

MOULDINESS MANIFESTO:

AGAINST RATIONALISM IN ARCHITECTURE

This manifesto, originally titled Verchimmelungsmaifest gegen den Rationalismus in der Architektur, was prepared in conjunction with an extensive demonstration against modern functional architecture. Hundertwasser first presented the manifesto to the public in a recitation at the Abbey of Seckau (Austria) on July 4 1958. This was followed by recitations at the Galerie Van de Loo, Munich, on July 11, and at the galerie Parnass, Wuppertal (German) on July 26. The manifesto has been published in German, Danish, Finnish, French and Italian. This is the first translation in English (from the original German transcript), and the first publication of the manifesto in English. Mouldiness Manifesto is a distillation of Hundertwasser's ideas on the subject of modern architecture and reveals his irritation with the persistent trend toward what he considers the disastrous sterility of functionalism as related to architecture.

Painting and sculpture are now free. Inasmuch as anyone may produce any sort of structure (creation) and subsequently display it. In architecture, however, this fundamental freedom to construct does not exist. Our present, planned architecture cannot be considered art. Architecture in the Western world has succumbed to the same censorship as has painting in the Soviet Union. Our modern buildings are detached and pitiable compromise by men of bad conscience who work with straight-edged rulers.

No restraint should be imposed upon the individual's desire to construct. Each person should be allowed to build (and ought to build), and would thus be truly responsible for the four walls within which he lives. There is a certain risk that such a fantastic sort of amateur construction might collapse, but we should not be afraid of the human sacrifice that this new style of construction might engender. It is the only way to stop the process in which human beings move into their quarters like chickens into their coops. The big revolution in architecture will come only with the acceptance of the concept of absolute uninhabitability, just as the revolution is still in store for us, since the course of architecture runs thirty years behind the other arts.

If an inhabitant-built construction is unsound, its collapse will usually be predictable and the tenants can escape. After that, however, each tenant will be more critical and more creative regarding his own housing, and with his own hands and from his own experience the tenant will make walls and pilings stronger until they no longer seem too fragile.

The tangible and material uninhabitability of slums is preferable to the moral uninhabitability of modern functional architecture. In the so called slums only the human body can be oppressed, but in our modern architecture (allegedly "constructed for the human being") man's soul is oppressed. Therefore, the principle behind functional architecture should be rejected. We should instead adopt as the premise for improvement the slum principle, that is, wildly, luxuriantly growing architecture.

With time and experience functional architecture has proved erroneous, just as has painting with a ruler. We are now finally approaching in giant steps an architecture that will be impractical, non-utilitarian and finally, totally uninhabitable.

We had to reject completely total tachistic automatism before we finally came to see the wonders of transautomatism. Similarly only after denigration of the concept of total uninhabitability and of the creative mould process will we be able to see the wonders of a new, true, and free architecture. However, since we have not yet reached even the first stage of total uninhabitability (because, unfortunately, we are not yet in a state of transautomatism) we must strive to reach that state - i.e., accepting as creative the process of mouldiness in architecture - as quickly as possible.

The apartment house tenant must have the freedom to reach from his window as far as his arms can stretch to scrape off the mortar or deface the gridwork of his building. He must be allowed to paint as far as his arms can reach - everything pink, for instance, so that from the street or from a distance everyone can see that there lives a man who distinguishes himself from his neighbors (those cooped up chickens!). He should be allowed to saw up the walls and to make all kinds of changes and to fill his room with mud to polyethylene - even if the architectural harmony of a so-called masterpiece is destroyed in the process.

Yet all rental agreement and leases prohibit this!

The time has come for the people to rebel against their confinement in cubical constructions (like chickens or rabbits in cages, a confinement which is basically alien to human nature. Such a cage or utility construction is a building alien to the nature of all three human types who deal with it:

1. The architect and/or his design have no relationship to the finished product, the building. Even the greatest architectural genius cannot either select or predict his tenants. The so called human element in architecture is a criminal fraud, especially when measurements and determination are based on the statistically-average man of the Gallup poll.
2. The brick-layer has no spiritual relationship to the building. If for example, he wants to vary (if only slightly) the construction of a wall according to his own personal concepts (if he has any), he loses his job. Even more, of course, the brick layer is usually completely indifferent to questions of innovation since he will not be living in the structure anyway.
3. The tenant has no relationship to the structure, since he has not built it, but only moved into it. His human needs (his human space) are in all probability completely different from those represented by the structure. And this unfortunate situation will prevail even if the architect and the mason concentrate on building exactly according to the specifications of the future tenant.

We will be able to speak of architecture only when architect, mason, and tenant are a unity, which in practical terms means having one person assume all three functions. Nothing else is architecture, but only a criminal act become form.

Architect/mason/tenant is a trinity just like the Holy Trinity. There is a great similarity, almost quasi-identity, of these two trinities. If this unity, architect/mason/tenant, does not exist, there can be no architecture, since the current manufactured constructions cannot possibly be construed as architecture. Man has to regain his critical creative function, without which he ceases to exist as a human being!

Also criminal is the use of the ruler in architecture, which can be easily proved, has become an instrument of decay for the architectural trinity. Perpetuating the straight line ought to be forbidden, if only on a moral basis. The ruler is the symbol of new illiteracy. The ruler is the symptom of the new decay.

Today we live in a chaos of straight lines. If you do not believe this, take the trouble to count the straight lines which surround you. And then you will understand, for it is a never-ending task.

On one razor blade I have counted 546 straight lines. By imagining a linear connection to another identical razor blade, one sees 1,092 straight lines, and, adding the whole package, there are approximately 3,000 straight lines from the same blade.

Not long ago possession of the straight line was a privilege of royalty, wealth, and learning. Today every idiot carries millions of straight lines in his pants pockets.

This imprisoning and entangling jungle of straight lines has to be cleared. Until now man has always cleared away his jungles and freed himself. But to clear a jungle one must first become aware that one is in a jungle. For jungles take from us stealthily, without the knowledge of the population. This time it is the jungle of the straight line.

We should reject any modern architecture in which the straight line or the circle have been employed, if only for a moment or if only in a conceptual way. Because of the straight line the products of design, drawing board, and modeling have become sickeningly sterile and truly senseless. The straight line is godless and immoral. The straight line is not a creative line, but simply a reproductive lie. In it there live not God and human spirit, but a mass created, brainless ant addicted to comfort.

Consequently, straight line structures (whether the line is curving, bending, hanging, or perforating) will not endure. The straight line represents a panic to stay in fashion. The straight line manifests the architect's anxiety and his desire to evolve into tachism, that is, uninhabitability.

We should be glad when rust settles on a razor blade, when a wall grows mouldy, or when moss grows over the geometric angles of a corner, because, together with microbes

and mushrooms, life thus moves into a house through this process we more consciously become witnesses of the architectural changes from which we must learn.

The irresponsible vandalism of current functional architects is well known. In the beginning functional architects simply wanted to tear down the beautiful stucco-facade house of the 1890s Jugendstil, and put up their own empty structure. I cite Le Corbusier, who wanted to destroy Paris completely in order to erect Justice, the constructions of Mies vander Rohe, Neutra, the Bauhaus, Gropius, Johnson, Le Corbusier, etc., should be torn down, for even thirty years ago they were already obsolete and morally unbearable.

However, transautomatism and those who think even beyond uninhabitable architecture are more humane in their treatment of predecessors: they want no more destruction. In order to rescue functional architecture from its moral ruin - in order to revive it - a decomposing solution should be poured over all those buildings, allowing the mould to settle.

The time has come for industry to recognize its basic mission: to pursue creative mouldiness! It is now task of industry to evoke in their technicians, engineers and directors a moral feeling of responsibility for mouldiness and critical decay should be the very basis of the principles of education.

The technicians and scholars capable of living in mould and producing mould creatively will be tomorrows aristocracy. And only after the acceptance of creative mouldiness - from which we have a great deal to learn - will a new and wonderful architecture arise.

Addendum: 1959

Today's architecture is criminally sterile. Unfortunately, the building process ceases at the very moment when man takes up residence in his domicile; ideally the building process should begin only when man moves in.

Modern architecture scandalously robs US of our humanity by its disgraceful dictates. WE are legally restrained from making any change or additions to facades, designs, or interiors, either in color, structure or masonry. Even tenant-owned buildings are subject to censorship (by regulations of the Board of Works and Lease statutes). Such regulations are characteristic of prisons, cages, and tables - all ready-made, a priori structures, for which construction is completely halted prior to prisoner or animal habitation, assuring total alienation between inhabitant and structure. This situation is not altered by the fact that the inhabitant is free to leave his domicile and move around through his city or village.

True architecture derives only form natural construction, which is organic development of a shell around a group of people. Such a construction is like the growth of child to man.

The absolute finite (drawing of a line beneath...) ill building construction is tolerable, if at all, only in monuments and uninhabited architecture. If a structure is intended to house people, the discontinuation of construction prior to habitation must be seen as an unnatural sterilization of the growing process and as such should be punished as criminal transgression.

The architect as we know him today, if he is at all capable of doing so must be allowed to construct only monumental architecture; habitable architecture is not within his range and must be forbidden him. Society does not allow a notorious poisoner or an anarchist to pursue his desires freely, and the same restraints should be imposed upon architects.

Architectural pre-planning of homes is currently highly praised, but is actually little more than planned mass murder by pre-mediated sterilization.

To walk through a European town (especially through a recently constructed sector) is to prove this shocking accusation.

There is, however, some exemplary, healthy contemporary architecture Unfortunately, shamefully little:

Gaudi in barcelona certain Jugenstil constructions the Watts Towers by Simon Rodia, near Los Angeles The slum sections of all urban centers (the so-called urban blemish) Le Palais du Facteur Cheval in the Departement de la Drome, France Peasant and/or primitive homes, whenever still hand-made

Addendum: 1964

The architects only function should be that of technical advisor, i.e., answering certain questions regarding materials, stability, etc. The architect should be subordinate to the inhabitant, (tenant, owner, lodger) or at least to the inhabitants wishes. All tenants must create their own "outer skins - they must be free to determine that shell of their domicile which faces the street.

Friedrich Hundertwasser Translated and edited by Renate Littek and Brenda Richardson

The Paradise Destroyed by the Straight Line

An ecologist without a conscience is doomed to failure, and the same is true of an artist who does not bow to the laws of nature.

The world has not improved. The dangers felt have turned into reality.

Nevertheless, today, although nothing has been done, my longstanding warnings are at last being taken seriously.

Yet there are still no lawns on the roofs, no tree-tenants, no plant-driven water purification plants, no humus toilets, no rights to windows, no duties to the trees. The essential reforestation of the town has not come about.

What we lack is a peace treaty with nature.

We must restore to nature the territories we have unlawfully taken from it. Everything horizontal under the sky belongs to nature. Everything touched by the rays of the sun, everywhere where the rain falls is nature's sacred and inviolable property. We men are merely nature's guests.

In 1952 I spoke of the civilization of make believe, the one we must shake off, myself, the first of all! I spoke of columns of gray men on the march toward sterility and self destruction.

The same year I used the term transautomation to show the way beyond the rationalism of technocrats toward a new creation in harmony with the laws of nature.

In 1953 I realized that the straight line leads to the downfall of mankind.

But the straight line is something cowardly drawn with a rule, without thought or feeling; it is a line which does not exist in nature.

And that the line is the rotten foundation of our doomed civilization.

Even if there are certain places where it is recognized that this line is rapidly leading to perdition, its course continues to be plotted.

The straight line is the only sterile line, the only line which does not suit man as the image of God.

The straight line is the forbidden fruit.

The straight line is the curse of our civilization.

Any design undertaken with the straight line will be stillborn. Today we are witnessing the triumph of rationalist knowhow and yet, at the same time, we find ourselves confronted with emptiness. An aesthetic void, desert of uniformity, criminal sterility, loss of creative power.

Even creativity is prefabricated.

We have become impotent. We are no longer able to create. That is our real illiteracy.

-Hundertwasser