The Face of the Modern Architect

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- who is the modern architect?
The twentieth century provides two contradictory but convergent responses to this question, responses that coexist and commingle during architecture's century-long march toward professionalization and the achievement of an unprecedented degree of social visibility.[1]

The first answer is that articulated in Ayn Rand's monument to objectivism, *The Fountainhead* (1943), in the voice of her rationalist architect-hero Howard Roark, subsequently embodied by Gary Cooper in a film bearing the same title:

> Every creative job is achieved under the guidance of a single individual thought. An architect requires a great many men to erect his building. But he does not ask them to vote on his design. They work together by free agreement and each is free in his proper function. An architect uses steel, glass, concrete, produced by others. But the materials remain just so much steel, glass and concrete until he touches them. What he does with them is his individual product and his individual property.[2]

An individualistic descendant of the divine *arkitekton* with his cosmic compass and thaumaturgic touch, this modernist demiurge is possessed with the secular counterpart to spirit: a transcendent thought, a vision, a plan, a logos for the earthly city that, in seeking its realization, necessarily collides with and overcomes a real world of obstacles-bureaucracies, philistine clients, small-minded interests. For him:

Fig. 1 August Sander. *Der Architekt* (Hans Poelzig), 1929. Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts: V- Die Künstler. © 2008 Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, August Sander Archiv, Cologne; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

> A building is alive, like a man. Its integrity is to follow its own truth, its one single theme, and to serve its own single purpose. A man doesn't borrow pieces of his body. A building doesn't borrow hunks of its soul. Its maker gives it the soul and every wall, window and stairway to express it.[3]

The architect is, accordingly, the antithesis of the mere technician, that master of modern machinery: the engineer. Rather he is the poet and philosopher who writes in aluminum and steel, the artist who places the giant leverage of industrial machinery under the mastery of spirit, the genius who transforms the built landscape into a self-portrait: a body that is his own but that endures for tens of centuries.[4]

The second answer to the question "Who is the modern architect?" is articulated by Massimo Bontempelli in his writings on architecture from the 1930s: the modern architect is he who manages to achieve what Bontempelli deems the highest ideal of art - *anonymity*, the absolute detachment of work from author and fusion with the world. Success means that the work of architecture manages to achieve such a high degree of "necessity" - whether the word is understood in a social, historical, organic, formal, or aesthetic sense matters little - that it merges with the earth's crust and quickly becomes the natural identity of a place that is itself both the summing up of a historical epoch and the portrait of a collectivity at a given historical moment.[5]

Many variations - right and left, soft and hard - of this second response have been expressed. All hark back to a vision of architecture as a collaborative, even communal undertaking, whether the "cathedral of socialism" of Walter Gropius's inaugural Bauhaus manifesto that "will combine architecture, sculpture, and painting *in a single form*, and will one day rise towards the heavens from the hands of a million workers as the crystalline symbol of a new and coming faith." Or Hannes Meyer's more rigorously held conviction that "building is an activity profoundly connected with social-economic needs and the spiritual superstructure. And the architect is always of necessity a collaborator. He does his work together with economists and industrialists, with workers, artisans, and housewives."[6]

The figure who best incarnates this antitype to the architectdemiurge is the engineer, the protagonist of the lead chapter of Le Corbusier's

Vers une architecture and role model for Corbu's reform of modern architecture.[7] Engineers serve the collectivity. They fabricate tools according to the universal laws of physics and mathematics; tools "are the result of successive improvement; the effort of all generations is embodied in them."[8] Tools either work or they are replaced: a matter of progress, morality, cleanliness, even beauty. The myth of the engineerredeemer is even more fully fleshed out in Pietro Maria Bardi's rationalist polemics from the late 1930s:

> Engineers are the direct and immediate agents of human progress to a greater extent that any other social category. With their discoveries and painstaking tinkering with inventions, they improve everything that humankind has devised so that life may fulfill its potential for intelligence. [The title "engineer" refers to] a vast cadre of technicians . . . extending from Guglielmo Marconi to the fresh graduate who dons a worker's suit, from individuals whose inventions transform civilization to those who, submerged within the anonymous masses, produce only a single piece of machinery. Beyond the diversity of values and personalities, beyond disparities in social class and intellectual sparkle, one always recognizes in the engineer a quiet, level-headed, thoughtful human subject, a subject used to coolly resolving all situations with good will, perseverance, and a sense of duty infused with the best of popular virtues.[9]

This modest, level-headed subject becomes the model practitioner of an architecture that sets out to do everything from providing machines for living for the working masses to devising up-to-date luxury shelters for men and women of initiative, action, and thought - an architecture that strives to become the consummate extension and expression of the machine age.

The two replies may appear contradictory, but most of the leading figures of twentieth-century architecture manage to straddle both sides of the divide. This is possible because both converge in their core conviction that, properly understood, architecture is neither decoration nor ornamentation but a form of *poiesis* the etymological sense of "making." *Architecture makes and remakes the world*. Because of this act of physical making and remaking, architecture matters in a way that novels, paintings, and symphonies cannot. Here the convergences end, for whereas the first reply places the emphasis upon the potential of architectural works to transcend historical circumstance, the second is equivocal, attributing a *longue durée* to the work of successful world-making yet always placing this operation at the mercy or in the service of shifting political, social, and aesthetic tides. The question then becomes whether these tides are measured out in centuries or in weeks or months or years.

The following remarks explore - less via the analysis of works than by looking at facets of the material culture and iconographic context of the profession - how this founding tension informs the figure of the architect from WWI into and beyond the digital turn of the 1990s. In so doing, I attempt to show how the first of the two responses gradually overcame the second and went on to become architecture's public face - or, rather, a paper-thin public mask behind which looms the truth of an ever more complex, distributed, deindividualized practice that is no longer an overwhelmingly male preserve; moreover, a mask that has been flattened out by a media regime that places any and all vestiges of the romantic cult of genius in the service of the construction of the architect as celebrity of the moment.[10] The upshot is that the figure of the architect, once a background presence within the public sphere, emerges as the bodily locus for the staging of architecture qua discipline, becoming a billboard featuring a face readily exchangeable with both fashions and façades - a global brand name and embodied logo veiling the reality of a large-scale collaborative practice.

I track this shift with the disenchanted eye of an anthropologist probing the rites, rituals, and relics of a little-known tribe whose female membership has swollen only in recent times. The resulting portrait of the modern architect is selective in character and makes no claim to completeness. It strings together a sequence of microhistories, mini-mythologies à la Roland Barthes of disciplinary accessories - tools, hands, coats, bow ties, smoking items, and eyeglasses - that mark the architect's passage from invisibility to visibility, moving upward along the vertical axis of his anatomy from midsection to neck and mouth to eyes.

As such, I expand the frame of August Sander's *Das Antlitz der Zeit* to the entirety of the twentieth century. Sander's enterprise was to reconstruct the "face" of Weimar Germany through portraits of individuals who, though distinctive, also embodied distinctly new contemporary types.

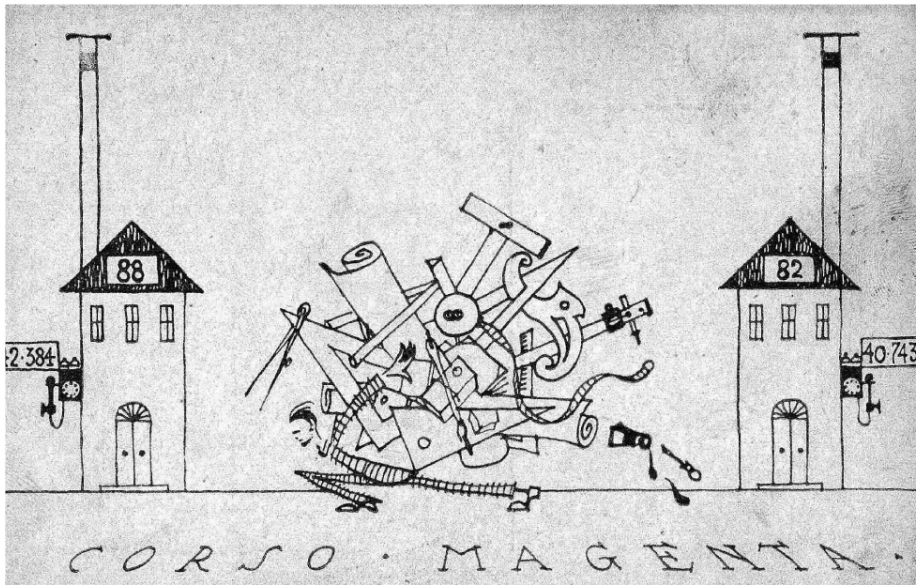


Fig. 2 Piero Portaluppi. Postcard with cartoon, early 1920s. Archivio, Fondazione Piero Portaluppi, Milan, Italy.

Among his cast of emerging characters was The Architect, figured by Hans Poelzig in a photograph from 1928 and accompanied by another ten portraits of this same emerging social type[11] (Fig. 1). Poelzig's lineaments and professional props are our guide in this item-by-item, feature-by-feature, anatomical dissection of the modern architect from Poelzig to Pei.

a - tools

From the early modern period until the digital turn of the 1990s, the toolkit of modern architecture remained relatively stable - aside, perhaps, from the increasing importance assumed by photography and photomontage in project development and presentations.

The major technical changes during that period include the arrival of blueprints and blueprinting machines in the second half of the nineteenth century, their displacement around World War II by blueline or blackline diazo printing, which, in turn, was gradually replaced by xerography in the postwar period. Drafting tables grow in complexity and flexibility during the same period, from the standard flat desks of the Beaux Arts period to the adjustable, tiltable, sliding ruler - or pantograph - equipped tables of today. A wide array of graphic devices accompany changes in paper supports and tables: Rapidographs, for instance, begin to take the place of ruling pens around midcentury, greatly simplifying the elaboration of technical drawings and thereby reinforcing the decline of detailing and the predominance of schematics. Airbrushing gradually increases in importance as a rendering tool over the course of the entire century. Starting in the 1960s, felt-tip pens and markers become key annotation tools, particularly as Mylar allows for increasing use of overlays. The subsequent decade sees the triumph of large-scale xerography, which facilitates cut-and-paste compositional techniques, particularly in the wake of the arrival of glue sticks, correction fluid, and precision utility knives in the 1970s. Last but not least, in this same period new materials such as white Strathmore board, museum board, and various foams and plastics simplify 3D modeling and confirm the longstanding trend away from elaborate exterior renderings of the sort that had been the focus of Beaux Arts-era training.[12]

Few if any of these developments find their way into figurations of the architect during the first half of the twentieth century. On the contrary, the most tradition-bound symbols continue to prevail. For example, in Piero Portaluppi's cartoon notifying friends and clients of his studio's

Fig. 3 Pablo Picasso. *The Architect's Table*, early 1912. Oil on canvas mounted on oval panel. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The William S. Paley Collection, 1971. © 2001 Estate of Pablo Picasso/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

change of telephone number and address, T-squares, 45- and 60-degree triangles, rulers, lead pointers, measuring tapes, sable brushes, India ink pots, a register, and rolls of paper are all juggled on the architect's back as the emblems of a drafting- and drawing-based practice. A compass hangs above his head and, as in prior centuries, remains the defining object in the architect's bag of tricks (Fig. 2).

The same toolkit is encountered in Picasso's 1912 *The Architect's Table* (Fig. 3): an oval begun in a horizontal format with a glass and mandolin perched atop a table but then rotated vertically and reworked as an homage to architectural labor consisting in an array of tools of the trade - a ruler; a truncated compass; some leads, ink, and brushes. The absence of a human figure orients the viewer's gaze away from the question of the architect's personality or identity toward the act of drawing, probably in keeping with Picasso's inclusion of self-referential elements: the card of his patron, Gertrude Stein, is inserted at the bottom right; Ma Jolie, the nickname of his lover Eva Gouel, appears at the center left. Within the setting of this playful game of hide and seek, the drafter and builder of carefully jumbled planar assemblies, soon to include embedded real-world objects, appears to be none other than the cubist artist himself.

A similar pictorial logic can be found at work in two other cubist depictions of architects: Roger de la Fresnaye's 1914 *Seated Man* and Diego Rivera's 1915 *The Architect* (a portrait of Jesús T. Acevedo). Neither is a portrait in the strict sense of the word, for the embodied particularity of the architect qua human subject surfaces only to disappear into a planar array that grants primacy to drafting tools: in the former, a triangle, ruler, and ink, accompanied by drawing paper, a blueprint, and a cloth; in the latter, a table, easel, straight edge, brush, and lead. The eyes of de la Fresnaye's architect are blocked out; those of Rivera's architect are buried behind a mask. A muscle-bound builder's profile lurks behind him.

Even after the return to figuration of the 1920s, the architect remains a figure more closely affiliated with the engineer than with the romantic demiurge. In Achille Funi's sober portrait of the futurist Mario Chiattone (1924), as well as in Mario Sironi's rich series of self-stylings as an architect, an oversized compass in a no-less-oversized hand stands for the venerable character of architecture as a form of labor, while a sober backdrop made up of scaffoldings or of an abecedarium of geometrical

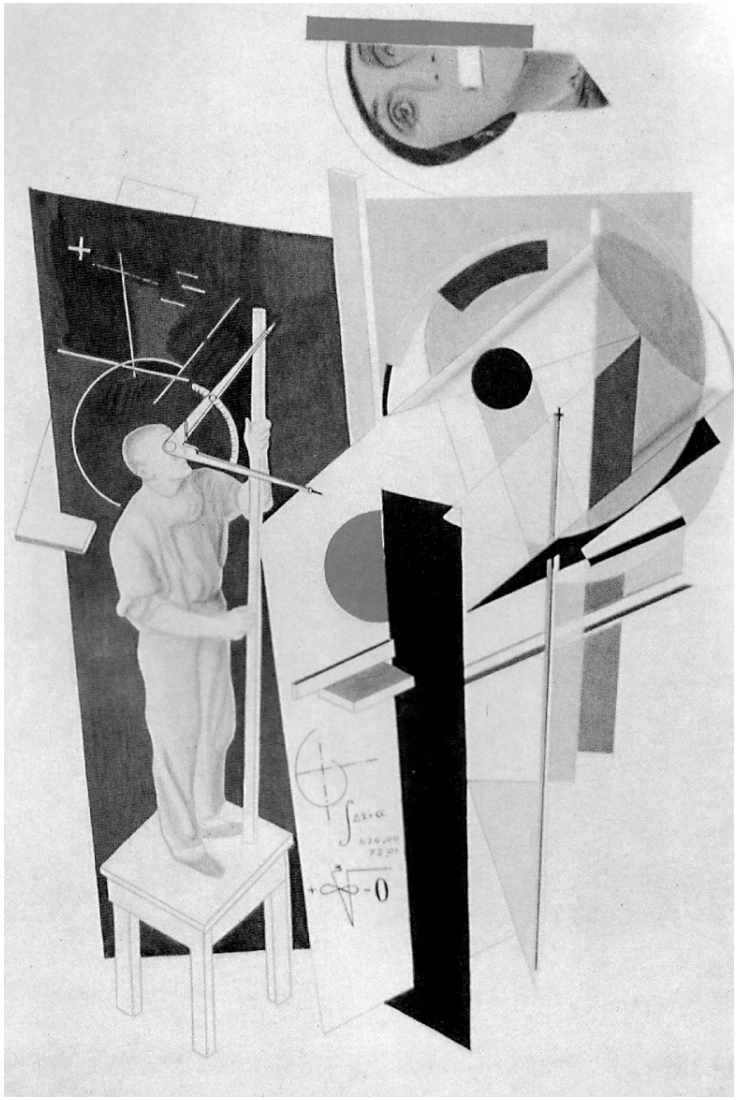


Fig. 4 El Lissitzky. Illustration to Ilya Ehrenburg's *Shest povestei o legkikh kontsakh (Six Tales with Easy Endings)*, 1922.

volumes, elementary columns, doorways, and arches, sets off the stoic, mask-like gaze and simplified forms of the architect's body placed against the edge of a drawing table. Foreground and backdrop are differentiated, perhaps even with intimations that architecture represents a heroic struggle to overcome mortality, yet the emphasis falls upon the nobility of a pursuit that poses the same moral challenge that Sironi would later articulate in his "Manifesto on Muralism": "that of becoming a 'militant,' an artist in the service of a moral ideal who subordinates his individuality to the collective task . . . the artist must once again become an ordinary man among men, just as he was during the supreme eras of our civilization."[13] For the painter, the architect continues to figure as the fulfillment of modern art's aspirations as a public or political form of communication.

This same essential figuration of the architect recurs within the laboratory of constructivism where, in a series of related works, El Lissitzky portrays Tatlin and himself as builders of the future. The first is one of the illustrations to Ilya Ehrenburg's *Six Tales with Easy Endings* (Fig. 4) and equates Tatlin's eye with an oversized compass and his hands with a vertical straight edge.[14] Together these tools give rise to a complex planar choreography glossed in a 1925 essay as follows: "Not independent forms cut off from what lies outside, but instead relations and ties: an open structure, bodies in motion bobbing in and out of traffic. New constructions. The fifth dimension considered. The demand for new materials, but without fetishization. All under the aegis of a unifying concept: functionality."[15] This fifth perspective is the perspective of desire: desire both for the seductive levity of the cinematic image - note the visage of Lily Brik pasted in on top - and for new forms of assemblage that will allow an expanding universe of relational constructions to defy gravity and float upward. The key to this passage from earthbound to airborne traffic is inscribed into the base of the central planar structure: the spiral, Tatlin's figure for the revolution as synthesis of history's linear and circular movement.

In Lissitzky's self-portraits as constructor, the compass again fuses with the eye, but through the agency of the hand, thanks to which it traces a halo-like circle over the play of verticals and horizontals. Elements from the artist's own stationary and bookplate point to their ghostly referent whose photographic image hovers between the hand and a graph-paper backdrop. An XYZ in the upper left evokes the three geometrical axes

and their cooperation in the fulfillment of the constructor's task: a task whose protagonist is the hand - the hand of the draftsman, the artist, the laborer. Here, as in Sander and elsewhere, the emphasis falls not on the individual personality of the architect but on establishing him as a generalizable modern type whose identity can be equated with the mastery of certain tools.

b - hands

Hands represent the point of contact between the body of the architect and the world of tools. Instruments themselves, they figure within the iconography of the architectural profession as markers of the ties that bind architects to builders, architectural drawing to actual construction, whether in the Arts and Crafts workshop, the cathedral of socialism, or the rationalist studio.

If the face was the locus of bourgeois identity in modern forms of portraiture, hands become the locus of worker identity in modern art; in particular, hands that are seen wielding industrial tools.[16] This proliferation of working hands in twentieth-century political art destabilizes conventional bodily hierarchies, marking the migration of thought from the head to the site of bodily action and execution; it also democratizes the legion of hands in medieval and Renaissance art pointing from on high as markers of God's intervention into history, transforming them into signs of labor taking history into its own hands.

The hands of the new architect are more closely affiliated with these calloused worker hands than they are with the refined artistic hands that were the focal point of Beaux Arts training. Yet, like their predecessors, they remain signs of a calling higher than that of mere tools: of architecture as an art capable of transforming the everyday-life world of the working masses through the Plan's magic touch. Hands are highlighted 14 in portraits of modern architects in order to suggest that, like his role model, the engineer, this peculiar hybrid of dreamer and draftsman transcends the opposition between art and action, thinking and doing.

c - coats

The bifurcation between artistic and toiling hands becomes explicit when one turns to architects' choice of coats. Here the two initial responses to the question of "Who is the modern architect?" translate into distinct sartorial schools.

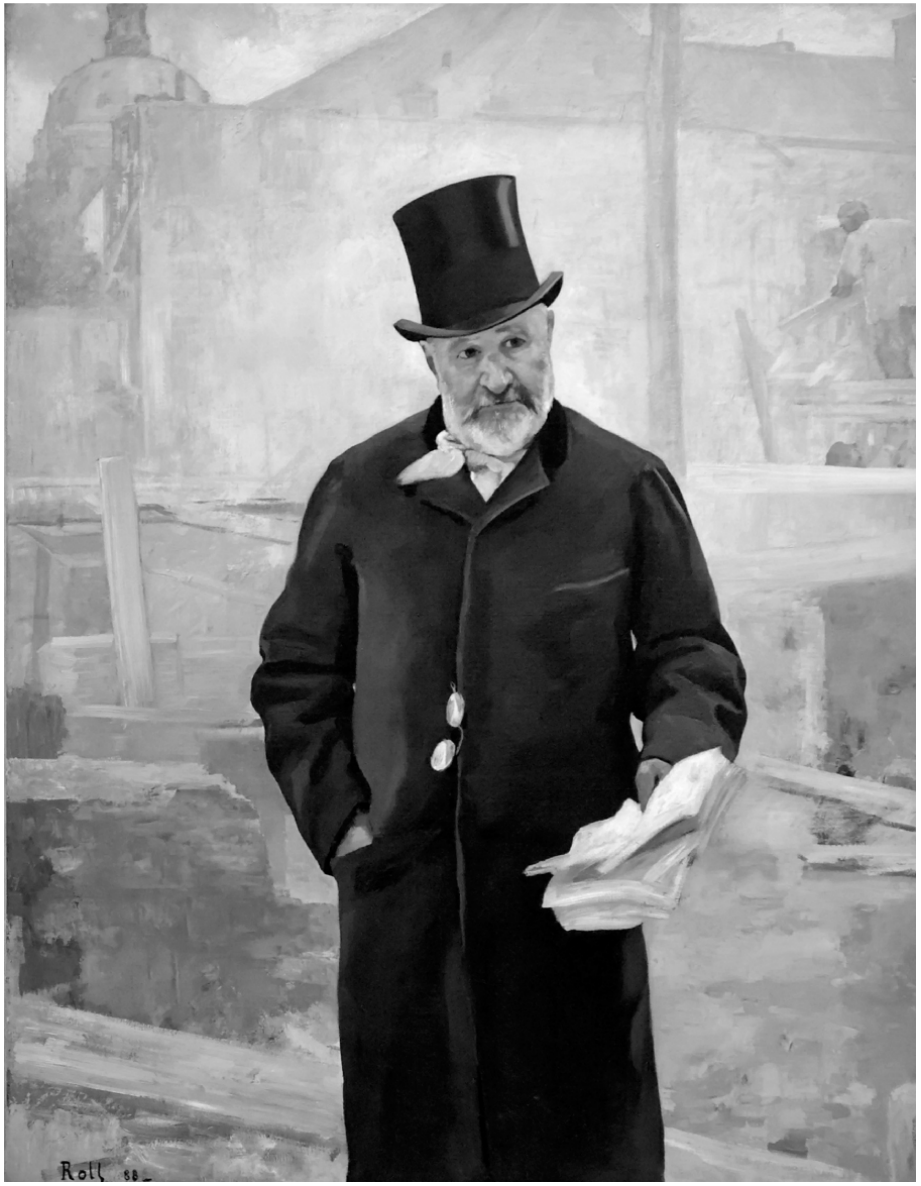


Fig. 5 Alfred Roll. Portrait of Adolphe Alphand, 1888. Oil on canvas. Musée de la Ville de Paris, Museé du Petit-Palais, Paris.

Fig. 6 Photograph of Frank Lloyd Wright seated with Clough Williams-Ellis. © 2008 The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, Taliesin West, Scottsdale, AZ.

Fig. 7 Photograph of Mies van der Rohe. © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VGBK, Bonn.

Fig. 8 George R. Lawrence. Ninth Annual Banquet, Architectural League of America, April 24, 1907. Library of Congress. Prints & Photographs Division, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pan.6a24855.

The first is dedicated to the proposition that the architect is a worker among workers, even when he is hiding a three-piece suit under his *bleus d'ouvrier* or Mao suit. The coat in question is that of someone unafraid of dirtying his hands or upper body: a knee-long dust coat or work suit worthy of a machinist, a factory foreman, or a laboratory worker, here modeled by Paul Ludwig Troost and Hannes Meyer; the universal suits of Vladimir Tatlin; and the working overalls of Alexander Rodchenko.

On the demiurge-genius side of the spectrum, in opposition to the adoption of standardized work clothing, stand a sequence of individualized framings of the architect's body. In Alfred Roll's 1888 portrait of the Baron Haussman's collaborator, the landscape designer Adolphe Alphand, the architect dons the top hat, silk ascot, and knee-length frock coat of a gentleman who is present on the construction site for a reason - the plans in his hands - yet placed at an absolute remove from its toil, sweat, and dust (Fig. 5).

Whereas in the case of Alphand the accent is placed on the architect's belonging to a privileged social caste, in cases like that of Clough Williams-Ellis, creator of the fantasy Welsh-Mediterranean village of Portmeiron, or Frank Lloyd Wright, the task is instead that of individuation (Fig. 6). Individuation is here understood in precisely the same manner as in the long lineage of swells, macaronis, *incroyables*, fops, *raffinés*, and dandies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; namely, as the constitution of a new aristocracy of spirit in the era of democracy. In Baudelaire's oft-quoted words:

> All partake of the same traits of opposition and revolt; all are representatives of that which is most precious in human pride: of that need, ever rarer in the present age, to combat and demolish triviality. From which derives the dandy's haughtiness as if that of the member of a new caste of ice-cold provocateurs.[17]

The method combines eclecticism with extravagance - *especially extravagance in the pursuit of simplicity*. Williams-Ellis invented a look no less flamboyant than his Welsh-Mediterranean village, styling himself as a kind of industrial-era country squire anachronistically clad in knee breeches, an oversize bow tie, and a trademark pair of yellow stockings. Wright donned his trademark capes, tailored three-piece suits, flat-top hats, ascots, and cuff-link shirts in an affirmation of spirit and a gesture of protest against mobocracy.[18]

The architect's look moves back into the mainstream on the body of Mies who, already in the Bauhaus's Dessau-Berlin era, was immune to the proletarian passions of a Hannes Meyer. After the move to Chicago, Mies was free to become one both with his buildings and businessman patrons. He was never spotted without a dark tie, a starched white shirt, the pocket handkerchief, and a dark suit - the uniform of respectability and seriousness; the uniform of America, Inc. (Fig. 7).

A trumped-up formality, austerity, and even minimalism would remain the solution of the day well into the late twentieth century, which saw the eclipse of the tie, driven in part by increasing gender diversity, and the triumph of elite interpretations of the *bleu d'ouvrier* or People's Army uniform: Prada black on black.

d - ties

If the postwar Mies effects a move away from both the studied plainness of proletarian constructors and the formal elegance of architect-visionaries, he strategically omits one of the most ubiquitous public markers of the profession in its modern guise: the bow tie.

The bow tie has a long history with respect to the figure of the architect and an even longer one with respect to modern fashion.[19] A photograph of the 1907 gala dinner of the Architectural League of North America (Fig. 8) documents the bow tie's role as a standard feature of male formal attire, accompanying tailcoats and tuxedos. The black bow tie-descended from the more formal white and associated with the restrained elegance of British naval and military officers - would soon be drawn into architectural studios.[20]

Bow ties had once figured prominently within a heterogeneous universe of ties, scarves, and ascots (Fig. 9). But the triumph of the austere *régate* - the now standard vertical tie-in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century limited bow ties to formal occasions by the beginning of the twentieth, which makes the lineage of architects, from Gropius and Mendelsohn to Ponti to Eisenman (Fig. 10), who have regularly sported them all the more distinctive. This deliberate anachronism - or, rather, this construction of a highly formal public image that recalls the revolts against triviality of a prior century of nonconformists - openly defies contemporary habits, both in the realms of formal and informal dress: "The majority of men who wear bowties do so because the majority of men

Fig. 9 Advertisement for lines of ties offered by the Maison du Phénix, Paris, 1863.

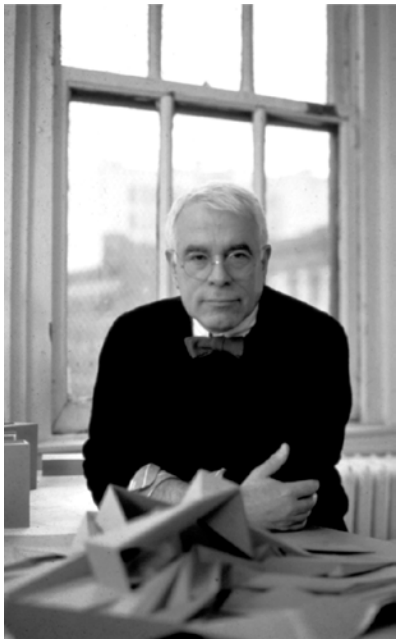
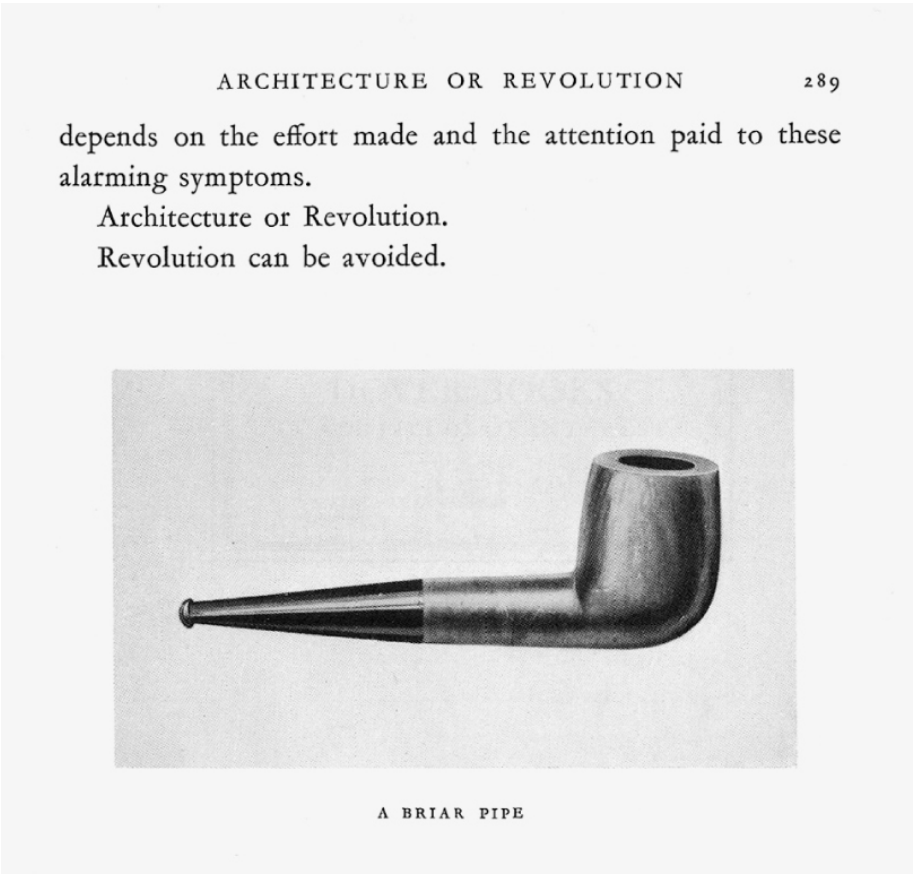


Fig. 10 Peter Eisenman wearing bow tie, ca. 1995. Courtesy of Eisenman Architects.



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depends on the effort made and the attention paid to these alarming symptoms.

Architecture or Revolution.

Revolution can be avoided.

A BRIAR PIPE

Fig. 11 Le Corbusier. "Architecture or Revolution,"concluding page of Towards a New Architecture, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York, 1927), Call no. 1765 (ID 87-B11720), Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

don't" observed *New York Times* fashion commentator Abbott Combes.[21] The architect's bow tie, with the exception of Wright who was known to don the occasional romantic *lavallière* or mounted ascot, is of a compact, geometrically firm variety that projects a linearity and right-angled rigor in keeping with the values of the modern movement. Consistently black, it crosses the color and pattern barrier only in the 1980s, entering the realm of postmodern citational play.

e - smokes

Tobacco figured alongside sugar, coffee, and distilled spirits in Honoré de Balzac's 1838 *Traité des excitants modernes* as the most potent of modern hyperstimulants:

> [under its sway] you soar into a world of fantasy; like a child armed with a butterfly net racing across a meadow chasing fireflies, you snare your fluttering dreams [*délires*], dreams that surface in their ideal form such that one is readily inclined to make them into realities. . . . You know what I'm talking about, fellow smokers! The spectacle enhances nature's beauty, all of life's difficulties vanish, life becomes effortless, intelligence lucid, the gray atmosphere of thought turns sky blue. Yet, odd as it may seem, the curtain falls on this opera as soon as hookah, cigar, or pipe goes out.[22]

The smoker was thought to be living dangerously fast.[23] His natural habitat was the bohemian demimonde also inhabited by prostitutes, absinthe drinkers, and gamblers. Waves of modern artists from Paul Cézanne to Theo van Doesburg set out to update precisely this dead-end universe, displacing the old clay-pipe-smoking decadent with his briar-pipe-smoking industrial antitype.[24] At the end of the genealogical line, one arrives at a new beginning: a man-machine for whom hyperstimulus translates into hyperproductivity and comfort, not dissipation. Such an individual is Fernand Léger's *Man with Pipe* (1920), whose pipe functions as the smokestack of a squeaky-clean house/machine.[25] His double is the architect who smokes: Rodchenko with his pipes, Mies with his cigars, others with their cigarettes.

The new beginning is heralded on the final page of *Vers une architecture*, which must be considered as nothing less than an authorial self-portrait.[26] There the briar hovers, alongside photographs of the rooftop autodrome of the Lingotto assembly plant, as the compacted sign of

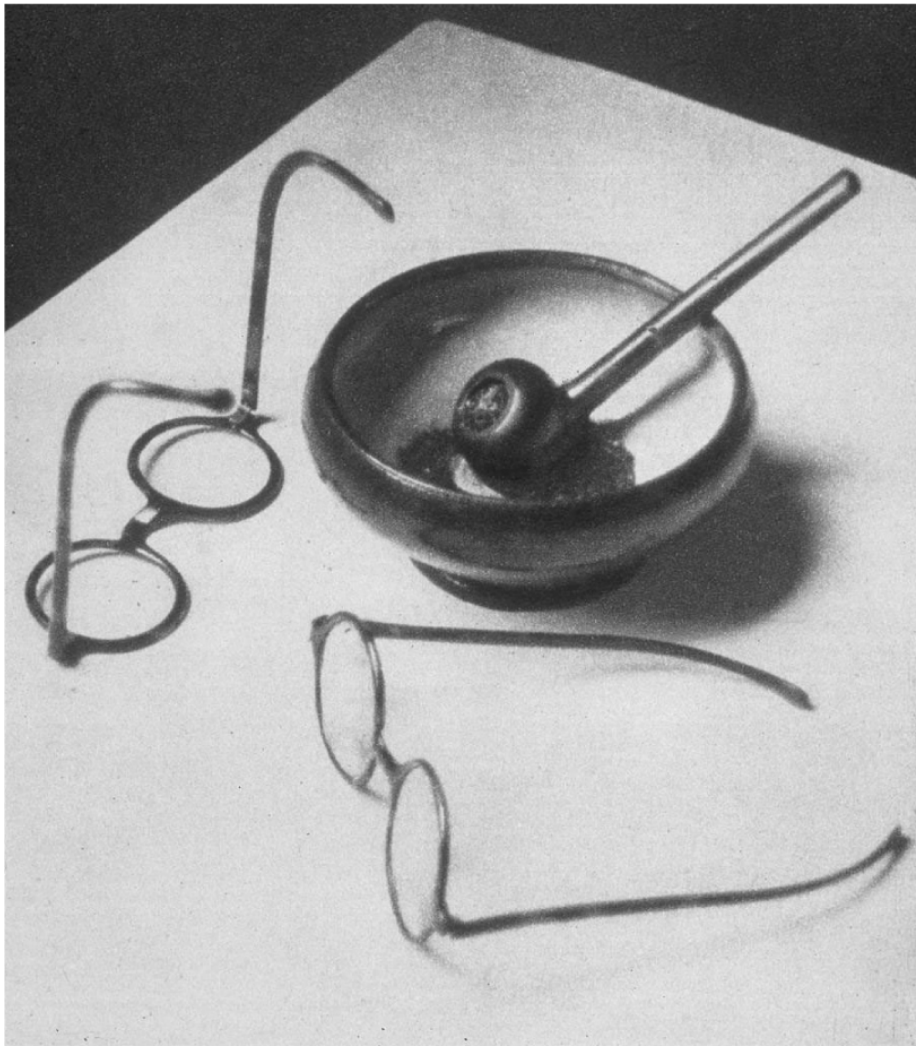

Fig. 12 André Kertesz. *Mondrian's Glasses with Pipe*, 1926.

everything that has come before it in the course of the book's verbal/visual argument: the engineer, the plan, grain silos, steamships, airplanes, automobiles, the house-machine. That it crystallizes the purist ideals preached by Le Corbusier is made clear in the text:

> There reigns a great disagreement between the modern state of mind, which is an admonition to us, and the stifling accumulation of age-long detritus.
>
> The problem is one of adaptation, in which the realities of our life are in question.
>
> Society is filled with a violent desire for something which it may obtain or may not. Everything lies in that: everything depends on the effort made and the attention paid to these alarming symptoms.
>
> Architecture or Revolution.
>
> Revolution can be avoided.[27]

The briar pipe (Fig. 11) embodies an architecture capable of providing technical solutions to today's problems. The pipe's pure lines, its freedom from ornament, its simple functionality all signify an emancipatory rationalization of life and the democratization of mass comfort, consumption, and even thrills. But they also figure the architect himself, the demiurge whose once hopelessly fluttering pipe dreams are now promising to reengineer the real.

Vers une architecture was an epochal text, and among the many places where its impact can be felt is the work of another visionary with a pipe: Piet Mondrian, the Dutch painter-theoretician of neoplasticism. After many years devoted to elaborating a private language of two-dimensional primary-colored planes, Mondrian decided to go three-dimensional in the 1920s. He transformed his Paris studio into a neoplasticist utopia: an "almost mathematically pure" space in which, anticipating a future cityscape in which beauty, health, and shelter would be ensured "by opposing buildings and empty spaces in an equilibrated way," the individual can transcend his "petty personality" and "be uplifted through beauty toward universal life."[28] Only two warm-bodied intruders are permitted into this cool, smoke-free transformation chamber: a coal-

burning stove and a briar pipe. The pipe's roving presence is signaled by the ashtray that appears in André Kertesz's famous 1926 photograph *Mondrian's Glasses and Pipe* (Fig. 12). Like Léger's man-machine, the neoplasticist superman and his successors in decades to come need tobacco to snare their fluttering dreams, without which their universal plans might go up in smoke.

f - eyeglasses
Alongside the pipe are round-frame glasses destined to become the focal point of tribal identity formation and genealogical sparring over the century's subsequent course.

Here, for once, is an indisputable founding father and founding moment: Le Corbusier, suffering from poor eyesight since childhood, looses much of the sight of one eye in an accident in 1918. Contemporary lens grinding technology dictates a thick round lens and a robust circular frame. The result becomes an answer to the question "Who is the modern architect?" so tenacious that for decades it managed to stave off the arrival of frameless eyeglasses and contact lenses on the architectural scene. No other object in the modern architect's tool kit exhibits greater staying power, surviving well beyond the moment when productive modern smoke became postmodern air pollution.

Here is also an indisputable successor who kept the flame of Corbu's owl-like glasses burning ever brighter well into the post-World War II era: Philip Johnson. To a degree that exceeds even his role model, Johnson transformed his eyeglasses into a visual calling card. They became both a bodily iteration of his architectural corpus and a framing device for placing his face in public circulation: so openly so that at events like a 1979 FAIA dinner in his honor, everyone felt free to join in the fun (Fig. 13). The form of his eyeglasses is the same as that of the famous cutout in the pediment of the 1984 AT&T building. His glasses marked him as the perpetual inhabitant of a signature enclosure like his legendary 1949 New Canaan, Connecticut, glass house, casting his image in its image and vice versa.

The theme of the glass house is among the richest in twentieth-century architecture for the range of interpretations and social fantasies to which it has given rise and for the tensions and paradoxes embedded within it. That the latter extend also to the architect's eyeglasses seems perfectly

Fig. 13 © Frances Halsband. Photograph of First Annual Mary Buckley Scholarship Dinner for Pratt Institute honoring Philip Johnson, October 20, 1993.

Fig. 14 Ishmael Orendain. *Daniel Libeskind in front of his extension to the Denver Art Museum*, 2006. Creative Commons 2.0 License. Photo enhanced by the author.

transparent. The Corbusier-Johnson lineage of glasses establishes a façade of seriousness, structural integrity, strength, symmetry, and focus with its elementary but rigorous geometries. The lineage implants one of the defining materials of modern times, tempered glass, within a rigid frame in what amounts to a promise of sincerity, transparency, and visibility, while in effect putting in place a mask that impedes the exchange of mutual gazes. The eyeglass teasingly establishes the architect's depth, individuality, and authority, while also defining him as a pure surface that ideally merges with the public surfaces of his body of work. The continuity between the two, still a fanciful conceit at the time of the 1931 Beaux Arts Ball, has become a standard feature in contemporary media stagings of architecture.

The success of this distinctive game of image hide-and-seek can be measured not only by the frequency with which certain classes of eyewear are adopted by the leading architects of the twentieth century but also by the emergence of entire genealogical subfamilies branching off from the main Corbusier-Johnson line. Purists like I.M. Pei and, perhaps surprisingly, Edwin Lutyens and Peter Cook, adhere strictly to the coke bottle bottom eyeglass paradigm. Others, like Luis Barragan, throw in a curvilinear variant. Transparentists line the branch of the family tree extending from Bruno Taut and the Dutch neoplasticists through Moneo, Graves, and Boehm. In between, are the integralists seeking both transparency and structure: the Bofills and Bottas, the Gehrys and Meyers and Eisenmans.

Once a game reserved for insiders, the architect's glasses have gone public in recent years even as some other of the icons of the architect's tool kit-for example, the bow tie-have begun to betray signs of decline. Within today's studiously informal black-on-black digital design studio, the architect with the best glasses gets the job.[29] When the 2002 World Trade Center competition came down to a duel between the proposals formulated by Rafael Vinoly and Daniel Libeskind, it was clear from the start who would emerge as victor. Vinoly's double eyeglass approach was far too radical, too unprecedented in the history of modern architecture, for him to have any hopes of winning, especially when competing against a grand Hegelian synthesis - a pair of Alain Miklis that are the eyeglass version of the venerable (but now endangered) black bow tie (Fig. 14).

LOUIS XIV COMMANDING THE BUILDING OF THE INVALIDES

Homage to a great town planner.

This despot conceived immense projects and realized them. Over all the country his noble works still fill us with admiration. He was capable of saying, "We wish it," or "Such is our pleasure."

Fig. 15 Le Corbusier. Concluding panel of *The City of To-morrow and its Planning* (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1929). Call no. W2108; ID:87-B10007, Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture / Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

- faces and façades

The 2002 Battle of the Eyeglasses, though a mere blip on the media screen, has the virtue of bringing the story (pre)figured in Sander's staging of Hans Poelzig as *The Architect* into sharper focus: namely, that of the modern architect's conquest of a new kind of public visibility at the start of the new millennium. "New" because, at our story's beginning, roughly coincident with the period extending up through World War I, the architect mostly passes unperceived. He is a secondary creature in the public eye: a gentleman devoted to the art (not the structure or the science) of building; an applied artist, subservient to the system of styles inherited from prior epochs and to the whims of clients. Over 90 percent of all construction goes forward in his absence and in the hands of mere builders. Trade associations, nonapprenticeship-based training models, and licensing systems have yet to carve out a real professional niche for him, not to mention a sociopolitical role.

Such is the diagnosis of the field's ills proposed by Williams-Ellis in his 1924 essay *The Pleasures of Architecture*. The public, he observes, has no difficulty imagining judges, lawyers, and painters: so why not architects? Why are architects unable to project a distinctive image of their particular skill set or profession?[30] Despite its glorious past and promising future, Williams-Ellis is forced to conclude that the profession's defining traits are pragmatism, dull respectability, and a dearth both of wit and personal charm - failings he sets out to remedy by means of signature yellow stockings and sparkling prose.

An admirer of Lutyens, Williams-Ellis was committed to values deriving from the Arts and Crafts movement. But his views are perfectly in line with those expressed by Le Corbusier in *Vers une architecture*:

> Our architects are disillusioned and unemployed, boastful or peevish. This is because there will soon be nothing more for them to do. *We no longer have the money* to erect historical souvenirs. At the same time, we need to be able to wash up! Our engineers provide for these things and they will be our builders.[31]

A century later the situation has been turned on its head. The once image-less, disillusioned applied artist finds himself transfigured into a visionary armed with a body and a Plan. A *body* like that of Poelzig accessorized with working hands, a cigar, a dark coat, glass-house eyeglasses, and a bow tie. A *plan* like that with which Le Corbusier

stupefied audiences at the November 1922 Salon d'Autonne for a contemporary city of three million inhabitants: a city made for speed, which is to say a city made for success.[32]

Such plans had embedded within them the not-so-secret expression of a will to power on the part of architects, made explicit in the concluding panel of *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning* (Fig. 15): to become the industrial-era equivalent of a monarch whose every word is a command. The new century was launched. By the century's end, even the stars of the silver screen long for a place within the court of one of the fin de siècle's new monarchs.

The architect has arrived.

But he or she arrives less as that solitary figure within the pantheon of familiar names whose disciplinary lineage can be equated with the history of modern architectural invention than as a sustaining myth whose reality has long been embedded in the connective tissues of ever larger-scale, distributed design processes.

[Note: This lecture was published in *Grey Room* 33 (Fall 2008): 6-25.]

NOTES

[1] Among the overall histories of architecture as a profession that I have found useful are Spiro Kostof, ed., *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. 209-344 on the modern era; and Herbert Ricken, Der Architekt, Geschichte eines Berufs (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1977).

[2] Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*, Signet Centennial ed. (New York: New American Library, 2005), 682.

[3] Rand, 24.

[4] "The giant leverage the machine might be for human good may fall by its own weight from helpless, human hands, far short of our hope. Spirit only can control it. Spirit is a science mobocracy does not know." Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949), xiii.

[5] "The main consequence of the distinctive nature of architectural works is the absolute detachment of work from its author. It becomes a true modification of the earth's crust. Traversing it, man encounters here a lake, there a city; here a cluster of trees, there a temple." Massimo Bontempelli, *L'avventura novecentista*, ed. Ruggero Jacobbi (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974), 63-64. Author's translation. See also 322-343.

[6] Andrew Saint, *The Image of the Architect* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 136.

[7] On the myth of the engineer, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Building Fascism, Communism, Democracy: Gaetano Ciocca - Builder, Inventor, Farmer, Writer, Engineer* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1-7.

[8] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London: John Rodker, 1931), 13.

[9] Pietro Maria Bardi, "Missione degli ingegneri," *Meridiano di Roma*, 16 January 1938.

[10] The best analytical study of modern architecture as an actual design practice is Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of a Practice* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), which includes both statistical data and a number of valuable case studies.

[11] *Das Antlitz der Zeit* was Sander's first sketch of what would become his even more sweeping People of the 20th Century project, in which, in addition to Poelzig (second in the sequence), the architect was figured by Hans Heinz Lüttgen (v/31/1), Fritz August Breuhaus de Groot (v/31/3), Emil Fahrenkamp (v/31/4), Richard Riemerschmid (v/31/5), Hans Hansen (v/31/6), Wilhelm Riphahn (v/31/7), Hans Walter Reitz (v/31/8), Fritz Fuss (v/31/9), Edmund Bolten (v/31/10), and Heinz Dickmann (v/31/11). Following these eleven, came a group portrait of "Architecture School Representatives" (v/31/12) where the profession appears in its collective guise. Whereas significant variances in dress and style occur in the individual portraits, the image is one of cohesion in the group portrait. The full run is in August Sander, *Die Künstler*, vol. 5 of *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur, revised by Susanne Lange et al. (New York: Abrams, 2002).

[12] On the topic of the iconography of the contemporary architect's studio, see Matthias Petru Schaller, *Werkbildnis*, Biennale di Venezia 2002 (Munich: Twinbooks 2002).

[13] Mario Sironi, "The Manifesto of Muralism," appendix to Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Flash Memories (Sironi on Exhibit)," in *Donatello among the Blackshirts*, eds. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 238-240.

[14] Ilya Ehrenburg, *Shest' povestei o legkikh kontsakh* (Moscow and Berlin: Gelikon, 1922).

[15] Sophie Lisitzkij-Küppers, *El Lisitzkij: Pittore, architetto, tipografo, fotografo*, trans. Piero Leone and Alberto Scarponi (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992), 360.

[16] I have written at greater length about this theme in "Anatomie dell'operaio (appunti)," in *Tempo Moderno: Da Van Gogh a Warhol: Lavoro, macchine e automazione nelle Arti del Novecento*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Skira, 2006), 35-41.

[17] The full passage reads, "Que ces hommes se fassent nommer raffinés, incroyables, beaux, lions ou dandies, tous sont issus d'une même origine; tous participent du même caractère d'opposition et de révolte; tous sont des représentants de ce qu'il y a de meilleur dans l'orgueil humain, de ce besoin, trop rare chez ceux d'aujourd'hui, de combattre et de détruire la trivialité. De là naît, chez les dandies, cette attitude hautaine de caste provoquante, même dans sa froideur. Le dandysme apparaît surtout aux époques transitoires où la démocratie n'est pas encore toute-puissante, où l'aristocratie n'est que partiellement chancelante et avilie. Dans le trouble de ces époques quelques hommes déclassés, dégoûtés, désoeuvrés, mais tous riches de force native, peuvent concevoir le projet de fonder une espèce nouvelle d'aristocratie, d'autant plus difficile à rompre qu'elle sera basée sur les facultés les plus précieuses, les plus indestructibles, et sur les dons célestes que le travail et l'argent ne peuvent conférer. Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences; et le type du dandy retrouvé par le voyageur dans l'Amérique du Nord n'infirme en aucune façon cette idée: car rien n'empêche de supposer que les tribus que nous nommons sauvages soient les débris de grandes civilisations disparues. Le dandysme est un soleil couchant; comme l'astre qui décline, il est superbe, sans chaleur et plein de mélancolie. Mais, hélas! la marée montante de la démocratie, qui envahit tout et qui nivelle tout, noie jour à jour ces derniers représentants de l'orgueil humain et verse des flots d'oubli sur les traces de ces prodigieux mirmidons. Les dandies se font chez nous de plus en plus rares, tandis que chez nos voisins, en Angleterre, l'état social et la constitution (la vraie constitution, celle qui s'exprime par les moeurs) laisseront longtemps encore une place aux héritiers de Sheridan, de Brummel et de Byron, si toutefois il s'en présente qui en soient dignes." Charles Baudelaire, "Le Dandy" in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, vol. 2, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Pléiade, 1975), 710-11.

[18] Wright made the word *mobocracy* his own in such works as his 1949 homage to Louis Sullivan, *Genius and the Mobocracy*.

[19] On this subject, see François Chaille, *La cravatta - storia - mito - moda*, trans. Raffaella Grasselli (Turin: Idealibri, 1997).

[20] The first female member invited to join the Architectural League, in the wake of several decades of resistance, was Verna Cook Salomonsky, who was welcomed as follows: "We have, as you know, at last decided to include a limited number of women who are distinguished in the artistic professions, as active members of the League. A number of names were considered and your name was selected as being the first and only woman architect to be invited." Letter to Vera Cook Salomonsky, 25 May 1934, http://www.archleague.org/tinymce/jscripts/imagemanager/images/1934large.jpg.

[21] "The Bow's Art," *New York Times*, 2 February 1986.

[22] Honoré de Balzac, *Traité des Excitants modernes* (Paris: Le Castor Astral, 1992), 52-53; my translation.

[23] Balzac observes: "Since few Turks are wealthy enough to own one of those famous seraglios where they can waste away their youth, it follows that their early loss of generative powers may chiefly be attributed to the effects of three other stimulating agents - tobacco, opium, and coffee - the consumption of which renders a 30-year-old Turk equal to a 50-year-old European." *Traité des Excitants modernes*, 57; my translation.

[24] On this subject, see Henk Egbers, *Tabak in de Kunst* (Weert, The Netherlands: Van Nelle, 1987).

[25] Many other Leger images come to mind as well, such as his 1920 oil painting *The Three Comrades*, now in Amsterdam's Municipal Museum.

[26] On the pipe in the modernist imagination with particular emphasis upon the relationship between René Magritte's reworkings of the motif and Le Corbusier, see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Art/Lit Combines; or, When a Pipe Is Only a Pipe," *Profession* (1998): 37-50.

[27] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London: John Rodker, 1931), 288-289.

[28] The full passage from the neoplasticist manifesto reads, "Man will choose or create his own material environment. He will not regret the absence of natural appearance, that aspect of nature which most people still regret even as they are forced against their will to abandon it. The truly evolved human will no longer attempt to bring beauty, health, or shelter to the city's streets and parks by means of trees and flowers. He will build healthy and beautiful cities by opposing buildings and empty spaces in an equilibrated way. Then the outdoors will satisfy him as much as the interior. . . . Through the intensified but variable rhythm of relationships in an almost mathematically pure plastic means, this art can come close to the 'superhuman' and certainly the universal. That is possible, even today, because art anticipates life. Neo-Plastic art loses something of the superhuman as it becomes realized in life in the form of material environment, yet retains it enough for the individual no longer to feel his petty personality but to be uplifted through beauty toward universal life." Piet Mondrian, "Neo-Plasticism: The Home - The Street - The City," in Frans Postma and Cees Boekraad, *26, rue du Départ: Mondrian's Studio in Paris, 1921-1936* (Berlin: Ernst and Sohn, 1995), 76; emphasis added.

[29] For examples of shifting media perceptions, see Ruth La Ferla, "Let Me Guess, You Must Be an Architect," *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 2003, and Samantha Grice, "It's the shade of their trade," *National Post*, Oct. 13, 2005.

[30] Saint, 108.

[31] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 15; emphasis in original.

[32] Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1929), 163.