

Hundertwasser

Mouldiness Manifesto Against Rationalism in Architecture

(1958/1959/1964)

Painting and sculpture are now free, inasmuch as anyone may produce any sort of creation and subsequently display it. In architecture, however, this fundamental freedom, which must be regarded as a precondition for any art, does not exist, for a person must first have a diploma in order to build. Why?

Everyone should be able to build, and as long as this freedom to build does not exist, the present-day planned architecture cannot be considered art at all. Our architecture has succumbed to the same censorship as has painting in the Soviet Union. All that has been achieved are detached and pitiable compromises by men of bad conscience who work with straight-edged rulers.

The individual's desire to build something should not be deterred! Everyone should be able and have to build and thus be truly responsible for the four walls in which he lives. And one must take the risk into the bargain that such a fantastic structure might collapse later, and one should not and must not shrink from human sacrifice which this new mode of buildings demands, perhaps demands. We must at last put a stop to having people move into their quarters like chickens and rabbits into their coops.

If such a fantastic structure built by the tenants themselves collapses, it will usually creak beforehand, anyway, so that people will be able to escape. But from then on the tenant will deal more critically and more creatively with the housing he lives in and will bolster the walls and beams with his own hands if they seem too fragile to him.

+ The tangible and material uninhabitability of slums is preferable to the moral uninhabitability of utilitarian, functional architecture. In the so-called slums only the human body can be oppressed, but in our modern functional architecture, allegedly constructed for the human being, man's soul is perishing, oppressed. We should instead adopt as the starting point for improvement the slum principle, that is, wildly luxuriantly growing architecture, not functional architecture. +

Functional architecture has proved to be the wrong road to take, similar to painting with a straight-edged ruler. With giant steps we are approaching impractical, unusable and ultimately uninhabitable architecture.

The great turning point – in painting the absolute tachistic automatism – is in architecture its absolute uninhabitability, which has yet to come, because architecture lags thirty years behind.

Just as today, after crossing beyond total tachistic automatism, we are already witnessing the miracle of transautomatism, we will only experience the miracle of a new, true and free architecture after overcoming total uninhabitability and after a creative moulding process.

However, since we do not yet have total uninhabitability behind us, as we are unfortunately not yet in the transautomatism of architecture, we must first strive to achieve total uninhabitability, the creative moulding in architecture, as quickly as possible.

The apartment-house tenant must have the freedom to lean out of his window and as far as his arms can reach transform the exterior of his dwelling space. And he must be allowed to take a long brush and – as far as his arms can reach – paint everything pink, so that from far away, from the street, everyone can see: there lives a man who distinguishes himself from his neighbours, the pent-up livestock! He must also be allowed to cut up the walls and make all kinds of changes, even if this disturbs the architectural harmony of a so-called masterwork, and he must be able to fill his room with mud or children's modelling clay.

But the lease prohibits this!

The time has come for people to rebel against their confinement in cubical constructions like chickens or rabbits in cages, a confinement which is alien to human nature.

+ Such a cage or utility construction is a building alien to the nature of all three groups of men having to do with it:

1. The architect has no relationship to the building. Even the greatest architectural genius cannot foresee what kind of being will dwell in the house. The so-called human dimension and proportions in architecture are a criminal fraud, especially when measurements are based on the average value of a Gallup poll.
2. The bricklayer has no relationship to the building. If, for example, he wants to vary, if only slightly, the construction of a wall according to his own moral and aesthetic concepts – if he has any – he loses his job. And besides, he doesn't care, since he will not be living in the structure.
3. The tenant has no relationship to the structure. He has not built it, but only moved into it. His human needs, his human space, are probably completely different. And this remains the case even if the architect and the bricklayer try to build according to the instructions of the future tenant and the building sponsor. +

+ Only when architect, bricklayer and tenant are a unity, or one and the same person, can we speak of architecture. Everything else is not architecture, but a criminal act which has taken on form.

Architect/bricklayer/tenant is a trinity just like the Holy Trinity of God-Father/Son/Holy Spirit. The great similarity, almost identity of these two trinities should be noted. If this unity, architect/bricklayer/tenant is lost, there can be no architecture, just as the current manufactured constructions should not be considered architecture. Man has to regain the critical, creative function he has lost and without which he ceases to exist as a human being! +

+ Also criminal is the use of ruler and T-square in architecture, which, as can be easily proved, have become instruments of the breakdown of the architectural trinity. +

Just carrying a ruler with you in your pocket should be forbidden, at least on a moral basis. The ruler is the symbol of the new illiteracy. The ruler is the symptom of the new disease, disintegration of our civilisation.

Today we live in a chaos of straight lines, in a jungle of straight lines. If you do not believe this, take the trouble to count the straight lines which surround you. Then you will understand, for you will never finish counting.

On one razor blade I counted 546 straight lines. By imagining linear connections to another razor blade of the same manufacturing process, which surely looks exactly the same, this yields 1,090 straight lines, and adding on the packaging, the result is about 3,000 straight lines from the same blade.

Not all that long ago, possession of the straight line was a privilege of royalty, the wealthy, and the clever. Today every idiot carries millions of straight lines around in his pants pockets. This jungle of straight lines, which is entangling us more and more like inmates in a prison, must be cleared.

Until now, man has always cleared away the jungles he was in and freed himself. But to clear a jungle you must first become aware that you are in one, for this jungle took form stealthily, unnoticed by mankind. And this time it is a jungle of straight lines.

Any modern architecture in which the straight line or the geometric circle have been employed for only a second – and were it only in spirit – must be rejected. Not to mention the design, drawing-board and model-building work which has become not only pathologically sterile, but absurd. The straight line is godless and immoral. The straight line is not a creative line, it is a duplicating line, an imitating line. In it, God and the human spirit are less at home than the comfort-craving brainless intoxicated and unformed masses.

Consequently, T-square structures, be they ever so curved, bending, overhanging, or perforated, are invalid. This is all just the panic of the constructive architects not to lose

contact with trends and to change their style in time. (Look at the Postmodernist style twenty years later.)

When rust sets in on a razor blade, when a wall starts to get mouldy, when moss grows in a corner of a room, rounding its geometric angles, we should be glad because, together with the microbes and fungi, life is moving into the house and through this process we can more consciously become witnesses of architectural changes from which we have much to learn. The irresponsible vandalism of the constructive, functional architects is well known. They simply wanted to tear down the beautiful stucco-façade houses of the 1890s and Art Nouveau and put up their own empty structures. Take Le Corbusier, who wanted to level Paris completely in order to erect his straight-line, monstrous constructions. Now, in the name of justice, the constructions of Mies van der Rohe, Neutra, the Bauhaus, Gropius, Johnson, Le Corbusier, Loos etc. should be torn down, as they have been outdated for a generation and have become morally unbearable.

However, the transautomatists, and everyone who is at a point beyond uninhabitable architecture, deal with their predecessors more humanely. They don't want any more destruction.

In order to rescue functional architecture from its moral ruin, a decomposing solution should be poured over all those glass walls and smooth concrete surfaces, so the moulding process can set in.

++ It is time for industry to recognise its fundamental mission, which is to engage in creative moulding!

It is now the task of industry to engender in its specialists, engineers and doctors a feeling of moral responsibility towards moulding.

This moral responsibility towards creative moulding and critical weathering must already be established in education laws.

Only the engineers and scientists who are capable of living in mould and producing mould creatively will be the masters of tomorrow. ++

And only after creative moulding, from which we have much to learn, will a new and wonderful architecture come about.

Paragraph marked with ++ are an addition by Pierre Restany, 1958

Paragraphs marked with + have been included in the manifesto only after the speech in Seckau

Addendum, 1959

Today's architecture is criminally sterile. For unfortunately, all building activity ceases at the very moment when man "takes up quarters", but normally building activity should not begin until man moves in. We are outrageously robbed of our humanity by defiling dictates and criminally forced not to make any changes or additions to façades, the layout or interiors, either in colour, structure, or masonry. Even tenant-owned dwellings are subject to censorship (see building-inspection regulations and lease statutes). The characteristic thing about prisons, cages or pens is the prefabricated "a-priori" structure, the definitive termination of building activity prior to prisoner's or animal's moving in to a structure which is innately incompatible to him or it, coupled with the categorical restriction that the inmate may change nothing in this "his" housing, which has been imposed upon him.

For true architecture grows out of normal building activity, and this normal building activity is the organic development of a shell around a group of people. Such building growth is like the growth of a child and of man. Absolute completion of building construction is tolerable, if at all, only in monuments and uninhabited architecture.

But if a structure is intended to house people inside it, the discontinuation of construction prior to habitation must be seen as an unnatural sterilisation of the growing process and as such as a criminal act which should be punished.

The architect as we know him today is only entitled to construct uninhabitable architecture, if he is indeed capable of doing so. Habitable architecture is not his responsibility, and he must be vehemently denied the right, just as society does not leave a notorious poisoner or a mass murderer free to his devices.

For the currently highly praised architectural pre-planning of dwellings is little more than planned mass murder by premeditated sterilisation. To prove this accusation, you just have to walk through any recently constructed European town or suburb.

To give just an idea of some exemplary, healthful contemporary architecture, and this list is, unfortunately, shamefully short:

1. The Gaudí buildings in Barcelona.
2. Certain Art Nouveau buildings.
3. The Tower of Watts by Simon Rodia, in a residential section of Los Angeles.
4. Le Palais du Facteur Cheval in the Département de la Drôme, France.
5. The slum sections of cities, the so-called “urban blemish” (“taudis”, “quartiers insalubres” in French).
6. Homes of peasants and primitives, whenever still handmade, as earlier.
7. Old Austrian and German “schrebergärten” (workers’ allotment-garden houses).
8. *Illegally built American self-made houses.*
9. Dutch and *Sausalito houseboats.*
10. Buildings by the architects Christian Hunziker, *Lucien Kroll* and few others.

Additions and corrections by Hundertwasser made in 1996 printed in italics.

Addendum, 1964

The architect’s only function should be that of technical advisor, i. e., answering questions regarding materials, stability, etc. The architect should be subordinate to the occupant (tenant, owner, lodger) or at least to the occupant’s wishes.

All occupants must be free to create their “outer skins” – they must be free to determine and transform the outward shell of their domicile facing the street.

Read by Hundertwasser at Seckau Abbey, Styria, July 4, 1958
read in Galerie Van de Loo, Munich, July 11, 1958, and
in Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, July 26, 1958
published in a signed and numbered brochure, 1958,
and in many other publications.