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international working party for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

# *Journal 14*

*The Image of Modernity*



November 1995

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**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

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# Journal 14

November 1995



The engineer's laboratory, designed by Rob Mallet-Stevens for *L'Inhumaine*. Photo: Cinémathèque Française, with kind permission of Editions Parenthèses. More on pp. 48-53.

Front cover: Antoine Beauty Salon, Paris, c. 1930, architect unknown. Courtesy of Cooper-Hewitt, National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution - Art Resource, NY. Photo: Service Bonney. More on pp. 42-47.

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## COLOPHON

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In the 1920s and 30s the Modern Movement was an important international architectural development. The cultural, economic and technical results of this movement are still noticeable today.

Characteristic of this movement is among others that buildings were designed with a relatively short functional as well as technical life expectancy in mind. Therefore most of these buildings are in a bad condition at present, or they have been altered, sometimes beyond recognition. Due to their social and cultural value it is important to safeguard some of these for the future, in one or another way.

### **The International Working-party for the Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement**

DOCOMOMO was initiated in 1988 by the University of Technology in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, further to a research project on how the preservation of these buildings can be obtained in a coherent and effective way. The foundation of the Working-party is meant to advance an effective inventory, documentation and preservation of the most important Modern Movement buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of that period. The aim of the Working-party is to sustain a network for exchange of experience and know-how and to draw the attention of the general public to the significance of this part of the cultural heritage.

The initiative is directed to:

- those who are involved in policy-making (legislation, financing, management),
- those who are professionally interested in the protection of early modern buildings, sites and neighbourhoods (architects, urban designers, art historians, critics) and
- those who are responsible for their actual restoration (researchers, technical specialists, consultants).

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## The Image of Modernity - Guest edited by Hilde Heynen

The Cartesian interpretation of the Modern Movement, that is adhered to by many, somehow obscures the evident aesthetic dimension of modernity. This poetic side of the Modern Movement is harder to define than the dimensions of modernity that are more easily assessed in rational terms of social and technical innovation. The far reaching conceptions of rationalism, as taught at the Bauhaus Dessau under its first director, are commonly associated with the Modern Movement in architecture. Walter Gropius perceived rationalism as an indispensable expedient to enable art and architecture to play their vital role in the transition from a traditional into an industrial society. An evaluation of Modern Movement architecture on the basis of rationality alone, however, would of course be defective.

This edition of the Journal explores the perception of modernity in various arts. Focusing on modern life, photographers disseminated an image of progress. Composers transformed the colourful brilliance of *De Stijl* into novel timbres, and the dynamics of modern life were stylized by Schlemmer's 'organized movements.' Sculpturers visualized their fascination with technology and film directors created a contemporary atmosphere by means of modern imagery. For the protagonists of modern architecture, however, modernity was much more than an image. It rendered an aspiration for a new culture to emerge, that would reflect the Industrial Age. The erosion of these visionary conceptions found a first manifestation in the *International Style* exhibition in 1932. Hilde Heynen, in her essay, demonstrates that this process resulted in a mere aesthetic that still connoted progress, rationality, dynamics and technology, but that was no longer intrinsically represented by it. Over time, the meaning of the avant-garde aesthetics degenerated to an extent that it could even become part of contemporary advertising strategies for cigarettes, kitchen ware or toys.

The architects of the Modern Movement were revolutionaries. The existence today of a well established group of designers that seem to work in a modern tradition surprises perhaps, but may be explained by the fact that the Movement's pioneers looked to the future to legitimate their cause, succeeded, and have now become reconciled with traditions. Yet, the conceptions of the avant-garde were watered down to a *modernist* vocabulary rather than a *modern* one, sometimes depriving even the image of modernity of its authenticity.

Cesare Brandi, first director of the Italian Restoration Institute, considered two primary assets in defining a work of art: its creation -the mental process and physical construction that resulted in its existence- and its history -the results of intervention and weathering over time. 'Understanding this process of creation' wrote ICCROM director Jukka Jokilehto in a contribution to the current debate on authenticity, 'is also the basis for a critical understanding of the authenticity of a work and identification of its essential qualities.' Reassessment of the Image of Modernity might therefore help us to re-evaluate our interpretation of the Modern Movement as a whole. The DOCOMOMO Registers and Selection should represent the strong conceptions of the Modern Movement rather than a modernist imagery.

Wessel de Jonge

**Journal 15 is scheduled for June 1996. News items with illustrations should be in by May 1st, 1996. Articles with a 4 to 5 page maximum, typewritten with 1,5 spacing (preferably also on floppy disc) with illustrations should be in by April 1st, 1996.**

## Next Journal - Curtain Wall Renovations

The curtain wall is an emblematic feature of MoMo architecture. Yet, numbers of characteristic modern curtain walls are altered in an undesirable and irreversible way today, to meet current requirements, to restyle a corporate identity or just because architects fail to recognize the architectural merit of the products of their predecessors. The next Journal will explore the history and development of the curtain wall. Authors are invited to send in case-studies of successful renovation works. See p. 6 for further details.

# Letters to DOCOMOMO...

## Garage des Nations

Dear Sir, you were so kind as to support our campaign for the preservation of the *Garage des Nations* in Genève, designed by Maurice and Pierre Brillard. Now the construction works have been completed, the Fondation Brillard Architectes would like to express its gratitude. Because of your support, our influence during the meetings that we have held with *l'Etat de Genève* on this subject was increased substantially. Most notably, we have been able to achieve, thanks to a continuing following of the project on the construction site, the conservation of the original structure and a satisfying reconstruction of the glass roof. *(Translated from the French)*

Ola Söderström, Director of the Fondation Brillard Architectes, Genève, Switzerland, September 1995.

## Correction

Dear Sir, Concerning Vladimir Mitrovic (author of 'Dorde Tabakovic', Journal 13, p. 30), he is not a member of the Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, but an art historian and a custodian in Novi Sad. Mr. Mitrovic is also the author of several publications on architecture in Novi Sad.

Svetlana Bakic, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, June 1995

## Brazil

Dear Sir, I was very pleased with the final result of Journal 13. Unfortunately we made an error in our text ('Hiding the sun', pp. 54-56): the ABI (Association of Press of Bahia) was designed by Hélio Duarte, Abelardo Rodrigues and Zenon Lotufo. I must also say that we were happily surprised with the letter of Paul Meurs that was published, which was an important stimulus for us.

Anna Beatriz Galvão, Salvador, Brazil, July 1995

## Phone numbers extended

As of October 10, 1995, all national telephone and fax numbers in The Netherlands have been extended to 10 digits.

For the DOCOMOMO International Secretariat, an additional 2 has been placed before the subscriber's number:

Tel.: +31 - 40 - 2 47 24 33

Fax: +31 - 40 - 2 45 97 41

## Preserving the Recent Past Conference

Dear Sir, I fear my remarks at the Recent Past Conference may have been misunderstood, judging by accounts in Journal 13, pp. 16-18. I am unequivocal in my belief that the evidence of the recent past be protected no less vigorously and carefully than that of previous eras. The issue of preserving significant works from the 1930s through the 1960s has consumed much of the time I have devoted to preservation in the Washington, D.C, metropolitan area. [...]

As a historian, I believe it is essential to examine a period of the past from as objective a framework as possible. My prejudices toward modern architecture are numerous; it is the world in which I was raised. My father was a long-time associate of Richard Neutra's (after whom I am named). I grew up in the drafting rooms of modern houses my father designed for us and on the construction sites of many others. I have always taken a dim view of the rather superficial criticisms that began to be levelled at modern architecture in the 1970s. But I do not seek to be an advocate of modern architecture any more or less than of any other period. The 'critical' remarks I made in my paper were introduced to discuss the attitudes that exist whether we may agree with them or not, and also to underscore that no movement, no age stands beyond criticism. I also sought to emphasize that real differences exist between the postwar legacy and many of the buildings/districts upon which preservationists have usually focused. Understanding those differences is, it seems to me, essential if preservationists are to be effective in dealing with the recent past. At the same time, I never meant to imply that the differences were of a qualitative sort.

Richard Longstreth, Professor of Architectural History at the George Washington University, Washington, USA, August 1995

*Dear Professor Longstreth, When I listened to your presentation at the Recent Past Conference, to the reactions by the majority of the audience and to the presentation of Mr. Lapidus afterwards, I got a clear impression that you were an advocate against the Modern Movement.*

*However, having read your paper in the Conference Proceedings I have to admit that this is certainly not the case. I do apologize for this mistake and withdraw the words I wrote about you in my 'postscript' in DOCOMOMO Journal 13. I agree with you that an architectural historian should be as objective as possible.*

Hubert-Jan Henket, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, October 1995.

# Renewal of membership for 1996-1997

## announcement

With 1995 coming to an end, the time has come to renew the membership of DOCOMOMO International for those who are registered as a member for the period 1994-1995. These individuals, students and institutions have received DOCOMOMO Journals 11, 12, 13 and 14. If the membership is not cancelled, it will automatically be renewed by the DOCOMOMO International Secretariat for another two years. The membership fee for 1996-1997 is due in advance, preferably before January 1, 1996.

Members of DOCOMOMO International receive the DOCOMOMO Journal published twice a year (corporate and professional members receive respectively 4 and 2 copies per edition), a reduced fee for the International DOCOMOMO Conference, invitation to all DOCOMOMO activities, the possibility to participate in international committees and other activities, and the chance to stimulate, and form part of an international network of highly motivated individuals interested in the Modern Movement.

The membership classes include:

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Corporate membership   | US \$ 350.-- (two years) |
| Professional practices | US \$ 180.-- (two years) |
| Individual membership  | US \$ 100.-- (two years) |
| Students               | US \$ 40.-- (two years)  |

Reductions for underprivileged countries will remain the same (see Journal 9, pp. 8-9). Renewal of the membership should preferably be done through your National Working party. Direct via the International Secretariat is also possible, but will usually lead to higher costs. Residents of the Netherlands and countries without representation in DOCOMOMO can pay the membership fee by direct transfer of the proper fee to the International Secretariat.

If preferred, the registration form printed on this page can be used, but this is only optional. The membership fee can be paid by transfer to our bankaccount. Note the additional costs for transfers from abroad. It is also possible to pay the membership fee by VISA or Eurocard via mail order, by completing and mailing the application form to the DOCOMOMO International Secretariat. Personal cheques cannot be accepted. Single subscriptions to the DOCOMOMO Journals are not possible.

If you have any questions concerning the membership of DOCOMOMO, please contact the DOCOMOMO International Secretariat.

## Application for renewal of membership

I hereby renew my membership of  
DOCOMOMO International, for 1996-1997.

Name: .....

Institution: .....

Address: .....

Postal code/City: .....

Country: .....

Tel./Fax: .....

Membership class: .....

Students must enclose a photocopy of a valid  
student card.

Preferred method of payment:

Transfer to bank-account number  
52.78.75.961 of the ABN-AMRO Bank in  
Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Non Dutch-  
residents should add US\$ 10.-- for transfer  
costs if this method of payment is preferred.

VISA, expiry date: .....  
cardnumber: .....

Eurocard, expiry date: .....  
cardnumber: .....

Date: .....

Signature: .....

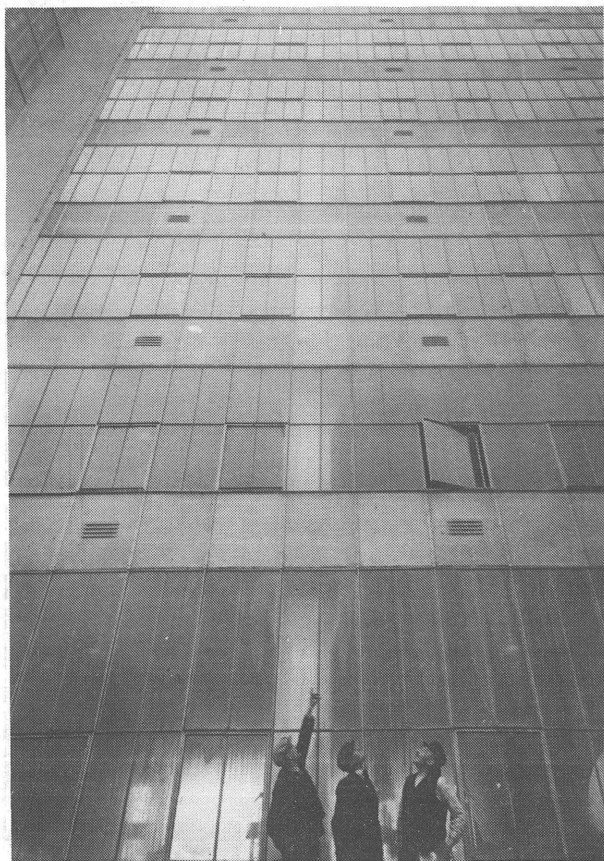
Please reply to:  
DOCOMOMO International Secretariat  
TUE, BPU Postvak 8  
P.O. Box 513  
5600 MB Eindhoven  
The Netherlands

## Curtain wall renovations

Int'l Seminar on January 25, 1996  
Eindhoven, the Netherlands

### *announcement*

When in 1929 the famous Van Nelle factories in Rotterdam were completed, the curtain wall was still a breathtaking expression of progress, that was looked up at in wonder. Typically, the curtain wall concerns a non-loadbearing, mostly light envelope being erected before a loadbearing skeleton. This type of construction originates from the USA, where in the late 19th Century the development of loadbearing frames was more advanced, and its application more widespread as compared to Europe. In the Old World this type of facades became more popular after World War II. In Europe, the curtain wall was used for offices, department stores and commercial buildings, but also for hospitals, schools and sometimes even for public housing. Today, curtain walls are used on a broad scale and in a large variety of materials, such as panels of glass, metal, enameled porcelain and synthetics, or thin claddings in stone, prefab concrete and various ceramics. Particularly in the private sector the maintenance and replacement of such facades form a rapidly increasing technical and financial problem. Many of the characteristic 1950s facades for instance, are approaching the end of their life span, or do

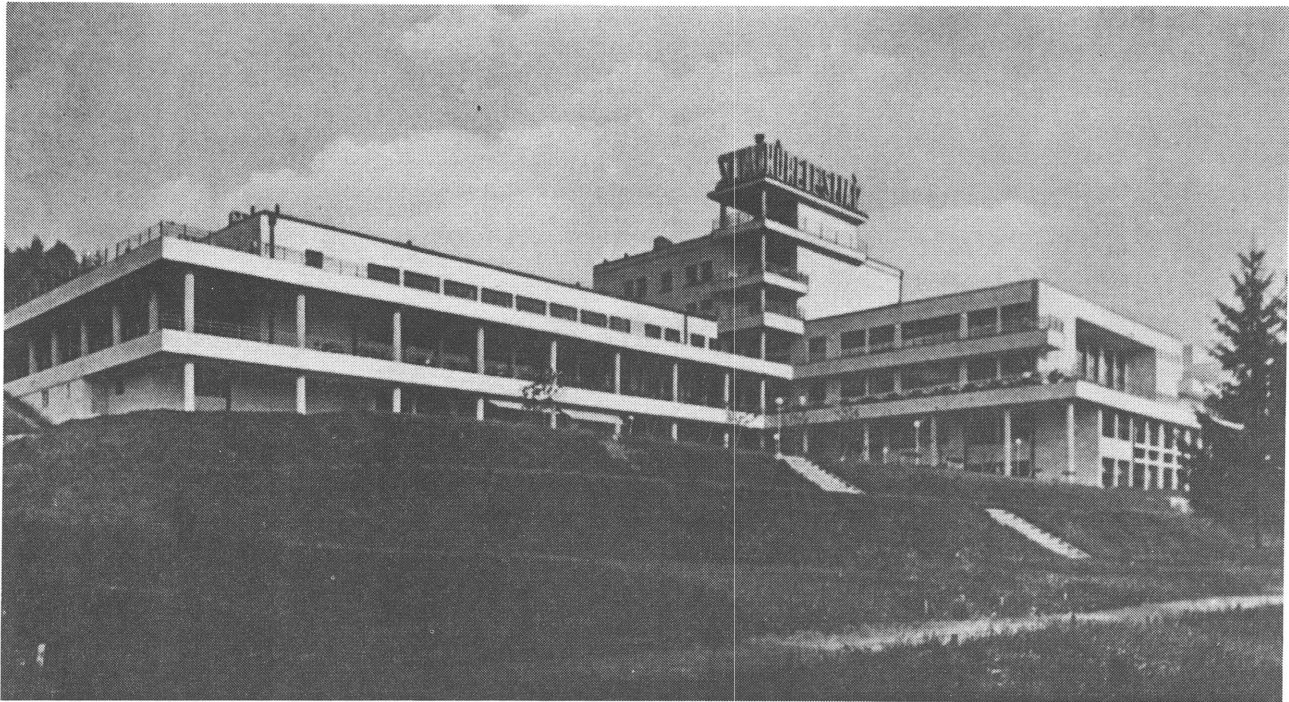


not sufficiently come up to current standards. The poor performance with regards building physics, mainly in terms of thermal qualities, makes facility managers and proprietors decide to have such facades drastically renovated. Developers often opt for a radical face lift to give a property a smooth image of success. However, some of the current systems, such as the presently so popular thin stone claddings, already meet critical response from experts that question the manageability of such systems in the not too distant future. On the other hand, postwar architecture is currently going through a period of critical reassessment. The many buildings that feature curtain walls form a significant part of our most recent architectural heritage already by their quantity. No wonder that planning authorities, preservationists and architects are increasingly concerned about the loss of a growing amount of typical postwar architecture as a result of facade renovation. Double glazing and reflective coatings make deep inroads on the appearance of such facades. The requirements laid down in building codes as regards the thermal insulation often lead to a dramatic decrease of the glazed surface, thereby ignoring the characteristic transparency of such buildings. Unfortunately, it must be concluded that many such interventions could have been more restrained or even been avoided altogether. Still, there is insufficient appreciation and recognition of the sometimes unexpected architectural qualities of these buildings.

DOCOMOMO-NL with the Eindhoven University of Technology are organizing a seminar for January 25, 1996, on the architectural and technical aspects of curtain wall renovations. The professional curriculum is developed in close cooperation with the ISC/Technology. The programme includes lecturers from Holland as well as abroad. Stephen Kelley, a consultant with Wiss Janney Elstner Associates Inc. from Chicago, and a member of DOCOMOMO-US, built up an extraordinary appraisal through his involvement in such renovations as the Rookery and the curtain wall of the Reliance Building in Chicago. More specialists from Europe are being invited. The programme is aimed at facility managers, investors, developers, preservationists, architects, facade producers, and executives in the building trade and will address the following: history and development of the curtain wall; architectural and technical characteristics; renovation options; building physics; durability of various claddings, glazings and sealants; renovation and maintenance. A number of case studies will illustrate these issues.

**Members of DOCOMOMO International enjoy a substantial discount on participation fees.**

*Information from: DOCOMOMO Int'l Secretariat.*



## Palace Spa at Sliac

### Venue for the Fourth International DOCOMOMO Conference

by *Stefan Slachta*

The proposal to situate the Fourth International DOCOMOMO Conference for the main part in the area of Sliac Spa, has met an extraordinary response and appreciation from those who have visited the spa before. For the majority of the participants in the upcoming conference, however, the spa is largely unknown. Sliac Spa is remotely situated in the country, amidst a 60 ha forest park in mid-Slovakia. It lies 5 km from the city of Zvolen, 18 km from Banská Bystrica, 180 km from Bratislava and approximately 220 km from Schwechat Airport in Vienna. Sliac Spa is one of the four spas in the world where natural, isothermic springs well up, containing a high amount of carbonic acid. Patients with cardiovascular diseases are treated and cured here.

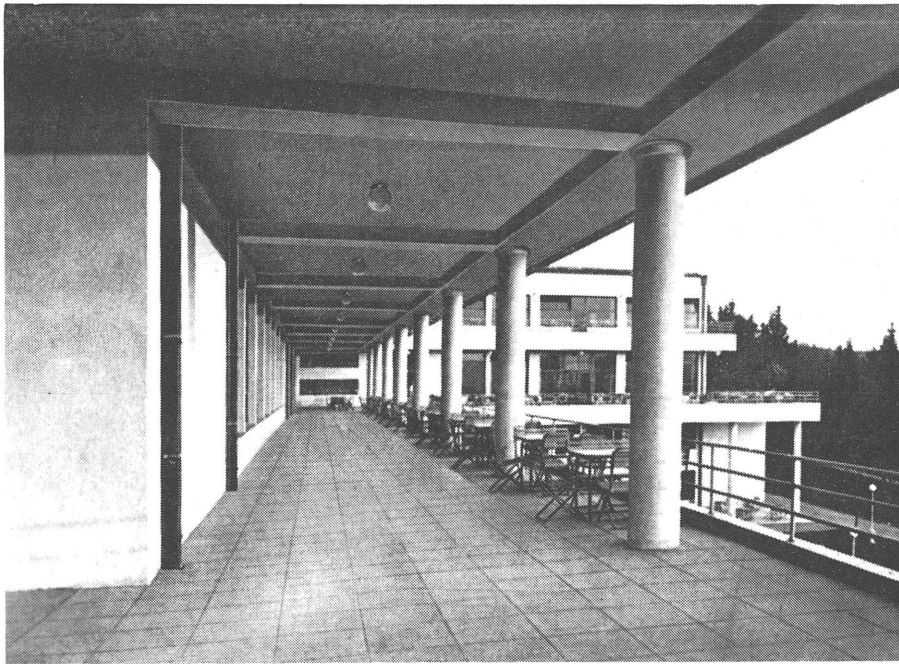
The oldest written document about the spa dates from the year 1244, during the reign of King Bela IV, who in those days appointed Zvolen as a Free Royal City. The historian Georg Agricola writes about this event in his book *De Natura Fossilium*, published in 1546. However, these documents mention the noxious evaporation of the Sliac springs rather than their healing power. The first allusion on the curative effect of the local springs, however, dates from the year 1549.

The development of a structure at the spa became finally realized in the 19th Century. Georg Andreas Lenoir, a manufacturer in Vienna, acquired the spa

in 1882 as his property. The French emigrant changed the spa into one of the most fashionable spots of, at that time, Hungary. However, in 1893 he gave, as a symbol of grace, the spa to Kassel - a German town, which had given asylum to his ancestors. A new stage for the structure had begun, which lasted until 1922, when the spa became part of the territory of Czechoslovakia. Between 1928 and 1929 the architect Rudolf Stockar designed a new regulatory plan for Sliac Spa, as well as projects for the new main building - the 'Palace' House. The project was realized in the first half of the 1930s, and this building will be the venue for our conference. It presents an interesting contribution to the issue of the relationship between Modern Movement architecture and nature. The 'Palace' House is an extensive rectangular complex of airy, partly opened, independently arranged volumes. The length of the building is 138 m and includes a restaurant, a café, a complete theatre, a hostel with 300 rooms, a meeting place and a bathing wing. Through lodges, balconies, terraces and colonnades an outstanding relationship is provided with the surrounding landscape.

The elevated edges of the terraces evoke, especially in the evening when the terraces and the colonnades are illuminated, the image of a transatlantic steamer on a night voyage. The leading architectural idea was a long white shape, whose geometric austerity would contrast with its surroundings. However, its careful setting on the contour-line, the right seize and height makes it look restrained and natural. The interiors and the hand-made furnishing represented a great cultural and architectural value. To our regret, it was destroyed and stolen during the War and, mostly, the socialist





Left: Terraces of Sliac Spa.  
 Bottom: The Organizing  
 Committee of the Fourth  
 International DOCOMOMO  
 Conference.  
 Photo: Klará Kubicková.  
 Page 7: Exterior view of the  
 Spa before extension.

reconstruction period that followed. Only the main body was preserved, as well as the extraordinary value of the relationship between the spaces, that stayed the same.

Besides the main building, 'Palace', Stockar consequently developed projects for adding a hotel (recently it served as a children's sanatorium), 'Slovakia', and a new design for the spa's park with springs, colonnades, sports areas and vistas. The economic crisis restrained the complete realization of Stocker's project soon, but did not end it. The entire complex, despite its indisputable qualities, stayed in the shadow of other great projects of those times, for example the sanatorium for tubercular patients in Vysné Hágy (Frantisek Libra and Jirí Kan, 1932), or the constructions of Jaromír Krejcar and Bohuslav Fuchs in Trencianské Teplice. Only the magazine *Slovensky Staviteľ* published an article on this building, in 1931. The Czech architectural press never paid attention to Stockar's realization. It remained quite unknown until recently when, thanks to the Slovak section of DOCOMOMO, Sliac was internationally presented.

We believe it will please you. This time it will not be the famous Dessau, nor Barcelona, but a little and unknown Slovak spa. For the first time during a DOCOMOMO Conference we will pay attention to the relationship between landscape and the Modern Movement. We could not have made a better choice than Sliac. The past regime did not admit the values of Modern Movement architecture. The Fourth International DOCOMOMO Conference will, with your participation, help to correct the unjust past.

*Stefan Slachta is the rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava.*

The deadline for submitting abstracts has passed. Registration for the Conference will be possible after the mailing of the Final Program and Registration Forms in April 1996. For more information, please contact:

DOCOMOMO Conference Office  
 Slovak Architects Society  
 Panská 15  
 811 01 Bratislava  
 SLOVAKIA  
 tel. +42-7-335167 in 1996: tel. +42-7-5335167  
 fax +42-7-335744 in 1996: fax +42-7-5335744

**Every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and  
 Thursday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., telephone  
 calls can be answered in English.**



# ISC / Technology

## Inquiry results

The research inquiry as distributed in January 1995 has been completed and returned by a number of members from various countries. The amount of responses allows for some preliminary conclusions as regards the main fields of interest of technical experts within DOCOMOMO, and their results. The nature of the various research programs has been determined by three questions addressing respectively the subject and the purpose of the study and the way the research is carried out.

1. The researches are mainly dealing with:  
70% specific materials (concrete, steel, plaster),  
60% constructions (composed materials, building parts such as window frames etc.),  
40% systems (facades, foundations, heating etc.),  
20% construction methodology (industrialization, craft industry, mechanization etc.).

Of the participants, 70% indicated to be involved with various subjects, such as the research of a specific material (marble) as part of a construction (cladding) or a system (facade). While 20% tackled only one subject, 10% did not answer this question.

2. The research objectives are indicated as:  
80% historic documentation (what was there?),  
40% consolidation and conservation (how to save what is left?),  
45% restoration and reconstruction (how to get back what got lost?),  
60% maintenance and managing (how to keep it for the future?).

All participants answered this question. Two thirds tackled more than one option, one third only one.

3. The way the research is being carried out is:  
90% desktop (archive, literature, models etc.),  
15% laboratory (analysis, tests etc.),  
30% hands-on experiments (field tests, experimental applications, case studies etc.),  
30% operational for field use (ready-to-use technical solutions).

Half of the participants indicated more than one option, the other half tackled only one. Everybody answered it.

One can draw a preliminary conclusion that most technology experts are involved in theoretical research of specific materials as these were applied in MoMo buildings. Given the fact that the technological survey of modern architecture is still a very young field, this will be no surprise. Quite encouraging is that a large majority is involved in actual conservation, restoration and maintenance. More than half of the participants indicated that the results of their work are hands-on experiments and operational for actual preservation works.

At the same time the importance of broadening the scope of our work to the complex issues of construction systems and methodologies should be stressed. Also, a stronger emphasis on field work and operational techniques seems appropriate. The fact that we are dealing with a relatively young field of research appears from the fact, that only about a third of the researches mentioned have been concluded and reported so far. Another third is expected to be concluded the coming years, while almost 40% of all projects are in progress.

A next step in the ISC/T programme will be to have the inquiry results more complete by next summer. Experts that did not yet return the completed form will be urged to do so. The ISC/T will consider to link up the data base of the results with similar sources elsewhere to form an international network. Another line to follow will be to link up various researches, to form international programmes. At our next meeting, in November in London, we will formulate some recommendations. Proposals can then be presented at the Conference in Slovakia.

*Report by Wessel de Jonge, chair ISC/T.*

# ISC / Education

## Action program

The efforts of the ISC/E have been and are concentrated on gathering background information from geographically different existing centers for education as well as contacting colleagues, from several countries, in view to prepare the session planned for our next International Conference, in Bratislava.

Our objective is to furnish, as an answer to detected needs and priorities, a suitable action program for the future in matters dealing with education and conservation. Our Fourth International Conference, exploring the aspects of Universality and Heterogeneity, will give the committee an appropriate frame to discuss the following issues:

- a) The educational situation -past and present-on conservation, architecture, urbanism and landscape design referring to the Modern Movement.
- b) The degree to which the ideals of the Modern Movement form part of today's current curricula and the detection of as to where and with what importance this happens. we expect this would render important information to take into account, in order to suggest and orient future training policies.

Organizing an *International Directory of Education Centers* (graduate and postgraduate levels) and *Case Examples of MoMo Conservation* are basic

goals we expect to achieve in the short run and to do so, we are preparing, as a draft, a working document for the meeting in Bratislava.

This is why we again like to draw your attention to the Call for Papers sent by our Slovak colleagues. Please also contact the ISC/E (fax +54-1-797-2514) in case you would like to send suggestions or need information, to allow us to work with as much information as we can collect to fulfill our aims.

*Report by Mabel M. Scarone, chair of the ISC/E.*

## ISC / Urbanism

### Action program

Through their positive response on the questionnaire we sent to the Working parties recently, architects and researchers of already nine countries demonstrated their interest in participating in the International Specialist Committee on Urbanism. Brazil, Venezuela, Israel, Latvia, Finland, the Netherlands, France, England and Germany form our first net of relations in this field, gathering an extensive number of related interests towards modern urbanism. Many researches are being carried out with different approaches.

Therefore, it is necessary to point out perspectives and coordinate efforts to structure progressively and productively the ISC/Urbanism. We suggest for this next procedure:

1. Continuing of the work for the structure of the ISC/U, finding people interested to work on it and establish a format for the ISC/U,
2. Take the experience of the ISC/Register as example of a collective work on a central theme, 'The New Cities Created in the 20th Century'. An initial field of reflection, that inscribes the main urban conceptions and the discussion of the relationship between project, urban dynamics and preservation.
3. Direct our attention to the upcoming International DOCOMOMO Conference in Bratislava, where we will have a meeting of the ISC/Urbanism, concentrating on
  - a) the city as an artifact, addressing the phenomena of City and Nature, City and History and City and Utopia,
  - b) the confrontation of temporality of the Modern Movement and its management,
  - c) the diversity in expression of 20th Century urbanism, related to the polarity of autonomy versus context.

We are counting on comments, suggestions and active participation of all those interested in the ISC/Urbanism.

*Report by Ana Fernandes, member of the ISC/U.*

## Ginzburg's Narkomfin

### Salvation at last?

In the only current Russian architecture magazine *Arkhitekturnyi Vestnik* it was announced earlier this year that Moisei Ginzburg's most significant work, the Narkomfin Flats in Moscow of 1928 has finally been listed as a monument. Back in 1991, DOCOMOMO had already started a campaign to save the building from deterioration. As reported in DOCOMOMO Journal 6, the apartments were largely abandoned and the Narkomfin Flats, once an ingenious solution to a housing crisis, were left in a disastrous condition. The magazine also reports on future plans. Vladimir Ginzburg, son of the architect and director of *Studio AO Mosproekt*, had tried for years to get his father's monument restored. Now the building will be transformed into smart apartments by an American firm of investors, seeking to make themselves popular in Moscow. This company has undertaken to provide, at their own expense, for rehousing of the remaining inhabitants and to restore the building according to a scheme designed by Vladimir Ginzburg. Although the report does not give more information on Narkomfin's future, it looks like salvation at last. Let's hope the decrepit building will be restored into its proper state. -Catherine Cooke.

## Servant's home restored

### Zonnestraal as World Heritage?

On October 6, the former servant's house of Jan Duiker's Sanatorium *Zonnestraal* was officially re-opened by the alderman of Hilversum, Mrs. J. Ubbink-van Aniel. As reported before (see DOCOMOMO Journal 11, p. 7 and Journal 13, p. 36), the restoration has been executed by eight students of the Delft University of Technology, with the help from several experts, as well as fellow students. The servant's house has become an exhibition room and visitor's centre. The current show gives an overview of the restoration project and works.

In the same week it was also announced that the Dutch State Secretary for Cultural Affairs, Mr. A. Nuis, has selected ten monuments as nominees for the World Heritage List. Besides such typical Dutch sites as the Kinderdijk windmills and the Amsterdam canals, three monuments of Modern Movement architecture are being proposed: Rietveld's *Schröderhuis* in Utrecht, Brinkman and Van der Vlugt's *Van Nelle* factories in Rotterdam and Sanatorium *Zonnestraal* in Hilversum. Decisions are expected to be taken at the next session of the World Heritage Committee, which will take place in 1997. -A.D.

## Cities for utopia

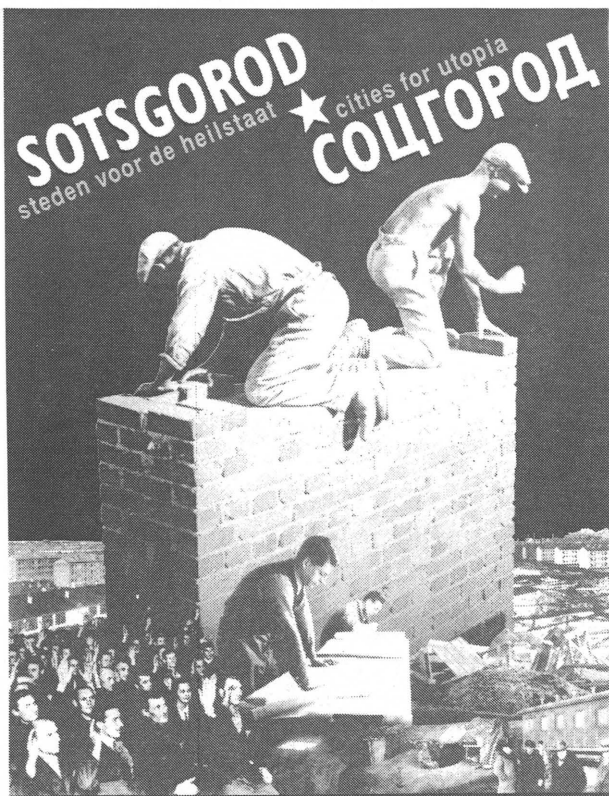
### Documentary on Siberia

#### announcement

The Russian Czars never looked far beyond the Urals. In their days, only prisoners and nomads lived on the inhospitable expanse of the steppe. After the revolution and the civil war, the new regime wanted to cultivate the Russian hinterland as quickly as possible. The wealth of coal and iron ore was to cover the costs of creating a Socialist Utopia. On the bare plains of Siberia, huge industrial cities had to be built to house hundreds of thousands of workers. The Soviet Union itself seemed unable to provide sufficient architects to design cities like these. The old guard was politically unreliable and young architects lost themselves in utopian fantasies. So in the late 1920s and early 1930s, well-known modern architects from Western Europe were invited to build the future workers' paradise. The documentary *Sotsgorod. Cities for Utopia* tells the story of the Western architects in Siberia and also shows the everyday life of the present inhabitants of the cities they built. The first storyline is about their ideals and their demise, the second about the mundane. By using a different style and different material for these two lines, the present confronts the past. In this way the viewer is able to compare the ideals of the architects with the results.

After 1932, the ideas of the European modernists were deemed bourgeois and Stalin decided to return to traditionalist architecture. Most of the Western architects left the Soviet Union disillusioned. They spoke and wrote little about this period in their lives. So, little is known in the West about these cities. The story is being told by the architects themselves, through interviews with the last remaining survivors: Jan Rutgers (worked for the Autonomous International Colony *Kuzbass*, the company founded by his father), the Austrian Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (built infant schools with the Ernst May group) and Phillipp Tolziner, a German who naturalized to Russian and a former member of the Bauhaus Brigade with Hannes Meyer. Other architects (the Dutchmen Mart Stam and Han van Loghem, the German Ernst May and the Swiss Hannes Meyer and Hans Schmidt) speak through letters, articles and lectures. Their words are illustrated by historic photos, archive footage and stylized short scenes. In order to clarify the story, use is made of new shots of the areas, focusing on the architecture. In the second story, the everyday activities of four people in four cities are closely followed. The film reflects on the question whether the architects succeeded in creating an environment in which people can be happy. Has anything remained of their ideals? That is the question with which the film confronts the public.

*For more information: Rongwong, Polderweg 92, 1093 KP Amsterdam, the Netherlands, tel. +31-20-6633566, fax +31-20-6949402.*



## Estonian Functionalism

### Video documentary

An excellent documentary on Modern Movement architecture in Estonia has been produced by a group of colleagues in this Baltic republic. Author Mart Kalm, current coordinator of DOCOMOMO Estonia, leads the viewer back to the roots of local modernism as being designed by architects most of whom were trained in Riga, St. Petersburg and Berlin.

The documentary, professionally directed by Peter Brambat, gives a fascinating overview of the development of an architecture that represented the newly independent state, mainly by showing examples in Tallinn. Special attention is given to the 'limestone-functionalism' of architect Johanson. But also interesting examples of MoMo architecture in the northern city of Narva and along the sea shore in sunny Pärnu have not escaped Peep Laansalu's photography.

The 27' video was produced in 1993 for national broadcasting and has since been used at international exhibitions. Copies at cost-price available from DOCOMOMO Estonia. - WdJ.

# Van Loghem in Russia

## A travel report

by Rudolphine Eggink

The Netherlands based *Stichting Analyse van Gebouwen* (Foundation for Analysis of Buildings) develops several research programs and exhibition projects that have, one way or another, a strong relationship with Russia. First there is an exhibition on the Dutch architect and civil engineer J.G. Wiebenga that is scheduled to tour Russia soon. It is the intention to tour another exhibition, on the architect J.B. van Loghem who worked in Siberia in the early years of the Soviet Union, by the autumn of 1996. The latter project is based on my Ph.D. research on Van Loghem, that is currently being carried out at Delft University of Technology, where also the Foundation has her headquarters. Last May 9-20, Jan Molema, chairman of the Foundation, and I made a trip to Russia where we visited St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, Kemerovo and Moscow. The objectives were to further prepare the exhibition tours in Russia as well as to do research on Van Loghem. The visit started in St. Petersburg, where we had help from Boris Kirikov and Maria Makogonova from the State Museum of the History of St. Petersburg, and both well-known in DOCOMOMO circles.

### Ekaterinburg

With Maria Makogonova, who had agreed to be our interpreter, we then flew to Ekaterinburg. We were welcomed by Lyudmilla Tokmeninova, whom we met earlier at the Second DOCOMOMO Conference in Dessau in 1992. Ekaterinburg is richer than any other Russian town where MoMo buildings are concerned. Its larger part was built in the 1920s, when the site was designated an industrial centre by Stalin, as it is a rich mining area. Today, however, the city faces a big problem in preserving and restoring these buildings. In our discussion with the Dean of the local School of Architecture, Jan Molema proposed to establish a DOCOMOMO expert group to advice how to counter these problems. Of course, money is the main problem.

### Research

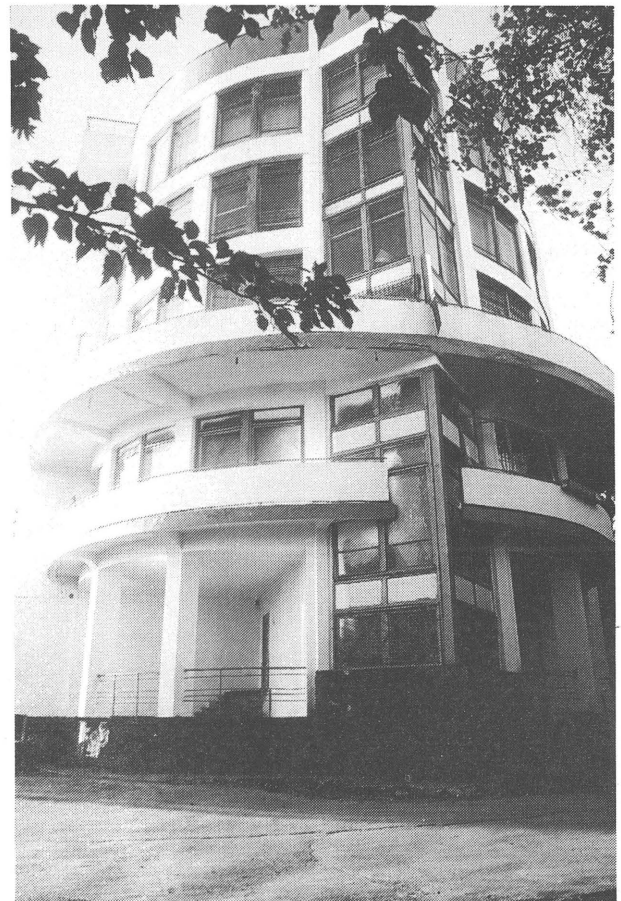
All Modern Movement buildings in Ekaterinburg have been documented by Mrs. Tokmeninova, but nothing could be published yet. The almost complete lack of any funds is such a constraint that even a proper application for assistance from the Paul Getty Fund could not be formulated, and the Fund rejected their request already twice. After initial hesitation, Alexander Kapustin, head of the city archives, is now supporting the research. He was kind enough to show us around the archives on a Sunday morning. Here we found

quite an impressive number of drawings of Modern Movement buildings, unique because cartloads of this kind of material were burnt when this style of architecture fell into disgrace. Mr. Kapustin invited us to survey the collection and consider an exhibition of authentic drawings and documents, to confront the Wiebenga exhibition in the autumn.

### Van Loghem in Kemerovo

After the Revolution the Dutch civil engineer Sebald Rutgers together with his American colleague Herbert Calvert founded, in 1922, the Autonomous International Colony *Kuzbass* (AIK) in Kemerovo, Siberia, the centre of a rich mining area. Their idea was to have socialist workers and engineers from Western countries set an example for backward Russia. The first years, housing was very primitive and scarce, and as the colony grew an architect became necessary. In 1925 Van Loghem was invited to fill this post. He arrived in Russia in the spring of 1926 and worked here for two seasons.

About Van Loghem's activities in Kemerovo little was known. In a lecture after his return to Holland he gave many particularities about the size of the plan, construction and building methods. He introduced housing blocks as the only economical way of providing the houses with water, electricity and more than 2 m. deep foundations to withstand the Siberian frost. He introduced bricks, which were fabricated on site in specially constructed



moulds, but continued to construct as well in timber, according to the Siberian tradition, so that building could continue during the long and severe winters.

It has been suggested that Van Loghems statement about 1000 houses being built during his stay was incorrect and that his activities did not go further than a few blocks of workers houses and some utility buildings. However we found that the text of Van Loghems lectures matches reality quite closely. In the Kemerovo Archives, which have only recently been opened up, there is still a lot of material including drawings.

The interest in Van Loghem in Kemerovo has grown the past few years. A museum will be opened devoted to the colony and a documentary was made earlier this year (see also page 11 of this Journal). The Union of Architects in Kemerovo is keen to host our Van Loghem exhibition. Plans are to have the *premiere* in Kemerovo at the end of 1996, when the AIK museum will open its doors to the public. The director of the new museum, Oleg Zenkov, is campaigning for the designation of all colony buildings as monuments, and is trying to raise funds for restoration. A little help from abroad would be more than welcome.

It looks like DOCOMOMO has work to do in Russia!

*Rudolphine Eggink is a research fellow at the Delft University of Technology. Her dissertation is scheduled for publication in 1996. Text edited.*

Left: Dynamo building in Ekaterinburg.

Bottom: Delapidated housing in Kemerovo.

Photos by Jan Molema.



## ICOMOS Seminar

Helsinki, June 18-19, 1995

During the third week-end in June, a seminar on the preservation of 20th Century heritage was organized by ICOMOS in Helsinki. A very important issue because the international recognition of cultural monuments of the 20th Century is making progress only slowly. At this moment only four of the 411 registered monuments inscribed on the World Heritage List, are constructed in our century. Significant contributions to the meeting were made by members of DOCOMOMO, who were well represented. DOCOMOMO has, so far, listed a large number of items which should appear on 20th Century inventories. However, they have yet to provide a theoretical context which would justify the definition of 20th Century heritage and devise a methodology for its identification. The heritage of the nearly ending century should not be defined only with reference to its architectural forms, but taking into account the broad ecological, social, anthropological, economic and cultural framework which forms the whole. There is a need to stress the importance of memory over considerations of materials.

On the other side ICOMOS also wants to focus on architecture that does not belong to the Modern Movement, especially postwar buildings, town planning and cultural landscapes. Besides that, a large number of architects is being active all over the world. Another problem is that already many buildings and sites of the 20th Century are demolished or changed out of all recognition, before protection, reuse or documentation could even be discussed. Technical issues also cause problems: some constructions or building materials were experimental and it is not yet clear if these could be preserved for the 21st Century. During the *Preserving the Recent Past* Conference in Chicago earlier this year, several interesting conservation methods were already being presented.

Still, a lot of work has to be done; as yet, education and exchange of information are being emphasized. Conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe, drawn up after a congress in Vienna in 1989, were completely agreed and emphasized with extra recommendations. It was also agreed that there will be an on-going process of consultations between ICOMOS, DOCOMOMO and the World Heritage Centre. A second seminar, preferably in a non-European country, was recommended as well. Undoubtedly DOCOMOMO will then be able to again make a valuable contributions for the preservation of 20th Century heritage. -A.D.

*Text based on merged reports by Marieke Kuipers and Timo Tuomi.*

## Finnish modernism

'Protect the Modern', travelling exhibition by the Museum of Finnish Architecture touring Finland from October 4, 1995.

by *Timo Tuomi*

The Architectural Society in Finland has arranged a travelling exhibition on the importance of correct ways to repair and develop the architectural heritage of recent decades. The exhibition was first opened at the Museum of Finnish Architecture, where it was shown from October 4 until November 12, 1995. Along with the exhibition a catalogue with the same name as the exhibition was published. Both the catalogue, with the finest pictures from the exhibition and a very informative text, and the exhibition were planned and written by the architect Yrjö Suunto.

Suunto travelled across Finland for more than two years, and searched and photographed examples of all possible kinds of repair and maintenance problems of modern buildings. The nation-wide selection of pictorial materials also helps in familiarizing the exhibition in different parts of Finland, where it shall be touring for the main part of 1996.

In the exhibition and catalogue both the famous modern monuments and the everyday ordinary buildings are shown side by side with the same kind of problems. This creates a fruitful contrast in many ways. By comparing the more known examples with the ones in our own environment it

is possible to find architectural qualities in our familiar surroundings. It also becomes evident that the problems of maintenance and adaptations to new uses are common to the entire built environment. The exhibition shows clearly that the main threat to modern architecture is not total demolition but rather all kind of repairs and alterations that are being done to buildings without taking into account the original architectural qualities. In a country like Finland, where 80 % of all buildings date from after the Second World War, it is easy to see that the question of modern architecture is much wider than just protecting a few modern 'pearls': it is a question of the quality of the Finnish built environment in general.

A large number of suburbs built in the 1960s and 70s are now undergoing repair, many of them for the first time to any meaningful extent. During those decades a great number of buildings were built rather hastily, using pre-fabricated elements that later were considered unsuitable for the Finnish climate. Other building materials and technical solutions of recent decades have also a very short life. Both the government officials and the building industry face a massive challenge with large suburbs literally crumbling down.

The architectural side of these problems is just as difficult. The exhibition 'Protect the Modern' shows how important it is to evaluate the architectural qualities of each phase of modernism. Without identifying the different features characteristic even to the most commonplace apartment building, there are no architectural guidelines for repairs.

*Timo Tuomi is head of research at the Museum of Finnish Architecture in Helsinki.*



Left: Meilahti elementary school, Helsinki, 1953, by Viljo Revell and Osmo Sipari. Photo: Museum of Finnish Architecture.

## Modern interventions in medieval Tallinn, Estonia

'Modern architecture in the old city 1920-30s' exhibition by the Museum of Architecture at the City Museum of Tallinn; Summer 1995.

by *Karin Hallas*

The question how one is to reconstruct the Old City of Tallinn has again become highly topical, after restitution of many buildings to their former owners and general resumption of construction

activities. What suits the Old City and what does not, and why; how high can ancillary buildings, attachments and superstructures be; what is to be the style of the new buildings -simulating the old styles or proclaiming the new insights? Should the Old City change or go unchanged?

'Should the Old City left untampered with, the material values would perish; should new buildings be erected instead of the old ones, one would be so much poorer in the way of spiritual values. We are witnesses of how the solution to that dilemma triggers off continuous debates in the City Authority, the press and the general public, the said debate however having failed, until now, to lead to any firmly established principles. In the face of fiendish antagonism between individual trends one would be tempted to venture the opinion that there is no solution in that matter acceptable to all and sundry' -wrote Edgar Johan Kuusik in 1926. One has to admit that the 20th Century preference for innovations and progress has, with its modernist spirit, been a challenging tribulation to historic architecture. Nevertheless, one has succeeded in providing adequate solutions -aware of the impossibility to block the relentless course of life and the ongoing building activities. The 1920s and 30s witnessed large scale construction and reconstruction in the Old City, but by today the buildings of those days have integrated into the general appearance of the Old City so harmoniously that the man in the street (on his routine walk about the town) never notices that they date only from the 20th Century. In the eyes of the majority the centre still continues to be a medieval town.

Presenting the projects, photos, blueprints and designs of the new constructions and reconstructions in the Old City of the 1920s and 30s, a recent exhibition produced by the Museum of Architecture in Tallinn provided a chance to have a new and unconventional look at the old City and to create a background for the current debate on new architecture in the Old City. Art historian Karin Hallas was the curator for the exhibition, that was designed by Peeter Mauer. The Museum of History and the Tallinn Inspectorate for Protection of Architectural Monuments are acknowledged for lending historic materials. To stress the actual relevance of the topic, the exhibition was shown in the City Museum in downtown Tallinn.

'We cannot help seeing that the destiny of the Old City is linked to our cultural development as a whole. When our cultural level reaches the heights aspired for, not even modernism will have a deleterious effect on the Old City' -those words by Edgar Johan Kuusik could serve as a fine motto for the exhibition.

*Karin Hallas is an art historian and the director of the Museum of Estonian Architecture in Tallinn.*

## Borg: restrained modernism

'Elsi Borg 1893-1958 Arkkitehti', by Maarit Henttonen, Helsinki 1995, 167 pp., black & white ill., with English summary, ISBN 951-9229-87-6, ISSN 1238-1381.

### announcement

Elsi Naemi Borg (1893-1958) was an intriguing combination of artist and architect, able to merge the achievements of artists and designers in different fields to create total works of art. She was one of the charter members of *Architecta*, an association of women architects which was founded in 1942. Prior to this she had been active in *Tiumstocken*, a society of young female architects.

In her architecture, Borg's artistic spirit was particularly evident in the design of details. Garden design was one of her specialties, and as a skilled draughtswoman she also illustrated books and designed labels and posters, in addition to participating in numerous designs competitions for labels, stage sets, furniture and glass. Elsi Borg's draughtmanship was legendary, and her drawings can be recognized by their distinct dark lines.

As the daughter of a clergyman, Borg was particularly attuned to the design of churches. Her most significant achievement in this area, and one of the masterpieces of Finnish architecture of the 1920s, is the church at Tulumäki in the rural parish of Jyväskylä. It was also the first church project ever to be commissioned to a woman architect in Finland. The distinct and pure forms of the staggered gable are a theme which Borg developed and varied throughout her career. In her church designs, she created an atmosphere in which the natural surroundings contributed to the function of the building.

Elsi Borg's language of form followed prevailing styles in a restrained manner retaining its originality. She was able to project her own personal interpretation into each project which she undertook. Her earliest works express the classicism of the 1920s. Though influenced by the styles of different periods, Borg never really rejected classicism, which is reflected in minor allusions throughout her work. In the 1930s, while working for the Ministry of Defence, Borg adopted features of functionalism, but in a less orthodox manner than younger colleagues, whose education already included the principles of functionalist architecture. Elsi Borg's works followed the general trends of Finnish architecture from the 1920s to the 1950s. Interviewed in 1953, she observed: '...the architect does not create so much himself or herself; the period itself draws its mark through the architect.'



# The Palace of the Soviets

'The Palace of the Soviets - The Paradigm of Architecture in the USSR', by Peter Lizon, Colorado Springs 1992, 244 pp., 293 ill., ISBN 0-89410-004-1 (hardback) 0-89410-049-1 (paperback).

by *Lubomir Mrna*

If you had not experienced those times, you could, nowadays, easily mistake the countless tragedies of the period for a farce. It was this era, which Peter Lizon identified for his scholarly topic. '...as in the other spheres of building socialism, our leader also showed us Soviet architects the road to innovative new types of building'. These were the words of one of the three ex aequo Grand Prize winners in the International Competition for the Palace of the Soviets in Moscow, held in 1931. It was Boris Yofan, who then, in 1933, after two more competition rounds (1932 and 1933), became the chief architect of the never built building and admitted the influence of Stalin on his work and on the destiny of Soviet (and also its satellites) architecture in the ensuing two or three decades. The idiosyncratic slogan on the socialist Content and National Form had been for a long time the shield of the 'victorious' socialist realism for architecture in Eastern Europe. Regardless of the complex reasons and origins or the will of a single tyrant, the shadow of Dzhugashvili had crept across the drafting tables of the Iron Curtain architects. Stalin's directives had to be implemented without any question and sycophantically termed by the bootlickers as work of the genius. In such a 'creative climate', the imagery of the Palace of the Soviets was the interpretation of this vague definition of content and form as legible in the drawings and models of the project. The proposed image of the monumental edifice of traditional architectural elements and familiar shapes richly adorned with realistic art was close to the feelings of an ordinary Russian or Soviet citizen. It was, then, one of the fundamental premises of the total rejection of constructivism in the Soviet Union. While, since 1934, 'for almost twenty years, the *Dom na Mokhovoi*, apartment house on Mokhovaya Street, was the flagship of socialism in Soviet architecture'. The role of the Palace of the Soviets was that of a laboratory model which paved the way towards the change. The design of the Palace of the Soviets became on the one hand a precedent and on the other an illustration of the struggle of Soviet architecture through a labyrinth of the 'creative method of socialist realism', the same method which had made the 'flagship of Soviet

architecture' possible. The title of the book *The Palace of the Soviets - the Paradigm of Architecture in the USSR* captures the essence of the research of the author through the chain of events and their aftermath.

## The author

Peter Lizon, today a professor of architecture at the University of Tennessee, personally experienced both socialism and socialist realism. He comes from the country, which, when he was young, unwillingly entered the path of the socialist experiment. Now, an American, he has frequently been coming back to his homeland Slovakia. In his book he writes: 'Every human being is, to some degree, the product of his own experience...I received my early architectural training in Eastern Europe; the instruction and practice then, in the 1950s, was strongly influenced by architectural design trends in the Soviet Union, specifically by socialist realism'. He is familiar with the background and the atmosphere socialist realism originated from, as well as he has known many of the players in the arena. His thorough knowledge of the setting and the genius loci of the former iron curtain countries is evident in a series of monographic works on Ginzburg, Melnikov, the Vesnin brothers, Havlicek, Karfik and on Kotera or Lechner. He published about the Prague National Theater, about the Villa Tugendhat and about Melnikov's House. He has initiated a campaign to save the Melnikov House and a fundraising effort to complete the restoration of the Villa Tugendhat. Professor Lizon has had contacts with a number of personalities knowledgeable in cultural affairs of the territory. Two experts in the field of research contributed to the book: Professor Soltan and Dr. Shvidkovsky.

## Competition

Stalin's vision of the Palace of the Soviets was no other than the tallest structure in the world: an enormous pedestal for a grand statue of Lenin. 'The height of the full monument was finally set at 415 meters .... The height of the Palace was determined by the dimensions of the crowning sculpture. Numerous sketches and model studies proved to Gelfreykh, Yofan and Shchuko', the chief designers of the project at the design development stage, 'that the pedestal had to be lifted. The dimension of the figure at 50 to 75 meters was recommended by the Construction Committee. Stalin personally changed the height to 100 meters in the final design'. The index finger of the sculptural monstrosity was to measure more than 6 meters in length. Everything was huge, including the number of victims and great losses, despite or precisely in spite of the participation of the leader himself in the situations when Comrade Stalin was there 'to solve the more serious problems'. The loss of the prestige of Soviet architecture acquired by the constructivist avant-garde movement was

Cover of the book.



just one of the serious losses.

The author leads the reader through a maze of the Soviet socio-political conditions following the footsteps of the gigantic chimera almost to the end. The book was published in 1992, just after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The mosaic of the events, their consequences and influences on architecture since the October Revolution of 1917 has, of course, many different pieces. In the climate of the battle between the Old School and the avant-garde architects, in 1931, the idea of the Palace of the Soviets is revived. Following a preliminary competition, the international competition is announced. After a complex procedure, the 1933 Limited Competition for Five Collectives declared Yofan as the winner. Then, according to the resolution of the Palace of the Soviets Construction Committee, the Palace is to become a pedestal for a statue of Lenin. Intensive preparations of construction documents allowed the works to start in 1937. The foundations were laid but, in 1938, all work was interrupted due to World War II.

### Frank Lloyd Wright

The author's attention to the key elements of the subject is remarkable. Apart from the solid foundations in history, he is capable of weaving in his personal observations and experiences in a way quite unusual for scientific literature. His idea to include a dialogue between Frank Lloyd Wright and the domestic participants of the First Congress of the Soviet Architects in Moscow in 1937 illustrates more eloquently the situation in Soviet architecture than anything else could. Wright, a delegate for American architects, disenchanted with the historicist trend of Soviet architecture demonstrated at the Congress as the 'victory' of socialist realism and with the construction of the Palace of the Soviets, proclaimed 'never mind, we will tear it down in ten years'. The Russian

architects, among them Yofan, took the situation calmly, with the humor and fatalism so characteristically Russian. The Moscow Palace of the Soviets was never built, so it did not have to be demolished. Nevertheless, it cannot be eradicated from the history of Soviet architecture. It symbolizes the evolution of an unforgettable era.

### Ensuing development

Dr. Shvidkovsky wrote on Peter Lizon that 'he has been one of the first to try to show that the change marking Soviet architecture after the 1930s sprang not only from the will of Joseph Stalin, but also stemmed from substantial internal causes and consequences. It is a good feature of this book that the author has not confined himself to the 1920s but has outlined the ensuing development of Soviet architecture'. Indeed, the author illustrates these developments with a third round of the competition for a new vision on the Palace of the Soviets (1957-1959), the Posokhin's Palace of Congresses (1959-1960), and on the three architectural competitions for the Central Museum of Lenin in Moscow (1969-1972).

Still, even this author is not able to predict the unexpected and to foresee a future direction for architecture in a country with a legacy of socialist realism and a history of political flip-flops. The Palace of the Soviets at the time has been a paradigm of architecture also in Lizon's old homeland. In the chapter on Stalinist Architecture in Eastern Europe, we read the names of Ivan Kuhn, Milos Chorvat, Jan Svetlik, names familiar to their contemporaries. There is an analysis of architecture and cities this generation knows intimately: Nova Dubnica, Banska Bystrica, Bratislava. Therefore this book deserves to be published in the mother tongue of the author.

*Lubomir Mrna is an architect, a critic and chair of the editorial board of the Slovak magazine Projekt.*

## Searches for a style

'Polski stilia', by Igor Kazus (ed.), papers from a conference of the Shuchev Museum of Architecture with DOCOMOMO Russia, Moscow 1994, 122 pp., black & white illustrations.

by Catherine Cooke

This collection had a special piquancy to me, as a chance to read these papers I should have heard in person, back in March 1993, when shift of dates forced me to leave my own paper to be read by a Russian DOCOMOMO colleague.

The exhibition of the same name celebrated the centenary of one of Russia's leading MoMo architects of the 1920s, Moisei Ginzburg (1892-1946), a founder of Constructivism, editor of the magazine *Contemporary Architecture (SA)* and architect of some distinguished MoMo monuments now at risk (see also DOCOMOMO Newsletter 6 and Journal 9). Papers from the DOCOMOMO Narkomfin-campaign featured in the exhibition to indicate the outside world's concern, and now at last the news seems optimistic.

### Necessary reflection

This is a physically modest publication of the kind that carried the best archival research on MoMo during the late Soviet years, and this reflects the fact it is still a minority interest. Indeed with the collapse of funding, all such academic activity is now even further reduced. As one author here commented to me at the Barcelona Conference, 'the tragedy is that we are the last: we have no pupils'. On the other hand perhaps the imaginative, interpretative approach taken to this Ginzburg exhibition was well calculated to stimulate a wider interest in this architecture and to create a readership for the research which has already been done. That may be more important now than generating new historical detail out of the archives. The small size of the Russian research community on this period tends to mean that such a conference assembles colleagues whose specialisms may not intersect with the conference's particular topic, and that is not entirely productive. The *merit* of such celebrations is surely in focussing our minds on half-lost individuals as creative and professional personalities, on their colleagues and collective ideas, on their oeuvres, and in generating reflections about that legacy. The further we move from the period, and particularly for those like Ginzburg on whom there are still no substantial monographs and from whom few archival materials remain, these moments are too precious to diffuse

into unrelated topics. Thus some papers here could have contributed more to the overall impact by standing back to reflect their own special topics in the mirror of Ginzburg and his notions of 'Style'.

### Zadacha versus zadanie

Most stimulating in relation to my own theoretical interests, and for its illumination of the larger dilemmas of the Soviet profession over this century, is the paper by G.N. Yakovlev. Behind the somewhat enigmatic title of 'Postconstructivism' he draws out the difference between two actually very different conceptions of the 'job' as presented to an architect which are concealed in the two words *zadacha* and *zadanie* which are carelessly used interchangeably. Their common etymology involves the idea of 'being given', of 'what is handed to you'. But as Yakovlev points out, 'what is given' is very different. The notion of 'an open-ended problem to solve' which is implied by the word *zadacha* has very different implications for the extent of an architect's freedom from the notion of *zadanie* as 'a defined task or exercise to perform'.

Though he does not develop this topic in relation to today, Yakovlev, as I see it, has identified here the crucial dilemma now facing Russian architects who trained and practiced in the Soviet era. Without this succinct conceptual vocabulary to describe it, Western architects now working on Russian collaborations have repeatedly commented to me on precisely this. They come seeing the problem as a *zadacha*: multi-factoral and open-ended, whilst Russian colleagues are familiar with the unrealistic fantasy and the habitual *zadanie*, but quite unfamiliar with the 'real' territory of possibilities in between. Thus the process of closing down options which caught the Modern Movement unawares is now being reversed, and architects whose practice has been limited to the *zadanie* now lack the tools to handle reality as a *zadacha*. As I see it, the same problem affects the conceptual capacity to make use of their own history in teaching. The kind of broader perception about their own history produced here by Yakovlev touches these larger conceptual issues and is, I suggest, even more valuable to Russian architecture at present than archival work for its own sake. But given the Modern Movement's position in the middle of that close-down, the sort of detail in other papers here, which illuminates these opportunistic compromises out of which real architectural progress grows, is its most valuable support.

I only regret having to wait two years and more to learn what was said on that day, and not to have been there to develop this debate in person. It is therefore most valuable that the Museum under DOCOMOMO chairman Vladimir Rezin have devoted their scarce resources to this publication.

*Catherine Cooke is a lecturer in design in the Faculty of Technology at the Open University in the United Kingdom. Text shortened by the editor.*

# Russian Avant-Garde

## An educational challenge

'Russian Avant-Garde - Theories of Art, Architecture and the City', by Catherine Cooke, London 1995, 208 pp., over 450 illustrations, ISBN 1-86490-390-X.

### *announcement*

Behind the dramatic architectural images and innovative buildings of Russia in the 1920s were challenging and perceptive theoretical ideas that still have enormous relevance.

Whilst intended to provide a readable account for anyone interested in architecture or the period, the book is particularly aimed at architects and students for whom the design issues raised remain live ones today. Therefore we invited a professional colleague of the author as well as an architectural student of today to review the book.

## Missing links

*by Mabel Scarone*

From a very first glance into the contents of this study, divided into twelve chapters that cover one of the crucial historic moments for the Arts and Architecture of the late 19th and the 20th Century, the reader is assured he will find (at last) 'missing links' to understand the blurred parts of the picture that, beginning with the pioneer work of Nicolaus Pevsner and Siegfried Giedion, gradually began to take shape as a mature form of history of the Modern Movement.

Catherine Cooke masters her subject, not only because her knowledge of the Russian language has allowed her to use original period documents (either partly translated or unknown to date), but also because her solid background in history and the use of the sound critical attitude of a trained architect, are all merits explaining the results, synthesis, and sound structure of her book. Graduated as an architect at the University of Cambridge, she later completed her Ph.D. by delving into subjects concerned with the planning and design theories in the Soviet Union. This turned to be the mainstream of her continuous research activities, parallel to those of teaching design at the Open University in Cambridge. For scholars who have been interested in the analysis of this important period, Catherine Cooke

is no newcomer. Already in 1984, AD Profile n° 55 registered the pioneering study of the avantgardist 'Chernikhov - Fantasy and Construction'.

The exhibition at the Pompidou Center on this same subject in 1985 was later to be followed again in the AD series (Vol. 59 - 1989) - by her analysis on 'Russian Constructivism and Iakov Chernikhov'. The study of 'The Avant Garde - Russian Architecture in the 20's' (AD - Profile n° 93 Ed. Andreas Papadakis - 1991) was to be now only a step away from the present volume, the outcome of almost 25 years of continuous research of Russia's contribution to the Modern Movement. The adopted approach into this study of the recent past could produce nothing but an absorbing account of the development of the important architectural ideas and principles put forward by the no less important figures of the Russian avant-garde.

Quotings from original documents give strength to her arguments and in doing so, the author succeeds to give both architects and scholars a much needed book especially for the present and sometimes confusing moment of MoMo's history. I cannot but agree with the author when in her foreword she hopes that this study, meant '... for students and schools ... may also be a textbook in the sense of providing the raw material for lecture courses and the starting point of dissertations...'. She has no doubt managed also '... to spotlight some individuals who deserve far more detailed study in their own right ...', thus showing others a number of new paths to follow.

As closing remarks we should remember that for the Modern Movement new design methods and values such as site and programs, responsibility for functionality and economics of construction, were all considered achievements that should be read from the resulting architectural form.

In Russia the Soviet architects, as Catherine Cooke shows, emphasizing the aspects of usefulness and technology in the aftermath of a revolution, meant to solve the problems of a new society through designs for a new architecture. As a result of this the theory and practice in teaching methods and philosophies developed then, have not been forgotten in this research. The use of three-dimensional models, a still valuable tool today, together with other grass-root forgotten principles seem to give 'Russian Avant-Garde, Theories of Art, Architecture and the City' yet one more use that the author perhaps should consider: allow the book to be a working tool to back a special DOCOMOMO coordinated training program in different schools of architecture. A worthwhile future and exciting exercise for our ISC on Education!

*Mabel Scarone is an architect, a professor at the University of Buenos Aires, Faculty of Architecture and chair of the DOCOMOMO ISC on Education.*

# The Soviet schools

## Architectural education in the 1920s

by Camiel Berns

Catherine Cooke has written a most readable and informative work on the ideas and backgrounds of both tutors and students of the Soviet schools of architecture. Starting with its precursors and their social and cultural atmosphere, the book provides a general idea of the Russian avant-garde. The introduction is the handle with which you can select subjects of interest. The documents added to the chapters enable to study these subjects in greater detail, thus keeping the main text clean and simple.

In the foreword, the author expresses the hope that this book may be used for and by students of the schools of today. In that light it is interesting to study the architectural education in the Soviet Union of the 1920s and to see what can be learned from it.

### Pre-Revolutionary period

Russia had more than one architectural school of some interest in the 1920s. It all started in the chaotic late Czarist period when sheer talent was an important criterion for obtaining entry to the schools of architecture. The result was a rather free minded spirit. But as the pressures on the government came from students of law and philosophy rather than from those of architecture, nothing really changed in architectural education until after the revolution of 1917.

By April 1918 the Soviet Government's Council of

People's Commissars, Sovnarkom, had decided the whole academic system of art education had to go. The academies were reformed into the so-called Free Studios, which were open to everyone, regardless of prior training, which had total freedom of pursuits.

Teachers, preferably the so called 'living classics', were invited by the students to run a studio. In the following years chaos reigned. Not only the constraints had gone, but also the professional teaching of artistic skills. People protested and another national reorganisation followed. The two Moscow Free studios were amalgamated into the 'Moscow Higher State Artistic and Technical Studios' or *Vkhutemas*. The aim of this school was to produce 'master-artists of higher qualification to work in industry' as the government saw great need for them.

In Petrograd (St. Petersburg) a parallel process recreated the Academy. Its foundation course was an attempt to find a middle course between the highly 'formal' teaching in Moscow and the old Academy.

### Asnova: the rationalists

In Moscow Ladovsky, Krinsky and Dokuchaev formed the first new architectural society, the *Asnova*. A reorganisation at the *Vkhutemas* gave them more power as the entry path for all students was a basic course in a form they had created: first an abstract exercise with rhythm, metre, proportion, contrast and nuance, mass and stability, then a task with a 'brief' using that formal theme. Through student exhibitions the essentials of this approach became known throughout the architectural community.

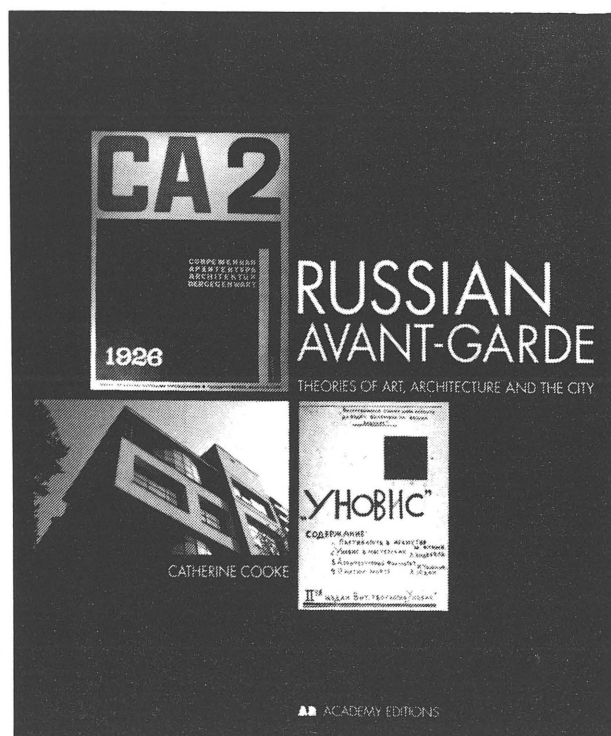
Above this foundation level there were also other philosophies than *Asnova's* Rationalism being taught at *Vkhutemas*, which ranged from relics of historicism to constructivism.

### OSA: the constructivists

But the constructivist architects had their powerbase elsewhere, in the faculty of architecture of the Moscow Higher Technical College MVTU. In 1917 the MVTU had inherited the Polytechnic, the Parallel school to IGI in Petrograd. The curriculum at MVTU was more conventional but also more liberating for the practical architect than that at *Vkhutemas*. Alongside its industrial specialism, architecture at MVTU had two thematic disciplines, civil building and housing, and town planning. In their first year the students mainly got trained in representation and in their second year they began their main discipline: architecture. The philosophy at MVTU was that an architect is 'an artist with a technical education'. In this environment the constructivist architecture group OSA was formed.

### Malevich

The Leningrad (former Petrograd) equivalent of MVTU was the faculty of architecture of the



Institute of Civil Engineers LIGI. Their teaching method stressed the development of projects through models. In contrast to the work of LIGI-MVTU their schemes were not ignoring the 'old gods'. This faculty offered a different environment of artistic experiment to its students than *Vkhutemas* in Moscow. The most significant being the presence of Malevich and his pursuit of suprematism in architecture. In 1923, Nikolsky, the man who reformed the curriculum, formed a small 'office' with his pupils and other young architects. Together they worked on projects, often for competitions, each 'contributing to the thought and work of each other'. As Nikolsky was head of OSA Leningrad, the teaching at LIGI owed much to Moscow constructivism, but they were also open to other teaching methods. Even so much that Vesnin, one of the *Vkhutemas* constructivists accused Nikolsky of getting too close to *Asnova*, that his work was done 'more formally than functionally'.

### Lack of facilities

In the late 1920s the main problem for all schools of architecture was the lack of material resources. Now they all had to prove their relevance. As a result there was a great competition between the schools. Finally they came to the conclusion that they had to prove their complementarity. At the *Vkhutemas*, Dokuchaev followed the abstract *Asnova* line whereas Ginzburg followed the constructivist line of OSA.

However, the productivity of the schools was considered still too small. The Central Committee of the Party thought the best solution to this problem was to admit more of 'peasant and worker origins'. But the lacking output of technical personnel was the result of a lack of facilities rather than a lack of candidates. In 1928 *Vkhutemas* became an institute called *Vkhutein*, the role of the basic course was further reduced while criticism increased.

All these problems are in stark contrast with the quality of the work generated in these schools. As can be read from the memoirs of two veterans of *Vkhutemas*, the personal contact between teachers and students was very good. This created a climate of creativity and debate. The same thing happened in Leningrad.

### Education outside the schools

The students came to work alongside a professor at home. They discussed the problems, the trends and the tasks of contemporary Soviet architecture. Their main aim was to work out a theoretical position. At the same time they could learn from the practical work and contacts of their professor. The big event for every student was his or her diploma project, which was discussed extensively with their teacher and fellow students. As the book shows, the Moscow studios were the inspiration for schools all over the Soviet Union. The work

produced there is still of great importance. But the teachers greatest merit was that 'they took key streams of their thinking so far as to mark out the next horizon' (Catherine Cooke).

### Quality and quantity

With just five years of training, the Soviet students were only trained well in a few aspects of architecture. These aspects depended on their choice of school and teacher. And although material resources and facilities were not very good, the results were very rich.

From this we can conclude that a well organized education with good facilities and material resources is not synonymous with good education. Due to the enormous numbers of students today there is very little contact between professors and students. In this book we can see that just that was the greatest power of the architectural education of the Russian avant-garde. Because we are being trained to comply with the requirements of society, which means solving problems, not much attention is being paid to theory. People can work their way through university without ever having the opportunity to discuss their ideas. Architectural education has become a system to produce people who produce buildings.

Perhaps things are changing. More and more, groups of students are no longer satisfied with their education. Sometimes aided by a teacher, they develop extra curricular activities to broaden their horizon, to expand their education and to have more fun in architecture.

*Camiel Berns is a student in architecture at the Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands.*

## Events & Exhibitions

### Lina Bo Bardi; retrospective

Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki, Finland

December 13, 1995 - February 4, 1996

### Piet Mondrian 1872-1944

Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA  
October 1, 1995 - January 23, 1996

### Third Jerusalem Conference on Heritage 'Making Historical Cities Liveable'

Jerusalem, Israel

March 25-28, 1996

inquiries: Israel Architects Association

200 Dizengoff St.

P.O. Box 3082

Tel Aviv 61030

Israel

## Katowice's nearly forgotten modern architecture

'Architektura Katowic w latach międzywojennych 1922-1939', by Waldemar Odorowski, Katowice 1994, 343 pp., English and German summary, 106 b/w. & 4 col. ill., ISBN 83-85039-05-8.

by *Zdzislawa and Tomasz Tolloczko*

Dr. Waldemar Odorowski's book meets the demands of readers interested in the history of modern architecture, which is so very strong at present. It presents the history, in words and images, of nearly forgotten architecture. The majority of recent publications on Polish modern architecture so far only used examples from Warsaw, Cracow and Gdynia, while Katowice had been neglected. Obviously we are not referring to the numerous articles on Katowice scattered over various journals, which, though hardly available, the author still comprised in his work. Let us emphasize here the high level of methodology and research procedures the author has applied. The scientific consultation was done by professor Ewa Chojecka who also wrote the introduction to the book. Professor Chojecka holds the chair of History of Art at the University of Silesia. She is well-known for investigating and popularizing art and architecture in Upper Silesia. Odorowski starts by presenting the characteristic economic and social-cultural conditions of this region, which factors affect any type of architecture

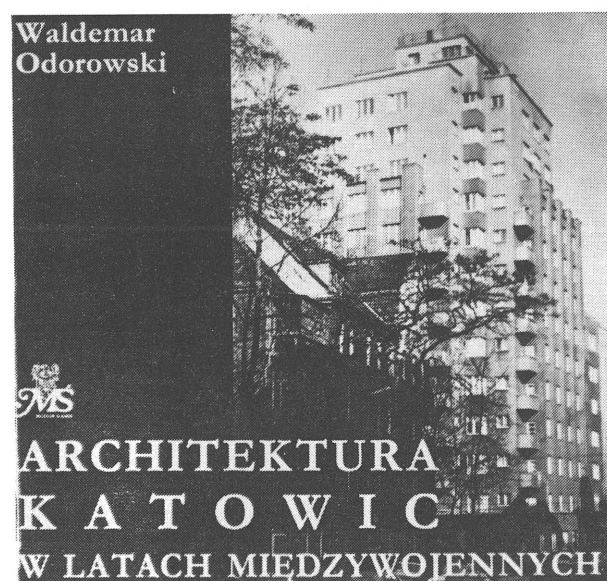


and building style, including those of Katowice. It should be noted that the architecture of Katowice, the capital of Upper Silesia, was created under specific political conditions and was inspired by artistic influences from Wroclaw and Berlin, Prague and Vienna, Warsaw and Cracow. At the same time it achieved its own original style. In the architecture of Katowice we can observe a significant evolution of forms: from eclectic through avant-garde to classic modernism. On the other hand, however, we can also notice features characteristic of Polish avant-garde architecture, such as traditional semi-modernism, national expressionism or the influence of cubism and *Art Deco* up till 1939. In our opinion, the most valuable architecture of this city are the buildings that were created under the predominant influence of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus. Odorowski presents numerous examples of buildings in a genuine and international functional style. No wonder, when the contribution and participation of Polish architects in CIAM (for example Helena and Szymon Syrkus, Barbara and Stanislaw Brukalski and Bohdan Lachert) is taken into account.

A particular valuable part of the book are the illustrations. With great care for the inventory, the author has collected over a hundred photographs of various objects including some hardly known examples. Waldemar Odorowski's book is a significant chapter in the historiography of modern architecture and a very important, even invaluable contribution to the documentation of this architecture.

*Zdzislawa Tolloczko is an assistant professor at the Institute of History of Architecture at Cracow University of Technology. Tomasz Tolloczko is a retired associate professor of Cracow University of Technology.*

Left: Period photo of the State Railways Apartment house, by T. Michejda, 1930.  
Bottom: Book cover.



# DOCOMOMO Library

## New acquisitions

Recently, the DOCOMOMO International Secretariat received a number of interesting publications from specialists in Modern Movement historiography and modern conservation. Unfortunately, these books arrived at the International Secretariat too late for an extensive review. In order to inform our readers properly, an overview of the latest acquisitions is listed below:

### **Mart Kalm: 'Arhitekt Alar Kotli', Tallinn 1994**

In this monograph the work of the architect Alar Kotli (1904-1963) is appraised. Kotli belongs to the second generation of Estonian architects, and is one of the most brilliant representatives of that generation. The author describes Kotli's work as a journey from modern architecture in the 1930s to traditionalism (free development) and, after World War II, from traditionalism (for example architectural stalinism) back to modern architecture (public policy of architecture led by the government). Kolti passed all stages moderately, remaining a pragmatic architect who went along with the epoch. His most exceptional work is the Tallinn Song Festival Stage of 1958, an innovative construction because of its shell structure similar to a hyperbolic parabola. Text in Estonian, with English summary.

### **Michael Spens: 'Viipuri Library, Alvar Aalto', London 1994**

The subject of many publications, including the DOCOMOMO Journal, the history of Alvar Aalto's Viipuri Library has now been documented in one single book. Besides describing in detail how Aalto created his most famous building, the author also takes up the latest developments on the restoration of the library. In order to restore the Viipuri Library in strict conformity with the author's idea, and because of its outstanding place in the world of architecture, the Russian and Finnish sides decided in 1993 (after a key seminar, reviewed in Journal 10) to join forces. The restoration principle is to save as many original elements as possible, which is a difficult task. However, the main problem is finding sufficient funds; many gifts and contributions have already been received so far, and the restoration works have started. Text in English.

### **Katalin Kiss: 'Industrial Monuments, Our Budapest', Budapest 1993**

This small booklet describes what has become of the many industrial monuments in the city of Budapest, Hungary. The majority of these buildings do no longer sustain their original function; a situation often similar to monuments of the Modern Movement as well. However, some of these

buildings in Budapest are being reused. An example of giving an industrial building a new function (thereby avoiding its demolition) is the water tower on Margaret Island, that now serves as an exhibition gallery for contemporary art. Text in English. Booklet also available in German and Italian.

### **Dennis Sharp (ed.): 'Connell Ward & Lucas', London 1994**

Connell Ward and Lucas was one of the most consistent, controversial and successful architectural practices working in England in the 1930s. Their work was uncompromisingly modern in its clarity and form giving. Their house designs are now much in vogue. Many have been listed as buildings of exceptional importance. Not since the 1930s has there been such a widespread interest in their buildings and in the techniques they adopted. This excellent overview serves as a catalogue to the DOCOMOMO-UK exhibition on these outstanding British modernists that has been reviewed in Journal 12. On November 25 the exhibition will open for a second show in Mendelsohn and Chermayeff's Bexhill Pavilion, until January 1996. The catalogue is just a prelude to the comprehensive publication that is currently being prepared by Dennis Sharp. His expert and witty lecture on Connell, Ward and Lucas last November 1st in London has been just a promise for the future. Text in English.

## Industrial sites redeveloped

Symposium, January 11, 1996

Right at the start of the Industrial Heritage Year, a symposium on the redevelopment of industrial sites will be organized by the Government of Limburg at Maastricht, the Netherlands, in coordination with the Delft based Foundation for Analysis of Buildings (STAG).

The east bank in Maastricht is the former site of the *Céramique* factories, that is presently being revitalized on the basis of a masterplan by architect Jo Coenen. The way cultural and industrial heritage is incorporated in the redevelopment of the area will be evaluated in order to reassess incentives, policies and design strategies for similar projects in the future. Speakers will be Joost Schrijnen, head of the Rotterdam Planning Department and responsible for the extensive redevelopment of harbour areas at the *Kop van Zuid*; Michelle Provoost, in charge of the urban research for *Leidse Rijn*; and Frits van Voorden, author of a historic analysis of urban structures at the *Céramique*, Maastricht. -WdJ.

*More information from: Jan Bernard Vercauteren, Padualaan 6, 6226 BL Maastricht, The Netherlands tel. +31-43-3622961.*



## Two monographs on Lurçat

'l'Architecte André Lurçat', by Pierre et Robert Joly, Paris 1995, 263 pp., colour & b/w ill., ISBN 2-7084-0475-X.

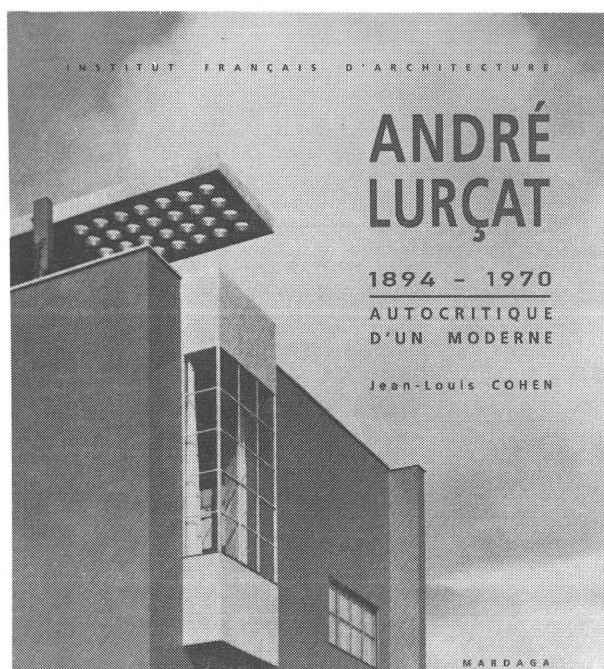
'André Lurçat 1894-1970, Autocritique d'un Moderne', by Jean-Louis Cohen, Liège 1995, 309 pp., colour & b/w ill., ISBN 2-87009-598-8.

### *announcement*

One year after his 100th birthday, two richly illustrated monographs that include rare and previously unpublished archive material have been published on André Lurçat. The French architect had a career that lasted more than 40 years, which has resulted in projects all over France, including his famous reconstruction of war-struck Maubeuge. The first monograph, by Pierre et Robert Joly, is an extensive survey which reveals the affection of the authors for the architect and his work.

The second one, by Jean-Louis Cohen, analyses the political and social ideas of Lurçat -who published several essays and books on these issues- and how these writings are related to modern architecture in general and his projects in particular.

Although different in approach, both publications examine the possibilities, as well as limitations, that Modern Movement architecture offered to Lurçat. Although both publications are in French they certainly deserve wider dissemination through an English translation.



## Demolition update: Allen Parkway Village Social Housing in Houston, USA

*by Marta McBride Galicki*

In August a preservation specialist from the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation came to Houston for a consultation in order to determine what preservation issues needed to be addressed at Allen Parkway Village,<sup>1</sup> a 37-acre Modern Movement social-housing community, and the extensive surrounding historic properties of the Fourth Ward. The meetings were part of the still-ongoing consultation process whereby the plans of the Housing Authority of the City of Houston (HACH), the owner of the property, to demolish 80% of the village are reviewed by the Advisory Council in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Allen Parkway Village Resident Council (and its Advisory Board) have fought steadfastly since the early 1980s to have the complex rehabilitated instead of demolished and the general landscape plan retained. The ultimate goal of the consultation process, from the Advisory Council representative's perspective, is to reach a 'fair compromise' to the 15-year controversy so the project can move forward. This is easier said than done: Ms. Vaughn, the preservation specialist, is now back in Washington trying to hammer out the first draft of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that all parties will agree to and sign. Once signed, it becomes a legally binding document. Supporters of Allen Parkway Village are not optimistic about the agreement and fear much of the village will be sacrificed.

### **Preserving the recent past**

The review process requires the Council to determine how and if HACH has weighed the issue of historic preservation against its other project goals. This is an interesting point: HACH desire to demolish 80% of the buildings at Allen Parkway Village was based on a 1984 report. This was before Allen Parkway Village was even placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 and does not reflect the village's ever-growing value as an outstanding example of public housing from the era of the New-Deal. The village designed by MacKie and Kamrath, is now especially significant for its modern architectural design, based on pioneering Dutch and German prototypes of the interwar period and as Houston's earliest surviving example of a public 'building' in the Modern Movement style. HACH's 1984 recommendations could not be possible have predicted or taken into account the exciting and

on-going re-evaluation of modern architecture and of landscape architecture as the 'hot topics' in prominent national and international preservation and academic circles today. One of the most difficult aspects of this case for traditional preservationists, is that time has passed and attitudes have drastically changed as modernism continues to be reassessed, in many cases, by a new generation of social and architectural historians. Indeed, too many preservationists in Houston do not consider Allen Parkway Village to be a preservation case because they do not believe or do not want to believe that the buildings are 'historic': they have yet to embrace the idea that the architectural heritage of the Modern Movement is a burning preservation issue.

### Demolition

Although HACH has yet to commence its own legally-mandated master planning process for Allen Parkway Village, it broached the possibility of leasing portions of the site, and stated that developers would build new housing on the Historic District property. This is part of a broader program to revitalize the adjoining Fourth Ward-Freedmen's Town Historic District neighborhood with large-scale development, to be promoted and subsidized by the City through the office of the Mayor's newly-appointed 'volunteer' Housing Advisor. He believes that high-quality affordable housing would not be as marketable if all the contributing historic buildings were rehabilitated rather than demolished. The Resident Council continues to question why or how demolition of 80% of the site is being discussed if the master planning process has not begun. During the consultation, a Texas Historical Commission staff member suggested the *retention* of 80% of the site and supported the contention that any replacement buildings should be of like material and scale; he also emphasized the importance of preserving the landscape plan. Because of its own unease with HACH's master planning process, the Houston Chapter of the master plan before demolition is considered.

### Landscape design

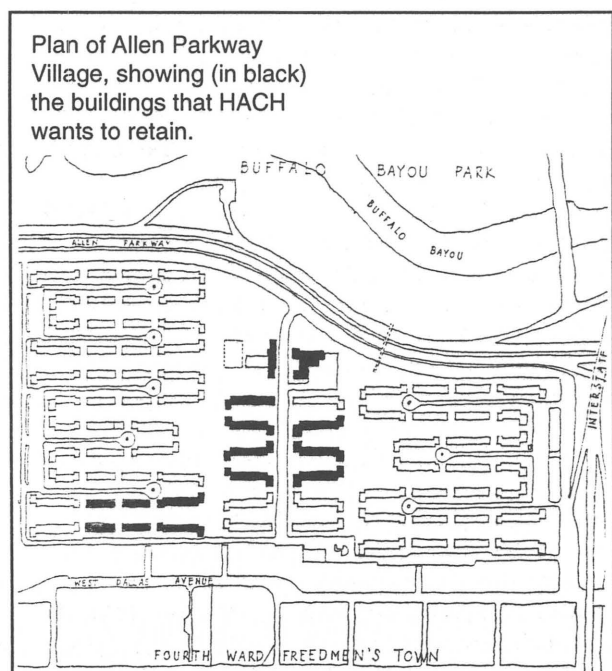
HACH and HUD seek 'to balance their other program goals' by preserving 14 of the 82 buildings on site: the Project Center Building and one-half of the Community Building; 7 of the 12 three-story apartment buildings that flank Valentine Street, the live oak tree-lined street that is the focus of the village; and 6 of the 8 two-story apartment blocks in the far southwest corner. This pattern of spatially discontinuous and disconcerting preservation seems arbitrary to anyone with a design-literate eye, but it would free all of the village frontage along the main roads for redevelopment. Ms. Vaughn was very concerned with Allen Parkway Village's site plan, which includes magnificent and extensive green space and rows of trees and

buildings; its importance in African-American history; and its relationship to a group of people who have lived there and will continue to live there.'

HACH proposed to 'mitigate' its destruction of 80 percent of Allen Parkway Village by offering to fund minimal, somewhat superficial, projects in order to record the architectural and cultural memory of an entire community. These feeble gestures include: Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation of the property prior to demolition, performing oral history interviews to 'willing' residents, and installing a permanent exhibition of the history of the site in a new Community Building.

### Lack of maintenance

Throughout the consultation meetings, HACH and HUD provided a long list of the planning and construction flows that in their eyes justify demolition and that allegedly make rehabilitation of Allen Parkway Village unacceptable. Structural surveys show that the buildings are sound. Common sense indicates that most of the problems at Allen Parkway Village stem from HACH's lack of routine maintenance over many years. The further notion that low-income families are better served in non-project style housing dispersed about the city is also widespread. In certain circumstances these notions may be quite valid. But their validity is by no means universal. It is crucial to understand that it is the Allen Parkway Village residents who have fought to preserve their community: for them, like any closely-knit neighborhood, there is a strong sense of the 'power of place'. It is the residents who nominated it to the National Register to demonstrate that the village is not a sociopathic environment but an architectural, planning and historical landmark.





Administration Building,  
MacKie and Kamrath,  
1940-44.  
Photo by Paul Hester.

### Support

Although the residents are dedicated and valuable allies of local and national preservation organizations, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, they have not yet received the support one would expect from them. The National Trust will not even permit an article to be written about Allen Parkway Village in its Historic Preservation Magazine, despite its upcoming annual meeting in nearby Forth Worth, Texas. This is especially distressing because the Allen Parkway Village case is exactly the kind of case with which the National Trust usually validates its broad-based mission and its alleged commitment to African-American preservation issues. The National Trust's surprising posture is due to the political climate that exists in Washington, DC, today: various members of Congress want to totally eliminate federal funding for the National Trust. Unfortunately, many of these politicians tend to be Texans and strong supporters of Houston's Mayor Lanier, the man behind the demolition proposals. Locally, the Board of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance has yet to reach a consensus over Allen Parkway Village primarily because of the contentious real-estate and housing politics of the case.

### Community Campus

Working with community supporters, the Resident Council of Allen Parkway Village has devised the Community Campus proposal. This is an innovative, intelligent and responsible programmatic proposal. It entails preservation and rehabilitation of the buildings and spaces of Allen Parkway Village, converting from HACH's project-style management to a *resident-managed, mixed-income, mixed-use community*. The principles of the Community Campus proposal reflect those of HUD's HOPE VI program, which states in part: 'Effective solutions will grow from local experiences and the effective collaboration of the Grantee with residents, ... [and] HOPE VI is intended to address the condition of people and communities, and not merely of the bricks and mortar.'

In 1994, when the Resident Council met with the secretary of HUD, Mr. Henry Cisneros, he endorsed their Community Campus proposal and promised that none of the village's site would be sold to developers. Recently he has avoided all contact with Allen Parkway Village proponents. Last month Mr. Cisneros introduced the Community Campus Plan (created by the Resident Council of Allen Parkway Village) as a national blueprint for all public housing projects in America. Yet, he will not stand up to Mayor Lanier because Cisneros, as former mayor of San Antonio, Texas, is his political crony.

### Preservation pioneer

The residents of Allen Parkway Village are committed preservationists. They have made historic preservation central to their struggle to maintain their homes and determine the future of their community. Meanwhile, all Houstonians, as temporary caretakers of this city's and this nation's modern architectural heritage, must somehow begin to recognize that they are living in and responsible for a 20th Century showcase-city that is a design resource of international consequence. Houstonians have the right, and the obligation, to lead the current modern architectural preservation debates at the highest and most informed levels. An enlightened approach to modern preservation philosophy together with Houston's livable city movement, could put Houston on 'the cutting edge' rather than on the sidelines due to its own underestimation of its newly defined role.

*Marta McBride Galicki is a member of the Allen Parkway Village Resident's Council Advisory Board.*

Send your letter of concern to: Marta McBride Galicki, 2029 Swift Boulevard, 77030 Houston, Texas USA.

Note:

1. See also DOCOMOMO Journal 13, page 8.

## Postwar Rotterdam

### Open Monuments Day 1995

by *Birgitte Saugé*

During a study tour to Holland this fall, I was lucky to attend the Open Monuments Day in Rotterdam. Due to its hallmark as a center of postwar modern architecture, Rotterdam had chosen to focus on buildings of the 1950s and the Reconstruction of the city after the War. Just one week later the municipality of Rotterdam decided to list three bank buildings in the local register of historic buildings, in order to reassure protection of these Reconstruction monuments. All three buildings were built right after the War and served as banks until recently. On the Monuments Day ten buildings, many listed monuments and more unknown buildings were open to the public. Also five of the architect's offices involved in the postwar Reconstruction were open to visitors. Everywhere eager guides were ready to show you around. The program also included a guided tour by bus to the residential areas from the 1950s, actually a copy of a tour from the days that the areas were new.

All in all a very interesting and popular way of focusing on our modern heritage!

*Birgitte Saugé is head of the archives of the Museum of Architecture in Oslo, and a member of DOCOMOMO Norway.*

## First Brazilian DOCOMOMO Seminar

by *Anna Beatriz Galvão*

From June 12 to 14, 1995, Brazilian experts in modern architecture from different regions of the country met in Salvador, Bahia, to participate in the First Brazilian DOCOMOMO Seminar. Important universities and preservation offices were represented in this meeting, with as a main purpose to discuss the 'Universality and Diversity of the Modern Movement in Architecture and Urbanism in Brazil'. It was an opportunity to identify the different approaches on the theme, as well as to prepare our contribution to the International Conference next year in Bratislava.

Right after the opening section the first lecture was held by the art critic Aracy Amaral of the University of São Paulo, who presented aspects of the Brazilian Modern Movement in the artistic field,

making a bridge with architecture. Concluding the first day, professor Jorge Francisco Liernur from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, exposed very well the role of the *mestizo crossbred* and the neo-colonial as a product of the international Modern Movement, in spite of their regional speech. On the second day, the philosopher Otilia Arantes of the University of São Paulo discussed the autonomy of regionalism, emphasizing its political role within the capitalist economy and, therefore, the aim of universality implicit in every Modern Movement thought. To conclude the seminar, Roberto Segre, professor of the University of Havana, Cuba, exposed a great number of examples of Latin American architecture and their regional yet rationalist codes.

It was a pleasure to have these special guests present during all the sessions and debates of the seminar, that was divided into three basic issues: the preservation of modern sites and buildings, its concepts, and the regional aspects of modern architecture and urbanism. The majority of the papers provided new aspects of the Modern Movement, especially unknown architectural projects, contributing to our knowledge of modern architecture, and to extend its historiography, usually restricted to the same examples and protagonists (Costa, Niemeyer, Reidy, etc.).

Concerning the regional aspects, two main trends were perceived during the seminar: the first one defended a certain autonomy of a regional manifestation, the second one recognized universal value within every architectural or urban production of the Modern Movement, in spite of its specificities.

The preservation sections discussed concrete cases of intervention, conservation and especially the ideas of selection (register) and the limitation of a heritage list. They were followed by a long debate, regarding the different attitudes exposed by the participants. The conclusion was that it is still extremely necessary to expand our reflections on preservation.

During the seminar two parallel DOCOMOMO meetings were organized. One to talk about the Brazilian register and another one to expose a first statute for DOCOMOMO Brazil. It was decided that in the next two years a definitive statute will be established, including rules for a future election.

The First Brazilian DOCOMOMO Seminar was sponsored by the the CNPq, the Brazilian national Research Institute, and the Master Course on Architecture and Urbanism of the Federal University of Bahia, home of the Brazilian DOCOMOMO Working party.

*Anna Beatriz Galvão is coordinator of DOCOMOMO Brazil and a CNPq researcher.*

# Tallinn House of Arts

## Second MoMo restoration in Estonia

by Karin Hallas

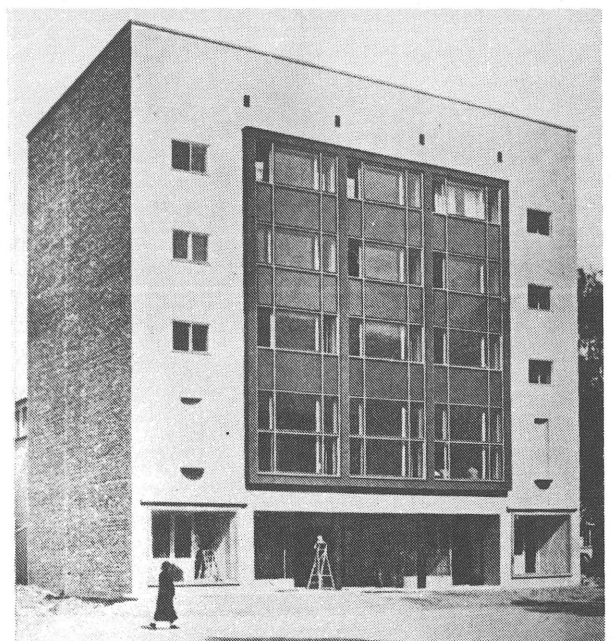
The Arts Hall of Tallinn, completed in 1934, is one of the most outstanding and eye-catching pieces of modern architecture in Estonia. It was designed at a time when architecture in Estonia was just setting out its paths of modernism, a time when the first functionalist private houses emerged in Tallinn and Pärnu, disseminating a new, modern concept of life. The House of Arts was a building with a special function, or rather a multifunctional building, meant for the arts and the artists, with exhibition halls, offices and studios. Originally it was intended to be located in the center of the city, near Independence Square, a fact that increased the responsibility of the designers even more. The final architectural solution was not promptly reached - it lacked a clear-cut conception of how to create a building that would be both modern and representative, stressing the importance of the arts in society. In 1932 the architects Anton Soans and Edgar Johan Kuusik finished the preliminary design of the building, resembling a rather modest tenement house. However, the Cultural Foundation, the initiator for the construction of the building, decided to organize an architectural competition. Of the 38 projects that were received, Anton Soans' project was considered best. Soans invited Edgar Johan Kuusik as co-author to draw the final project. A series of sketches put up at the Museum of Architecture show that the solution for the imposing facade was developed only over a long period of time, until a truly powerful image was reached: the great glass screen, the symbol of openness and light, emanating the true spirit of modernism. The traditional cultural public however, thought the building was too modern, therefore the embellishment of the facade was ultimately installed only in 1938.

The years 1994-1995 saw an extensive renovation of the House, thanks to the initiative of the Swiss artist George Steinmann and a subsidy from the Government of Switzerland. George Steinmann considered the whole enterprise as a piece of performance-art, dubbed by him as the 'Revival of Space'. The aim of the renovation was to restore the flavour of the 1930s within the walls of the functionalist building, and a replay of the functionalist effect of space in the exhibition halls. The Swiss artist was assisted in his task by the Estonian designer Rein Laur and the art historian Liivi Künnapu, while the whole project was coordinated by the superintendent of the House of Arts, Anu Liivak.

In the course of the repairs the worn out and damaged details of the interior design were replaced.

It was important for the essential details (doors, clothes racks and cloakroom counter, cloakroom floor, benches in foyer) that their spatial effect was being restored. The parquet floor was replaced by oak, and on the facade new window packets were mounted. For the renovated facade the original colour shades were tried, but the rosy plaster and the red hue of the columns seemed too intense. The project of George Steinmann 'Revival of Space' was inaugurated very festively on February 15, 1995, and for one month the exhibition halls were left empty for the public to have a look at. At the same time, the Estonian Museum of Architecture staged an exhibition on the design and construction at the Gallery of the House of Arts, which -unlike the conceptual project of George Steinmann- was an exhibition of documents, compiled by Karin Hallas, Eneken Laugen and Peeter Mauer, and designed by Leonhard Lapin. This was the first time the project materials of the House were exhibited, deposited in the funds of the Estonian Museum of Architecture, and thus emphasize the essential place the House of Arts occupies in the history of Estonian modern architecture. After the Pärnu Beach Hotel (see Journal 12, pp. 28-29), the Arts Hall is the second MoMo building in Estonia that has undergone extensive renovation and, as such, is both instructive and noteworthy. Besides restoring the building by means of good repair, bringing about the actual revival of the modern spirit of the 1930s, the selfless help of the Government of Switzerland that, as well as George Steinmann's project, attracted the attention of the public to a monument of Estonian 20th Century architecture, should be emphasized.

*Karin Hallas is an art historian, and curator of the Museum of Estonian Architecture in Tallinn.*



- From October 15 until December 15, 1995, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Geneva organizes an exhibition on the 1927 international competition for the design of the *Palais des Nations*. Impressed by the high quality of the contributions, from renowned architects including Le Corbusier, Jan Duiker, Alvar Aalto and Richard Neutra, the jury could not make a final decision. The contributions of 34 artists are, by means of drawings, photographs and models, presented at the exhibition, which can be visited from Monday to Friday at the *Musée et Hall de Bibliothèque du Palais des Nations*, 8-14 avenue de la Paix (porte 20 - 1st floor), Geneva, Switzerland.

- A richly illustrated monograph has recently been published on the Dutch architect Willem Dudok. His complete architectural and town-planning oeuvre, including his famous town hall in Hilversum, has been documented by the architectural historian Herman van Bergeijk, often including statements from Dudok and his contemporaries. 'Willem Marinus Dudok, Architect-Stedebouwkundige 1884-1974', Dutch text, Doetinchem 1995, ISBN 90-6611-144-5.

- Recently, the US National Park Service has published a book on 20th Century building materials. Edited by Thomas Jester, one of the organizers of the recent *Preserving the Recent Past* Conference, this architectural reference offers a full inventory and evaluation of major building materials available during this century. In addition to exploring the history, uses and problems inherent in each type of building material, the book provides a wealth of valuable tips and techniques for repair and restoration. 'Twentieth Century Building Materials, History and Conservation', English text, New York 1995, ISBN 0-07-032573-1.

- On May 14, 1995, the *Akademie der Architektenkammer Hessen* and the *Deutsches Architekturmuseum* organized the symposium 'Patina and Architecture', a controversial theme in terms of modern conservation. The lectures which have been held turned out to be so interesting, that the organizers decided to publish a book, scheduled for summer 1996. For more information: Akademie der Architektenkammer Hessen, Manzer Straße 10, 65185 Wiesbaden, Germany, fax +49-6-11-173840.

- High costs have forced the APT, the US-based International Association for Preservation Technology, to close its office and terminate the staff; however, volunteer members of the Board are now coordinating all activities. The magazine *Communique* is still being published, and from November 14-18, 1995, the APT Annual Meeting Event was held. The new mailing address is: Association for Preservation Technology, P.O. Box 3511, Williamsburg VA 23187, USA.

Selected information from the participating countries, received **before April 15th, 1996**, will be published in the next Journal, June 1996.

## **Estonia: photographic archive**

The annual meeting of DOCOMOMO Estonia was held on May 29th. According to the rules of the Estonian DOCOMOMO Working party the new national representative was elected. Mart Kalm will be the new national representative for the next three years. All correspondence to DOCOMOMO Estonia should be directed to him; the new address can be found in the list of Working parties elsewhere in this Journal. The DOCOMOMO archive will be kept in the Museum of Estonian Architecture.

The Estonian DOCOMOMO Working party has worked out a list of 143 Estonian 20th Century buildings and has presented it to the State Department for Protection of Cultural heritage (Ministry of Culture and Education) for inclusion in the list of state-protected architectural monuments. A photo archive of MoMo buildings has been initiated; for that, financial support has been given by the State Cultural Foundation.

Recently two exhibitions on 20th Century architecture have been organized: 'Tallinn Art Hall 1934' in the Tallinn Art Hall gallery (February 1995) by the Museum of Estonian Architecture, and 'Old Town & Modern Buildings' (from 1920-30s) in the Tallinn City Museum (June-September 1995) by the Museum of Estonian Architecture (curator Karin Hallas).

*(Report by Karin Hallas, member of DOCOMOMO Estonia)*

## **Scotland: research and documentation**

Over the year, we have undertaken a range of research and documentation initiatives. Arising out of the problems of Cardross Seminary, Diane Watters has been carrying out research in the Gillespie, Kidd & Coia archive, housed at Glasgow School of Art. Ranald MacInnes and Diane Watters were responsible for securing the preservation of the archives of the Glasgow architect Alec Buchanan Campbell, designer of the daring, arched Dollan Baths in East Kilbride (1965). Miles Glendinning has begun preliminary work on a research project into the work of Sir Robert Matthew, the foremost modern architect in Scotland.

Our involvement with a variety of exhibitions has continued: three committee members (Diane Watters, Ranald MacInnes and Miles Glendinning) helped the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland organize their most successful ever

summer exhibition, 'Towers of the Imagination', a thematic study of high buildings, including, of course, modern multi-storey towers. On the preservation front, following the approval at Barcelona of our draft group of 50 international fiches, we submitted these fiches, with accompanying text, as a report to Historic Scotland, the Government heritage agency: they are now considering the report as part of a wider thematic protection study, and have already made use of it in the statutory preservation of one of the 50 buildings, the Bernat Klein Studio at Galashiels. We have also begun to involve ourselves in some cases of demolition or proposed alteration to postwar buildings, by offering advice or information: individual cases of note are reported on in our national bulletin *Report*.

*(Report by Miles Glendinning, member of DOCOMOMO Scotland)*

#### **Italy: association**

DOCOMOMO Italy has officially become an association. We are all very glad that after three years the whole group has recognized how important it will be to work in the future as a non-profit association. New plans, new fund raising, and so on could be started in the near future. Also, the Working party has elected a new president and executive committee. They are listed on page 31-33.

*(Report by secretary Maristella Casciato)*

#### **Argentina: Le Corbusier and South America**

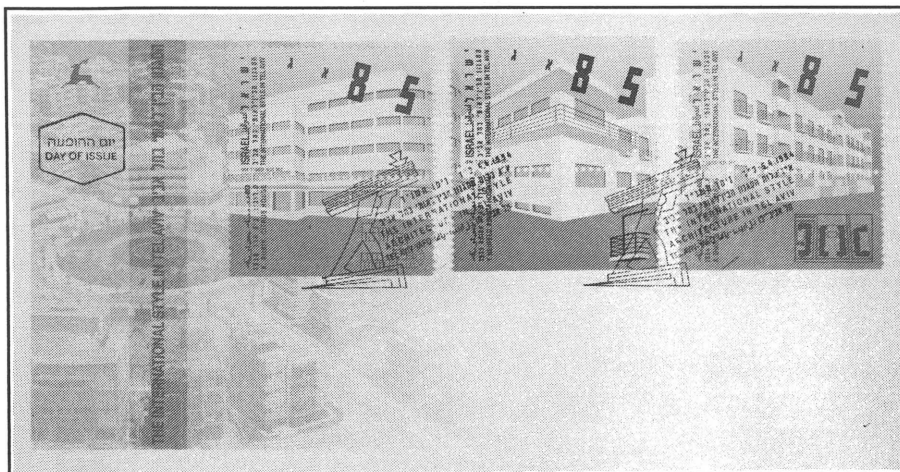
Our main efforts in broadening the Working party's activities to other fields within the Modern Movement, besides that of architecture (see Journal 13, June 1995) specifically on urban design and landscape & gardens, have finally been concluded and the incorporation of specialists of both these fields would be welcomed. While considering the disciplinary structure of both landscape and urban design, other important areas that have been and are significant for MoMo were

suggested. Such is the case for industrial design, graphic and textile design, cinema (in its relation with architecture). All these fields have been closely associated in the new ideas of a 20th Century architecture and urbanism, and in Argentina clearly associated with Tomas Maldonado. The result of these discussions for our Working party will be presented at the next International Conference, in Bratislava.

The Landmark program, also referred to in our June report has been launched and linked to the visit of DOCOMOMO's chairman to Argentina. Prof. Hubert-Jan Henket has accepted the invitation of the Postgraduate Center for Urban & Rural Conservation at the University of Buenos Aires to lecture to exchange experiences in problems dealing with the restoration of 20th Century buildings and the technological aspects involved, as well as discussing the issue of authenticity concerning MoMo's heritage. The latest relevant cultural meeting in Buenos Aires has been the exhibition on Le Corbusier at the Recoleta Cultural Center. Mabel Scarone was invited to evaluate the period and also to give DOCOMOMO's view on this architectural era, together with the conservation principles of this period.

Architect Alfredo Conti -one of our recently appointed members- has returned from Paris where he has been working as the coordinator of the 1996 meeting on 'Le Corbusier and South America', organized by the Le Corbusier Foundation and UNESCO. Our Working party has been invited (and we have accepted) to be associated with this important regional event that will take place in November, in La Plata, Argentina. Similar events, part of an overall programme will be held in Bratislava, Naples and La Chaux de Fonds (not yet confirmed: Cambridge, USA, Chandigarh, India, and Tokyo, Japan). The closing meeting of these events has been set in Paris, May 1997.

*(Report by coordinator Mabel Scarone)*



Last year, the Israeli Postal Service designed a special series of stamps to celebrate the International Style.

From left to right:  
Citrus House by Carl Rubin, 1936-38, Assuta Hospital by Joseph Neufeld, 1930s, and Workers' Housing by Arie Sharon, 1934-36.

### **Greece: change of the board**

The administration of the Greek DOCOMOMO Working party passes to the Greek Institute of Architecture, whose president is Prof. S. Kontaratos. This is an institution founded not long ago by a large number of architects, historians and university teachers as well as by the architectural review *Architecture in Greece*. The new coordinator will be the architect P. Tournikiotis. The new address is listed on page 31-33.

*(Report by former coordinator Andreas Giacumacatos)*

### **Brazil: seminars**

In 1995, three main activities have been decisive for DOCOMOMO Brazil this year. We had a very satisfactory result with the co-editorship of the previous DOCOMOMO Journal, dedicated to Latin America. We have truly appreciated the effort of the DOCOMOMO International Secretariat to work on a usually very scarcely treated theme.

In June and August we had two big events, the First Brazilian DOCOMOMO Seminar and the Seventh Seminar of Latin American Architecture (VII SAL). The Brazilian Seminar (see report elsewhere in this issue) had a nationwide diffusion of DOCOMOMO aims and actions. The presence of over 150 participants demonstrated not only the interests on matters relating to the Modern Movement, but also the lack of forums concerning these subjects in our country.

Together with DOCOMOMO Argentina and DOCOMOMO Iberia, DOCOMOMO Brazil also participated in the VII SAL, that took place in São Paulo on August 21-25, 1995. The activities of these working parties, including the ISC on Registers, were presented to a public of architects from various Latin American countries. The interest in the study and the preservation of Modern Movement architecture got many participants interested in (and informed about) the activities of DOCOMOMO. The representative of DOCOMOMO Brazil presented a historical overview of the activities of this working party since its formation, and explained the main plans for the coming years, amongst others the publication of a book of the papers presented at the First Brazilian Seminar and the realization of the second part of the national register of modern architecture. Also announced was the intention to organize the Sixth International DOCOMOMO Conference in Brasilia, in the year 2000. Generally speaking the proposal seemed to have been appreciated very well. DOCOMOMO Brazil is also involved in the implementation of the ISC's (Technology and Landscape & Gardens) not yet established, which we think will have their representatives by the end of the year.

*(Report by Angela West Pedrão, secretary of DOCOMOMO Brazil, and Marco Aurelio Filgueiras, representative of DOCOMOMO Brazil during VII SAL)*

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# The image of modernity

## An expression of progress and emancipation

Since the end of the 18th Century modernity has been challenging the life experiences of individuals all over the world.<sup>1</sup> In architecture, the Modern Movement can be considered as probably the most convincing attempt to come to terms with this challenge. The Modern Movement saw itself embodying a concept of architecture that constituted a legitimate answer to the experience of modernity and to the problems and possibilities resulting from the process of modernization. The protagonists of the Movement considered modernity as the emergence of a new culture. This culture would be homogeneous and closed, as were the great cultures of the past (Ernst May). It would be a culture built on rationality, which would take advantage of the poetic possibilities inherent to technology (Le Corbusier). This new culture would be characterized by a hidden synthesis, based upon the unity of space and time (Sigfried Giedion). Rationality would be its hallmark, not only in terms of design and materials, but also in terms of social relationships (Walter Gropius).

by Hilde Heynen

In its initial phase the Modern Movement unquestionably belonged to the avant-garde, thus participating in an anti-historical tendency that celebrated continuous experimentation and innovation. The avant-garde is a typical modern phenomenon. In order to deal with the feelings of

loss and uncertainty that resulted from modernity's rupture with tradition, the avant-garde posited the ideals of purity and authenticity and opposed the idea of keeping up appearances. Therefore it was constantly engaged in an iconoclastic struggle. Marinetti's appeal, 'Let us kill the moonlight!' can

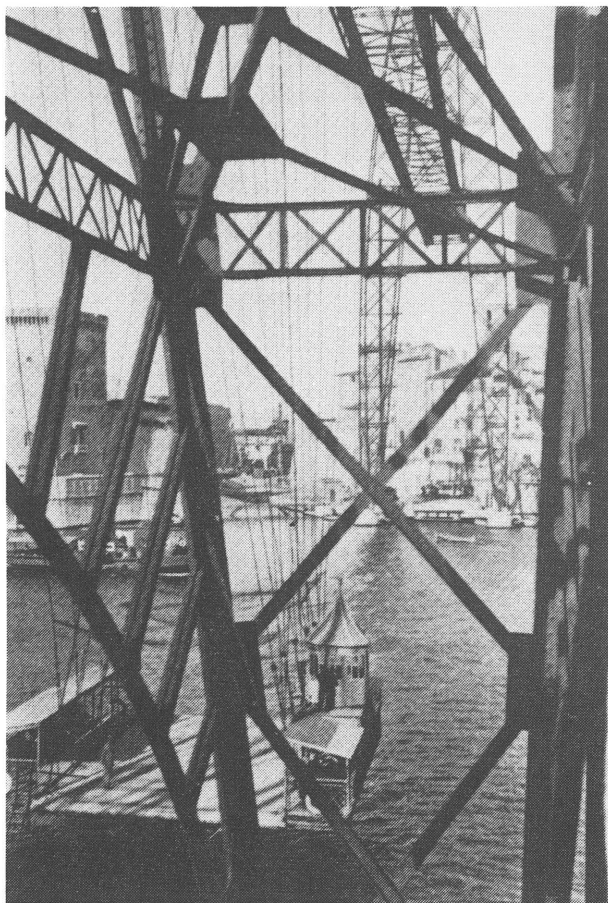


Left: Front cover of *Das Neue Frankfurt* 1/1928. Modernism wanted to get rid of ornamentation and superficial decoration. Essential forms would be more rational, more functional and more truthful. Right: Pont Transbordeur, Marseille (1905). Archetypal image for Giedion of the experience of interpenetrating spaces. Illustration in Giedion's *Bauen in Frankreich, Eisen, Eisenbeton*, p. 63.

serve as a model for the logic of negation that the avant-garde advocated: all norms, forms and conventions had to be broken; everything that was stable had to be rejected, every value negated. In doing so the avant-garde radicalized the basic principle of modernity - that is, the urge towards continual change and development, the rejection of the old and the longing for what is new.<sup>2</sup>

The issues and themes around which the Modern Movement in architecture crystallized are in the first place bound up with this avant-garde logic of destruction and construction. Here too what was involved first of all was a rejection of the culture of philistinism that used pretentious ornaments and kitsch and which took the form of eclecticism. Instead the desire for purity and authenticity was given precedence. All ornamentation was regarded as unacceptable; instead authenticity was required in the use of materials and it was thought that a constructional logic should be clearly visible in the formal idiom.<sup>3</sup> The avant-garde logic also led to the idea that the traditional role of architecture had to be challenged. Such was the conviction behind Giedion's observation that:

'It would seem questionable, whether the limited concept of 'architecture' can have any future. There is no way we can give an answer to questions such as: What is architecture? Where does it begin? Where does it end? Contexts merge (*Die Gebiete durchdringen sich*). Walls no longer rigidly surround the roads. Roads



become a moving flow. Tracks and trains make up a single entity along with the station...<sup>4</sup>

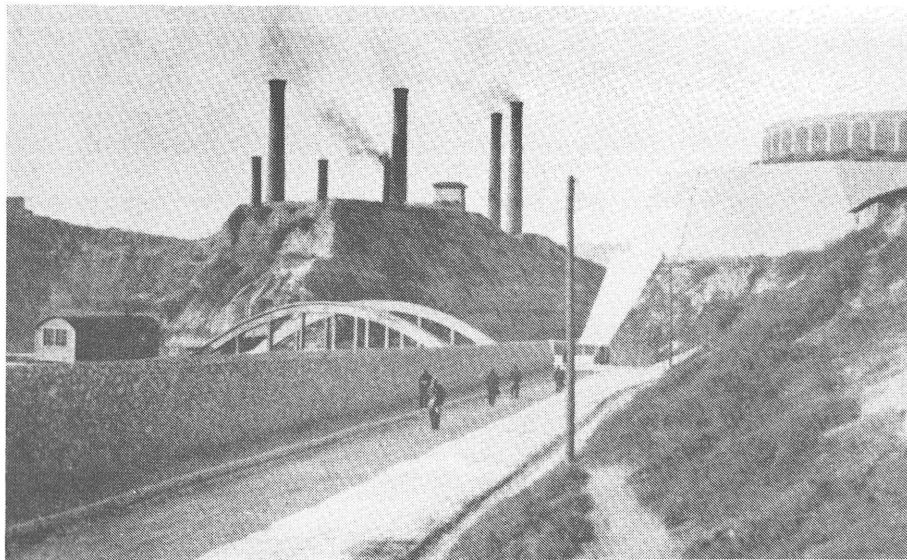
In this key passage of his book *Bauen in Frankreich, Eisen, Eisenbeton* (1928) Giedion stresses the mutual relation that is created between the new concept of space in architecture and the new social reality: both are characterized by 'interpenetration' (*Durchdringung*) and both give way to new forms, new experiences and new attitudes.

Rationality and functionality were catchwords that connected the new architecture with broader issues such as industrialization and standardization. For most of its protagonists, it was clear that modern architecture innovated the discipline not only on the level of form. They claimed that the new architecture was the embodiment of the innovation of society itself, and that the image of modernity represented in architecture in fact referred to an in-depth process of modernization which affected all layers of reality. Marcel Breuer put a widely held conviction into words when he stated that:

'Because the outside world currently affects us in ways that are both very intense and very disparate, we are changing our manner of life in a much more rapid tempo than was formerly the case. It goes without saying that our surroundings will also undergo corresponding changes. This leads us to layouts, spaces and buildings every part of which can be altered, which are flexible and which can be combined in different fashions.'<sup>5</sup>

Some of the more radical architects such as Mart Stam or Hannes Meyer linked these ideas also with a leftist political orientation and claimed that functionalist architecture had to be directed towards the realization of emancipatory ideals and projects. With these people the 'New Building' became intricately associated with the desire for a more socially balanced and egalitarian form of society. But even for those who were not as explicit in their political convictions as Stam or Meyer, it was evident that modern architecture stood for progress and development, for innovation and social change.

The broad conviction however that modern architecture was the legitimate embodiment of a project of modernity, a project of social progress and emancipation, did not survive the 1920s undamaged. The intimate connection that existed between the new architectural language and the longing for a better social reality gradually dissolved. This can be observed in the evolution within the work of Sigfried Giedion, who took a much more socially committed position in his writings of the 1920s than in his later *Space, Time and Architecture*. The most telling example to illustrate the shift is probably the influential publication by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock on *The International Style*.<sup>6</sup> Here the whole phenomenon of the new architecture was brought back simply and plainly to a stylistic



Left: Industrial landscape. For Giedion this landscape with its different levels of transportation prefigures the future development of cities where the interpenetration of different domains will be evident. Illustration in Giedion's *Bauen in Frankreich, Eisen, Eisenbeton*, p. 8.

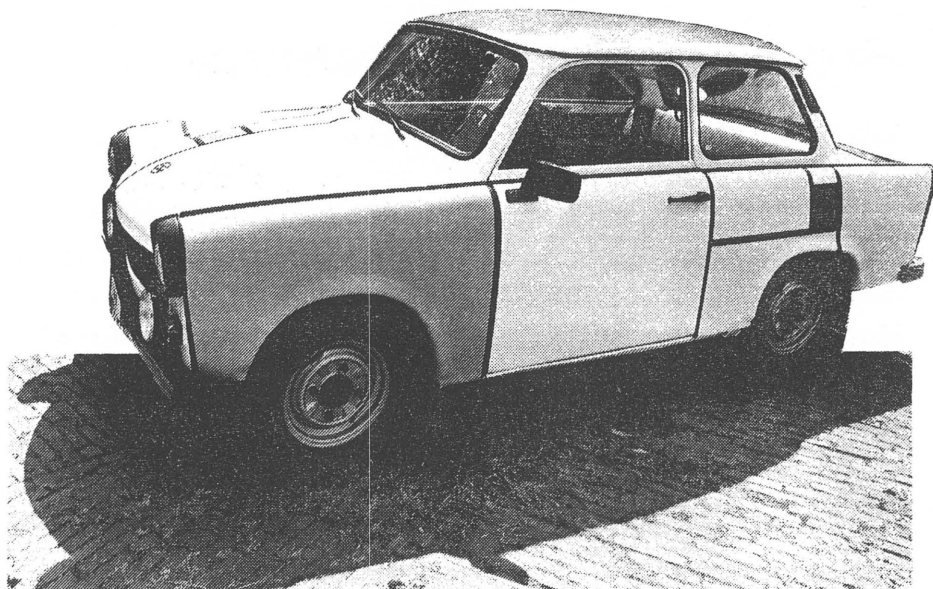
change that could be described in purely artistic terms and that apparently had nothing to do with any social claims whatsoever, let alone with evolving ideas about the role of architecture vis-à-vis society. Hitchcock and Johnson managed to reduce the 'New Building' to an easily recognizable image that could do without any further content. In comparing the heroic period of the 1920s with the later praxis of modern architecture, one can see that the avant-garde moment was gradually neutralized and emasculated. The original avant-garde aspirations, which were dominated by a logic of struggle and negation, gradually became forged into a fairly univocal programme in which the need for a permanent redefinition of one's own aims no longer played a crucial role. Nevertheless the aesthetic appearance of modern architecture continued to connote ideas of progress, rationality and belief in technology, even when the direct link with social issues ceased to be self-evident.

### **Modernisms and the postmodern condition**

It is difficult to give a general assessment of 'modernism' as a cultural phenomenon, because it took a different form in different disciplines. Modernism cannot be considered as a homogeneous movement: there are major divergences among the different modernisms, chronologically as well as ideologically. Whereas modernism in literature, e.g. with authors such as Joyce or Kafka, celebrated the autonomy of language and concentrated upon the development of self-referential literary techniques, the modernism in dance (Martha Graham) rather stressed the expressionistic character of dancing in trying to convey particular messages to the public. Modernism in music on the other hand (Schönberg and the later 'New Music') excelled in the radicality of its experimentation, which finally led to compositions that were almost totally inaccessible to a majority of listeners. One can however discern in most modernisms

some traits that give them their particular 'modern' flavour. For the sake of clarity and simplicity we can suffice here with mentioning the traces of essentialism and utopianism that are present in many manifestations of modernism. Essentialism refers to the idea that pure or rational forms, i.e. forms that are stripped from any ornamental redundancies, are more likely to represent essential truths. This is a basic conviction in the modernisms in architecture, in the visual arts, in music and in dance: no ornamentation, no superfluous adornments are allowed, everything has to be reduced to its purest essence. Utopianism has to do with the belief that there is a certain connection - how indirect and mediated it may be - between cultural innovations on the one hand and societal transformations on the other. Most modernists believed that what they did in their own discipline somehow had an impact on society and contributed to the development of a better world for everyone. This conviction is very eloquently formulated by Jürgen Habermas, who described the modern project as follows: 'The project of modernity formulated in the 18th Century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic. At the same time, this project intended to release the objective potentials of each of these domains from their esoteric forms. The Enlightenment philosophers wanted to utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life - that is to say, for the rational organization of everyday social life.'<sup>17</sup> Since, roughly, the 1970s however, we are supposed to live in a postmodern condition. This means among other things that basic ingredients of the modernist outlook on the world are no longer undisputed. Essentialism and utopianism for instance are both heavily under attack. Essentialism became the victim of the dominance

Right: The imagery of *De Stijl* became a consumable item.



upon the intellectual forum of structuralism and semiotics during the 1960s and 1970s. When it is assumed plausible that language in all its manifestations should be studied as a sign system based on pure convention, the idea that geometrically pure forms contain more 'truth' than other ones loses its attractivity. Utopianism on the other hand gradually lost its force due to the continuation of disappointing experiences as to the impact of cultural revolutions throughout the 20th Century. Very rare indeed are those examples where one can clearly recognize the emancipatory potential emanating from cultural or artistic experiments. Therefore, many intellectuals, artists and architects are no longer convinced that pure and rational forms are the better ones, or that innovations in the cultural field automatically imply a surplus value on the level of social conditions of life. The legitimation of the project of modernity is not taken for granted any more.

The consequence of this state of affairs is that there is a tendency for all images of the past to become value-free as it were: images are becoming more and more consumable items, commercially exploitable and available for any marketing strategy. It seems that the strong links that, earlier on in this century, connected forms and their meanings, are losing their rigidity. There is no guarantee today that building with a flat roof is proof of one's progressive ideas or that using the colours of *De Stijl* equals a confession of faith in the rationality of the world to come. We still recognize the image of modernity in the famous and by now well spread icons of modern architecture and modern visual arts. This image however seems to be floating in a certain sense: it is used in so many different ways, in so many divergent contexts that it is no longer inevitably linked up with social and political ideas about modernity as a project of progress and emancipation. No doubt these circumstances make up for one of the great risks an organization such as

DOCOMOMO is confronted with. When struggling for the conservation and restoration of certain modern buildings, one can imagine that at a certain point aesthetic concerns could take precedence over social and political ones. Such an evolution of course, which would try to save the image of modernity at all costs, is in danger to end up in a situation where the image is saved but where modernity itself has been lost.

*Hilde Heynen is a professor in theory of architecture at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.*

#### Notes:

1. Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid melts into the Air, The Experience of Modernity*, London 1985.
2. The distinction between avant-garde and modernism is a fairly recent one. Authors such as Adorno, Poggioli and Weightman used these terms as though they were interchangeable. In recent years however a tendency has developed of defining the term avant-garde rather strictly, using it only for the most radical artists who operated collectively. See Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity. Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Durham 1987, p. 96; Jochen Schultesasse, 'Foreword: Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-garde' in: Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis 1984, p. vii-xlvii.
3. Miriam Gusevich, 'Purity and Transgression: Reflection on the Architectural Avantgarde's Rejection of Kitsch' in: *Discourse*, X.1, fall-winter 1987-88, pp. 90-115.
4. Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich, Eisen, Eisenbeton*, Berlin 1928, p. 6.
5. Marcel Breuer, 'Metallmöbel und Moderne Räumlichkeit' (*Das Neue Frankfurt 1/1928*), in: Heinz Hirdina (hrsg.), *Neues Bauen, Neues Gestalten*, Berlin 1984, p. 210.
6. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (1932), New York 1966.
7. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity - An Incomplete Project', in: Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic, Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983), Seattle 1991, p. 9.

# From image to essence

## Lessons from modernity

The architectural output today has declined from essence to image, whereas vast social and environmental issues are asking for our attention. Architectural magazines worldwide concentrate on glitter and form rather than on content. Many consider the Modern Movement as one of the culprits of this state of affairs. Yet aren't there lessons to be learned from modernity?

by *Hubert-Jan Henket*

It is rather old-fashioned nowadays to think that architecture primarily should serve a social purpose. In her article 'The image of modernity' Hilde Heynen sets out clearly that for many the social ideas about modernity, as a project of progress and emancipation, has failed. Of course, in retrospect, one can only admit that many celebrated issues of Modern Movement architects and planners have gone sour due to the rigorous and rigid fashion in which they were implemented, particularly after World War II. One only has to think of the rejection of the past, the denial of the local context, the *tabula rasa*, the separation of functions or the neglect of the imagination. Yet it is my opinion that several basic intentions of the Modern Movement are still as relevant today as they were several years ago, provided they are translated to fit current conditions. Just a few observations about the global situation today. We are witnessing a population explosion the world has never witnessed before. How are we going to feed and house these masses? Doesn't that sound familiar? A new underclass is rapidly emerging everywhere which poses the question how we can provide a decent life for all. Doesn't that sound familiar? We are rapidly consuming finite energy sources and raw materials; air- soil- and waterpollution are taking place on a massive scale, and global warming is here to stay. It is obvious that we need to be more material efficient. Doesn't that sound familiar?

But, you might ask, aren't these issues far removed from your local situation? I doubt it. In Germany, there are over 800,000 homeless, not to mention the situation in the former USSR. In the Netherlands, as in most North-West European countries, an increasing multi-ethnic underclass doesn't succeed in being integrated in society. And how are architects and urban designers facing these challenges? Confused by experiences of failing revolutions and by disappointing architectural and urban experiments of the recent past, architects today on the whole reject any social commitment and retreat in a nihilistic approach where form has triumphed over content. Although conditions are different today, intentions and innovations of the recent past, however, could

be a stimulant for the future.

The roots of the Modern Movement are planted both in the liberal ideas of the 18th Century and in the collectivist ideas of the 19th Century. Both represent a strong social purpose, a commitment for the improvement of living conditions, through social, technical and aesthetic innovations for every day use. Because we look at things now in a different context doesn't alter the fact that at that time many innovations were considered tremendous steps forward on the road to improved living conditions. Just think of the *Van Nelle* factories in Rotterdam (1926-29) by Van der Vlugt, the *Museu de Arte* by Lina Bo Bardi in São Paulo or the postwar high-rise housing blocks in Glasgow. That today many consider these housing towers disastrous doesn't mean that they weren't considered tremendous improvements by those who moved out from the 19th Century inner city tenements.

Another vital lesson of the Modern Movement is the attention to essentialism, not so much as regards purity of form, but as regards the reduction of the superfluous, the search for the necessary. Johannes Duiker called this 'spiritual economy', addressing the intention to minimize material and manpower, to maximize the use of material characteristics and constructions, and to fit the technical lifecycle of components with the functional life expectancy of the building as a whole. Valid observations in the context of today, where the search for a sustainable environment ought to be a top priority for architects. I believe that the Modern Movement should not be approached as a dead stylistic relic of the past, but could be a useful source of inspiration for the improvement of life and the environment today. In the Eindhoven Statement, as accepted by our founding Conference in September 1990, we set ourselves the task to 'explore and develop the knowledge of the Modern Movement'. I suggest that we again start a debate about this statement, because surely the architectural scene of today could do with some social and essentialist impulse and inspiration.

*Hubert-Jan Henket is an architect and professor at the University of Technology in Eindhoven.*

# A new monumentality

## Images and image of modernity

In 1943 the art historian and architecture critic Siegfried Giedion started to problemize the *rein utilitairen Zweckgefühlung* in architecture, something he aspired to do since 1923. Jointly Giedion himself, the architect Sert and the painter Léger took up their pen and wrote a manifesto on the need for as an assembly in image and symbol of building, visual arts, applied science and ideology. Through C.I.A.M.-congresses (since Bridgewater 1947) this particular thought became adopted by a broader professional circle.

In 1958 I myself presented the Giedions in Zürich my own assembled documentation on urban development, architecture and visual arts (which had started as *Espace et Volume* in 1954, during my study in Paris); it was a kind of examination. Siegfried responded with criticism, Carola with a kind word. All of this took place in their house in Doldertal which looked like a chalet, dark, with a lot of brown wood and the image of living was that of the artistic intelligentsia at that time; framed drawings hung from the key of a cabinet with glazed doors and net curtains! The evangelist of the Modern Movement had had that image realized at the adjacent premises, designed by Marcel Breuer and Alfred Roth. The supposed need for a new monumentality was to be fulfilled in a public space, in the city, and apparently not at home.

by Nic.H.M. Tummers

Pertaining to the 'Environmental Sculpture'

'Our western world has been overrun by masses of art objects. What we really need are not more and more objects, but an objective.'

'The era of experimentation in materials and forms which lasted over half a century has run its gamut; a new era has begun, that is, an era of correlating the plastic arts within their own realms but towards a further objective of integrating them with a life freed from self-imposed limitations.'

'The traditional art object, classic or modern, be it a painting, a sculpture, a piece of architecture, is no longer seen as an isolated, segregated entity but must be considered within the context of our expanding human and spatial environment.'

'There are several galaxial coordinates in this exhibition space, such as 'The Last Judgement', 'Birth of a Lake', 'Goya: or the Ever-Present Past', and 'The Cup of Prometheus' (the latter consisting of a ceiling piece, the standing sculpture, the wall relief and the aluminium seat).

These galaxial coordinates are intended to be passed through and around, to be 'lived with and within', not just to be looked at.'

Frederick Kiesler

Today, half a century later, the interest in the perception of the Modern Movement as an image of the public domain has increased, but as yet this has not led to an equal broadening and deepening of its knowledge. Neither did the persistent presence of the Modern Movement on the stage of postmodernism lead to a more accurate notion of its role as a cultural actor. The image of postmodernism though, is not the image of the aspired monumentality that Giedion wrote about. How can it be that the same increasing interest in Modern Movement architecture did not lead to an equally increased insight towards the cultural meaning of that movement? One of the possible explanations is that it emanates from the continuous association of all white, square built objects with the Modern Movement, and at the same time nominating them for designation as recent architectural heritage. Giedion would accurately identify and denounce those sentimental motives and this unfounded urge for protection; he would demand to examine the authenticity of those examples recommended for protection, to see if they were authentic enough to receive the predicate of representation of modern life, of the broader, the more arts containing culture of modernity.

I would like to expose some significant aspects of visual arts and architecture, as far as they can contribute to the specification of time and space, the epoch and the domain of the Modern Movement. This seems highly necessary, now that the culture of modernity soon will belong to 20th Century heritage. If one does not want to leave this





Friedrich Kiesler, *Man escaping into outer space*, from 'Us-You-Me' environment, 1963-1964. 114 inch, silverplated bronze aluminium. Photo: Nic. Tummers.

heritage to the custodians, then it should, as one package of knowledge-of-the-past, also form a substantial part of the materials available to current designers.

That quantity oriented interest which hinders the selecting of examples, which allows too many derivatives within the 'selection', obstructs the exploration of origin and context, and leads to such a mediocre and superficial knowledge of the past, that it cannot be expected to play a part in the creative processes of the nearby future.

This is in particular a problem when we look at the various well meant, democratically assigned judgement committees. Being granted the procedure of judgement, they hardly recognize the fact that the same procedure is also a hindrance to rise above average quality. This is certainly the case when their members themselves have not been selected according to the standard of 'preeminence', applied to the critical verdict.

### Contradictory phenomena

In order to select the most authentic examples it is necessary to judge with eminence, for example the contradictory phenomena in the image of the culture of modernity. Take the next examples from the immediate surroundings of modern pioneers: the collector -maecenas- politician Nelson

Rockefeller, on the authority of the leaders of his election campaign, was never shown in public together with his modern art collection. Konrad Wachsmann, the architect of Albert Einstein, who specialized in very imaginative spatial structures, had to deal with his deception in private when he learned that his patron could not work up equal imagination to Wachsmann's work. Soon after the completion of his self designed living with studio in Meudon, when designing the lay-out of his garden, Theo van Doesburg revealed himself as a true troglodyte. The *De Stijl* group architect Jan Wils, who always designed with a clear logo, recognized himself best in portraits which pictured him as a well-dressed chap. Mies van der Rohe, who took it as his duty when the plan of his Barcelona pavilion was compared to an elementaristic figuration of Van Doesburg, chose one of George Kolbe's when he had to place a sculpture in that plan. Those and more caricatural examples make up just as many cracks in the image of the culture of modernity.

But on the other hand there are other examples: Rietveld succeeded, when decorating Dr. Hartog's interior, to keep out a reproduction of Rembrandt's 'The Jewish Bride' and finished the whole with the well-known round circle. And who of the *De Stijl* knights showed up as the Modern Movement dressed as Marlowe Moss?

### The roots of the Modern Movement culture

At a conference on authenticity (in Nara, Japan, November 1994) it was explored how to find out best what object from the various movements in architecture is most authentic.

DOCOMOMO's contribution was to determine the origin of the Modern Movement at the beginning of the Industrial Age, more accurately: in the proclamation of the *liberté du travail* (1791) and the simultaneous abolition of guilds. The 'handmade' (*auto-hentès* = authentic) stayed behind in history as an individual curiosity and the anonymous mass product became common. Authenticity moved from the signature of the craftsman to the declaration of production rights, patent and trademark. In the modern vision a double track was developed from here. The first track, caused by the so-called dissolved manual and nature-reflecting arts, culminated in the 'Arts and Crafts' movement. Its ambition was integration in architecture and settlement policy. However progressive this intention may seem, it had the conception of reaction. The second track, aspiring to the *rein utilitairer Zweckerföhlung*, to the businesslike, the functional, reserved and minimal arts, finally culminated in ZERO. This development aimed at experiment and research. Its concept was to take up visual arts themselves as a process of research, focussing on space; both imaginative and social space. Where the 'Arts and Crafts' movement sought for integration in architecture and environmental planning, it was the element of spatial survey that

marked the Modern Movement, established around 1910, so significantly. Visual arts, sciences and architecture mutually stimulated models; literature was penetrated with technical terms indicating components of those models, for example the electrotechnical transformer. Cubism and its drive for investigation gave shape to time-space theories, for example Minkowski's, and architecture extracted that image from the flat surface; the punch card was being referred to, to underline the sense of reality in elementarism in the visual arts. The art of flying was realized and wireless communication materialized the air. Perspective went out of date in the world of new visualizations and new materials allowed clearer presentation of the new space image and assigned to spiral forms, the emblematic value of that moment. To experience the new space image also meant to visualize openly the technical interiors of building constructions as something of evocative value.

### A new era

Whereas the new settlement plans and the visual representation of the new space image contrasts sharply with settlements and images of the past, they should be called carriers of a new era; the other way around there is a new era that recognizes itself in architecture and urban design, in visual arts, music and literature.

First there was an era of concave spatiality (Troglodytic). Horizon hardly played a part; only the enclosure of the cave counted, the shape of the building and art were its immediate form of expression (image: Venus of Willendorf).

Then there appeared an era in which man was conscious of his verticality in spatial terms, especially culturally speaking; he gave it expression in the shape of for example the pillar

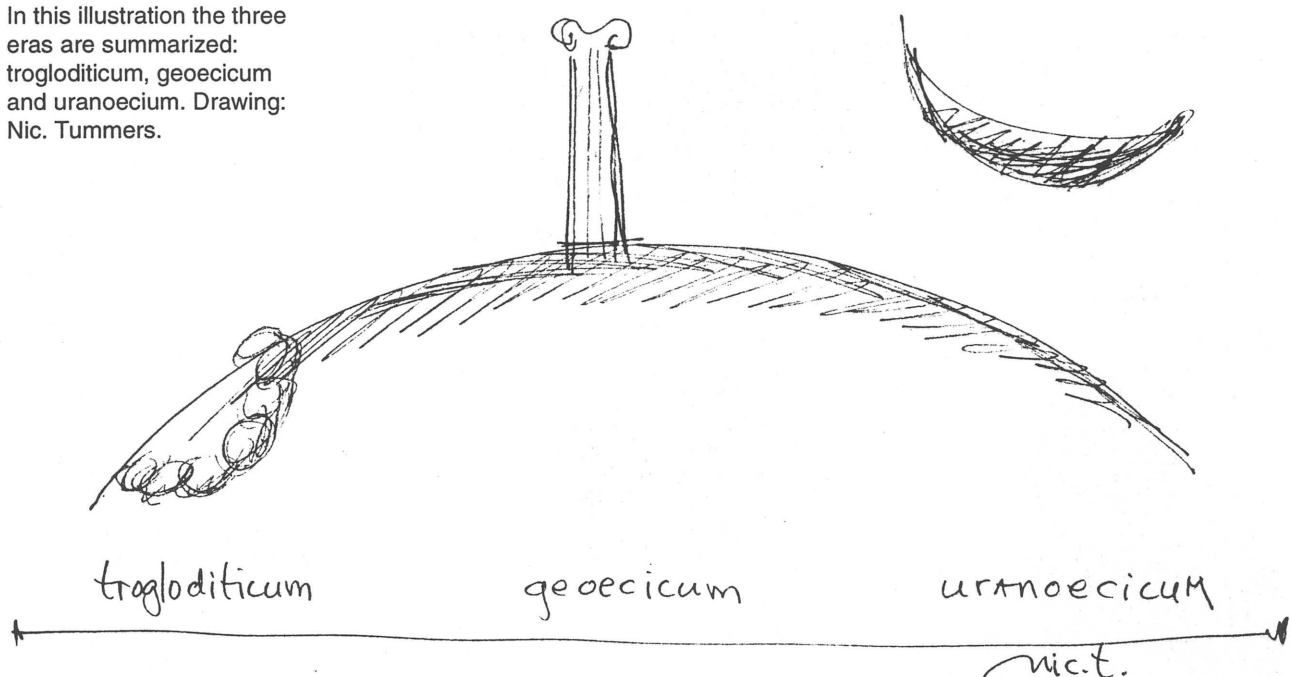
and the problem of the horizon (the behind). The settlement characteristic of this era can (by analogy with names of eras in geology) be called ge-oe-cic: era of place-on-earth.

In the 20th Century, an era has begun in which the new spatiality is being experienced, beyond the horizon, around the earth, into cosmic space: the uran-oe-cic.

None of these eras do belong to another time! Sometimes they occur through one another. Le Corbusier's underground (troglodytic) peace cathedral is of our time and represents the spatiality of a past time. Karel Appel, for example, is its portraitist. On the other hand Le Corbusier also invented the pilotis by which he lifted the built volume from the earth and gave space to the *cultiver le corps* above the horizon. For the museum of Caracas, Oscar Niemeyer designed a pyramid standing on its point, throwing its base up into space. Visual arts preceded him in this vision. The auditorium of the Technical University in Delft by Van den Broek and Bakema is like an animal painted by a member of the Cobra group and joins all three 'space images' into one concept. The visual artist-architect who handled the new space phenomenon integrally, and also wrote with his image (not the other way around), is Friedrich Kiesler (1896-1965). His 'pertaining to the Environmental Sculpture' has not been published before. Next year in Bratislava, DOCOMOMO will be very close to the place where Kiesler a hundred years ago was born; it would only be appropriate to give special attention in Bratislava to his work, in order to further specify the *image* of the culture of modernity.

*Nic.H.M. Tummers is a member of the Comité International de Critique d'Architecture/UIA.*

In this illustration the three eras are summarized: trogloditicum, geoecicum and uranoecicum. Drawing: Nic. Tummers.



# Focus on modern living

## Thérèse Bonney's photographic record of *Paris moderne*

Architecture and design photographs processed by the office of the American journalist Thérèse Bonney (1894-1978) record architecture and the decorative arts in Paris from the onset of the Modern Movement with the 1925 *Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels* to 1932 when Bonney suspended her services. These black and white photographs, made at the moment in time when the power of photography to turn architectural trade had just begun to be probed, reveal the visual change wrought by the Modern Movement with its emphasis on clear geometric form, mobility and legibility. In the light of the current reevaluation of the Modern Movement, the question as to what was actually built in this nascent period is, in part, answered by Bonney's archives.

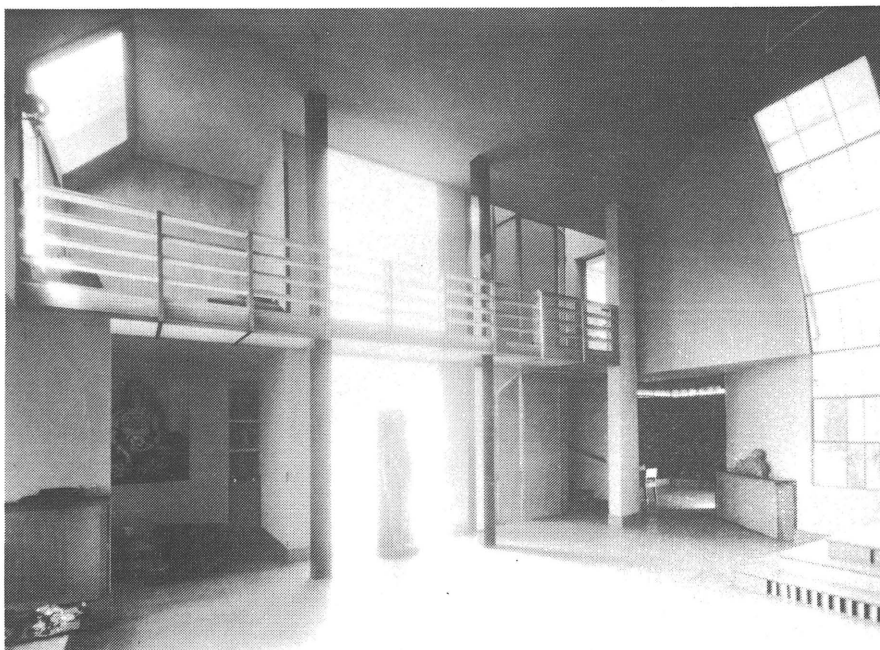
by Claire Bonney

If the volume of these works, revealing everything from the inner workings of 1920s hairdressing salons to a documentation of a B.F. Goodrich tire display at the *Salon d'Auto* does not impress, the thoroughness of works documented does. Bonney's photographs are rarely single, but usually document a building inside and out in a series of prints providing a *promenade architecturale* allowing the reconstruction of floor plans and spatial sequences, furnishings, and use of rooms. The architects best represented in Bonney's archives are Pierre Chareau, Georges Djo-bourgeois, Gabriel Guévrékian, Francis Jourdain, André Lurçat and Rob Mallet-Stevens. For a short intensive period, Bonney followed these architects' careers in detail while also recording *architectes de la deuxième ligne* - among them Pierre Barbe, Raymond Fischer,

Jean-Michel Frank, Michel Roux-Spitz, Louis Süe and André Mare, whose works are only now being documented by French architectural historians. Through the sheer volume of her photographs, as well as through their emphasis on avant-garde themes, Bonney's work provides a unique archive on modern French architecture. Many of the buildings she photographed were destroyed in the ensuing World War and many of the architects she portrayed either died during this time (Mallet-Stevens, Djo-bourgeois), emigrated to North America (Chareau, Guévrékian, Frank), or left France to work elsewhere (Lurçat).

### Private view

Bonney was born in New York State and emigrated to Paris in 1919. She opened her Paris press service in 1924 with the aim of informing America



Apartment of the hairdresser Antoine, Paris, c. 1932, designed by Lipska. Here, in empty spaces reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Ozenfant studio, Lipska utilized the roof's curve to insert glass panels illuminating not only the living area, but the sleeping loft above it which is carried by a glass floor supported by columns sheathed in blue mirrored glass. Courtesy of Cooper-Hewitt, National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution - Art Resource, NY. Photo: Service Bonney.

on French arts, architecture, decorative arts, and fashion. The service sold photographs to American dailies and magazines, as well as to a long list of trade journals and the French periodical *Art et Décoration*.<sup>1</sup> Writing in 1931, Bonney stated that her staff of six in Paris distributed an average of 350 photographs a month of which 200 a month went to the American press.<sup>2</sup> By 1939, the Bonney service had over 100,000 negatives and had served the press of 22 countries.<sup>3</sup> But Bonney's service all but closed in December 1932, having fallen prey to straitened economic conditions following the Wall Street stock crash, and new competition from other press services. Bonney left Paris to return to New York where she learned the craft of photography herself and went on to become a World War II documentarist of some note.

Bonney's collections contain a wealth of information useful to architectural and design historians and restoration architects. Among her architectural photographs, subject emphasis is placed squarely on shops, the new Paris department stores, restaurants, many of which were being newly lit with neon for night-time advertising, and villas or apartments built by wealthy Frenchmen or by the numerous émigrés then located in Paris. There are no airports, bus terminals, train stations or streetcar depots in these archives. Similarly, government buildings, hospitals, schools, and the low-cost public housing then being promoted through the *Loi Loucheur* are, for the most part, missing, while churches and factories receive very limited attention. Unusual in Bonney's work are the many photographs of the luxurious bathrooms of the ultra-rich that provide a view of rooms generally considered to be private. Bonney was not partisan in her documentation of architects. Both 1920s camps - *Art Deco* and

Modern Movement- can be found. Her photographs depict the work of representatives of the Paris 'establishment' - Pierre Patout, Süe et Mare, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann- which worked for a wealthy elite, as well as the younger avant-garde - Guévrékian, Georges Djo-bourgeois, André Lurçat, René Herbst, and Pierre Barbe, to cite just a few examples. She seems equally at home in documenting projects made on a shoestring budget, such as her own apartment decorated by Chareau and Guévrékian, and those in which money obviously played no role, such as Helena Rubinstein's Paris apartment. An emphasis on expatriate architects and American buildings in Paris is clearly documentation tailored to the interests of the American press.

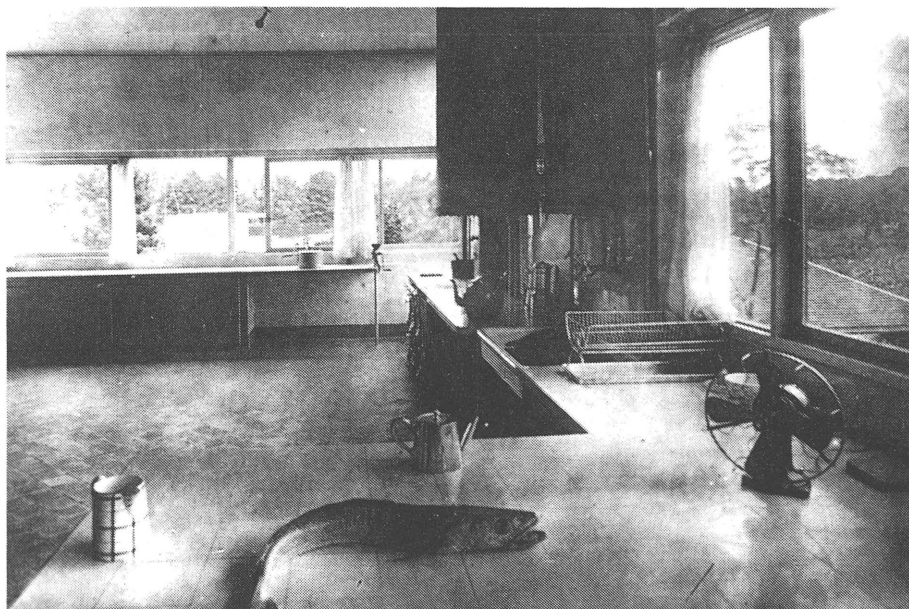
### Description of details

The other half of Bonney's work as a photojournalist is represented on the backs of the photographs her office processed, i.e. on the labels she wrote to nearly every photograph that went out of her office. Without these labels, often jotted down in Bonney's breathless slapdash style, her photographs of more obscure architects and subjects, the presence of which that makes her archives so interesting, would be unidentifiable to historians. Bonney's enthusiasm for innovation and her obvious thrill at being located at the eye of the storm of the Modern Movement come through to us loud and clear.

Bonney's loving descriptions of details also draw attention to objects in her photographs that might otherwise remain unidentifiable. In a series on the Bally shoe store on the Boulevard de la Madeleine built in 1928 by Mallet-Stevens even the shoe stands designed in glass and nicked copper by Francis Jourdain do not escape her eye, lens, and pen.

Fortunato carpet store, rue Cambon, Paris, 1929, designed by Pierre Barbe (born 1900) with Henri Delaage and Raymond Robain. Bonney notes that sheet iron facade is painted deep brown. Its large show window and door are edged in polished silver metal to highlight the facade's uncompromising lines and sleek elegance in all its modern nudity. Courtesy of Cooper-Hewitt, National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution - Art Resource, NY. Photo: Service Bonney.





The kitchen of Maison Cook (Villa Stein-de Monzie) with the dead eel carefully placed on the counter. Garches, 1926-1928, by Le Corbusier.

Indeed, due to Bonney's labels, several unknown works by architects of the Modern Movement can be identified. For example, three photographs of an unpublished early work by Pierre Barbe depict the striking stripped-down facade of the previously unpublished Fortunato carpet shop on the rue Cambon in Paris,<sup>4</sup> designed in 1929 in collaboration with Henri Delaage and Raymond Robain.

### Women designers

In light of the fact that so little is known about them, the work of women designers and architects as reflected in Thérèse Bonney's photographs deserves closer attention. An early feminist, and a professional herself, she was interested in what fellow females were up to in Paris in the 1920s. The photographs cover the work of some of the best known women designers of the era, including a special effort to document American women then at work in Paris, while also adding new information to our knowledge of the interior design that is so integral to French architecture of the 1920s. Again, it is through Bonney's labeling system that we are able to name these women and to see hitherto unknown works by them. One interesting collaboration noted, as far as I know, only in Bonney's archives, is that of Noeme Hess who decorated the children's nursery for Mallet-Stevens's Noailles villa at Hyères.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most interesting and enigmatic feminist find in the archives is the interior decorator Lipska. Nothing is known about her except that she was a pupil of Léon Bakst, an artist who designed stagesets for the *Ballets Russes*. Lipska's most radical work, however, is the Paris apartment of the hairdresser Antoine.

One more fascinating detail is provided by the photograph of a salon installation with a modern carpet by Hélène de Mandrot. It is not widely

known that the wealthy Madame de Mandrot, patron of cinematographers and architects, and hostess to the first CIAM meeting in La Sarraz, ever tried her hand at design.<sup>6</sup>

### Bonney's photographs compared

In his recent book, *L'Architecture en France, une histoire critique 1918-1950*, Gérard Monnier asserts that architectural photography, a field born of the 1920s along with the Modern Movement, 'affirms itself as a representation of a different nature, one different from all other techniques of architectural representation that are or that can be related to the work of the project.'<sup>7</sup>

Whereas an earlier generation of engineers and architects may have documented their buildings to prove that they turned out to be what the plans had proposed, photographic sequences introduced through the notion of space and time, a series of perceptions of the object that was not inherent in the object itself. This space in time is, Monnier says, 'radically opposed to the atemporality of the academic rendering.'<sup>8</sup> In order to assess Bonney's contribution to the field of architectural photography, it is helpful to look at the work of contemporary photographers. Under the assumption that Bonney chose the subjects her office photographed and made aesthetic choices as to cropping and positioning of objects within the picture frame, I refer to the work of Bonney's office as her work although she herself was not behind the camera. This body of work will be compared with hers here: the well-known photographs of Le Corbusier's purist villas.

### Le Corbusier

Le Corbusier's photographers' methods have been analyzed by several scholars although no consensus has been reached as to who this person actually was, if indeed he was one person

and not several. Le Corbusier's photographs were highly effective in publicizing his architecture. Photographs of the Maison Cook kitchen, with a dead eel carefully placed on the kitchen counter, or of the de Beistegui apartment's terrace, with its severed view of the *Arc de Triomphe*, are surely among the most fascinating architectural photographs of the 1920s.

In a useful discussion, Monnier lists seven characteristics as those making the photographs Le Corbusier employed so special. His first main point is that photography introduces the issue of temporality into architecture for the first time. With the photographs of Le Corbusier's studio for the painter Amedee Ozenfant, Monnier postulates that the issue of life style, of inhabited space, of depiction of the building as a result indissociable from its use has begun. Beginning with the Villa La Roche, the relationship between building and time is documented from the construction site to the point where the home is furnished and the pictures have been hung.<sup>9</sup>

Bonney's photograph of the roof terrace at Guévrékian's Villa Heim, built in Neuilly in 1927, offers a good comparison with Le Corbusier's photograph of the Maison Tarnisien in Boulogne-sur-Seine, 1923-27, pictured in Monnier on pages 278 to 279. Both photographs focus on and look through a garden trellis. In Bonney's photograph, the eye is led back through the trellis along the side of the building to a bench on the other side of the terrace. Le Corbusier's photograph accomplishes this and more. While, on the left side of the photograph, the eye ultimately rests on the entry gate to the house from the street, the house itself is also seen through the trellis wires. Thus Le Corbusier's photographer manages to include the street outside of the house, the house itself, and the home's garden. Bonney's photograph is not nearly as inclusive. It can only give us the impression of what it is like to be on this roof. The house is left to other shots, as is the street level implying the outside world. Her sky and horizon do not include any landmarks, such as the house on the left in Le Corbusier's photograph or the pine tree on the right, that would aid us in orientation. Instead, we stare off into the whiteness of the sky.

In two of Bonney's twenty photographs of the building did she focus on an object very close to lens to suggest space and depth, a technique that made the photographs of Le Corbusier so special. While oblique views are often utilized, they are not nearly as extreme as that of Le Corbusier's Maison Tarnisien photograph. Shadows are not employed to suggest volume. It is doubtful that Bonney used orange filters as the skies in her photographs are uniformly white. In large expanses of white cement, the effects of moisture and other small imperfections are easily seen. Her printing is not brilliant, but rather flat, suggesting that she generally used one gradation of paper

only. Unlike Le Corbusier's photographer or Le Corbusier himself, Bonney seems never to have employed retouching or the new technique of photomontage.

If Bonney's photographs seldom reach the quality of Le Corbusier's photographers, the strength of her documentation lies not in quality, but in quantity. While even Boissonas' album of the Villa La Roche only contains fourteen photographs,<sup>10</sup> Bonney, in ten exterior and ten interior shots of the Villa Heim, offers us a tour of the premises at two different building stages -during construction and after the family had moved in- thus providing a complete picture of the villa, its grounds, including the garden plantings, and its furnishings. This is a pattern that is often repeated in her work. Beginning as early as the Hyères photographs for the Noailles villa, Bonney seems to have made a special effort to document the relationship of the landscape to the architectural object. Attention is paid to the setting of the house within the landscape as well as to the gardens and their plantings. This technique seems to be in direct opposition to Le Corbusier whose photographs tend to present his buildings as isolated phenomena without a neighborhood and without topography. In fact, the only memorable shots of landscapes in Le Corbusier photos are those of the mountains surrounding the Lake of Geneva as seen through his wall window at his mother's house.<sup>11</sup>

### Commercial photographers

In their discussions of the use of the photographic medium in architecture, neither Monnier nor Cervin Robinson, co-author of *Architecture Transformed, A History of the Photography of Buildings from 1839 to the Present*, so much as mention the two photographers who radically changed the face of architectural photography in the 1920s: the Hungarian-born Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) and the Russian Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956), who had designed the interior of Melnikov's Soviet Pavilion at the 1925 Paris exposition. Both photographers specialized in dramatically-angled shots taken looking straight up the side of a building, nearly straight down onto it, or from an oblique angle. Rodchenko was using this technique as early as 1920.<sup>12</sup> Moholy-Nagy's seminal book *Malerei Photographie Film* demonstrating this technique as well as photograms, double exposures, montage, and the use of film sequences and news photographs, was published in 1925.<sup>13</sup> Whereas Le Corbusier's photographers generally tried to get as 'correct' a photograph as possible by planting the building squarely on the ground with the camera pointing straight toward it, Bonney at times offers photographs in which the camera is pointed nearly straight up or straight down, although rarely as radically as Moholy-Nagy or Rodchenko did. This technique, not often seen in the work of

contemporary French photographers, implies Bonney's knowledge of their photographs. From her photographic documentation of it, it is evident that Bonney attended the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne in 1928. Although I believe Bonney knew of this technique earlier, here, at the latest, she would have seen the radical Russian approach to journalistic photography as exhibited in the Soviet pavilion there designed by El Lissitzky.<sup>14</sup> Many commercial photographers competed with Bonney for publication. In a lengthy article in *Art et Decoration* of 1929 on the architect Gabriel Guévrékian, for example, photographs by competitor firms *L'illustration* and *Chevojon* were chosen over Bonney's for buildings she, too, had photographed.<sup>15</sup> It is underneath only two photographs of her own apartment, in which Guévrékian had installed a bookcase and a toilet table with a folding mirror, that Bonney's name appears. In comparing photographs taken by Bonney with those of her

competitors, one can understand why hers were not chosen. Where *L'illustration* has taken a horizontal view of the main stairway and the living room of Guévrékian's Villa Heim and has opened partition doors to create the illusion of more space, Bonney has taken a vertical view of the same room that includes the doorframe and makes the living room seem smaller and more compressed. In her photograph, both the closed partition doors and the abrupt angle on the staircase do nothing to make this space appear luxurious. Whereas Bonney's view of the trellised terrace walkway of the home's roof is not, as I have suggested above, very successful, the picture chosen for publication is, in that it includes less sky and more terrace floor and flower boxes, thus anchoring the viewer firmly on the roof. Where Bonney's other terrace photographs suggest desolation and the little fountain pool is seen to be empty, *L'illustration*, by concentrating on smaller sections of terrace that are furnished and planted, conveys a more



Interior, Chiquito restaurant, 38, rue du Colisée, Paris, designed by Charles Siclis (1889-?) before 1929. Courtesy of Cooper-Hewitt, National Museum of Design, Smithsonian Institution - Art Resource, NY. Photo: Service Bonney.

convivial mood.

On the other hand, a Marc Vaux photograph of Lurçat's Guggenbuhl House appeared in *L'Architecte* of 1928 and became, through its continuous publication by Lurçat, the 'official' photograph of the building. In her archives, Bonney offers us a similar view, but her photograph is better. By standing farther left than Vaux did, she captures not only the drama of the cantilevered terrace roof but manages to exclude an ugly crack in the wall of a neighboring building while simultaneously capturing the playful shadow cast by the lower terrace trellis construction. Why, one wonders, did Lurçat continue to use the less good Vaux photograph?<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said Bonney's view is at times more inclusive than that other contemporary documentary photographers, more willing to put up with people, traffic, the clutter of everyday life. Her interest in topography and in gardens makes her unique among her male contemporaries. If her work is not always technically perfect, her sense of drama is strong. More importantly, she is thorough, offering us a huge selection of photographs from which to choose.

#### Further career

The fact that Bonney's bicultural press service was short-lived does not seem to have daunted her spirit. Her allegiance to both her native and adopted countries remained firm. From the mid-1930s she continued her career by organizing several American exhibitions on French artists and French culture for which she was awarded the cross of the French *legion d'honneur*.<sup>17</sup> From 1936 to 1937, as Le Corbusier angled for a space at the 1939 New York World's Fair, Bonney was under contract as the sole representative for the architect's work in America.<sup>18</sup> In 1940 she was feted as a hero for her photographic documentation of the effects of war on children shown at a solo exhibition at the fledgling Museum of Modern Art.<sup>19</sup> Her collection of paintings and decorative arts, amassed in the very years that her photo press service was active, is now in the collections of the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>20</sup>

*Claire Bonney is an independent architectural historian and photographer based in Basel, Switzerland. Thérèse Bonney and she are not directly related. This article is based on her doctoral dissertation (Thérèse Bonney: The Architectural Photographs, University of Zürich, 1992). Earlier drafts appeared in Faces, University of Geneva, Switzerland (no. 17, Fall 1990, pp. 60-62) and Archithese, vol. 24, no. 4 (July-August 1994). The author wishes to thank Professor Stanislaus von Moos for his enthusiastic encouragement of this project, and Mel Byars of The Cooper-Hewitt Museum's Thérèse Bonney Photography Collection.*

Notes:

1. Thérèse Bonney, *Rapport établi par le Président de la Chambre de Commerce française de New York pour être remis à Monsieur Pierre Laval à son retour de l'Amérique*. Typescript dated 15 December 1931 with handwritten additions, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

A collection of Bonney's works for *Art et Décoration* was donated by its editor, Albert Lévy, to the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, Paris, where it is still stored today. Those photographs sold by Bonney to *Art et Décoration* are labeled 'EAL' -Editions Albert Lévy- in her New York archives.

2. 'Thérèse Bonney,' untitled typescript dated January 7, 1931, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

3. N.O. Robbins, 'How the Lens Supplements Pens, an interview with Thérèse Bonney,' typescript dated 7 July 1939 for release in *U.S. Camera*, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

4. Barbe's biographer, Jean-Baptiste Minnaert, mentions this shop in *Pierre Barbe, Architectures*, Liege 1991, p. 33, without reproducing any documents relating to it.

5. See DOCOMOMO Newsletter 6, November 1991, pp. 55-59.

6. Bonney no. 9262 (Cooper-Hewitt no. STS 049), Cooper-Hewitt archives.

7. Gérard Monnier, *L'Architecture en France, une histoire critique 1918-1950*, Paris 1990, p. 263. All translations of Monnier are my own.

8. Monnier, Op. cit., p. 264.

9. Monnier, Op. cit., p. 263.

10. This album has been published in: Le Corbusier und Raoul La Roche, *Architekt und Maler, Bauherr und Sammler*, exhibition catalogue Architekturmuseum in Basel, June 6 - August 9, 1987, pp. 32-47.

11. See Le Corbusier's *Une petite Maison*.

12. See Evelyn Weiss (ed.), *Rodtschenko Fotografien 1920-1938*, exhibition catalogue, Kunsthaus Zurich, July-August 1978, Cologne 1978.

13. László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film*, Munich 1925.

14. See Wulf Herzogenrath (ed.), *Fruhe Kolner Kunstaustellungen*, Cologne 1981, for a reprint of the original Pressa USSR 1928 catalogue.

15. Rene Chavance, 'Guévrékian, Architecte et Decorateur', in *Art et Décoration*, vol. 55 (January 1929), pp. 1-16.

16. There is some doubt as to the author of this photograph. An identical print, housed in the Sigfried Giedion Archives at the Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur (gta), Zürich-Hönggerberg, is stamped 'Marc Vaux'. If this is indeed work by Vaux, why, one wonders, did neither he nor Lurçat make use of it in publications?

17. Entry 'Bonney, (Mabel) Thérèse,' *Current Biography*, vol. 5: 2, February 1944, pp. 9-13, p. 10.

18. Letter Le Corbusier to Thérèse Bonney, 23 October 1936, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris, Box Cl-1, # 25. I thank Dan Naegele, Philadelphia, for relaying this information to me.

19. See press texts dated 5 December, 1940 and 11 December 1940, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

20. See catalog *Aren't they lovely? An exhibition of the bequest of Thérèse Bonney, Class of 1916*, organized by Andrea Fraser, University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, 27 June - 13 September 1992.



# A house located *North by Northwest*

## Modern architecture and cinema

During the 1920s and 1930s, modern architecture as well as the movies underwent a development that, although it concerned two totally different phenomena, had its similarities. Both relied on new technologies, and both would become a significant cultural aspect of the 20th Century. With architects appreciating movies and filmmakers appreciating architecture, it is no surprise that modern architecture is often featured in films since the 1920s.

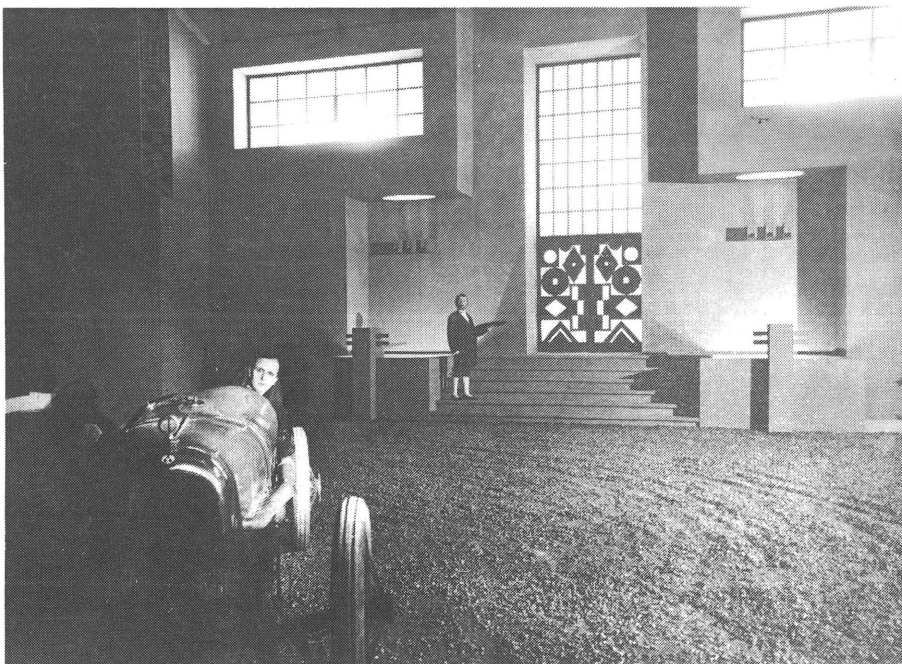
Existing buildings were sometimes made part of the architectural setting of a film, but in most cases new designs would especially be created for a movie, often with references to famous examples of the Modern Movement. Such was the case in 1959, when Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* was released, a film that includes existing as well as non-existing examples of modern architecture.

by Arjan Doolaar

Since the first film-show in 1895, now one hundred years ago, architecture has always played a minor role in films. Although almost every film features one or more buildings, a building often serves only as the setting for the actors, simply because that makes it look 'real'. Sometimes however, the architecture (or the architectural design) of a film becomes an important part of the story. For instance, what would *King Kong* (1933) have been without its final sequence atop the Empire State Building; both gorilla and building have gained popularity because of this sequence.

Also well-known is *Metropolis*, the now classic silent-film directed by Fritz Lang in 1927. The futuristic set designs, including a bizarre *Art Deco*

factory, are still astonishing today and add to Lang's frightening prospect of a totally mechanized city. The title of the film has even become synonymous with the city of the future. Many years after *Metropolis*, Fritz Lang would appear as an actor in Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963, English title *Contempt*), playing himself as a director. The film is for a great part set in and around the famous Villa Malaparte on the island Capri, that was originally designed by Adalberto Libera in the 1930s. In the film the villa serves as the location where a film version is being made of *The Odyssey*. The film is shot in clear and bright colours and offers many contrasts; the setting of a classic story in a modern entourage is just of one



Left: Rob Mallet-Stevens designed the exterior of this villa for *L'Inhumaine* of 1924, starring Jaque Catelain (in car).

Top right: The engineer's laboratory, also designed by Rob Mallet-Stevens for *L'Inhumaine*.

Photos: Cinémathèque Française, with kind permission of Editions Parenthèses .

them. An interesting aspect is that Alberto Moravia, who wrote the story the movie is based on, lived in the villa for some time. Although he never explicitly mentions the villa in his novel *Il Disprezzo*, there are many clues that refer to the Villa Malaparte; thus, what remained a mystery in the novel, became real on film.<sup>1</sup>

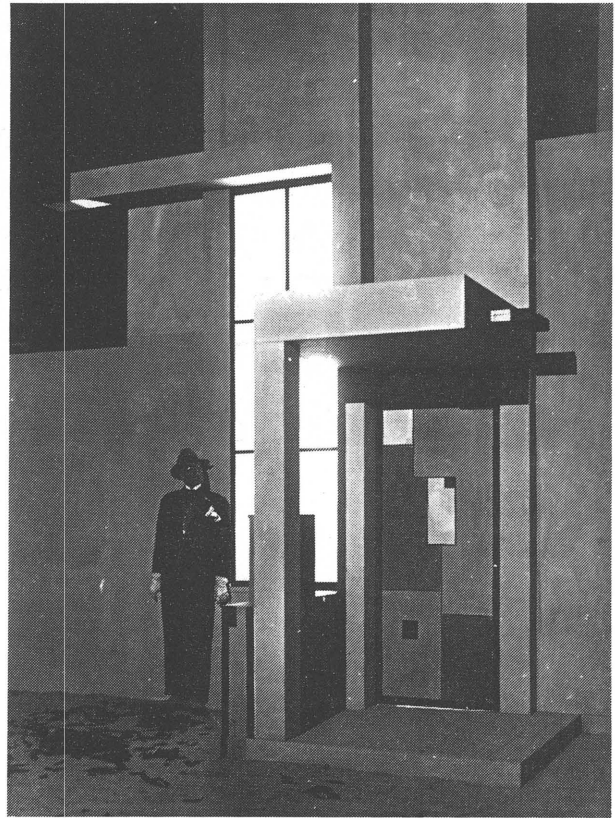
### Hollywood

However, most films that feature examples of modern design do not include famous buildings such as the Empire State Building or the Villa Malaparte, simply because filming on location has always been more expensive than filming in a studio. With the rise of the movie industry during the 1920s and 1930s, art directors and production designers of the Hollywood filmstudio's were able to bring their fantasies alive on the screen. Many of them were inspired by the pioneering architects of those days, like Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Richard Neutra. Traces of their heritage, most notably interiors, can be found in a number of films. For most people in the audience it would be the first time that they were confronted with this new cool and elegant, modern look.

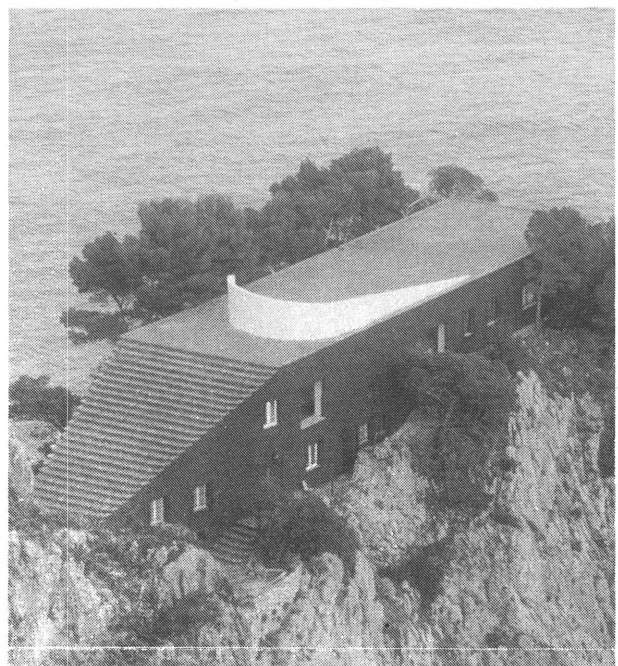
Because the 1920s and 1930s were also the decades of economic depression, modern architecture (and also *Art Deco*) as presented by Hollywood on film was conceived as a dreamworld, unattainable for 'ordinary' people. Films with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing the night away in a fancy nightclub, or Greta Garbo being a millionaires owning a complete office building would become a representation of the glamorous life that the rich and famous led in their big penthouses and on their gigantic ocean liners. This was the opposite of what most modern, mainly European, architects had in mind; they were interested in designing for all people, no matter what social standard. Modern design in Hollywood had its height before the Second World War, which is odd when considered that modern architecture in the US would reach a climax only after the War.<sup>2</sup>

### Mallet-Stevens

Besides filmmakers bringing modern design into the movies, architects (as well as other artists) were also interested in exploring the new medium, most notably in Europe. Rob Mallet-Stevens was an art director for several French productions during the 1920s, including the famous -but rarely shown- *L'Inhumaine* (1924, English title *The New Enchantment*). Directed by Marcel L'Herbier, *L'Inhumaine* tells the story of a wealthy woman and her affairs in a luxurious villa. The exterior of this villa and the engineer's laboratory were designed by Mallet-Stevens; among the other collaborators were Fernand Léger, René Lalique and Pierre Chareau. Mallet-Stevens's settings show his affinity with the Dutch *De Stijl* group, most notably Rietveld's Schröder House in Utrecht, which was also completed in 1924. The components of the



Bottom: The Villa Malaparte on the island Capri, built between 1938 and 1942. Originally designed by Adalberto Libera, it is now assumed that the owner, the Italian writer Curzio Malaparte, was also responsible for its design. Photo courtesy of M. Talamona.



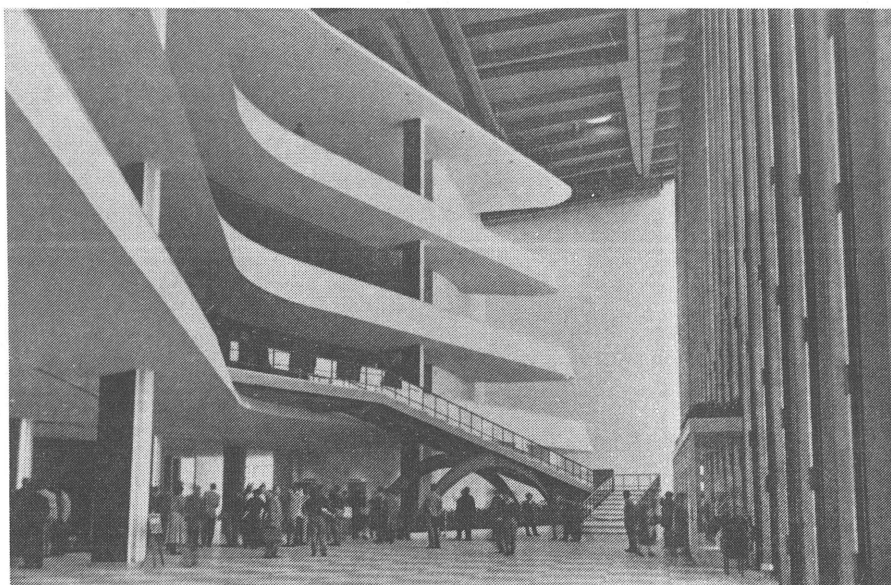


Left: The French filmposter of *North by Northwest*, showing the main actors as well as the Mount Rushmore monument, that was completed in 1941. Right: Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water in Bear Run of 1936. Photo: Crittall Windows Ltd.

laboratory, like the Schröder House, look like they have been slid randomly into one another, yet constitute a whole. A striking detail is that Mallet-Stevens's designs have been decorated with some geometrical forms, whereas the Schröder House has no ornaments at all. Mallet-Stevens had strong opinions on architecture, in real life as well as in films. He even published a book about modern architecture and film, *Le Décor Moderne au Cinéma* (1928), still one of the few books on the subject. In the introduction of this book he stresses his concern about the Modern Movement being presented in movies as 'exclusively for places of debauchery: nightclubs or boudoirs of the demi-mondaine, which would allow one to suppose that the admirable efforts and researchers of painters, decorateurs, and architects are good to surround drunkards or those of ill-repute'.<sup>3</sup> Mallet-Stevens does not criticize one film in particular, so it is not clear if he refers to cinema in general or that he was not content with productions that bear his name as an art director; *L'Inhumaine*, for instance, is set in a milieu that fits Mallet-Stevens's criticism.

### United Nations

One of the most outstanding films that features modern architecture is Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, released by MGM in 1959. Not only does this film include existing as well as non-existing examples of Modern Movement architecture, but each of the buildings shown also has a function towards the story. *North by Northwest* is a thriller, but because this is an Alfred Hitchcock-movie, some black comedy is also involved. The story is typical for Hitchcock: advertising executive Roger Thornhill, played by Cary Grant, is mistaken for a secret agent by a group of criminals, lead by a smooth and distinguished man named Phillip Vandamm. Thornhill winds up in a number of adventures, chased cross country from New York via Chicago to Rapid City. The geography of his travels explains the title of the film, which is also a quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act II, scene 2): 'I am but mad north-northwest: when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw'. The idea is that Thornhill nor Hamlet is mad, although most of the situations are certainly bizarre.

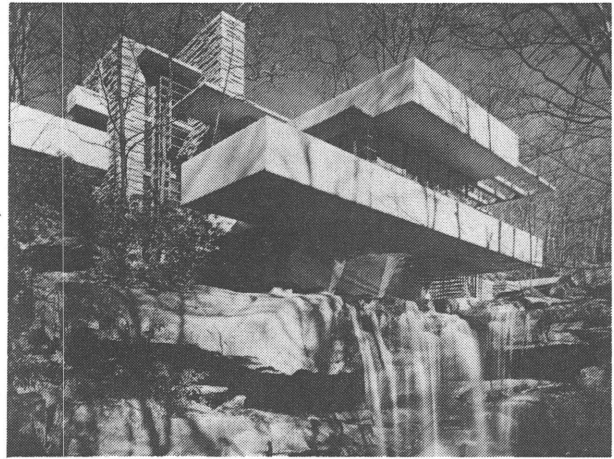


The entrance hall of the United Nations headquarters in New York. Alfred Hitchcock secretly filmed the hall from this angle, using a concealed camera. Period postcard.

Characteristic of the classic Hollywood-film, such as *North by Northwest*, is that the opening credits already show some of the film's contents to give the audience an idea what the film is all about. For instance, the film *Casablanca* shows during its opening sequence the map of Africa. *North by Northwest* starts with an abstract pattern of geometric white lines against a green background, that slowly dissolves into the glass facade of a skyscraper, reflecting the busy traffic of Park Avenue in New York. Because the building is only partly filmed, it is difficult to tell which building is shown; it is most probably a building by Emery Roth & Sons from the late 1950s.<sup>4</sup> The important thing is that the tone of the film has been set. The first part of the film is set in New York where Thornhill tries to find out why he is mistaken for someone else. His trace leads to the headquarters of the United Nations. Alfred Hitchcock had chosen this location because it is one of New York's most famous landmarks, recognizable for everyone. During filming this sequence, Hitchcock and his crew were confronted with a difficult problem: any shooting of fiction films had been prohibited by the then secretary-general of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld. Determined to film the building, Hitchcock and his crew secretly took their equipment inside. 'Just the same', said Hitchcock, 'while the guards were looking for our equipment, we shot one scene of Cary Grant coming into the building by using a concealed camera. We'd been told we couldn't even do any photography, so we concealed the camera in the back of a truck and in that way we got enough footage for the background. Then we got a still photographer to get permission to take some coloured stills inside, and I walked around with him, as if I was a visitor, whispering "Take that shot from there. And now, another one from the roof down." We used those colour photographs to reconstitute the settings in our studios'.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of this procedure the building of the United Nations is only seen in long distance shots, which gives it a prestigious impression. This becomes most notable during the scene where Cary Grant enters the building: the entrance hall is so overwhelming that he is hardly noticed at all. The scene during which Grant leaves the building later, chased by guards who think he has committed a murder, is also being seen from a distance: from high above. It is a trick shot, which makes the audience believe that the camera has been placed on top of the building's tower, and makes Grant and his pursuers look like small spots on an abstract painting.

The décor for the scenes in the public lounge, the place where a man is being stabbed in the film, is actually a reconstruction of the delegates' lounge. Alfred Hitchcock was always very concerned about the authenticity of settings and furniture. However, the lounge shown in the film was called the public lounge to maintain the prestige of the United



Nations. This also explains how a man with a knife could get into a building of such importance. Seen in the film for a few moments only, the building of the United Nations still looks dignified and unapproachable, not even by a murder.

### Mount Rushmore

Being a murder suspect, Thornhill flees to Chicago by train. Because the man he is mistaken for is supposed to have left for Rapid City (South Dakota), Thornhill's stay in Chicago is only for a short time, which means that the city's architecture is also seen very briefly; only Midway Airport can be recognized. Meanwhile, the police has found out about Thornhill's innocence and the mistaken identity. He agrees, hesitantly, to help the police by pretending he is the man the criminals have mistaken him for. He travels to Rapid City (by plane, 'Northwest Airlines'), where Vandamm has a retreat near the Mount Rushmore Memorial, the mountain-monument representing four American presidents.

After the United Nations building, Mount Rushmore is again a famous landmark in the US, and again Hitchcock did not receive permission (from National Park Service) to film on the monument and its surroundings. Therefore Mount Rushmore was recreated on a gigantic set of MGM. More interesting however is the modern villa of Vandamm that, according to Hitchcock, was 'a miniature of a house by Frank Lloyd Wright'.<sup>6</sup> Although Ernest Lehman's original screenplay described the house as 'a sprawling modern structure in the Frank Lloyd Wright tradition', it was actually designed especially for the film by its production designer, Robert Boyle.

The story demanded a distant house with large windows that made it possible for Thornhill to see who were in the house. He also had to climb the walls to reach the bedroom on the first floor; in other words, not a regular house but one that should be based on an unusual functional programme. 'Every architect is influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright', according to Boyle, who turned to one of Wright's most famous designs. 'The Falling

Water house, which Frank Lloyd Wright designed, was partly cantilevered', recalled Boyle, 'but that wasn't what interested me; it was the stonework in the Falling Water house, which was horizontal striated stone. That was perfect for somebody to get a handhold and climb up; that's why I selected it. I was really influenced by the handholds. Falling Water jutted out over a little stream. I made the Mount Rushmore house more extravagant, and I really jutted it out. Of course, in actuality, there is no such place around Mount Rushmore. [...] All we had was a road, and the house was a matte painting'.<sup>7</sup>

The matte painting consisted of a painting of the (non-existing) house on glass, which, when photographed, at the same time shows the (existing) landscape through the clear part of the glass. The house was partly built for the scenes in which Cary Grant climbs the walls. Set on top of a mountain with an extreme long balcony, it could probably never have been realized in real life: the house looks like it could plunge into the ravine any moment. In this way the house anticipates on the final scenes of the film, during which Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint (the film's heroine) end up on Mount Rushmore and, like the house, nearly fall down. The house also serves as a characterization of Phillip Vandamm; although a criminal, he is a distinguished person with great taste in architecture. It makes one wonder what Rob Mallet-Stevens would have thought when seeing this house being owned by someone of 'ill-repute'.

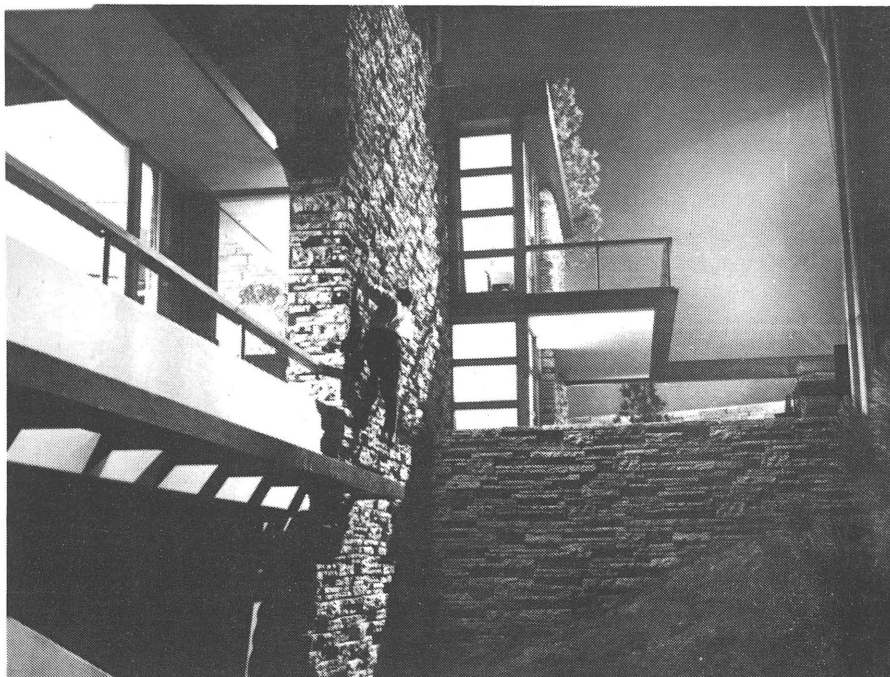
### Frank Lloyd Wright

Frank Lloyd Wright, who died in 1959, did not live to see *North by Northwest*, but during his life he did express his interest in film, which amongst others resulted in a lecture for the staff of the Walt

Disney Studio as a part of an education program. Wright, who had strong opinions on the arts, did not hesitate to criticize Disney's film *Fantasia* because it illustrated classical music.<sup>8</sup> An inspiration for many art directors and production designers, Wright himself was asked to design the sets for *The Fountainhead* (1949), a film that was said to be based on Wright's own life. Wright agreed, but the architect's salary of US \$ 250,000 made the producers decide to employ art director Edward Carrere. Largely based on famous buildings like Falling Water, Carrere's designs are nothing but weak reflections of Wright's work.<sup>9</sup> It can only be guessed what Wright's opinion would have been on *North by Northwest*, but it must have pleased him that modern design had found its way into cinema. Fact is that the buildings featured in *North by Northwest* are not only important towards the story, but the film also shows how modern architecture had become a cultural aspect of society in the 1950s. Compared with prewar films, modern architecture was no longer a privilege for the rich and famous. In a short period of time its forms had shaped cities like New York and films like *North by Northwest*, forms that only decades before had seemed to be an unattainable fantasy.

### Batman and Melnikov

Art directors and production designers were often influenced by what they saw outside the filmstudio's, but never seem to have created settings that were completely new or revolutionary, apart from exceptions like Mallet-Stevens. This may be explained by the fact that movies mostly are about what is going on in the real world, so that the audience can relate to it. A revolutionary design would only be suitable if the story requested an extraordinary building. Besides that,



A scene from *North by Northwest*. because of the horizontal stonework Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) is able to climb the walls of the Mount Rushmore-house. The functional programme was derived from the story producing a functional imagery, designed by Robert Boyle. Photo courtesy of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences.

limited budgets frequently made (and still make) architectural experiments impossible. Today, modern design still finds its way into movies. This year's much hyped film, *Batman Forever*, has some astonishing sets that echo the designs made sixty years earlier for *Metropolis*. Even more remarkable is that Batman's Gotham City also includes Konstantin Melnikov's design of 1929 for the Colón Lighthouse (for illustration, see Journal 13, p. 53), now used as the head quarters of The Riddler, the film's villain. It looks like modern design in the movies is back where it started in the 1920s, a fantasy brought alive on the screen.

*Arjan Doolaar is an art historian in the Netherlands. For their help and advice while doing research, the author wishes to thank Cécile Briolle, Dirk Baalman, Maristella Casciato, and especially Kristine Krueger and Barbara Hall of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences.*

Notes:

1. For an extensive discussion of the Villa Malaparte, including the film *Le Mépris*, see: Jean-Paul Robert, 'Cap Malaparte', in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, n° 289, octobre 1993, pp. 116-129.
2. An overview of modern design in the movies between 1920 and 1940 can be found in: Donald Albrecht, *Designing Dreams, Modern Architecture in the Movies*, New York 1986.
3. *Designing Dreams*, pp. 44-45.
4. I thank Dirk Baalman, who pointed this out to me.
5. François Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, New York 1983, p. 252.
6. *Hitchcock*, p. 254.
7. Vincent LoBrutto, *By Design, Interviews with Film Production Designers*, Westport 1992, p. 9.
8. Christopher Finch, *The Art of Walt Disney*, New York 1973, p. 254.
9. *Designing Dreams*, pp. 169-173.

Films mentioned that feature modern architecture and/or modern design:

*L'Inhumaine* (France 1924), directed by Marcel L'Herbier, art direction by Rob Mallet-Stevens, Fernand Léger, Alberto Cavalcanti and Claude Autant-Lara, starring Georgette LeBlanc and Jaque Catelain.

*Metropolis* (Germany 1927), directed by Fritz Lang, art direction by Otto Hunte, Erich Kettelhut and Karl Vollbrecht, starring Brigitte Helm and Alfred Abel.

*King Kong* (USA 1933), directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, art direction by Carroll Clark and Al Herman, starring Fay Wray and Robert Armstrong.

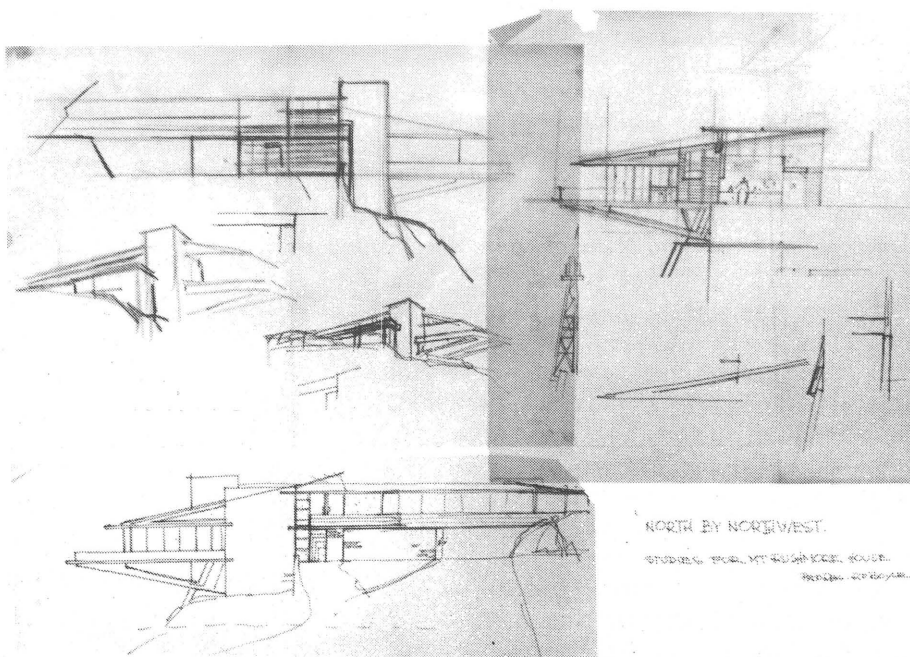
*The Fountainhead* (USA 1949), directed by King Vidor, art direction by Edward Carrere, starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal.

*North by Northwest* (USA 1959), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, production design by Robert F. Boyle, starring Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint.

*Le Mépris* (France/Italy 1963), directed by Jean-Luc Godard, no art director credited, starring Brigitte Bardot and Michel Piccoli.

*Batman Forever* (USA 1995), directed by Joel Schumacher, production design by Barbara Ling, starring Val Kilmer and Jim Carrey.

Some of the sketches Robert Boyle made for the Mount Rushmore-house in *North by Northwest*. The similarities with Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water are striking. Photo courtesy of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences.



# The sound of modernity

## Modernism in architecture and music

It is uncommon for informed comparisons to be made between distinct art media. Perhaps the main obstacle preventing such comparisons is that practitioners are, by necessity, specialists. In consequence, they may be prevented from apprehending that they are saying the same thing, because they are using different languages. Thus, concepts and ideas defined in one field may not transfer literally to another. But if we abandon, as Adorno<sup>1</sup> recommends we do, attempts to compare directly characteristic features of different media, and concentrate instead upon how those features, following different routes of development, nevertheless reach the same destination or conclusion, we may discover that distinctness at the surface hides similarity at a deeper level.

And if we discover such commonalities between different modernist arts, more integrated and generalised theories of modernism may be revealed that are external to their manifestation in any particular art form or work.

Is it possible to make such comparisons between modernist architecture and music? Do the concepts associated with design, theory, and aesthetics in modernist architecture have equivalents in modernist music?

by Gordon Downie

To illustrate the potential of a comparative approach, we will take Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *three principles* and demonstrate how they can be generalised to form concepts which have an equivalent applicability to certain aspects of modernist music. The principles, governing the aesthetic and technical vocabulary of modernist architecture, were formulated in 1932 in response to the growth of the International Style\* and emphasised architecture as volume, modular regularity, and the avoidance of applied ornament.<sup>2</sup>

### Atonality

For architects of the International Style, the primary architectural symbol was no longer the 'dense brick, but the open box'.<sup>3</sup> With walls freed of their load-bearing function, mass was replaced by volume, opacity by transparency, and static solidity by a weightless, bounded space. If architecture of the past tended to supplant the space it occupied and ignore that surrounding it, the new architecture interacted with it, and in consequence dissolved distinctions between interior and exterior. Form thus became more fluid, the whole becoming a sum of individual, semi-autonomous parts, each element possessing an equivalence with every other. This non-hierarchical approach to construction enabled multiple readings of any given structure, and contrasted sharply with the univalent forms of the past. And it is this multi-perspectival approach that characterises music composed within an atonal framework.

Tonality, by its very nature, is a hierarchical system, one in which certain materials are privileged in relation to others. The process of asserting the importance of those materials guides

(← und → sehr deutlich)

24

Englishhorn

Flöte

Holztrummeln

Trommeln

Harfe

Violinen

Viola

Violoncelli

ca 7 1/2''

24 pp + sfz (← und → sehr deutlich)

25

6 J-120

Hörn

Kl. Klarinette

Alt. Saxophon

Trommeln

Vibraphon

Gitarre

Violinen I II

Brasshorn I II

the formal and structural arrangement of a tonal composition. In contrast, the new paradigm emphasised equivalence between parameters, the dissolution of tonality (a process synonymous and coextensive with the rise of modernism in music) enabling forms of harmonic, contrapuntal, and formal invention that were no longer reliant upon processes of departure and arrival, emphasising instead more immediate and localised relations between contrasting and complementary musical events. Thus, the *centripetal* force of tonality, in which all musical materials existed relative to a central point of reference, was replaced by the *centrifugal* force of atonality, in which multiple perspectives compete equally for the listener's attention.

### Volume

But music, in common with other media, exists not only as *abstract organisation*, but as *concrete realisation*. Thus, a more fundamental level of comparison can be identified between Hitchcock and Johnson's first principle and music in terms of musical *texture* and *density*.

The late serial scores of Anton Webern composed during the 1930s, or the delicate textural fabrics created by composers of the post-Webern avant-garde during the 1950s and 1960s, are in stark contrast to the opaque, densely scored works of late Romanticism, to which, of course, the moderns reacted. In contrast to the excesses of late Romanticism, though in accordance with the lightweight structures of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye or the independent planes articulating the

form of Rietveld's Schröder House, such music sounds spacious and transparent, the listener able to identify the qualities of individual instruments and lines rather than those qualities being subsumed within the homogenised, compound timbres and textures of late nineteenth century scoring. So although a work such as Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gruppen* (1955-57) is scored for an orchestra equivalent in size to a Straussian orchestra, the predilection in the case of the former for avoiding compound sonorities and rhythmic simultaneities via considerable rhythmic complexity and independence of line, produces orchestral textures that, although frequently highly active and quantitatively dense, are at the same time perceptually transparent and qualitatively lightweight.

### Modular regularity

But in response to the loss of the structuring functions of tonality, Arnold Schönberg and his school developed serialism, a rigorous method of composition designed to organise and furnish the pitch material and interval succession for a whole work. It was then left to the postWar generation of continental modernists to take serialism further, by developing an integrated system in which every aspect of a work, be it pitch, duration, articulation, or rate of change, was controlled by a single structural principle or set of relationships. Thus, modernist music is characterised by a heightened concern for, and preoccupation with, structural process, coherence, and unity, and in its desire for such principles to be manifest at every level of a

Rietveld's Schröder House and Stockhausen's *Gruppen*: do they have characteristics in common?  
 Left: Fragment of Stockhausen's *Gruppen* of 1955-57. Reproduced by permission of Universal Edition (London) Ltd.  
 Right: An impression of Gerrit Rietveld's Schröder House of 1924. Drawing by Paul Meurs.





work, mirrors the second principle Hitchcock and Johnson identified, *regularity of structure*, where similarity and equivalence of parts articulate an underlying unity and coherence of expression. Whereas architecture and music of the past relied upon *symmetry* (however disguised) to organise independent details and features, the primary organisational principle in the new architecture and music became one of *repetition*, in which a work obtains coherence and unity through the exhaustive exploration of a limited and precisely defined set of elements. In the case of the Schröder House, the repetition and complex interpenetration of orthogonal planes. In the case of *Gruppen*, the repetition and complex manipulation of a pre-defined network of relations, proportions, and operations.

### Avoidance of applied ornament

Such regularity and clarity of structure was only possible, however, by rejecting everything that might hinder the articulation of pure forms and relationships, leading to Hitchcock and Johnson's third principle, *avoidance of applied ornament*, a principle rooted in Adolf Loos's earlier diatribe against applied decoration.<sup>4</sup> In order that the essential clarity of their buildings remained uncompromised, architects of the International Style avoided any detail or complication that might contradict the underlying unity and regularity of their designs. Any element not intrinsic to a building's underlying structure was therefore excluded from their design vocabulary, producing an architecture of great rigour and efficiency. Modernist music, similarly preoccupied with issues of structural clarity, also prohibited the addition of elements that detracted from the expression of formal unity and coherence.

Thus, within both architecture and music, the avoidance of inessentials was critical if underlying structure, function, and constructive process was not to be obscured. But what constitutes the inessential within music, and how can it be avoided?

Although a composition's underlying structure exists as an abstraction separate from its realisation in sound, the approach adopted for that realisation will either *obscure* it, by diverting attention to non-structural elements such as arbitrary colouration or gratuitous technical display, or *reinforce* it, by excluding the indiscriminate and meretricious. There is thus a sense in which Webern's work from the 1930s exhibits an economy of colouristic and expressive intention which assists the perception of constructive means. In this context the materials of music possess a functionality and independence which liberates them from the service of extra-musical expressivity and narrative. As Clement Greenberg perceived, with music as with literature, we tend to 'wait to see how things turn out',<sup>5</sup> thus a composer seeking to direct attention toward materials will

avoid the generation of expectations and goals that require resolution and accomplishment. By doing so, materials and the structure they articulate can be contemplated unmediated by the distractions engendered by goal-directed movement. It should be unsurprising that the finest examples of musical modernity were, and continue to be, essentially static in character.

### Defeat of representation

In common with other constructive art, such as that by the *De Stijl* movement, modernist architecture and music is characterised by an organisational methodology that eschews all inessentials in favour of stylistic purity and structural clarity. Such a methodology requires strict attention to the materials of the medium in order that constructive process and intention is not obscured or compromised. In consequence, materials are foregrounded and liberated from the service of narrative, anecdote, and associated forms of representation, assuming a dominance in the structural logic of art work that is historically unprecedented.

Although the forms it takes are different within architecture and music, it is *representation* that most effectively detracts from the expression of structure and the materials articulating it. And it is the defeat of representation that characterises most succinctly modernist sensibility.

*Gordon Downie is a composer and Director of the Contemporary Music Ensemble of Wales. He graduated in music from the universities of York and Durham and obtained his PhD in Computer Science from the University of Wales, Cardiff. Over the coming year his music will be performed at Festivals in Italy and Germany. He is a member of the Working party for DOCOMOMO UK.*

*The author wishes to thank the constructive visual artist Keith Richardson-Jones for reading the final draft of this article and for making several helpful suggestions.*

### Notes:

1. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, London 1984.
2. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, New York 1966.
3. Ibid.
4. Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, 1908.
5. Clement Greenberg: 'The Case for Abstract Art', in John O'Brian (ed.), *Collected Essays and Criticism*, Chicago 1993. Greenberg's essay was first published in 1959.

\* Note from the editor: The author prefers to use the term *International Style* instead of *Modern Movement* because he considers this 'the most efficient way of exploring links as it represents, arguably, the purest manifestation of modernist ideals within architecture.'

# An image of Dutch clarity restored

## Rietveld's Biennale Pavilion in Venice (1953-54)

The Netherlands Pavilion at the Biennale of Venice was called by the Italian contractor who was assigned the task of executing Rietveld's design in 1953 'exceptionally beautiful, the most beautiful even of all the other pavilions'. A certain measure of partiality can of course be expected of a contractor, but it is true that the confident simplicity of the spatial composition made the building in the *Giardini di Castello* into a very special phenomenon. The architectural clarity seems to evoke a striking portrait of postwar Holland. However, it is not to be hoped that recent visitors on the basis of this pavilion have tried to form an idea of the Netherlands as it is today. In the early nineties the building was only a shadow of the original design. Its hardly concealable dry rot and the severe subsidence of the small office joined on to the pavilion would most certainly have left an undesirable impression, quite different from the impression the first visitors in 1954 must have had.

by Wessel de Jonge

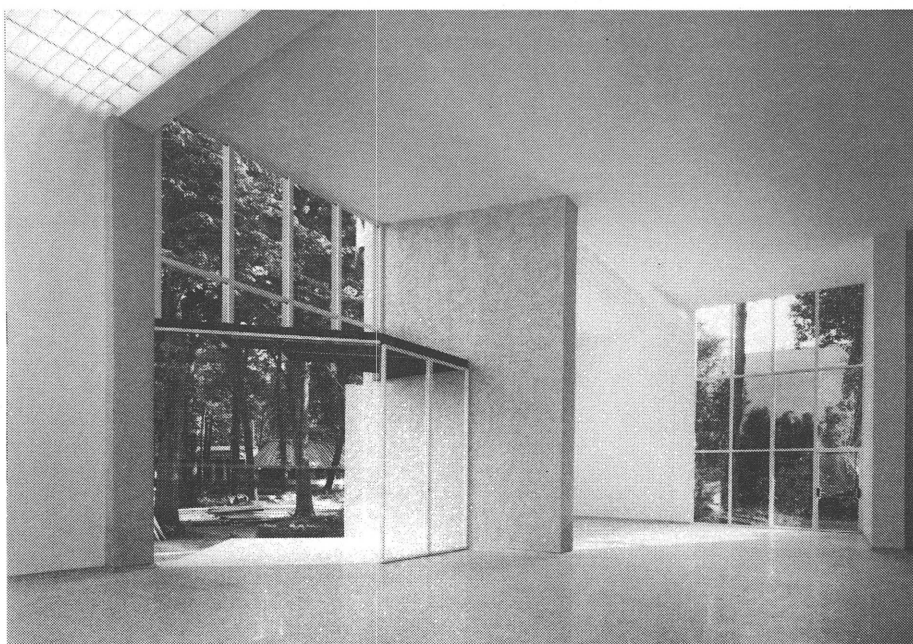
In the course of time the architectural character of Rietveld's pavilion was seriously affected. The interior spatial concept was weakened by later interventions, while a number of elements characteristic of Rietveld, such as the casing details, the lay-out and graduation of the facades and the slim roofboards had been radically altered. Also in a constructional sense there were a number of problems which constituted a hazard to both the aesthetical appreciation of the building and its proper maintenance. That damp in the Venetian lagune plays a devastating role is common knowledge. The inner walls showed a persistent salt-efflorescence as a result of which the plasterwork had to be repaired every other year. During the frequent downpours in the area serious leakages occurred. The roofboards and the casings had rotted through and the roofing had

seriously blistered. The degeneration of this 'showpiece of the Netherlands' must be partly attributed to the way in which until roughly a decade ago the stewardship was almost exclusively seen as a problem of upkeep.

### Restoration approach

The changing views with respect to the conservation of recent architecture have resulted in the stewardship of Rietveld's pavilion having to change tack. The time was ripe for no longer considering the running of a technically imperfect building in foreign parts a *problem*, but a *challenge* in the form of an integral restoration of a special example of recent architecture. After an initial phase of two years the commission to put the restoration into effect was given early in 1994. On the basis of previous research<sup>1</sup> a number of

The interior of the exhibition hall after the 1995 restoration. The terrazzo flooring has been fully reconstructed and fitted with floor heating to control the level of interior humidity. The horizontal slats in the ceilings have been replaced by opal white polycarbonate, to get a more diffuse light in keeping with present requirements.  
Photo: Jan Versnel.



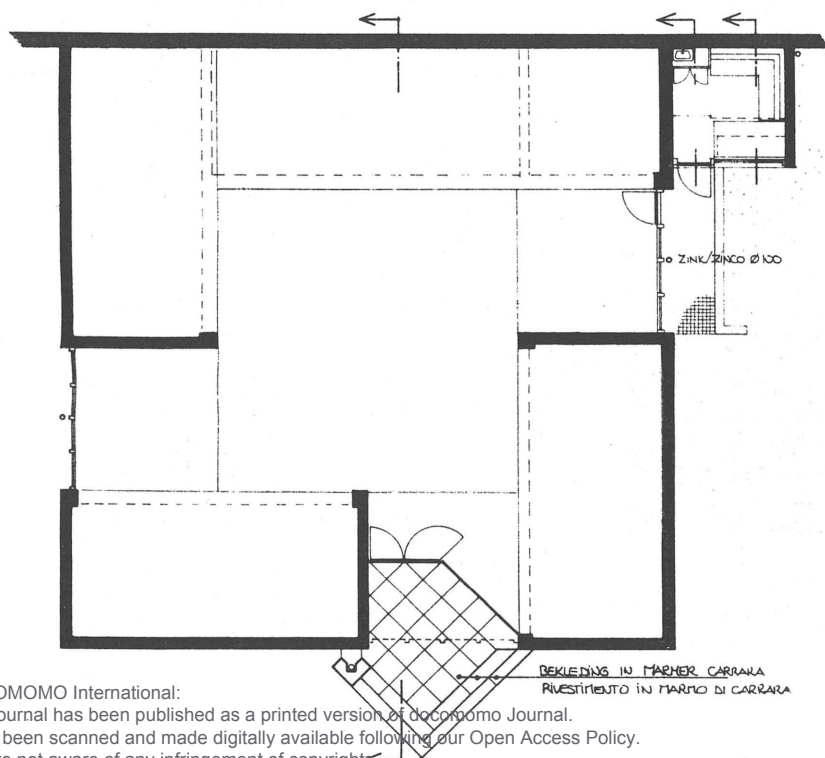
points of departure for the restoration plan have been formulated. The numerous interventions in the building in the course of time did not concern the architectonic aspect but rather technical measures to counter maintenance problems. In contrast to other, mostly older monuments, which allow themselves to be read as constructed history books, nothing stood in the way of a complete restoration back in time.

Unlike the work by some of his contemporaries such as the innovative architects Duiker and Van der Vlugt, Rietveld's work does not in the first place stand out as regards constructional ingenuity but rather because of its originality in aesthetical terms. The pavilion is a clear example of this. It is therefore understandable that when in the past the technically inadequate parts of the pavilion had to be replaced, usually an alternative solution was chosen that diverged from the original, although some changes could still have been avoided. At the restoration non-authentic parts and details have been re-designed on the basis of the original drawings. Details that led to early damage or disproportionate maintenance costs have been improved technically, but only if that could be done without disturbing consequences. It remains inevitably for the restoring architect to judge what is experienced as disturbing and what is not. Original parts which were in good condition have been kept and used again, such as most of the stucco and the terrazzo tabletop in the office. As on balance only the walls, some parts of the roof, the concrete floor and a mezzanine floor were still of the original composition, the topical question of material authenticity<sup>2</sup> has hardly played a role.

### Three dimensions of modernity

The question if material authenticity should be a key issue when restoring Rietveld's works remains an interesting one, even if we put the above observation aside. Let's take the three dimensions

of modernity, as formulated by DOCOMOMO earlier on, as a starting point to see how innovative his works are in technological, social and aesthetical terms. It is obvious that his approach stood apart from the ideas of most contemporary modern architects in Western Europe. The sometimes rigid rationality, as displayed for example in Gropius' *Bauhaus* and Van der Vlugt's Van Nelle factories, or even in a more sensitive interpretation of these principles such as Duiker's sanatorium *Zonnestraal*, seems quite in contrast with Rietveld's ideas. Presumably the most successful *De Stijl*-member measured by actual architectural production, he was much more concerned with the artistic and aesthetic aspects of the profession, rather than with architecture's social impact and technological development. Although his Schröder House is a fascinating test-case as regards how people can live together in a continuous space, this social experiment was a result of an artistic effort rather than having been a starting point for the design. In comparison to, again, Van der Vlugt and Duiker one could successfully argue that Rietveld's approach was certainly directed less towards technological innovation. In the first cases the industrial production of building components was a part of the architectural conception, since it allowed for easy replacement, change in time and low production costs. Therefore, it seems quite senseless to attach great value to the material authenticity of industrially produced parts of their buildings. Rietveld however, as a carpenter and cabinet-maker by training, was much more concerned with how things were actually crafted and especially his earlier works, before his move towards a more functionalist approach, show strong evidence of workmanship. For example the patina of some elements in the Schröder House is a valuable witness that cannot be transferred by any medium and that should be respected in its material authenticity.



Left: Plan of the pavilion as reconstructed for the restoration.

Drawing: Wessel de Jonge. Right: The Netherlands pavilion at the Biennale of Venice after the recent restoration. Main facade with entrance steps. Luigi de Lerma's mosaic of the Netherlands Lion on the flagpole still has to be replaced.

Photo: Jan Versnel. Far right: A sketch by Rietveld of the entrance steps and coffered ceiling. Archive NAI.

The pavilion on the other hand was built by an Italian contractor, and proper supervision by the architect on actual construction and technical details could hardly be expected. In contrast with the house in Utrecht, the material authenticity of the pavilion in Venice is therefore generally not regarded as very significant, probably with the exception of some specific elements such as the terrazzo flooring. Here, the issue was rather to again establish the spacial qualities and Rietveld's volumetric composition as well as the splendid image of early postwar Holland, as was originally reflected by this little building.

### Rietveld's Pavilion

Rietveld's design was developed on a grid derived from an existing foundation with the intention of re-using it. The module of 4 m taken from this was not only applied on the flat surface but was also chosen as a guideline for the entire spacial construction. It turned out to be a daylight pavilion providing an undivided space that measures 16 x 16 m and is 6 m high, on the inside. Three short cross walls somehow divide the space available into three compartments: a small room, in direct relation to the transparent entrance, a medium-sized room left of the entrance and a main room at the back. A square stuccoed ceiling of 8 m has been kept detached from the walls on all sides. This seemingly floating surface in the middle subtly emphasizes, as it were, the space in its entirety. The interior is thus alternatively experienced both as a whole and in its parts, with both asymmetrical space accentuation and a perceptible centre. Around the ceiling in the middle, the volume has been raised and vertical roof lights applied through which natural light falls on the walls of the pavilion. Horizontal Venetian blinds consisting of plywood slats, usually referred to by Rietveld as 'shutters', were to keep out the sun and focus the light on the walls at eye-level. In the course of time, this

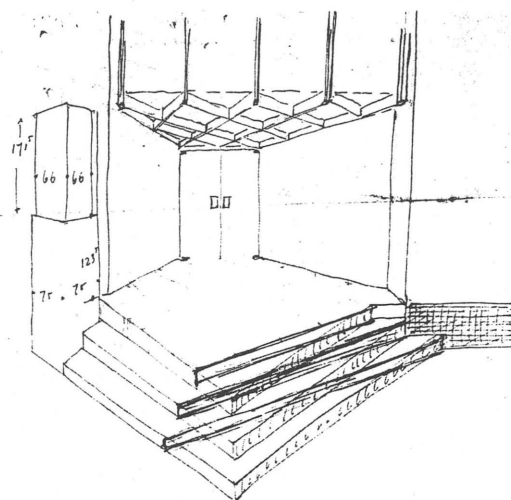
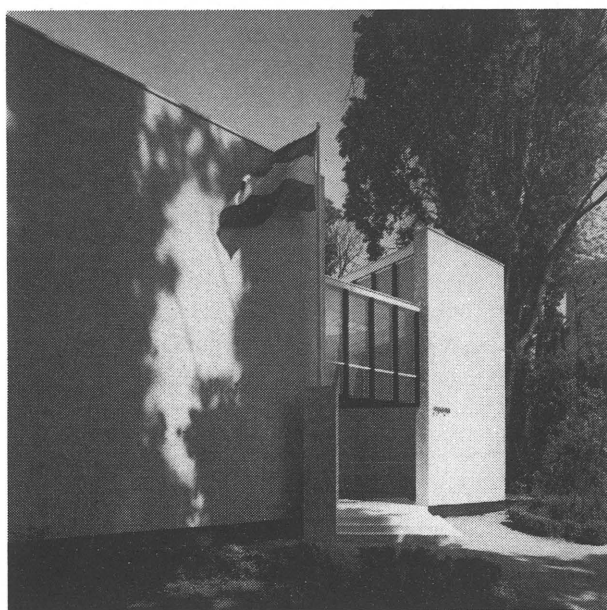
concentration of light on relatively narrow sections of the walls became increasingly unsuitable for contemporary exhibitions, that today rarely consist of a series of paintings hanging on a wall.

From the outside one gets the impression of a number of volumes grouped at some distance away from each other. The windows which are kept 2 m lower, are in between. The independence of the cubical masses was intended to be further emphasized by a contrast between the black rear block and the lightly coloured volumes in the foreground. In the building as it is realized this contrastive effect has been slightly toned down by finishing the rear part in smooth natural stucco, whereas the other blocks have been stuccoed with a rough surface, right of the entrance in pale grey, and to the left in mellow yellow. The black plinth so characteristic of Rietveld's work of this period makes the masses float in the air.

At the restoration much effort was put into finding again the original colour scheme. Eventually the original shades could be determined by laboratory tests and on site research so that the authentic textures and colours could be fully respected at the restoration. A remarkable discussion came up when the colour samples of the new paints were judged 'too cool' on the Italian part. Indeed the colours of most of the Biennale pavilions is attuned to the Italian context of the *Giardini di Castello*. The new apricot shade of the German pavilion, for example, produces a curious and quite anachronistic reinterpretation of its rigid 1930s architecture. When the Netherland's Secretary of State inaugurated Rietveld's pavilion last June, it distinguished itself clearly from its neighbours by the brilliant and unmistakably Dutch colouring.

### Entrance

Through the large glass fronts natural light falls into the hall, which can be agreeable for the exhibition of some pieces such as sculptures, while



Handwritten notes below the sketch: "1953" and "in the plan of the pavilion by Rietveld".

at the same time some views of the park are offered. A remarkable aspect of the big fronts is the use of the colours white for the transoms and black for the mullions. The result of also choosing white for the beads in the end was a strong pattern which again emphasizes the consistently adhered to grid. The lower half of the entrance front was moved back. Above the entrance section an ingenious coffered ceiling of diagonal lattice work of wooden boards was devised, in between which glass was fitted. The contrasting colour scheme between the black transoms and the white beads produced here a fascinating graphic effect. As a result of a large window placed diagonally beside the entrance doors a line of vision was created from the park avenue to the main wall of the first room. A series of preliminary sketches shows how on the steps in front of the entrance the play with the diagonal patterns was continued. Together with the base of the flagpole, on which a mosaic of the Netherlands Lion designed by Luigi de Lerma was fitted, the entrance forms the playful element in the somewhat austere design of the pavilion.

### **The principle of the flat roof**

The most fundamental problem of the restoration, in terms of conflicting technical and aesthetical aspects, was what to do with the lower part of the roof and its relation to the large glass fronts. The roof kerbs were designed very slight, so as to allow the roofboards, as the termination of the facades, to remain very slim. In the threedimensional graduation of Rietveld's overall composition, moreover, the roof was completely horizontal and so without any slope. In Venice, where it can often pour with rain, there were serious leakages already in the first season. As the roof construction had been economized on, the roof also sagged strongly so that often water was left on it. In the early 1970s it was rightly argued that the problem could only be solved by introducing an adequate slope and a therefore necessary lowering of the roof's perimeter. Disturbance of the geometry of the windows, that followed the three dimensional grid of Rietveld's design, would be the inevitable result. After much consideration it was decided to do this still, in order to regain control over the problematic maintenance of the pavilion. Unfortunately, the roof perimeter was lowered twice as much as initially planned. Also the dimensions of the roofboards themselves had to double as a result of unforeseen problems with the realization and became over pronounced. In this way, the composition of the building as a whole was seriously affected. Another result was that in the interior the independence of the central ceiling had been encroached on because those parts of the ceiling that sloped up to the glass fronts had had to be pulled flush with the central part, with the resulting loss of definition of the square.

At the restoration the low roof was again replaced, this time by light corrugated steel panels with

thermal insulation. The construction of a slope towards the centre of the roof allowed for the roof's perimeter to be raised to the original height and, consequently, for the windows and the interior ceiling to be restored again in accordance with Rietveld's idea. A special Swiss drainage system provides the essential guarantee for a speedy removal of the rainwater. The former rain pipes along the glass fronts now serve as overflow and detector in case the drainage clogs.

### **DOCOMOMO Network**

The starting point during the development of the restoration was that, wherever possible, the project should be in harmony with Italian building practice. On the one hand an effort was made to anticipate local building codes, while on the other hand the possibility was left open to call in a local contractor, just as Rietveld had done in 1953. In view of this, it was necessary to involve a local architect that was acquainted with modern conservation, and well established with Venetian circumstances and authorities. Through the agency of DOCOMOMO Italy we were fortunate to get in touch with Maria Caterina Redini, a member of our network from the very beginning. After helping with the bilingual tender, she has acted as executive architect. Her dedication during the permit procedures and the actual restoration -and certainly also her remarkable personality- have been indispensable. The work was put to tender multiply and privately and the contract was finally awarded to the firm ICCEM from Venice-Marghera. In spite of the inevitable communication problems due to the language difference, this firm has made an all-out effort to complete the work. Thanks to the contribution of many people, the Rietveld Pavilion will now be able to serve again for quite a number of years. The 1995 Netherlands contribution to the Biennale could be presented in a pavilion that once again exudes the atmosphere that Rietveld realised in 1954. Proper stewardship and systematic maintenance will have to ensure that this representative little building will not again arrive in a downward spiral of decay and undervaluation.

*Wessel de Jonge is an architect with Leodejongearchitecten in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and was the job architect for the restoration. English translation for the larger part by Hans van Tour.*

*More specific information on the restoration can be found in the tri-lingual monograph The Most Beautiful Space I Know / De mooiste ruimte die ik ken / Lo spazio più bello che io conosca, ed. Rob Docter, Rotterdam 1995, ISBN 90-6450-238-2.*

Notes:

1. See English summary of *Het Nieuwe Bouwen en restaureren*, Henket & De Jonge, Zeist-The Hague 1990.
2. See report on ICOMOS meeting and Nic Tummers' article elsewhere in this issue.

# A virtual image of modernity

## Eileen Gray's House E-1027 digitalized

Virtual architecture enables us not only to make advanced designs for the future, it also offers new ways of understanding our architectural heritage. Buildings that have been demolished long ago can now digitally be reconstructed and visualized. The virtual reconstruction of a building designed by Eileen Gray in 1926-29 demonstrates what possibilities a digital rendering of a demolished building can offer. This article is to clarify the consequences of such a virtual reconstruction.

by Stefan Hecker and Christian F. Müller

A peculiarity and a decisive aspect of a virtual reconstruction of a historic building is, that work is being done independently from the object itself. A lost, no longer existing situation can virtually be recreated. In this way, a real-life reconstruction can be prepared up to the smallest details. The computer gives us a precise and comprehensive image of the building. Its design can always and everywhere be virtually experienced. The ETH Zürich,<sup>1</sup> in cooperation with the Delft University of Technology<sup>2</sup> were among the first research institutes to introduce the virtual reconstruction of historic buildings. With the help of a computer Eileen Gray's *Maison en bord de mer* was virtually recreated.

### Eileen Gray's House E-1027

The Irish architect and designer built the *E-1027: Maison en bord de mer* for herself between 1926 and 1929 in Roquebrune, Southern France. Her friend Jean Badovici, editor of *L'Architecture Vivante*, supported her in designing what was her first actual building project. The outstanding quality of the design lies mainly in the close interweaving of the interior and the exterior, that were conceived

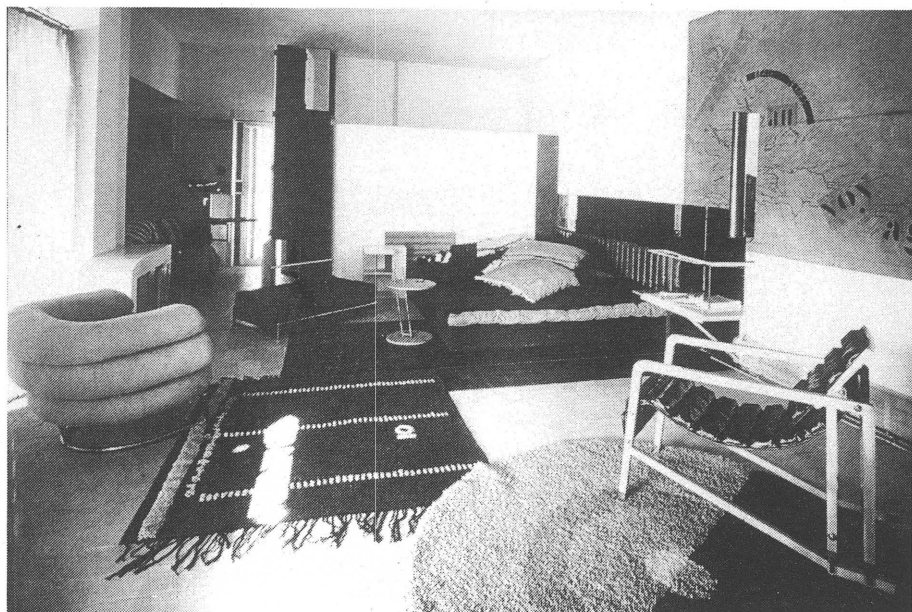
together right from the start. It is the combination of architectural envelope, furniture and the details of the furnishing that provides a strong impression of space. Like so many architectural monuments however, fate was against the house.

After moving to another house she built some kilometers away, Badovici moved in the House E-1027 in the mid 1930s. His friend Le Corbusier often stayed in the house, and during some of his visits in 1938-39 he painted large murals on what he considered not the best walls of the villa, but 'on the contrary, they burst out from dull, sad walls "where nothing is happening". The result: meaningful paintings on indifferent walls and all the fine white walls preserved.'<sup>3</sup>

After Badovici's death in the 1950s the house was bought by a Swiss, and changed property again some twenty years later. The new owner has very limited interest in maintaining the building. In 1991, he put a unique set of 28 pieces of original furniture for sale at an auction at Sotheby's in Monaco. We immediately initiated a campaign to cancel the sale, or at least to preserve the entity of the set. DOCOMOMO International got alarmed just a few days before the auction was scheduled.

*Salle* (large room) *Maison en bord de mer*, original state 1929.

Photo: Eileen Gray Archive, V&A, London.



In just three days an international campaign from their end could unfortunately not prevent the furniture being dispersed.<sup>4</sup> We had no choice but taking measurements and pictures for documentation. Today only parts of the building and its furnishing are left, however in a very poor condition. Visits are not appreciated and hardly possible. If that were not bad enough, renovation seems very unlikely for the time being since the owner did not keep his promise to use the proceeds of the auction for maintenance of the villa.

### Digital model

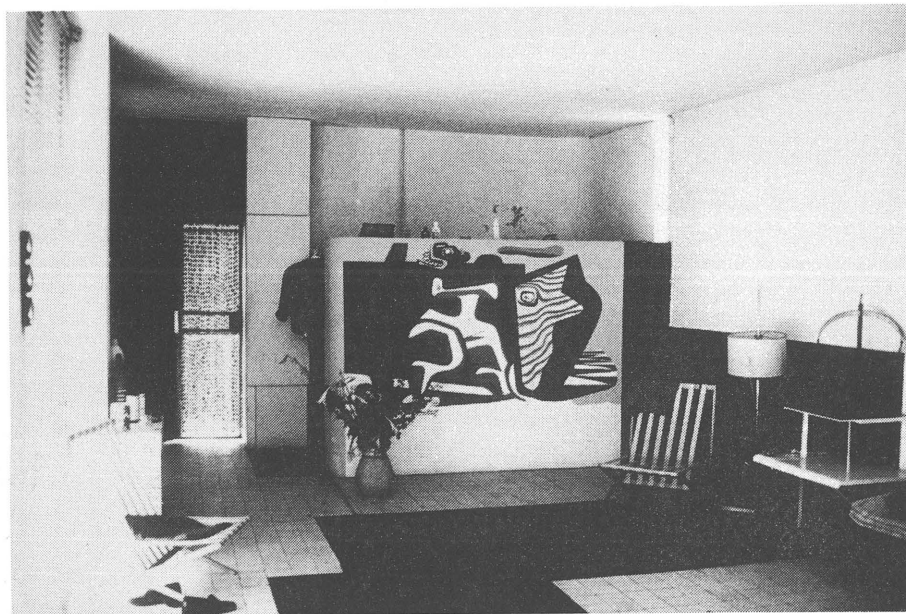
The composition of a digital model of the house required several steps. First, all salvage parts of the building that were still available and relevant information on the building were being collected, arranged and processed. The actual reconstruction consisted of joining these individual elements together into a three-dimensional, archeological puzzle. The first stage was to rebuild, step by step, each of the available parts and to insert them into the digital model. Components that were insufficiently documented were being compared to the adjoining parts and completed as yet. It would prove to be an advantage that the virtual reconstruction did not have to follow the process of a real-life construction. During the second stage the quality of every surface area had to be examined and defined. The final result is an extremely sizeable, detailed model of the house and its furnishings.

A computer program for visualizing enables viewers as it were to enter the digital model and interactively move around. Preprogrammed animations and readily available bird's-eye views serve as orientation. Yet, at the same time the model serves as a data bank. This means, that when a certain surface area of the digital model is being clicked, background information on the chosen part of the house or its furnishings will

appear. This way, original photographs, maps, sketches and descriptions are easily accessible. Finally, the virtual model also allows for an analytical representation of the object. The building's spacial composition as well as for instance the construction process can be studied by specifically highlighting certain elements of the building, that are isolated in one of the layers of the model, or by compositing specific overlays. The interactive circuit of the virtual model does not only provide an impression of a real home, but also the didactic and analytical possibilities of such a representation are highly versatile.

### Artefact versus fiction

When the results of the effort are being interpreted, it must clearly be kept in mind that digital work is always an abstraction to get ahead with the real materials involved. The question remains to what extent such an abstraction approaches reality. But what exactly *is* the relationship between fiction and the artefact? On the one hand the fictitious object serves as a tool, but on the other hand it is a form of documentation just as well. The computer helps us to compose all individual parts together as a whole, as well as to make this product always and everywhere accessible. In this way the method replaces and completes primarily the use of traditional resources for reconstruction and documentation. Still, certain rules must be followed in order to distinguish the virtual model clearly from the building itself. Otherwise there is a risk, that the significance and the relevance of the artefact are partly being taken over by a virtual monument or, in the worst scenario, even replaced by it. The virtual transformation must always make its reference towards the original object manifest. The public must be allowed to perceive its own impression. In the case of Eileen Gray's house this has been made possible by including period photographs, descriptions by the architect and



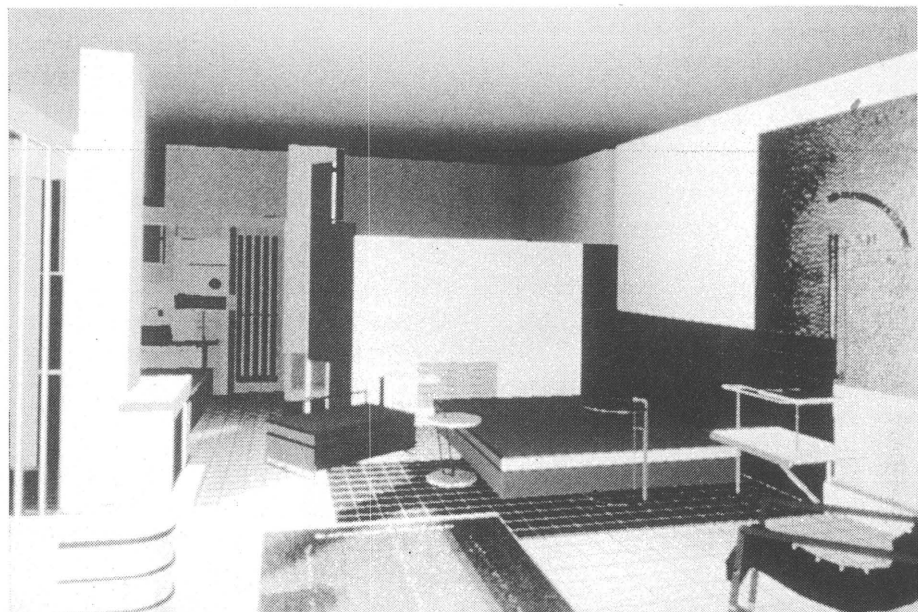
*Salle* with mural by Le Corbusier, state 1989.  
Photo: Hecker & Müller.

indications to distinguish hypothetical parts within the model, all of which are included in the computer model. When such indications and references would be missing, the original would, as it were, be betrayed and replaced by the virtual monument.

### A preservationists dilemma

The potentiality of virtual reality will have consequences for the conceptions in architectural conservation. Let's again take the *Maison en bord de mer* as an example. There are two very different causes that explain why today nothing is left of the original character of the building. At one time the complete furniture has been removed and the furnishings largely demolished. Moreover, the empty rooms have later been altered dramatically by the large murals that Le Corbusier added to the interior, without permission by the original architect. If the only concern would be the conservation of the house, the National Trust would not have to take a difficult decision. It is clear, that Eileen Gray's interior decorations and Le Corbusier's murals are quite intolerant for each other. Moreover, no authentic work of art by Gray has been preserved, neither in the house nor elsewhere. These could be enough reasons to remove Le Corbusier's paintings from the house and to reconstruct the original situation. Yet, Le Corbusier's reputation would have made this risky enterprise very difficult, if not impossible. Besides, the fact that the setting of these paintings in this place by Le Corbusier gives interesting information on his personality: another good reason to preserve his paintings at the original place. A way out of this dilemma is being provided by virtual technologies. The National Trust may look for solutions to restore Eileen Gray's house without removing the traces of its history. At the same time, the original state can be recreated with the help of a computer.

Virtual reconstruction of the original state.  
Rendering: Hecker & Müller.



### Virtual Disneyland

This example demonstrates that virtual reality can take the edges of finding the right conception for architectural conservation. The now widely appreciated opinion that a historic building should show the various traces of its history and not just one random moment in time, will be even more widespread. The virtual model takes on the task to show one or more defined stages in the building's history. The task of the National Trust will however not be easier. Their aim should be to make the distinct and important elements that represent the various stages in the buildings existence perceptible, and to preserve and combine them creatively. Simultaneously it must be assured that virtual reconstructions and presentations do justice to the building and meet scientific criteria. Otherwise there is a risk that a virtual Disneyland is being presented as a reality that once was. Could virtual reality provide an alibi for the demolition or disfigurement of a historic building? For example, before the restoration of an archeological excavation, a virtual model could be constructed and certified as adequate documentation. This possibility exists and such incidents do occur. The National Trust has the responsibility to prevent this. The question, whether only second hand documentation will do justice to the artefact in every respect is certainly justified and must be raised. The answer to the problem can only be given by the object itself and will never depend on the nature of a visual rendering, either digital or real. Virtual rendering can contribute to the forming of an opinion. Sense and nonsense of an intervention could be examined and debated without affecting the building itself. For each individual object the best possible solution can be determined. It can be expected that virtual reality will increase understanding, interest and sensibility with respect to the artefact itself. With this in mind



we return to the issue mentioned earlier, that the virtual rendering of a historic building allows for a differentiated approach in professional terms. At the same time, a lively representation by a virtual model will advance that our architectural heritage will be opened up to much larger groups of society.

*Stefan Hecker and Christian F. Müller are architects educated at the ETH Zürich, Switzerland, who studied the House E-1027 comprehensively in the early 1990s. Today they work as architects in Basel, Switzerland, respectively Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Text translated from the German by the editor.*

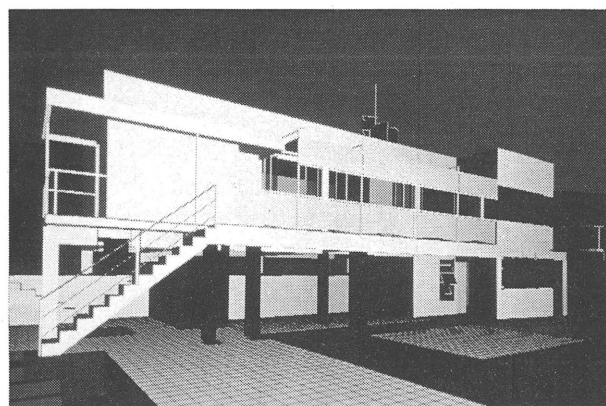
Notes:

1. Professorship for architecture and CAAD, Prof.Dr. Gerhard Schmitt and the Institute for the Preservation of Historical Monuments and Sites, Prof.Dr. Georg Mörsch.
2. Professorship for Technical Design and Computer Science, Mrs. Prof.Dr.Ir. Sevil Sariyildiz.
3. "Le Corbusier" Oeuvre complète 1938-1946, published by W. Boesinger, Zürich, 1946.
4. See DOCOMOMO Newsletter 6, pp. 9-10, Nov. 1991.



Top: View towards the guests' balcony and the main terrace, original state 1929. Photo: Eileen Gray Archive, V&A, London.

Bottom: View towards the main terrace. Rendering: Hecker & Müller.



## The design of *E-1027: Maison en bord de mer*

The house has been built for 'a person who likes work, sports, and who likes receiving friends'. With these words Eileen Gray described the purpose of the *Maison en bord de mer* in a special edition of *L'Architecture Vivante*.<sup>\*</sup> She spent the building period, 1926-29, almost exclusively at the site in Roquebrune on the French Côte d'Azur. She designed everything herself, from the architecture through the furniture to the smallest details of the interior decoration. The small villa contains the *salle*, two bedrooms, a servant's room, and utility rooms. The *salle* was partitioned with screen furniture serving as a living room, dining area, wardrobe, shower or as an alcove for guests if requested.

The E-1027 was a laboratory for experiments. She herself appraised the *Maison en bord de mer* 'should not be considered a perfect house, where all problems are resolved. It is only an attempt, a moment in a more general research'.

Eileen Gray learned the metier of architecture in the middle of the 1920s by herself. Till that time, she had no experience at all in building and so drew upon the support of her friend Jean Badovici, editor of *L'Architecture Vivante*. This explains the rather strange sounding name, E-1027: E for E(ileen), 10 for Jean (J is the tenth letter in the alphabet), 2 for B(adovici) and 7 for G(ray). Badovici is considered to be the co-designer of E-1027. Nowadays, it's difficult to find out how much Badovici took part in the design process of the house. However, his role may mostly have been that of a critic and adviser.

*Compiled by Stefan Hecker and Christian F. Müller.*

*For more information on E-1027 and the work of Eileen Gray, see: Eileen Gray, Works and Projects, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 1993, revealing the close relationship between her architecture and design.*

<sup>\*</sup> Eileen Gray and Jean Badovici, 'E-1027: Maison en bord de mer', in *L'Architecture Vivante*, Paris, II-1929.

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