Consejo Superior de Colegios de Arquitectos de España as an award acknowledging his lifetime accomplishments in favor of Spanish architecture, regarding his work, writings and conferences, and the different public positions he held.

The second remarkable event is the transfer of his remains after his death, which happened in Madrid, to Rome, to be buried at the Spanish Vault at the Campo di Verano graveyard, which he designed in 1957. The moving ceremony was attended by his family members and a number of faculty members from the Architecture School of Navarra University. This event properly crowned a lifetime devoted to architecture, acknowledged by the profession and embraced for eternal rest in one of his masterpieces.

Jorge Santayana's phrase: "Christ has made possible for us the glorious liberty of the soul in the Sky" that Carvajal engraved in the vault became an excellent epitaph for himself.

Alberto Campo Baeza prepared two texts corresponding to each event that we publish as the best farewell to Javier Carvajal Ferrer.

