

WHERE IS ARCHITECTURE?

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Where is architecture? That is, probably, one of the most frequent questions within the profession. It is formulated literally or it comes with some variation that does not modify its sense, which is none other than interrogating oneself on our own identity while, in a cunning and deliberate manner, providing most of the times a previously thought answer. It is more ambiguous than a more difficult question of defining –what is architecture?– since few of the answers that have attempted to reply the question along history have successfully done so.

So it happens that prowling around the outskirts of thought, turning to a roundabout of thought, one can reach answers that, although being partial, may satisfy the inquirer, or at least attempt to do so. We should now remember what Antonio de Capmany (*Filosofía de la Elocuencia*, Madrid, 1842 (1777), p. 264) stated about interrogation:

"As a rhetoric figure, it is not a simple question asked to certain people, to ease our doubts, or fulfill our eager curiosity. It is a question asked over and over again directed to reflexion, not to the listener or reader; and not looking for an answer, but a tactical consent, an interior approval, or the admiration of what we are exposing. This figure envelops a certain disguised conviction in the question, assuming a certain persuasion in the audience, since they are expected not to contradict nor feel aversion to the righteousness and confidence of the speakers convictions. The question is thus nothing else than an insinuation not to hail so much as to capture the spirits of the audience, in order to strengthen the evidence with these anticipated acceptance. (...) always coming out successfully providing nerve and vigour to the reasoning".

Therefore where is architecture? seems to be the question that conceptually threads this new issue of *Ra*, *Revista de Arquitectura*.

¿Où en est l'architecture? Is the key question, full of rhetoric that Le Corbusier repeats himself a number of times along his path. As Mark Wigley will recall in the 'The Emperor's New Paint' (*White Walls, Designer Dresses. The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, MIT Press, 2001); this apparently simple question is the one he asks when beginning his career explaining the reasons behind *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (G. Crès et Cie, Paris, 1925) and his theory of the white wall, after which he assures to have "discovered architecture". But we know well that it is not the first nor the last time that Le Corbusier asks that question. And every time this happens, the answer is different, suiting his interests of each moment. In 1927 it will be the theme of an article published in *L'Architecture Vivante*. In this case the answer will be "beyond the machine"; in 1932 in *Croisade, ou le crépuscule des académies* (Crès, Paris, 1933) the answer will be "in the order of the material world", rather than in the "highly decorated monumental buildings promoted by the academy". In 1937 "it will be everywhere" (*Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches*, Plon, Paris, 1937); and in 1957, for example, the question will open the celebrated message to architecture students (*Entretiens avec les étudiants des Ecoles d'Architecture*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1957); and we could go back to the same issue a number of times with different outcomes. Wigley considers the role of the white walls in modern architecture, recalling their superficial, textile and thus visual features linking it with Loos and Semper's arguments, starting with that "deceptively simple" question.

Therefore we should state the same thing about Adolf Loos. Doesn't that question appear in the foundations of all his thought, specially the written one? As Mariano González Presencio unveils in "Loos by Rossi: Tradition and Modernity in *Casabella-Continuità*" the inflection point played by the publication of the article 'Adolf Loos: 1870-1933' in issue 233 of the Italian magazine. That article reconsidered the destiny of the characters' critique while revising the dogmas of modernity in the Italian post war architectural culture allowing for the reconciliation with the foundations of tradition.

Referring to Dimitris Pikionis and his project for the approach paths and connections in the surroundings of the Acropolis started in 1951 and prolonged until 1958, we can find the answer in the artisan's carefulness, the artist's vision, and the architect's ability, as argued by Darío Álvarez in "Landscape as Total Art Work. Dimitris Pikionis and the Acropolis". The refined and exquisite attention, their pictorial, metaphysical, philosophical, and poetic features turn this committed project into a fascinating lecture on 20th century architecture and a magnificent reply for anyone asking themselves "Where is architecture?".

In Lina Bo Bardi's case as presented by Mara Sánchez Llorens in "Borbardian Metamorphosis", we find it in architecture's capacity as cultural driving force agglu-

tative of social needs and public powers. Their different proposals for the city of Sao Paulo between 1958 and 1964 achieved on top of that and a innovative understanding of the urban condition, an equilibrium between landscape and city, a masterly choreography between nature and architecture.

On the other hand, Carlos Montes focuses on Le Corbusier's Journey to the East. In "100 years from the Journey to the East" through some of the letters sent to his tutors, some photographs, and above all, his journey sketches, he argues the change in graphic procedures, its finalist and practical character, far from the refined manners of the first and closer to the architect's specific interests. In Le Corbusier's own words, "Drawing, tracing lines, composing volumes, organizing surfaces..., all these requires to look first, observe afterwards and finally perhaps discover". Perhaps discover where does architecture lie.

In *Cos'è l'architettura* from 1961 Giancarlo de Carlo provides an answer based in the correspondance between buildings and social groups, and the influence that these exert upon the community, the private and the public realm, what has in short been defined as architectural structuralism. Federico Bilò presents in "Modular / Accumulative / Combinatory. Giancarlo de Carlo's Project for the Marine Colony in Classe (RA)" a lesser known unbuilt project of the same year. And the question titling the architect's lecture a year earlier is the favourable occasion to determine the reasons for his routine.

Where is architecture? might also be the fundamental question blended with a personal quest that some foreign architects found answer for in postwar Spain. Juan Miguel Ochotorena and Héctor García-Diego explore in "Enclave, Vantage point and Goal. Houses of Foreign Architects living in Spain in the third quarter of the 20th century" the peculiar phenomenon of a number of foreign architects establishing themselves, during the same time and in most cases after a trip, and building a house for themselves in a recurrently mythicized country with intense and singular connotations.

In Sung-Taeg Nam's article the question obtains slightly different shades, but absolutely complementary. Following Stanford Anderson's article published in issue number 12 of *Ra*, *Revista de Arquitectura*, 2010, the questioning of the validity of decorative arts in front of the rise of industrial design centers the debate started at the beginning of the 20th century based on every day objects in general and the electric light in particular. In "Designing the Electric Light or Decorative art versus *Ready Made*" the artistic condition of the phenomenon, its production closer to Duchamp's *ready made* is argued above this known confrontation and decisive change.

And we are not pushing it too far if we propose the same question as the theme for José Manuel Pozo's article "Architecture between East and West. On modern European Abstraction" where a risky but possible theory about the oriental influence as one of the foundations for the path towards abstraction engaged by last century's architecture.

As we won't push it too far either if –although "Young Latinamerican Architecture Panorama. II Latin-American Architecture Biennial BAL 2011 in Pamplona" is Rubén A. Alcolea's chronicle of what happened in such event– the title and the activity itself might imply another possible answer for the same question.

In short, these key question is and will be repeated many times and so will the answers. Let's summon up with these two:

In 1960 Mies published an article in the magazine *Bauen und Wohnen* (n. 11, p. 395) titled 'Wohin gehen wir nun?' (Where are we headed?) The master answered the question posed by students, architects, and interested outsiders: "Undoubtedly it is not necessary, nor possible, to invent a new architecture every Monday morning (...) Only by carrying out our profession in a proper manner we will build a correct foundation for the future".

And again Le Corbusier. Endless. In August 1965, few weeks before dying he wrote a letter from Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, something close to his will.

In 'Mise au point' we read what could well be an answer to the question: "I am 77 years old and my morale can be summarized like this: in life it is necessary to do. That is, work in modesty, exactitude, and precision. The only atmosphere suitable for artistic creation is regularity, modesty, continuity, and perseverance".

THE EMPEROR'S NEW PAINT

Mark Wigley

In 1959 Le Corbusier added a preface to his lesser-known *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* of 1925, in which he had introduced his theory of the white wall. It describes the book as the result of an extended inquiry that began at the very beginning of his career with the deceptively simple question "*Where is architecture?*". Whatever the white wall is, it plays some kind of role in determining the place of architecture itself, how it is placed before it places, how it inhabits culture before culture inhabits it, how it is itself housed. Far from a new finish on an old structure, the white wall is presented as a rethinking of the very identity of architecture. *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* has to be understood in terms of the long institutional history that prescribes where architecture can be seen, what kind of vision is required, and who sees. This tradition presupposes that the fundamental experience of architecture is visual, that architecture is a "visual art". It locates architecture in the visual field before locating it in any particular site. Le Corbusier's text engages with this tradition and revises some of its fundamental assumptions. Architecture is no longer simply a visual object with certain properties. It is actually involved in the construction of the visual before it is placed within the visual. Indeed, vision itself becomes an architectural phenomenon. The place of architecture becomes much more complicated. A building can no longer be separated from the gaze that appears to be directed at it. Before having a certain look, the building is a certain way of looking. The white wall is intended to radically transform the status of building by transforming the condition of visibility itself. The seemingly simple idea that modern architecture should be white answers the question "where is architecture" in a way that reconfigures the limits and operations of architectural discourse. Le Corbusier's small book has a big role.

L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui examines the objects of contemporary everyday life, condemning those that have ornate decoration and praising those without it. The lie of decoration is that it is added to objects as a kind of mask. It is a form of "disguise", a representational layer inserted between the new reality of the modern object that results from modern techniques of production and the new reality of modern life that those techniques make possible. Misrepresenting both, it produces historical and spatial alienation by sustaining a nostalgic fantasy in the face of modernity. Like so many everyday objects, architecture has to discard the representational debris that clutters the surface of its structures and distracts the eye from modernity.

This erasure of decoration is portrayed as the necessary gesture of a civilized society. Indeed, civilization is defined as the elimination of the "superfluous" in favor of the "essential" and the paradigm of inessential surplus is decoration. Its removal liberates a new visual order. Echoing an argument at least as old as Western philosophy, Le Corbusier describes civilization as a gradual passage from the sensual to the intellectual, from the tactile to the visual. Decoration's "caresses of the senses" are progressively abandoned in favor of the visual harmony of proportion. The materiality of representation appears to be abandoned in favor of the immateriality of clear vision. The eye finally transcends the body that props it up. Sensuality is conquered by reason. Or so it seems. Upon closer reading, Le Corbusier's text is far from straightforward. It cannily subverts the very tradition it appears to be echoing and, in so doing, disturbs the place of architecture.

THE LOOK OF MODERNITY

The rejection of decoration in favor of the cultivated eye is explicitly understood as a form of purification. The argument culminates with the chapter entitled "A Coat of Whitewash: The Law of Ripolin", which advocates replacing the degenerate layer of decoration that lines buildings with a coat of whitewash. Whitewash liberates visibility. It is a form of architectural hygiene to be carried out in the name of visible truth: "His home is made clean. There are no more dirty, dark corners. *Everything is shown as it is*". The true status of the object is exposed. Cleansed of its representational masks, it is simply present in its pure state, transparent to the viewer: "Law of Ripolin, Coat of Whitewash: elimination of the equivocal. Concentration of intention on its proper object. Attention concentrated on the object. An object is held to be made only out of necessity, for a specific purpose, and to be made with perfection". The look of modernity is that of utility perfected, function without excess, the smooth object cleansed of all representational texture. The apparent consequence of this argument is tacitly rehearsed within the traditional interpretation of Le Corbusier's early work. His villas are read repeatedly in terms of a visual logic of transparency to structure

and function, an abstract architecture that engages with the age of the machine. But, surprisingly, the polemical whiteness of the villas is not examined as such. It is taken for granted. The buildings are understood as objects, machines to be looked at, inhabited by a viewer who is detached from them, inhabited precisely by being looked at, whether it be by the user, visitor, neighbor, critic, or reader of architectural publications. The whitewash is tacitly understood as part of the look but so fundamental a part that it does not even have to be pointed out. Le Corbusier's elaborate arguments about the relationship between the white surface and the very act of looking, arguments that allow him to speculate about the unique status of architecture in industrialized society, are not examined⁴. The capacity for whitewash to rethink the fundamental definition of architecture is ignored. To say the least, the obvious tension between the opaqueness of the white surface and the supposed transparency of modern architecture is not problematized. Precisely by being made part of a look, the white wall is looked through. This privileging of the look seems to be supported by Le Corbusier's writing, which everywhere appears to privilege the visual. But the nature of that look and that privilege is not examined. The theory of the white surface is rendered as transparent to the critics as they imagine the surface to be. The critics have Le Corbusier's famous "eyes that do not see". But why is it necessary for the whiteness to be ignored by the manufacturers of the canon? What is preserved by this strategic blindness?

Clearly, Le Corbusier's argument has to be understood in terms of the central role of whiteness in the extended history of the concept of cleanliness. Modern architecture joins the doctor's white coat, the white tiles of the bathroom, the white walls of the hospital, and so on. Yet the argument is not about hygiene per se. It is about a certain look of cleanliness. Or, more precisely, a cleansing of the look, a hygiene of vision itself. Whitewash purifies the eye rather than the building. Indeed, it reveals the central role of vision in hygiene. After all, the "clean" white surface is not such a simple thing.

The white surfaces that traditionally mark cleanliness do just that, they mark rather than effect it. The whiteness of supposedly hygienic spaces originated with the garments and cosmetic powders that were periodically changed in order to take the sweat of the body out of sight but not to remove it. Putting on a new white shirt was equivalent to taking a bath. As Georges Vigarello argues: "it was the treatment of clothes which, from the sixteenth century, created a new physical space for cleanliness... the whiteness and renewal of linen took the place of cleaning the skin"⁵. The linen garments that were once hidden beneath layers of clothing slowly came to the surface to represent the condition of the body that they no longer even touch. The ideal of cleanliness that Le Corbusier appeals to originated as a style of clothing and a certain attitude toward clothing in general. It established a social order rather than a physical one. Even when laws were passed that controlled the amount of ornamentation on clothing, the white fabric was able to articulate levels of social distinction. Cleanliness was the visual effect that marked one's membership of a social class rather than the state of one's body. The book of hygiene was a kind of label that classifies the person who wears it⁶.

Eventually, the cleaning of clothes would be supplemented by the cleaning of the body. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, a concern developed for what was "behind appearance which could call into question the long relationship between cleanliness and dress, imposing on clothes other criteria than simply those of show. Surfaces and perfumes could no longer stand alone"⁷. The mere look of white was no longer the guarantee of hygiene. Bathing became the rule, a social statement. But still, the whole economy of hygiene remains fundamentally visual rather than sensual. More precisely, it is all about bracketing the sensual out in favor of the visual. When white fabrics came to the surface of the outfit, they challenged the logic of the visible, complicating the traditional economy of vision by carving out a new kind of space⁸. The white surface "erects a screen" between the body and the onlooker, interrupting the eye's attempt to grasp the body. It brackets the body out. But, at the same time, it forces the body into the imaginary by advertising an inaccessible domain. The idea of the body is sustained without any sensory information being provided about the particular body being imagined. What distinguishes the white fabric from the forms of clothing that it displaced is the way it raises the question of the body that it conceals, hovering somewhere between revealing and concealing. The sensuousness of the surface has been reduced to a minimum in order for the general condition of the sensual world to be tested. In other words, it plays a crucial part in the very constitution of the category of the sensual that it appears to bracket out. The thin white

garment produces the image of a physical body behind it, but it is a body that did not exist as such before⁹. Previously, the surfaces of a person's clothing had the role of their body. The white shirt opened up a gap between the body and its clothes. Despite being nothing more than a certain kind of image, its surface raises the question of a physical domain beyond images and, in so doing, defines a new kind of space. Indeed, it starts to redefine the very condition of space. As Vigarello puts it, the history of the concept of cleanliness "consists, in the last analysis, of one dominant theme: the establishment, in western society, of a self-sufficient physical sphere, its enlargement, and the reinforcement of its frontiers, to the point of excluding the gaze of others"¹⁰. Whiteness plays a key role in the constitution of space, understood in terms of such an institutionally loaded economy of vision.

Likewise, Le Corbusier's arguments about whitewash are arguments about visibility that reconfigure traditional assumptions about sensuality and space. In appealing to the look of hygiene, he appeals to the enigmatic operations of the white shirt. The white wall, like the white shirt, institutes the very distinction it appears to merely demarcate, carving out a space that was not there before. The white surface does not simply clean a space, or even give the impression of clean space. Rather, it constructs a new kind of space. Or, at least, it restores the kind of space that was supposedly erased by the overly sensual decorative interiors and facades of nineteenth-century architecture. Such ornamental schemes block the fantasy of a body behind them and even the sense of a discrete body in front of them. The body of the building and the body of the observer disappear into the sensuous excesses of decoration. To look at decoration is to be absorbed by it. Vision itself is swallowed by the sensuous surface. The white surface liberates the eye by reconstituting the idea of a body hidden behind it, recovering a sense of space that has been lost. For Le Corbusier, the look of whitewash is not simply the look of modernity. Although he repeatedly employs the white walls of a transatlantic liner as a model for architecture, whitewash is not the mark of the industrialized twentieth century but of civilization as such:

Whitewash exists wherever people have preserved intact the balanced structure of a harmonious culture. Once an extraneous element opposed to the harmony of the system has been introduced, whitewash disappears... Whitewash has been associated with human habitation since the birth of mankind. Stones are burnt, crushed and thinned with water—and the walls take on the purest white, an extraordinarily beautiful white¹¹.

The collapse of authentic folk culture caused by the intrusion of foreign practices is marked by the loss of whitewash. It is the global dissemination of inauthentic forms through the new channels of communication (trains, planes, movies, magazines, and so on) that has peeled off all the white surfaces and fostered a degeneration into the sensuous excesses of decoration. But the white walls of the ocean liner mark the maturing of the very industrial culture that was once responsible for "brutally driving out" vernacular whitewash. It is the status of the object in the twentieth century that is new, not its coating with whitewash. Modernity is able to recover the purity of the ancient cultures it has desecrated, restoring the white surfaces it has graffitied. The neutrality of whitewash is more historical than formal.

Even then, it is not a passive neutrality. The whitewash is not simply what is left behind after the removal of decoration. It is the active mechanism of erasure. Rather than a clean surface, it is a cleaning agent, cleaning the image of the body in order to liberate the eye. The whitewash makes the objects of everyday life visible as any impurity, any decorative excess, would leave a "stain" on its surface: "On white ripolin walls these accretions of dead things from the past would be intolerable: they would leave a stain. Whereas the stains do not show on the medley of our damasks and patterned wallpapers... If the house is all white, the outline of things stands out from it without any possibility of transgression; their volume shows clearly; their color is distinct"¹². More than just the appropriate setting for the look (a "neutral" background, like a gallery wall), and even more than the active removal of distractions from the eye, the whitewash is itself an eye: "Put on it anything dishonest or in bad taste—it hits you in the eye. It is rather like an X-ray of beauty. It is a court of assize in permanent session. It is the eye of truth"¹³. It is not simply the look of cleanliness but a cleaning of the look, a focusing of the eye. Not a machine for looking at but a machine for looking.

But does this viewing mechanism only focus on the supplements of building: objects and people located inside, outside, or on its surfaces? What happens when it catches the building itself in its own look? What does it see in architecture? Exactly what

qualities of architecture does it expose? Can all the stains be removed without destroying the fabric?

THE CLOTHING OF SPACE

Le Corbusier's privileging of white clearly draws from his own experience of vernacular whitewash. At the end of the long tour through the East that he began at the end of 1910, he describes his new found love of white in a letter to his friend William Ritter: "In their crazy course, red, blue and yellow have become white. I am crazy about the color white, the cube, the sphere, the cylinder and the pyramid and the disc all united and the great empty expanse"¹⁴.

Not by chance does the preface of *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui*, whose examples are so often taken from this tour, refer to it as the critical moment in which he finally "discovered architecture" in response to his "unceasingly" asked question "*Where is architecture?*"¹⁵. When he "succumbed to the irresistible attraction of the Mediterranean"¹⁶, as he puts it, this attraction had everything to do with all the white walls whose "brilliant", "delicious", "dazzle" he repeatedly describes. This formative encounter with the white wall was clearly reinforced when his first Purist paintings eight years later were abstractions of whitewashed houses in the French countryside. The architect's appeal to the universal status of white seems to be founded on a highly specific and idiosyncratic set of personal experiences and fantasies.

At the same time, the description of these intense encounters is itself part of a very particular cultural discourse about whitewash that had been ongoing for a long time. This discourse clearly shaped Le Corbusier's accounts of his personal experiences. Indeed, it seems to have initiated and organized those very experiences. The architect's love affair with the whitewashed house is not so much an intimate experience as a social construction with its own history and specific agenda. The generic mythology of the architect as artist-genius tends to transform whitewash from an artifact produced and interpreted by elaborate collective discourses into a primal phenomenon that exceeds all discourse and is experienced personally by a uniquely sensitive individual. This transformation effectively buries the particular investments that are being made in the white wall, whether they be collective or personal. The strategic role of the wall all but disappears in favor of a brief flash of a single image of modern architecture as a simple echo of the supposed purity of the Mediterranean vernacular. Still, we can begin to uncover this role by scrutinizing the sources of Le Corbusier's argument.

The account of civilization as progress from the sensuality of decoration to the abstraction of form through the progressive removal of ornament is, of course, taken from the Viennese architect Adolf Loos's notorious criminalization of ornament: "The lower the culture, the more apparent the ornament. Ornament is something that must be overcome. The Papuan and the criminal ornament their skin... But the bicycle and the steam engine are free of ornament. The march of civilization systematically liberates object after object from ornamentation"¹⁷. Le Corbusier's text appropriates those of Loos much more than its two brief references to Loos indicate¹⁸. In fact, it is everywhere indebted to Loos¹⁹. In Loos's canonic essay "Ornament und Verbrechen" (Ornament and crime) of 1908, which Le Corbusier republished in the second issue of *L'Esprit Nouveau* in 1920, the removal of ornament is a process of purification that ends up with the whitewash: "*The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from objects of daily use... We have outgrown ornament... Soon the streets of the cities will glow like white walls!*"²⁰. This concern with whitewash can be traced throughout Loos's writing. The degeneration of contemporary architecture is repeatedly opposed to the construction of the vernacular house, which, as he puts it in his "Architektur" essay of 1910, concludes when the peasant "makes a large tub of distemper and paints the house a beautiful white"²¹. The aesthetic purity of this traditional gesture is now guaranteed by principles of modern hygiene. As with Le Corbusier, the whitewash is seen as at once the mark of modernity and tradition. Indeed, as Stanislaus von Moos points out, Le Corbusier was already extensively quoting from this very essay in 1913 without acknowledging the source, and *L'Esprit Nouveau* advertised that it would publish it although it never did²². Consequently, Le Corbusier's "Law of Ripolin" needs to be understood in a conceptual context that undermines the assumptions that organize the architectural discourse that neglects it.

In my view, the "Law of Ripolin" of 1925 is a specific reference to the "Law of Dressing" [*Gesetz der Bekleidung*] that Adolf Loos formulates in 1898. In so doing,

Loos legislates against any “confusion” between a material and its dressing. Dressings must not simulate the materials they cover. They must only “reveal clearly their own meaning as dressing for the wall surface”²³, identifying their detachment from a structure without identifying that structure. The outer layer of a building must be understood as an accessory without revealing that which it accessorizes. Loos does not simply advocate the removal of decoration in order to reveal the material condition of the building as an object. What is revealed is precisely the accessory as such, neither structure nor decoration. The perception of a building becomes the perception of its accessories, its layer of cladding.

The privilege of the whitewash is bound to this idea that the perception of architecture is the perception of a layer of dressing that dissimulates the structure it is added to, a layer that can be as thin as a coat of paint. Indeed, for Loos, the coat of paint is the paradigm. The “Law of Dressing” emerges alongside a reading of the traditional whitewashed wall. The argument turns on an anecdote about the perception of the difference between a window frame that has been stained and one that is painted white. The twentieth-century invention of wood staining is opposed to the peasant tradition in which pure colors are set against the “freshly whitewashed wall”. The transparency of the stain is dismissed in favor of the opaque mask of white paint:

“wood may be painted any color except one –the color of wood”²⁴. Le Corbusier’s argument has to be rethought in terms of a nineteenth-century logic of veiling rather than one of transparency.

Furthermore, Loos’s “Law of Dressing” is, in turn, a specific reference to the “Principle of Dressing” [*Prinzip der Bekleidung*] formulated in the mid-nineteenth century by the German architect Gottfried Semper. Semper defines the essence of architecture as its covering layer rather than its material structure. This definition involves a fundamental transformation of the account of the origin of architecture on which so much of traditional architectural discourse tacitly or explicitly bases itself. Architecture is no longer seen to originate in the construction of material protection, a simple wooden shelter that is later supplemented and represented by successive ornamental traditions –such that ornament is always representative of, and subordinate to, the original structure. The story of architecture is no longer one of naked structures gradually dressed with ornament: “rather, it was with all the simplicity of its basic forms highly decorated and glittering from the start, since its childhood”²⁵. Architecture begins with ornament. It is not just that the architecture of a building is to be found in the decoration of its structure. Strictly speaking, it is only the decoration that is structural. There is no building without decoration. It is decoration that builds.

For Semper, building originated with the use of woven fabrics to define social space, specifically, the space of domesticity. But the textiles were not simply placed within space to define a certain interiority. They were not simply arranged on the landscape to divide off a small space that could be occupied by a particular family. Rather, they are the production of space itself, launching the very idea of occupation. Weaving was used “as a means to make the ‘home’, the *inner life* separated from the *outer life*, and as the formal creation of the idea of space”²⁶. Housing is an effect of decoration then. It is not that the fabrics are arranged in a way that provides physical shelter. Rather, their texture, their sensuous play, their textuality, like that of the languages that Semper studied, opens up a space of exchange. The decorative weave produces the very idea of a family that might occupy it, in the same way that a language produces the idea of a group that might speak it. Space, house, and social structure arrive with ornament. The interior is not defined by a continuous enclosure of walls but by the folds, twists, and turns in an often discontinuous ornamental surface.

This primordial definition of inside and, therefore, for the first time, outside, with textiles not only precedes the construction of solid walls but continues to organize the building when such construction begins. Solid structure follows, and is subordinate to, what appear to be merely its accessories:

Hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for security, for supporting a load, for their permanence and so on. Wherever the need for these secondary functions did not arise, the carpets remained the original means of separating space. Even where building solid walls became necessary, the latter were only the inner, invisible structure hidden behind the true and legitimate representatives of the wall, the colorful woven carpets²⁷.

The textile is a mask that dissimulates rather than represents the structure. The material wall is no more than a prop, a contingent piece of “scaffolding” that is “foreign” to the production of the building, merely a supporting player, playing the role of support, supporting precisely because it does not play. Architecture is located within the play of signs. Space is produced within the sensuality of language. As its origin is dissimulation, its essence is no longer construction but the masking of construction. Just as the institution of the family is made possible through the production of domestic space with a woven mask, the larger community is made possible through the production of public space through masquerade. Public buildings, in the form of monumental architecture, are seen to derive from the fixing in one place of the once mobile “improvised scaffolding” on which hung the patterned fabrics and decorations of the festivals that defined social life. The space of the public is that of those signs. Architecture literally clothes the body politic. Buildings are worn rather than simply occupied.

Semper identifies the textile essence of architecture, the dissimulating fabric, the fabrication of architecture, with the clothing of the body. His monumental treatise *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Aesthetik* (Style in the technical and tectonic arts or practical aesthetics) of 1860 draws on the identity between the German words for wall [*Wand*] and dress [*Gewand*] to establish the “Principle of Dressing” as the “true essence” of architecture. The chapter entitled “Correlation of Costume with Architecture” explains the “intimate” relationship between clothing and the arts and demonstrates the “direct influence” of developments in clothing on developments in the arts. But architecture does not follow or resemble clothing. On the contrary, clothing follows architecture. The definition of domestic interiority precedes the definition of the interiority of the body²⁸. The clothing of the individual follows the clothing of the family. The body is only defined by being covered in the face of language, the surrogate skin of the building. The evolution of skin, the surface with which spatiality is produced, is the evolution of the social. The social subject, like the body with which it is associated, is a product of decorative surfaces. The idea of the individual can only emerge within language. Interiority is not simply physical. It is a social effect marked on the newly constituted body of the individual. Culture does not precede its masks. It is no more than masking. In a footnote to his treatise, Semper argues that the highest art form is not that which detaches itself from the primitive use of decorative masks but that which most successfully develops that practice by dissimulating even the mechanisms of dissimulation:

I think that the *dressing* and the *mask* are as old as human civilization... The denial of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous creation of man. Let us make forgotten the means that need be used for the desired artistic effect and not proclaim them loudly, thus missing our part miserably. The untainted feeling led primitive man to the denial of reality in all early artistic endeavors; the great, true masters of art in every field returned to it –only these men in times of high artistic development also *masked the material of the mask*²⁹.

The subordination and dissimulation of material does not imply ignorance or disregard of material³⁰. On the contrary, it is the “mastery” of material. Materiality is hidden by being mastered. Only through a detailed understanding of the construction can it be effaced –reduced to an invisible prop. The most sophisticated technical control is required in order that the technical world can give way to the weave of ornament³¹.

Repeatedly identifying architecture with clothing, Loos follows Semper’s arguments closely³². This is nowhere more explicit than when he formulates the “Law of Dressing” in his 1898 essay “Das Prinzip der Bekleidung” (The principle of dressing) in which architecture emerges from textiles and structure is but the scaffolding added to hold them up:

The architect’s general task is to provide a warm and livable space. Carpets are warm and livable. He decides for this reason to spread out one carpet on the floor and to hang up four to form the four walls. But you cannot build a house out of carpets. Both the carpet on the floor and the tapestry on the wall require a structural frame to hold them in the correct place. To invent this frame is the architect’s second task.

This is the correct and logical path to be followed in architecture. It was in this sequence that mankind learned how to build. In the beginning was dressing³³.

The textile masks the structure but does not misrepresent it. It hides the building but does not disguise it. Following Semper, Loos is against lying. The dressing dissimulates in the name of truth. It must register its Independence without identifying that from which it is independent. Materials organize forms but the material of the dress-

ing is different from that of construction, and the form of a building is only produced by its cladding. The structural prop is not revealed, even as prop.

In paying attention to the layer of paint, Loos continues to follow Semper, whose whole argument turns on the status of a coat of paint. Semper produces a history of paint within which the addition of a coat of paint to the surface of building is the way in which the original textile tradition was maintained in the age of solid construction. In this way, architecture, the “mother art”, gives birth to the art of painting. This simulated textile, the painted text, becomes at once the new social language, the contemporary system of communication, and the new means by which space is constructed. Architecture is literally in the layer of paint that sustains the masquerade in the face of the new solidity because it is “the subtlest, most bodiless coating. It was the most perfect means to do away with reality, for while it dressed the material, it was itself immaterial”³⁴. Semper explicitly opposes the hegemonic tradition of the white ‘surface, whether it be the practice of white buildings that he argues was instigated by Brunelleschi (in whose work “we find for the first time an unpainted, naked architecture”³⁵) or in art history’s adoration of the white surface, which he identifies with Winckelmann’s influential writing. For him, everything has to do with color. It is the color of the paint that keeps the weave of the carpet alive, substituting the painting of walls for the dyeing of fabrics.

Semper’s argument was based on the emerging archeological evidence that the ancient buildings of antiquity only appeared to be “naked” white stone because their layers of colored paint had been weathered off, including his own findings at the Parthenon. He interpreted this in a way that undermined the status of the building’s structure to that of a mere prop for the layer of paint, arguing that white marble was only used by the Greeks precisely because it was a better “base material” for painting on. The marble is transformed from the traditional paradigm of authenticity into a “natural stucco”, a smooth surface on which to paint. Its smoothness is no longer identified with the purity of its forms, but as the possibility for a certain texture. Architecture is no longer the decoration of a naked structure. The sense of the naked is only produced within the supplementary layer itself. The body of the building never becomes visible, even where it coincides with the decorative layer. The places “where the monument was supposed to appear white were by no means left bare, but were covered with a white paint”³⁶. All differences are literally inscribed in the surface.

Loos develops the “Principle of Dressing” into the “Law of Dressing” by prohibiting any coincidence between the structure and its cladding. While this has the specific consequence of disassociating whiteness and structure, the general purpose of Loos’s law is to keep the naked-clothed distinction within the textual economy sustained by the layer of paint rather than between the layer and its prop. It is this agenda that organizes most of his arguments.

While his demands for the removal of ornament and the purification of the sensual in the name of whitewash appear to be a rejection of Semper’s privileging of ornament, they are in fact the maintenance of it. The whitewash is the extreme condition, the test case, of Semper’s argument. Loos is not simply arguing for the abolition of ornament but for collapsing the distinction between structure and ornament into the layer of cladding, a layer between structure and ornament within which all distinctions are produced by being inscribed into the surface.

PROSTHETIC FABRICATIONS

But what of the suggestion that Le Corbusier transforms the “Law of Dressing” into the “Law of Ripolin”, in which there is no explicit rehearsal of Semper’s argument? Indeed, it appears to be set up in direct opposition to Semper. Le Corbusier’s whitewash removes precisely those accessories that Semper identifies as the essence of architecture: “Imagine the results of the Law of Ripolin. Every citizen is required to replace his hangings, his damasks, his wall-papers, his stencils, with a plain coat of white ripolin”³⁷. The textile tradition seems to be abandoned. Surface texture is erased. Indeed, decoration has to be removed precisely because it “clothes” the smooth modern object. Decoration is repeatedly described as clothing to be discarded in the name of the naked truth. While Semper locates architecture in the supplementary layer, whitewash supposedly purifies architecture by eliminating the “superfluous” in favor of the “essential”. Le Corbusier’s infamous *Vers une architecture* (Towards an architecture) of 1923 had already argued that the culture it promotes is one of “rejection, pruning, cleansing; the clear and naked emergence of the

Essential”³⁸. For civilization to progress from the sensual to the visual, the sensuality of clothes has to be removed to reveal the formal outline, the visual proportion, of the functional body.

But the body cannot be completely naked as that would be to return to the very realm of the sensual that has been abandoned. There is a need for some kind of screen that remodels the body as formal proportion rather than sensual animal, a veil with neither the sensuality of decoration nor the sensuality of the body. The whitewash is inserted between two threats in order to transform body into form. Folklore begins with “man naked, dressing himself”³⁹. The modern savage is not naked. On the contrary, purification results in the “well-cut suit”:

Decoration is of a sensorial and elementary order, as is color, and is suited to simple races, peasants and savages... The peasant loves ornament and decorates his walls. The civilized man wears a well-cut suit and is the owner of easel pictures and books.

Decoration is the essential surplus, the quantum of the peasant; and proportion is the essential surplus, the quantum of the cultivated man⁴⁰.

Le Corbusier identifies modernity with modern clothes. His lists of exemplary modern objects that have been purified of decorative excesses always include clothes. It is not just that the garments form part of such lists. The very act of purification is explained in terms of the cut of a suit. *L’art décoratif d’aujourd’hui* begins by contrasting Louis XIV’s “coiffure of ostrich feathers in red, canary, and pale blue; ermine, silk, brocade and lace; a cane of gold, ebony, ivory, and diamonds” and Lenin’s “bowler hat and a smooth white collar”⁴¹. A photograph of the President of the Republic in a modern suit is symptomatically substituted for one of Lenin. The lists of modern objects almost always begin with clothes⁴². The first item in the museum “that contained everything”, the archive of the twentieth century, is “a plain jacket, a bowler hat, a well-made shoe”⁴³. It is not by chance that the first thing we know of modern man, the first piece of evidence for his elevation from the degenerate realm of the senses into the realm of the visual, is his clothing. Indeed, Le Corbusier seems to suggest that clothes were the first objects of everyday life to lose their decoration: “But at the same time [that household objects were decorated] the railway engines, commerce, calculation, the struggle for precision, put his frills in question, and his clothing tended to become a plain black, or mottled; the bowler hat appeared on the horizon”⁴⁴. Clothing leads the way, acting as the link between the modernization of industrial culture that has already occurred and the modernization of architectural culture that is about to occur.

The clothing being praised here is unambiguously that of a man. The textureless white wall is associated with the generic man’s suit organized around the “smooth white” shirt. Its austerity is tacitly opposed to the seductions of women’s dress. On one double-page spread, Le Corbusier contrasts an image of the ornamented white dress of a famous ballerina to the sheer white walls in an image of an ocean liner from the same year. Her outfit is associated with the ornate interior of the ship. The sinuous motif of the backdrop in the theater is repeated in the ship, rendering its interior as theatrical and suspect as a woman’s dress. On the following spread, the dress of the legendary singer Mistinguette (whose multitude of plumes, like those of Louis XIV, seems to have been plucked from the ostrich pictured in the book’s very first image) is associated with *Art Nouveau architecture*. Not by chance does the text identify *Art Nouveau* with femininity. At one point, it notes that through the dissemination of that architecture in magazines “young ladies became crazy about decorative art”, speculating that this craze would have been enough to kill off the style had it remained the craze of women alone⁴⁵. Indeed, it is precisely after noting that men have also succumbed to the craze of Art Nouveau ornament that the book makes its first call for a “crusade for whitewash”. The white wall emulates the austere men’s suit that holds the seductions of women’s dress at bay and already participates in the modern world that architecture has yet to join.

In fact, clothing is much more than a historical precedent. Le Corbusier’s whole thinking of the modern object is organized in terms of clothes. Objects are understood as “auxiliary limbs”, “artificial limbs”, prosthetic additions “supplementing” the fixed structure of the body. It is symptomatic that Le Corbusier draws on the story of Diogenes, who abandoned all his excesses, his clothing and possessions, and lived in a barrel that he walked around with. The clothing of the naked body with a barrel is cited as “the primordial cell of the house”⁴⁶. It is a model of purification and the fun-

damental identity between clothing and housing. The rejection of decoration is not a rejection of clothing. On the contrary, architecture is clothing. Modern architecture, like all the many sciences of artificial limbs, is a form of tailoring. The role of the artist is transformed: "He chucks up cornices and baldacchinos and makes himself more useful as a cutter in a tailor's shop, with a man standing in front of him and he, metre in hand, taking measurements... Decorative art becomes orthopaedic, an activity that appeals to the imagination, to invention, to skill, but a craft analogous to the tailor: the client is a man, familiar to us all and precisely defined"⁴⁷. Decorative art is the prosthetic "art" of the tailor, an art centered on man, but no humanism. It is a science of the artificial, centered on the imperfect body, the "inadequate", "insufficient" body in need of protection by "supporting limbs".

It is the prosthetic supplements that support the body, not the body that supports the supplements. For Le Corbusier, all useful objects are clothes. The story of whitewash, as the endgame of the story of the modern object, is a story of clothing. The coat of paint is, after all, just that, a coat. It is still a form of dressing, albeit the most simple dress. Sempers argument has not been abandoned. Even without a visible texture, the smooth white surface remains a fabric. We are still in the domain of the textile. Le Corbusier makes a twentieth-century reading of clothes, a displacement of what constitutes clothes rather than a displacement of clothing as such. Hence the central paradox of the text: "*Modern decorative art is not decorated*". Having been stripped of decoration, the white surface itself takes over the space-defining role of decorative art.

It is symptomatic that commentators omit clothing from the list of everyday objects used as models of the "Purist" sensibility that informed Le Corbusier's canonic white villas of the early 1920s. Unlike the other objects, clothes can only be understood as supplements. They make explicit the Purist concern with the perfected supplement that is at odds with the ideal of the authentic, irreducible object transparent to the gaze that is sustained by traditional criticism as a model of modern architecture and sound historiography. The removal of clothes from the picture makes a certain architectural theory possible, a theory that draws on and sustains a millennia I tradition of assumptions that orchestrate a whole regime of cultural biases. This regime, which is codified in the philosophical tradition but drives so much of everyday cultural practice, routinely subordinates clothing as a suspect realm of dissimulation. And yet, for Le Corbusier, it is precisely such a supplement, the simple fabric, that is the possibility of thought itself. "The naked man does not wear an embroidered waistcoat; so the saying goes!... The naked man, once he is fed and housed... and clothed, sets his mind to work... The naked man does not wear an embroidered waistcoat; he wishes to think"⁴⁸. Likewise in modernity, his original clothing, the house, is not embroidered. Its woven surface occupies the space between the new savage body of modern structure and the old seductive body of decoration. The thin opaque layer of whitewash masters the body in order to liberate the mind. The discretely clothed object makes pure thought possible by bracketing materiality away.

Le Corbusier systematically inverts his ironic taunt that "for the present we are most certainly not in the agora of the philosophers: we are only dealing with decorative art"⁴⁹. Architecture is more than simply an agent of any particular theory. It is theory's condition of possibility. It is not that a rational theory's ability to detach the superfluous from the essential leaves modernity with simple clothes, the "essential surplus". Rather, the very distinction between superfluous and essential is made possible by those clothes. Indeed, the distinction emerges in the text from a discussion of the simplicity of Diogenes' outfit. Philosophy emerges from the clothing of the philosopher. High theory is made possible by the low art of clothing. It is privately exceeded by that which it publically subordinates. The look of the whitewash is not simply that of traditional metaphysics, where the immaterial eye of reason precedes, scrutinizes, and subordinates the physical world, even though whitewash makes the effect of such a subordination possible. Like the white shirt, the white wall subverts the traditional logic by being neither strictly visual nor strictly sensual, while making that very distinction possible, facilitating the apparent domination of reason over the physical world that it can only elude. Rational thought emerges out of the very thinness of the surface.

It is important to note that although Le Corbusier appeals to reason and the modern techniques for rationalizing the built environment, he does not simply advocate a rational architecture. Indeed, he opposed such an architecture throughout the various shifts in his practice. Reason follows the clothing that is architecture but is not its endpoint. Architecture does not simply subordinate itself to the theoretical order it

makes possible. While the whitewash is responsible for the emergence of the reason that may then be applied to the structure it covers, it does not exhibit the rationality of that structure, nor is it the result of that rationality. The truth made visible by the whitewash is not that of structural materials or construction technology but the truth of modern life. The layer of white paint exposes the "structure" of the "edifice" of modern culture rather than the structure of the edifice it is added to⁵⁰. Le Corbusier is concerned with the relationship between clothes and everyday life rather than that between clothes and the body. He opposes the masking of cultural life but not the masking of the body. Structural conditions are never simply equated with those of everyday life. It is the prosthetic additions to the body that are the possibility of everyday life, not the body itself. The supplementary decorative screen of folk-culture is "the perfect mirror of its people", as he puts it, because it exposes what is in front of it rather than what is propping it up. It reflects the truth of culture rather than that of physical material. Modern man can only exist in harmony with the realities of modern physical life by being isolated from them. The whitewash is a form of defense. It is not an extraordinary addition to everyday life but the representation of the ordinary to a subject increasingly anxious in the face of modernity, dissimulating structure in order that people can feel.

Decoration is not removed in favor of pure structure. The expression of construction is described as but a temporary "fashion" that followed the nineteenth-century separation of decoration from structure and is succeeded by the truly modern concern for straightforward, simple working clothes. For Le Corbusier, construction is mere reason, the rational tool by which man is set free. It is not a thing of interest in itself⁵¹. Indeed, it must be masked with a coat of paint.

This masking is often criticized as a departure from the rigorous theory of modern architecture that violates the critical ideal of transparency to the essential status of a rationalized object. One writer, for example, describes the way Le Corbusier's early villas "masqueraded as white, homogenous, machine-made forms, whereas they were in fact built of concrete block-work held in place by a reinforced concrete frame"⁵², while another argues that in the "white stucco box tradition" of the early work "the feel of the machine-made was more image than reality... all succeeded and painted to try to give it the precision of machine products... traditional buildings decorated to look machine-made... the machine-age image"⁵³. Yet inasmuch as the "Law of Ripolin" translates Sempers "Principle of Dressing", the role of the whitewash is precisely that –masquerade– and the reality of the machine age is precisely the reality of the image. For Le Corbusier, structure can only begin to be exposed when it has been rationalized to the minimum, so reduced that it can only be seen as a subordinate prop. His central principles of the "free plan" and the "free facade" are no more than the attempt to free the building from being "the slave of the structural walls". His buildings are multiple layers of screens suspended in the air. Even where the structure seems to be exposed, it is actually clothed in a layer of paint, purified. Even the bones have skin, a self-effacing skin. Following Loos, the object is, like all modern slaves, a "self-effacing" prosthesis, with an "unassertive presence", marked only by the absence of decoration⁵⁴. But this is not to say that the object is silent. Again, it is clear that the white is not neutral. The "aesthetic of purity" speaks loudly about silence. Purist rather than pure, the building exhibits the look of the naked, the clothing of nakedness, the clothes that say "naked". Nakedness is added and worn as a mask.

In such an account of architecture, construction technology does not simply produce new forms but lighter props for form. Technological progress is the increasing reduction of construction. Structure is but a frame for a skin, a cloth, the clothing of modernity. The house may be a machine but inasmuch as it is architecture, it does not look like one: "Art has no business resembling a machine (the error of *Constructivism*). But the means of art are set free. Illuminated with clarity"⁵⁵. The look of the machine is transformed into the look at art, a new look made possible by the machine. The white coat is a "channelling of our attention only to those things worthy of it"⁵⁶. It is actually a way of looking away from the structure toward art: "In this mechanical, discreet, silent, attentive comfort, there is a very fine painting on the wall"⁵⁷. Suspended in the void between structure and decoration, the whitewash is a new, strange ground, a floating "platform", as Le Corbusier puts it, on which objects "stand out" as either artistic or utilitarian. The look of the whitewash splits the incoming gaze into the utilitarian look of rational theory and the seemingly disinterested aesthetic gaze. It organizes the eye, classifying objects and presenting them to the appropriate view. The

inhabitant of white architecture becomes a discriminating viewer, exercising a newly found sense of judgment. If, following Semper, to occupy a building is to wear it, then to wear a modern building is to wear a new set of eyes.

Le Corbusier repeatedly separates utility from aesthetics and prohibits any “confusion” by placing them in a vertical hierarchy in which art subordinates rational utility. Utilitarian objects are the “platform of art” and reason is the “support” of aesthetics, but support in the Semperian sense, a supplementary prop that comes after, and is subordinate to, that which it holds up: “Even before the formulation of a theory, the emotion leading to action can be felt: theory later gives support to sentiment in a variety of seemingly incontrovertible ways”⁵⁸. Rational theory is organized by and for the emotional realm of art. The whitewash does not bracket materiality in order to simply construct a space of pure rationalization. It screens off the object in order to make a space for art, which necessarily employs theory as a prop. It literally frees an eye for art.

But what is the status of this look that precedes that of rational theory? Is the “detachment”, “disinterest”, and “distance” from materiality that the whitewash produces simply that of the traditional aesthete? Exactly what is it to look at the white wall?

It must be recalled that Semper’s argument is explicitly set up in opposition to the account of architecture sustained by the philosophy of art. Aesthetics is seen to subordinate art by isolating it in a discrete field. For Semper, art and philosophy belonged together in antiquity. Indeed “philosophy was, as it were, an artist itself”⁵⁹. But it detaches itself from art by subjecting artistic practices to a regime of alien categories that all follow from an original split of the art-object from its accessories⁶⁰. The isolation of accessories leads to the isolation of all the arts from the rest of culture and from each other. Theory presents itself as the adjudicator of what is essential and what is accessory. Art is rendered into an accessory, then that accessory is itself divided into essential and accessory arts, then each of those is divided into essential and accessory elements, and so on. Semper argues that this suspect regime of endlessly spiraling judgments was actually put in place by an original division of architecture into fundamental material structure and merely contingent accessories, a division that entraps it: “In ancient and modern times the store of architectural forms has often been portrayed as mainly conditioned by and arising from the material, yet by regarding construction as the essence of architecture we, while believing to liberate it from false accessories, have thus placed it in fetters”⁶¹. Ironically, the structure of a building acts as the model for the subordination of accessories, but within the newly subordinated domain of art the accessories that were detached from that structure (like the wall paintings that took over the original space-defining role of the wall hangings but were then detached from the wall to become framed paintings) are elevated into “high” arts. Hence architecture’s “organizing and at the same time subordinate role” in the “household of the arts”⁶². The philosophical regime is based on the control of architecture. Theory is liberated by confining architecture to a single place.

Throughout his writings, Semper opposes the attempt to locate architecture in a particular place that is made possible by the original distinction between structure and decoration. His strategy is to invert the distinction between high art and low art that follows from it⁶³. The treatise opposes “the perversity of modern artistic conditions, according to which a wide gap, unknown to the Greeks, separates the so-called small arts from the so-called high arts”⁶⁴. While the philosophical tradition employs the architectonic image of a decorated structure to subordinate craft as merely “applied”, Semper counters that craft is not applied art. It is neither applied to something nor has it been detached from something else. Craft begins with weaving that simply originates as building⁶⁵. It precedes the structure on which it might be propped, and all the other crafts emerge out of it. Semper bases his theory of architecture on these “low” decorative arts rather than the monumental “high” arts. In so doing, he inverts the traditional architectonic, subordinating structure to decoration by demonstrating that the “false” accessories are actually the “true” essence of architecture.

This inversion necessarily distorts the traditional economy of vision based upon a carefully preserved image of architecture in which that which is seen on the outside supposedly articulates, and is subordinate to, some inner truth: “Even where solid walls become necessary they remain only the inner and unseen structure for the true and legitimate representatives of the spatial idea: namely, the more or less artificially woven and ‘seamed-together, textile walls... the *visible* spatial enclosure”⁶⁶. The truth of architecture is now located in its visible outside rather than its hidden interior. The Roman substitution of unpainted colored materials for the Greek use of colored paint,

which lets the material “speak for itself”, is condemned as a loss of the Greek “conviction... that inner content should conform to outer beauty”⁶⁷, rather than the other way around. The inside submits to the authority of the outside. Indeed, the inside is at most an extension or effect of the exterior surface. The “true” wall is its visible “artificial” surface. The “invisible” structure is secondary. Everything is reversed to the extent that “naked architecture”, the absence of a coat of paint, is described as a “disguise”. Everything is in the surface. Architecture turns out to be nothing more than texture. To wear a building, by entering it, is to feel its weave. More precisely, to feel the surface is to enter. Occupying a space does not involve passing through some kind of opening in the surface, like a door, to find an interior. To occupy is to wrap yourself in the sensuous surface.

Architecture is to be found in the sensuous play of surfaces rather than the lines that seem to mark the limits of those surfaces. While traditional discourse subordinates ornament and then, within ornament itself, subordinates color to form, Semper privileges color over form, insisting that it came first before radically complicating the distinction between them and thereby promoting a completely different sense of visibility⁶⁸. In countering aestheticians who argue that applied color “must confuse the forms and pamper the eye”, he argues that the immediately visible condition of the wall “brings the eye back again to the natural way of seeing, which it lost under the sway of that mode of abstraction that knows precisely how to separate the visible and inseparable qualities of bodies, the color from the form”⁶⁹. Once form cannot be separated from color, the institutionally preserved figure of architecture is radically displaced. The seductions of the surface displace the formal proportion worshipped by the institutions of high art, producing a visibility so entangled with a sensuality that cladding materials are analyzed in terms of their feel, their tactility, and smell becomes part of the essence of a building⁷⁰.

The “visible spatial enclosure”, the surface texture that constitutes the architecture of the mask, is produced by this convolution of vision and sensuality⁷¹. Architecture no longer simply occupies the visual. Its sensuality is not screened off by the white surface in the name of an uncontaminated eye. Visibility becomes a construction of necessarily sensuous social transactions and the eye is unable to detach itself from what it sees. For Semper, the social is sensual. The eye feels the colored paint just as the body feels the weave of clothing. Indeed, it is the eye that holds the larger set of clothes that the building is against the body. Far from a disembodied form of perception, the eye anchors the body in space.

It is in the context of this particular displacement of the visual that Le Corbusier’s appropriation of “low” cultural objects like an industrial warehouse, a man’s suit, or a filing cabinet has to be rethought. His convolution of the relationship between the everyday object and the art object disturbs the place of architecture and therefore the visibility it constructs. In the middle of *L’art décoratif d’aujourd’hui*, engineering, which is supposedly the realm of pure structure, is identified as the new decorative art and the book’s original question “where is architecture?” is reformulated: “Can one then speak of the architecture of decorative art, and consider it of permanent value?” Le Corbusier attempts to clarify the question by separating art from decorative art and placing them in a hierarchy.

The Permanent value of decorative art? Let us say more exactly, of the *objects* that surround us. This is where we exercise our judgement first of all the Sistine Chapel, afterwards chairs and filing cabinets; without doubt this is a question of the secondary level, just as the cut of a man’s suit is of secondary importance in his life. Hierarchy. First of all the Sistine Chapel, that is to say works truly etched with passion. Afterwards machines for sitting in, for filing, for lighting, type-machines, the problem of purification, of cleanliness, of precision, before the problem of poetry⁷².

The generic type-form of standardized objects is subordinated to the individual artwork. While the prosthetic type-form is universal, and makes available a new way of life by extending the body in new ways, it can be outdated by a new type, thrown away in favor of ever greater extensions. But the artwork made possible by a particular set of type objects in a particular time and place is permanent.

As in the aesthetic tradition, art is supported on the utilitarian objects that come “before” it but remain secondary to the disinterested eye. Art is the supplement of the supplement. It decorates the type-objects that decorate the body. The tension between art and decorative art is actually between two kinds of decoration, two kinds of clothing-or, more precisely, between two layers of clothing. While the model of decorative art is yet again “the cut of a man’s jacket”, the model for art, the Sistine

Chapel, is precisely the paradigm of the painted surface, Semper's clothing of space. In fact, the difference between them is social. It is a choice between the collective "mirror" of decorative art and the individual "mirror" of art, the suit worn by everyman and the seamless frescoes worn by one space⁷³. What is so intriguing about Le Corbusier's argument is that architecture cannot simply be placed in either domain. He always identifies architecture with both: "Architecture is there, concerned with our home, our comfort, and our heart. Comfort and proportion. Reason and aesthetics. Machine and plastic form. Calm and beauty"⁷⁴. Architecture is neither one nor the other. It is produced in the play between the two, the complex exchanges that occur between the generic type suit and the one-off designer outfit. The question of architecture's place is symptomatically not answered. The text is unable to simply place architecture within its own categories.

The same enigma can be found throughout Le Corbusier's writing. The opening of his most famous text: *Vers une architecture*, for example, attempts to place architecture by splitting it from engineering as one might split art from utility. But the division is immediately confused. On the one hand, architecture exceeds engineering: "ARCHITECTURE is a thing of art, a phenomenon of the emotions lying outside questions of construction and beyond them"⁷⁵ but, on the other hand, "engineers produce architecture". The generic industrial structures produced by engineers are more poetic than the work of any architect. Ironically, art is produced by a certain disregard for artistic value. An obsession with standard solutions produces the unique event. Yet it is precisely in the face of this displacement of the institutional practices of architectural discourse by engineering that the possibility of architecture, the "essential surplus", is announced:

Nevertheless, there does exist this thing called ARCHITECTURE. Admirable thing, the most beautiful. The product of happy peoples and that which produces happy peoples.

Happy cities have architecture.

Architecture is in the telephone and in the Parthenon. How easily it could be at home in our houses!⁷⁶.

These easily overlooked sentences from the beginning of the first chapter of probably the most influential text in twentieth-century architectural discourse at once raise and complicate the question of the place of architecture. Architecture is itself housed. It has a home. But more than that, it houses itself. The new architecture of the telephone inhabits the old architecture of the house. The sentences involve more than just a juxtaposition of high and low art. It is not that the telephone is now to be thought of as a beautiful object available for appropriation by the detached eye. Rather, the Parthenon has to be thought of as a system of communication like the telephone. And the telephone has to be thought of as a means of production of space like the Parthenon. The telephone, like all systems of communication, defines a new spatiality and can be inhabited. It is the modern equivalent of Semper's weaving. Not by chance does Le Corbusier's archive of visual material for *L'Esprit Nouveau*, within which the essays making up *Vers une architecture* were first published, contain a diagram showing the weavelike structure of the international telephone network. Indeed, telephone companies had from the beginning portrayed the telephone operator as a weaver of telephone lines. Like the coat of paint, the telephone is a form of clothing that can be occupied, but not by some preexisting culture. It is a new language that produces rather than represents modern culture. The telephone institutes a new community in the same way as the woven carpet instituted the family. *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* makes this transformation from one technology of communication to another explicit: "Here, in widespread use in books, schools, newspapers, and at the cinema, is the language of our emotions that was in use in the arts for thousands of years before the twentieth century. We are at the dawn of the machine age. A new consciousness disposes us to look for a different aesthetic satisfaction from that afforded by the bud carved on the capitals in churches"⁷⁷.

In Semper's model, the idea of the individual can only emerge within the institution of domesticity. Even the interior of the body is produced for the first time when its surface is marked with tattoos then clothes in response to the definition of the interiority that is the family, which is itself constituted by the construction of the textured surface that is the house. The idea of an individual speaker with an interior life only emerges within language. Interiority is not simply physical. It is a social effect marked on the newly constituted body of the individual. Just as the language of the carpet produces the speaking subject in need of representation through clothing, the new

means of communication produce a new individual in need of self-definition through art. Art, for Le Corbusier, is the mark of the individual. It is the systems of representation detached from the physical definition of interior that actually constitute shelter and make possible the "inner life" that he repeatedly identifies as the goal of architecture: "The human spirit is more at home behind our foreheads than beneath gilt and carved baldachinos"⁷⁸. Home is an effect of the appropriate decorative art, the art that is, by definition, "something that touches only the surface"⁷⁹. Enclosure is a surface effect. While architecture is housing –the production of shelter– this is, for Le Corbusier, as it was for Semper and would later be for Heidegger, primarily a question of representation. As he puts it in *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* (When the cathedrals were white): "The terminology employed today is no longer exact. The word 'architecture' is today more understandable as an idea than as a material fact; 'architecture': to order, to put in order"⁸⁰. Architecture constructs through classification. The lines it draws are not simply material. Rather, they are the framing, the "look" of different systems of representation. The whitewash is but one such system. It cannot simply be placed in either equipment or art because it is the mechanism for making the distinction between them. It is a system of classification defined in its intersection with other systems, each of which reframes the others. The traditional look of the whitewash, the limit condition of the painted wall, is transformed by its interaction with new systems of communication, new surfaces in which people wrap themselves.

In *Le voyage d'Orient*, Le Corbusier's record of the original tour in which he fell in love with white walls, he describes how cinema, radio, photography, trains, and gramophone records have violently driven out vernacular whitewash, exporting the taste for decorative bric-a-brac to an international audience that promptly covers and colors the once purified walls of its old buildings⁸¹. It is only "far from the major lines of communication" that "the walls are white" and "each spring, the house that one loves receives its new coat: sparkling white, it smiles the whole summer through foliage and flowers that owe to it their dazzle"⁸². *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* simply elaborates this observation to formulate the "Law of Ripolin":

In the course of my travels I found whitewash wherever the twentieth century had not yet arrived. But all these countries were in the course of acquiring, one after the other, the culture of cities, and the whitewash, which was still traditional, was sure to be driven out in a few years by wall-paper, gilt porcelain, tin 'brassware', cast-iron decoration –driven out by Pathé-Ciné and Pathé-Phono, brutally driven out by industry, which brought complete confusion to their calm souls.

Once factory-made brassware arrives, or porcelain decorated with gilt seashells, whitewash cannot last. It is replaced with wall-paper, which is in the spirit of the new arrivals. Or, as long as whitewash lasts, it means that the brassware has not yet arrived, because the whitewash would show it up. Pathé-Ciné or Phono, which are the mark of the times, are not hateful –far from it– but Pathé incarnates, in these countries living on the morality of centuries of tradition, the dissolving virus which in a matter of years will break everything down⁸³.

But now the same systems of communication can be used to restore the lost whitewash. Having been destroyed by them, the whitewash returns so that the architecture implicit in those systems of communication can emerge. Far from covering old forms, the whitewash facilitates the development of new forms, understood as new ways of looking at the world.

The whitewash is able to effect this transformation by being inserted into the gap between structure and decoration in a way that constructs a space for architecture that is neither simply bodily or abstract. It occupies the gap in the cartoon-like image of architecture that organizes traditional accounts of vision. An almost immaterial fabric that traces the convoluted lines stitching the tactile and the visual, its visuality is not that of traditional aesthetics. Like the polychrome wall dressing that Semper describes, the whitewash is produced where the visual cannot be simply detached from the sensual and each is transformed. As Le Corbusier puts it: "Our hand reaches out to it [the modern object] and our sense of touch looks in its own way as our fingers close around it"⁸⁴. Architecture is compacted into the thickness of the mask that makes this sensuous vision possible.

The eye of the whitewash, like the decorative art of the past, is first and foremost a system of representation. Such systems change as technologies are transformed. Modernity is the production of new ways of looking before it is the production of new forms. Le Corbusier finds what he calls a "new vision" in industrialized buildings and clothing styles that architecture, as a high art, a "visual" art in the traditional sense,

actively resists. This reconfiguration of vision is sustained by the thickness of paint into which architecture is collapsed, Semper's "nonbodily surface" between inside and outside. Flattened, it is pure image, a two-dimensional projection of modern life. The white wall is a screen on which culture is projected: "The white of whitewash is absolute: everything stands out from it and is recorded absolutely, black on white; it is honest and dependable"⁸⁵. It is a recording device on which other textualities are registered, and with which they are accommodated.

Architecture is to be found in these new textiles. It responds to transformations in the systems of communication –railway, automobile, aeroplane, gramophone, radio, camera, cinema, and telephone– before it responds to the isolated objects of industrialized everyday life⁸⁶. Le Corbusier reinterprets the whitewash of vernacular culture in terms of these contemporary mechanisms, new languages that appear to operate increasingly independently of buildings. He places architecture within systems that do not require a structural prop. The whitewash dematerializes building in order to make a space for these systems, a space for new spacings, new sensualities. It is a double gesture. Architecture accommodates the new systems and is, at the same time, accommodated within them. The seemingly straightforward and clearly articulated white wall participates in a radically convoluted geometry that eludes conventional analysis of visual form. It is folded into other less visible fabrics in intriguing knots whose twists echo those that Semper studied so closely.

In the end, the whitewash promoted in *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* answers the leading question of Le Corbusier's youth –"Where is architecture?"– by locating architecture in the seemingly elusive space of communication, a space that is only partially visible as such. In the same year, he reopens the question in an essay literally entitled "Où en est l'architecture?" that confronts his earlier definition of the house as a "machine for dwelling", seeing such a mechanism as being but one stop on the way toward architecture and concluding: "Where is Architecture? It is beyond the machine"⁸⁷. The question does not go away. Indeed, it is opened further by every attempt to close it. *Croisade, ou le crépuscule des académies* (Crusade, or the twilight of the académies) of 1933 again asks "What is architecture? Where is architecture?" and answers that architecture is in the ordering of the material world, as exemplified in the order of nature, rather than in the highly decorated monumental buildings promoted by the académies⁸⁸. The smooth metal surfaces of modern engineering structures are architectural inasmuch as they establish a unique order and thereby make available a new world and a new way of engaging with that world. In a polemical illustration, the static view of the ornate surfaces of a palace is literally displaced by the mobile view from the front of a train, one that reframes both the old buildings of the city and the new engineering structures that now inhabit that city. For Le Corbusier, the new architecture is not so much to be found in the smooth metal surfaces of the train but the view that those surfaces make available. One system of communication is displaced by another. Architecture is a way of looking, a way of asking questions rather than a phenomenon to be found in a certain place.

Twenty-five years after Le Corbusier "discovered" architecture in the white walls of the Mediterranean vernacular, his last extended discourse on the unique status of white walls, *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* of 1937, returns to the same question. Because it is the gesture of placing, architecture has no intrinsic place: "Where does architecture belong? In everything!"⁸⁹. It can only be placed by a specific architecture, an ensemble of representational techniques which preserves specific institutional agendas. Le Corbusier's arguments about whitewash disturb such agendas and mobilize new techniques. They translate Semper's argument in the face of the emerging twentieth century systems of representation, subverting the account of architecture with which traditional discourse has tacitly organized its sense of visuality long before it explicitly attempts to place architecture within the visual. The architect sketches not so much a new kind of object with a particular look, but an architecture by which the institution of architectural discourse can occupy the decorative art of today, the sensuous space of communication –an architecture that is all but invisible to the art-historical servants of philosophy. It is not just the white coat that is so routinely overlooked by the discourse but also these less obvious garments that the modern architect would have us wear. To even begin to grasp their architectural function, and thereby address the question "where is architecture" that has become even more urgent in an electronic age, it is necessary to return to the old logic of clothing that underpins the white wall. The white layer needs to be explored much more slowly and in much more detail. It is a matter of going even deeper into the surface.

NOTES

1. Le Corbusier, *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Éditions G. Grès et Cie, 1925), 193. Translated by James Dunnet as *The Decorative Art of Today* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), xix.
2. *Ibid.*, 188.
3. *Ibid.*, 192.
4. For the references to the "Law of Ripolin" in recent scholarship, see Lion Murand and Patrick Zylberman's entry "Decor (1925): Il s'agit d'une épaisseur de blanc" in *Le Corbusier, une encyclopédie*, ed. Jacques Lucan (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987), 116-118; and Bruno Reichlin, "La 'petite maison' à Corseaux. Une analyse structurale", in *Le Corbusier à Genève 1922-1932: Projets et Réalisations*, ed. Isabelle Charollais and André Ducret (Lausanne: Payot, 1987), 119-134.
5. Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, translated by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 227.
6. "Clothes retained, at whatever cost, their ability to differentiate. A certain sort of white was distinctive, confirmation that the concept of cleanliness, gradually elaborated by means of this architecture of linen, was social... To mention linen, then, and associate it with whiteness, was to associate it with a certain condition... The effect of washing and the effect of the material were the same. Together, they exuded a cleanliness which was not accessible to all" *Ibid.*, 72.
7. *Ibid.*, 136.
8. *Ibid.*, 70.
9. "The shirt had broken through the surface of the clothes, enabling the physical body to be imagined, indirectly but clearly. It supposed a sensibility no longer confined to what was visible. Changing linen was also cleaning the skin, even if the skin itself was not touched by a cleansing hand". *Ibid.*, 60.
10. *Ibid.*, 231.
11. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 189.
12. *Ibid.*, 189 [translation slightly modified].
13. *Ibid.*, 190.
14. Le Corbusier, letter to William Ritter from Pisa, 1911, in Giuliano Gresleri, *Le Corbusier Viaggio in Orient* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1984), 401.
15. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, xix.
16. *Ibid.*, 207.
17. Adolf Loos, "Damenmode", *Neue Freie Presse* (August 21, 1898). Translated as "Ladies Fashion" by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith in Adolf Loos, *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 99-103, 102. "The lower the cultural level of people, the more extravagant it is with its ornament, its decoration... To seek beauty only in form and not in ornament is the goal toward which all humanity is striving". Adolf Loos, "Das Luxusfuhrwerk", *Neue Freie Presse* (July 3, 1898). Translated as "The Luxury Vehicle" by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith in Adolf Loos, *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*, 39-43, 40.
18. "Decoration: baubles, charming entertainment for a savage... It seems justified to affirm: *the more cultivated a people becomes, the more decoration disappears.* (Surely it was Loos who put it so neatly.)" Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 85. "Elsewhere, around 1912, Loos wrote that sensational article, *Ornament and Crime*". *Ibid.*, 134.
19. See Beatriz Colomina, "L'Esprit Nouveau, Architecture and Publicité", *Architectureproduction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 77. Stanislaus von Moos, "Le Corbusier and Loos;" *Assemblage 4* (1987): 25-38.
20. Adolf Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen", lecture of 1908. Translated as "Ornament and Crime" by Wilfred Wang in *The Architecture of Adolf Loos* (London: The Arts Council, 1985), 100-103, 100.
21. Adolf Loos, "Architektur", *Der Sturm* (December 15, 1910). Translated as "Architecture" by Wilfred Wang in *The Architecture of Adolf Loos*, 104-109, 104.
22. von Moos, "Le Corbusier and Loos", 31.
23. Adolf Loos, "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung", *Neue Freie Presse*, September 4, 1898, translated as "The Principle of Cladding" by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith in Adolf Loos, *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897- 1900*, 66-69, 67. Bekleidung is being rendered here as "dressing" following Mallgrave and Herrmann's translation rather than Newman and Smith's translation as "cladding". For the respective notes on this issue, see Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, translated by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 293 and Adolf Loos, *Spoken into the Void*, 139.
24. Loos, "The Principle of Cladding", 67.
25. Gottfried Semper, *Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architektur und Plastik bei den Alten* (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1834). Translated as "Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity", in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 45-73, 52.
26. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder Praktische Aesthetik* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1860). Translated as "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics", in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, *The Four Elements of*

Architecture and Other Writings, 181-263, 254.

27. Gottfried Semper, *Die vier Elemente der Baukunst* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1851). Translated as "*The Four Elements of Architecture*", in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 74-129, 104.
28. "It is well known that even now tribes in an early stage of their development apply their budding artistic instinct to the braiding and weaving of mats and covers (even when they still go around completely naked)". Ibid., 103. "The art of dressing the body's nakedness (if we do not count the ornamental painting of one's own skin discussed above) is probably a later invention than the use of coverings for encampments and spatial enclosures". Gottfried Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics (1860)", 254.
29. Ibid., 257.
30. The artist must not "violate the material to meet halfway an artistic intent that demands the impossible from the material" Ibid., 189.
31. "Masking does not help, however, when *behind* the mask the thing is false or the mask is no good. In order that the material, the indispensable (in the usual sense of the expression) be completely denied in the artistic creation, its complete mastery is the imperative precondition. Only by complete technical perfection, by judicious and proper treatment of the material according to its properties, and by taking these properties into consideration while creating form can the material be forgotten". Ibid., 257.
32. "But have you ever noticed the strange correspondence between the exterior dress of people and the exterior of buildings? Is the tasselled robe not appropriate to the Gothic style and the wig to the Baroque? But do our contemporary houses correspond with our clothes?" Adolf Loos, "Architecture (1910)", 107.
33. Loos, "The Principle of Cladding (1898)", 66.
34. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder Praktische Aesthetik*, vol. 1, 445. Cited in Henry Francis Mallgrave, "Gottfried Semper: Architecture and the Primitive Hut", *Reflections* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1985): 60-71, 65.
35. Semper, "Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity (1834)", 56.
36. Ibid., 59.
37. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 188. "The time is past when we... can lounge on ottomans and divans among orchids in the scented atmosphere of a seraglio and behave like so many ornamental animals or humming-birds in impeccable evening dress, pinned through the trunk like a collection of butterflies to the swathes of gold, lacquer or brocade on our wall-panelling and hangings". Ibid., 192.
38. Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris: Editions Cres, 1923), 1 10. Translated by Frederick Etchells as *Towards a New Architecture* (London: John Rodker, 1931), 138.
39. "The study of folklore gives us no magic formulas for the resolution of the problems of contemporary architecture. It lovingly teaches the profound, natural needs of man as they are revealed to us in solutions that have stood the test of time. Folklore shows us 'man naked', dressing himself, surrounding himself with tools and objects, with rooms and a house, reasonably satisfying his minimum requirements and coming to terms with the surplus to permit him the enjoyment of his great material and spiritual well-being". Le Corbusier, *Entretien avec les étudiants des écoles d'architecture* (Paris: Donoel, 1943). Translated by Pierre Chasse as *Le Corbusier Talks to Students* (New York: Orion Press, 1961), 60.
40. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 143 [translation slightly modified].
41. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 6. When this chapter was originally published in *L'Esprit Nouveau* no. 19 of December 1923, it was illustrated with a photograph of the current President of the Republic in a less modern outfit.
42. Clothing sometimes occupies both the beginning and the middle of the list: "Our modern life, when we are active and about (leaving out the moments when we fly to gruel and aspirin) has created its own objects: its costume, its fountain pen, its eversharp pencil, its typewriter, its telephone, its admirable office furniture, its plate-glass and its 'Innovation' trunks, the safety razor and the briar pipe, the bowler hat and the limousine, the steamship and the airplane". Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 95.
43. "Let us imagine a true museum, one that contained everything, one that could present a complete picture after the passage of time, after the destruction by time... let us put together a museum of our own day with objects of our own day; to begin: A plain jacket, a bowler hat, a well made shoe. An electric light bulb with bayonet fixing; a radiator, a table cloth of fine white linen...". Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 16.
44. Ibid., 54.
45. "At this point it looked as if decorative art would founder among the young ladies, had not the exponents of the decorative ensemble wished to show, in making their name and establishing their profession, that male abilities were indispensable in this field: considerations of ensemble, organization, sense of unity, balance, proportion, harmony". Ibid., 134
46. Ibid., 72.
47. Ibid., 69.
48. Ibid., 22.
49. Ibid., 170.
50. Gratuitous decoration not only covers over flaws in the structure of the object, it also covers over flaws in the structure of contemporary life: "Then *background noise* to fill in the holes, the emptiness. Musical noise, embroidered noise or batik noise". Ibid., 30.
51. "Architecture has another meaning and other ends to pursue than showing construction and responding to needs", Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 110. The Parthenon, for example, is seen as the climax of the gradual passage "from construction to Architecture". Ibid., 139.
52. Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 248.
53. John Winter, "Le Corbusier's Technological Dilemma", in *The Open Hand: Essays on Le Corbusier*, ed. Russell Walden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 322-349, 326.
54. "The human-limb object is a docile servant. A good servant is discreet and self-effacing in order to leave his master free". Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 79. "Rather, it is a question of being dressed in a way that one stands out the least". Adolf Loos. "Die Herrenmode", *Neue Freie Presse* (May 22, 1898). Translated by Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith as "Men's Fashion", in Adolf Loos, *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*, 10-14, 11.
55. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 114.
56. Ibid., 76.
57. Ibid., 77.
58. Ibid., 163. "Feeling dominates. Feeling is never extinguished by reason. Reason gives feeling the purified means it needs to express itself". Ibid., 168.
59. "Thus, from this perspective, too, art appears isolated and shunted off to a field especially marked out for it. The opposite was true in antiquity; then this field was also part of the same domain where philosophy held sway. Philosophy was as it were an artist itself and a guide to the other arts:" Gottfried Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics (1860)", 194.
60. "What is the purpose of this constant separation and differentiation that characterizes our present theory of art? Would it not be better and more useful to stress the ascending and descending integration of a work into its surroundings and with its accessories, rather than always to distinguish and divide?... must we again rob it of its necessary accessories?" Gottfried Semper, "*The Four Elements of Architecture* (1851)", 89.
61. Ibid., 102.
62. Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics (1860)", 183. Semper is referring to the title "Household of Art" that von Rumohr's uses for his Introduction in *Italianische Forschungen*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1827. See editorial note to Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, 304.
63. "Before this separation our grandmothers were indeed not members of the academy of fine arts or album collectors or an audience for aesthetic lecturers, but they knew what to do when it came to designing an embroidery. There's the rub!" Gottfried Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics (1860)", 234.
64. Ibid., 184.
65. "It remains certain that the origin of building coincides with the beginning of textiles". Ibid., 254.
66. Ibid., 255.
67. Semper, "Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity (1834)", 55.
68. "It ranks among the earliest of all inventions because the instinct for pleasure, as it were, inspired man. Delight in color was developed earlier than delight in form". Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics (1860)", 234.
69. Semper, "Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity (1834)", 61.
70. "To complete the image of an oriental residence one has to imagine the costly furnishings of gold-plated couches and chairs, divans, candelabras, all kinds of vases, carpets, and the fragrance of incense". Gottfried Semper, chapter 10 of *Vergleichende Baulehre* (1850) (Comparative building theory), Manuscript 58 fols. 94-120 in the Semper-Archiv. Translated as "Structural Elements of Assyrian-Chaldean Architecture" in Wolfgang Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 204-218, 216. Semper cites Bruno Kaiser on speculative aesthetics: "If form, color, and quantity can only be properly appreciated after they have been sublimated in a test tube of categories, if the sensual no longer makes sense, if the body (as in this aesthetics) must first commit suicide to reveal its treasures—does this not deprive art of the basis for its independent existence?", Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics (1860)", 194.
71. On the play between the visual and the tactile in Adolf Loos, see Beatriz Colomina, "Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interiors of Adolf Loos", *AA Files* 19 (Spring 1990): 5-15.
72. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 76 [translation slightly modified].
73. "The work of art, the 'living double' of a being, whether still present, or departed, or unknown; that faithful mirror of an individual passion". Ibid., 118. As opposed to decorative art, "in which particular is absorbed in the general". Ibid., 121.
74. Ibid., 137.
75. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 19.
76. Ibid., 15 [translation modified].
77. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 125.

78. Ibid., 77.
79. Ibid., 118.
80. Le Corbusier, *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches: Voyage au pays des timides* (Paris: Pion, 1937), translated by Francis E. Hyslop as *When the Cathedrals Were White* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), 202.
81. The argument is repeated in *The Decorative Art of Today*: "The railway brought him wagon-loads full of delicate porcelain covered with roses as fine as the flowers themselves, with seashells, and leafy tendrils of the brightest gold. The peasant on the Danube was immediately dazzled, quite overcome, and lost faith in his folk culture: he let it drop like a load of bricks, wherever the railways reached—throughout the world... Later, the cinema would finish off the work of the railways. The peasant on the Danube has chosen. Folk culture no longer exists, only ornament on mass-produced junk. Everywhere!" Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 57.
82. Le Corbusier, *Le Voyage d'Orient* (Paris: Editions Force Vives, 1966). Translated by Ivan Zaknic as *Journey to the East* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 59.
83. Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, 189.
84. Ibid., 112.
85. Ibid., 190.
86. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).
87. Le Corbusier, "Où en est l'architecture?" *L'architecture vivante* (1927): 7-11, 11.
88. "What is architecture? Where is architecture? In palaces bedecked with sculptures and paintings: such is the doctrine they have been taught... At the summit of 'Polytechnique,' the most renowned of schools in the country, the mind has not emitted a wave that may illuminate the country. Zero!... Where is architecture? If the doctrine is: to order, group, bind, organize according to a lofty intention, to endow works with the technique, unity, polish and grace that nature everywhere manifests in its creations. Nature's creations: geology; organic life; seed, root, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits; chemical and physical phenomena, purely technical phenomena led through the purest of paths to their coordinated, harmonious expression, —from that point on, the poly technician is a demiurge". Le Corbusier, *Croisade, ou le crépuscule des académies* (Paris: Crès, 1933), 20.
89. Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, 118.

BOBARDIAN METAMORFOSIS

Mara Sánchez Llorens

Italian Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi, proposes an innovative and contemporary way of understanding the city. In the *Ladeira da Misericórdia* project developed at Salvador de Bahia (Brazil), we find a new equilibrium between architectural spaces and natural landscapes. This harmony activates the future growth of the city, its limits and its historical development. Her project provides a new atmosphere for the place, a new point of view.

In her proposal for São Paulo's *Nova Prefeitura* we find a building covered by a huge garden providing the place with a renovated atmosphere, dissolving the boundaries of the park where it is located: a new layout juxtaposed on the city that rediscovers and redefines the limits between it and the park, through a large metropolitan multi-functional void stimulating collective activities.

The relationship between geography and the city is her way of reading nature. Her architecture interprets the existing landscape and the later constructs her architecture. Through the projects analyzed here, *Ladeira da Misericórdia* in Salvador de Bahia and São Paulo's *Nova Prefeitura*, we infer how Lina Bo Bardi threads architecture, anthropology and nature: Bobardian metamorphosis.

LANDSCAPE AS TOTAL ART WORK.

DIMITRIS PIKIONIS AND THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE ACROPOLIS

Darío Álvarez Álvarez

Between 1951 and 1958 Greek architect Dimitris Pikionis (Pireo 1887 - Atenas 1968) designed and conducted one of the most unique works blending landscape and architecture of the 20th century, the arrangement of the surroundings and the access to the hills of the Acrópolis and Filopapo in Athens, as part of the regeneration process of the Athenian archaeological areas promoted by the Culture Minister

Constantinos Karamanlis. Pikionis, with his wide pictorial education, introduced expressive references in the eternal background landscape of the Parthenon, referring to the artistic vanguards, represented by the two great artists linked to the Bauhaus, Paul Klee, and Vassily Kandinsky. On top of that, his friendship with Giorgio de Chirico, who he met when they were both students, and discovering in Paris his first paintings of the Piazza d'Italia series imbued in him an outstanding metaphysical spirit which became clear in many of his works, and in a very special manner in the surroundings of the Acropolis, where his interest in oriental cultures, specially the Japanese, is also made clear in the arrangement of the paths and some of the constructions built in wood as a part of the landscape arrangement operation, which intentionally evoke some of the images of the classical Japanese garden. For the two new paths leading to the two Athenian hills Pikionis used concrete and stone coming from the demolition of 19th century houses, a destructive remodeling of Athens performed during the 1950s that was specially criticized by the architect. Using new and recycled materials provides the work with the appearance of a large architectural collage, unfold right in front of the Acrópolis, adapting to the topography in a smart way and making the most out of the land's irregularity, turned into the project's material. The new paths establish a dialogue with the rock, producing very intense dramatic moments, almost sculpture like, always with a metaphysical ambience that surrounds and engulfs everything. The landscape envisioned by Pikionis contains echoes of the classical Greek landscape introducing at the same time truly modern aspects, inherited from the European avantgarde cultures: without a doubt, a landscape made out of time, built with time as material and at the same time representing it in an outstanding manner.

A landscape with different types of juxtaposed memories, articulating a magnificent palimpsest, a true total work of art brilliantly threading many references on the place, completed with a wise use of the greenery. Pikionis' landscape is, at the same time, modern and eternal, bearing both didactic and sentimental values distinguishing it from the rest of the works built during the second half of the 20th century.

ENCLAVE, VANTAGE POINT AND GOAL. HOUSES OF FOREIGN ARCHITECTS LIVING IN SPAIN IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Juan M. Otxotorena / Héctor García-Diego

Journeys have uneven goals, referring to the sort of trip. In the popular sociology of the last decades, Spain appears in different moments, as the focus of many journeys and pilgrimages. In this essay we will recall the grand amount of foreign architects visiting its geography during the third quarter of the 20th century, finally settling down there.

It is focused during Franco's ruling period (1939-1975) and regards a number of architects arriving to Spain during those years, in many cases due to similar motifs and having one thing in common: they end up building a house in some part of its territory.

This option could be seen as a way of providing rigour, engagement and reliability to their insertion in it. It associates it with a permanence will. This will would have special characteristics. We must point out, for example, the fascinating experimentalism of the results. Some still remain among us, as an outstanding built legacy, a visible proof undoubtedly demanding attention.

MODULAR / ACCUMULATIVE / COMBINATORY. GIANCARLO DE CARLO'S PROJECT FOR THE HOLIDAY HOSTEL FOR CHILDREN AT CLASSE

Federico Bilò

In 1961 Giancarlo De Carlo designed three projects —two children's summer colonies and a holiday apartment building— similar in programme and scale, which constitute a small though recognisable *corpus* within the architect's professional development. Of particular interest not only for the quality of their architecture, they also constitute a sort of prologue to the lengthy story of the university colleges constructed in Urbino.

The relationship between the individual and the collective dimension, and the spatial organisation that regulates the association between the two, can be found at the core of the three projects from 1961, further matured and developed in the successive uni-

versity buildings. This text examines the lesser known and only unbuilt project of the three, that for the Holiday Hostel for Children at Classe, near Ravenna: it presents the qualities of a fabric, composed from the aggregation of simple elements, and appears related to what is known as architectural *structuralism*.

LOOS BY ROSSI:

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN CASABELLA-CONTINUITÀ

Mariano González Presencio

The critique of Adolf Loos shifted its path in the European scene when issue 233 of the Milan based *Casabella* magazine appeared in 1959 –*Casabella-Continuità* at the time– with a number of articles devoted to the Austrian architect. The first one of them was written by the magazine's director Ernesto Rogers meaningfully entitled "Attualità di Adolf Loos". Another one of the articles titled "Ricordo di Adolf Loos" written by Richard Neutra, one of his disciples after WWI, evoked the Viennese master. The magazine also printed a short essay by Gropius from 1931 published in the Paris-based *Vient de Paraître* magazine in an issue generically titled "Hommage à Adolf Loos", and the obituary written by Persico in 1933, in *Casabella* itself when Loos died, "In memoria di Adolfo Loos". But if this issue of *Casabella* is crucial for the critique of Loos is mainly due to the ambitious article written by Aldo Rossi "Adolf Loos: 1870-1933" signaling a new critical space for the consideration of Loos' written and built work and settling the foundations for the Italian neo-rationalism, the deepest and most rigorous revision of the principles of the modern movement carried out during the second half of last century.

Therefore the importance of this issue is not only limited to the possible historiographical implications for the figure of Adolf Loos by redefining his critical consideration, but behind his return to the foreground of the architectural debate, seemingly towed away to a secondary role, there was a deeper theoretical conception related to the revisionist process on modernity and its dogmas started by a determined group of Italian architects. With his brief introductory article, Ernesto Rogers claimed the validity of the teachings of the Viennese architect for the postwar Italian culture attempting to find its own dimension and autonomous style through the careful revision and critical analysis of the master's work.

100 YEARS FROM THE JOURNEY TO THE EAST.

PHOTOGRAPHS, LETTERS AND DRAWINGS

Carlos Montes Serrano

2011 is the hundredth anniversary of Le Corbusier's Journey to the East, somehow ending his self-taught period. In this essay we wish to evoke young Jeanneret's artistic and intellectual context at the time of beginning the journey, through some of the letters sent to Charles L'Eplattenier and William Ritter, paying close attention to the culmination nature adopted by drawings, sketches, and paintings in those crucial months.

These sketches were done to learn how to look, analyze and understand what is being observed, to record in his memory a fleeting impression or a scene that he could want to recall later on, or to file away some data that could be useful for his future task as an architect. In that sense, when glancing his six sketchbooks from his journey to the East, we can confirm how there is a clear evolution toward these sort of sketches, achieving their final stage in the ones drawn in Pompeii, Rome, Tivoli, and Florence.

Thus, it is through his journey to the East where Le Corbusier understands the ultimate meaning implied in his drawings, and that many years later, he would define in such manner in his autobiography *L'Atelier de la recherche patiente* (1960): "When you travel, you look with your eyes and draw with the pencil attempting to internalize the impression caused by our sight. Once the visual impression is registered with the pencil, it remains, becomes registered and recorded in our interior. The photographic camera is an instrument for the lazy that make the machine look for them. Drawing, tracing lines, composing volumes, organizing surfaces..., all these requires to look first, observe afterwards and finally perhaps discover. We then reach inspiration".

DESIGNING THE ELECTRIC LIGHT OR DECORATIVE ART VERSUS READY MADE

Sung-Taeg Nam

Being one of the most technical domestic objects from the beginning of the 20th century, the incandescent electric light bulb arouses a vivid interest among interior decorators contrasting with other technical systems, such as plumbing, scarcely valued in the aesthetics realm and strictly inside the industrial field.

The electric bulb is, to begin with, a source of light, artificial undoubtedly, but a fundamental pillar of architecture, specially because nightlife revolves around it. Furthermore, this light becomes the only visible energy source, like the old fire, overdue now thanks to modern heating systems. Its position in the center of the ceiling stresses its visibility; you can easily spot it although it is meant to be used at nighttime. In general, it is even easier to perceive its shape when it is shut down. The electric light is, therefore, an object that can be appreciated with natural light constituting therefore an important matter of reflection for design.

To begin with, it is necessary to underline the intrinsic paradox linked to this object, purely technical and potentially artistic at the same time. The design of electric light arouses thus a wide field of thoughts and discourses, opening the debate between modern architects in relation with the objects of use. On the one side, the "decorative arts" that want to artistically cultivate the industrial productions, opposes to the new attitude that appreciates and underlines the nobility of the objects themselves. Nevertheless, this debate is nothing but the result of a general movement questioning the decorative arts, where the beginning of the 20th century seems to signal a significant change. The decorative arts, evolving then towards the premise of industrial design, involves developing a stronger and more radical stream of thought. Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier are important representatives of this trend. In a retrospective manner, these reflections seem to exceed the simple defense of industrial design and seem to come closer to the artistic processes of Marcel Duchamp.

ARCHITECTURE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. ON MODERN EUROPEAN ABSTRACTION

José Manuel Pozo Mucio

The main characters of the European avant-garde looked towards America with fascination, appealed by the shapes of their silos, their factories and the skyscrapers of their cities; aware of the need for change, they sensed what they wanted to do but not how to do it; it was fairly clear that the new architecture had to be as intellectual and abstract as the painting and sculpture and that those shapes fascinated them; but at the same time they were aware that they would not solve their needs; the intellectual solution to the problem came from eastern Europe, boosted through Russia but originating in the far east, beyond the ocean.

YOUNG LATINAMERICAN ARCHITECTURE PANORAMA

II LATIN-AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE BIENNIAL BAL 2011 PAMPLONA

Rubén A. Alcolea Rodríguez

Last April the second edition of the BAL Latin-American Architecture Biennial took place, an event that is consolidating as a meeting point for young emerging architects as well as an exceptional opportunity to scan the horizon of the future of architecture in the South American continent. For this second edition, twelve young teams were chosen to present their work turning Pamplona in the embassy for young Latin-American architecture in Spain during three days. With Chile as guest country for this edition, a monographic exhibition on the country's architecture was inaugurated presenting both the most orthodox modernity to the most celebrated contemporary practices.