Journal of Design History Vol. 16 No. 2 © 2003 The Design History Society. All rights reserved

Manuscript on Ornament[1]

Henry van de Velde
Translated by Elie G. Haddad and Rosemary Anderson

Chapter 1. The Historic Survey of Linear Ornament and its Development

It is problematic, if not impossible, to follow the destiny of linear ornament in an absolutely historical order. It would be as problematic to present a general picture in which the different phases of this evolution followed each other without interruption or presented themselves in a strict logical order.

This evolution of Linear Ornament can be followed neither in time nor in space with an absolute continuity or with method. From time to time we see a beginning, but then we fail to find any document that would enlighten us further, neither within the same culture nor in the same context; elsewhere, we see that the phases of its development either stop in full flow or find themselves thwarted by the appearance of other types of ornament, geometric or naturalistic, that overshadow them: technical, geometric or naturalistic ornaments. In yet other cases, we notice a culminating phase, an apogee whose beginnings elude our investigations.

In order to represent a continuous curve that would take account of all the intermediary phases, it would be necessary to draw freely on all the historical periods, among all peoples, and in all regions, without worrying that such bold procedures do not correspond to generally applied scientific methods.

Moreover, we only possess a limited number of purely linear ornamental forms. We have witnessed the work of the Balkan populations since the time they arose out of the misty horizons of the Stone Age. They inaugurated linear ornament as such; we would be right if we considered all such attempts at that time to be decoration that is not the result of the application of a system. Such application would manifest itself only later and in other regions, among peoples who had reached a level of culture corresponding to the invention of geometric ornament. These are the people who led a settled life on pasture lands: shepherds, who had invented the primitive industries of plaiting, weaving and wickerwork.

The knife, the chisel and the gouge, out of which line-drawing grew, are no longer the tools one manipulates in moments of leisure. Neolithic man practises the technique of his trades and thus invents geometric ornament.[2] He discovers in it sumptuosity in which he revels with pleasure and he covers every available surface with geometric ornament. With this change in the lifestyle and mentality of these new groups of people there resulted in Central Europe a displacement of ornament from the psychological level at which Paleolithic ornament was born, to the aesthetic level during the course of Neolithic civilization!

Nobody would contest the Beauty of certain geometric ornaments which are born spontaneously in wickerwork, weaving or plaiting, from the play with technique, yet we refuse to recognize simply for their sumptuousness and their decorative qualities, the Beauty of an ornamentation which would later apply these motifs, which are particular to the trades above-mentioned, to the decoration of ceramics and other surfaces on which they did not spontaneously develop from this play with technique and in tune with their materials.

Thus, from the dawn of humanity, we notice that a confusion took place, the consequences of which are still in effect. I do not think that Troglodyte man preoccupied himself with the idea of Beauty. The figures that he engraved on his weapons and tools signified something altogether different. The idea of Beauty appears to come to birth only at the point where it meets with the idea of sumptuousness, and later, with that of symbols and sentimentalities.

The idea of beauty consequently would, from the

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beginnings of the world, be conditioned by its varying links with elements that bear no relation to the pure essence and conception of ornament. We will see that in the course of the centuries, this confusion would not only affect ornament, but equally the domain of form, which would have to fight, to struggle, often to fall vanquished and to recover only for brief moments.

Let us pause; let us not lose from our sight that it would only be necessary at this moment to group the different types, to establish the phases. In the great confusion of ornaments we would only find linear ornament at certain phases. We have identified two of these: the Paleolithic period, and that in which the populations of the Balkans distinguished themselves by the invention of linear ornaments that resemble those invented by the Troglodytes of the Paleolithic period, through the evident awareness of the dynamic nature of the line.

These people were potters living in Butmir,[3] in Cucuteni. The products of Jablanica and Tordos—some pottery decoration from the 'la Têne'[4] period, found in Western Europe[5]—give us some information on what would have been the beginnings of these 'ribboned' ornaments. We should admit that those Pre-Mycenaean ornaments—to which we will return—did not have any followings.

Paleolithic Ornament[6]

All that Man would look for in the exhilaration of the line, in the exhilaration that he feels in tracing lines, the line would grant him without limits!

For him, the slightest stroke, the most elementary repetition of strokes would constitute a phenomenon, whose appearance on surfaces or objects that he had seen blank just moments before, had an intoxicating effect on him: that of a miracle; a miracle that he accomplished himself, with his own powers, with the magic of a power within himself.

At first, he only played this game for the sake of the game itself, on surfaces where the tracing could only be ephemeral: the soil, the sand!

From there, it would only be a short step before he seized a stone, threatening the rock with an armed hand. His excitement then mocked his earlier timidity!

From there, the trace became precise and had no significance except as play.

However, it is the acquisition of this knowledge that the line is the inevitable result of his armed gesture with a tool harder than the matter on which he sought to leave a trace, that led the Man of the caves to trace in the rock these contours of animals, and to decorate with paintings walls of the cave in which he settled, paintings of such amazing perfection of execution, of inspired skill and profound truth of observation, that it required multiple and irrefutable proofs in order to definitively establish the conviction that these were indeed prehistoric works, made by people from such a primitive culture!

It would seem that it was at the same epoch, at the same cultural level that Man learned about colouring materials and the particular results that their application could provoke on the skin and on objects.[7] It would be possible to conclude that the application of colour to the skin, i.e. the primitive tattooing of the skin, would equally have led to the application of colour to objects and that this latter practice springs from the same idea as that of tattooing the body. It is very important to stress this opinion as it will enlighten us on the nature of ornament which would be nothing else than a tattooing which gratifies the object with symbolic virtues, effective and propitiatory![8]

But if it were left to us to disentangle the fact that the Man of primordial times was invested with an understanding of line and colour, we would still lack clarification in this investigation on the point of departure of a technical skill that produced masterpieces from the moment it began to be practised, and on the factor which could have provoked the birth of this astonishing art, which brought together, without a doubt, painting and sculpture in these bas-reliefs or half-bosses, these round humps, these paintings on the walls of the caves where nature's cataclysmic upheavals have modelled incoherent and undecipherable forms, in seemingly perpetual movement and formation.

Yet it is precisely in the suggestion, the riddle of these bosses, these cavities animated by the shadows and the lights that were cast on their surfaces by inadequate lamps; that we see the origin of this coloured plastic art, the initial emotional factor and the explanation of the miracle. Squatting around the hearth and its open fire or around the primitive lamp, the Troglodytes saw these bosses in the rock, rocks coming alive, chasing each other, as animals do, and, according to the flickering of the flames, they took

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form.[9] A little imagination was all that was needed to add a few lines, at that moment when they felt moved to scrape the surfaces of these protrusions or to rub them with colours, to create for the miracle of the presence of these superb beings, these so constantly and intensely coveted beings, to happen, as much as the miracle of the birth of plastic polychromatic art or plastic-painting. There should be no doubt about this issue, for the determining action of the protrusions appears as the principal material factor behind the cave wall paintings. Here, the surfaces have revealed and suggested to Quaternary Man the presence of beings who moved in the depth of these mysterious troubling masses in as much as the contours, natural or accidental, of bone fragments, of the tusks of slaughtered and torn prey, killed in these caves or in the woods, have exerted their determining action on the movement and the attitudes of animals that he cut in the ivory, in the horns, and engraved on the surfaces of the caves![10]

This eloquent activity of the cave surfaces and of the form of bone fragments did not escape the attention of the informed and competent authors of the 'Caverne d'Altamira', in their search for the most precise and careful observations, even though this action did not appear to them determinative to the same degree as we have given it here.

Emile Cartailhac and Henri Breuil only observed a 'great singularity', 'a great skilfulness', 'a wonderful use' of the surfaces. They do not go as far as according them the benefit of a formal and decisive indication of the origins of figuration through the means of painting applied to the projecting surfaces, modelled by nature and scraped by the hand of Man.

These observations that they gathered in the course of their research in the various decorated caves of Fond-de-Gaume, Combarelles and Grotte de Marsoulas allow us to see to what extent they give importance to the role of the projecting surfaces in the problem of the origin of these paintings.[11]

The study of the surface paintings of Altamira seems to have led them one step further,[12] and if they allow themselves at the beginning of this study to consider that the 'use of the accidents of rocky surfaces' as an 'original procedure' to 'perfect the images', these same authors in their final chapter entitled 'Summary and Conclusions' lead us to suppose that these 'voluminous projections have, perhaps, under the play of light appeared like the backs of animals, giving thus the idea of perfecting the image with colour!'[13]

It is my firm conviction that if, by the caprice of nature, these cave surfaces had been smooth, we would not have been led to state that the origin of painting goes back to the primordial times of human painting. Instead it would have been necessary to await identical and favourable circumstances which, given the conditions in which human culture evolves in all the regions of the world where Man has appeared, would soon have presented themselves.

The suggestive surfaces were not lacking anywhere, nor in any period; the suggested elements have varied according to the desires, the covetousness, the enthusiasm and the intensity of primitive Man. In the successive periods of the Paleolithic age, we notice that those tend towards presenting the prey, the diverse animals, varying according to climatic conditions, rather than towards presenting the human body, the possessing of it and the sensual delights it offers. At other times things would be different; there is therefore no need to see in these figurations, as Carthailac and Breuil propose, cult consecrations, and in the decorated caves, temples.

However, be that as it may on a subject which I am not particularly in a position to debate, I hold to that moment of the suggestive action of surfaces, because they give us the key to the origin of the painting, of the engraving as much as to that of the ornament.

At the beginning of the world, at the time when the bumpy surfaces of walls in the caves and shelters where Man found refuge offered a spine that pulls itself, that stretches, that stands or bends itself; a stomach, a neck hanging heavily; a trunk or a tail swinging; tusks or horns that rush forward or threaten; legs flexing ready to jump, which gallop or paw the ground: these suggestions, as much as the associations of images, are so elementary that it would be safe to assume that they preoccupied the mind of Man at his most primitive state!

It is by means of motion, therefore, of a motion suggested by the outline of the rocky projections, as much as by the accidental forms of the deers' antlers and their protuberant bones, that the Troglodyte hunter achieved his skill in reproduction. And it is thus that we recognize in the representation of each of these animals—mammoth, bison, and wild horse—the sum of movements that create their actions and the line that clarifies and completes, clarifies and

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defines the action, before attempting to define the detail or the part of the body that it seeks nevertheless to represent. The figures drawn on the walls of the caves of Pair-non-Pair, near Marcamps; of Grèze in Dordogne; of Maux in Ariège; of Combarelles; on the bones, the engraved stones of the caves of Gourdau in Garonne; of Roc du Courbet; of the cave of Eyzies in Dordogne; of the Laugerie Basse; of the cave of Chafaud (Vienne); the painted figures of the cave of Altamira and those of Marsoulas in Haute Garonne; of Fond-de-Gaume, *do not evoke the various animals as they are but as they move*! One meticulous and attentive observation has followed the slightest movement, the least change in the line of these animals that appeared to an observer like silhouettes, inasmuch as every change, every new expression of straight lines or curves had its particular significance for the alert hunter who, dependent on whether the animal grazed, noticed a danger, or took flight, realized in this movement itself the basis of what his actions would be, whether he would move closer or kill!

Such a conception of the representation of living beings has led to such magnificent results that it is because of this that the engravings, paintings and sculptures of the Paleolithic period occupy such an exceptional rank in the history of art, and they have led us to pay our respects with all modesty and to place them at the dawn of this world, for that drawing, engraving and sculpture have given us the most immediate living, most sensual and perfect form!

At no other period in the history of the world was Man more naturally and wholly gifted with the genius of line drawing! I have a sense of the inappropriateness of the application of the term 'genius' to beings without culture—more or less—who passed most of their time in the darkness of caves where the remains of corpses gathered, the animal carcasses, the crushed and used bones, the ashes of various combustible materials! In fact there is nothing inappropriate in conceiving of that genius, in placing this highest degree of the human faculties at the origin of the world and of the species, since this faculty relates more to the senses than to the intellect!

Yet, the arts of drawing and those of painting and the plastic arts cannot be conceived otherwise: according to their very essence, they appeal to the senses! And it is no different with song, music and dance.[14]

They are sensory and impressionistic, and throughout the history of art, from prehistoric times until more recent times, they spread at varying distances, and we find these works of genius drawn from the same source, the pure source of a sensuality that was not yet mixed with anything intellectual!

This conception of art is one of the most fertile of this century and the last one, to which we owe Impressionism. But also, moreover, no generation has been shaken by so many successive revelations, which, one after the other, consecrated the principle of the sensual essence of the plastic arts, of painting and drawing! First it was the art of Japanese prints, then the works of the Impressionists such as Guys, Degas, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and Bonnard, then Chinese paintings and finally the numerous works of Prehistoric art, the degree of perfection of which is surprising to those of us who are not aware of it, to the point that it was left out by the incredulity of the scholars who obstinately, and for a long time, could not see in those sculpted ivories of the Dordogne caves and these paintings of Altamira anything but 'fakes'!

Between these two extreme periods of the history of art—of which Impressionism constitutes the present, and the other, the extreme limit of the past where we can find the manifestations of the art of painting and drawing, the age of the sculpted stone, the Paleolithic culture—one could only insert in between these two poles the few works and the few geniuses of the French eighteenth century, of the Flemish and Italian Renaissance, so that we see appearing before us a slightly surprising evolution of a talent that humanity has possessed to the highest degree since the beginning of time.[15]

The reasons for this decline we recognize in the fact that something foreign has come between sensation and the vision that reflects in our brain like a mirror the images it retains and is capable of reproducing through drawing, painting or the plastic arts. This foreign element is the faculty of reflection, which Professor Verworn has noted, with remarkable clarity and conciseness in his studies on the origin of art; this phenomenon he observed with the tranquillity of soul and the readiness of a scholar to submit to any truth he finds, even though it may upset the foundations on which aesthetes and professors had heretofore based the history of art!

Verworn denounced reflection as the source:

> of the deceptions that lead to the deviation of drawing from the truth of nature. While this source plays a certain role in dulling the truth of nature even in the case of

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direct copying from nature, its significance really only unfolds fully when the constant checking of the drawing through continual observation of the subject is entirely excluded, that is, when one draws from memory. In this case it is not the complex of sensory perception, but the idea, that is, the image in one's memory of it, that is reproduced. The stimulus in this case originates from the border area of the optical ideas and moves from here to the area of the corresponding ideas of hand movements. However, here everything depends on how the idea of the object in question is obtained, how much of it springs from actual observation and how much from abstraction and associative combination. The ideas that we have of individual objects are entirely dependent on the richness of our associative life, for ideas mutually influence each other through association. All our thinking, after all, rests on the associative combination of individual ideas. So the more richly the life of ideas is developed, so much greater will be the danger that the idea, that is, the memory image of an object, will be changed by associations from the most varied directions, that is by countless factors which have not sprung from the immediate, sensuous perception of the object. Here motor innervation is the resultant of countless associative processes in the large areas of ideas. In drawing, therefore, it is not the pure memory image of the object that is expressed, but everything that the draughtsman knows and thinks about the object. Thus a thoroughly ideoplastic art is developed, in contrast to a physioplastic art.[16]

The conception of a 'physioplastic' art includes the removal of any preoccupation with the 'causes' and as a result, humanity has never enjoyed such a privilege in art, except in some periods of the prehistory, in the art of some primitive peoples and in some exceptionally gifted individuals!

Some have thought it possible to include the art of children and to draw similarities between children's drawing and those of prehistoric or primitive people. Verworn has given little value to this opinion and demonstrated how the child 'thinks', adds what he 'knows' to this or that animal or object that he reproduces:[17]

> The previously discussed facts (physiological, psychological and ethnological) now also lead us to an understanding of the curious fact that the oldest art we know, Palaeolithic cave art, is such a pronounced physioplastic art, while later prehistoric art is a totally ideoplastic art. The hunters of mammoths, bison, horses, reindeer of southern France were people whose sensory life was entirely in the foreground, as with the South African hunter tribes. Their life of ideas consisted simply in the play of the immediate memory images of their sensory perceptions. There was certainly no question of pondering over the 'causes of things', indeed I am convinced that the concept of an invisible 'cause' in the sense of later speculation was completely lacking in them. In the same way the Paleolithic hunter formed no ideas or theories about things, which he perceived with his senses as just the ideas that the sensory impression directly left behind. All theorizing and speculation was completely foreign to this stage of culture, and thus the conditions for the development of an ideoplastic art were not yet present at all.

This will appear only much later:

> The Palaeolithic hunter of former days, as far as we know, did not yet have the idea of the soul with all its entourage. He did not speculate at all about things. He did not look for anything 'behind' things. He had no knowledge of metaphysics. He took account only of what he perceived. In all this he was entirely similar to the Bushman. Not a single one of all the countless phenomena that prove the existence of the idea of the soul and religious concepts in Neolithic times and later is known to us with certainty from the Palaeolithic era. No idols, no amulets, no sacred signs, no trepanation, no sacrifices, no shrines, no funerary monuments, or other such things.

This observation, which put Verworn at odds with Breuil, allowed him to conclude:

> Primitive art has all the more physioplastic characteristics, the more the abstracting, theorizing life of ideas in prehistoric times gave the concept of the soul. The religious ideas springing from this concept provided the general conditions for the development of an ideoplastic art.

This observation confirms psychologically the contrast between the general characteristics of the art of the Paleolithic culture and those of the cultures that will follow.[18]

It would have been inappropriate for me to prolong, at this point, a diversion that is more related to the history of art in general, and to aesthetics, in particular; if this parenthesis did not help in confirming, once again, that at the beginning the line had existed in all its breadth of free, varied and instinctual gestures!

Thus we can consider the Paleolithic line, mobile and changing like movement itself, variable and momentary, stretched to this point of elasticity, that it would seem that it cannot appear to us as it appears at this moment, but only for the duration of this moment itself. It has therefore hidden from life itself the secret of her mobility and transience in the

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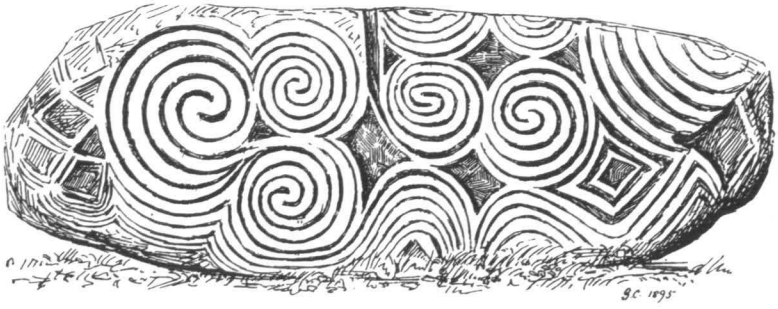

Fig 1. Slab with spiral ornament, Newgrange

transformation of her appearance. In her, as in life itself, there is no cessation, nothing stands still; what seems like a cessation in it is only a culminating point: a birth, a catastrophe, an explosion of physical and psychical forces.

As such, it is the source and the genius of drawing and even painting; as such, we will see it evolve throughout the whole history of drawing and painting, which sees a succession of periods of apogee or relative renaissance followed by periods of sudden and momentary decadence, and yet others that threaten to be endless!

Egyptian Ornament

We do not possess sufficient documentation on the prehistoric periods of Egypt and Assyria to enable us to pursue the successive stages through which the ornaments of these two great nations of High Antiquity passed before reaching the stage at which all Egyptian and Assyrian ornament seems to have been fixed.

The motifs are of a stylized naturalism that is so striking that it would appear that there never could have been a purely linear contribution, had we not discovered a constant use of the combined spiral as ornamentation. And these linear motifs are not subordinated to the caprice of an arrangement that would seek to complete with difficulty an ornamental composition. Quite to the contrary, they are the predominant elements in these compositions where the floral motifs fill the voids left between the linear structure.

The 'classical' motifs of this type of ornament date back in the case of Egyptian ornament to the period of the 'New Empire' [1] But there is no doubt that the use of the spiral, a strictly linear and dynamic element, dates back to epochs that are much earlier and could go as far back as the most remote periods of Egyptian art.[19]

If we have no doubts on the existence of this linear motif par excellence, at this most remote period of Egyptian civilization, it is because we conclude unhesitatingly that the line and its primordial linear motifs emerged in Egyptian prehistory in the same manner that we saw them appear during the most remote period of human civilization in Europe: the Paleolithic period![20]

There is no further need to construct, on the basis of a hypothesis, a theory as hazardous as that of Goodyear, at the heart of which can be found the same misunderstanding as that pointed out about the opinion of the ethnographers who accepted that the primitives had chosen or sought to stylize this or that object or animal because they had given the names of these objects or animals to certain geometric and abstract motifs. Are we so sure that it was not because the Egyptians of the Stone Age could not designate otherwise than by the word 'lotus' the primeval linear schema, born in the manner we have described in the chapter on Paleolithic ornament, and which resembled the lotus flower, and for this reason became a symbol and occupies such a place in the history of Egyptian ornament? The schema in figures 19 and 20 (Riegl) strengthens this opinion and even more ancient and rudimentary ones must have existed in the most remote period of Egyptian civilization! As such, they are strangely suggestive of an extreme dynamic intensity, which exhaust themselves in striking and complementary actions and reactions, the meaning of which can only be understood fully by those who have accepted our theory on the line and the dynamic relations of the lines among themselves![21]

Mycenean Ornament[22]

Following what has preceded, we will no longer be surprised to rediscover the spiral or any other linear motif, either in regions where there was contact

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between people or in regions where any idea of direct or indirect influence is excluded.

It would be difficult for us if we were to present a sufficient number of elements to demonstrate that the Assyrians had at any time in the development of their artistic culture anything to do with the problem of the nature of the line. What would be the reason for this? Would it be that their mathematical minds were less sensitive to the drama of the line, exhausting itself in a sequence of actions and reactions to settle finally into a balanced composition?

The few motifs in which we discern a dynamic pattern are of an obvious Egyptian origin. (Fig. 34, la bordure, Riegl) We are even more lacking in Persian linear ornament than in Mesopotamian linear ornaments. The Mycenean art brings us back to the dynamic source, to the true nature of the line and its contribution to ornament. The excavations of Tyr, of Mycenae in Argolide, of Knossos in Crete have provided us with documents that have revealed all the phases of a linear ornamentation, the beginnings of which could not but be similar to the rudimentary 'ribboned' attempts of the Neolithic pottery of Thrace and Illyria. About 3000 years before our era, linear ornamentation predominated! Among the ornaments on objects found in the tombs of Mycenae, as well as those on objects found in the palaces of Knossos and of Phaestos (2000BC), we recognize some that represent the particular characteristics of the second phase of development, in which the abstract nature of these ornaments appears to be threatened. It is obvious that it could not defend itself against the hints of lively naturalism that this curved, at times unrestrained line, was particularly predisposed to provoke.

What still appeared in Mycenean ornament as inevitable, that is the association of naturalistic elements to these curves that are predisposed to suggest such associations, appears in Cretan ornament as a willingness to accept that naturalisn had triumphed.[23]

A comparison of the gold plates found in the tombs of the Mycenean Acropolis with those of the vases of Phaestos and Knossos informs us on all that still separates these two phases of development of linear ornament—in the former, the basic roughness and severity of the ornament dominate; in the latter, elegance does not preclude the passionate excitement of the 'Middle Minoan' and the first phase of the 'Kamares Style'.

But the linear principle already threatens to fall into the background of ornamental preoccupations. We see this Cretan linear ornament assimilating the naturalistic elements with a delightful carelessness. The line gathers up these flowers like a dancer accepting homage, who then puts them into her bodice or pins them in her hair.[24]

Greek Classical Ornament[25]

In Greece, we again find an ornament whose nature and origin are clearly linear and dynamographic. Between classical Greek ornament and Mycenean ornament there was nothing but a 'twilight', 'an interruption of the normal evolution'.[26] It is in those terms that Riegl explains this in his *Stilfragen*, repeating the important theme that Owen Jones put forward in the middle of the previous century, in a contribution of the highest value with innumerable drawings, *The Grammar of Ornament*.

This interruption is provoked by the triumph of the geometric Dipylon style. It seems that Mycenean ornament attempts to reclaim its rights, by reclaiming this geometric style which was stolen from it.[27]

And at this moment, it is in the ornament of the Prehellenic vases, those of Melis (Riegl, fig. 69) and of Rhodes (Riegl figs. 70, 71) that we find its influence if not its imitation.

We have now arrived at the moment when Greek genius, in possession of all its particular qualities, will strive to create logic and harmony on which the misplaced Mycenean genius had imposed its originality! (Owen Jones, fig. 54; Riegl, figs. 115, 125, 127, 96).

In his *Grammar of Ornament*, published in 1868, Owen Jones applied to the creation of ornament 'three fundamental laws revealed to Man by Nature: 1) die Strahlung von Mutterstamm [the radiation from the mother strain]; 2) die verhältniss-mässige Einteilung des Flächenraumes [the comparative division of the surface space]; 3) die tangentenförmige Krümung der Linien [the tangential curvature of the lines]!' His belief that the Greeks of the classical period operated according to these principles corresponds to the fact that the Greeks had considered ornament as an abstraction, that they assimilated it to architecture and classified the art of ornament among the abstract arts : Dance, Music and Architecture. This belief has led Owen Jones to

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question in these ornaments a naturalistic origin and meaning:

> In the well-known honeysuckle decoration there is no expression of the striving for imitation, but rather a consideration of the principle underlying the growth of the flower; and if one carefully observes the vase paintings, one is tempted to believe that the leaves of a Greek flower first received their various forms under the [painter's] brush, according to whether the artist's hand was turned upward or downward, and so impressed a different characteristic on the form of the leaf, and that the slight similarity of this decoration to the honeysuckle was discovered only later, is much more likely than the assumption that the natural flower served as a model for the ornament.[28]

The world had progressively exhausted the healthy faculties whose vigour reacts to the suggestive action of the line force. It had exhausted them in these excesses which are as extravagant as the linear and disordered entanglements to which the repeated use of the acanthus motif had led.

Owen Jones notes that this motif, in which the Greeks had preserved all that they owed to the 'principle of growth' of leaves which is at its origin, suffered at the hands of the Romans all the affronts due to their lack of artistic sensibility. He gives as an example an ornament 'exclusively composed of curves of which one depends on the other' (fig. p. 45). In general, he only sees in this motif as used by the Romans an 'object of fabrication' whose production was entrusted to the hands of specialists, outsiders to the work of the architect, uninterested in this ornamentation.

The origin of the acanthus has brought forth a number of hypotheses from those who were not satisfied with the legend.[29] Riegl[30] cites the opinion of Fürtwängler who discovers the origin of the acanthus in the palmette of the ['aérotères'?]; he cites the opinion of Brückner who comes to the same conclusion, but who also believes that the reason behind the choice of the acanthus for the ['aérotères'?] of the funerary steles is that this wild plant grew in abundance around them.[31]

Riegl expresses reservations about this in his account. He hopes, as he says, to demonstrate that this famous motif does not owe its origin to a premeditated imitation of nature, but rather to a 'totally artistic process of development in the history of ornament!'[32]

But to arrive at this point, he bases his argument on a remark he made on the subject of the particularities of the leaf of the 'acanthus spinosa', *which are missing* in the most primitive specimens of this motif![33]

For our part, we would have looked elsewhere for the proof that the origin of the 'acanthus' motif does not lie in a slavish and premeditated imitation of nature. We believe that as in the case of the 'lotus', one should look for the existence of a linear, purely dynamographic schema, and for a naturalistic association which has spontaneously provoked the origin of the motif!

There is no need to look for this original model at the beginnings of Greek art; it could have been invented by some practising artist around the period indicated by Vitruvius in his story as being the period of the invention of Kallimachos of Corinth.[34]

There is no reason to look beyond the Roman period for ornaments in which the principle of the line-force manifests itself. At least not in those periods that mark the last centuries before the Christian era, the most complete decline of the styles of classical antiquity, with these Graeco-Roman populations, which for several centuries had assumed a civilizing and dominating role in the world.

We are so used to seeing them occupy these roles in the forefront of the world that we have difficulty in imagining that up to the frontiers of these two world centres of Athens and Rome, and beyond, in regions that stretch from the Balkans to Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, lie settled populations of which the antique world was totally unaware.[35]

Yet it is in these regions, among these peoples, that we will go in search of the currents that came out of the source from which sprung, at the remote stone age, the untimely gesture of the potters of Butmir and Cucuteni.

Celtic Ornament[36]

None of what was revealed by the Hallstadt site would recall in any way the emotions that gave primeval Man such a strong rapport with the line. These potteries surpass neither the level of those that date back to Neolithic times, nor those that we know through having cited them when discussing the invention of the earthen bowl, marred from the very beginning by the decision to imitate the woven basket, where are derived these incised orna-

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ments that take the form of notches simulating flexible woven stems!

We have to wait for the time when Hoernes locates 'the awakening of the West', which will set in motion these peoples passionately devoted to all the artistic trades, which they had learned to practise, and which reach their apogees in Celtic art and the La-Têne period! The field of research is vast, the data on the causes of this awakening are rather imprecise. We are inclined to summarize them all in one way, and it is that of the nature of these primordial beings, in possession of all their faculties, which allow them to draw their creative force and talents of invention directly from the essence and meaning of everything. The antique world had exhausted these faculties. What a contrast between the Roman ornaments that we examined, on the one hand, and the Celtic ornaments as well as those on the vases of Western Europe from the La-Têne period! The vases found in Spain, in France, in the countries beyond the Rhine and western Switzerland all the way to Bohemia.

These are linear ornaments drawn from the Paleolithic source of Butmir, etc. . . . (fig. II p. 567, Hoernes) and evolving in phases as we observed in Crete and Orgolide! (fig. 3, p.567, Hoernes).[37]

As for the Celtic linear ornaments, it was predictable that they would occupy an important place, if not the most important, next to the Oriental Arabesque, in this quick survey of the history of linear ornament. The spirals, the combined spirals, appeared from the beginnings of Celtic decoration, as well as from the beginning of Prehistoric ornament. They are identical, those of the Paleolithic period to those of the decorations we can see in the museums of Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo;[38] (fig. p. 59, R. Allen) identical to those we find engraved on the stones of Trumulus in Newgrange (fig. p. 48, 49 Romilly Allen [1]) and to those of the Troglodytes as well as those of the Egyptians and the Myceneans. (fig. p. 58, R. Allen).

During the period that extends from the Bronze age to the first part of the Iron age, Celtic ornament is purely linear. The line can hold its own in any combination. It spreads out and undulates like a rippling banner, it makes conquests and sounds fanfares. It tells us the epic story of these new tribes coming down from the North to invade the more fertile regions and to destroy the might of Rome.

Celtic ornament develops in proportions that have no equal except in the violence of Maori decorations! In the course of the fifth century of the Christian era, Celtic decoration surprises us by associations of a new kind. They are borrowed from nature: heads and limbs of animals.[39] They appear at the ends of lines or where, at some places, they meet and connect.[40] Sophus Müller considers that they had borrowed them from the decorative animal representations of the Romans. But he is anxious to explain that this ornamentation was not a copy 'sondern wurde im Gegenteil von Grund auf neu geshaffen' [but, on the contrary, was newly created from scratch].[41]

It is true that Celtic decoration at this phase of its development borrows from nature only to deform what it has borrowed. The naturalistic ornament was unable to resist the whirlwind of forces that assailed it. These forces penetrate through it and incorporate it in the ensemble of forms of an ornamental pattern.[42]

It is surprising how this, more than any other, accentuates the relationship and the play of complementarities and the dynamographic structure of the motif and the composition.

W. Worringer, who loses no opportunity of putting forward his abstraction theory, uses the citation of the above-mentioned Danish scholar. Worringer goes even further than Müller and contests that the denominations 'tales of dragons and snakes' should be the least appropriate; he affirms that they are 'misleading', as much as 'originally no one had any idea of reproducing any model found in nature!'[43] The same author says later:

> The same applies for the animal decoration of almost all other styles, whether one cites Graeco-Roman, Arabic or medieval decorative art. Every time, it is not the natural model that is depicted, but certain peculiarities in the formation of animals, for example the relationship of the eyes to the nose or beak, or the relationship of the head to the rump, or of the wings to the body, etc. With these relationships, these peculiarities of animal formation, people enriched their store of forms of linear structure. That in this process the memory of a model in nature was no longer directly active is best proved by the fact that there were no scruples about combining various motifs abstracted from different animals. It was only the later naturalism that made these structures into the well-known fabulous creatures that appear in all branches of decorative art. Fundamentally these are not the products of the imagination, and by no means exist in the imagination of the peoples in question, as they have been frequently interpreted, but they are the pure product of linear abstract tendencies!

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Worringer discovers in these ornaments 'a searching and striving' that carries them beyond the 'abstract calm and exclusiveness'. He will conclude his thoughts by declaring that 'Here, as it were, only the material for abstraction is given, not abstraction itself.[44] This laborious, unclear and apparently arbitrary linear method of decoration would never have satisfied the artistic Oriental peoples!'

So from this can we really conclude that the oriental people had realized in the Arabesque the Absolute 'abstraction'?

The Arabesque[45]

The theory of the line-force is the only one that makes it possible to understand the nature of the Arabesque and its real meaning. Until now, and probably from the first moment that 'a Saracen Arab decorator who, when questioned on the signification of certain repetitive motifs in the Arabesque, answered in the manner of a primitive who had no other answer: this motif is a leaf, this one a flower—up to that moment the origin and significance of this decoration would not have been clarified.

Riegl, Owen Jones and other more recent authors—Racinet, G. Marçais, . . . —favoured a more naturalistic contribution. Riegl declared that the Arabesque does not make use 'of absolutely naturalistic reproductions'; and he sees in their 'stylization', 'a desired and conscious abstraction!'

'The lack of respect of the higher rules of strictly symmetrical configuration' leads Riegl not to classify the Arabesque among the 'geometric ornaments'! He considers the Arabesque as 'an ornament of vegetal stems'! Those are motifs similar to those (fig. 139 a.b.c), which the opinion of Riegl seems to confirm. He identifies the 'vegetal habitus'. In (e.f.g.) he identifies flowers[46] (see Owen Jones).[47]

Racinet, in his *L'Ornement polychrome*, admits some reservations about this naturalistic contribution. He remarks that 'in the primitive Arabic style—not yet mixed with the Persian, we do not find the flower strictly speaking, but rather forms that resemble it and appear directly inspired by nature.'

On the subject of the relationships between these motifs and the foliage and the tracery, it is appropriate to note that, according to Riegl, 'the lines that move according to a rhythm are the most agreeable solution to the problem of connecting these motifs'; according to Racinet, these moving lines 'constitute the structure of a constructed ornament'! And that this 'structure' was a game for the geometric minds of the Arabs.

Here we are close enough to the purely linear nature that we champion. Racinet takes a step further in this direction. He notices that these motifs—at least as hybrids—'are not only born from the windings in order to conclude them, they form an integral part of them' (as Owen Jones remarked in his *Grammar of Ornament*); they do not interrupt the linear network; they extend it by enlarging it momentarily![48]

Figures: See *Manuel d'art Musulman*—George Marçais. Ed. Picard, Paris
Reproduce Figs. Pages 76, fig. 41 (page 77)
development of complementaries
id. II et F (page 170)
Fig. 95 (florets and palms) [2–3]
Fig. 96 (last one to the left)

In G. Marçais's *Manuel d'art Musulman*, we find reproductions that will allow us to dissect some of the most characteristic motifs in order to establish the substance-force and the unique contribution this brings to the definitive aspect of these motifs. Georges Marçais makes a great effort to give a complete historical account of the Arabesque. He studies it in all the Islamic countries. He admits the flora, as an element of décor, 'a very conventional flora which takes little account of nature.' But he admits a duality of elements in the Arabesque: the motif and what he calls, erroneously, at first 'the support of the flower, the stem; the branch'![49]

They are represented, a little further on, as 'geometric elements', 'schematics of Arabesques', to which are added vegetal forms that fill the voids,[50] or even 'elements particular to the Arabesque'.[51]

Repro fig. 245 (pg. 415)
fig. 246 (pg. 416) (Almorade Palms) [4]
fig. 247 (pg. 416) (florets)
fig. 345 (tome II—pg. 635) 'Symmetrical tracery'
fig. 456 D & C (Double palms)

The arguments that we have just analysed are based on appearances. There are no facts—in my opinion—other than in the explanation of the appearance of these motifs through the method of the line-force, of the law of complementarities.[52]

Conclusion[53]

['You will realize that we are not in a position to accept unreliable definitions, and that it would not be difficult

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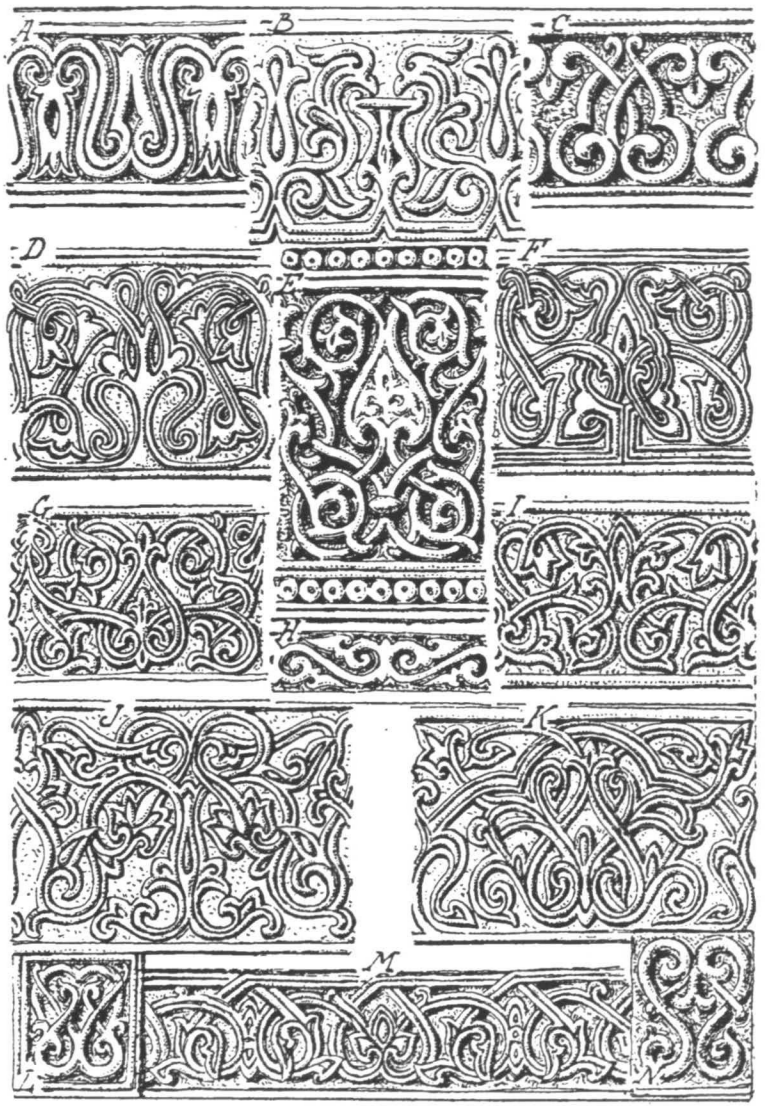

Fig 2. Floral decoration (Kairouan Marçais)

for us to explain the origin of all the motifs of the Arabesque by the virtue of the dynamic line, the law of complementarities, and to categorize the Arabesque among the structuo-linear and dynamic ornaments.

The point we have arrived at is the conclusion of this historical survey of Linear Ornament.

We can overlook the ornament of the Renaissance, that of the Baroque; because it consists of a vegetation that blossoms without moderation, under a fanciful flowering creating a restless line. It abandons itself to convulsive movements. It will appear to ascend like a missile without aim, without function other than, it seems, to create thousands of stars to crackle like fireworks around it, the "rococo" which intensifies the blaze even more.

In the Empire ornament, all vigour is suffocated, every flame is extinguished. Ornament becomes emblem and the symbolic Roman ideology is revived.

Compressed as this historical exposé is (forgiving the omission of Byzantine, Tuscan, Indian and other decoration . . .) we could not be allowed to omit any decoration as important as that of the Skeles, i.e. these ornaments that the Japanese of all times have inscribed

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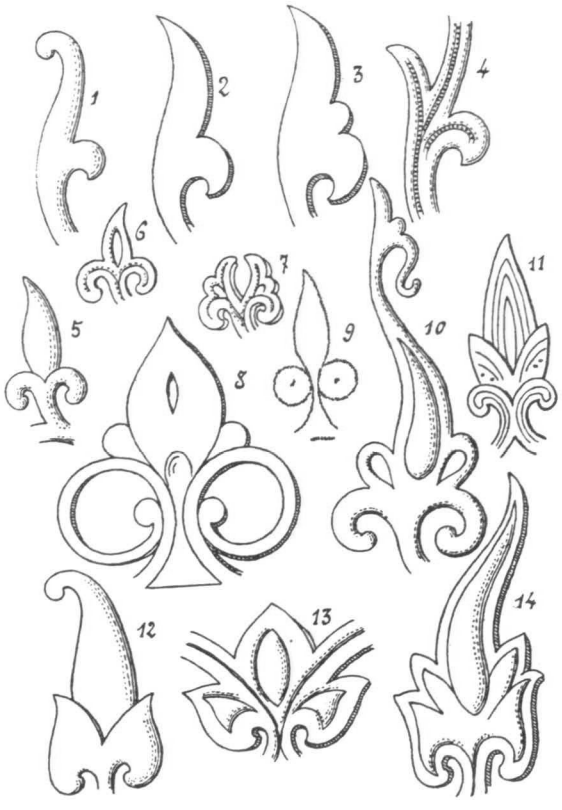

Fig 3. Studies of Palms and Florets (Marçais)

in a circle on any object that offered a circular surface for decoration. In their most primitive aspect, that is, deprived of any association with naturalism, the Japanese Skele is the perfect example of a linear dynamographic composition. The linear image in such a Skele



Fig 4. Palmes Almohades (Marçais)

is a function of the structure of the framework, of the support intended to retain the contour of the surface in the form of a perfect circumference. The combined power of one multiple "complementary" lines will ensure the circle retains its form.

It is consistent that we, who have explored in depth the nature of the line, cannot conceive of it *without* the presence of this framework ornament that can only exist by means of the circle in which it is contained, in as much as the circle would not exist once its structure, its support, i.e. its ornament, is removed.

Would these primitive Skeles be all that remains of a primitive, prehistoric Japanese art? We know other examples than these, but they are hybrid compositions, composed of a structuo-linear and dynamographic pattern with naturalistic associations.

. . .

These motifs that we know at present are:
1) the identical psychological reactions prompted by the image of the line, the line-force, and found in all periods with all peoples;
2) the inevitability of the complementary action in the presence of the reaction represented in all curved lines;
3) the structural and organic nature of ornament; an ornament determined by the form or the surface on which it has chosen its place.']

Notes

1 This text—translated into English and published for the first time—is basically the final version of the Manuscript on Ornament, written in French and found in the collections of the *Bibliothèque Royale Albert I* in Brussels, Belgium under the main file FSX 1269.

I have compiled the various fragments from the main file, and added where necessary section headings to clarify the sequence established by the author.

In translating this document, I have also tried to remain faithful to the text, even at the expense of keeping sometimes complicated structures and ambiguous paragraphs, which, if anything demonstrate the author's personal approach to the construction of the arguments and development of the thesis. The only modifications that I allowed myself to make are rare corrections to the vocabulary and occasionally to the grammar, where it was obvious that the author made unintentional mistakes, and where the corrections were necessary to understand the sentence or words, without changing the intended meaning.

All footnotes to the text are by van de Velde, except where indicated—I have added certain footnotes between brackets where necessary to point to other variations of the text, as they appear in previous manuscripts [files FSX 1270 to 1272], and which can now shed additional light on the construction of this text. E. Haddad

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2 Hoernes, in his book *Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa*, expands upon the subject of *woman's collaboration* in primitive industries and declares that: 'So if we find other hands at work in the Neolithic period than in the Palaeolithic, then this is perhaps because a large and important part of industrial work has moved from one sex to another. We may presume, however, that the primary stage of art, where it ruled, owed its development to the *masculine hand* and that the *feminine hand* is a special machine which works in a different way from the first-mentioned one.

Probably the more finely developed and graduated organization of innervation and muscular activity of the female eye and the female hand is *one of the essential factors in the creation of geometric ornament*, and thus the abrupt transition from the realistic to the geometic peculiarities of the two sexes could be explained. An inner *psychological* factor is now added to this outer psychological one!

Geometric ornament, from all we see of it with our eyes and under[stand of its]origin and original meaning . . the domestic spirit of the woman, pedantically loving order and at the same time superstitiously considerate . . It is, regarded purely aesthetically . . . with certain limits . . but in its limited nature healthy and capable—diligence and outward daintiness helpful manner the impression of the *female nature* in art. The conservative and hieratic character is of the same, even though the latter is perhaps secondary, is connected with it!'

3 [Bosnia-Hercegovina]

4 [A name given to later form of Hallstatt, as it existed in Central Europe from 400 BC to Caesar's conquest]

5 Finistère, p 567. Hoernes.

6 [This whole section was not located in the final manuscript file. I could not determine whether it was the author's final intention to remove it or simply an archival error]

7 Carthillac and the Abbé Breuil, in their famous work on the 'Cave of Altamira', mention that 'in all the deposits of the Renne period were found, among the spread-out stones and bones, the debris of coloured stones in more or less large quantities and the tools used to prepare and use colour.' There is not, according to these authors, 'a distinction to establish, in this regard, between the most ancient deposits and those of more recent date'; they are aurignacians, others solutreans, and magdaleneans! The Troglodytes collected them and in the excavations were found fragments of ochre or limonite 'diversely scraped, sometimes cut sharply, like a pencil': grinders, mills and mortars! The Abbé Breuil described and illustrated tubes 'formed of metatarsals of reindeer well decorated with geometric motifs containing ochre'! The mixing of the paste appears to have been worked on bones or flat stones, or even in large shells 'with the means of spatulas'!

8 Notes on the subject of the virtues of tattooing . . . Grosse Section Kosmetik; Yrjo Hirn, Section . . . ; Hoernes; Wundt . . .

9 ['elles *ont pris corps*', in the original French]
'The two or three lamps found in the deposits of our historic sites, including the fine and beautiful specimens from Mouthe, are precious because they furnish *positive evidence!* In addition, we have some valuable ethnographic evidence. The Greenlanders, when they came into contact with European civilization, had in their caves, which they built themselves and which were closed all winter long, as many as 20 lamps similar to those of Mouthe, and in which they burned the dogfish oil. A little dried moss, cut very fine, was placed in thin layers on one side of the cavity and lighted. The lamp burned as long as the moss lasted, and gave out no smoke.'
Section Résumé et conclusions, 'Caverne d'Altamira' (page 232) [Carthillac et l'Abbé Breuil]

10 'The available surfaces are wonderfully exploited and the animals depicted are adapted with astonishing ingenuity; of the two equally, the outcrops and angles of the rock or protuberances of the reindeer wood here give a suggestion of heads like small round bosses, finished off with only the minimum of strokes!'
Section L'art des objets mobiliers et des parois des cavernes. (138) [Carthillac et l'Abbé Breuil]

11 Grotte Fond-de-Gaume (page 25):
'Sometimes the artist has taken advantage of natural protrusions in the rock to accentuate (?) certain parts of the animal.'
Grotte de Combarelles:
'Sometimes a natural *projection* in the rock, used to create the figure, *is also accentuated and shaped!*'
Grotte de Marsoulas: 'Sometimes even carved images are *completed* by including the natural shapes of the rock; thus they verge on bas-relief.'

12 'The *use* of the actual surface of the rock to *finish* pictures, we have already seen at Marsoulas. Altamira shows us, in the paintings, the *best examples* of this original procedure!' (page 63). Page 63 Section Les premiers habitants, les gravures et les fresques, 'Caverne d'Altamira'.

13 'We have studied and described with care all this technique (of wall painting). We have emphasized the *singular character* of this ceiling. There are enormous projecting masses, which, *perhaps*, in the play of light, resembled the backs of animals, *thus promoting the idea of perfecting the image* with colour. The adaptation of the paintings to these accidents of the rock face has been very skilful, moreover the drawings, seen in isolation or as a whole constitute a remarkable piece of work.' Caverne d'Altamira (page 231)

14 Verworn has characterized the most ancient period of the world, the Neolithic, as 'das Zeitalter des sinnlich-impressionistischen Geistes' (the age of the sensual-impressionistic spirit)

15 Hoernes, *Natur und Urgeschichte des Menschen* Section Die Kunst Die einzelnen Künste auf der untersten Kulturstufe (Art. The individual arts at the lowest stage of culture):

'Visual art thus does not come into being from some supernatural inspiration granted to the "divinely favoured" artist, but by a natural process from a disposition of the spirit, the hand and the eye, which within certain limits are more frequently met among primitive people than among civilized people.

The disposition of the hand arises among primitives from the varied use of this organ, which we mostly use only in a one-sided way. The disposition of the eye consists in an ability to see [sharply?] and to see more than we are used to see in things externally . . .' (vol II, page 553)

To support the opinion that primitive peoples possessed such talent 'to produce rapidly characterizing drawings', he cites the observations of Richard Andrée (Das Zeichnen bei den Naturvölkern, of Stanley, of von der Steinen, Irving Rosse, Wallace, on the subject of the natives Wagandas, the Indians of South America, the Papous Eskimos.

16 'Zur Psychologie der primitiven Kunst' (page 18)

17 'This childhood of art is far from being the art of a child!' Gabriel de Mortillet (Le Préhistorique, p. 416)

18 This contrast is rediscovered in the art of primitive people: 'All the peoples among whom the imagination of the soul and

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religious ideas have overgrown their whole lives, such as the Negroes, the Indians, the South Sea Islanders and so on, show us an extremely ideoplastic art. The less influence this area of imagination has upon the actions and thoughts of the peoples, the greater extent to which the character of art becomes physioplastic. Among the Bush people, in so far as they stay remote from contact with their civilized neighbours, religious ideas are apparently totally absent. Admittedly, for foreigners such things are very difficult to understand with certainty. But if they should be present only in the form of suggestions, they have in any case not the slightest influence on the thoughts and actions of the people. Accordingly the art of the Bush people is an almost exclusively physioplastic art.' [Verworn]

19 See Flinders Petrie. This author reproduces the motif found on the objects of the XI and V dynasties. [William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) was a prominent Egyptologist, with a number of publications, among them *Egyptian Decorative Arts* (1895), *Egyptian and Conscience in Ancient Egypt* (1898), *Egyptian Architecture* (1900) and *A History of Egypt*, in multiple volumes (1913–1924).]

20 This opinion is in flagrant contradiction with the theory defended by W. G. Goodyear, in his *The Grammar of the Lotus: A New History of Classic Ornament as a Development of Sun Worship*, 1881. This author observes that the spiral is an 'original element' among the ornaments. According to him, it is derived from the 'lotus' motif, as in all others: *all* the ornamental motifs of Antiquity. [See footnote on Goodyear in Chapter 3.]

21 We know of schemic figures that go back to the first dynasties, in which the lotus '*carnes*' Horus and the sun '*carnes*' the 'Sun Hawk' (see Flinders Petrie). It is in *function* of the dynamic pattern that we find often in the volute And first of all in the Cypriot and Doric capitals. (Fig. 41 Riegl et fig. .)

22 [I have added this section heading for clarity and sequence of text]

23 'When wanting to enrich his repertoire, he began *by turning towards the world of living things* what he first tried were molluscs, with long sinuous tendrils which reminded him of the curves he loved; to copy them, he scarcely needed to change his habits of drawing Once his attention was taken in this way, he went on to draw other shell-like objects, then insects whose wings and antennae offered him the curves necessary for his shapes. He found these also in the flexibility of plant stems and in the opening-out of the blossoming corolla!' [Perrot et Chipiez] (p. 997, vol VI 'La Grèce primitive'—L'art mycénien.

24 Here we have something missing. No 2—Linear Ornament from Crete and the Argolide—in Greece. Its future in Hellenistic lands. See Owen Jones and connect it to the following text.

25 [I have added the section heading for clarity and sequence of text—EH]

26 Riegl, p. 127. Mycenean.

27 [Here an earlier text adds some more details to this section:

'In the chapter that Riegl devotes to classical Greek ornament, he states that the interruption of the *normal* evolution of Mycenean ornament provoked an eclipse. It facilitated the arrival of geometric ornament, the "Dipylon" which is not wholly an ornamentation that uses wisely all the geometric motifs that were successively enriching the decorative inheritance by inventions made in certain branches of the industry of art: plaiting, weaving and basketwork. "Dipylon" ornament is more exactly a schematic, geometric arrangement, dividing the surface into bands with motifs superimposed. This arrangement itself prevents any spontaneous, organic expression of line; eliminates all possibility of an organic framework.

From then onwards, "Dipylon" seized on all these motifs for the decoration of classical Greek vases. 'If it was necessary to provide fresh proof, Riegl specifies, that the supplanting of dynamographic Mycenean ornament by this geometric ornament, "Dipylon" was a step backwards, the Greeks themselves proved this, since they abandoned it, as soon as they noticed the impossibility of achieving anything whatsoever with this style, to return to the source of their greatest motifs: *the East.*' (FSX 1271)

28 *The use of the brush has considerably influenced the aspect of line*; and the fact itself that the brush is naturally adapted to being able to thicken the line, something which the chisel or graver cannot do, has not played an insignificant part in increasing the number of imaginative associations which can be brought to line drawing!

Mycenean ornament abounds in motifs that grow spontaneously from the lively manipulation and play of the brush! The motif, commonly called ivy leaf, that of tentacles of argamantes [–] or the "Fuler" of the . . and those of starfish (fig PetCh p. 922) etc. belong to this category.

However, it is in the area of classical Greek ornament that we shall find the most convincing argument for a demonstration that the technique of the brush plays a part as decisive in the origin of ornamental motifs, as the dynamic arrangement and striking structure of lines constituting these motifs. But it is not until we have shown in the second part of this work, the theory of the complementarity of line and that of the reciprocal action of lines between themselves, that we can usefully conclude this demonstration. These ornaments, at present, will serve as much as others to exemplify this theory, the theory of the dynamic nature of line and its structural function in decoration!

29 The fable told by Vitruvius and which relates to his origin and to that which might have provoked it: the sculptor Kallimachos of Corinth is too well known for us to report it here.

30 (pages 212, 213)

31 Brückner, A;a,o 82, cité par Riegl.

[Another version of this text is slightly different:

'. . . He quotes that of Brückner who confirms his opinion, but is more reticent himself! He hopes, he says, to persuade that this "famous motif does not have its origin in a premeditated image of nature, but rather to a process in the first place artistic which would be developed in the frame of a purely historical evolution of ornament". (213) And to attain this end, he points out in particular that the most striking characteristics of "the acanthus pinosa" which could have served as a model was absent from primitive examples of the motif. (Riegl, 218).'] [FSX 1271]

32 Riegl, p 213.

33 Riegl concludes that the 'acanthus' ornament is the sculptural transposition of the palmette on a cubic form. (p. 218)

34 [In an earlier version, the following part followed in the text:

'Riegl neglected to state the contradiction which must have distanced the Greeks of this classical period from a geometric ornament which was inorganic and inanimate, while in their architecture they showed a sensitivity which—for the first time in the history of architecture—reacted visibly to the dynamic action of line.

Line *animates* the Greek building: the Temple: we perceive in all the elements to which it has contributed, the conflict between the construction of the building and the materials

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which determine the shape of all these elements according to how much they are called upon to act with the weight or to react by resisting it.

It is the sensitivity that urged the Greeks to have recourse to a series of tricks or subterfuges. The curve of the column, the bulge of the entablature, and the curvature of the stylobate.

It is this sensitivity which recognised in architecture all the importance of the power of line which *must* prevail—sooner or later—in geometric ornament, and to invent a sufficient ornament, one which will be of the *same* nature as an architecture whose essential, aesthetic principle was to conceive the expressive line, that is to say, structuo-linear and dynamic.

So, we see disappear from the fifth century onwards, the Greek ornament "Dipyon" and will see the appearance of a ornament which is intimately allied with the linear ornament of the Homeric era and the fabulous Heroes installed in the fortresses of Mycenae and Tyrinth.

However, in the meantime, the frenzy we have noted in Mycenean ornament seems to have calmed down. The practice of "Dipylon" ornament must have contributed to this settling down. Furthermore, the motifs that we find "after the eclipse" on the ceramics of Rhodes for example are infinitely more reticent.

These linear ornaments belong to an intermediary phase between those of mythic (or archaic) Greece or Rome and those of classical Greece. We [had?] not rather reminded ourselves of the importance of recognising in all the motifs that we have seen on Cretan vases, on Mycenean vases, as well as on those of the islands in the Aegean Sea, the use of the brush and the natural consequences that this had on the physiognomy of line and on the linear motif.

The handling of the brush, the technique of painting with the brush provokes spontaneous "downstrokes" and "upstrokes". Yet a linear composition which sets the downstrokes and upstrokes against each other, which delights in the game special to this technique with the brush, lends itself much more to associations; multiplies the occasions for linking naturalistic forms to these fluid lines which separate and gather themselves together again.

We are brought up against the phenomenon of associations which without great effort transform purely linear sketches into "ivy leaf" motifs or "tentacles of argoncentes" [*sic*] of the Myceaneans. (Riegl p. 176)

(Note: Owen-Jones: 'If we take particular note of painted Greek vases, we are tempted to believe that the petals of a Greek flower must owe their diverse shapes to brush strokes—according to the idea that a brush stroke was directed either up and down or down and up—so that the resemblance they can have with ivy leaves (common in Mycenean decoration) or with that of some other plant was not recognised until after the event, is much more probable than the fact that a natural flower served as a model.' (page 33 fig. 33)

We consider that the connection remains unsure; that Greek painters only approach nature enough to evoke associations with plants. (Owen Jones plate XX)

These approaches were sufficient for Owen Jones to formulate his theory of "the three fundamental laws" to which he will make further reference—according to this theory, it is to the phenomenon of plant growth that the Greeks may have borrowed the three laws they applied for the creation of their decorative motifs.

1) The plant stems from a central point.
2) Its development is accomplished by a regular arrangement of branches.
3) The branch structure is a succession of tangents.

The conviction of the English historiographer of ornament is that the Greeks consciously applied these three laws of the growth of a plant. It led them not to doubt the predominance of the abstract element of nature in the invention of classical Greek ornament!

However, he could not deny the naturalistic appearance of the Corinthian motif of the *acanthus leaf*, but, at least, he will try to stress "all that the motif *owes* to the principles of plant growth"!

This submission to the fundamental principles of classical ornament provoked his generosity He will not condemn this Corinthian decoration and will not wax indignant against its use—which, however, provokes decadence in ornamental Greek sculpture—except when he is brought to take note that the Romans, no longer observing these laws, "have denatured the motif and have made of it a vulgar fabricated object"] (FSX 1271)

35 They are mentioned by Hecatus of Milet in 509 BC; by Therodus half a century later; by Plato after a similar period of time. The latter calls them Celts, Scythes, Iberians and Thracians . . . (cited by Romilly Allen, *Celtic Art in Pagan and Christian Times*)

36 [I have added the section heading for clarity of text]

37 'The style of Iberian vases depends, however, less on outside influences than on an inner development, which led to similar results among the Celtic-Iberians of the second to fourth centuries BC, as it did many centuries earlier among the inhabitants of the Aegean cultural area.' (Hoernes, p. 566)

38 See *Monographs of the Bronze Age*, A. P. Madsens, the books of Montelins and J. H. A. Worsaae; the transactions of the Danish and Swedish archaeological societies. (Cited by Romily Allen)

39 'Certain animal forms, domestic animals, sacred animals, sacrificial animals, ordinary hunting animals or creatures of the imagination or religious ideas.' (Sophus Müller)

40 See Salin, *Die altgermanische Tieromamentik* (pages 271, 285, 313).

41 '*It can clearly be seen how the animal heads, at first by quite minor additions, came into being, [by] development into given forms and fields!* Presumably this began with the Gothic tribes in southern Russia and Hungary; but this style quickly became widespread [? text missing here] the later fully developed animal ornament, after the time of the migration of peoples, forms a common possession of the Frankish, Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon tribes of eastern Europe.' (S. Müller, 175)

'This peculiar animal ornamentation became fully established in the north, but as with earlier artistic creations from abroad, it was nationalized in the north and handled with singular power and certainty . . .' (S. Müller, 184)

42 [Another text that was actually part of a previous manuscript attaches itself here:

'And it is striking how this one, more than all that we have learned to know, accentuates the connections and the game of complementarities and lends weight to the dynamic structure of the motif and of the composition . . .

'one can clearly see how by minor additions, slight deviations, these heads of animals insinuate themselves between the lines in the blank spaces . . .' wrote *Sophus Muller* (p. 175)

It could well be that the usage was first established in Hungary and southern Russia, it must have spread rapidly, above all after the period of the population migrations, to become a common link for all the peoples of Western Europe, Franks, Merovingians, and Anglo-Saxons. It is in the North

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however that this ornament attained its highest degree of brilliance and perfection. Celtic participation in linear ornament was considerable. It cannot be denied that it also influenced Roman and Gothic. But we can note that Latin and Roman influence will rapidly extinguish the linear elements of this Celtic ornament and that Roman and Gothic ornamentation, even more, will evolve towards the exclusive use of naturalistic floral and plant motifs.

And, having reached this point in the historic expose it appears to us that, for the second time, we see a flagrant contradiction between the nature of the ornament and that of architecture.'

[This second case is in reference to the first case with the Greek classical period]

No architecture has been in its nature *more dynamic* than Gothic architecture. In all the elements of Gothic construction is manifested an organic function which relies on strength—the strength of the materials which press with all their weight, the power of the construction which resists them. Gothic architectural line is imbued with a force which appears to triumph—it is in the astonishing upward surge to the sky—or so it seems—of these vaults of naves of cathedrals and the arrow-shafts spurting from their towers!

And at the same time, we see the ornamental line lose all dynamic thrust and decoration submit to a scrupulous reproduction of the flora of our countries. (Helz [?] fig. 6 taf. 137)

If it happens that we are sometimes drawn towards these ornaments, it is because by some sumptuous and imposing stylisation, it reminds us of its eastern source Of this East, with which Venice was in constant contact, Venice which was in the Middle Ages the hyphen between east and west! And it is in the east that we shall find the seat of the line-force that will be revived thanks this time to Muslim culture!'] (FSX 1271)

43 W.A. à F 66

44 Worringer (116)

45 [The text that follows on the Arabesque was filed under FSX 1270, and not with the final manuscript. It is hard to believe that van de Velde himself would have left this important section out of the 'historique' of ornament. My belief is that it was misplaced, as were other fragments.]

46 [Another fragment from FSX 1270, where there is another commentary on Riegl's definition of the arabesque:

'This conclusion allows for the possibility of classing the arabesque with linear decoration? Precisely the case.

The argument of Riegl in this case . . superficial It states that the arabesque is not a geometric ornament because . . . it has to borrow its motifs even if by the most convoluted means. He later recognises the rudimentary traces of vegetable origin in the 'leaflike . . . erskeen [*sic*]' (263) fig. 139.a.b.c

It is only by means of the theory of line that we explain in the second part of the book that we can refute this argument (?) of Riegl.

For the moment it must suffice for us to recall our understanding of the line-force and set ourselves to thinking that all movement of lines in the arabesque can . . . like . . . ? Organic, which appear such as they are in a more striking fashion . . . more striking than the ? of Riegl tend towards ['patterntising, geometrisirung, abstraction [patternizing, geometricizing, abstraction] . . . .(267).

Among the arabesque motifs, Riegl tends to recognise flowers (fig. e.f.g., fig. 139). The figure 0 (. . . 139) is an example of these motifs shown dividing into two by . . . ? given in flowers. This symmetrical division is quite particular to eastern decoration.

It is a commonplace to attribute to eastern people the need for abstraction and to bring this need to . . (see Worringer p. 51 + 81)

The arabesque is 'the plant . . .' of the Saracen era. At the time that Riegl formulated this definition, this thought was far from being shared by everyone. We must not lose sight of the fact that Riegl means by "Ranke . . ." this "line of Beauty", this "rhythmically moving line . . in many motifs.

What appears to us hazardous in his definition is the word "plant" "vegetal"! And the proof that Riegl gives us of the naturalistic origin of the arabesque is *more* than *uncertain*.

He wants to recognise firstly that [naturlisteschen haalbildungen . . . wesen . . ewussi absrakte.' [*sic*] (268). But as these motifs disobey 'superior rules' of a strictly symmetric configuration, Riegl does not want ot consider them as 'geometric ornaments' and his conclusion is 'that a concept . .' (261)] [FSX 1270]

47 [It seems that van de Velde eliminated here an additional text elaborating further Owen Jones's interpretation:

'Owen Jones only accords a limited part to the imitation of nature—he explains this by a sort of compromise thanks to which the Arabs, as well as the Turks and the Moors, sought to satisfy both their inclination towards appreciating the charms of nature, and the precepts of their religion which strictly forbade them from reproducing natural things. "The Arabs and the Moors" he said "create their decorative motifs according to the law of nature, that is to say, the laws of growth. But they *strive to avoid strict imitation of nature*. The content themselves with *borrowing* from nature its laws without trying to "copy", as that is practised today.' (Owen Jones, 77)

G. Migeon [*sic*]—in his *Manual d'art Musulman* (Manual of Muslim Art) states for his part that the Persians 'have few scruples in transgressing the law of the prophet and have not heeded the prohibition to represent living forms ' And he invokes, rightly in this case, Persian miniatures!

Owen Jones recognises in arabesque—whether Arabic, Turkish or Moorish, 'the law of growth of the plant to which he had already attached such importance in classical Greek ornament . . .

But it is above all when Owen Jones gives us to understand that there is a powerful cohesion between the lines of an arabesque, that we are more disposed to listen to him He could not foresee—since the theory of the power of line I have outlined was not formulated before I did it—that this cohesion came from this equilibrium between the actions and the reactions of the opposing energies of a same linear sketch; but he felt, it seems to me, that this equilibrium was the result of this neutralization of forces present, when he declares: "that one can neither take away nor add to anything whatsoever without compromising the beauty of the whole, in these compositions."(67)

But he also states that 'the lack of observation of higher rules of symmetry forbids them from aspiring to this level. So he returns once more to his opinion. Riegl will say that one must consider the arabesque as a "foliage decoration" and dispensing with all hesitation, the Austrian historian of decorative art proclaims that the finds in the motif "a plant-like state" (illus. Riegl, fig. 139, a, b,c,d—and idem e.f.g.) . . . a "*floral*" origin!'] [FSX 1271])

48 'Racinet in his work *L'Ornement polychrome* (Polychrome ornament): 'These are the motifs half way between subjects of imaginary conception and the real flora'.

[In another fragment, van de Velde notes down a quotation from Racinet's *L'Ornement polychrome*:

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'. . . endowed with a superior genius, but forced to avoid direct contact with nature by this prescript of the Koran: "thou shalt not make images", the Arabs have substituted for exclusively floral decoration, a constructed decoration whose framework was a game for their geometric minds . . . the flight to the halfway in genres.' (p. 24 & 25 Vol. I)] [FSX 1270]

49 Marçais (p 70, ff)

50 Marçais (p. 409)

51 Marçais (p. 762)

52 [Typewritten manuscript starts here again with text on Egyptian Ornament, but I believe these are misplaced here—another fragment would make sense here:

'After the arabesque, it remains for me to point out a return to line as the principal element in decoration . . . and . . . and . . .

Document . . .

then finally, *L'Ornement linéaire* "Belge" dates from 1892.

Its manifestation in German "Jugendstil"!

Its momentary twilight.'] [FSX 1270]

53 [This conclusion was not part of the final text, but I found it nevertheless important to include, it comes from another file: FSX 1271]

Chapter 2. Structuo-linear Ornament of the Primitives

We have already established—before we set ourselves to examining the opinions of art historians, ethnographers and psychologists, on the origin and nature of ornament—that the line is the determining factor in all aspects of ornament. We have established that free linear ornament is more ancient than geometric ornament.

We will concentrate totally on the nature of this linear ornament, as soon as we have gone into depth about the essential nature of its determining factor: the line.

I do not want to expose myself to contradiction by affirming that the Man of the Paleolithic period would have been aware of what the line represents, its force and its power of dynamic composition. However, it is sufficient for us to remember that he did subconsciously feel what we have just analysed. He felt what is essential in the definition of the line and the nature and function of ornament.

These linear ornaments of the Balkan potteries are the most elementary manifestations of this instinct, which gives itself exclusively to the line in the composition of ornament. We would be glad to find among these primitive peoples still extant, some who have preserved intact similar primordial qualities. This would allow us to observe directly, rather than to speculate on the remains of prehistoric objects. At one time, there was a common opinion among art historians who considered that the lacunas we still have could all be filled by observing those primitive people still living in the unexplored regions of the world, in a similar condition to those of the prehistoric peoples.

But in the meantime, ethnologists were seeking to establish more precisely what place could be assigned to the development of the art and industrial activity of primitive people in the general scheme of the human culture.

The recommendations of an author as respected as K. Preuss are sufficient for us to arrive at a cautious conclusion on the documentation we are borrowing from the primitive races, without denying the great interest there is in comparing certain primitive ornaments with protohistoric and historic ornaments, the similarity between which is striking.[1]

Yrjo Hirn had, in his work, recognized the relationship that links 'mimical movements' with line. He could not then avoid being led to establishing the relationship linking expressive movements to the line in Maori ornamentation.

In the chapter 'on the deduction of the form', he notes that 'expressive movements, which are the physiological mirror images of a recognizable arousal of feeling, can to a certain extent be translated into lines and forms that repeat the expressive movements in other spirits', and that 'the geometric (in the linear sense) ornament has the same, if not yet greater, power to conjure up in us states of emotion that we read into the twists and snail-like spirals!'

The only thing that struck him was the excessive and misplaced character of these ornaments. He attributed them to their warlike inclination.[2]

But we have observed that with the Paleolithic Troglodytes—who were not at all warlike—that such inspiration is not a particular attribute of war and the warlike character. It is enough for a people to have kept intact their innate powers of exuberance, of vigour and passion; all these Dionysiac virtues which are renewed as they are exhausted, whether they are physical forces or creative ones, the sources

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of life which flow abundantly, and preferably where they can be used up!

We recognize on the Maori ornament an instinct which has constantly followed its course and is employed by the native of New Zealand with a consistency and consequences from which nothing escapes, neither the body he tattoos nor the objects created by his hands!

But we equally recognize that while remaining conscious of the expressive difference that exists between the surfaces of the diverse forms and the various objects awaiting the intervention of a linear ornamental framework. We urgently need a remedy for the problems of instability they pose.

Thus, in their baskets as well as in their mats, on these planar surfaces, the Maoris did not think about using these structuo-linear and dynamographic ornaments, which are common to them. For the basket as much as for the mat, the Maoris made use of modest geometric and planimetric ornaments, wisely borrowed from the technique and materials of these objects.[3]

This distinction, so consciously observed by these primitive peoples, is of particular importance in the history of ornament. In general, we notice that once a certain people have invented an ornamental motif, they apply it unquestioningly to all forms, to all surfaces, to all the products of their industry, whatever the material it is made of.

In his work Owen Jones discerned in Maori ornaments 'the principles of the most elevated ornamental art'![4] Semper was not mistaken about the constructive nature of the schematic and linear ornaments of tattooing of some primitive peoples. He noticed in these tattoos:

> a very peculiar phenomenon, which proves that ornamentation in its structural-symbolic sense was grasped and very well understood by these peoples!

But he attributes the meaning and symbolism of this structure to a 'a proper knowledge of the situation and functions of the muscles covered by the hands!' They were seeking 'to reproduce these and their activities on the surface of the skin, as it were, pictorially, or rather to portray them graphically through lineaments!'[5]

This rather puerile interpretation does not come close to the real meaning of the intervention of structure in the origin of these ornaments and the nature of a conception of ornament in general, on the subject of which Semper then reflects:

> Would one be justified in concluding from this that this interpretation of ornament is the most original, or rather to see it as a sign of a secondary state of culture of those peoples among whom they are evident?

Semper does not give us to understand what the first stage could be, in case he has to admit that he has relegated the Maoris to a cultural level of secondary degree. Does he implicitly wish to win us back to the infallibility of his theory on the technical origin of all ornaments and that the 'structive and symbolic conception was grafted onto that'?

Riegl, who failed to notice the contradictory aspect of this statement about the importance of the material origin of ornament which is at the basis of Semper's theory, questioned the theory with arguments borrowed from Maori ornamentation. He recognized in it some 'motifs' which, in any case, could not have been created by the technical means of skill and in the products of these industries which Semper identified as being those where such a skill spontaneously produced these motifs! And among these motifs that of the spiral allowed him to polemicize on the matter with Semper with a success more apparent than real.

According to Semper[6] we would have to search for the origin of the spiral in the coiling of thread. Yet the Maoris, whose culture did not reach beyond the Stone Age had known neither thread proper to textiles, nor the use of metal, nor, consequently the use of metal wire!

Once again, we come to the weak point in Semper's theory. We had pointed out previously that all of Semper's reasoning was incorrect, because he accepted that Man's earliest technical skill was that of plaiting and weaving, and that he did not know the engraving of the Paleolithic period. On the engraved bones of that period, he would have found the spiral and the combined spiral.

We have held back on elaborating on the origin of the spiral, in order to present convincing observations that the spiral owes its origin as much to the coincidence of mechanical action by the concentric action of the fingers holding a tracing tool to surfaces offering no real resistance, and for reasons of a structuo-dynamographic sensibility. Let us observe the effects of the intervention of a second hand, the one holding and leading the engraving too!

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Experience will show us that the concentric action of the hand turning around the mobile axis of the wrist does not produce perfect circles. At the moment of closing the circle, an effort is needed to make the circling line return to its starting point. It tends naturally to drop and aim for a lower level in the same direction. An intervention of will is necessary for the operation to create a perfect circumference. And that being so, the result appears to be the object of premeditation! The natural movement of the hand holding the object and turning in one direction or another on the axis of the wrist finds itself arrested at a certain point. It is at this moment that the hand, equipped with the tool and tracing the coiled curve arrives at a lower point (B) than the point where the tool incised the smooth surface. (A) [illustration missing]

At this moment the pattern offers the image of an aborted spiral.

But why not go all the way to the end? A line is suspended at the point B. Why does the hand holding the engraving tool not seek to make it follow an identical path, in a more restricted circle?

At the second resting point of the wrist holding the object, the pattern reaches point C and so on. This is the technical explanation which we believe is the most probable to explain the origin of the spiral, of the volute. It falls within Semper's theory. Had he known of Paleolithic ornaments, he would have sought to provide a technical explanation, which could not in my opinion, be very different from what I have just elaborated.

However we can clearly distinguish two factors at play in this origin: one is mechanical, the one we just discussed, the other psychological. The intervention of the latter is so immediate that it appears to eliminate the other! It is directly related to the sensation that Man felt at the moment when he traced his first curved line. (Fig. I.)

Starting from point A, his attempt is arrested at point B; at this moment an irresistible attraction pulls him and directs his force to the point of extreme bending that he feels at C. But when he is almost at that point, he feels a compelling drive to lend his support to the bending D, which without this support would risk collapse. It follows from this observation that the traced or engraved spiral is the normal and conclusive result of a play of 'complementaries' which follow each other in receding circles.

We will have occasion during this study to define the nature of complementary lines, their action and intervention; which is as inevitable in linear ornament as is that of the 'complementaries' in the play of opposing colours.

It will be unnecessary to point out that the origin of the metallic spiral is entirely independent and spontaneous, and that the coiling of the metal wire is a product of a mechanical play as much as the origin of the spiral in wickerwork (the bottom of the basket) relates to technical skill.[7]

The psychological and dynamic origin of the volute and the spiral as we have presented them inevitably predisposed them to find their application in tattooing. The human body presents a multiplicity of fleshy forms, of projecting bones particularly fitting, because of their rounded surface, to suggest the idea of rotary movements.

These motifs have the effect, on these surfaces, of provoking a rapid and schematic structure! They alternate in 'Maori' tattooing with lines that stress the features of the face, and accentuate the planes with others which spread out (fig.) radiating from one point like a bouquet. These bundles of lines fill out the space rather than forming it, and it seems that the contours in these areas of the body (for example the brow), being less determinative may have provoked some indecision. On the projections of the chin, on the flat of the cheek, on the cheekbones, on the lateral surfaces of the nose, the contours are more effective and the line which comes into contact with these surfaces cannot, it seems, do other than curve, and in this case it replaces the structure. In coiling up on itself, it has concentrated and accumulated an energy that guarantees that the form will endure.

The 'Maori line' carries and coils itself like that of the 'Prehistoric Balkanic ornament', yet it harmonizes, sharpens and [extends] the appearance of the forms taken on and arrayed in their preordained ornaments! Where the 'Maori line' is not structural, it is elastic and compliant; it stretches itself like the stream in a ravine, it turns around a higher level that it cannot climb, or where the surface is too constrained to allow it the freedom to animate it by its action and presence.

We shall see in what follows the activity of the complementary line and its constant use in the ornament of circular shapes. These will provoke, first in the East, this series of 'bi and triskeles' move-

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ments which Celtic art will then propagate in the West, and then pass on to Gothic art!

Riegl, who declared his antagonism to Semper's material theory, did not arrive at clear conclusions with regard to these motifs, whose use by different and separate peoples had impressed him.[8] He appears obliged to propose, after so many hypotheses, an apriori solution, the subtlety of which does not impress him, in his own words, but which has the advantage of remaining on the 'very own grounds of Art' rather than claiming itself 'some dead technology or other, of an empty transcription of nature!'[9]

When Riegl, speaking elsewhere of the spiral, declares that, 'There must have been some permanent, generally applicable basis for this motif, that allowed it to become so generally accepted and ubiquitous' he is defending again the ubiquity of origin and the causes common to this ubiquity, but he is closer to a self-evident truth which could be formulated in the following manner, that 'the phenomenon of ubiquity of certain motifs depends less on what the identical origin had provoked, and more on identical psychological conditions which had led diverse peoples so different and separate from one another, to use these motifs!'

This similarity of psychological conditions, we have seen, does exist. We have witnessed it getting more and more defined in the course of our investigations; it draws its source from the sensation that the traced line provokes in our imagination. And regarding this generally felt sensation, the issue of the origin of motifs becomes secondary. Henceforth, we can therefore refrain from debating and arguing on the subject of the origin of certain motifs.

We will only consider them from now on in as much as they bring to us some clarification on the dynamic principle of the line and the psychological reactions which are the consequence that we wish to expose and explain.

Many documents have been found thanks to the excavations of archaeologists and the researchers who have also gathered and classified in the museums all that we need to understand about the technical skills of industries at all the levels of human culture. On the subject of the psychological reactions provoked by the form or the line, we do not have much positive evidence. We are forced to consider things indirectly, i.e. to uncover the sensations they provoked in the imagination or the sensibility of those who saw them for the first time. In a certain period, there was a tendency to assume a certain relationship between the psychology of primeval or primitive man and that of the child. Today this comparison has been relegated to its rightful place, and anyway we know that this cannot enlighten us very much.

Today, the fact of the diversity of the mentalities peculiar to each people is well-known and established! Which is the reason why the specific mentality of a certain people leads them irresistibly to naturalistic associations, and determines just as clearly that another people is attached to a magical or symbolic meaning, and yet another enjoys exclusively dynamic and structural power.

As regards our study specifically, the documents that we possess on the historic populations, on those of Prehistory and those of the Primitives, allow us to consider the history of linear ornament under three essential divisions: naturalistic, symbolic, and dynamo-structive!

All the previous classifications, all the known styles in ornamentation, fall within one or other of these large divisions. The boundaries of these divisions do get confused sometimes and create 'zones of penetration'.

We have sufficiently indicated that our objective was not to write a history of ornament! We will therefore not seek to develop further our study in the two areas other than the last one, except where the structuo-linear and dynamic principle may have left some traces.

Chapter 3. The Rule of Linear Ornament

Axioms I and II[10]

1) All the rules of Linear Ornament are the result of the definition of the line. *The line is a force.*
   These are applied in all circumstances where two lines become present.

2) The complementary Line
   As soon as it appears that one line has gone in one direction or another, it means it must have been under the pressure of another. Without the action of this other, no curve is possible. A force moving

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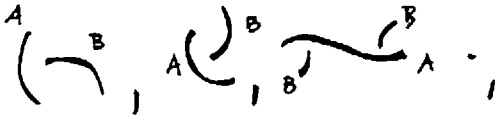

Fig 5. Drawing after van de Velde

freely in one direction would not simply bend into another. The action of a line which, moving in the opposite direction, provokes this curve is invariably complementary. Thus traced, this line is the complementary line [5].

Every curved line has its complementary; as much as every colour has its complementary. The action and reaction of the ones on the others are as perceptible in the colours as in the lines.

A linear ornament must take into account the existence of these complementaries. They prompt the first development of an ornamental composition, which leads to an ensemble of actions and reactions, neutralized to form a perfect and eternal equilibrium.

3) Linear ornament develops differently according to whether it appears on clearly delimited surfaces or not. In the first case, these contours-lines-forces will determine the initial lines of the ornamental schema. The development—it could be simple or complex—of linear ornament remains determined until it is concluded.

In the second case, i.e. ornament where the initial lines were determined by nothing other than the free impulse of the person who traced them, it will be developed according to the logical deduction of the dynamic actions and reactions visible in these initial lines. Let us examine these two cases.

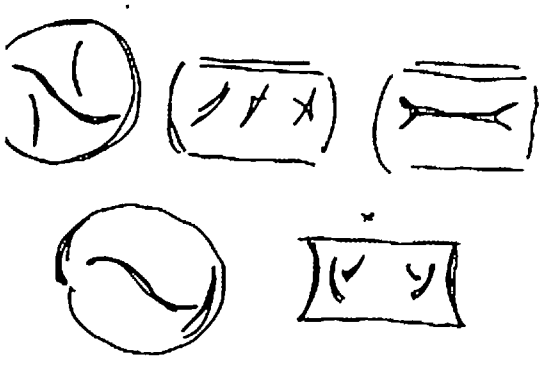

Fig 6. Drawing after van de Velde

In the first case, that of a defined space or form, in which the contours are themselves the lines whose directions and inflections evoke the existence of determining anterior forces, the first lines which we would be tempted to draw according to the laws of linear and dynamic ornamentation would be lines destined to support the inflections inscribed within these contours, or to resist their energy and their dynamism [6]!

Thus, to summarize, every form would be the consequence of determining forces—rendered visible by ornament; while at the same time this ornament would be determined by the contours of the form![11]

Determining forms, that's the fact; determining ornament, that's the appearance!

In the second case, the surface spreads free and unspoiled before us. Nothing determines the first line or lines that we are going to trace. But then a line springs up spontaneously, it is supple, ample, uplifted. It appears to move freely, as it appears to sustain the action of invisible forces. What are these forces ? This question preoccupies us to the point that we are suddenly driven to define them with other lines which express through their movements, in turn, the part that they play in the inflections seen in the initial line(s); it is thus that the pleasure of gesticulating, or the sudden excitement felt when tracing these lines is not without consequence.

Those are immediate.

These 'complementary' lines legitimize the inflections, they will maintain the tension in the lines opposing them for as long as they are there.

But for this objective, they only expend the energy going in this direction; (A) the line which tends, at its other end, leans, in another direction, we must stop (B) or divert (B′), or bring back in accordance with a rhythm acting to balance all these agitated forces [7]. [Fig. III/2b]

Note that every new line called upon to participate in neutralizing what remains of the forces in suspense, would in itself provoke a new movement of forces. This play could take us further, if we expend our energy without control.

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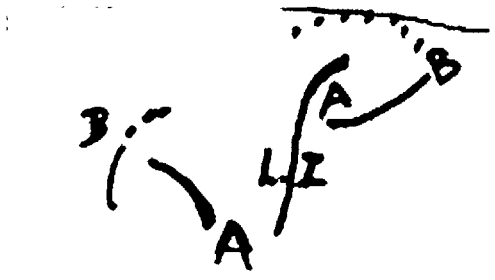

Fig 7. Drawing after van de Velde

There must be—whether the ornament is simple or complex, whether the space to be covered is limited or extended—a gathering of this group of lines into a unity where all energies are neutralized, frozen in a permanent equilibrium.[12]

As long as a composition of lines, in which all the forces having been neutralized by the intervention of complementary ones, taking an active place in the ensemble to express by their inflections and directions the actions of other lines completing the ornamental composition—as long as such a composition of lines remains visible on one surface or another, it will conserve the energy accumulated in all these lines, without any loss or displacement. A powerful rhythm of penetration, circulation, convolution and growth will be perceived repeatedly without our eye feeling the slightest fatigue. It will feel itself carried along these outward and return journeys, these detours, these curves and convolutions, without fatigue—with the voluptuousness of a dancer balancing, turning her body, throwing her arms and her legs in the air.

The significance of such ornament is identical to that of dance—its function differs from that of the linear ornament determined by the contours of a surface playing a role in a structure. The ornament that is free from any preliminary determination, incorporates itself into the surface in order to represent the surface, as a moving pattern, the admirable play of mysterious hidden forces.

These forces summoned to the surface are moving and generous:

1) moving, because they testify to a victory conjured up from the mysterious depths of the surface, by the magic of a primordial gesture, all the elements of an ornament, whose equilibrium and harmony had been set from the earliest times;
2) generous, because they invite us all and at every moment to participate in their games and in the intoxication that they bring.[13]

The Motifs

The linear and dynamographic ornament possesses its own motifs.

Definition:
The motif is a variable number of lines which are assembled in a group. They are related by the power of forces that are intertwined, that support each other, that concentrate themselves into a unity in which all these forces have been neutralized in a perfect equilibrium.

Repetition of motifs:
These 'motifs', of whatever kind they are, lend themselves to all kinds of repetition which have been well illustrated in the particular treatises on ornamentation: the simple repetition of the in-line and superimposed motif, the arrangements in stepped-pattern, in diamonds, in circles, etc. . . . The arrangements by which the motif reverses itself, or turns around on an axis, etc. . . . It is important only to note that the arrangement of 'motifs' in this linear and dynamographic ornamentation remains subject to the principle of continuity of forces acting on the whole as much as on every part.

Thus they can appear on any surface, as in the case of the Arabesque.

In the bands, we recognize free movement born out of a spurt of creativity. The hand traces a series of lines, as when the feet hit the floor, or the voice emits a series of screams. The enjoyment felt at the repetition of this same movement forces us to prolong the play. Then our enthusiasm makes us support the inflections of these lines with complementary line-forces, out of care that the first lines do not end up swaying [8].

Fig. A.
Fig. B.
Fig. C.
(In Fig. C. these complementaries became links)
Fig. D.

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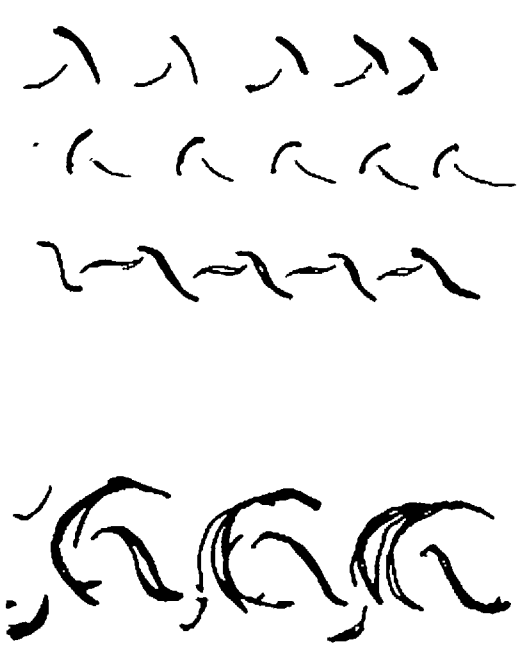

Fig 8. Drawing after van de Velde

(to compare with the Greek 'bands or architraves' or those of primitive peoples)

The most striking 'motifs'—those that defied time and have the greatest chance of lasting—are those in which we perceive the most economy of forces. This economy is the result of an instinctive reserve; it may be acquired by experience.

The 'Skele' are linear ornaments that are inscribed in circles and that we find with similar motifs,[14] among people who are very different and distant from each other. They offer us the most striking examples of the 'structural and complementary' activity of the line, similar to the ones we find on certain Neolithic Balkanic vases [9].

The circle is an expressive form; it is manifestly the result of an interior expansion of force that has caused and maintained its extent and totality of its form. As long as the space it delimits remains empty, the threat of its collapse remains influenced by this. We trace the threat, the line or lines intended to support and retain this circular form. However, according to how strongly we feel this sensation, we shall create either a clear construction or a complicated framework. Certain peoples have shown a marked predilection for these 'Skele': the Myceneans, the Celts, the

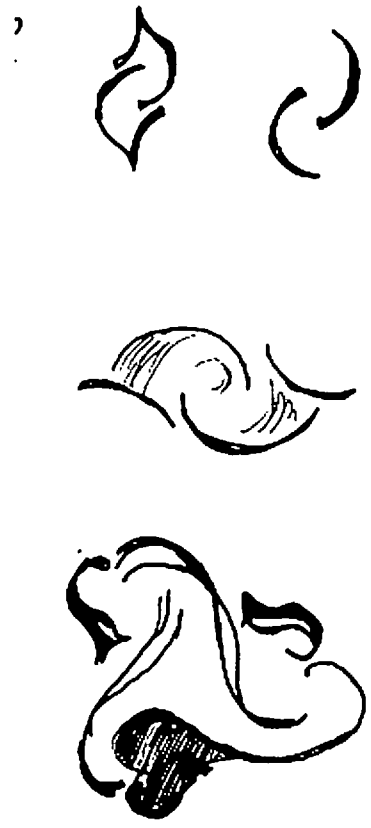

Fig 9. Drawing after van de Velde

Goths, the people of East Asia and the Primitives of Australia and America.

An elementary and primitive conception of ornament would have been satisfied with such patterns as ornaments. We have noticed that the earliest inhabitants of the world and certain primitive peoples were quite satisfied with them. We ourselves were quite content with them to begin with, when our instincts led us to favour an ornamentation so rudimentary as the stylized ornamentation that had been resurrected at that period as an improvement of taste and as a revolt against the naturalistic ornamentation which, according to Owen Jones, had been practised in the previous century 'ad nauseam'.[15]

The structuo-linear and dynamographic ornaments conceived around 1892 had barely risen above the level at which a linear composition could be considered as an ornament. I remember the case of a

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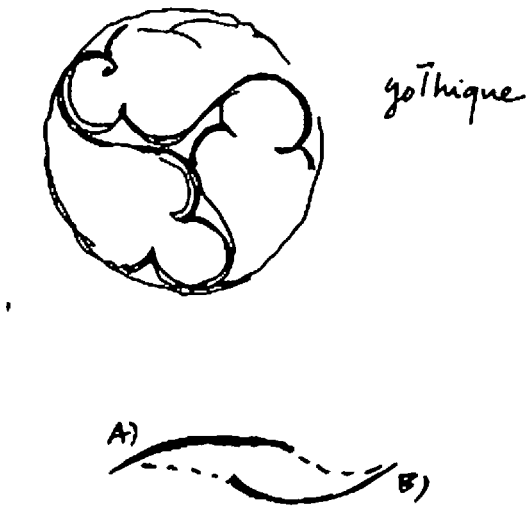

Fig 10. Drawing after van de Velde

convergence of two lines, two complementary lines, one of which was flattened in an arc (A) appearing to weigh heavily on the second (B) which struggled to support the tension of the first. [See Fig. . . .] I was irresistibly drawn to link together this pattern of complementaries in the following manner (dotted): Fig. [10]

This unexpected, if not totally new 'figure', subject to infinite variations, constantly presented itself! It became popular. I can understand its popularity by the fact that this figure achieved something which satisfied the eye. It answered to the need to connect lines to each other in such a manner as to create a 'figure' in which the conflict of opposing forces is resolved into its most elementary aspect.

From the moment we created the first line decoration, we have had a precise idea of the rules. But it was only in the course of a long series of various exercises that we arrived at giving these ornaments a degree of sumptuousness and decorative magnitude similar to the one which characterizes the Arabesque, for instance. We had no idea of the sensation that they would cause, nor of the vogue that they would have. In the pursuit of perfection, each one of us will bring, in this work, his own sensibility, his ingenuity and his genius. An identical pattern at the beginning will still lead to a definitive elaboration of different ornaments. (Examples)

We can achieve a result in which beauty will have all the eternal characteristics, but we may equally finish—despite a perfect scheme at the beginning—with a 'correct' ornament, which may be irreproachable, but which may also be, in the end, nothing more than mediocre.

The conditions to fulfil in order to reach a perfect result are:

1) a continuity without interruptions, regulated by the circular force;
2) the most essential condition is to control the spaces resulting from the conjuction of several lines, into a fixed, filled motif. The empty spaces appear and define themselves as the ornament develops. These spaces inevitably become themselves the figures, whose importance in the ornament is equal to the figures intentionally created.

The existence of these forms, which are not evident to everyone and which exist in all ornament, becomes striking in the case of purely linear ornament. As soon as we have fixed certain motifs and spread a colour or a tone between the contours, these negative forms appear as strongly as the positive forms. They demand their rights at the same time that they manifest their existence. There is no doubt that we cannot challenge these rights and this negative condition is only temporary and accidental, since we can, at any time reverse the appearance of the Arabesque and switch the roles! In this case, the negative forms become positive forms and vice versa. [Fig.]

On the question of knowing whether the principle and existence of these negative forms were intended when these ornaments that have been passed down to us and that we consider as perfect were created, the same answer applies as to the question of the awareness of the dynamic nature of the line: 'let us be satisfied with the observation that the one and the other played a role!', whether it was conscious or not.[16]

Beyond a summary of these few rules on the direct relationship of the nature of the line and the function of ornament, beyond this brief summary, words will no longer serve to explain it.

As to the final appearance of the ornament and the pleasure we expect from its beauty, these will depend on the quality of the sensibility which, successively and in a continuous fashion, decided on the course of

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the line and its direction—where it had this freedom—on the choice that promoted the meeting of a line with one group of lines rather than another; finally on the finished co-ordination of lines composing the ornament. Because this could have been otherwise, if at a certain point it was preferred to group this line with another, to send it in this direction rather than another.

In all cases, the linkage of all the parts of a well-constructed linear and dynamographic pattern is such that if we were to remove one single line, the ornament would collapse like a scaffold from which a beam had been removed!

The different types of formal linear and dynamographic ornaments are affected by our sensability to them as our modern sensibility shows itself strikingly in our ornament.

The reproductions of my own ornaments, as well as those that were developed by some of my former students, contain original elements. They betray a sensibility that is affected by certain cadences, by particular rhythms, by predilections for a more intent and expressive accentuation, for more sumptuous and quickly-formed coils. This sensibility seems to seek an equilibrium between the virile and forceful suppleness of Paleolithic ornaments and the gracious extent of Pre-Mycenean and Cretan ornaments, while the feeling of continuity brings our ornament closer to that of the Saracen Arabesque. This is because there is a certain relationship between all the people who adopted a linear and dynamographic ornament; that of a sensibility predisposed to experience in everything the phenomenon of power and life, and to be touched by the spectacle in which this phenomenon is realized, even under the most abstract forms and aspects!

This need is so intense, so rooted, and the emotions that result from it so indispensable to a sense of pleasure, that we find the most distant populations, distant from each other in space and time, agreeing to create life where no traces of life existed, and to give form to these amorphous forms whose presence they felt on every acceptable surface. The same instinct, the same need has evoked the presence of these forces on the wall surfaces of the shelters, in prehistoric times, on the skin of primitive Man through tattooing, and on the various objects, whose industrious genius has greatly enriched later humanity! The same instinct led them to discover the magical powers that the line could lend them. It would be appropriate perhaps to stress the fact that this need to make all things participate in life stems from a physical and at the same time psychological satisfaction, rather than *a need for beauty*! Or even to say that the existence of beauty itself is linked so intimately to these satisfactions that it becomes part of them, and that without them Beauty itself cannot be conceived!

This truth applies to the ornaments of the Troglodytes of Western Europe, the ornaments of the populations of primitive Greece and the Aegean isles, of the Balkanic, Germanic, Celtics and Scandinavian peoples, as much as those of the Orient and certain primitive populations dispersed all over the world.

Each one of these groups of men has chosen the paths towards which their intellect and the psychological predispositions peculiar to their race led them. But it is in the pleasures of life and in the contemplation of the phenomena of force that, through them all, Beauty has drawn its origins. It awakened at the same time as the first expression of the human faculties of coordination, balance, and harmonization of all that first appeared as chaotic, disordered, and subject to incessant, violent and futile struggles!

An instinct that sought to conserve our energies, led us to the conquest of a Beauty that would culminate in works of a superior order, equilibrium, and harmony freeing us from the elements destined to destroy and misunderstand or shut out the eternal 'I' which would find itself alien to these elements. These works would present themselves to us stripped of any external sentimentality, even 'dematerialized', not in order to strip them of life, but so that we may consider them with the kind and secure feeling of their being eternal, of their being understandable at all times and by all people, by all those who celebrate a communion with the pure idea and the phenomenon of life!

This conception which has been embodied in the highest expressions of aesthetic thought and sensibility ever reached until now, i.e. in the Doric temple and Greek philosophy, this conception is opposed to the naturalistic or symbolic conception which started in Egypt and has persisted throughout the centuries![17]

Our efforts tend towards re-uniting with a tradition of life considered as a phenomenon, with its most pure and unchanging expression which is force—our efforts have tended to re-unite with a

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tradition of beauty elevated above the contingencies and naturalistic aspects, and perceived in the order and supreme harmony of organized forces.

For this objective, we seek to lead our spirits towards these forces, as much as we ought to nourish our feelings by looking at supremely organized bodies.

We consider the structuo-linear and dynamographic ornament as a supremely organized body. It offers itself as the fitting complement to the style whose progress we are pursuing, this new style whose arrival we have awaited with much impatience, which we have announced long before it came to existence, and towards which those who have been hostile still today deny the existence and the necessity, despite the fact that it is spreading its magnificent manifestations all over the world!

In spirit, the rules, the aesthetic roots of *this* style that we have summarized and formulated in another book[18] have penetrated as deeply as possible the spirit, the rules and the aesthetic roots of this structuo-linear and dynamographic ornament to which we have consecrated this work.[19]

Appendix: Ornament Study Outline

1. Our study on the origin of linear ornament concludes that there is a psychological origin to it. Ornament was born during Man's remotest times, out of instinctual actions provoked by [the observation?] of the hidden powers in surfaces . . . of pebbles, of bones.

2. Our study on *the nature of line* has permitted us to formulate a definition of line: *the line is a force.*

3. Moreover, we have been brought to conclude the existence of a complementary line which establishes between the lines of the same composition, of the same linear motif, links as close and inevitable as those of cause and effect!

4. We have finalized the definition of line in the formula: line = drawn movement. And as for linear ornament, we have realized that ornament which—consciously or unconsciously taken from this theory—puts us in the presence of the spectacle of currents of energy, running in different directions and seeking a balance in a sequence of changes. I explored this theory briefly for the first time in 1902, in an article which appeared in . . . I mentioned in the article the opinion of Lipps; his 'Considerations Esthétiques' appeared in 1906.

The article appeared in *Zukunft* dated 1902; the chapter 'Déclaration des Principes' of the book *Les Prédications aux Laics* (p. 27–40) contains an account more elaborate than my theory on the line force.

These distinctions should find their place somewhere in this work . . .

It follows from the account of laws and axioms which were the subject of preceding chapters that as soon as we have traced a line on a surface somewhere, we are irresistibly drawn to set another one against it, that we fall irretrievably under the thumb of these laws and know what we must do.

If we have an unrestricted surface or one which seems unlimited, like a sheet of paper, the wall, we can continue. We make lines that follow each other, that are grouped in a plan, that instinctively we are drawn to bring towards each other. It will determine the importance of the development of the composition. This, in the case of a surface where the *contours* exercise no influence, no dynamic action on the first lines drawn.

But in a great number of cases, the surfaces are restricted by contours which—visibly—must exercise an action on the lines which will appear on these surfaces. It is the case with certain materials: ceramics, glass and metal objects, musical instruments, arms, etc. . . . It is the case with limbs on the human body. They are all *expressive shapes*—determining. They determine the first lines that we trace on their surfaces. And these first lines will be the visible structure on to which the shapes of the various objects fit like the [casing ?] on an airship covering the metal framework or the skin of our bodies the skeleton that is hidden inside it!

Thus the expressive shapes of the objects imperiously determine [?] the decoration which is the particular decoration proper to each one of them.

Taken literally, this could lead to thinking that there is only a single ornament which answers to the absolute accord which exists between what is determining and determined, between what presents to us

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as cause and effect. But these relationships of total agreement are stopped at the structure, the initial linear framework. We shall see in what follows that the development of the same linear schema produces ornament motifs which are very different. This development can be simple or complex. In its most rudimentary aspect, the framework appears clear. It *imposes itself like an organism*. It is apparent that it has a *function*.

At present the words 'ornament', 'organ' and 'function' mean the same thing. And the ornament [?] on a place where we have not been used to finding it: *on the organic plane*; it fulfils a function to which it has not been accustomed; it becomes the framework, the structure of the shape!

From now on, we see the ornament endowed with a meaning very different from that which we had agreed to give it; that of ornament—and this new meaning that we have given it will impose itself so much that the presence of the ornament appears to us totally useless where it will not fill its organic function, where no important framework is needed.

Ornament that adorns, and no more, loses its raison d'être, decoration as a structure justifies its existence in the case of expressive determining shapes. But before submitting examples, it is worth noting that the conception: shape determining ornament, ornament determined by shape, that this conception is an *inversion* and that if we consider an object on which the ornament is in absolute accord with the shape, we can be induced to think that it is the ornament which has determined the shape rather than the contrary.

We return in thought to the psychological origin of ornament such as we have revealed it and to the phenomena of the subconscious anguish which pushes the hand to find a line of structure between two lines whose curves go in two opposing directions; a line which offers itself to support whatever at right or at left threatens to collapse.

Notes

1 K. Preuss, in his work *Die geistige Kultur der Naturvölker*, chapter 'Methode der Forschunge', is of the opinion that 'Natural peoples may justifiably form the source for a portrayal of primitive culture' but he recommends that before thinking about a systematic classification according to the chronology of appearance and degree of culture of primitive races, would be required 'to allow the [psy]chological side of the creation of phenomena to emerge particularly, however difficult and misleading these attempts may be.'

2 He recognizes that: 'Like the fantastic convolutions on the shields of the Dayako, the flaming black and red curlicues that spread out over the floors and walls of Maori houses give unmistakable evidence of their origin from a people that has made *war violently*, powerfully and with extraordinary energy. In view of these mighty drawings even the most neutral obsever will be affected by strong elevation of feeling, which here, not in words, sounds or images, *but in pure line and colour has found a way out*. Such mighty strokes, full of life and restlessness, could never have been drawn by peaceful, quiet natives. The movement and the wild content of ideas are possible only with a people which has experienced a continually repeated, high-tension arousal of feeling in constant battle!'

3 See Hamilton D. 6815. Berlin

4 O. Jones, d-s 18

5 Note 4 to be compared with note . . . in previous section.

6 Stil. I. 167

7 R. Wurz in his appreciated work has made a historic summary of these motifs of ornamentation and exposed all the hypotheses on the subject of the spiral and the volute!

8 See Riegl Section I (24).

9 Riegl page 79 R.
'Among the planimetric basic motifs stands . . . just . . . Tangente überzugchen [*sic*]'

On the 'irgend etwas' [something or other] which he has never defined and to which my theory responds with precise proposals.

10 [Note: This title is van de Velde's It is actually not clear in this text where axiom I or II begins. This is much clearer and more detailed in another manuscript (FSX 1272/9) where he begins with the definition of the 'line is a force', followed by three axioms

Axiom I. The movement that we notice in the line is an activity determined by the power of the gesture which has traced it . . . 'Our sympathy is withdrawn from an area where it does not find any phenomena of the feeling world . . . Whilst in the feeling world we are conscious of movement, of violence and relations between cause and effect . . . geometric lines evoke a world in which the appearance of things is invariable, where they are rigid and unchanging.

Axiom II: the line doesn't use up all its energy in movement, it extends beyond the confines of its material parts, its dynamic power . . .

Axiom III: The activities determined . . 'The sequence of all the cadenced rhythmic movements provoke an effect of drunkenness. That, particularly, which communicates itself to us by a 'dance of the eyes', ascends to the brain, without our feeling the least fatigue in our limbs or body. The pleasure of this drunkenness communicated by the line in the arabesque, in linear and dynamic ornament, protects us from fatigue, sleep and the rancour which are the consequences of drunkenness provoked by wine! Drunkenness which communicates to us the 'dance of the eyes' transports us well beyond our selves and draws us, by the magic of a 'silent' and hidden music into the regions of the absolute. 'There, all is only order and pleasure, luxury, calm and pleasure! . . .']

11 [Note: van de Velde underlines twice the words *determining* and *determined*]

12 Contrary to what happens in the development of a group of crystals projecting their offshoots ceaselessly into space, the

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linear, decorative schema on the contrary develops and is enlarged by the powers it draws towards itself and which seem to have existed, scattered and invisible in space.

13 [It seems that a paragraph was deleted here. Another fragment indicates it:

'Linear ornament, dynamic and organic. It results from its function as a framework, from its role of arfaivre [*sic*]which is organically incorporated into the surface or the shape. Linear and dynamic ornament is incorporated, as much as is geometric ornament in certain surfaces: those of mats, baskets and cloth, motifs which are the result of a play of technical skills with materials acting as decoration.' [FSX 1269]

14 By the fact that the circle, the oval, etc are absolute geometric shapes, known and used by all people scattered all over the terrestrial globe, it was inevitable that formulas were established, and that the same principle being applied, must provoke the same results.

15 [Van de Velde here inserts a Note, yet it is unclear whether the Note is simply missing and the text continues, or whether the following paragraph is the intended note. I left it as a continuation of the text]

16 On this subject it is important to point out that A. Riegl in his great and erudite work 'Spätrömische Kunstindustrie' appearing in . . . *noted the existence of these shapes* and gives us to understand that towards the end of the second century of our Christian era, knowledge of the existence and the importance of these shapes was undeniable! It is also important to note that Riegl had chosen the same term 'Negative, complementary motif' as that to which we had recourse in the prediction that he helped us to pass on to our pupils. It should be believed that I have found more pleasure in meeting with one of the writers most authorized to write on ornament, than disappointment to see that his insight had outstripped mine. A Riegl says further on this subject: That it was first in cut jewels that he discovered the existence of the negative shapes. 'If one considers the broken-through areas that appear white in the reproduction (pl. XV, 2&3), it will not be difficult to notice that these areas perfectly represent in themselves a regular and badly *composed* pattern! This result not only did not pass unnoticed at the time of its creation but was evidently consciously striven after!' (142, 143).
(to reproduce: 'complementary motifs' of Riegl (143)
(to reproduce: the ceiling of the Mosque Ibu Tulun (Cairo) A.R.P. (163)

17 [Another version was scratched out by Van de Velde from the final version, it went as:

'. . . Across Greek cultures (the decadent periods), Roman, those of the "migration of peoples" in Europe, right up to Gothic art, beyond which we shall consider decadence which must inevitably provoke the same idea!'] [FSX 1269]

18 *Les Formules de la beauté architectonique moderne*

19 The twelfth of December 1916, we finished writing the text of this manuscript, begun in January 1915! The sixteenth of August 1930 we finished revising this text in order to present it for publication.

Publisher's note

Van de Velde makes numerous references throughout his manuscript to illustrations in other publications. It has not been possible to reproduce more than a small number of these, which are indicated in the usual way: the figure number is in square brackets and the figure itself appears nearby in the text. We have retained all the original illustration references, as given by van de Velde.

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