

MoMA

The Museum of Modern Art

What Is Happening to Modern Architecture?

Author(s): Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Walter Gropius, George Nelson, Ralph T. Walker, Christopher Tunnard, Frederick Gutheim, Marcel Breuer, Peter Blake, Gerhard Kallmann, Talbot Hamlin, Lewis Mumford and Carl Koch

Source: *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Vol. 15, No. 3, What Is Happening to Modern Architecture?: A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art (Spring, 1948), pp. 4-20

Published by: [Museum of Modern Art](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4058109>

Accessed: 22-01-2016 10:57 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Museum of Modern Art is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

What is Happening to Modern Architecture?

Those who came to the Museum of Modern Art's symposium on "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" heard no easy answers to a hard question. As a formal symposium, the evening failed. No conclusion was reached; the question remained unsolved. However, the meeting succeeded in presenting a significant cross-section of current architectural thought, diverse, conflicting, often stimulating, as much a part of the process of architecture as plans and specifications.

Two points of view dominated the discussion. They were not the points originally planned. The talk was expected to balance neatly between two groups: the originators of the term "International Style," and the upholders of the English-invented reaction to it, called the "New Empiricism," with its American counterpart, the new humanism of the "Bay Region" school. The controversy was soon reduced to something much more basic: those who spoke in terms of style and standards, and those who denounced all labels and "isms" as secondary to the problem of production.

In the first group, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Henry-Russell Hitchcock redefined the International Style. Gerhard Kallmann, English architect, defended the New Empiricism, and at the end of the meeting Lewis Mumford came to the rescue of his much misinterpreted definition of "Bay Region" architecture.

Christopher Tunnard pointed out the need for the reconciliation of public taste and good architectural performance, suggesting the study of the monuments of the past as a possible corrective prescription. Frederick Gutheim upheld the language of style as essential to the qualitative judgment of the critic.

Those who took exception to the historical approach were Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Ralph Walker, Peter Blake, Eero Saarinen, George Nelson, and Carl Koch. Nelson, Blake, and Koch laid the greatest stress on the immediate, practical aims of architecture: the need for increased production and industrialized building.

The following text is a summary of the talk of the evening. Some changes have been necessary. The entire question period at the end of the symposium, with its interesting contributions by Serge Chermayeff, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., John McAndrew, Isamu Noguchi, Matthew Nowicki, Eero Saarinen, Vincent Scully and others has been eliminated only because of the lack of space. Carl Koch's undelivered speech and the post mortem correspondence between Mr. Mumford and Mr. Barr have been added in the interest of a more complete record.

Mr. Mumford, acting as moderator, opened the meeting and introduced the first speaker.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr.:

It gives me special pleasure to have Lewis Mumford here as our Chairman. Many of you will remember that sixteen years ago he contributed an important article on housing to the Museum's exhibition of modern architecture which Philip Johnson organized. I recall, too, that he spoke at the first symposium on architecture ever held by the Museum.

I have read with care Mr. Mumford's piece in *The New Yorker*, which is the basis of tonight's discussion. If we differ this evening, lay it to the fact that it is hard for two old soldiers to remember a campaign in exactly the same way. Yet, I believe, at least at this stage of the evening, that we are still fundamentally on the same side. We are on the side of architecture as an art rather than on the side of mere building, however structurally efficient, commercially successful, sentimentally effective, humanistically plausible, or domestically agreeable that building may be.

I am not an architect nor a critic nor an historian of architecture. Please consider me a kind of "kibitzer" or back-seat driver. Believe me, if I were not an irresponsible amateur, I would never have the courage to speak at all in this highly professional gathering.

It is almost impossible in a few minutes to present a point of view about so complicated and confused a matter as the history of recent architecture.

Let me go back to the year 1932. That was the year the Museum put on its first show of modern architecture, and the year that Hitchcock and Johnson published their book, *The International Style*. I have read through this book again during the past few days and have marked a few passages to read to you, first from the preface, which the authors asked me to write in my usual function of back-seat driver:

"Mr. Hitchcock and Mr. Johnson have studied contemporary architecture with something of the scholarly care and critical exact-

ness customarily expended upon Classical or Mediaeval periods. This book presents their conclusions, which seem to me of extraordinary importance. For they have proven beyond any reasonable doubt, I believe, that there exists today a modern style as original, as consistent, as logical, and as widely distributed as any in the past. The authors have called it the International Style.

"To many, this assertion of a new style will seem arbitrary and dogmatic, for it has become almost customary to say that we are in a 'period of gestation,' that we have 'not yet arrived at a consistent style.'

"This uncertainty of direction is clearly demonstrated by two recent magazine articles." These articles were written, as I remember it, at the end of 1931 and early in 1932, one of them on European, and one on American architecture. "The first, called *New Building for the New Age*, is illustrated by photographs of six buildings supposedly representative of 'what is happening in architecture on the continent of Europe.' They include Saarinen's prewar—that is, pre-1914—railway station at Helsingfors; the bizarre Expressionist Einstein Tower of 1920 at Potsdam, and a ponderous department store, both by Mendelsohn; Tengbom's Concert Hall at Stockholm with its portico of tall decagonal columns surmounted by Corinthian capitals; a school by Dudok, one of the more advanced members of the conservative Amsterdam group; and a theatrical Danish church façade derived from Hanseatic Gothic prototypes."

The second article—I think it was in the *Times* magazine—is called *Poets in Steel*. It is "a characteristic essay on modern American architecture, primarily concerning itself with skyscrapers, although one of Mr. Cram's churches is illustrated, and Frank Lloyd Wright is mentioned only to be dismissed as a mere theorist. But skyscrapers are accepted as 'one of the most magnificent developments of our times'—Romanesque, Mayan, Assyrian, Renaissance,

Aztec, Gothic, and especially Modernistic—everything from the stainless steel gargoyles of the Chrysler Building to the fantastic mooring mast on top of the Empire State. No wonder that some of us who have been appalled by this chaos turn with the utmost interest and expectancy to the International Style.”

We realized at the time that this announcement of a new style would seem arbitrary and even dogmatic and that it would meet with resistance from many quarters—from the general public, which is usually reluctant to accept anything new in the arts; from academic conservatists, of course; from the half modern designers of the buildings just listed; and from the very architects who had themselves laid the foundations of the new style.

For the progressive architect of the second quarter of the twentieth century has distrusted the idea of style. Style smacked of the *Beaux Arts*, of the academic, superficial, and introspective. Style was somehow felt to be a menace to the individual freedom of the architect and to the free development of architecture itself.

We were aware of this in 1932; in fact, Hitchcock and Johnson were at times reluctant to use “International Style” at all. But it was obvious that the style had been born and needed a name. We wanted to emphasize this fact in the name, and because the style had developed in several countries at once we felt “international” would be a reasonable and neutral adjective.

Since then, architects and critics alike have questioned the term, often referring to it as the “so-called” International Style; yet, no one since that time has thought of a better term, nor, I believe, a term more widely used. Perhaps I should say “misused,” for in spite of every effort on our part, the term has often been used interchangeably with the word, “functionalism.”

Now, it is true, of course, that the principle of functionalism helped generate the new architectural forms of the 1920’s and thereby con-

tributed to the International Style, but functionalism was and still is a principle of building design which stops short of architecture. To us, in 1932, the cold, mechanical, utilitarianism preached by Giedion and Hannes Meyer seemed a denial of architecture as an art. By the same token, we felt that the cynical parody of functionalism which we found among certain American architects was equally debasing. I refer to the theory that architecture is not an art, but a business or an industry in which design is simply a commodity to be furnished as a superficial afterthought.

I find that much of this book was devoted to defending architecture against these scientific functionalists on the one hand and commercial functionalists on the other. We even considered using the term, “post-functionalism,” to make absolutely clear that the new style was superseding functionalism.

Another misconception current today is that International Style was conceived as a kind of rigid strait-jacket requiring architects to design cubistic, white stucco boxes on Lally columns, with flat roofs and glass walls. In 1932, Hitchcock and Johnson put the matter differently:

“The idea of style as the frame of potential growth, rather than as a fixed and crushing mould, has developed with the recognition of underlying principles such as archeologists discern in the great styles of the past. The principles are few and broad. They are not mere formulas of proportion such as distinguish the Doric from the Ionic order; they are fundamental, like the organic verticality of the Gothic or the rhythmical symmetry of the Baroque. There is, first, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than as mass. Secondly, regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design. These two principles, with a third proscribing arbitrary applied decoration, mark the productions of the International Style.

“This new style is not international in the sense that the production of one country is just

like that of another. Nor is it so rigid that the work of various leaders is not clearly distinguishable. The International Style has become evident and definable only gradually as different innovators throughout the world have successfully carried out parallel experiments."

On rereading this book, I find, too, that the authors did not dogmatize about materials. They praised Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier for their then recent desertion of flat stucco for fieldstone and marble. About wood, which was generally neglected by the modern architects of the twenties, they wrote: "In many regions, wood, for example, is economically the most satisfactory material. For certain types of building, its relative impermanence is not a disadvantage. Nor is there anything in wooden construction which makes it unsuitable to the esthetic or the functional disciplines of the contemporary style."

Nor did they ignore the human needs of the clients. On the contrary, they made fun of the doctrinaire functionalists who designed housing for "some proletarian superman of the future," and insisted that "there should be a balance between evolving houses for scientific living and providing comfortable houses for ordinary living." They welcomed the idea of national and personal variants of the style. They paid honor to Frank Lloyd Wright, not only as the most important single source of the style, but also as the magnificent living example of romantic individualism.

They concluded their book with these words:

"The International Style is broad and elastic enough for many varying talents and for many decades of development. We have, as the Egyptians had or the Chinese, as the Greeks and our own ancestors in the Middle Ages before us, a style which orders the visible manifestation of a certain close relationship between structure and function. Regardless of specific types of structure or of function, the style has a definable esthetic. That esthetic, like modern technics, will develop and change; it will hardly

cease to exist. It is found in the humblest buildings, as well as in monuments, fully architectural. Those who have buried architecture, whether from a thwarted desire to continue the past or from an overanxiety to modify and hurry on the future, have been premature: We have an architecture still."

What has happened to the International Style since 1932, particularly in this country? That it has been very widely influential, I think no one will deny. One has only to study our architectural magazines, the real estate pages of our newspapers, the work done in our architectural schools to see that the Style has largely transformed architecture in this country. Of course, Frank Lloyd Wright would deny that he has been influenced himself, but I invite you to draw your own conclusions after you have compared his designs made before 1932 with his more recent work.

Of course the Style has developed and changed and mellowed. It has even generated reactions and created new opponents here and abroad. We may mention in passing the bitter hostility of Hitler and his National Socialist architects to the International Style. Fortunately, this is now a matter of history. But parallel to the German reaction has been the Soviet revival of the stylistic chaos and pomposities of the nineteenth century in the name of proletarian taste and socialist realism. In this country at the present moment, I would say that our best architects take the style for granted so far as large buildings are concerned, whether they be office buildings, apartment houses, schools, stores, airports, or, most appropriately, the new buildings for the United Nations.

We have among us, however, some old-line functionalists, some orthodox social realists and, lastly, the designers of houses, in the style which Mr. Mumford has proposed might be called the "Bay Region Style."

That there has developed during the past ten years an informal and ingratiating kind of wooden domestic building cannot be denied,



Wurster's Reynolds House

Barr: "That there has developed an informal and ingratiating kind of wooden domestic building cannot be denied."

but if one studies British, Swiss, and Scandinavian architectural magazines, it is clear that this style, too, is international. Indeed, I think we might call this kind of building the International Cottage Style, for it appears to be a kind of domestication of the International Style itself, a kind of *neue Gemütlichkeit* with which to supersede the *neue Sachlichkeit* of the 1920's. It would seem to fulfill Hitchcock and Johnson's suggestion made in 1932 that more wood be used in modern architecture. At the same time, it answers their criticism of the doctrinaire functionalists for not providing "comfortable houses for ordinary living."

It is significant, however, that when such a master of the Cottage Style as William Wurster is faced with a problem of designing an office building or a great project for the United Nations, he falls back upon a pretty orthodox version of the International Style.

Now, in deference to our Chairman, I should like to end my remarks with a quotation from his essay on housing written for the Museum catalog in 1932. Apropos of the great International Style housing projects around Cologne and Frankfurt, he writes: "In these experi-

ments, one witnesses the growing integration of modern architecture, an integration with the land itself, with human beings and their needs. Those who cling to the ideal of the romantic cottage, however that ideal is betrayed and soiled by present-day actualities, are doubtless incapable of appreciating the esthetic achievement of these new housing projects. It is as if they rejected the automobile because it does not resemble a sedan chair. But the romantic cottage is not a universal form."

And he concludes: "The eye is gratified by the new architecture, not alone because its order and composure is the essence of all sound architecture; the eye is likewise happy because every other function of the mind and body is in effective rhythm."

Henry-Russell Hitchcock:

Mr. Barr has made it almost unnecessary for me to speak, having quoted so freely from what Mr. Johnson and I wrote more than fifteen years ago. He had more courage than I. I couldn't bring myself to reread it. I was gratified to see that Mr. Johnson and I had provided, as it were, so many emergency exits.

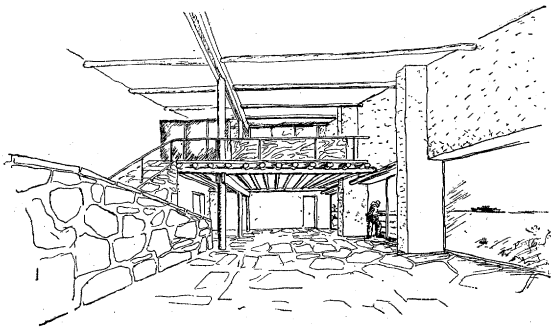
However, considering some of the things that have happened since, to which he made reference, I would like to point out that at the time we wrote the book, Le Corbusier had already designed the Errazuris house in South America, and that certainly shows some of the essential characteristics of the new Cottage Style. And he himself referred to the use of rubble walls in Madame de Mandrot's house at Le Pradet, as well as the Swiss Pavilion. As we look around today, a great deal of what is happening was presaged by things that happened quite a long time ago and was, if I may say so, apparently provided for in the loose frame that Mr. Johnson and I drew around the concept of an international style.

Mr. Barr thinks it a little bold to assume a victory, but it has seemed to me almost as if we could now consider International Style to be synonymous with the phrase "Modern Architecture"; so long as we put the emphasis on *architecture* and do not thereby imply just any building of the present period.

But our subject this evening is "What Is Happening to *Modern Architecture*?" One thing that is happening, it seems to me, is the fact, not only that there are so many of us on the platform this evening, but that there are so many of you in the audience.

The subject of architecture in the broadest and the deepest sense is on the carpet once more. The criticism—for it is a criticism—that is implicit not so much in the work of the Bay Region as in the work of certain Swedish and Swiss architects (not to speak of Dutch architects whose work has lately been described and illustrated in the foreign magazines), is a criticism of the International Style conceived in a limited sense, as if it were literally true that Le Corbusier's houses had been merely machines in which to live.

It seems to me, however, that this criticism and the steps that have been taken are to be subsumed in a more general problem: that is, the problem of expression in architecture. Par-



Le Corbusier's Errazuris House

Hitchcock: ". . . the Errazuris house in South America certainly shows some of the essential characteristics of the new Cottage Style."

allel with the critical interest in the Cottage Style has been a critical interest manifested curiously enough by Mr. Giedion in the question of monumentality.

The Cottage Style is concerned apparently with giving a more domestic, a looser and an easier expression, to domestic architecture, or—as the nineteenth century would call it—the individual, detached villa residence. That, it seems to me, is one of the difficulties about that particular new phase of expression—that its activities are centered on what is frankly not one of the important problems of the architecture of the present day.

The individual, detached residence is always a good field for experiment but it is of very little statistical consequence today, and in the housing field it is mass and group housing and various kinds of production of housing components which are of serious importance.

In the field of monumentality, we have the United Nations buildings, by their size and scale a monument. Whether, under the circumstances (which amount to a sort of committee design), they will have a strong, symbolic expression of their significance, I should doubt. The circumstances make it difficult.

Monumental expression is the most difficult expression to obtain. Pseudo-monumental expression is easy to obtain. Pseudo-monumental expression has, perhaps, in the United Nations buildings been rejected, but that a new monumentality will find its expression there, I doubt.

However, the more we build of large housing projects the sooner the time will come when we will need focal monuments, even if those focal monuments are only small "pubs," public houses which many English architects dream about being allowed to build when their hundred thousand dwellings are completed.

There are, of course, other kinds of expression besides monumentality and domesticity or that particular expression which interests English intellectuals so much—the expression of the village "pub." There are expressions of gaiety,

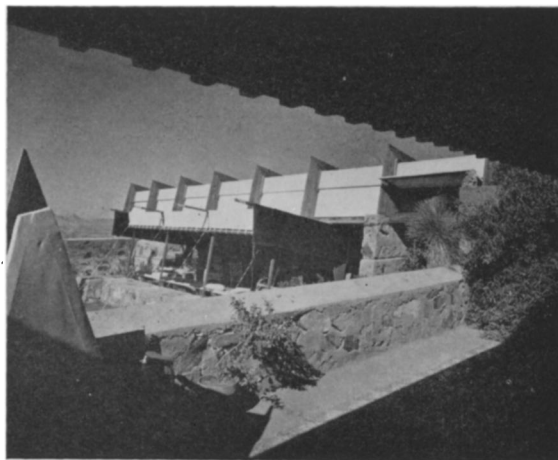
such as was once achieved so superbly within the frame of the International Style by Asplund in the Stockholm Exposition of 1930, and which later expositions have so signally failed to achieve. There is also the sort of expression which is concerned with places of amusement. There is the expression of commercial life, which I think we are now inclined to agree is not adequately brought out by the spike on the Chrysler Building or the mast on the Empire State Building. It actually was intended for mooring Zeppelins. There is also the interesting problem of expression for "atomic" architecture, for the housing of cyclotrons, and for scientific buildings in general.

It may be said that our International Style in its most obvious and lowest common denominator is most successful at expressing industrial life—factories, dams, powerhouses, such as those of the TVA. They are esthetically viable.

It is hard, unless we turn to that extraordinary man, Frank Lloyd Wright, to find much wealth or variety or range of expression in modern architecture at the present time. Tremendous opportunities lie ahead—I am now talking not about something that has happened, but something which I hope is going to happen.

Now, with Mr. Wright there is a danger, for he is obviously the Michelangelo of the twentieth century. Michelangelo was not good for his contemporaries and, least of all, for his students. But Michelangelo, in a period of considerable confusion, was a master who looked forward, not to what was going to happen in ten years, but to what was going to happen in fifty years.

I would like to believe, therefore, that Mr. Wright is aimed 'way beyond any simple "humanization" which may be desirable in the immediate present. We can read off Mr. Wright and only hope that he has another ten or twenty years of production, for, frankly, I do not see anybody in the world who has his capacity for variety of expression. A range of expression



Wright's Taliesin West

Hitchcock: "Mr. Wright is obviously the Michelangelo of the twentieth century."

sufficient for several centuries seems to be concentrated in that man's last few years' projects, as shown in the January number of the *Forum*:

We cannot learn from Mr. Wright, but he can indicate to us, as Mr. Barr has suggested, that he is less of an enemy of the International Style than he claims to be, and that there are many possibilities of expression within the frame of reference of modern architecture.

We are not, therefore, ready for a reaction, as some of the more articulate defenders of the new Cottage Style believe.

Walter Gropius:

As our topic for tonight, part of an article of Mr. Lewis Mumford's was sent around to the speakers, and I must start by apologizing to Mr. Mumford for disagreeing on some basic points, but I will try to behave.

I quote: "The modern accent on living is on the machine." But didn't the initiators of the movement in modern architecture preach just that? We thought, of course, man should be the focus, but the machine was part of his life so we cannot exclude it. I might mention some

personal experiences we had in the Bauhaus. There was an endless violent fight in the Bauhaus over our attempt at a new way of life, which penetrated all our doings. Kandinsky for example had a very good formula, saying, "Let's not say 'either/or,' any more but 'and'; let's not exclude anything but include everything."

In an exhibition in 1923, under the title, "Art and Technics in New Unity," the problems of humanizing the machine were discussed to a great extent, and functionalism for us meant embracing the psychological problems, as well as the material ones.

The word, "functionalism," has been taken too materially. This is evident from my own writings, from writings by Le Corbusier and others of the period. The elements of the new approach were then apparent, but we felt that the new generation was facing the task of refining this approach and making it more subtle, more palatable to the people, and that is exactly what happened.

Today, we are more articulate, more mellow, but the principles have not changed very much. Is the machine for living really "old hat" if we see its meaning without taking the slogan out of context?

At the time when it was written, emphasis was not so much on the machine itself as on the greater use of the machine in service for human life. I was interested, as early as 1910, in prefabrication and wrote my first essay about it. Looking back I think that we dealt not too *much* with the machine but too *little*. We are still enslaved by the machine and its possibilities for business instead of making it our obedient slave for the good life.

In the same book in which Le Corbusier wrote "the machine for living," there is on a prominent page, "Architecture reaches beyond utilitarian problems. Here, human passion creates a drama out of inert materials"—which does not sound like machine worship—or does it? Does the coining of styles help us? Don't we

talk too much about styles and "isms"? What we have looked for in architecture today is a new approach, not yet a style. A style is a successive repetition of an expression which has become settled, as a common denominator. The emphasis on the "isms" and the intellectual interpretation of present movements as styles obscures the creative men behind the new doings.

Our life is not yet settled, so modern architecture is not yet settled. It is in the making. Instead, the flow of continuous growth, the change in expression in accordance with the change in life, should be underlined.

As to the rigorists, they are not limited to the modern school. They are a part of the Beaux Arts as well as the modernists, and I should like to underline the fact that Sigfried Giedion in all his writings fought violently against the Swiss rigorists.

The life functions in a building are too often violated by preconceived formalism and too often the design of a building appears precocious, when it is not sufficiently backed up by the designer's knowledge of the realities involved in the problem or by sufficient experience in the crafts and industrial processes. It is often still too much an end in itself instead of being an integrated part of a new contemporary conception of a better community life, which is our basic aim.

Instead, we are concerned with "isms" and styles. Styles, in my opinion, should be named and outlined by the historian for past periods only. In the present, we still lack the distance necessary for proper impersonal judgment because we are all jealous. Why don't we leave to the future historians the settlement of the history of today's growth in architecture?

I was struck by the definition of the Bay Region Style as something new, characterized by an expression of the terrain, the climate, and the way of life, for that was almost precisely, in the same words, the initial aim of the leading modernists in the world twenty-five years back.

The difference, in my opinion, is only that we have proceeded to greater freedom, and we find suppleness of design, but the leaders as well as the newcomers have also advanced, and the principles are still the same.

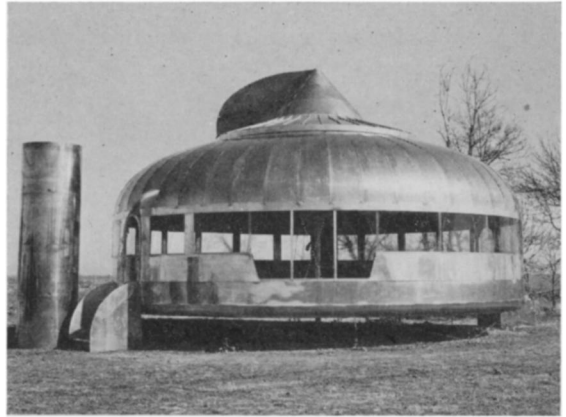
Do we really want a truly universal style to be a meeting of the Oriental and Occidental? I am afraid of it. Do we want to have Chicken a la King with Ferro-Concrete Sauce everywhere in our country, or a regional cuisine for everybody? The International Style is neither international nor a style. The real International Style consists of those borrowed Greek buildings, like the museums and banks and ministries throughout the world, from Leningrad to Washington, but the idea of the so-called International Style was regional in character, developing out of the surrounding conditions.

I would like to suggest that in a period when the leading spirits of mankind try to see human problems on earth as an interdependent entity, any chauvinistic sentimental national prejudice regarding the development of architecture must result in narrowing limitations. The emphasis should be on, "Let us do it together," with each nation, each individual giving his share without giving up regional expression, the emphasis being on teams rather than on individuals. I dare say that we are today much more influenced by each other than in former centuries, because of the rapid development of interchange and intercommunication. This must be welcome, as it enriches us and promotes a common denominator of understanding, so badly needed.

George Nelson:

The problems facing modern architecture have nothing to do with labels.

The talk about Bay Style, or any other style, is irrelevant. It is usually necessary, today, to use old materials and handicraft techniques in houses. That the results should express these limiting circumstances is scarcely remarkable.



Fuller's Dymaxion House

Nelson: "It is here that we will find the No Man's Land of future professional battles."

There is no contradiction, as suggested here tonight, between the "machine look" and "living." This argument was disposed of twenty years ago. It is possible to create a work of art at any technical level.

Most of what happens to architecture is out of the hands of the architects. No architect alive has produced a church or government building that evokes a deep emotional response from the beholder. Faith in the institutions no longer exists, and even genius is powerless in face of this fact.

The only expressions of communal activity that show architectural validity today are factories, commercial structures and projects like TVA. The UN designs show an attractive arrangement of rentable space, but no monument to a great ideal. The ideal exists, but the politicians are no longer its carriers.

To discover the social forces that are shaping modern architecture, one has only to look for the building types that currently generate the greatest excitement. For other forces one must look to the world of science and advanced technology.

The difference between the Tugendhat house and a dwelling in the "Bay Region Style" is almost invisible by comparison with the gap

between the Tugendhat house and Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion house. It is here that we will find the No Man's Land of future professional battles.

What is happening to modern architecture is that it is just barely beginning to feel the impact of the social attitudes and technical facts of a new world in the making. The "New Empiricism" that has the architectural word-peddlers so excited is a natural, ostrich-like and historically insignificant reaction to the impact.

The effect on "modern architecture" of structures now possible will be as catastrophic as the effect of the pioneering work of the early 1900s on the production of the academies. Our problem has nothing whatever to do with the meaningless differences between "Bay Region," "International" or any other styles. It is to free ourselves for creative activity on a whole series of new levels.

Ralph T. Walker:

I think, as a profession, we are very weak because we resent criticism. We are very weak because we become enthusiastic about photographs without adequate knowledge of what photographs mount up to. I disagree about this idea of the international architecture, the architecture of the Greek column. I have been around South America recently and I have just come back from Europe, and I find everywhere that modern architecture means a slab on pillars. It means the same thing in the United States because you pick up the architectural magazines and practically every issue has as its leading number a slab on pillars.

I think it is about time that architects began very definitely to look at this problem and say, "What does it mean in terms of human needs and occupancy?"

Functionalism of materials has blazed our thinking around the world because you will find that the building in Rio for the Education Ministry looks exactly like a building that was

designed for a giraffe in the London Zoo, and it looks exactly like the building that has been designed for the United Nations. In other words, you have a cover of unthinking uncritical acceptance of things.

A critical sense of architecture considers the fact that humanism is its basis.

Humanism is the basis of all art, in my estimation. Art is not an abstraction. We can know what affects our bodies, we can know what affects our minds, through our eyes and through our senses, and apply it to our architecture.

What we are trying to do first of all is to develop surroundings for people to live in, that will give them the greatest amount of the happiness and warmth of life.

Christopher Tunnard:

I represent a special school of modern architecture which Mr. Johnson has just informed me is called "the gold-plated plumbing school."

Actually, apart from such facetious remarks, I believe that this school, though limited in numbers to probably about four people, has a very serious mission. We are worried about the state of modern architecture. We were brought up in the school of modern architecture, we were bred on the *Architectural Review*, and Mr. Johnson's and Mr. Hitchcock's book, and we have gone through a period of modern building, but it seems that there are limitations.

One of the limitations, I think, can be laid at the door of one of the great modern architects, M. Le Corbusier, who, perhaps fortunately, does not practice what he preaches, but one of his slogans is "The plan is the generator"; and another is, "The styles are a lie."

Now, when you are very young and interested in new things, you tend to swallow these statements whole, and I think it is only *now* that those of us in my generation are able to see beyond and through such statements, which are rather glib and probably not at all important. But we feel that architecture which

derives from a space concept or even from a materials concept, such as Mr. Wright puts forward, has serious limitations, and it seems that we need an approach which contains a more positive approach to style and—dare I mention the word, “beauty”?

I feel that there is something lacking in this approach that we have now. There is a great deal of sociological emphasis, the idea that buildings should be good for people, that they should contain the proper amount of interior space, outside parking space, and all those utilitarian things which we know are very important. There is also a tremendous emphasis on the materials, on form, on clean surfaces, on a great many things which are, perhaps, not so very important esthetically.

We have to look, I think, at the buildings which, as Thomas Jefferson said, have received the approbation of all good modern critics, and I think we have to look at the buildings of the past which we have been taught *not* to look at. We have got to look at the buildings that have received the approbation of critics and the buildings which people like, and reconcile public taste and good architectural performance.

It is unfortunate that we have been trained on photographs. Many of us here tonight are students. We have not seen good buildings. There have not been enough of them around, even with the new work that is going on in New York, which, as Mr. Mumford has pointed out, is of a very inferior calibre. I think that perhaps we have to go abroad and see the work that has been approved in the past, for, unfortunately, unlike the great paintings which are now in all museums in this country, the world's great architecture is immovable and it is important to know, apart from photographic representation, what is good architecture and what is not.

And so I think that if we don't make the latest thing in architectural magazines our exclusive diet, perhaps we shall be able to create again buildings which receive the approbation of all good critics.

Frederick Gutheim:

“Style!” The instinctive reaction of any architect when he hears talk about “style” is that someone is trying to pin a label on him. But “style” is important in the language of the critic and the art historian. It seems to me that talks from this platform tonight have been marked by two conflicting approaches to the use of this one word. The language of the critic is important because only through language can we hope to understand what architecture has done, is doing and may do for us.

But the same words do not mean the same things. You have heard tonight, for example, a group of speakers, all of whom are saying the same thing in different words, and I am sure you could have heard a group of speakers, all of whom would be saying the *same* thing but meaning *different* things.

The language that we have to use from this platform is going to defeat us.

I am convinced that modern architecture today is not looking for inspiration to architecture of the past, or to structural problems. It is looking for inspiration to the life around it; it is looking with eyes that have constantly changed as modern science has developed.

When architects today talk about living, when they say that one of the most significant things about building, for example, is that it permits a release of creative abilities in man, or it frees man, they are talking about a new concept. Those words are constantly being refreshed and given new meaning, not by developments in architecture but by developments in biology, in medicine, in education.

The trouble with modern architecture is that we have not enough good architects and the good ones we have are not kept busy enough. We are not recognizing what they can do, and we do not set them to work to do the things we need done. The trouble with modern architecture is that not *enough* is happening in modern architecture.

Marcel Breuer:

I don't feel too much impulse to set "human" (in the best sense of the word) against "formal." If "human" is considered identical with redwood all over the place, or if it is considered identical with imperfection and imprecision, I am against it; also, if it is considered identical with camouflaging architecture with planting, with nature, with romantic subsidies.

If International Style is considered identical with mechanical and impersonal rigorism, down with International Style! Anyway, the word is an unhappy one, just as unhappy as "functionalism." However, all this controversy was in order, I am afraid, about twenty-five years ago. Since then, many things have happened. For instance, just as Sullivan did not eat his functionalism as hot as he cooked it, Le Corbusier did not build his machine for living! His houses are much less machines for living than, for instance, the three thousand family housing developments of the West Coast, the same pseudo-prefabricated houses, hill up, hill down, in rigid rows or in rigid curves—though quite redwoody.

Many things happened, as I see it, which some prefer not to see, because they want to prove or, better, to create, a fifty-year-old original, native and modern California style full of humanity.

"Human" seems to me more than just a pleasant forgiving of imperfection and an easy-goingness as to precision of thinking, as to the quality of planning, as to consequences of materials, details and construction.

God knows, I am all for informal living and for architecture in support of and as background for this, but we won't sidestep the instinct towards achievement—a human instinct indeed. The most contrasting elements of our nature should be brought to happiness at the same time, in the same work, and in the most definite way. The drive toward experiment is there, together with and in contrast to the



Breuer: ". . . Sullivan did not eat his functionalism as hot as he cooked it."

warm joy of security at the fireplace. The crystallic quality of an unbroken white, flat slab is there, together with and in contrast to the rough, texture-y quality of natural wood or broken stone. The perfection of construction and detail is there, together with and in contrast to simplicity, broadmindedness of form and use. The courage of conception is there, together with and in contrast to humble responsibility towards the client. The sensation of man-made space, geometry and architecture is there, together with and in contrast to organic forms of nature and of man. "*Sol y sombra*," as the Spanish say; sun *and* shadow, not sun *or* shadow.

Peter Blake:

I plan to make one point in connection with Mr. Mumford's article. In his attack on what he calls the "mechanical rigorists," I think he presupposes that one aspect of the new architecture, one part of that battle, has already been won, and I do not think that that is the case.

The part of the battle to which I am referring is the one concerning a very prosaic thing, the question of a building industry. I think that all

of you have probably heard that around the year 1910, an automobile cost about the same as a one-family house. A one-family house costs about ten times that much today, and the automobile is a great deal larger and the one-family house a great deal smaller. I think the reasons for that are very obvious, and I think they were very obvious to the inventors of the International Style, or whatever you want to call it.

I don't think they were just trying to be unpleasant. I think they were trying to make a very definite point, and that is, that the Industrial Revolution in building has not yet occurred. It had not occurred around 1910 and it has not occurred yet, and I think that those who today are going in for a new romanticism, who are going in for the new holy trinity of fieldstone, flagstone, and the kidney shape, are delaying that Industrial Revolution in building.

Now, I think that the Bay Region Style is a valid attempt to bring about a more human architecture, because such attempts are valid. But what, after all, is more human than a roof over a man's head? And although we do have more roofs over more men's heads in this country than probably anywhere else, the quality of those roofs leaves a great deal to be desired, and I think that that quality will not be improved until we have done something to the techniques which we use to produce the roofs over men's heads.

I think that the Bay Region Style is lots of fun, and I think that this holy trinity is pleasant and it lends itself to very attractive illustration, but I don't think it has got very much to do with what we should be trying to do today.

Gerhard Kallmann:

Much as I would like to give a competent description of the current European trend in architecture identified as the "New Empiricism," these can be only a few chance remarks of my own, by no means representative of the

viewpoint of British architects or of the publication with which I was connected and which carried an article recently on this matter.

I do not believe that anything can be gained from lending the stigma of a fully fledged architectural theory to what in my opinion is only a paraphrase, an elaboration of the theories of the modern movement. In England, at least in the work of the younger generation, we can observe a deviation away from the formalistic trends of the late thirties, which by the way were followed more by the rank and file than the great protagonists of the movement. To-day we have both a stricter discipline, in the return to the functional core, through emphasis on social and individual psychology, and greater freedom in a widening of the expressive range and the evolution of a more humanistic form language. Symptomatic perhaps is the yearly English pilgrimage to Sweden, my own to Switzerland, where the buildings we would have liked to build ourselves can be seen in the realities of achievement and failure.

It was most instructive for me to see here, when I had the honor to attend one of Professor Gropius' juries at Harvard, that an approach not so very different from ours was encouraged, that stress was laid on the social and technical realities, on expression of innate character as against imposition of form, on the human scale, on refinement of detail.

It is my opinion, that far from condemning as heresy what so soberly is called the New Empiricism (but what all too often in appearance resembles a sentimental eclecticism), we should try to understand it as a variation on the main theme, and enjoy the concomitant enrichment of our architectural idiom. We should condemn it as reactionary, where it leads, for instance, the eminent Swiss art historian Peter Meyer to advocate a return to historicism for important buildings, and others to indulge in folkloristic revivalism. I prefer to think of the more likeable traits of the New Empiricism such as are shown in the Municipal Hospital at Zurich, where the

architectural conception at all times is subordinated to the psychological requirements of the patients. At the same time efforts are made through detail, interesting surface patterning, landscaping to meet the legitimate demands for richness, intricacy, dignity, which were often left unsatisfied by the over-schematic and blatant solutions in earlier phases of modern architecture.

There are admittedly weaknesses here, inasmuch as some Swiss designers representative of this trend have voluntarily stopped short of



AKZ, Associated Architects' Zurich Hospital

Kallmann: "The architectural conception . . . is subordinated to the psychological requirements of the patients."

"architecture," and some of the Scandinavians have produced no more than a collage of nice bits. Eventually this kind of architecture must be infused with an intensity of feeling, which will mould each part to such a degree that total

architectural character can be achieved to replace the grand formal conception which is regarded as too confining for the life content of the building.

Thus I also believe that the practitioners of the New Empiricism will find a greater meaning in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto than in the form world of Le Corbusier and his South American disciples. For in "expressive architecture" lies the key to the vitality of this particular trend and the strength of its contribution to the modern movement.

Talbot Hamlin:

Architecture exists in its context. Whatever an architect does is conditioned by the society in which he finds himself. Certain things are happening and have happened in connection with our society that it seems to me should be of great interest to every creative person.

Mr. Gropius remarked that architecture today depended a great deal on the free exchange of influences from country to country; yet, just recently, an architect of great fame, one of the greatest, in some ways, of modern architects in South America, who was invited to this country to give a course of lectures at the universities here was refused admittance by the State Department, and that after he had been one of the most important contributors to the building of the United Nations.

Oscar Niemeyer, the well-known Brazilian architect, who had been invited to lecture at Yale University, has been refused his visa by the State Department because of his political convictions. Mr. Niemeyer is one of the outstanding modern architects whose international reputation led to his appointment to the United Nations Design Board, which was a remarkable example of international collaboration.

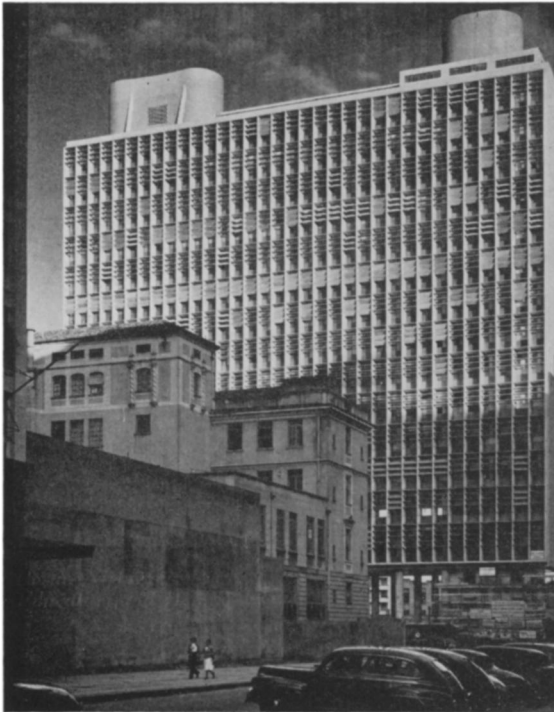
May I say that it is this group's opinion that the essence of contemporary architecture is based on the free and unfettered flow of in-

formation among all countries, and that we therefore urge the State Department to reconsider its action and permit Mr. Niemeyer to deliver the lectures at Yale which he had been invited to give?

At this point Mr. Mumford asked for a vote from the audience. It was decided that all interested individuals should sign Mr. Hamlin's resolution as they left the meeting.

Lewis Mumford:

It is my business to bring this meeting to a close, and I have a very relevant question addressed to all the people on the platform. What is happening to modern architecture? None of us has yet found out. Just now, at eleven o'clock, I am sure the members on this platform are about to come to grips with the real subject that we came here to discuss tonight.



Costa, Niemeyer, Reidy, Leão and Moreira: Ministry of Education and Health, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

There were too many ancient quarrels and ancient stands and ancient attitudes to be resolved before we really got down to it. I contributed to this confusion, I confess. I never wrote an article that was worse understood than this little attempt at reporting what was happening in the world outside.

Giedion, a few years ago, had written an article on Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Company building and had gone out of his way to say that this kind of excess, this luxury, this monumentality is perhaps something we should look for now. I was not attacking Giedion when I called attention to the development of this point of view because I don't think that anything more serious is happening to modern architecture at the present moment than that it is growing up. You do not expect an adolescent to wear the same clothes as he did in babyhood. There will be a time when even whiskers may be appropriate. I am not talking about you, Mr. Hitchcock, at this moment.

This natural development towards richness, towards exuberance — and certainly Frank Lloyd Wright was exuberant in the Johnson Wax Company's offices when he took a very simple problem and gave it a very elaborate answer—this sort of thing certainly is not reprehensible unless it is done badly. At all events, modern architecture is necessarily in the course of growth.

What is the Bay Region Style? Nothing but an example of a form of modern architecture which came into existence with our growth and which is so native that people, when they ask for a building, do not ask for it in any style. That is the healthy state that we should have in every part of the world. To me, that is a sample of internationalism, not a sample of localism and limited effort. Any local effort, if worth anything, is worth reproducing elsewhere; and any universal formula that is worth anything must always be susceptible of being brought home—otherwise it lacks true universality.

To read into that any form of chauvinism seems to me sublimely funny. I cannot take it very seriously, I confess.

Now, as I say, we have reached the point of asking ourselves what *is* happening in modern architecture. Many things are happening. Some things are still to happen. Mr. Gropius well said that the original exponents of the movement in the twenties had a rich conception of human nature. They did not think of it as limited purely to the mechanical environment. Our conception of human nature has been undergoing many modifications, sometimes sad enrichments, during the last ten years. But there are ways in which things should be done, that have been forgotten on account of formulas.

One of the most shocking experiences I had about ten years ago came from a psychologist, who said, looking through a book of modern architecture, "This is very interesting architecture. It is completely extroverted. I can imagine a great many of my patients being happy in these homes. But what are you going to do for the man who has an inner life, who wants to close himself away from the world? Don't the architects recognize that this is also an attribute of the human personality?"

I think that one of the things that must come in due time is such a flexibility in approaching the problem of any particular building that both sides of human nature—the introvert and the extrovert—will be thoroughly recognized.

But I am not here to preach a sermon on the future in modern architecture. I am not competent to do so, in the first place. The fate of modern architecture rests in the hands of the living, who will create it, and of the society of which they are a part. That society is now in the process of a very profound transformation.



Mumford: "... I don't think that anything more serious is happening to modern architecture at the present moment than that it is growing up."

It may either commit suicide on an inconceivably large scale, or it may develop the foundations of a new civilization. If we continue to develop the foundations of a new civilization, the first efforts of the modern style will be seen as indications of that greater humanism and universalism which can be achieved.

And on those words, ladies and gentlemen, I bid you good night!

The following additions have been made to the report of the meeting: First, Carl Koch's speech, which was never delivered because bad weather cancelled his scheduled flight to New York, and second, correspondence between Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and Lewis Mumford, after the discussion, in which they further defined and clarified the ideas they had presented during the meeting.

Carl Koch:

In talking together, architects may find that they have a fundamental philosophy of architecture which is more important than considerations of style. Whatever our motives for becoming architects, I think many of us would agree that in architecture we have a common aim, which can be boiled down to something as simple and corny as this—"working together." Everyday we read, and most of us believe, that we must soon learn to work together or expect to perish together. Do we build horizontally or vertically, in the city or in the country, in the style of the International, or the Bay Region? This is merely more argument over detail. Any consideration of American architecture today must necessarily be concerned with our present overwhelming problem—the provision of adequate living conditions.

Let us see what the acceptance of this common aim in architecture can do for us. In the first place, it takes our jaundiced eye momentarily off Mr. Wright and M. Corbusier and any lesser brethren, and leaves them to the historians and chroniclers. For, interesting and significant as their work is, they cannot provide singlehanded the answer to the contemporary problem of housing. The solution does not lie within the grasp of any one individual. As a group, however, working together with people in other allied fields, architects can contribute a great deal.

When we look at modern architecture from this "work together" standpoint, there aren't many real monuments in sight. I can see only two from here. The first is T.V.A., which most architects would agree is not particularly exciting from the point of view of its building, but is certainly a unique contribution to America, and an example of what cooperative efforts can do. The other example I have in mind is Greenbelt, the 1000 family community near Washington, D.C. built in 1934. Here, the buildings are a more important part of the whole than in the

T.V.A. Yet the architecture is still incidental to the fact that such a project has been constructed. Although most of us would find fault with every building there, I don't think it has been equalled as a whole by any community building project since, though some have been designed by very talented individuals. There are several discouraging facts about these selections; both were begun during the Depression, which proved ironically to be the most propitious time for working together, since nothing like them of a constructive nature has been attempted since.

Many of you by this time are undoubtedly thinking—cooperative projects like Greenbelt, and a common philosophy of architecture are all very well, but what line of action can we take in achieving this common aim? I have been astounded in the last year or so to find that most people still do not understand the reasons for our lack of housing and what the necessary steps are in its solution. Veterans' groups, citizens' groups, state and city boards are all holding meetings, listening to complaints, conducting surveys, being lobbied by one pressure group or another. Meanwhile, the relatively simple issues seem to become less and less clear.

As a line of action toward clarifying these issues, how about a plan of collaboration between representatives of the architectural profession and others with knowledge in the planning and housing field on the one hand, and the Museum on the other, to act as an educational group? By means of this combined membership, through the educational media with which the Museum is so familiar, a comprehensive exposition of the housing situation could be prepared, with suggested steps towards its solution. This material would be made available to large and small groups, in town halls and senatorial chambers, to include everything from bathroom reading to congressional committee displays. Certainly, in this way a real contribution might be made toward the solution of our No. 1 architectural problem.