1903 Henry van de Velde: Programme

The new departure of 1900' had in Henry van de Velde (b. 1863 in Antwerp, d. 1957 in Zurich) a program drafter and spokesman already experienced in argument and counter-argument. His first publications pointing the way for the future appeared in the mid-nineties in Brussels; from 1896 on his name was indissolubly linked with the concept 'l'Art Nouveau' (from an exhibition with this title at the gallery of S. Bing in Paris). On a trip to Germany in the winter of 1900/I he proclaimed in Kunstgewerblichen Laienpredigten (Lay Sermons on Applied Art) his functional aesthetic, the aesthetic of 'pure form'. The publication of these lectures (Leipzig 1902) preceded the 'programme'.

To recognize the meaning, the form, the purpose of all the things of the material modern world with the same truth as the Greeks, among many others, recognized the meaning, form, and purpose of the column. It is not easy nowadays to find the exact meaning and the exact form for the simplest things.

It will take us a long time to recognize the exact form of a table, a chair, a house.

Religious, arbitrary, sentimental flights of fancy are parasitic plants.

As soon as the work of cleansing and sweeping out has been finished, as soon as the true form of things comes to light again, then strive with all the patience, all the spirit and the logic of the Greeks for the perfection of this form.

It seems to me that artistic sensibility is just as highly developed among ourselves as among the Greeks; what is less highly developed and weaker among ourselves, however, is the sense of perfection.

Under what social regime shall we enjoy the serenely transfigured calm that we need for work and for serious endeavour?

Answer:

Are we to expect from a social program what can only spring from our own most inward *selves?*

Think rationally, cultivate artistic sensibility! Each one of us today can do this for himself; if only a large number of people do this a new social atmosphere will be brought about.

1906 Hans Poelzig: Fermentation in architecture

During the period of his activity, Hans Poelzig (b. 1869 in Berlin, d. 1936 in Berlin) was link-man between the romantic-idealistic and radical-objective tendencies in the new architecture. We know his reflective, but at the same time incorruptible and exacting, judgment from his famous speech to the Bund Deutscher Architekten (Association of German Architects) on 4 June 1931. We also find it twenty-five years earlier in an essay on Die Dritte *Deutsche Kunstgewerbe-Ausstellung (The Third German Exhibition of Applied Art, Dresden 906). Poelzig, then head of the Academy of Arts in Breslau, makes it plain that there is more than just one step from applied art to architecture.*

Essentially, the buildings at the Dresden Exhibition of Applied Art of 1906 mirror the process of fermentation which our architecture is today passing through, whose end cannot yet be foreseen and whose products are as yet scarcely to be recognized.

The main tasks of modern architecture do not lie in the ecclesiastical sphere, nor do monumental constructions of a secular character exercise a decisive influence. Life in the modern era is dominated by economic questions; thus the participation of the people and of artists in architectural problems of this kind - from the private dwelling to town planning - is constantly growing.

This is the starting point for most of the movements towards formalistic constructions, in so far as we can speak of a movement at a time marked by the multiplicity of vacillating trends - trends which for nearly a hundred years have been changing in quick succession the fundamental principles upon which they were based.

Attempts, mostly based on the art of Schinkel, to transpose elements of the Greek language of forms onto our buildings, were followed by an unselective use of forms taken from the most varied styles of the past - from Gothic via the Renaissance in both its Italian and its German manifestation to Baroque and Empire - generally with no regard for the inner spirit of the forms, with no regard for the material from which these forms originally sprang.

And isolated attempts by outstanding teachers of architecture in South and North Germany to attain by detailed study a knowledge of the artistic language of the ancients and its true meaning were soon crossed with energetic attempts to invent a new world language of architecture, whose rules and roots would not parallel or resemble any of the styles of the past.

And once again there is beginning a shamefaced revival of foreign words from architectural idioms belonging to many stylistic epochs, even primitive ones, and these foreign words are frequently grafted onto stems of fundamentally different character.

In almost all the subdivisions of art that serve decoration, with its simpler basic requirements, *the modern age has attained a genuine style of its own* and has splendid achievements to show. After initial vacillation there was a

wholesome return - influenced by a study of the art of early times and especially of that of an Asian people - to techniques adapted to the material in question and an artistic elaboration of the motif based on a detailed study of nature.

Above all, wallpapers, textiles, glass windows, surface decoration, and minor arts of all kinds at the German Exhibition of Applied Art show this clearly enough, and architecture too demonstrates the decorative skill of its creators. But both the successful and the unsuccessful solutions clearly reveal that a true architecture is not to be achieved with the armoury of decoration, that the problems of modern architecture cannot be mastered by purely external means.

Flight from everything historical can no more bring salvation than a purely decorative return to formsfrom the past.

The principle of interpreting things in purely surface terms has for several decades led to shapes in various materials being reproduced according to a play of lines forced into a particular system - with no regard for scale. Apart from the great curtailment of inventiveness, this schematism may be harmless for small-scale works, but when applied to large-scale, tectonic projects it leads to monstrosities. It is partly as a result of recognizing this fact that we see so many instances of renunciation of any tectonic solution at all: supports remain shapeless and receive merely surface decoration, dividing cornices are omitted altogether.

This produces a tranquillity in the appearance of buildings that was often missing in the past, but it is a tranquillity applied by force, not the outcome of a real balance of energies accompanying full emphasis of the tectonic transitions. It is a frequent error of periods of fermentation to impose suddenly and forcibly developments that normally take several epochs to evolve, and to attempt to give a work an exceptional quality by applying external peculiarities that have not come into being organically and spontaneously. The artist's attention is distracted from what must be his main task: an unfailing mastery of his motif directly corresponding to his temperament and ability.

We also forget that the utilization of structures from earlier times for a building designed to meet the demands of modern life must be accompanied by an unmistakably modern adaptation of these structures, and that the correct use of materials and construction consciously adapted to purpose produce inner advantages that cannot be replaced by decorative embellishments, however skilfully applied.

We cannot do without the past in solving the architectural problems of our own day. We may dispense with the externals, but not with the work done in the past on the mastery of tectonic problems.

In spite of all the constructional achievements and changes, most of the best building materials are still the same and many of the constructions of the past remain unsurpassed. We are absolutely compelled to stay firmly planted on the shoulders of our forefathers and we deprive ourselves of a solid foothold if we begin *needlessly* to experiment afresh on our own account.

A sure eye and the right freedom in performing the tasks presented by the use of new building materials are to be acquired from a close study of what is

possible and good for other materials and motifs. *This freedom has to be gained by an intellectual analysis and mastery of tradition and has nothing to do with that lack of restraint which inevitably leads to helpless confusion.*

The sad role frequently given to iron - that mighty aid to light structures and great spans - is that of a coupling which, because of its malleability and its ability to operate in concealment, is compelled to link together two elements in a building that are inorganically juxtaposed.

Every architectural work first has to tally with the work done by the engineer - and the modern architect more than any has no right to think illogically. But most of us are and remain sentimentalists and behave just as romantically as those who revived the formal elements of Gothic - not its tectonic core - around the middle of the nineteenth century. We all too frequently seek to save the emotional content of past epochs, without first thinking what use it is to us.

The past has bequeathed to us a deep understanding of materials and their characteristics, the evolution of science has afforded us a much more precise knowledge of the laws of statics, and yet for the most part we are more restricted and illogical in our thinking than was ever the case in an age that confronted architectonic problems armed only with sound common sense.

It is left to the engineer to calculate and design a unity between load and support, the right measurements for the parts of the structure consisting of various materials. The architect all too often seeks his salvation in purely decorative constructions that have to be imposed on the fabric of the building and spoil its organic clarity.

Every real tectonic constructionalform has an absolute nucleus, to which the decorative embellishment, which within certain limits is changeable, lends a varying charm. First, however, the absolute element has to be found, even if as yet in an imperfect, rough form.

And the artist who approaches the design of structural elements solely from the viewpoint of external, decorative considerations distracts attention from the discovery of the pure nuclear form.

Domestic architecture is the first to begin freeing itselffrom an exterior conception, to make demands that operate from the inside outward, that help this architecture to achieve authenticity and have to be taken into account.

And yet here too the striving to say more than necessary often robs the building of that calm and naturalness which can be achieved by simplifying the overall design. Even here we are too much bogged down in an exterior, painterly conception and pay too little attention to the reconciliation between initially contradictory architectural demands (unity of material and form, limitation in the choice of materials) which creates tranquillity. Only when this overall tranquillity has been achieved does it become possible to apply decorative richness without overburdening the structure.

Instead, we often damage buildings of smaller dimension by attempting to increase their importance by stressing individual elements in a manner contrary to the organic harmony of the whole; we cannot go far enough in utilizing the most varied building materials in a single structure. And painterly

play with emblems and applied decoration of all kinds, in so far as they serve no structural purpose, is merely confusing and easily leads to a mantle of sentimentality being thrown round a perfectly good basic structure, charming the undiscerning imitator and distracting his attention from the true core of the whole building.

The new movement carries the banner of objectivity against traditional structures that have become empty of content and petrified into a scheme. Objectivity is possible in architecture only on the basis of sound construction and a formal idiom evolved out of it.

Creative buildings of a new kind can come into being only in this way.

The fabric of our architectural idiom is still confused and we lack a knowledge of what is essential. We are still chasing after fashionable manners that after a short time, having been vulgarized by a series of imitators, become the object of contempt, whereas real architecture as the product of intense thought governed by artistic considerations offers little opportunity for unjustified robbery by imitators.

The right kind of architecture is already beginning to appear, especially in the case of buildings presenting few complications; here the path of unaffected artistic expression is already being trod. It is time to stop trying to make a style of this, to stop burdening the artist with the demand to evolve an intrusive personal note, which drives him to superficialities. For the time being we must demand only *unrelenting objectivity and a solution, in keeping with good taste, of a clearly thought out problem.*

1907 Henry van de Velde:
Credo

In his book Vom Neuen Stil (On the New Style) Henry van de Velde continues the explanation of the principles set forth in his Laienpredigten (Lay Sermons). The three sections called by him Credo are to be found in the chapter entitled The Striving for a Style Based on a Rational, Logical Conception. These principles, says Henry van de Velde, need only to be enunciated to be accepted as valid. Their fruitfulness has already been proved. In fact there arise from them the two basic demands not merely of the theory and critique of the new architecture, but also of its practice: honesty of materials, honesty of construction. Both have been till now uncontested.

Thou shalt comprehend the form and construction of all objects only in the sense of their strictest, elementary logic and justification for their existence. Thou shalt adapt and subordinate these forms and constructions to the essential use of the material which thou employest. And if thou art animated by the wish to beautify these forms and constructions, give thyself to the longing for refinement to which thy aesthetic sensibility or taste for ornament - of whatever kind it is -

shall inspire thee, only so far as thou canst respect and retain the rights and the essential appearance of these forms and constructions

1908 Adolf Loos:
Ornament and crime

Adolf Loos (b. 1870 in Brno, d. 1933 in Vienna) brought back with him to Vienna from his three-year stay in the United States (1893-6) a remark of Louis Sullivan's: It could only benefit us if for atime we were to abandon ornament and concentrate entirely on the erection of buildings that were finely shaped and charming in their sobriety'. From this Loos developed his radical aesthetic purism, which made him a zealous foe of Art Nouveau and the German Werkbund: 'The German Werkbund has set out to discover the style of our age. This is unnecessary labour. We already have the style of our age.'

The human embryo in the womb passes through all the evolutionary stages of the animal kingdom. When man is born, his sensory impressions are like those of a newborn puppy. His childhood takes him through all the metamorphoses of human history. At 2 he sees with the eyes of a Papuan, at 4 with those of an ancient Teuton, at 6 with those of Socrates, at 8 with those of Voltaire. When he is 8 he becomes aware of violet, the colour discovered by the eighteenth century, because before that the violet was blue and the purple-snail red. The physicist points today to colours in the solar spectrum which already have a name but the knowledge of which is reserved for the men of the future.

The child is amoral. To our eyes, the Papuan is too. The Papuan kills his enemies and eats them. He is not a criminal. But when modern man kills someone and eats him he is either a criminal or a degenerate. The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his paddles, in short everything he can lay hands on. He is not a criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty per cent of the inmates show tattoos. The tattooed who are not in prison are latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats. If someone who is tattooed dies at liberty, it means he has died a few years before committing a murder.

The urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the start of plastic art. It is the baby talk of painting. All art is erotic.

The first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act which the first artist, in order to rid himself of his surplus energy, smeared on the wall. A horizontal dash: the prone woman. A vertical dash: the man penetrating her. The man who created it felt the same urge as Beethoven, he was in the same heaven in which Beethoven created the *Ninth Symphony.*

But the man of our day who, in response to an inner urge, smears the walls with erotic symbols is a criminal or a degenerate. It goes without saying that this impulse most frequently assails people with such symptoms of degeneracy in the lavatory. A country's culture can be assessed by the extent to which its lavatory walls are smeared. In the child this is a natural phenomenon: his

first artistic expression is to scribble erotic symbols on the walls. But what is natural to the Papuan and the child is a symptom of degeneracy in the modern adult. I have made the following discovery and I pass it on to the world: *The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects. I* believed that with this discovery I was bringing joy to the world; it has not thanked me. People were sad and hung their heads. What depressed them was the realization that they could produce no new ornaments. Are we alone, the people of the nineteenth century, supposed to be unable to do what any Negro, all the races and periods before us have been able to do? What mankind created without ornament in earlier millenia was thrown away without a thought and abandoned to destruction. We possess no joiner's benches from the Carolingian era, but every trifle that displays the least ornament has been collected and cleaned and palatial buildings have been erected to house it. Then people walked sadly about between the glass cases and felt ashamed of their impotence. Every age had its style, is our age alone to be refused a style? By style, people meant ornament. Then I said: Weep not! See, therein lies the greatness of our age, that it is incapable of producing a new ornament. We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament. See, the time is nigh, fulfilment awaits us. Soon the streets of the city will glisten like white walls. Like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven. Then fulfilment will be come.

There were black albs, clerical gentlemen, who wouldn't put up with that. Mankind was to go on panting in slavery to ornament. Men had gone far enough for ornament no longer to arouse feelings of pleasure in them, far enough for a tattooed face not to heighten the aesthetic effect, as among the Papuans, but to reduce it. Far enough to take pleasure in a plain cigarette case, whereas an ornamented one, even at the same price, was not bought. They were happy in their clothes and glad they didn't have to go around in red velvet hose with gold braid like fairground monkeys. And I said: See, Goethe's death-chamber is finer than all Renaissance splendour and a plain piece of furniture more beautiful than any inlaid and carved museum pieces. Goethe's language is finer than all the ornaments of Pegnitz's shepherds.

The black albs heard this with displeasure, and the state, whose task it is to halt the cultural development of the peoples, made the question of the development and revival of ornament its own. Woe to the state whose revolutions are in the care of the *Hofrats!* Very soon we saw in the Wiener Kunstgewerbemuseum [Vienna Museum of Applied Art] a sideboard known as 'the rich haul of fish', soon there were cupboards bearing the name 'the enchanted princess' or something similar referring to the ornament with which this unfortunate piece of furniture was covered. The Austrian state took its task so seriously that it is making sure the foot-rags used on the frontiers of the AustroHungarian monarchy do not disappear. It is forcing every cultivated man of 20 for three years to wear foot-rags instead of manufactured footwear. After all, every state starts from the premise that a people on a lower footing is easier to rule.

Very well, the ornament disease is recognized by the state and subsidized

with state funds. But I see in this a retrograde step. I don't accept the objection that ornament heightens a cultivated person's joy in life, don't accept the objection contained in the words: 'But if the ornament is beautiful!' Ornament does not heighten my joy in life or the joy in life of any cultivated person. If I want to eat a piece of gingerbread I choose one that is quite smooth and not a piece representing a heart or a baby or a rider, which is covered all over with ornaments. The man of the fifteenth century won't understand me. But all modern people will. The advocate of ornament believes that my urge for simplicity is in the nature of a mortification. No, respected professor at the school of applied art, I am not mortifying myself! The show dishes of past centuries, which display all kinds of ornaments to make the peacocks, pheasants and lobsters look more tasty, have exactly the opposite effect on me. I am horrified when I go through a cookery exhibition and think that I am meant to eat these stuffed carcasses. I eat roast beef.

The enormous damage and devastation caused in aesthetic development by the revival of ornament would be easily made light of, for no one, not even the power of the state, can halt mankind's evolution. It can only be delayed. We can wait. But it is a crime against the national economy that it should result in a waste of human labour, money, and material. Time cannot make good this damage.

The speed of cultural evolution is reduced by the stragglers. I perhaps am living in 1908, but my neighbour is living in 1900 and the man across the way in 1880. It is unfortunate for a state when the culture of its inhabitants is spread over such a great period of time. The peasants of Kals are living in the twelfth century. And there were peoples taking part in the Jubilee parade [of the Emperor Franz Joseph] who would have been considered backward even during the migration of the nations. Happy the land that has no such stragglers and marauders. Happy America!

Among ourselves there are unmodern people even in the cities, stragglers from the eighteenth century, who are horrified by a picture with purple shadows because they cannot yet see purple. The pheasant on which the chef has been working all day long tastes better to them and they prefer the cigarette case with Renaissance ornaments to the smooth one. And what is it like in the country? Clothes and household furniture all belong to past centuries. The peasant isn't a Christian, he is still a pagan.

The stragglers slow down the cultural evolution of the nations and of mankind; not only is ornament produced by criminals but also a crime is committed through the fact that ornament inflicts serious injury on people's health, on the national budget and hence on cultural evolution. If two people live side by side with the same needs, the same demands on life and the same income but belonging to different cultures, economically speaking the following process can be observed: the twentieth-century man will get richer and richer, the eighteenth-century man poorer and poorer. I am assuming that both live according to their inclinations. The twentieth-century man can satisfy his needs with a far lower capital outlay and hence can save money. The vegetable he enjoys is simply boiled in water and has a little butter put on it. The other man likes it equally well only when honey and nuts have been

added to it and someone has spent hours cooking it. Ornamented plates are very expensive, whereas the white crockery from which the modem man likes to eat is cheap. The one accumulates savings, the other debts. It is the same with whole nations. Woe when a people remains behind in cultural evolution! The British are growing wealthier and we poorer...

Even greater is the damage done by ornament to the nation that produces it. Since ornament is no longer a natural product of our culture, so that it is a phenomenon either of backwardness or degeneration, the work of the ornamentor is no longer adequately remunerated.

The relationship between the earnings of a woodcarver and a turner, the criminally low wages paid to the embroideress and the lacemaker are well known. The ornamentor has to work twenty hours to achieve the income earned by a modern worker in eight. Ornament generally increases the cost of an article; nevertheless it happens that an ornamented object whose raw material cost the same and which demonstrably took three times as long to make is offered at half the price of a smooth object. Omission of ornament results in a reduction in the manufacturing time and an increase in wages. The Chinese carver works for sixteen hours, the American worker for eight. If I pay as much for a smooth cigarette case as for an ornamented one, the difference in the working time belongs to the worker. And if there were no ornament at all - a situation that may perhaps come about in some thousands of years - man would only have to work four hours instead of eight, because half of the work done today is devoted to ornament. Ornament is wasted labour power and hence wasted health. It has always been so.

Since ornament is no longer organically linked with our culture, it is also no longer the expression of our culture. The ornament that is manufactured today has no connexion with us, has absolutely no human connexions, no connexion with the world order. It is not capable of developing. What happened to Otto Eckmann's ornament, or van de Velde's? The artist has always stood at the forefront of mankind full of vigour and health. But the modern ornamentalist is a straggler or a pathological phenomenon. He himself will repudiate his own products three years later. To cultivated people they are immediately intolerable; others become aware of their intolerable character only years later. Where are Otto Eckmann's works today? Modern ornament has no parents and no progeny, no past and no future. By uncultivated people, to whom the grandeur of our age is a book with seven seals, it is greeted joyfully and shortly afterwards repudiated.

Mankind is healthier than ever; only a few people are sick. But these few tyrannize over the worker who is so healthy that he cannot invent ornament. They force him to execute in the most varied materials the ornaments which they have invented.

Changes of ornament lead to a premature devaluation of the labour product. The worker's time and the material employed are capital goods that are wasted. I have stated the proposition: the form of an object lasts, that is to say remains tolerable, as long as the object lasts physically. I will try to explain this. A suit will change its form more often than a valuable fur. A lady's ball

gown, intended for only one night, will change its form more quickly than a desk. But woe if a desk has to be changed as quickly as a ball gown because the old form has become intolerable; in that case the money spent on the desk. will have been lost.

This is well known to the ornamentalist, and Austrian ornamentalists are trying to make the best of this shortcoming. They say: 'We prefer a consumer who has a set of furniture that becomes intolerable to him after ten years, and who is consequently forced to refurnish every ten years, to one who only buys an object when the old one is worn out. Industry demands this. Millions are employed as a result of the quick change.'

This seems to be the secret of the Austrian national economy. How often do we hear someone say when there is a fire: 'Thank God, now there will be work for people to do again.' In that case I know a splendid solution. Set fire to a town, set fire to the empire, and everyone will be swimming in money and prosperity. Manufacture furniture which after three years can be used for firewood, metal fittings that have to be melted down after four years because even at an auction sale it is impossible to get a tenth of the original value of the material and labour, and we shall grow wealthier and wealthier.

The loss does not hit only the consumer; above all it hits the producer. Today ornament on things that have evolved away from the need to be ornamented represents wasted labour and ruined material. If all objects would last aesthetically as long as they do physically, the consumer could pay a price for them that would enable the worker to earn more money and work shorter hours. For an object I am sure I can use to its full extent I willingly pay four times as much as for one that is inferior in form or material. I happily pay forty kronen for my boots, although in a different shop I could get boots for ten kronen. But in those trades that groan under the tyranny of the ornamentalist no distinction is made between good and bad workmanship. The work suffers because no one is willing to pay its true value.

And this is a good thing, because these ornamented objects are tolerable only when they are of the most miserable quality. I get over a fire much more easily when I hear that only worthless trash has been burned. I can be pleased about the trash in the KUristlerhaus because I know that it will be manufactured in a few days and taken to pieces in one. But throwing gold coins instead of stones, lighting a cigarette with a banknote, pulverizing and drinking a pearl create an unaesthetic effect.

Ornamented things first create a truly unaesthetic effect when they have been executed in the best material and with the greatest care and have taken long hours of labour. I cannot exonerate myself from having initially demanded quality work, but naturally not for that kind of thing.

The modern man who holds ornament sacred as a sign of the artistic super-abundance of past ages will immediately recognize the tortured, strained, and morbid quality of modern ornaments. No ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level.

It is different with the individuals and peoples who have not yet reached this level.

I am preaching to the aristocrat, I mean the person who stands at the pinnacle of mankind and yet has the deepest understanding for the distress and want of those below. He well understands the Kaffir who weaves ornaments into his fabric according to a particular rhythm that only comes into view when it is unravelled, the Persian who weaves his carpet, the Slovak peasant woman who embroiders her lace, the old lady who crochets wonderful things with glass beads and silk. The aristocrat lets them be; he knows that the hours in which they work are their holy hours. The revolutionary would go to them and say: 'It's all nonsense.' Just as he would pull down the little old woman from the wayside crucifix and tell her: 'There is no God.' The atheist among the aristocrats, on the other hand, raises his hat when he passes a church.

My shoes are covered all over with ornaments consisting of scallops and holes. Work done by the shoemaker for which he was never paid. I go to the shoemaker and say: 'You ask thirty kronen for a pair of shoes. I will pay you forty kronen.' I have thereby raised this man to heights of bliss for which he will thank me by work and material infinitely better than would be called for by the additional price. He is happy. Happiness rarely enters his house. Here is a man who understands him, who values his work and does not doubt his honesty. He already sees the finished shoes in his mind's eye. He knows where the best leather is to be found at the present time; he knows which craftsman he will entrust the shoes to; and the shoes will be so covered in scallops and holes as only an elegant shoe can be. And then I say to him: 'But there's one condition. The shoes must be completely smooth.' With this I have cast him down from the heights of bliss to the pit of despondency. He has less work, but I have taken away all his joy.

I am preaching to the aristocrat. I tolerate ornaments on my own body, when they constitute the joy of my fellow men. Then they are my joy too. I can tolerate the ornaments of the Kaffir, the Persian, the Slovak peasant woman, my shoemaker's ornaments, for they all have no other way of attaining the high points of their existence. We have art, which has taken the place of ornament. After the toils and troubles of the day we go to Beethoven or to Tristan. This my shoemaker cannot do. I mustn't deprive him of his joy, since I have nothing else to put in its place. But anyone who goes to the *Ninth Symphony* and then sits down and designs a wallpaper pattern is either a confidence trickster or a degenerate. Absence of ornament has brought the other arts to unsuspected heights. Beethoven's symphonies would never have been written by a man who had to walk about in silk, satin, and lace. Anyone who goes around in a velvet coat today is not an artist but a buffoon or a house painter. We have grown finer, more subtle. The nomadic herdsmen had to distinguish themselves by various colours; modern man uses his clothes as a mask. So immensely strong is his individuality that it can no longer be expressed in articles of clothing. Freedom from ornament is a sign of spiritual strength. Modern man uses the ornaments of earlier or alien cultures as he sees fit. He concentrates his own inventiveness on other things.

1910 Frank Lloyd Wright: Organic architecture (excerpt)

In 910 Frank Lloyd Wright (b.1867 or 1869 in Richland Center, Wisconsin, d. 1959 in Taliesin West, Arizona) came to Germany at the invitation of the publisher Ernst Wasmuth in order to supervise the first publication of his Collected Works (1893-1910). Kuno Franck, for some time an exchange professor at Harvard, had drawn attention to Wright in Berlin. With this publication, for which Wright himself wrote an introduction, the architectural idea of a free spatial flow between the various dwelling-areas, and the organic development of a building on an L-, X-, or T-shaped ground plan gained a firm foothold in Europe.

In Organic Architecture then, it is quite impossible to consider the building as one thing, its furnishings another and its setting and environment still another. The Spirit in which these buildings are conceived sees all these together at work as one thing. All are to be studiously foreseen and provided for in the nature of the structure. All these should become mere details of the character and completeness of the structure. Incorporated (or excluded) are lighting, heating and ventilation. The very chairs and tables, cabinets and even musical instruments, where practicable, are of the building itself, never fixtures upon it .

To thus make of a human dwelling-place a complete work of art, in itself expressive and beautiful, intimately related to modern life and fit to live in, lending itself more freely and suitably to the individual needs of the dwellers as itself an harmonious entity, fitting in colour, pattern and nature the utilities and be really an expression of them in character, - this is the tall modern American opportunity in Architecture. True basis of a true Culture. An exalted view to take of the 'property instinct' of our times? But once founded and on view I believe this Ideal will become a new Tradition: a vast step in advance of the prescribed fashion in a day when a dwelling was a composite of cells arranged as separate rooms: chambers to contain however good aggregations of furniture, utility comforts not present: a property interest chiefly. An organic-entity, this modern building as contrasted with that former insensate aggregation of parts. Surely we have here the higher ideal of unity as a more intimate working out of the expression of one's life in one's environment. One great thing instead of a quarrelling collection of so many little things.

1911 **Hermann Muthesius:**
Aims of the Werkbund *(excerpt)*

The true occasion of the birth of the Deutscher Werkbund (German Arts and Crafts Society) was the Third German Exhibition of Appi ied Art in Dresden in 1906. The proposal of certain friends who shared the same outlook that the exhibition should end in the founding of a society of artists and highly qualified representatives of trade and industry' was put into practice on 6 October 1907. Although one of the movers of this proposal, Hermann Muthesius (b. 1861 in Gross-Neuhausen, **d. 1927** in Berlin) was notamong thefounder members. Nevertheless Muthesius was the first to formulate the society's programme. As a result of his reports on British domestic architecture (1904-7), however, he was already known to the German arts and crafts movement and building industry as 'The Muthesius Case'.

To help form to recover its rights must be the fundamental task of our era; in particular it must be the content of any work of artistic reform embarked upon today. The fortunate progress of the arts and crafts movement, which has given new shape to the interior decoration of our rooms, breathed fresh life into handicrafts and imparted fruitful inspiration to architecture, may be regarded as only a minor prelude to what must come. For in spite of all we have achieved we are still wading up to our knees in the brutalization of forms. If proof is needed, we have only to observe the fact that our country is being covered daily and hourly with buildings of the most inferior character, unworthy of our age and calculated to speak to posterity all too eloquently of our epoch's lack of culture. What sense is there in speaking of success so long as this is still the case? Is there a more accurate testimony to a nation's taste than the buildings with which it fills its streets and populated areas? What would it mean, compared with this, if we could prove that today the energies required for decent architectural constructions are available and that these energies have simply not been able to get to grips with the tasks? Precisely the fact that they have not got to grips with the tasks characterizes the cultural situation of our day. The very fact that thousands and thousands of our people not merely pass by this crime against form unperturbed, but as the employers of architects contribute to its multiplication by choosing unsuitable advisers, is unmistakable proof of the abysmal condition of our sense of form and hence of our artistic culture in general.

The Deutscher Werkbund was founded in years when a closing of the ranks of all those struggling for better things was made necessary by the violent assaults of their opponents. Its years of struggle for its principles are now over. The ideas it existed to propagate are no longer contradicted by anyone; they enjoy universal acceptance. Does this mean that its existence is now superfluous? One might think so if one were to consider only the narrower field of applied art. But we cannot rest content with having put cushions and chairs in order; we must think further. In truth the Deutscher Werkbund's real work is only now beginning, with the dawning of the era of peace. And if up to now the idea of quality has held first place in the Werkbund's work we can already observe today that, as far as technique and material are concerned, the sense of quality in Germany is in the process of rapidly improving. Yet even this success is far from completing the Werkbund's task. Far more important than the material aspect is the spiritual; higher than purpose, material, and technique stands form. Purpose, material, and technique might be beyond criticism, yet without form we should still be living in a crude and brutal world. Thus we are ever more clearly confronted by the far greater, far more important task of reviving intellectual understanding and reanimating the architectonic sense. For its architectonic culture is and remains the true index of a nation's culture as a whole. If a nation produces good furniture and good light fittings, but daily erects the worst possible buildings, this can only be a sign of heterogeneous, unclarified conditions, conditions whose very inconsistency is proof of the lack of discipline and organization. Without a total respect for form, culture is unthinkable, and formlessness is synonymous with lack of culture. Form is a higher spiritual need to the same degree that cleanliness is a higher bodily need. Crudities of form cause the really cultivated man an almost physical pain; in their presence he has the same feeling of discomfort produced by dirt and a bad smell. But as long as a sense of form has not been developed in the cultured members of our nation to the same level of intensity as their need for clean linen, we are still far removed from conditions which could in any way be compared with epochs of high cultural achievement.

1914 Muthesius/ Van de Velde: Werkbund theses and antitheses

In June 1914 the first great exhibition of the Deutscher Werkbund was opened in Cologne. It was intended to provide a conspectus of the We rkbund's work in the seven years since its foundation. The very heterogeneity of the buildings in the exhibition - ranging from the Neo-Classicism of a Behrens to the gaily
austere objectivity of Gropius and Meyer's office building and factory-gives a hint of the opposing forces within the Werkbund. They clashed with full vigour at the Werkbund conference in Cologne at the beginning of July, when Muthesius proclaimed concentration and standardization as the aims of Werkbund design, while van de Velde advanced the contrary thesis of the artist as a creative individualist.

1. Architecture, and with it the whole area of the Werkbund's activities, is pressing towards standardization, and only through standardization can it recover that universal significance which was characteristic of it in times of harmonious culture.

2. Standardization, to be understood as the result of a beneficial concentration, will alone make possible the development of a universally valid, unfailing good taste.

3. As long as a universal high level of taste has not been achieved, we cannot count on German arts and crafts making their influence effectively felt abroad.

4. The world will demand our products only when they are the vehicles of a convincing stylistic expression. The foundations for this have now been laid by the German movement.

5. The creative development of what has already been achieved is the most urgent task of the age. Upon it the movement's ultimate success will depend. Any relapse and deterioration into imitation would today mean the squandering of a valuable possession.

6. Starting from the conviction that it is a matter of life and death for Germany constantly to ennoble its production, the Deutscher Werkbund, as an association of artists, industrialists, and merchants, must concentrate its attention upon creating the preconditions for the export of its industrial arts.

7. Germany's advances in applied art and architecture must be brought to the attention of foreign countries by effective publicity. Next to exhibitions the most obvious means of doing this is by periodical illustrated publications.

8. Exhibitions by the Deutscher Werkbund are only meaningful when they

are restricted radically to the best and most exemplary. Exhibitions of arts and crafts abroad must be looked upon as a national matter and hence require public subsidy.

9. The existence of efficient large-scale business concerns with reliable good taste is a prerequisite of any export. It would be impossible to meet even internal demands with an object designed by the artist for individual requirements.

10. For national reasons large distributive and transport undertakings whose activities are directed abroad ought to link up with the new movement, now that it has shown what it can do, and consciously represent German art in the world.

Hermann Muthesius

1. So long as there are still artists in the Werkbund and so long as they exercise some influence on its destiny, they will protest against every suggestion for the establishment of a canon and for standardization. By his innermost essence the artist is a burning idealist, a free spontaneous creator. Of his own free will he will never subordinate himself to a discipline that imposes upon him a type, a canon. Instinctively he distrusts everything that might sterilize his actions, and everyone who preaches a rule that might prevent him from thinking his thoughts through to their own free end, or that attempts to drive him into a universally valid form, in which he sees only a mask that seeks to make a virtue out of incapacity.

2. Certainly, the artist who practices a 'beneficial concentration' has always recognized that currents which are stronger than his own will and thought demand of him that he should acknowledge what is in essential correspondence to the spirit of his age. These currents may be very manifold; he absorbs them unconsciously and consciously as general influences; there is something materially and morally compelling about them for him. He willingly subordinates himself to them and is full of enthusiasm for the idea of a new style *per se.* And for twenty years many of us have been seeking forms and decorations entirely in keeping with our epoch.

3. Nevertheless it has not occurred to any of us that henceforth we ought to try to impose these forms and decorations, which we have sought or found, upon others as standards. We know that several generations will have to work upon what we have started before the physiognomy of the new style is established, and that we can talk of standards and standardization only after the passage of a whole period of endeavours.

4. But we also know that as long as this goal has not been reached our

endeavours will still have the charm of creative impetus. Gradually the energies, the gifts of all, begin to combine together, antitheses become neutralized, and at precisely that moment when individual strivings begin to slacken, the physiognomy will be established. The era of imitation will begin and forms and decorations will be used, the production of which no longer calls for any creative impulse: the age of infertility will then have commenced.

5. The desire to see a standard type come into being before the establishment of a style is exactly like wanting to see the effect before the cause. It would be to destroy the embryo in the egg. Is anyone really going to let themselves be dazzled by the apparent possibility of thereby achieving quick results? These premature effects have all the less prospect of enabling German arts and crafts to exercise an effective influence abroad, because foreign countries are a jump ahead of us in the old tradition and the old culture of good taste.

6. Germany, on the other hand, has the great advantage of still possessing gifts which other, older, wearier peoples are losing: the gifts of invention, of brilliant personal brainwaves. And it would be nothing short of castration to tie down this rich, many-sided, creative élan so soon.

7. The efforts of the Werkbund should be directed toward cultivating precisely these gifts, as well as the gifts of individual manual skill, joy, and belief in the beauty of highly differentiated execution, not toward inhibiting them by standardization at the very moment when foreign countries are beginning to take an interest in German work. As far as fostering these gifts is concerned, almost everything still remains to be done.

8. We do not deny anyone's good will and we are very well aware of the difficulties that have to be overcome in carrying this out. We know that the workers' organization has done a very great deal for the workers' material welfare, but it can hardly find an excuse for having done so little towards arousing enthusiasm for consummately fine workmanship in those who ought to be our most joyful collaborators. On the other hand, we are well aware of the need to export that lies like a curse upon our industry.

9. And yet nothing, nothing good and splendid, was ever created out of mere consideration for exports. Quality will not be created out of the spirit of export. Quality is always first created exclusively for a quite limited circle of connoisseurs and those who commission the work. These gradually gain confidence in their artists; slowly there develops first a narrower, then a national clientele, and only then do foreign countries, does the world slowly take notice of this quality. It is a complete misunderstanding of the situation to make the industrialists believe that they would increase their chances in the world market if they produced *a priori* standardized types for this world market before these types had become well tried common property at home. The wonderful works being exported to us now were none of them originally

created for export: think of Tiffany glasses, Copenhagen porcelain, jewellery by Jensen, the books of Cobden-Sanderson, and so on.

10. Every exhibition must have as its purpose to show the world this native quality, and it is quite true that the Werkbund's exhibitions will have meaning only when, as Herr Muthesius so rightly says, they restrict themselves radically to the best and most exemplary.

Henry van de Velde