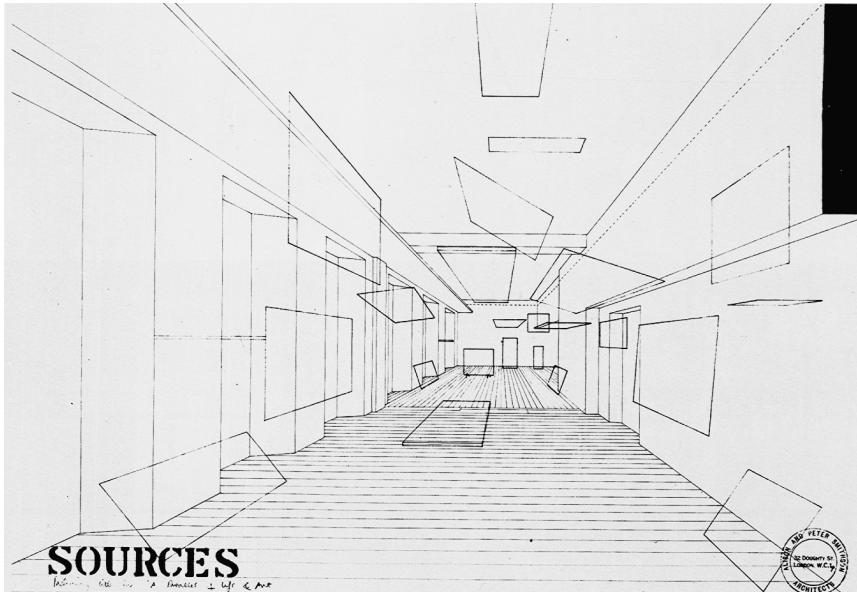




Alison and Peter Smithson. Sources. 1953.

Some Notes on Architecture

ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON

Only a few months after the publication of their Soho project, the Smithsons announce their interest in Le Corbusier's use of béton brut in his Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles. In so doing, they effectively posit the existence of two Le Corbusiers: an "academic" practitioner of high modern architecture and a more expressionistic variant preoccupied with the possibilities of poured concrete. Their goal is to find a postwar humanist architecture, disregarding in this search a number of other strains of modernism, including the posthumanist dimensions of the Bauhaus and De Stijl. In addition to Le Corbusier, the Smithsons also take inspiration from art practice, embracing Jackson Pollock's work and reproducing one of his paintings in Parallel of Life and Art.—A.K.

With the completion of the Pavillon Suisse [sic], modern architecture became academic.¹

With the completion of the Unité, life has returned.²

In the *béton brut* of the Unité a new human architecture has been born.

Technique is seen once more as a tool: the machine as means.

A new humanism has been born.

The dead hand of De Stijl can be lifted from our backs.

Cezanne [sic] can be seen as a boring painter of little importance.

Perhaps even Pollock is more important. Who can say?

All we know is what moves us now.

This day.

January 23, 1954.

We of the '50s have no one to look up to in our own country, and there is no climate of enthusiasm in which architecture can flower.

This magazine should aim to create such a climate of enthusiasm.

1. The Pavillon Suissé, designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, was completed in 1932 at the Cité Internationale Universitaire in Paris—Ed.

2. Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, France, was completed in 1952—Ed.

Discuss real architecture, Paestum, Sunion, the Villa Adriana, Prenestina, Seaton Delaval, Vezelay, and that by real architects to-day, the younger ones such as Moretti or Rudolph,³ as well as Corbu and Mies.

Establish real standards.

Don't worry about architectural education.

Don't be taken in by the Wiemar [sic] Fallacy.⁴

Architecture and urbanism are problems of significant organization. Utter complexity made lucid.

It is more important to fail magnificently than to achieve mediocrity.

—244: *Journal of the University of Manchester Architecture and Planning Society* 1 (Summer 1954), p. 4.

3. Luigi Moretti (1907–1973) and Paul Rudolph (1918–1997)—Ed.

4. A reference to the Bauhaus, which was located in Weimar between 1919 and 1925—Ed.