PART I EARLY MODERNISM

A. THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN

Introduction

The Arts and Crafts movement was among the most prominent and influential of the European movements of the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Its roots, as we saw in the previous volume, extend back several decades: to the writings of Augustus Welby Pugin and John Ruskin, to the Great London Exhibition of 1851, to the reorganization of the Department of Practical Art, and to the artisanal example of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company, founded in 1861.

The movement was also a response to the rapidly maturing Industrial Age – the passage from a system of handicraft production to a society predicated on wages and the machine. Over the preceding decades hundreds of thousands of workers (and their families) had migrated from rural areas to cities and formed a working class, while large and small entrepreneurs, from factory owners to shopkeepers, became the regulators of society and its

burgeoning economy. Major advances in transportation, communications, and the national infrastructure were empowering the individual and opening the world to many to whom it formerly lay closed, even those of modest means. Universal education enhanced literacy rates and created the value system of the new "middle class." And of course numerous social ills also came to be associated with industrialization as well, from unemployment to urban poverty, slums, crime, economic disparities, and rising friction between the classes. Reformers in Britain, which among the European nations had pushed fastest down the path of industrialization, reacted most sharply to this time of social upheaval.

One of the hallmarks of the British Arts and Crafts movement was therefore its social conscience or near-universal condemnation of existing social conditions. For many (and this includes the movement's godfather John Ruskin), the critique took the form of contempt for the machine and industry, as well as a pious nostalgia for medieval living conditions. For others, the argument assumed a political cast: the socialist desire to overturn the economic system of laissez-faire capitalism and share equally the growing economic wealth. For others still, there resided the belief that social conditions, while seemingly spiraling in no clear way, were in a natural process of transformation or evolution, beyond which a new and happier society would emerge, a new "modern" world. What should not be overlooked in these widely shared reactions to the "ugliness" of industrial society was the strong desire by all to enhance artistically and architecturally the living conditions of people.

1 JOHN RUSKIN
from *Fors Clavigera* (1871)

Although the name William Morris is today synonymous with the founding of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, Morris himself always proclaimed John Ruskin as his spiritual "master." Since his early writings, Ruskin's reputation continued to expand, and in 1870 he was appointed the first Slade Professor at the University of Oxford, a post that he would hold for the next seventeen years. In 1871 Ruskin began another long-term involvement with a project that was perhaps closer to his heart – the writing of *Fors Clavigera*. The book assumed the form of letters addressed "To the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain." The ninety-six letters, written over fourteen years, are perhaps the most unique of his writings from the perspective of both style and content. They are unmeasured, fanciful, and unconventional in their language, as well as meandering in their mixing of politics, satire, and artistic criticism. The letters were also connected with another of Ruskin's ventures – the founding of the St. George's Company, later known as the Guild of St. George. This new feudal or communistic society of masters and servants was conceived as a protest against the industrial age, and Ruskin, from his own purse, put up the first £7,000 for its foundation. The idea was to create an endowment from whose interest land could be purchased and turned over to tenants, who in turn would build their homes and cultivate the land without machinery. These new serfs owned their production (save for a tithe to the company), and a class of carpenters and smiths would round out the self-sufficient community. Every aspect of communal life – from education to costume – was to be regulated.

The project, which he describes below, was a failure and a keen disappointment to Ruskin, who over the next several years pleaded for donations but with little success. Nevertheless, the seed was sown, and the idea of a "guild," in another form, would become quite popular throughout Britain in the 1880s.

John Ruskin, from *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*. Chicago and New York: Belford, Clarke & Co., n.d., pp. 72–3.

I am not rich; (as people now estimate riches), and great part of what I have is already engaged in maintaining artworkmen, or for other objects more or less of public utility. The tenth of whatever is left to me, estimated as accurately as I can, (you shall see the accounts,) I will make over to you in perpetuity, with the best security that English law can give, on Christmas Day of this year, with engagement to add the tithe of whatever I earn afterwards. Who else will help, with little or much? the object of such fund being, to begin, and gradually – no matter how slowly – to increase, the buying and securing of land in England, which shall not be built upon, but cultivated by Englishmen, with their own hands, and such help of force as they can find in wind and wave.

I do not care with how many, or how few, this thing is begun, nor on what inconsiderable scale, – if it be but in two or three poor men's gardens. So much, at least, I can buy, myself, and give them. If no help come, I have done and said what I could, and there will be an end. If any help come to me, it is to be on the following conditions: – We will try to make some small piece of English ground, beautiful, peaceful, and fruitful. We will have no steam-engines upon it, and no railroads; we will have no untended or unthought-of creatures on it; none wretched, but the sick; none idle, but the dead. We will have no liberty upon it; but instant obedience to known law, and appointed persons: no equality upon it; but recognition of every betterness that we can find, and reprobation of every worseness. When we want to go anywhere, we will go there quietly and safely, not at forty miles an hour in the risk of our lives; when we want to carry anything anywhere, we will carry it either on the backs of beasts, or on our own, or in carts, or boats; we will have plenty of flowers and vegetables in our gardens, plenty of corn and grass in our fields, – and few bricks. We will have some music and poetry; the children shall learn to dance to it and sing it; – perhaps some of the old people, in time, may also. We will have some art, moreover; we will at least try if, like the Greeks, we can't make some pots. The Greeks used to paint pictures of gods on their pots; we, probably, cannot do as much, but we may put some pictures of insects on them, and reptiles; – butterflies, and frogs, if nothing better. There was an excellent old potter in France who used to put frogs and vipers into his dishes, to the admiration of mankind; we can surely put something nicer than that. Little by little, some higher art and imagination may manifest themselves among us; and feeble rays of science may dawn for us. Botany, though too dull to dispute the existence of flowers; and history, though too simple to question the nativity of men; – nay – even perhaps an uncalculating and uncovetous wisdom, as of rude Magi, presenting, at such nativity, gifts of gold and frankincense.

Faithfully yours,

JOHN RUSKIN.

2 CHRISTOPHER DRESSER
from *Studies in Design* (1874–6)

The work of Henry Cole and Richard Redgrave at South Kensington can be viewed as a second front of the handicraft movement when it blossomed in the 1870s and 1880s, and certainly one of the more gifted designers to emerge from this institution was Christopher Dresser. Born in Glasgow, Dresser entered the London School of Design at Somerset House in 1847 and he was still taking his studies in 1853, when Cole and Redgrave moved it (temporarily) to the Marlborough House. Dresser at this time was influenced by the work of Owen Jones and he even prepared a plate for Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* (1856). Shortly before this book's appearance, Dresser was appointed a lecturer on botany at the reorganized Department of Art and Industry. Dresser quickly distinguished himself as a designer, and over the course of a lengthy career he designed an array of products that today could still be seen as "modern" for their lack of ornamentation and simple functional lines. Among Dresser's numerous writings was his *Studies in Design*. This collection of articles was written to assist "those who desire to decorate houses in a manner that shall reveal their knowledge," and the work forms an early volume to a body of books written in these years to improve the level of interior design. This short passage on "repose" is typical of those in the Cole circle to put forward principles.

But how are we to achieve the necessary amount of repose in our rooms? We need not paint the walls of our apartments grey, nor of mud-colour, neither need we make them black; indeed, the highest sense of repose – *i.e.*, dreamy, soothing repose, may be realised where the brightest colours are employed. Repose is attained by the absence of any want. A plain wall of dingy colour reveals a want; it does not then supply all that is necessary to the production of a sense of quiet and rest. A wall may be covered with the richest decoration, and yet be of such a character that the eye will rest upon it and be satisfied.

If strong colours are used upon walls and ceilings, it is usually desirable that they be employed in very small masses; thus blue, red, and yellow may be used upon a wall (the three primary colours), either alone, or together with white, gold, or black, and be so mingled that the general effect will be perfectly neutral, and an effect so produced may induce the highest sense of repose. There will, however, be a glow, or radiance, about such a wall; yet this radiance will only give richness to neutrality, and this is desirable.

Those effects which are "subtle" – which are not commonplace – which are attained by the expenditure of special skill or knowledge, are the best, provided that the end which is most desired is attained by them. A tertiary colour which is formed of two parts of yellow and one of red and one of blue – in fact, a citrine – is neutral. But a wall covered with a well-designed pattern of minute parts, with the separate members coloured red, blue, and yellow – the yellow being in relation to the blue and the red as two is to one – would be neutral, yet it would be refined and glowing in effect, and thus it would exceed in merit the mere tertiary tint on the wall.

The white ceilings which we have in our rooms are almost fatal to the production of those qualities which yield the sense of repose or rest. A harmony between walls and a ceiling of

Christopher Dresser, from *Studies in Design*. London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1874–6, pp. 11–12.

cream tint is much more easily attained than between walls and a white ceiling; but there is no reason whatever why a ceiling should not be blue, or any dark colour. No satisfactory room, of dark general aspect, can look well if the ceiling is white, and rooms which are somewhat dark in tone are often desirable. Furniture looks best on a dark ground, unless it be white and gold, when it is invariably execrable. Persons always look better against a somewhat dark background, and pictures on light strongly-figured walls are rarely sufficiently attractive to call to themselves the least attention. If it can be had, I like much window-space, to let in light, but the walls I prefer of darkish hue.

If the room is dark through lack of light, the walls may be light above, and have a dark dado – that is, the lower third, or any desired portion, may be dark, and the upper portion light. If this arrangement is adopted, and the upper part of the wall and the ceiling are each of cream tint, while in the cornice there is a rather broad line of deep blue, and one or more lines of pale blue, and perhaps a very fine line of red, these colours being all separated from each other by white – or, in the absence of a cornice, if the ceiling is surrounded by a border in blue and white – the effect will appear to be lighter and brighter than if the room were all white, and yet there will be a certain amount of repose about the general effect such as could not be easily attained were the ceiling white.

By our decorations we must ever seek to achieve repose, but we must always remember that repose is compatible with richness, subtlety, and radiance of effect.

3 RICHARD REDGRAVE
from *Manual of Design* (1876)

Richard Redgrave, as we saw in the first volume (197), wrote the highly influential "Report on Design" for the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was sharply critical of the British goods displayed. The following year he and Henry Cole were appointed as co-directors of the national Schools of Design (Cole in charge of administration; Redgrave of the curriculum). The two men eventually reorganized into the Department of Art and Industry at the South Kensington Museum. In his capacity as co-director, Redgrave established the general principles to be taught at the various design schools and wrote several governmental reports on artistic education. His son Gilbert assembled these writings in 1876, shortly after his father's retirement. They truthfully convey his teachings, and the following passage on style, from the American edition of the book, encapsulates his views regarding architectural style. The emphasis on construction and utility reveals the influence of Augustus Welby Pugin.

In considering the elements of *style*, it must be remembered, that style does not merely relate to decoration, as is too often supposed, but originates in construction, to which decoration is only subsidiary. All the great æras of style have been notedly æras of changed construction. The mound-like temples of Egypt, the horizontal constructions of Greece, the arched vaultings of Rome, the vertical aspirings of Gothic buildings, contain elements of STYLE as

Richard Redgrave, from *Manual of Design* (1876). New York: Scribner, Welford & Armstrong, 1877, p. 15.

marked in their *bare walls*, as when, in their completed state, they are covered with the rich decorative treatments peculiar to them.

These preliminary arguments being admitted, it will follow, first, that style implies some dominating influence reflecting the mind of the age in all its works, and therefore presumes a certain unity of character throughout.

Secondly, that the primary elements of style are constructive, and that the design of a work must have regard to construction, and consequently to proper use of materials, prior to the consideration of its ornamental decoration.

Thirdly, that as construction necessarily implies a purpose, *utility* must have the precedence of decoration.

Fourthly, as construction necessitates a proper consideration of materials, and as each material has its own mode of manipulation, and is wrought by separate and varied processes; design must be bad which applies indiscriminately the same constructive forms or ornamental treatments to materials differing in their nature and application.

Fifthly, that as the greater regulates the lesser, the building should determine the style, and all which it contains of furniture or decoration should conform to its characteristics; and thus there would be a proper uniformity of style throughout, and a subordination of all the inferior objects to one another and to the whole.

4 WILLIAM MORRIS
from "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization" (1881)

Morris's writings specifically devoted to architecture were few, but they were nevertheless highly influential within Britain. This particular lecture may well have served as an architectural manifesto to the Arts and Crafts movement. The themes are quintessentially Morris: the carelessness and "ugliness" wrought by modern industrial society and its "progress," the confusion of luxury with art, the slavery of the worker to mechanical toil, and the scarring of the physical environment with a pervasive disregard for the beauty of nature and simple living. At one point in the lecture, Morris points to a common laborer's cottage built of Cotswold limestone – "a work of art and a piece of nature" – as the architectural ideal to be opposed to the speculative creations of suburban London. The following passage of the lecture of 1881, which appears near the conclusion of his talk, wraps these themes up in a philosophy of simplicity and respect for nature.

I believe that what I am now saying will be well understood by those who really care about art, but to speak plainly I know that these are rarely to be found even among the cultivated classes: it must be confessed that the middle classes of our civilization have embraced luxury instead of art, and that we are even so blindly base as to hug ourselves on it, and to insult the

William Morris, from "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization" (1881), in *Hopes and Fears for Art*. Boston: Roberts Bros., 1882, pp. 212–14.

memory of valiant peoples of past times and to mock at them because they were not encumbered with the nuisances that foolish habit has made us look on as necessaries. Be sure that we are not beginning to prepare for the art that is to be, till we have swept all that out of our minds, and are setting to work to rid ourselves of all the useless luxuries (by some called comforts) that make our stuffy art-stifling houses more truly savage than a Zulu's kraal or an East Greenlander's snow hut.

I feel sure that many a man is longing to set his hand to this if he only durst; I believe that there are simple people who think that they are dull to art, and who are really only perplexed and wearied by finery and rubbish: if not from these, 'tis at least from the children of these that we may look for the beginnings of the building up of the art that is to be.

Meanwhile, I say, till the beginning of new construction is obvious, let us be at least destructive of the sham art: it is full surely one of the curses of modern life, that if people have not time and eyes to discern or money to buy the real object of their desire, they must needs have its mechanical substitute. On this lazy and cowardly habit feeds and grows and flourishes mechanical toil and all the slavery of mind and body it brings with it: from this stupidity are born the itch of the public to over-reach the tradesmen they deal with, the determination (usually successful) of the tradesman to over-reach them, and all the mockery and flouting that has been cast of late (not without reason) on the British tradesman and the British workman, – men just as honest as ourselves, if we would not compel them to cheat us, and reward them for doing it.

Now if the public knew anything or art, that is excellence in things made by man, they would not abide the shams of it; and if the real thing were not to be had, they would learn to do without, nor think their gentility injured by the forbearance.

Simplicity of life, even the barest, is not misery, but the very foundation of refinement: a sanded floor and whitewashed walls, and the green trees, and flowery meads, and living waters outside; or a grimy palace amid the smoke with a regiment of housemaids always working to smear the dirt together so that it may be unnoticed; which, think you, is the most refined, the most fit for a gentleman of those two dwellings?

So I say, if you cannot learn to love real art, at least learn to hate sham art and reject it. It is not so much because the wretched thing is so ugly and silly and useless that I ask you to cast it from you; it is much more because these are but the outward symbols of the poison that lies within them: look through them and see all that has gone to their fashioning, and you will see how vain labor, and sorrow, and disgrace have been their companions from the first, – and all this for trifles that no man really needs!

5 CHRISTOPHER DRESSER
from *Japan: Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufacturers* (1882)

One of the cultural influences to appear across Europe and North America in the second half of the nineteenth century was Japanese art and architecture, examples of which were viewed with increasing interest at the various international exhibitions. Christopher Dresser first discussed his fascination with the theme in a paper he read before the Royal Society of Arts in 1874, "Eastern Art and its Influence on European Manufactures and Taste." In displaying several objects to his audience, he noted that Asian art was at heart an expression of a "poetic thought or a beautiful idea." Two years later Dresser departed London for a lecture tour of the United States, which he extended with a three-month tour of Japan at the beginning of 1877. In the Preface to this chronicle of this visit, Dresser admits to being "an earnest student of Oriental art for nearly thirty years." What follows in the passage below, from a book heavily illustrated with woodcuts, is one of the first attempts to explain the principles of Japanese architecture from a sympathetic Western perspective.

Before we begin to consider Japanese architecture itself we must look at one or two of those circumstances which have always modified the architecture of a nation, as the climate, the materials at command for the erection of edifices, and the wants which have consequently to be met by the production of a building.

Although Japan has a considerable rainfall, the rain is almost exclusively confined to one season of the year (about six weeks, between the end of April and the early part of June), and this wet period is followed by a continuance of hot weather.

This is a general statement, but the climate is by no means the same throughout the whole of Japan. In the central portion cold is intense on some winter days, while the heat is great in summer; but the long and severe frosts of the north are unknown at the Satsuma end of the country.

The Japanese seek shelter from the rain, and they desire houses which give shade from the sun. They also require buildings which allow of the freest circulation of air. They are a hardy people, and can stand cold, and in the warmer season lead what is practically an outdoor life. At this period of the year, and indeed through most of the winter days, the window-like surroundings of their houses are removed, when all that remains is a roof supported on uprights.

But although a Japanese house is a building intended to afford shelter from rain and sun, the nature of the building is influenced by other causes.

Japan is a land of earthquakes. And this brings us to one of the most singular facts connected with the structure of Japanese buildings; – a method adopted with the special view of insuring safety during these periods of the earth's vibration.

Japanese houses and temples are put together in a solid and simple manner, each work being complete in itself, and having an altogether independent existence. Thus a Japanese

Christopher Dresser, from *Japan: Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufacturers*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1882, pp. 234–5, 237–8.

house is in no way built upon foundations, or fixed to the ground on which it rests. It stands upon a series of legs, and these legs usually rest on round-topped stones of such a height as will, during the rainy season, support the timber uprights above any water that may lie upon the ground.

It is obvious that while an object fixed to the earth might, if rocked, be broken off from the ground or become strained and destroyed, that that which is loose would simply oscillate and settle down again after the cause of its vibration had ceased. For instance, we may cause a chair or a table to rock by jolting it, but in a very short time it will become stationary and will be uninjured; whereas, were the legs fixed, the application of a small amount of pressure on the upper part (especially if the top was heavy), or any upheaving of a portion of the ground on which it rests, would be likely to injure or destroy it.

[. . .]

A notable instance of the Japanese understanding of the conditions under which they exist occurs in the manner of giving security to pagodas. Pagodas are often of great height, yet many have existed for seven hundred years, and have withstood successfully the many vibrations of the ground, which must have inevitably achieved their overthrow had they been erections of stone or brick.

When I first ascended a pagoda I was struck with the amount of timber employed in its construction; and I could not help feeling that the material here wasted was even absurdly excessive, But what offended my feelings most was the presence of an enormous log of wood, in the centre of the structure, which ascended from its base to its apex. At the top this mass of timber was nearly two feet in diameter, and lower down a log equally large was bolted to each of the four sides of this central mass.

I was so surprised with this waste of timber that I called the attention of my good friend Sakata to the matter; and especially denounced the use of the centre block. To my astonishment he told me that the structure must be strong to support the vast central mass. In my ignorance I replied that the centre part was not supported by the sides, but upon reaching the top I found this monstrous central mass suspended, like the clapper of a bell; and when I had descended I could, by lying on the ground, see that there was an inch of space intervening between it and the earth which formed the floor of the pagoda.

The pagoda is to a Buddhist temple what a spire is to a Christian church; and by its clever construction it is enabled to retain its vertical position even during the continuance of earthquake shocks: for by the swinging of this vast pendulum the centre of gravity is kept within the base.

I now understood the reason for that lavish use of timber which I had so rashly pronounced to be useless; and I see that there is a method in Japanese construction which is worthy of high appreciation. In the absence of any other instance the employment of this scientific method of keeping the pagoda upright shows how carefully the Japanese have thought out the requirements to be met.

6 OSCAR WILDE
from "Art and the Handicraftsman" (1882)

One of the young artists to be drawn into the Arts and Crafts movement was the writer and playwright Oscar Wilde. A native of Dublin, Wilde attended Trinity College in his hometown before attending Oxford between 1874 and 1879. There he was first attracted to the lectures of the artistic critic Walter Pater, who advocated "art for art's sake," but after a chance encounter on High Street with John Ruskin – "going up to his lecture in cap and gown" – Wilde was also challenged by his suggestion to "do good to other people." This challenge soon entailed building a road between two neighboring villages. Wilde would later be drawn into the artistic circle known as the "Decadents" (notable for the work of Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Symons), but for a few years at least he was strongly attracted to the teachings of Ruskin and Morris. In 1882 Wilde embarked on an extended lecture tour of the United States and Canada, where he was one of the first to take forth the message to the New World. In this particular lecture, likely given in Philadelphia, he not only paraphrases the ideas of Ruskin and Morris but also encourages his American listeners to join the new movement and create a new American art.

Ours has been the first movement which has brought the handicraftsman and the artist together, for remember that by separating the one from the other you do ruin to both; you rob the one of all spiritual motive and all imaginative joy, you isolate the other from all real technical perfection. The two greatest schools of art in the world, the sculptor at Athens and the school of painting at Venice, had their origin entirely in a long succession of simple and earnest handicraftsmen. It was the Greek potter who taught the sculptor that restraining influence of design which was the glory of the Parthenon; it was the Italian decorator of chests and household goods who kept Venetian painting always true to its primary pictorial condition of noble colour. For we should remember that all the arts are fine arts and all the arts decorative arts. The greatest triumph of Italian painting was the decoration of a pope's chapel in Rome and the wall of a room in Venice. Michael Angelo wrought the one, and Tintoret, the dyer's son, the other. And the little 'Dutch landscape, which you put over your sideboard to-day, and between the windows to-morrow, is' no less a glorious 'piece of work than the extents of field and forest with which Benozzo has made green and beautiful the once melancholy arcade of the Campo Santo at Pisa,' as Ruskin says.

Do not imitate the works of a nation, Greek or Japanese, Italian or English; but their artistic spirit of design and their artistic attitude to-day, their own world, you should absorb but imitate never, copy never. Unless you can make as beautiful a design in painted china or embroidered screen or beaten brass out of your American turkey as the Japanese does out of his grey silver-winged stork, you will never do anything. Let the Greek carve his lions and the Goth his dragons: buffalo and wild deer are the animals for you.

Golden rod and aster and rose and all the flowers that cover your valleys in the spring and your hills in the autumn: let them be the flowers for your art. Not merely has Nature given

Oscar Wilde, from *Essays and Lectures* (1888). London: Methuen & Co. Reprinted New York: Garland, 1978, pp. 185–8, 190–1.

you the noblest motives for a new school of decoration, but to you above all other countries has she given the utensils to work in.

You have quarries of marble richer than Pentelicus, more varied than Paros, but do not build a great white square house of marble and think that it is beautiful, or that you are using marble nobly. If you build in marble you must either carve it into joyous decoration, like the lives of dancing children that adorn the marble castles of the Loire, or fill it with beautiful sculpture, frieze and pediment, as the Greeks did, or inlay it with other coloured marbles as they did in Venice. Otherwise you had better build in simple red brick as your Puritan fathers, with no pretence and with some beauty. Do not treat your marble as if it was ordinary stone and build a house of mere blocks of it. For it is indeed a precious stone, this marble of yours, and only workmen of nobility of invention and delicacy of hand should be allowed to touch it at all, carving it into noble statues or into beautiful decoration, or inlaying it with other coloured marbles: for 'the true colours of architecture are those of natural stone, and I would fain see them taken advantage of to the full. Every variety is here, from pale yellow to purple passing through orange, red, and brown, entirely at your command; nearly every kind of green and grey also is attainable, and with these and with pure white what harmony might you not achieve. Of stained and variegated stone the quantity is unlimited, the kinds innumerable. Were brighter colours required, let glass, and gold protected by glass. be used in mosaic, a kind of work as durable as the solid stone and incapable of losing its lustre by time. And let the painter's work be reserved for the shadowed loggia and inner chamber.

[. . .]

This is the spirit of our movement in England, and this is the spirit in which we would wish you to work, making eternal by your art all that is noble in your men and women, stately in your lakes and mountains, beautiful in your own flowers and natural life. We want to see that you have nothing in your houses that has not been a joy to the man who made it, and is not a joy to those that use it. We want to see you create an art made by the hands of the people to please the hearts of the people too. Do you like this spirit or not? Do you think it simple and strong, noble in its aim, and beautiful in its result? I know you do.

7 ARTHUR H. MACKMURDO
from "Arbitrary Conditions of Art" (1887)

One of the defining moments for the Arts and Crafts movement was the founding of the Century Guild in 1882 by Selwyn Image, Arthur Mackmurdo, and his former pupil Herbert Horne. The purpose of the guild was twofold: first to counter the influence of the Royal Academy and its concern for the "high arts," and second to raise the so-called minor arts to an equal footing. Whereas Image was an illustrator, Mackmurdo was

Arthur H. Mackmurdo, from "Arbitrary Conditions of Art," in *Hobby Horse* II (1887), pp. 58–60.

trained as an architect, and his first house on Private Road, Enfield was built in 1876. Most important in shaping his outlook was John Ruskin, with whom Mackmurdo traveled to Italy in 1874 and for whom he later taught. In his important essay written for the Century Guild's mouthpiece, *Hobby Horse*, Mackmurdo pens another manifesto to the new movement. If the first of his architectural requisites ("ornament should be a finish of finished construction") traces its lineage back to Pugin, his other two points ("appeal to the sense" and "interesting and appropriate in symbolism") herald Art Nouveau sensibilities already taking formation.

The choice completion of things necessary: this is the function of the decorative Arts, those Arts that, beginning in the endowment of the platter with simple imagery, find their end in the glorification of the temple walls. "Look that thou make them after their pattern shewed thee in the mount." How then shall we follow this pattern in architecture? If we answer this, we answer for all the Arts; for this Art comprehends all others, inasmuch as it is architecture that builds up the inner formal world in which all actual imagery lives, and which all imagery makes interesting: a world as self-contained and as fully informed by the Creative Genius as that outer world wherein Nature reigns; one also to be as much reverenced, since it is the joint creation of all peoples and of all ages: the soul treasury of all remaining from the inner life of the human past. For our purpose, however, we will take it part by part, dismissing architecture proper by saying it should be the Scholarship of Construction informed with character and with purpose; or to use our old definition, the choice completion of skilful building. If we understand this, it is sufficient for its service and for its symbolism. For that music of proportion which comes from the delicate adjustment of space to space in window and wall is one of the grandest elements of Beauty, and it is the highest compliment the artist can pay to their necessity that he makes them lovely in their mere disposition and measure. But in the sculptured or pictorial ornament of these features, this is the authoritative pattern after which the artist must work, would he be guided, and would he have his Art adequate in interest. In order, the requisites are these: –

I. His ornament should be a finish of finished construction.
II. It should make a direct appeal to the sense.
III. It should be interesting and appropriate in symbolism.

Thus, the first is a test of the simplicity of an ornament's application; the second is a test of its power in sensuous effect; the third is a test of its subjective force.

By saying that it should be a finish of finished construction, it is meant that the ornament should be not the embellishment of ill-bound books, but the gracing of exquisite workmanship. This implies that it should claim for itself no necessity of structure, so that were the ornament omitted the construction would suffer no change. Now to allow but the slightest departure from this frank simplicity of application, or technical rightness, is inevitably to doom the artistic result of any work, as may be seen in the case of turrets, gables, and other features built up solely for picturesque effect in our suburban villas. To confine this condition within a more restricted limit, as some have tried to do, is unnecessary for the architect, since that "sentiment exquis de la service," so strong in the artist, will safely guide in matters of detail, making it impossible for him to exceed the limits of artistic propriety. Now the best example of this simple application of ornament, is to be found in the decoration of structural points chosen for that purpose by the early Gothic builders, and in the directness of treatment employed by the metal workers and furniture workers of the fifteenth century. By saying that ornament should directly appeal to the sense, is meant that

the general aspect of ornament should before all else be decorative and full of *taste*. And since the decorative aspect depends largely on a certain inevitableness of disposition in the parts, as in the case of musical intervals, the ornament should have movement, and this movement should be rhythmic. Only by insistence on this ''tastefulness'' or ''sympathy'' of arrangement in his ornament, by means of symmetry or by means of repetition that is, can the artist hope to be successful in exciting the sensuous nature to the degree required of Art. And in evidence of this decorative quality, we may study the Attic vases, the ornaments of Byzantine buildings, the carpets and the cretonnes of William Morris.

8 WILLIAM MORRIS
from ''The Revival of Architecture'' (1888)

In one of Morris's later writings on architecture, his views on the prospects of architecture are somewhat rosier than those of six years earlier. The theme of the lecture is a brief history of the present architectural ''revival,'' which he traces to the Anglo-Catholic reform movements of the 1840s and to the writings of John Ruskin (*Stones of Venice* and his essay ''On the Nature of Gothic''). Of the evolution of medieval forms into the Queen Anne style in the late 1860s and 1870s, Morris is less sanguine, although not entirely disapproving. He concludes that the reformers are simply too few in number to have much of an impact on society as a whole, and it is indeed society that must first change if genuine architectural reform is to take place. The concluding passage to his talk was first published in the *Fortnightly Review* of May 1888.

There I say some of the Gothic feeling was left, joined to forms, such as sash windows, yet possible to be used in our own times. The architects in search of a style might well say:

> We have been driven from ditch to ditch; cannot we yet make a stand? The unapproachable grace and loveliness of the fourteenth century is hull down behind us, the fifteenth-century work is too delicate and too rich for the commonplace of to-day; let us be humble, and begin once more with the style of well-constructed, fairly proportioned brick houses which stand London smoke well, and look snug and comfortable at some village end, or amidst the green trees of a squire's park. Besides, our needs as architects are not great; we don't want to build churches any more; the nobility have their palaces in town and country already (I wish them joy of some of them!); the working man cannot afford to live in anything that an architect could design; moderate-sized rabbit-warrens for rich middle-class men, and small ditto for the hanger-on groups to which we belong, is all we have to think of. Perhaps something of a style might arise amongst us from these lowly beginnings, though indeed we have come down a weary long way from Pugin's *Contrasts*. We agree with him still, but we are driven to admire and imitate some of the very things he cursed, with our enthusiastic approbation.

William Morris, from ''The Revival of Architecture'' (1888), in Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 322–4.

Well, a goodish many houses of this sort have been built, to the great comfort of the dwellers in them, I am sure; but the new style is so far from getting under way, that while on the other hand the ordinary builder is covering England with abortions which make us regret the brick box and slate lid of fifty years ago, the cultivated classes are rather inclined to return to the severity (that is to say, the unmitigated expensive ugliness) of the last dregs of would-be Palladian, as exemplified in the stone lumps of the Georgian period. Indeed I have not heard that the 'educated middle classes' had any intention of holding a riotous meeting on the adjacent Trafalgar Square to protest against the carrying out of the designs for the new public offices which the Aedileship of Mr. Shaw-Lefevre threatened us with. As to public buildings, Mr. Street's Law Courts are the last attempt we are likely to see of producing anything reasonable or beautiful for that use; the public has resigned itself to any mass of dulness and vulgarity that it may be convenient for a department to impose upon it, probably from a half-conscious impression that at all events it will be good enough for the work (so-called) which will be done in it.

In short we must answer the question with which this paper began by saying that the architectural revival, though not a mere piece of artificial nonsense, is too limited in its scope, too much confined to an educated group, to be a vital growth capable of true development. The important fact in it is that it is founded on the sympathy for history and the art of historical generalization, which, as aforesaid, is a gift of our epoch, but unhappily a gift in which few as yet have a share. Among populations where this gift is absent, not even scattered attempts at beauty in architecture are now possible, and in such places generations may live and die, if society as at present constituted endures, without feeling any craving for beauty in their daily lives; and even under the most favourable circumstances there is no general impulse born out of necessity towards beauty, which impulse alone can produce a universal architectural style, that is to say, a habit of elevating and beautifying the houses, furniture, and other material surroundings of our life.

All we have that approaches architecture is the result of a quite self-conscious and very laborious eclecticism, and is avowedly imitative of the work of past times, of which we have gained a knowledge far surpassing that of any other period. Meanwhile whatever is done without conscious effort, that is to say the work of the true style of the epoch, is an offence to the sense of beauty and fitness, and is admitted to be so by all men who have any perception of beauty of form. It is no longer passively but actively ugly, since it has added to the dreary utilitarianism of the days of Dr. Johnson a vulgarity which is the special invention of the Victorian era. The genuine style of that era is exemplified in the jerry-built houses of our suburbs, the stuccoed marine-parades of our watering-places, the flaunting corner public-houses of every town in Great Britain, the raw-boned hideousness of the houses that mar the glorious scenery of the Queen's Park at Edinburgh. These form our true Victorian architecture. Such works as Mr. Bodley's excellent new buildings at Magdalen College, Mr. Norman Shaw's elegantly fantastic Queen Anne houses at Chelsea, or Mr. Robson's simple but striking London board-schools, are mere eccentricities with which the public in general has no part or lot.

This is stark pessimism, my readers may say. Far from it. The enthusiasm of the Gothic revivalists died out when they were confronted by the fact that they form part of a society which will not and cannot have a living style, because it is an economical necessity for its existence that the ordinary everyday work of its population shall be mechanical drudgery;

and because it is the harmony of the ordinary everyday work of the population which produces Gothic, that is, living architectural art, and mechanical drudgery cannot be harmonized into art. The hope of our ignorance has passed away, but it has given place to the hope born of fresh knowledge. History taught us the evolution of architecture, it is now teaching us the evolution of society; and it is clear to us, and even to many who refuse to acknowledge it, that the society which is developing out of ours will not need or endure mechanical drudgery as the lot of the general population; that the new society will not be hag-ridden as we are by the necessity for producing ever more and more market-wares for a profit, whether any one needs them or not; that it will produce to live, and not live to produce, as we do. Under such conditions architecture, as a part of the life of people in general, will again become possible, and I believe that when it is possible, it will have a real new birth, and add so much to the pleasure of life that we shall wonder how people were ever able to live without it. Meantime we are waiting for that new development of society, some of us in cowardly inaction, some of us amidst hopeful work towards the change; but at least we are all waiting for what must be the work, not of the leisure and taste of a few scholars, authors, and artists, but of the necessities and aspirations of the workmen throughout the civilized world.

9 WALTER CRANE
from *The Claims of Decorative Art* (1892)

Walter Crane, together with William Morris, represents the more militant wing of the Arts and Crafts movement in Great Britain. The son of an artist, he was initially trained in wood engraving by William James Linton, but soon branched out into watercolors and painting. Already well established as an illustrator of children's books in the 1860s, Crane came under the influence of Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones, and in the following decade he added the design of wallpapers, fabrics, and ceramics to his repertoire of artistic interests. He drew close to Morris and his socialist politics in the 1880s and with him joined the Social Democratic Federation, an early Marxist group. Crane later followed Morris in departing the organization to form the Socialist League, and he became active within Fabian circles as well. *The Claims of Decorative Art* (1892) is a collection of talks delivered over the previous decade, perhaps more political than artistic in their overall tone. The leading theme is the new art under the new socialism – "A religion and a moral code as well as an economic system" – which Crane repeatedly contrasts with the evils of commercialism.

Through the columns of the colossal architecture of time we look back down the long vista of ages and epochs, and read their spirit in the unmistakable language of art, coloured as it is by the human systems and beliefs of which it is the monument; whether as in the wall-paintings and reliefs of ancient Assyria, Egypt, and Persia, art is devoted to the glorification of military or sacerdotal despotism; or the systematised symbolism of an ancient nature

Walter Crane, from *The Claims of Decorative Art.* London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1892, pp. 12–15.

worship, humanised and made beautiful by the Greek, informed by freedom and life; decaying amid the corruption of ancient Rome, or graced with a new splendour from the East, rising in the solemn magnificence of Byzantine art; and so through the vivid imagination of the Middle Ages, absorbed in the new mysticism, yet through the Church linked to the hopes as well as the fears of humanity. Then with the new thoughts and hopes of the Renaissance it rekindles its lamp at the shattered shrine of classical sculpture and learning, until choked with artifice and pedantry in succeeding centuries, it is forced back to nature and life again on the threshold of our own time. But again it is in danger from a new tyranny in that unscrupulous commercialism, which is not less dangerous because less tangible, and not less despotic because it is masked under the form of political liberty. Steam machinery, like a many-headed, many-handed dragon, rules industry literally with a rod of iron, and fain would it make art prisoner too, for its profit, but that its touch is death. Intended for the service of man and for the saving of human labour, it has under our economic system enslaved humanity instead, and become an engine for the production of profits, an express train in the race for wealth, only checked by the brake of what is called over-production. Who can tell what will be the end of the journey?

Thus we are driven to the conclusion that the whole force of our economic system is against spontaneous art, and it is in spite of it that there is any life left in it yet. As William Morris has so strikingly pointed out, the system of producing all things for profit, which has succeeded the old one of producing for use; the necessity of selling in the big world market, division of labour, and lastly, machine labour, have rapidly destroyed the art of the people, and are fast vulgarising and destroying all local characteristics in art, as in costume and the surroundings of common life throughout the world. The system of absolute individual ownership of land, which, with the advance of commercialism, has displaced the older systems of tenure, and defrauded the people of their common rights wholesale, naturally leads to much destruction of natural beauty, and when not destroyed it is made inaccessible. It is also answerable, with the causes already named, for that other great disaster both to architecture and art already alluded to, the abnormal growth of the big towns, which year by year throws out its long and aimless feelers that feed upon the green country. When we speak of an advance in education, we too often forget that no education of the schools can compensate for life passed amid hills and woods, and by the sea, itself an education in a lore never to be forgotten.

Overshadowed by such conditions of life, what wonder is it that we should get our art by accident, that it should be in great measure the Art of Accident, which is really what modern realism or naturalism comes to, in spite of elaborate systems of art training, and the elaborate unlearning of them which follows? The sense of beauty may be stunted, but Nature cannot be altogether suppressed under the most perverse social conditions. It is sometimes urged in defence of the artistic aspects of modern life that strange and wonderful momentary effects are seen, in London smoke-fogs, for instance, or amid the fiery eyes of railway signals, and our blackened Stygian rivers, where the Charon of the coal-wharf plies his trade. I have even heard an apostle of beauty defend those monuments of commercial effrontery and theatrical competition, our advertisement hoardings, covered with varicoloured posters, as in certain lights becoming transfigured so as to rival the tints on a Japanese fan. But it is one thing to find accidental beauties in the midst of monstrosities, jewels on dung-hills as it were, and quite another to defend the monstrosities for the sake of

accidental beauties. The glow, the light fades, and with it the momentary exaltation of spirit; the north-east wind succeeds the south-west, and there being no dignity of form or beauty of proportion in our streets, they are apt to look more sordid and miserable than before. Grace and spirit may be shown by a child dancing to a barrel-organ in a smoky, squalid street, but one would rather see her on a village green dancing to a shepherd's pipe. We should aim at a condition of things which would not keep beauty at a distance from common life, or on the footing of an occasional visitor. No artist should be satisfied with such a cold relationship.

Art is not the mere toy of wealth, or the superficial bedizenment of fashion, not a revolving kaleidoscope of dead styles, but in its true sense, in a vital and healthy condition, the spontaneous expression of the life and aspirations of a free people.

10 JOHN D. SEDDING
from "Design" (1891)

John Sedding was another architect strongly attracted to the Arts and Crafts movement, one whose influence remains today much underappreciated. He was trained by George Street in the late 1850s, and later set up an office with his brother in London. After his brother's death and a period in Bristol, Sedding returned to London in 1874, where he rented an office next door to Morris and Company. His Holy Trinity Church, London (1885–9), became an early showcase for the talents of many Arts and Crafts designers, but perhaps more important were his polemics, which at times were critical of the movement. In a speech given to a Liverpool audience in 1888, he attacked Morris's anti-industrial bias in artistic reform, and in the following year in Edinburgh he did the same – this time opposing Ruskin. Sometime before his death in 1891, Sedding wrote a short essay entitled "Design." Although the theme of piece is needlepoint or embroidery, it stands as an early polemical masterpiece on behalf of modernism, and its architectural significance becomes all the more important for the attention it would soon receive from Charles Rennie Mackintosh (see next selection).

We have, I said, realised our ideals. We can do splendidly what we set ourselves to do – namely, to mimic old masterpieces. The question is, What next? Shall we continue to hunt old trails, and die, not leaving the world richer than we found it? Or shall we for art and honour's sake boldly adventure something – drop this wearisome translation of old styles and translate Nature instead?

Think of the gain to the "Schools," and to the designers themselves, if we elect to take another starting-point! No more museum-inspired work! No more scruples about styles! No more dry-as-dust stock patterns! No more loathly Persian-tile quilts! No more awful "Zoomorphic" table-cloths! No more cast-iron-looking altar cloths, or Syon Cope angels, or stumpy Norfolk-screen saints! No more Tudor roses and pumped-out Christian imagery suggesting that Christianity is dead and buried! But, instead, we shall have design *by* living men *for* living men—something that expresses fresh realisations of sacred facts, personal broodings, skill, joy in Nature – in grace of form and gladness of colour; design that shall recall Shakespeare's maid who

John D. Sedding from "Design" (1891), in *Arts and Crafts Essays*. London, 1893. Reprinted New York: Garland, 1977, pp. 409–12.

"... with her needl composes
Nature's own shape, of bud, bird, branch, or berry,
That even Art sisters the natural roses."

For, after all, modern design should be as the old – living thought, artfully expressed: fancy that has taken fair shapes. And needlework is still a pictorial art that requires a real artist to direct the design, a real artist to ply the needle. Given these, and our needlework can be as full of story as the Bayeux tapestry, as full of imagery as the Syon Cope, and better drawn. The charm of old embroidery lies in this, that it clothes current thought in current shapes. It meant something to the workers, and to the man in the street for whom it was done. And for our work to gain the same sensibility, the same range of appeal, the same human interest, we must employ the same means. We must clothe modern ideas in modern dress; adorn our design with living fancy, and rise to the height of our knowledge and capacities.

11 CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH
from "Architecture" (1893)

Charles Rennie Mackintosh was born in Glasgow and trained in architecture under John Hutchinson, and at the firm Honeyman and Keepie. In 1889, while working in the latter's office, he enrolled at the Glasgow School of Art, where he soon found prominence as a designer – forming the nucleus of "The Four," which included Margaret and Frances Macdonald and Herbert McNair. They were influenced by Pre-Raphaelitism in Britain and early Art Nouveau tendencies on the Continent. Mackintosh's architectural sensibilities, however, developed somewhat more slowly. He toured Italy in 1891, and in the following year (while still working as an apprentice) he gave his first talk on architecture. The talk was scarcely original and drew heavily on the ideas of Gerard Baldwin Brown and John Ruskin. One year later, in 1893, Mackintosh delivered another talk on architecture before the Glasgow Architectural Association. Here he strikes new ground, again with some help from others. References to Ruskin are still apparent in this talk (as are references to Lethaby and César Daly), but what is new is how Mackintosh invokes the cited passage from Sedding (on modern ideas and modern dress) and transposes it into architecture. The conclusion to this passage predates by one year Otto Wagner's famous embrace of the same polemic in his inaugural address before the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts (see 51). It also precedes Mackintosh's design for the Glasgow School of Art by three years.

Old architecture lived because it had/a purpose. Modern architecture, to be real, must not be a mere envelope without contents.

As Cesar Daly says, if we would have architecture excite an interest real & general, we must have a symbolism immediately comprehensible by the great majority of spectators. But this message cannot be that of the past terror, mystery, splendeour. Planets may not circle nor thunder roll in the temple of the future. No barbaric gold with ruddy bloom; no jewels,

Charles Rennie Mackintosh, from "Architecture" (1893), in *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Architectural Papers*, ed. Pamela Robertson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, pp. 206–7.

emeralds half a palm over, rubies like an egg, and crystal spheres, can again be used more for majic that for beauty. No terraced temples of Babylon to reach the skies no gold plated palaces of Ecbatana seven walled. no ivory palaces of Ahab. nor golden houses of Nero with corridors a mile long: no stupendeous temples of Egypt at first/all embracing then court and chamber narrowing and becoming lower, closing in on the awed worshipper and crushing his imagination; these all of them can never be built again, for the manner and the materials are worked out to their final issue. Think of the Sociology and Religion of all this, and the stain across it ''each stone cemented in the blood of a human creature. These colossal efforts of labor forced on by an irresistable will, are of the past, and such an architecture is not for us nor for the future.

What then will this art of the future be?

The message will still be of nature & man, of order and beauty, but all will be sweetness, simplicity, freedom, confidence, and light: the other is past and well is it, for its aim was to crush life: the new, the future, is to aid life/and train it, ''so that beauty may flow into the soul like a breeze''.

This much about ancient architecture will (and although I have only instanced one period and that very early, all architecture in successive ages up till the end of the 15th Century when we may say architecture ceased to be – was as vividly & inseperably the expression of the religious or social thoughts of the times) – I hope prove two things firstly that what are called Architectural styles were not made purposely as many people imagine – some say I like gothic – some I like classic – but you cannot surely believe that Architecture changed from classic to gothic because the old architects were sick of classic. No Architecture changed or rather evolved because the religious & social needs & beliefs changed, and when you consider as I said before how no change can be definitely pointed out you will understand how the/changes of Architecture were only the expression & embodiment of the natural unconcious evolution of mans thoughts caused by the changes of civilization and things around him.

And this leads on to the second point which I hope this essay so far will help to emphasize – namely all great & living architecture has been the direct expression, of the needs & beliefs of man at the time of its creation, and how if we would have great architecture created this should still be so. How absurd it is to see modern churches theatres, Banks, Museums, Exchanges Municipal Buildings, Art Galleries &c &c made in imitation of greek temples. I am quite concious of the dignity of greek temples when built in greece 1000 years ago as temples, but to be imported into this country and set up for such varied purposes, they must/surely loose all their dignity. And yet these are the modern buildings most people admire – perhaps even some of you dispute the loss of dignity – well let us admit that an art gallery copied from a greek temple has the same charm & dignity as its original I would ask whether the dignity is still retained if we reduplicate the design and make it into a small black marble clock & put it on a black marble chimney piece as is so often done. There are many such buildings in Glasgow but to me they are as could & lifeless as the cheek of a dead chinaman Dignity in architecture is the same as natural dignity – the very frankness of some natures is the essence of all thats dignified – which frankness if copied by one not natually frank immediately becomes impudence not dignity. It is absurd to think it is the duty of the modern architect to make believe he is living 4 – 5 – 6 hundred or even 1000/years ago – and that his mission is to exercise on the forms found associated

with a certain decade – no all the past is one art and all for us. And I am glad to think that now there are men such as Norman Shaw – John Bentley, John Belcher Mr Bodley Leonard Stokes and the late John D Sedding – names most of you will never have heard before but for all that quite as great if not greater artists than the best living painters men who more & more are freeing themselves from correct antiquarian detail and who go streight to nature. We must clothe modern ideas, with modern dress – adorn our designs with living fancy. We shall have designs by living men for living men – something that expresses fresh realization of sacred fact – of personal broodings of skill – of joy in nature in grace of form & gladness of colour.

12 CHARLES ROBERT ASHBEE
from *A Few Chapters in Workshop Re-Construction and Citizenship* (1894)

The last of the major Arts and Crafts architects and reformers to be associated with a guild was Charles Robert Ashbee. After attending King's College, Cambridge, he became articled to the London architect G. F. Bodley in 1883. During this tenure he resided in the East End of London at Toynbee Hall, an experiment in socialist living and continuing education founded by Canon Samuel Barnett. Ashbee soon came under the influence of Morris and at Toynbee Hall he began a reading class on Ruskin, which evolved into an art class. In 1888 he transformed this experiment into the School of Handicraft, alongside which he also created the Guild of Handicraft, which flourished in the early 1890s. During this decade he emerged as one of the international leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement, and on a lecture tour of the United States in 1900 he became quite enamored with the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright. Ashbee was slightly more accepting of the machine than many of his colleagues; nevertheless he shared the socialist beliefs of Morris and Crane that the Arts and Crafts movement was revolutionizing art (by a return to the medieval workshop) and the social fabric of society itself. This "humanising of the citizen," as he puts it, forms the very heart of the movement.

It is well that in our constructive citizenship we should bear this constantly in mind. Let us remember it when we hold in our hands anything made to-day for our service. "The commercial article," for instance, made not to use but to sell. Let us ask ourselves where was the producer, and what manner of man was he? It is well that we should bear this in mind when we walk these streets of London. Every now and then through this wilderness of brick and stone we come upon a reminiscence of other happier conditions, but only in name, for looking to the corners of the nearest brickwork, or asking some inhabitant, we mockingly learn that it is Bethnal Green, or Hackney Downs, Bow Common, Cambridge Heath, Mile End Waste or Stepney Green: a whiff of the fresh fields of a hundred years ago comes back to us. Let us remember, then, that sweeter conditions of life are an essential to better production.

None of the themes in the following chapters lay claim to novelty in themselves. To the founder of Christianity, to the Athenian Citizen, to the mediæval state builders, and to the

Charles Robert Ashbee, from *A Few Chapters in Workshop Re-Construction and Citizenship*. London: Guild and School of Handicraft, 1894, pp. 12–13.

modern exponents of socialistic economics, they might all be traced, but my effort has been to point to a few newer applications and to make clearer, positions often misunderstood by thoughtful men, whose experience and sympathies lie elsewhere. I believe that there are two movements going on in our midst which are tending to the expression of the new citizenship, and they are the *Re-construction of the Workshop* and the *humanising of the citizen*. I would ask for a closer study of the former and a more generous encouragement of the latter. In the former we have, on the part of the workman, the producer, an unconscious reversion to the mediæval state, the central idea of which was the maintenance of a moral code and an economic standard of life conformably with it. In the latter, we have through the educationalist, and the citizen himself, a readiness to enter again into that culture as it was understood by the great thinkers, poets and painters of the 15th and 16th centuries – we have, potentially, the spirit of the Renaissance.

The wave of revolutionary socialism that broke over us in the years 1880–90, has spent its force, done its work, and the result has been a variety of efforts in social re-construction throughout the country, and a strengthening and amplifying, owing to the new impulse, of older institutions already in existence. The points of view of the constructive and the revolutionary socialist, are, as I understand them, much the same, only the former makes for his end the reconstruction of society by little pieces of work here and there; while the latter says, it is no use tinkering, we must clear the old society away first before we can reconstruct the new. English love of order and constitutionalism will inevitably, indeed has already, given judgment in favour of the former, and we find the collectivist ideal, if not accepted, certainly compromised with, and often acted upon in every department of the State, whether under the guidance of the so-called Conservative or the so-called Liberal. The socialistic propaganda has, in other words, bitten into modern English political philosophy until we conceive it within the bounds of possibility that a Conservative Government shall, some day, give us land nationalization, even as it has given us factory acts and free education.

But apart from its political or semi-political aspects, the new thought has an due influence and is daily exerting a greater influence upon life, upon our relations towards one another, upon our way of regarding labour, upon the morale that underlies our conduct either in individual or collective citizenship.

B. CONTINENTAL REFORMS

Introduction

The desire for reform so evident in Great Britain was also quite visible on the Continent, where national boundaries in the last decades of the century were in a state of flux. Both Germany and Italy, for instance, were only unified as countries in 1871. Stirrings of nationalism, or more correctly the desire for a national state and the trappings of modern culture, were also evident among the Spanish, Portuguese, Belgian, Dutch, Czech, Polish, and Scandinavian peoples.

Architecturally, Germany and France remained at the forefront in their scale of reforms. Traditional historical accounts once viewed Germanic developments through the lens of Hermann Muthesius's turn-of-the-century fascination with the "English House," and therefore as a movement largely derived from Britain. But in fact a domestic reform movement in Germany and Austria was well underway during the 1870s, and these efforts are

perhaps better seen as running parallel with developments in England. The one qualification is that much of the impetus for reform in Germany and Austria was carried out by the newly founded industrial-art museums, many of which were in fact inspired by Henry Cole's efforts at South Kensington. By the end of the century, Germanic tendencies to reform not only compete with those in Britain but even surpass them, particularly with the attention being paid to industrial development and machine-made products. Hence architectural development in Germany at the start of the twentieth century plots its very specific course of modernism.

In France, the quest for reform also takes a somewhat different path – in part owing to France's lead in engineering and the use of iron, in part owing to political and psychological causes. The defeat by Germany was emotionally devastating, and the collapse of the government in 1870–1 led to another vicious civil war – the Paris Commune – in which as many as 30,000 Communards died. The Third Republic was not officially formed until 1879, and politically it remained highly unstable down to World War I. Within the arts, the reform movement was driven first by the great international expositions of 1878 and 1889, and second by a government-led reform movement in the decorative arts (again aimed at exportation of goods). The importance of the development of iron as a new building material during the French international expositions has long been recognized, most notably by Sigfried Giedion. Yet this paradigmatic modernist perspective leaves aside other aspects that also shaped the French architectural discourse of this period. One is the strong Oriental influence in the development of interior design. Forms, colors, and patterns from Japan, Turkey, and India were mixed with eighteenth-century French rococo, and strangely enough were seen as a natural contribution to the development of a national French style. Whereas the spirit of reform in the decorative arts culminates in the 1890s in Art Nouveau, the great engineering structures of the two major expositions herald the long-span technology of the twentieth century.

13 JACOB VON FALKE
from *Art in the House* (1871)

The reform movements in the domestic arts throughout Germany and Austria begin in the 1860s and have much to do with the founding of the Bavarian National Museum in Munich (1853), the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna (1863), and the Applied Arts Museum in Berlin (1867). Perhaps the leading voice calling for reform in Vienna was the art historian Rudolf von Eitelberger, who since the 1850s (often in concert with the architect Heinrich von Ferstel) had been demanding better living conditions for the city's residents in the midst of its explosive growth. Eitelberger was able to act upon his pleas in 1863 when he was appointed the director of the newly created Museum for Art and Industry. He appointed Jacob von Falke as one of the curators, and the latter (who later became the museum's director) responded by introducing stylized rooms into the museum as a way of educating the public into the manners of tasteful and practical appointments. Falke outlined his strategy in his book *Die Kunst im Hause* (Art in the house), which again was directed to the general public and again put an emphasis on simple and elegant design. The emphasis on color and form as the primary ingredients of good interior design signals an early desire in Austria to move away from the traditional historical styles.

Artistic harmony depends upon two things, color and form. In both there must be unity, that is to say, a union and blending together of many dissimilar things.

Jacob von Falke, from *Die Kunst im Hause* (1871), trans. Charles C. Perkins as *Art in the House*. Boston: L. Prang & Co., 1878, pp. 170–2.

Ordinarily, and one may say absolutely, color is of more importance in the decorative appointments of a house than form. Color makes the first and strongest impression; it gives the general tone; it may be used, if not to conceal faults and incongruities of form, at least to divert attention from them. Although a perfect eye for color is a rare gift, the power of perceiving defects and dissonances in color is much less uncommon than that of perceiving defects in form, which cannot be appreciated without a certain amount of education. It is color which chiefly gives character to a house, and by its help we may produce any desirable effect. A room may be made to look narrower or broader, lower or higher, by means of color. If we desire to make it grave or cheerful, bare or rich, simple or splendid; if we would impart to it a cosey and attractive or a poetic aspect, make it look warm or cool; if we would fashion for ourselves a place to dream in, or one fitted for serious and solitary meditation, or one suited to social enjoyment, our first and last medium is color. Color is a fairy, an enchantress who brings good and evil, joy and sunshine, or mourning and melancholy in her train, but she is always positive in her effect, and never allows herself to be treated with indifference. She repels and attracts, satisfies or disturbs, raises enjoyment to rapture or deepens discomfort into horror and *ennui*. He who covets her must not play the coward as we generally do nowadays, but must bear himself with that courage which wins beauty. Courage is needed chiefly at the outset, in the choice of the pervading tone. This is decisive, and it involves the artist in certain unavoidable consequences. Nevertheless, his freedom in the choice of colors and shades is so great that the possibilities of working out a rich scale of melodious hues are almost unlimited.

But although we are to depend mainly upon colors and colored decoration for effect, it will not do to neglect unity and harmony in form, because their absence is less generally observed. By unity of form, as I have before said, I do not mean any one of those definite historic styles which have been important in the history of art. We may expressly give up any idea of the Greek, the Gothic, the Renaissance, or any other style, no matter by what name it may be called, and yet insist upon unity; we may even demand a style, or, more properly speaking, style in the abstract. A design, a form of decoration, a piece of furniture, may have style without belonging in style to any one of the famous art-epochs either as original or copy, just as a painting may have style without following the taste of any master, time, or school. Style is the idealization of an object, the harmonious adaptation of form to means and end, the identification of the object with itself and its idea. A piece of furniture has style when it is exactly what it ought to be, when it is suited to the purpose for which it was intended, and has that purpose unmistakably inscribed upon it. From this point of view the simplest and the richest furniture, the humblest and the stateliest dwelling, may alike be full of style.

14 GEORG HIRTH
from *The German Renaissance Room* (1880)

Aligned with the work of Falke in Vienna were the efforts of Georg Hirth in Munich. After serving as a political editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Hirth began the publishing firm of Knorr and Hirth in 1875, which specialized in high-quality art books. The following year he lent objects from his collection of domestic furnishings to the Munich Exhibition of the Applied Arts, and from this time forward his interest in reform only grew. His book of 1880, *Das deutsche Zimmer der Renaissance*, is beautifully illustrated and an intelligent plea for tasteful design and furnishings in the home. The use of the German Renaissance period, or sixteenth century, was embraced throughout Germany in the 1870s as a way to simplify and reform design, that is, through the use of clean lines, neutral tones (unstained woods), and built-in furniture with a few harmonious parts. The following excerpts from the introduction echo two themes that will be paramount in German literature from the 1880s: the need to educate the new German middle class in the correct principles of taste, and the desire to simply design in keeping with the spirit of the new bourgeois era. It is likewise a challenge thrown out to the German people to embrace the ideals of its new democratic form of government.

For years I have been growing more and more convinced that among the many things that must work together for the enhancement of our economic life, the cultivation of a good national taste occupies a prominent, if not the leading place. It is an economic question to the extent to which it is assuredly transformed by the magic of art and removed as far as possible from the unpleasant conflict of interests between free trade and protective tariffs.

Even more relevant for industry and the economy in general is its meaning for our private lives. The older among our esteemed readers will understand me well if I say that there are hours and days in which we are completely soured by the world and its disappointments, in which we, tired and burdened with the troubles of life, see the bustle of humanity in tones of gray. Few are the happy people who get over such depression with a strong belief in God or simply out of necessity of mind. We "humanity" almost always seek out sensual impressions to help us chase off such gloomy thoughts. One person finds solace in the heights of mountains or in the scent of a forest, another in the harmony of musical tones, a third in the images of art. It may well be that the comforts that we thus create for ourselves, like our entire lives, rest only on a happy illusion; but it is not an *empty* illusion if we gain with it new vigor and new hope. Yes, this capacity for illusion for civilized man, if I might say, forms a likewise necessary protection against the unkindness of fortune, similar to assurance against the dangers of fire or impoverishment.

In this circle of magic, to which a good upbringing directs us and which can domesticate our troubles, the *artistic design of our household* should form, in a manner of speaking, the focus – the warming heart. In the house we rest from the burdens of the day; here we live with the ones who we love most in the world; here we plant nothing but good seeds into

George Hirth, from *Das deutsche Zimmer der Renaissance* (1871), trans. Francis Harry Mallgrave. Munich: G. Hirth's Verlag, 1880, pp. 1–2.

the hearts of our children. Even if it were just this one thing – a matter of playfully introducing our *small ones* into the sphere of beauty, of making their eyes susceptible to harmonies of artistic forms and color – then it would be enough to lead each father of a family to apply himself to domestic furnishings with the greatest care. Unfortunately, this happens only in the rarest or most exceptional of cases, and the reason for this sin of omission is certainly not superficial or pecuniary; it resides rather in the inner inability to seek, that is, in the lack of good taste.

15 ROBERT DOHME
from *The English House* (1888)

By the start of the 1880s the domestic reform movement in Germany had assumed a well-defined life of its own. But Germany, with its economy bustling forward, was also looking carefully at the trends of its neighbors, especially France and Great Britain. Robert Dohme was a custodian of art at the Prussian court of Frederick III and in 1887 he published a comprehensive history of German architecture. He followed this publication with a semi-official trip to England in order to observe new developments there, and he was impressed in particular with the work of Richard Norman Shaw and the Queen Anne Revival. What resulted, then, was the first major study to bear the title *The English House*. Dohme championed the Queen Anne not as a style to be emulated, but rather as an approach to design with the functional attributes of privacy, light, and ventilation, and also the emotional attributes of cheerfulness, comfort, convenience, and fastidiousness – the last four of which he left in their English spelling in his German text. His metaphor of "modern wagons and ships" was – following Horatio Greenough – an early paradigm for design that would be frequently repeated in Germanic literature in the 1890s, and of course it later becomes central to the polemics in the 1920s.

More unconditionally in England than in Germany is the principle that the value of a dwelling is to be sought more in its practicality than in its aesthetic appearance. In the eyes of the Englishman the desirability of a house is found not in its size and monumentality, nor in its richness and luxury, but in the harmony of the individual rooms and their skillful grouping, in short, in fulfilling that sum of demands that practical sense and the refined needs of life have shown to be prerequisites for a comfortable existence. The English architect will give to the small and simple cottage – which in its limits well corresponds to those demands – the honorary title of a "gentleman's house," a title he refuses to give to the badly disposed palace. For this reason one no longer finds in present-day English architecture those academically correct villas striving toward monumentality, conventionally laid out inside, developed as canons of classical periods, whereas with us they are indeed still the fashion. Less monumentality and more comfort, less classicism and more individuality – this can be the motto of modern English domestic architecture in contrast to our German counterpart.

* * *

Robert Dohme, from *Das englische Haus*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave. Braunschweig: George Westermann, 1888, pp. 28, 42.

I see in this movement (at the acme of which are the Queen Anne men, and especially their leader R. Norman Shaw) nothing of a fashion statement. It seems to me – in contrast to the creations on the Continent that at first glance today also seem so striking – that herein lies the beginning of *a new period of cultural evolution*, a period that moves away from the ornamentally lavish artistic character of the Renaissance, and toward new and still concealed goals lying before us. On the Continent we still do not recognize the impulses of this new spirit in the field of architecture; yet for a number of our utensils, however, it has already appeared to us, found sympathy, and been accepted – if indeed also arising from the examples of England and America. One thinks, for example, of our modern vehicles and ships, whose beauty, in fulfilling their task, we have to a great extent achieved by limiting any and all decorative ornaments merely to graceful lines, in seeking the object's greatest functionality and simplicity of form, and in divesting it of all superfluities. In a similar way, England has achieved the same today in architecture.

16 CORNELIUS GURLITT
from *Inside the Middle-Class House* (1888)

If Dohme looked to England to provide examples for artistic reform in Germany, Cornelius Gurlitt looked to his native country. This prolific author of ninety-seven books (including the first great history of the Baroque period), Gurlitt was a shrewd critic. An architect by training, he was appointed a curator at the Dresden Museum for the Applied Arts in 1879 and was later became a professor at that city's famed technical university. His book is addressed not to architects but to the public, and the word *Bürger* in the title (related to the English word "burgher") connotes not only the middle-class, but also the attributes of honest, simple, and functional design. His book is therefore a primer for modern home design, although he also rewards the reader with a learned discourse on the aesthetic principles of neoclassicism and romanticism as well as the more recent reform movement in Germany, which he traces back to Gottfried Semper. Gurlitt, although appreciative of recent English design, discounts the possibility of too closely mimicking a sensitivity that is at heart English, and in these closing remarks he challenges his countrymen to draw upon their own native instincts. Gurlitt was an early and, as we will see, articulate champion of modernism.

Enough! One could still speak on many things, but it is impossible to treat exhaustively every aspect of domestic interiors without composing a series of volumes that would be of no use to anyone. Before the pen of the last volume would be put down, the first would already have changed. For fashion, like style, marches inexorably forward. It transforms not only the form of things but also our eyes. The table that appears so charming to us today will seem ungainly in five years. Are there laws for such changes? Are there rules of beauty for how thick a table leg should be? Surely not. Each man makes it according to his own judgment following what he has seen before, following the images of similar things living in his

Cornelius Gurlitt, from *Im Bürgerhaus*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave. Dresden: Gilbers'sche Königl. Hof-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1888, pp. 227–9.

memory. Each man experiences beauty differently and no one can convey his perception to another in full. All attempts to create a unified concept of beauty will be in vain. For beauty lies not in the nature and in things, but resides in each of us.

[. . .]

True art, however, is the expression of our time. All the looking backward that has characterized our works for decades belonged to the time in which the German people had to seek their greatness in past centuries. In my view, this time has past. The march of our nation goes ever forward. We no longer live in the realm of dreams and history; our actions and thoughts direct themselves first to what is going on around us, in which we have to take an active part, in which we have to maintain our position. Let us turn our heads forward in order to view truly the continuing greatness of our nation. Then our art will be modern and only modern.

17 LOUIS-CHARLES BOILEAU
from "Shops of the Bon Marché in Paris – Grand Staircase" (1876)

Louis-Charles Boileau was the son of Louis-Auguste Boileau. The father was trained as a woodcarver, but early in his career made the transition into architecture. In 1854 he created a sensation by building a Gothic church – Saint-Eugène, Paris – with a light-weight iron structure. His design was controversial, but at the same time it helped to foster a debate regarding the architectural limits of iron, that is, whether its use should be restricted to utilitarian structures or whether it could be used in more traditional building types. In 1869 the elder Boileau was commissioned to design the Paris department store "Au Bon Marché," but the interior was remodeled by his son Louis-Charles in 1872, with the help of the engineer Gustave Eiffel. This design, too, reverberated through Parisian circles, now for its open atriums, iron staircases, and surrounding galleries – all illuminated by three colossal skylights. In this discussion of its conception, Louis-Charles goes far beyond the abstract theorizing of many of his colleagues by insisting that the architecture of iron and glass differs fundamentally from the architecture of stone. Architecture is no longer the shaping of form in daylight but rather the sculptural shaping of light itself.

It is always somewhat unrewarding to show the details of an iron and glass structure with engravings. The metallic tightness of columns and trusses offers little possibility of rendering the different planes of the transparent surfaces, and the geometric drawing does not permit the picturesque expression of atmosphere and light, in which resides almost all the charm of this type of building. We must also beg of our readers that if they cannot go and judge with their own eyes that part of the department store for which we give some drawings, they should at least not consider these drawings in an isolated way; rather, they should try to reassemble them in their minds in order to deduce the artistic effect of the executed work.

Louis-Charles Boileau, from "Magasins du Bon Marché, à Paris – grand Escalier," trans. Christina Contandriopoulos and Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Encyclopédie d'architecture*. Paris: V. A. Morel, 1876, p. 120.

If the rendering of such a work is difficult, the design is no less so and the typical training of the architect provides very little help. What is the use of having to learn to design and proportion moldings or ornaments on stone surfaces, on which we find the easy projections of friezes, cornices, bosses, or panels – in a word, all the architectural clichés that we have tirelessly put forth to rejuvenate art through new combinations – when there are no more surfaces available to receive them? Of course I do not consider these small-diameter shafts or some thin cast-iron details as columns or entablatures. Therefore I do not believe that they should play a prominent decorative role in these retail galleries.

In this regard, I am uncompromising and I know that one could cite some eminent architects who, having to deal with an analogous problem, have been delighted to treat the necessary meagerness of metal as a decorative material by resorting to a profusion of cuttings and embellishments. Well, I am sure that if these masters would have compared their efforts with the results they produced, they would also have to admit that this type of building cannot be seriously compared with stone building, and that they should refrain from all their imitation and consider the problem from an altogether different point of view.

If I may use an almost paradoxical exaggeration to express my thought, I would say that this viewpoint should consist in no longer designing the building surfaces but rather the void that they envelop, that is to say, instead of trying to play with light on plastic forms, we should rather consider the atmosphere that circulates throughout the structure and, by its profusion or economy, creates radiance, half-lights, or reflections, which endow a space with brilliance in the same way that we endow crystal chandeliers with a luster by sculpting them into differently shaped prisms.

In this luminous concert, architectural solids should play the role of being the setting for a fine stone. It exists just enough to make this full interior daylight vibrate with the greatest possible intensity, in such a way that the broad glass surfaces and semi-bright depth that surround it will render the stone happier, more resonant, and more expansive than, say, the pure and simple daylight of the outdoors.

18 CHARLES BLANC
from *The Fine Arts at the Universal Exposition of 1878* (1878)

If the idea of an international exhibition was a creation of the British in 1851, it was an idea nowhere embraced with greater enthusiasm during the following decades than in France. Paris followed the London example with its first international exposition in 1855, and continued with ever more ambitious fairs in 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900. The events were meant to put French goods on display, but also to entertain and bolster French pride.

Charles Blanc, from *Les Beaux-Arts à l'Exposition Universelle de 1878*, trans. Christina Contandriopoulos and Harry Francis Mallgrave. Paris: Librairie Renocard, 1878, pp. 39–41.

With France's excellent engineering schools, they too became showcases for structural innovation. The exposition of 1878 came at a particularly low point in French confidence, as earlier in the decade French armies had been routed by German forces and the country had subsequently endured another bloody civil war. In his competition proposal for this event of 1878, the engineer Gustave Eiffel responded with a bold design for an iron exhibition structure that would run from the site of his later tower across the Seine to the Place du Trocadéro, supported on a colossal arched truss. Although this proposal was not accepted, Eiffel did engineer the largest of the iron structures that were eventually built on the Champ de Mars, measuring 350 meters by 700 meters in length. The iron, glass, and sheet-metal structures of this event were so impressive that they were seen by the historian Charles Blanc as inaugurating a new era of human history. This former director of the École des Beaux-Arts was appointed professor of aesthetics and art history at the Collège de France in 1878, and his color theories published in *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1867) had greatly influenced the first generation of Impressionist painters. Here he speculates on the future of architecture.

Since antique times, two great innovations have been introduced into architecture. The first one is that which was invented during the twelfth century, which Viollet-le-Duc has called genuinely French because it was born in France and specifically in the Île-de-France. This admirable innovation consisted in having a whole building supported by a framework, in other words by a system of thin isolated piers, supporting the ribbed springing vaults. The vertical force of these vaults pressed down on pillars and the diagonal force or thrust was projected outside to be resolved in the buttresses. In the interior, this system lent itself to very poetic effects, for the walls merely played a very secondary role. The panels of the ribbed vaults were only a veil of light masonry and the partitions of the building – having nothing to bear, for even the rafters of the roof were supported by the vaulting – could be transformed into glass panels. In ancient architecture, the wall was a thick support whose function was to resist both compression and lateral thrust; in Gothic architecture, the wall was but a divider whose only purpose was to resist horizontal stress.

This wonderful innovation, which then limited the usefulness of the wall, was succeeded in this century by other, no less astonishing innovations deriving from the introduction of iron into all parts of the building, as both supporting and supported elements. The ability to cover immense spaces without obstructing them with intermediary supports, and the power to remove the interior walls (whose only function is to enclose) by pushing them to the boundaries of the building – these are, we have to admit, novelties that collectively announce a civilization very different from the one preserved the monuments and by history. For the masses who wish to assemble, for the people who would rather unite and live amicably, instead of struggling against one another, new buildings were necessary. They are temples whose construction corresponds to sentiments that exist only as germs within humanity, to needs that humanity has not known until now, to ideas that could develop only under the very protection of these temples. When these newly invented wonders receive their baptism of art, when grace consents to marry with the useful, we will be able to say truly that architecture reveals and sanctifies a new order of things. *Novus aedium et rerum narcitur ordo.*

19 EUGÈNE-EMMANUEL VIOLLET-LE-DUC
from "The Buildings of the Universal Exposition of 1878" (1878)

Although a somewhat embittered Viollet-le-Duc spent much of this decade in his Alpine retreats at Chamonix, and later near Lausanne, he was by no means retired from letters. During this time he finished the last four of his *Lectures on Architecture* and the final five volumes of the *Dictionnaire raisonné*. In addition, he wrote on a score of other subjects, ranging from the geology of Mont Blanc to the origin of Russian art. This short excerpt from a report on the architecture of the Exposition of 1878 also demonstrates his undiminished capacity to discern a new development: the advantages of prefabrication and the organizational complexity of the modern building project, where every element is designed prior to the start of construction.

In this regard, let us report something that deserves our attention today, when our habits and our needs require the rapid construction of buildings but cannot accept the congestion of a busy city produced by construction sites.

Apart from the foundation and grading, all the parts of the buildings on the Champ de Mars were made in factories and workshops. The advantages of this system speak for themselves. If the different parts of a building are thus able to be fabricated in many places, there is no reason to fear congestion. When they are ordered at the right time, the parts arrive from these places on the appointed day and are put in place. Generally it is the division of labor that is most advantageous and truly useful. But it should also be understood that such an approach requires absolute precision from the project manager, because if it happened that some pieces were a centimeter too long or too short it would cause the greatest difficulties during installation. Simple dimensional drawings no longer suffice and the manager must send the manufacturer perfectly calibrated measurements for the cast or shaped pieces. It is thus understandable how this demands both organization and a method, because any part of the work that arrives too soon would cause congestion, while any part arriving too late would bring the regular run of the work to a halt.

Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, from "Les bâtiments de l'Exposition Universelle de 1878," trans. Christina Contandriopoulos and Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *L'art, Revue hebdomadaire illustrée*. Paris: Ballue, 1878, p. 140.

20 ÉMILE ZOLA
from *The Ladies' Delight* (1884)

We have already seen this novelist of realism and his exaltation of the new iron architecture (vol. 1, 216), and in this later novel he returns to the same theme in a more dramatic fashion. The scene here is the opening of the fictional department store, based on part on the recently completed Bon Marché. Over many pages, Zola describes the experiences of Madame Desforges as she makes her way into the new building on its crowded opening day. The spectacular novelty of the iron and glass structure, bathed in white light streaming down from a colossal skylight above, cannot be suppressed. It is a classic homage to the new era of modernity, and, interestingly, Zola, in composing this passage, was advised by Frantz Jourdain, the later architect of the Samaritaine department store.

At that moment, Madame Desforges, who had almost had her coat pulled off in the crowd, finally got in and was crossing the first hall. Then, once she got to the main gallery, she looked up. It was like the concourse of a railway station, surrounded by the balustrades of the two upper storeys, cut by suspended stairways and crisscrossed with bridges. The iron stairways, in double spirals, formed daring curves with many landings. The iron bridges hung high up in straight lines across the void. And all this cast iron beneath the white light of the glass roof composed an airy architecture of complicated lacework which let the daylight through – a modern version of a dream palace, a Tower of Babel with storey piled on storey and rooms expanding, opening on vistas of other storeys and other rooms reaching to infinity. Moreover, iron reigned on all sides, the young architect having had the honesty and courage not to disguise it beneath a coat of whitewash or to imitate stone and wood. Downstairs, so as not to detract from the goods, the décor was sober, with large expanses of the same, neutral colour. Then, as the metal framework rose upwards, so the capitals of the columns grew richer, the rivets formed rosettes, the brackets and the corbels were laden with moulded sculptures. Finally, at the top, the painting shone out green and red, in the midst of a profusion of gold: streams of gold, harvests of gold, even on the windows where the panes were enamelled and encrusted with gold. Beneath the covered galleries, the visible bricks on the vaults were also enamelled with bright colours. Mosaic and faience were incorporated in the décor, brightening up the borders and adding a fresh note to moderate the severity of the whole; while the staircases with their banisters of red velvet were decked out with a strip of moulded, polished iron, shining like the steel on a breastplate.

Although she was already acquainted with the new building, Madame Desforges had stopped, struck by the bustling life that seethed that day beneath the huge vault. On the ground floor, around her, the crowd continued to flow in the same double current from the entrance or towards the exit, and this was perceptible as far as the silk department – a very mixed crowd, though in the afternoon there were more ladies among the petty bourgeoises and the housewives, many women in mourning, with their large veils, and errant wet nurses protecting their charges with their broad elbows. And this sea, these many-coloured hats,

Émile Zola, from *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1884), trans. and ed. Robin Buss as *The Ladies' Delight*. London: Penguin, 2001, pp. 245–6.

these bare heads, blonde or black, flowed from one end of the gallery to the other, blurred and drab amid the sharp, vibrant colours of the materials. Madame Desforges could see nothing but huge placards everywhere with enormous figures on them, standing out as garish stains against the bright Indian prints, the lustrous silks and the dark woollens. Piles of ribbons gashed across heads, a wall of flannel spread out like a promontory and everywhere the mirrors extended the shops, reflecting displays with fragments of the public, faces reversed, portions of shoulders and arms, while to the left and to the right the side galleries opened up vistas, snowy depths of white linens or the speckled pits of hosiery, far-away, vanishing, lit by the rays of light shining through some glazed bay, where the crowd was no more than a dust of humanity. Then, when Madame Desforges looked up, she could see along the stairways and on the suspended bridges, around the banisters on every floor, a continuous, humming, upward flow, a whole tribe suspended in the air, travelling past the spaces in this enormous metal frame and silhouetted black against the diffuse glow from the windows.

21 JORIS-KARL HUYSMANS
from *Against Nature* (1884)

Against the backdrop of escalating modernity in the 1880s – with its cold iron forms – stands the odd and seeming contrary French fascination with the pre-revolutionary period of Louis XV. Huysmans's novel, in fact, helps to inaugurate a trend in French art that finds its culmination a decade later in the artistic phenomenon of Art Nouveau. The novel itself is highly symbolic. A misanthropic aristocrat and former dandy, with especially acute senses and nervous excitability, takes refuge in posh surroundings, where he indulges his cravings for the luxurious pomp of the past. His self-imposed retreat and isolation represent not only a withdrawal from the world of changing tastes but also a desire to return to something genuinely French in the face of growing cosmopolitanism and excessive "mental stimulation." The novel may seem remote from architectural theory, but this passage, in fact, was crafted concurrently with Paul Sédille's construction of the Printemps department store, where the Paris architect wrapped his dazzling iron interiors with rococo towers and ornamental motifs on the outside.

There were, in his opinion, only two ways of arranging a bedroom: you could either make it a place for sensual pleasure, for nocturnal delectation, or else you could fit it out as a place for sleep and solitude, a setting for quiet meditation, a sort of oratory.

In the first case, the Louis-Quinze style was the obvious choice for people of delicate sensibility, exhausted by mental stimulation above all else. The eighteenth century is, in fact, the only age which has known how to develop woman in a wholly depraved atmosphere, shaping its furniture on the model of her charms, imitating her passionate contortions and spasmodic convulsions in the curves and convolutions of wood and copper, spicing the

Joris-Karl Huysmans, from *À Rebours* (1884), trans. Robert Baldick as *Against Nature*. London: Penguin, 2003, pp. 61–2.

sugary languor of the blonde with its bright, light furnishings, and mitigating the salty savour of the brunette with tapestries of delicate, watery, almost insipid hues.

In his Paris house he had had a bedroom decorated in just this style, and furnished with the great white lacquered bed which provides that added titillation, that final touch of depravity so precious to the experienced voluptuary, excited by the spurious chastity and hypocritical modesty of the Greuze figures, by the pretended purity of a bed of vice apparently designed for innocent children and young virgins.

In the other case – and now that he meant to break with the irritating memories of his past life, this was the only one for him – the bedroom had to be turned into a facsimile of a monastery cell. But here difficulties piled up before him, for as far as he was concerned, he categorically refused to put up with the austere ugliness that characterizes all penitential prayer-houses.

After turning the question over in his mind, he eventually came to the conclusion that what he should try to do was this: to employ cheerful means to attain a drab end, or rather, to impress on the room as a whole, treated in this way, a certain elegance and distinction, while yet preserving its essential ugliness. He decided, in fact, to reverse the optical illusion of the stage, where cheap finery plays the part of rich and costly fabrics; to achieve precisely the opposite effect, by using magnificent materials to give the impression of old rags; in short, to fit up a Trappist's cell that would look like the genuine article, but would of course be nothing of the sort.

He set about it in the following way: to imitate the yellow distemper beloved by church and state alike, he had the walls hung with saffron silk; and to represent the chocolate-brown dado normally found in this sort of room, he covered the lower part of the walls with strips of kingwood, a dark-brown wood with a purple sheen. The effect was delightful, recalling – though not too clearly – the unattractive crudity of the model he was copying and adapting. The ceiling was similarly covered with white holland, which had the appearance of plaster without its bright, shiny look; as for the cold tiles of the floor, he managed to hit them off quite well, thanks to a carpet patterned in red squares, with the wood dyed white in places where sandals and boots could be supposed to have left their mark.

22 SAMUEL BING
from *Artistic Japan* (1888)

Yet another thematic and formal wellspring for the development of Art Nouveau in France was the artistic influence of Japan. Although this interest initially ran in parallel with that in other European countries and North America, over the course of the 1880s it takes a surprising turn in French art. Louis Gonse, in his book *L'art Japonais* (1883), first establishes the tone for this discussion by applauding the functionalism of Japanese architecture and the fact that every Japanese architect is a "Le Nôtre" in his love and appreciation of nature. Samuel Bing's lavishly illustrated journal of 1888, *Le Japon Artistique* (issued simultaneously in German and in

Samuel Bing, from *Artistic Japan*. London, 1888, pp. 1–4.

English as *Artistic Japan*), now views Japanese art as indeed a possible source for fresh artistic inspiration. Bing was a German by birth and he moved to Paris in the 1850s to overview a family porcelain business. He not only became increasingly more Francophile in his outlook (eventually switching his citizenship and changing his first name from Sigfried to Samuel) but he also thrived as the owner of several Parisian shops dealing in objects of decorative art. By the mid-1880s, after a year-long visit to Japan, he came to embrace Japanese art as a way to resuscitate or revitalize French design. He therefore speaks in this "Programme" as a Frenchman, a dilettante, an entrepreneur, and most importantly as an aesthetician of modern life.

In presenting to the public ARTISTIC JAPAN, I lay no claim to the addition of a fresh chapter to the many works upon the history of Japanese Art already in existence. Its aim is not that of a guide to unexplored regions, or the examination of recondite theories. These have already been treated of by masters of æsthetics, who have subjected them to the keenest analysis, to the most careful verification, classification, and comparison.

But the section of the public which has been thus catered for is a comparatively small one: the inquiring spirit who is never satisfied unless he is admitted behind the scenes, and receives certificates of authenticity for every one of his much-prized objects as he acquires them, is only to be met with now and then. These have had, as I have already said, their requirements met. To them this publication is addressed, but not in the first instance. It is primarily intended for the instruction of the general public in the real and rare beauties of an Art which has hitherto attracted chiefly through its superficial qualities. How, indeed, could this be otherwise? In almost every country in Europe (England perhaps excepted) the great State collections, in which marvels of all styles, all epochs, and all lands are included, have disdainfully closed their doors to Japanese Art. In the shop and the bazaar only has Japanese Art been represented, and there merely in its least refined and elevated form.

There its productions, in picturesque disorder, have appealed to the undiscriminating glance of the passer-by, who, indeed, could not help being fascinated by the undeniable charm of nicknacks made only for exportation, but who did not consider that what he saw was no more than the vague reflection of an art which was formerly vigorous and sound. He could not know that the sculptured groups whose effeminate forms he admired had some masterpiece of life and expression for their prototype; he has not been told that yonder garish vase is but a feeble imitation of a piece of pottery marvellous in colour and technical perfection. It is not surprising that he admired a sample of tissue woven in the period of decadence, for he has never seen any of those sumptuous stuffs which the artist in embroidery of the feudal times covered with harmonious tints in a style of lordly grandeur. Even the artist, when he stopped to admire the drawings and engravings sketched with the cleverness of the race by some draftsman of modern Japan, knew naught of the wonderful albums in which the genius of the famous masters of the bygone time was matched by that of the engravers who interpreted and multiplied their works.

It is in the power of but very few, when first they are privileged to see side by side two phases of Japanese art-one in its prime, the other in its decadence – to recognise at a glance the vast distance that divides them. It is by degrees only that the eye can distinguish between them. It is only as we begin to examine them with closer attention that we arrive at some knowledge of the subject, and come to see that precisely the same distinction which there is in the case of the productions of our own country, exists between the masterly works of Japanese art which were creations, and the current products of a modern industry, in which

the mighty genius of ancestral artists has been frittered away under the mercantile influence of a later epoch.

This truth was, however, immediately recognised by that limited number of connoisseurs who in every age devote themselves to the study of the beautiful, and it came with especial force to the few well-informed collectors who were so fortunate as to meet at the onset with specimens of a superior order. Unfortunately, such specimens are rare, and are becoming more so every day, and it is within the means of but few to acquire them. To the great majority therefore the only way of instructing them as to what is really choice in Japanese Art is by placing before them faithful reproductions of the original objects. This is the task to which I am about to devote myself. I propose to furnish the lovers of Japanese Art, by the aid of the best processes of engraving, with a continuous series of diversified specimens, taken from every branch of that art, at all its various epochs. The work will constitute a sort of graphic encyclopædia, for the use of all those students of Japanese Art who are desirous of tracing the course of its development.

The present publication has yet another object. It is especially addressed to those persons who, on any grounds, are interested in the future of the industrial arts, and especially to those who, whether as manufacturers or as artizans, have an active share in their production. In the new forms of art which have come to us from the utter-most parts of the East, we see something more than a Platonic feast set before our contemplative dilettanti, we find in them examples worthy to be followed in every respect, not, indeed, worthy to uproot the foundations of the old æsthetic edifice which exists, but fitted to add a fresh force to those forces which we have appropriated to ourselves in all past time, and brought to the support and aid of our national genius. How could the vitality of that genius have been maintained had it not been recruited from fresh sources from time to time? Where is the civilized country, ancient or modern, from which we have not at some time borrowed some of its artistic culture?

23 JOSEPH EUGÈNE ANATOLE DE BAUDOT
from "The Universal Exposition of 1889 – first visit to the Champs de Mars" (1889)

Both the interest in Japanese art and the fascination with the rococo were evident in the Paris International Exposition of 1889, and can be found in the work of the young Art Nouveau designer Émile Gallé. But Gallé's exotic designs were for the moment overtaken by the two compelling architectural events of the exposition: the Galerie des Machines and the Eiffel Tower. The last phenomenon, still standing as the preeminent symbol of the city, created a furor, as artists and architects, government officials, and the public lined up to voice their support or – more generally – opposition to its presence on the Paris skyline. The architect Anatole de Baudot

Joseph Eugène Anatole de Baudot, from "The Universal Exposition of 1889 – first visit to the Champs de Mars", in *Encyclopédie d'architecture* 4. 1888–9, trans. Christina Contandriopoulos and Harry Francis Mallgrave, pp. 9–10.

opposed its erection, although he was one of the more moderate voices in dissent. As a youth Baudot had been one of those protesting students who in 1856 petitioned Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc to open his atelier to students, and he, with his Gothic predilections as a designer, remained a close associate of the master. In the 1880s, after Viollet-le-Duc's death, he began to take a more original architectural course, particularly with his later experiments of reinforced concrete. As the founding editor of the *Encyclopédie d'architecture*, Baudot here voices his opposition on the grounds that iron, as a material, had yet to find its appropriate artistic form.

In comparing the appearance of these metallic forms to those of works in stone, many artisans and amateurs deplore their sparse and light character and refuse to assign any artistic value to these modern productions. This way of viewing the architectural question is very unfortunate and somewhat small-minded. Such criticism hinders greatly the efforts being made in the ordering of modern ideas, because it leads builders to search for a compromise or to depart from the true path indicated by the design principle, which science lays out in a very clear way.

Instead of accepting frankly and without reservations this light appearance, the designing architect, in searching for the solution, believes he is obliged to increase the size of the supports, shorten the purlins or trusses that link them, and design the general form in such a way as to introduce elements into the composition that are in contradiction with the general principles of using metal. Once the general composition is designed, in comes the engineer who, through the aid of calculations, gives to each of the elements of the structure the section and strength requiring the least possible use of metal. Is this reasonable from an economic point of view? It is doubtful, but surely we can say that art gains nothing from compromises, and that if metallic construction were designed with no other concern than to satisfy its purpose and structural requirements it would take on a surprising new look and striking expression, and this spindly aspect reminiscent of scaffolding would disappear. I know well that one could object to the Eiffel Tower because, even though its appearance seems to answer my program, it possesses neither the artistic value nor the arresting character of a new work.

Nevertheless, the objection would not be serious if one did not take the trouble to reflect on it. Indeed, while the famous tower rather candidly proceeds from science and from the skillful calculations of the engineer, we should not forget that it does not answer any purpose or idea, and it therefore loses the spiritual value and attraction of a work of art. Moreover, this work, which is nothing but a vain symbol of the modern builder, has the great failing of bearing no comparison with any high-rise building. From antique columns to the minarets of the Orient to the towers of the Middle Ages, there are conceptions whose practical utility may be debatable, but whose idea is superb and great. In these works of the past, the idea intervenes and satisfies the imagination while it charms the eyes. But piling up several hundred meters of iron supports on top of each other without any other reason than to satisfy the pretension that we know how to do it is not sufficient to charm the skeptical spirits of the nineteenth century. Is iron, whose plastic quality has not yet been given its artistic note, ready for this kind of endeavor? Certainly not, and it was, then, rather audacious for an art in its initial stages to raise the highest structure that the world has seen since the Tower of Babel. However that may be, this error increases daily and today it reaches around 140 meters in height, and we must be resigned to see it going up the whole way. We must do so because if it were to stop it would mean the failure of our international exposition, one that, for my part, I would be far from wishing.

24 LOUIS GONSE
from "The Architecture of the Universal Exposition of 1889" (1889)

Taking a very different position from Baudot on the issue of the Eiffel Tower was Louis Gonse. This well-known critic was the influential editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, a vice-president of the Commission des Monuments Historiques, and a close friend of Samuel Bing, and it was he who first sparked interest in France over Japanese art – a subject on which he wrote in both the expositions of 1867 and 1878. He organized the first major exhibition on Japanese art in 1883, the same year in which his influential book *L'Art japonais* (Japanese art) appeared. In turning his attention to the controversial subject of the Eiffel Tower, he reveals a different perspective by writing a very positive review of its mathematical engineering and architectonic order, and thereby underscoring its psychological pleasure.

Within minutes, the Decauville light rail takes us to the base of the Eiffel tower. The metallic colossus, next to which the tallest buildings in the world are only pigmies, rises on four gigantic feet at the entrance to the Champ de Mars. It should not be necessary to describe it, for its design is today known to the entire universe. At first glance, everyone has understood and admired its lightness, audacity, and the perfection of its structure; everyone has divined that the constructional and structural problems were resolved with incomparable expertise. As a work of science and industry, nobody contests that the Eiffel Tower is a prodigious monument that has brought fame to the name of someone who had both the courage to conceive it and the talent to carry it through. Is, however, the iron tower to an equal degree, or to any degree, a work of art? Despondent spirits and those who fear novelty, the finicky, the quibblers, the shrewd – all answered "no" well before the tower was finished. As for me and many artists, we do not hesitate to say "yes," if it can be conceded that an impression of art, or at least a visual pleasure akin to art, can be had by the sight of great lines engendered by the calculation of forces and resistances, impeccably suited to their functions.

I believe there is a mathematical order to certain results of science and other creations, such as are found in a suspended word or in a sailing ship with a high waterline. It is a perfection or harmony that evokes beauty and awakens sensations in the soul analogous to those that we experience in standing before a beautiful tree or a large mountain. Note that the forms, lines, and proportions of the Eiffel Tower did not arise from engineering caprice. The tower, as we know, is not connected with the foundations; it poses, rather, it stands firmly on feet planted wide apart, like a man who opens his legs to resist the wind. Its weight, its equilibrium of forces holds it in this state of inert stability. Therefore it is the calculation of thrusts and resistances alone that created the building's profile; calculations gave the curve of the positioning of the bases, the relative height of the platforms, the diameter of the rise.

Louis Gonse, from "The Architecture of the Universal Exposition of 1889," in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, trans. Christina Contandriopoulos and Harry Francis Mallgrave. Paris, 1889, pp. 476–8.

Whereas some (not without reason) have criticized the work of M. Eiffel on some small points, such as the dryness intrinsic to a network metallic construction whose main quality must be lightness, nobody can remain insensible to the greatness of its lines, the boldness of the curves, the majesty of the great base arches that almost span a hundred meters. These arches are marvelous, especially in the evening, when they are illuminated with a string of lights and the accentuation of the large shadow enhances them even more. These horseshoe arches are the largest that have ever been built and we know that among all arch shapes the semicircular is that which best corresponds to the laws of eurhythmy. In summary, thanks to mathematical calculations, the proportions of the Eiffel Tower, without our knowing it, provide us with a feeling of security or fullness, which is one of the mysterious sources of aesthetic pleasure in architecture.

25 EDMOND DE GONCOURT
from *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire* (1895)

In late December 1895 Samuel Bing opened his newly expanded and renovated shop in Paris, the Maison de l'Art Nouveau, which can be seen as a culmination of the French artistic reform of the previous two decades. Bing, as we have seen, was an articulate advocate of Japanese art and the lessons it holds for the West; he was also a strong supporter of the various activities of the Union of Decorative Arts, the state bureaucracy charged with promoting French goods. In 1894 Bing had made a visit to the United States on behalf of the French government in order to gauge artistic developments there, and he was particularly impressed with the large workshops and studio of Louis Comfort Tiffany. Bing then hired the architect Louis Bonnier to enlarge his Japanese shop in Paris, and he conceived his new private venture as an international studio and workshop that would support the leading modern artists in their cultivation of a new art. One of the centerpieces to his new shop was the work of the Belgian artist and architect Henry van de Velde, whom Bing had recently "discovered" in Uccle, Belgium. Van de Velde designed and built several rooms of furnishings, in which he first displayed the forms of his popular "Art Nouveau" style.

These rooms stand behind the criticisms of Edmond de Goncourt, which he penned in his diary just a few days after the shop's opening. Goncourt had been close to Bing's circle and, like him, was an art historian, collector, and aesthete of long prominence and distinction. He was born into aristocratic and bourgeois circumstances and, financially secure, developed both an appreciation for and historical knowledge of the eighteenth century and its rococo style. From his rococo-inspired mansion in Auteil Edmond preached the message of "art for art's sake" (coined in 1830 by Théophile Gautier) and naturalistic objectivity. In the 1880s Edmond chimed in with the enthusiasm for Japanese art, and later in this decade he began collecting the glassware of the modern artist from Nancy, Émile Gallé. Thus his artistic tastes inclined both forward and to the past, but always from the protective shelter of his comfortable aristocratic bearing. These brief remarks from his journal portray French art at an

Edmond de Goncourt, from Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire, 1895–1896*, vol. 4, trans. Christina Contandriopoulos and Harry Francis Mallgrave. Monaco: Fasquelle & Flammarion, 1956, pp. 156–7.

interesting crossroads. On the one hand the exposition of 1889 had a few years earlier demonstrated to the world France's mastery of engineering and technology, fields that would soon become the hallmark of twentieth-century modernity. On the other hand, the nationalist and artistic impulses of the decorative art movement often became essentially a conservative reaction to a rapidly changing world.

Monday, 30 December 1895

Bing Exhibition. I do not find fault with the idea of the exhibition, I find fault with the exhibition of the day, today.

What! Is this country, which in the eighteenth century had stylish and curving furniture for idleness, now threatened by hard and angular furniture that seems to be designed for a rude cave or lake dweller? Will France be condemned to prizewinning shapes crowned for their ungainliness, to bay sections, windows, and dressers borrowed from the portholes of a ship? To the backs of sofas, seats, and chairs that have the look of sheet metal, covered with fabric on which gosling-green birds fly over a soapy, dingy blue, to washstands and other furniture that share a kinship with the washbasin of a dental office in the vicinity of the morgue? And will Parisians eat in this dining room in the midst of these tinted panels of false mahogany, decorated with these arabesques of gold powder, near this chimney serving as the heater for the towels of a public bath? And will Parisians sleep in this bedroom between these two chairs of horrifying taste, in this bed consisting of a mattress laid on a tombstone?

Really, have we become *denationalized*? Conquered morally in a conquest worse than war? Is this a time when there is no longer any place in France except for the Muscovite, Scandinavian, or Italian writer, and maybe soon a Portuguese one? Is this a period in which it also seems there is no longer any place in France except for Anglo-Saxon or Dutch furniture?

No! Is this the new furniture of France? No! No!

C. REFORMS IN THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

The intellectual and architectural traditions established around mid-century by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horatio Greenough, Alexander Jackson Davis, and Andrew Jackson Downing slowly but quite persuasively colored American architectural practice over the last third of the nineteenth century. At the same time, influences from abroad – particularly from England and France – continued to make themselves felt. The American private house, to take but one specific example, truly began to come of age in the 1870s with timber techniques based on the "balloon frame" and Shingle style. Yet these forms, at time, also betrayed in part the influence of Richard Norman Shaw and the Queen Anne style. By the mid-1880s, however, a very unique American housing naissance was in full swing throughout the Northeast and Midwest, as documented by the photographic studies of such critics as George William Sheldon.

Another national transformation taking place within American architecture was the westward expansion of the country in the second half of the century, fostered by the first transcontinental railroad lines. Almost overnight a number of new urban centers sprang up in Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, and San Francisco. The new hub of the Midwest – Chicago – literally rose from the ashes of the great fire of 1871 and it rapidly became an urban center known for its civic bluster and high-rise experimentation. The dominance of the generally European-inspired, established styles of the East Coast thus came to be challenged by the likes of William Le Baron Jenny, John Root, Holabird and Roche, and Adler and Sullivan – nearly all of whom had some architectural training in France while at the same time remaining committed to creating an original American style. Technological and economic developments were feeding this growth. Between the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, the United States in many ways came of age as a country, and was rivaling Great Britain and Germany in terms of industrial production. The accompanying bravado, too, would soon foster a few unique and sizable American architectural talents.

26 HENRY HUDSON HOLLY
from "Modern Dwellings: Their Construction, Decoration, and Furniture" (1876)

Within the tradition of such pattern-book writers as Alexander Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux fall the efforts of Henry Hudson Holly. This New York City architect first became a champion of American design with *Holly's Country Seats*, which appeared in 1863 in the middle of the Civil War. Holly had long been attracted to English architecture and to the picturesque movement in particular, and though he spoke of the need for a uniquely American architecture he, like Downing before him, was heavily dependent on English examples for his models. In this particular essay of 1876 – the first in a series of articles for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* – Holly again pleads for the need for a vernacular style for the young country, but once again he follows up by recounting the latest fashion from Britain, the Queen Anne movement, which he feels is superior to the Gothic style. This passage nevertheless underscores the desire of many American architects to pay lip service, at least, to the creation of a new American style, even if this meant a tentative importation of ideas from abroad. Holly's magazine articles were later collected and appeared under the title *Modern Dwellings in Town and Country Adapted to American Wants and Climate* (1878).

In this way we are doubtless building up an architecture of our own, profiting, as other founders of styles have done, by precedents in older countries. Our materials, climate, and habits differ enough from those of Europe to demand a distinctive change in their use and arrangement. For example, in European countries, wood, a most valuable building material, is rare and expensive, while in most sections of our own it is very abundant. But instead of

Henry Hudson Holly, from "Modern Dwellings: Their Construction, Decoration, and Furniture," in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 52 (December 1875–May 1876), pp. 855–6.

using this in accordance with its nature and capacities, we have stupidly employed it in copying, as exactly as we can, details of foreign architecture which were designed with reference to the constructive capacities of brick and stone. Hence we see rounded arches, keystones, and buttresses of wood; wood siding is sanded and blocked off to represent stone; and the prosperous American citizen with a taste for feudal castles, like Horace Walpole, may live and see three sets of his own turrets decay. Fortunately our people are beginning to recognize the folly of such unmeaning shams, and when stone or brick is adopted, it is treated as such; and when wood is employed, we are properly commencing to show details adapted to its nature. Until, however, we come to possess a vernacular style, we must content ourselves with copying; and the question arises, Which of the innumerable systems is best suited to our requirements? [. . .]

But the Gothic revival, started by the masterly hand of Pugin, glorified and made national by such men as Street and Ruskin, seemed to have decided the matter, and both England and America have rested with unmolested satisfaction for the past half-century until within the last three years, when suddenly it has been discovered that the Gothic, however well adapted to ecclesiastical purposes, is lacking in essential points for domestic use; and Norman Shaw, J. J. Stevenson, and others have openly advocated the heresy. Their argument was that the Gothic meant the development of the arched construction in the pointed work, vaulting, and traceried windows, and that while these features were suited to churches and great halls, they were unfitted for modern domestic structures, divided as they are into comparatively low stories; therefore that even in the dwellings of the Middle Ages, when this style reached its highest perfection, its characteristic features could not be displayed. In fact, Gothic architecture was not originally intended to meet domestic wants.

These writers, then, exempt themselves from a slavish conformity to the Gothic, admirable as it may be in its proper sphere on the ground that it is manifestly inadequate to meet all modern requirements. One of the principles upon which the promoters of the Gothic revival insisted with energy and eloquence was ''*truth* in architecture'' – that the construction should not be hidden under some fair-seeming mask, which had no affinity with it, and often represented something very different from it, but should be made apparent, and the basis of whatever adornment should be employed. But these new reformers say that truth is not the peculiar possession of Gothic architecture; and, indeed, *modern* Gothic has often found the temptations of an age that loves to be deceived too strong for it, and has fallen into the errors of the system it has attempted to replace. What, then, do they propose as a substitute for this in domestic architecture? They claim that in what is loosely called the ''Queen Anne'' style we find the most simple mode of honest English building worked out in an artistic and natural form, fitting with the sash windows and ordinary doorways, which express real domestic needs (of which it is the outcome), and so in our house building conserving truth far more effectively than can be done with the Gothic.

27 ROBERT SWAIN PEABODY
from "Georgian Homes of New England" (1877)

Robert Swain Peabody was one-half of the highly successful Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns. A native of Bedford, Massachusetts, Peabody attended Harvard University before taking his architectural training in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts and in the office of Ware and Van Brunt. In 1870 he formed a successful partnership with John Stearns. Although the firm's designs for larger buildings often reflected Peabody's Beaux-Arts training, its houses were much more relaxed and influenced by British developments, and in keeping within the American idea of a Shingle style. This relatively early essay of Peabody, written in the aftermath of the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, responds at least in part to Holly's penchant for the Queen Anne, and it becomes the first instance of the American "Georgian," or American architecture from the colonial period, being proposed as a model – a source of inspiration almost chronologically paralleling the Queen Anne in England.

The English Queen Anne designers have a way of justifying their many vagaries as follows. They say: In the seventeenth century men had rather ceased to think of style. Classical detail as introduced in Renaissance days had become completely naturalized, and gradually it had ceased to be used in a servile way, or with great regard for precedent; but it simply made things seem attractive without much thought of purity of style, or style at all. Following this came the successive revivals, – of Palladian art, then of Grecian work, then of all the phases of Gothic, – all these lifeless imitations of the antique. From this study of archaeology the Queen Anne men profess to rebel, and to turn to the point where our art was before all this direct imitation of obsolete forms began. They find more of the spirit of independence and carelessness for precedent which they seek for in the work of the seventeenth century than elsewhere; so they study and work on that basis, but are ready to combine any thing with it which is attractive. They say they have red bricks and white mortar for their walls, tiles for their roofs, and white sash frames for their windows; and of these the house shall be made.

All this sounds like good reasoning, although in practice the antiquarian spirit makes the movement seem much like other revivals. In fact, we really know that reasoning is not at the bottom of it at all, but that Mr. Norman Shaw and others like him admired and studied and sketched all the quaint old work they could find, and that this work enlivened by their talent has set a quietly imitated example to other designers. If we follow their lead without any native Jacobean or Queen Anne models of importance to inspire us, we shall but be adding one more fashion to our already rather long list. A neo-Jacobean table can join the Eastlake chairs, the American rococo mantel, and the Puginesque sideboard in our dining-rooms; but there is nothing in this but an additional fashion. Now, however, that this wave is felt along our shores, can it not be directed into more fitting channels here even than it has worn for itself in England? We too have had our revivals; and if we go behind them we find in the Georgian days men working without thought of style, simply, delicately, beautifully. Many

Robert Swain Peabody, from "Georgian Homes of New England," in *The American Architect and Building News* II (1877), p. 338.

a choice wooden cornice, many a stiff mantel in our farm-houses, attest to this. Plancia, fascia, and soffit still are Yankee words in spite of our mediaeval period. With our Centennial year have we not discovered that we too have a past worthy of study? – a study, too, which we can subsequently explain and defend by all the ingenious Queen Anne arguments, strengthened by the fact that our colonial work is our only native source of antiquarian study and inspiration.

28 CLARENCE COOK
from *The House Beautiful* (1877)

The architectural pattern books that proliferated in the 1850s and 1860s were followed in the 1870s by a spate of American books devoted to the relatively new field of interior design. And in the forefront of this new movement was Clarence Cook, a long-time journalist for the *New York Tribune* with a keen eye for trends abroad. In writing his essays for *Scribner's Monthly* magazine in the 1870s, Cook was following the lead of the British writer Charles Eastlake, whose *Hints on Household Taste* (first appearing in London in 1868, and in an American edition in 1872) was one of the first primers of interior design directed to the middle class. Both Eastlake and Cook are sometimes associated with the "aesthetic movement," that is, as reformers reacting to the entrenched Victorian taste of the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Adherents to the aesthetic movement included the American artist James Whistler (living in London) and Louis Comfort Tiffany, who first gained success as an interior designer in the early 1880s. Cook, however, was of a more practical bent and he was preaching the ethic of good taste in a simple and straightforward manner.

Among the smaller facts that must be taken note of in drawing the portrait of these times is the interest a great many people feel in everything that is written on the subjects of house-building and house-furnishing. There never was a time when so many books written for the purpose of bringing the subject of architecture – its history, its theory, its practice – down to the level of the popular understanding, were produced as in this time of ours. And, from the house itself, we are now set to thinking and theorizing about the dress and decoration of our rooms: how best to make them comfortable and handsome; and books are written, and magazine and newspaper articles, to the end that on a matter which concerns everybody, everybody may know what is the latest word.

[. . .]

The best plan is to know first, as near as may be, how we ought to live externally, and then to surround ourselves with the things best suited for that mode of life, whatever it may be. This, however, commonplace as it sounds, is so seldom done, that it must be thought a thing extremely difficult to do. Look about you, reader, and ask yourself, how many people you know who live as they really like to live, and let the world go by. There are such people. I know such in my own circle, but there are not many of them, and it certainly is not the way of the world at large. But, whoever will try the experiment will find the reward in peace, and serenity, and real comfort, so abounding, that it will be no longer a query with him whether

Clarence Cook, from *The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks* (1877). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895, pp. 19, 20.

he shall continue it or not. And he will find that the question of furniture will disappear from the catalogue of vexations, because there is always provision in the world for every reasonable want. Every country, too, has its own models, and was at one time satisfied with its own – that is, the mass of the people were satisfied, though in every country, at all times, the rich have preferred something borrowed and exotic.

> ''I would give thilke Morpheus
> ⋆ ⋆ ⋆ ⋆ ⋆
> If he woll make me sleepe alite,
> Of downe of pure doves white
> I woll give him a feather bed,
> Raied with gold, and right well cled
> In fine black sattin *d'outremere*;
> And many a pillow, and every bere,
> Of *cloth of raines* to slepe on soft,
> Him there not need to turne oft.''

Their satins must come from over seas, and homespun will not do, but they must go for cloth to some foreign town of Rennes, else they cannot rest in their beds. But the charm of every house is to find the people in it self-contained, and taking their pleasure and their comfort where they can, in the things that come to them, rather in what they have had to seek painfully and far.

29 LEOPOLD EIDLITZ
from *The Nature and Function of Art: More Especially of Architecture* (1881)

The American Transcendental movement – the legacy of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau – continued to flourish in the second half of the nineteenth century but along a somewhat different course. Among those enthused by its powerful spiritual inspiration was Leopold Eidlitz, one of the more underappreciated architects of the century. Eidlitz was born in Prague and trained in Vienna, before he immigrated to the United States in the 1840s. There he became one of the first practitioners of the Germanic *Rundbogen* (rounded-arch) style, which was a functionally oriented reform movement emanating from Heinrich Hübsch and Friedrich von Gärtner. But Eidlitz's ideas were also evolving. He was drawn to philosophical issues, and he combined his interest in Emerson with German Romantic idealism and the recent development of German psychological aesthetics (see next

Leopold Eidlitz, from *The Nature and Function of Art: More Especially of Architecture*. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1881, pp. 223–4.

section). The result – following Horatio Greenough – was an involved organic theory of architecture and another formulation of the form-follows-function thesis. Architecture, for Eidlitz, was a highly expressive art, and like all human expression it must also be a truthful expression.

We find in nature that the human frame does mechanical work, sometimes with the labor of the carrier of burdens, and then again with the ease of the athlete. It is these gradations of ease, grace, directness, and expression with which labor is performed, or with which mechanical work is done by the human frame, which furnish to the architect the elements of art expression in his structures.

Like the elements of all natural combinations which serve the purpose of artistic or natural expression, they are but few in number, but capable of an infinite series of artistic combinations.

When we enumerate strength, elegance, and repose, we have probably stated the whole range of the architectural gamut; but if we consider that each of these qualities may be endowed with an endless range of quantity, we can readily imagine that these mechanical conditions of matter may express endless varieties of ideas, from the dungeon keep to the tabernacle which contains the Sacraments in the church of St. Laurence at Nuremberg.

All natural organisms are possessed of the mechanical ability to perform certain functions. This ability we find more or less clearly expressed in their forms as a whole, or in their crystallization. In this way they convey to the mind an expression of these functions, and thus they tell the story of their being. The architect, in imitation of this natural condition of matter, so models his forms that they also tell the story of their functions; and these functions are always mechanical conditions of strength, elegance, and repose, in combinations of various quantities of these properties. The fundamental principle of the modelling of architectural forms is therefore mechanical.

30 LOUIS SULLIVAN
from ''Characteristics and Tendencies of American Architecture'' (1885)

The transcendental legacy that moved Eidlitz acquired another energetic devotee in the 1880s in the person of Louis Sullivan. The architect was born in Boston, and briefly trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in the Philadelphia office of Frank Furness. The economic Panic of 1873 ended his job there and he migrated to Chicago, where he joined the office of William Le Baron Jenney. Another brief period of training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris concluded his formal training. In 1880, back in Chicago, he joined the office of Dankmar Adler, but their celebrated partnership was not formed until 1883, and Sullivan's better designs would not appear until the 1890s. Thus the decade of the 1880s was still a period of intellectual fermentation for the romantically inclined ornamentalist, as he immersed himself in the writings of Emerson and Whitman and struggled

Louis Sullivan, from ''Characteristics and Tendencies of American Architecture,'' in *The Inland Architect and Builder* VI:5 (November 1885), pp. 58–9.

with the question of how modern architects could create a new American style. The issue was intensely considered during this period in Chicago and Sullivan's address to the Western Association of Architects meeting in Saint Louis in 1885 becomes historically important as an initial contribution to the debate.

The ability to develop elementary ideas organically is not conspicuous in our profession. In this respect, the architect is inferior to the business man and financier, whose capacity to expand a simple congenial idea once fixed, into subtle, manifold and consistent ramifications, is admirable, and a shining example which we have often ignored, creating thereby an undesirable impression.

This view lead us to a consideration of the element of power. Until this element is widely introduced into our work, giving it the impress of brilliancy, intuition and great depth of feeling, that work, exhaustively considered, will remain but little more than a temporary expedient.

The presence of power, as a mental characteristic in one class of our people, augurs well for the belief that it may pervade our ranks. The beginnings of power are usually so crude and harsh as to be revolting to a refined taste, and hence it is instinctively shunned; but once subtilized, flushed with emotion and guided by clear insight, it is a worker of miracles. Responsive to its ardent wooings, Nature yields up her poetic secrets.

We surely have in us the germ of artistic greatness. No people on earth possessing more of innate poetic feeling, more of ideality, greater capacity to adore the beautiful, than our own people; but architects, as a professional class, have held it more expedient to maintain the traditions of their culture than to promulgate vitalizing thought. Here, then, we are weak, and should sentiment gain a pronounced ascendency, we may remain weak.

On us rests partially the responsibility, and partially on the public. We have at times individually sought to lead the public, when we, more wisely, should have followed it, and have, as a body, often followed, when, with beneficent results, we could have led. While we may compromise for a time, through a process of local adaptation, no architectural style can become a finality than runs counter to popular feeling. The desire at once to follow and to lead the public should be the initial attitude of our profession toward the formation of a national style. For while we conduct the technical operations, the shaping and controlling process is mainly in the hands of the public, who are constantly watching us, constantly criticising us, and constantly keeping us within bounds. We cannot wholly escape this control while we are without a national architecture fully representing the wishes of the public, and ministering to its conceptions of the beautiful and the useful. This can evidently not come to pass forthwith, for the public itself can only partially and imperfectly state its wants. Responding readily, however, to the intuition of those who anticipate its desires, it accepts provisionally, year by year, all the satisfaction it can get, so that while one recognized style after another shall pass through our hands to be tried and finally rejected in the search for permanent satisfaction, a modified residuum from each will doubtless be added to a fund representing our growth in emotional and spiritual wealth. The progress of this growth toward consummation in a national style involves the lives of many generations, and need be of but little practical concern to us of today. We work at short range and for immediate results. Perhaps, however, there would be infused into our profession an abiding *esprit de corps*, should consideration of this subject and its associated themes lead to a substantial agreement upon our status, our tendencies and our policy.

If the conclusions set forth in this paper be accepted as correct, it becomes clearly evident, however, that the formative beginnings of this national style, now in progress, are of the utmost immediate interest to us, in part through feelings of patriotism, in part because of a surmise that those who approach most nearly in the substance of their work and administration to the qualities inherent to our race and potential to a national style, will come nearest to the hearts of our people.

Harassed though the architect may be, by the cares and responsibilities of his daily life, there exists nevertheless within him, in the midst of this turmoil, an insuppressible yearning toward ideals. These delicate promptings should be both protected and nourished, that, like the flowering plants springing by the sun's gentle persuasion from little seeds buried in the coarser elements of the soil, they also, because of the warmth of human feeling, may bloom at times by the wayside, yielding refreshing odors and the joy of color to the plodding wayfarer.

The soft beams of the full-orbed moon fall with pathetic caress upon the slumbering life of the world; paling with the dawn, her tender vigil ended, she melts into the infinite depths when the ruddy herald of day proudly summons the workers. So does the soul watch over its greater ideals until the thrilling radiance of power shall awaken them to action.

Ideal thought and effective action should so compose the vital substance of our works that that they may live with us and after us, as a record of our fitness, and a memorial of the good we may have done. Then, in the affluence of time, when a rich burden of aspiring verdure may flourish in the undulating fields of thought, wrought into fertility through the bounty of nature and the energy of the race, the mellowed spontaneity of a national style, reaching its full and perfect fruition, shall have come from out the very treasury of nature.

31 GEORGE WILLIAM SHELDON
from *Artistic Country-Seats* (1886)

Like Clarence Cook, George Sheldon was a critic for a New York newspaper. He was, in addition, a prolific writer on artistic themes and the author of numerous books on the state of American art. He first ventured into architecture with his *Artistic Houses* (1883–4), a profuse compendium of 203 photographs that documented the interiors of some of the more lavish American estates. In his follow-up *Artistic Country-Seats*, he turned to home exteriors and, as fortune would have it, documented American residential architecture at the moment it was achieving its first great flowering, under the lead of such talented designers as Peabody and Sterns, Bruce Price, Stanford White, and William R. Emerson. The house of Mary F. Stoughton in Cambridge, Massachusetts, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson in 1883, was once lauded by Vincent J. Scully as "perhaps, the best suburban wooden house in America." Sheldon's more modest description of the design nevertheless fully recognizes its architectural importance. It was an early manifestation of the mature "Shingle Style" – the fulfillment of the legacy and Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing.

George William Sheldon, from *Artistic Country-Seats: Types of Recent American Villa and Cottage Architecture.* New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1886, p. 157.

One of the simplest private residences designed by the late Henry Hobson Richardson is Mrs. STOUGHTON's cottage, in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and few cottages of equal dimensions were ever planned, in this country or abroad, which show better results in point of convenience, spaciousness, and architectural purity. The architect has used on the external walls, as well as on the roofs, cypress shingles of a size somewhat larger than usual, and has caused them to be painted a deep olive-green. The hall runs through the center of the building, and on the left are the parlor and library, and on the right the dining-room, with kitchen, china-closet, and pantry adjoining. The finishing of the interior is in harmony with the simplicity of the exterior, and the effect is that of a comfortable country-house, without ostentation, and yet at the same time with a pervasive and stimulating sense of the organizing presence of an artist.

When Mr. Richardson built this house, he set the style, so to speak, for many other country-houses; and since its erection, the use of shingles instead of clapboards has greatly increased, while the entire absence of all frivolous ornamentation of scroll-work, and other souvenirs of the ''Vernacular'' architecture of former years, set hundreds of architects to thinking; and if any one will compare it with the country-house built for Mr. Frederick L. Ames, at North Easton, Massachusetts, in 1859, he will note to what extent Mr. Richardson's own taste was capable of change.

32 JOHN ROOT ET AL.
from ''What Are the Present Tendencies of Architectural Design in America?'' (1887)

A symposium was sponsored by the Illinois Association of Architects on March 5, 1887, in which the above question was posed to the attendees. John Root, whose masterful design for the Rookery was nearing completion, delivered a short lecture on the theme, which was followed by both prepared and non-prepared responses to Root's remarks. Among those participating were Dankmar Adler, Clarence L. Stiles, W. W. Boyington, Louis Sullivan, and Frederick Baumann. The discussion about style reflects the fermentation underway, as the outlines of a Chicago commercial style of building were indeed taking shape. The reference of Baumann to the theory of Gottfried Semper reflects the influence of this theorist making its way into Chicago through the large community of German émigrés in the city.

John Root et al., from ''What Are the Present Tendencies of Architectural Design in America?,'' in *The Inland Architect and News Record* 9:3 (March 1887), pp. 23–4, 26.

JOHN W. ROOT

Probably in no age was it so difficult to determine such a question as now. All movements are now so rapid; thought is so lightning-like, so rapidly changing; transmission of ideas and news is so instantaneous that each one of us today realizes, not only the accomplishments of all other men, but is enabled, within limits, to think their very thoughts. The consequence of this is, that we are somewhat like Sancho Panza, in that many of the dishes thus rapidly presented to our lips must be taken away untasted; while much of the pabulum with which we load our stomachs remains unassimilated.

Before every one of us has passed a kaleidoscopic panorama of styles, for whose original development three thousand years were required. To what extent may we call any of these rapidly dissolving architectural impressions our own? To what extent will architects of today leave enduring impressions upon any one of the various styles in which they have rendered their buildings? Note some of the changes of the last twenty years. Nowhere today do we find academic productions in Neo-Grec so common a decade since; nowhere those pseudo Gothic designs, to whose production were consecrated the talents of Burges and Street and Scott. In high stays, and crisp, unyielding ruffs, Queen Anne has taken coach and driven off, and now only the rumble of her distant wheels, and the lingering perfume of her lavender remain; the Neo-Jacobean has lost its royal state; the Dutch have come to London, and, like William of Orange, holds silent sway in Cadogan square; here in America the present vogue is a style called ''Romanesque.''

In recalling this series of swift changes we can but ask, ''What in heaven's name are the present tendencies of architectural design in the world? What are they in America?''

In striving to reach some answer to this question, we will find it useless to waste time over the great mass of imitations, or the host of mere imitators. In no one of these quickly born and quickly dead art movements has anything been vitally done by the heedless throng who blindly followed the masters of their school. In each case the first apostle has made converts, among whom were a few, not content with the study of his work alone, but who went back to those original sources from which their master gained inspiration. These have added to the permanent value of his work. But how few have been their number. The vast mass of converts have been satisfied to follow where he led, to repeat what he has said, to devote lives to that mere industry of pencil which covered original and strong work with the killing vine of meaningless affectation.

Thus, in the so-called Romanesque work of today, how much comes freshly studied from France, and how much from New England? Which are commoner sources of modern inspiration, Ste. Croix, in Bordeaux, or Trinity Church, in Boston? St. Pierre, in Angoulême, or Harvard Law School? To the really creative minds of our day, and to those students whom they have inspired to imitate, but not copy them, must we look for the tendencies of our day. In considering these men and their work, we may see reflected in them something of the influences operating upon architecture in America. The creative artist must always be a man in whom are especially focalized these influences, which are different from those which move other men of his time, not in kind; but in degree alone. Thus, in one such man will be manifestations, not only through his work; but through the mere attitude of his mind, which will clearly indicate what forces are in play about him.

But apart from questions of architectural styles, as commonly understood, and quite distinct from the study of examples in these styles, or of the men who revived them, are considerations of national characteristics in non-architectural directions. These will, perhaps, after all, give us the best answer to what American architecture must soon be, and therefore what its present tendencies are. Judged by the character of the American people, in as far as this character has been developed, some qualities which we may assume of American architecture will be:

First. It will be *Catholic*. The American people do not tend toward narrow views of things, nor have they yet developed sufficient conservatism to retain things merely because they exist. They rather tend to the adoption of any new thing, provided it merely seem better than the old, which often leads to a too sudden abandonment of older modes, cutting off slow and yet promising developments, and inflicting the newer fashion with certain harshness and crudity. What conservatism the nation may acquire when it is older is wide of the question. It is the present condition which is creating the architectural tendencies we are striving to discover; and these conditions being what they are, it does not seem that there is immediate prospect of a single national style, or of adherence to single lines of development. On the contrary, it seems more likely that each architectural style will, in its turn, be taken and Americanized, – that is acclimatized and modified by local conditions.

Second. It will be *Grave*. No student of the American people can doubt their essential gravity. Even their humor is often a mere cover for an underlying seriousness, and the sober view of things is frequently disguised beneath what, to the careless observer, seems a trifling jest. Though Americans are really grave, the gravity is not of a somber sort, nor of the quality which marks our English brother. The gravity, essentially American, has a humorous complement, strongly marked, which will give to the architecture of the future a certain *Lightness*. This lightness may, in certain buildings, express itself in grace of detail, or in delicacy of parts, or in occasional touches of fancy or even *whimsicalness*. But underlying this lightness will still remain the essential and national gravity.

Third. Our architecture will probably remain *Practical*.

This means not only that structures of purely decorative character will be few in number, but that each important detail of a building must have some immediate, easily recognized and practical use. This is made likely by the strength in American character of the ''commercial instinct, which involuntarily shrinks from what it considers a 'waste of money.' '' Not that Americans are mean, for they are on the contrary, generous; but it is to be feared that long time must pass before we will as a nation, consider with equanimity large expenditures for buildings whose sole function is æsthetical, and whose sole beauty is to make the public mind more sensitive to beauty. At the same time there will come in America, and that very soon, an architecture of the greatest splendor.

The tremendous and rapidly acquired wealth, not only of individuals, but of the nation as a whole, coupled as it is by no national indifference to display, and by no national parsimony, will inevitably lead to the erection of buildings, both of private, commercial and public character, whose splendor will be phenomenal in the history of the world. We see many indications of this even now, not only in the magnificent palaces erected as dwellings for millionaires, but in the gorgeous trade-palaces which have already become typically American.

Thus, we may assume that architecture tends today in several widely different directions: toward *Catholicity*, toward *Gravity*, with its modifying *Grace*, toward *Utility*, and toward

Splendor. Other tendencies there are, arising from the tastes and needs of that chief element in all republics, the vast middle class; but this class is with us so unstable, so quickly passing from a middle state to great wealth or great poverty, so influenced by boundless ambition which seems to be cognizant of all possibilities; so imitative in cheap ways of the splendor of great wealth, that these tendencies seem difficult to estimate.

DANKMAR ADLER

The truly good features of the higher class of buildings cannot be effaced in reproduction, while the meretriciousness and ''whimsicalness'' that may be found in buildings upon which large sums of money have been expended, and which in such buildings may derive from their association with better work, and execution in the best material, and with the best workmanship, a certain dignity of effect which, when imitated in cheaper buildings, in cheaper materials, in inferior workmanship, become grotesque, and carry with them their own condemnation—a condemnation which will then reflect upon their prototype in better buildings. The danger, therefore, of finding salient features of good buildings travestied and caricatured in inferior structures, will make the projectors and designers of the better buildings all the more careful to exclude from them all features that are not subject to this danger.

I therefore believe that to the tendencies of modern American architecture enumerated by Mr. Root, there should be added another, namely, that of the gradual elimination of all whimsical and trivial features.

CLARENCE L. STILKS

Taking into consideration the acknowledged lack of conservatism and the independence of American thought, may not the formation of a distinctively American architecture be among the possibilities of the near future? By this is meant an order or style which shall be the outgrowth of American thought and feeling, and the result of conditions under which that thought and feeling has been developed. Not an American edition of any existing style, not even a combination of them, but a style of architecture which shall be as distinctive as any of the already recognized styles of other countries.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Baumann said that he thought *utility* one of the most salient points, and that it had not been as fully emphasized as it ought to be; that in this modern age *utility* was the true base of architectural art. We have spoken of *style*. What do we call style? What is style in architecture? He concluded by quoting from Professor Gottfreid Semper, the great German architect, in his

work published on the subject: "*Stile ist die Uebereinstimmung eines Bauwerkes mit den Bedingungen seines Enstehens*" – Style is the coincidence of a structure with the conditions of its origin.

Mr. Sullivan: I think we are starting at the wrong end entirely. We are taking the results of what has already passed, examining on the surface, and from that are searching for the source of impulse. I do not believe the origin of style is outside, but within ourselves, and the man who has not the impulse within him will not have the style. But the more he thinks, the more he reflects, observes and assimilates, the more style he will have. So, therefore, it seems to me that the eventual outcome of our American architecture will be the emanation of what is going on inside of us at present, the character and quality of our thoughts and our observations, and above all, our reflections. If I were to forecast the outcome of American architecture I should search for it by the study of my own generation; not by studying the architecture of the past. We are in a vast ferment at present, and like most of them, the top of the liquor is covered with scum, but the real process is down below; and it is from this gradual clarifying of the fermentation of thought that the style will result, but the impulse must come first. Therefore, I think that to arrive at the style it is a great deal more important that we should be good observers and good reflectors rather than good draughtsmen.

33 MARIANA GRISWOLD VAN RENSSELAER
from *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (1888)

Although H. H. Richardson's residential designs were highly influential, this architectural genius was best known within Chicago architectural circles by the design of his "Field Building," also known as the Marshall Field Wholesale Store, designed and erected in Chicago between 1885 and 1887. Here Richardson strengthened his earlier style with a more Spartan character and reduced the volume to a rectangular block enlivened with a rhythmic sequence of arched and flat openings. The building particularly impressed Louis Sullivan, and is often credited with advancing him toward his mature style, as seen first in his Auditorium Building, Chicago (1887–90). Richardson's Field Building impressed others as well, including Richardson's first biographer, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. For many years she had excelled as a literary critic, but in the mid-1880s she turned her attention to architecture and produced her series "Recent American Architecture" for *Century Magazine*. Her biography of Richardson, published two years after his death, is a masterpiece of facts and analysis, so much so that she was made an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects in 1890.

The Field Building is the vast rectangular box in its most uncompromising estate. The site measures three hundred and twenty-five feet by one hundred and ninety feet, and every foot of it is covered by a solid mass which rises to a height of one hundred and twenty-five feet.

Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, from *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (1888). Reprint edition, New York: Dover Publications, 1969, p. 97.

The roof is invisible, the doorways are inconspicuous, and decoration is very sparingly used. The whole effect depends upon the structure of the walls themselves. No building could more frankly express its purpose or be more self-denying in the use of ornament. Yet the most elaborately massed, diversified, and decorated structure could not be more truly a design; and its prime virtues of a solidity commensurate with its elevation and a dignity equal to its bulk are secured in such a way that even a high degree of beauty is not wanting. The material is fine in color – red sandstone in the upper parts and red Missouri granite in the lower. The tone of the two differs only slightly, but they are unlike, of course, in quality and are differently finished – the sandstone is cut and the granite is rock-faced. Each detail of the reticent sculptured decoration tells strongly against the general severity, and the hand of a careful, skillful artist is as plainly visible in that varied disposition of the plain units of construction which gives interest to every foot of the surface. It is visible, too, in the beautiful profile of the angles, and in that alternation of heavier with lighter piers which inconspicuously yet effectively relieves the monotony of the upper range of windows. In short, this vast, plain building is as carefully studied as the smallest and most elaborate could be, and is a text-book of instruction in treatment no less than in composition.

34 FRIEDRICH BAUMANN
from "Thoughts on Architecture" (1889)

Baumann's remarks regarding Gottfried Semper earlier in this section are echoed in this address delivered before the American Institute of Architects convention in October 1889 in Washington, DC. Baumann at this time was a senior fellow with the Institute. He had emigrated from Germany to Chicago in 1851, and had built much in the city before the great fire of 1871. In 1873 he published a very important structural manual on footings in Chicago's loamy soil, and he was again quite active in the style discussions of the late 1880s. What makes this particular reiteration of Semper's "dressing" or "curtain" thesis so interesting is its coincidence with the evolving notion of a curtain wall. The question of whether theory was influencing practice or practice theory has no clear answer.

Architecture has its own special language. Its works narrate their history. Were this possible in a language which has not been transmitted from generation to generation?

Architectural construction, according to Semper, bases on four constituent parts: The fireside as center; the protecting roof; the circumvallation; the substruction. From these originally very modest parts the temple bases its origin. It starts with the simplest wood to become the finest marble structure. The sacredness of the purpose demanded the best material at command. And this did not suffice. Even the finest and at the time the most appreciated of wood materials, the cedar of Lebanon, had to be ornamented and wholly covered with metal, precious gold not excepted. To this fashion, which must have

Friedrich Baumann, "Thoughts on Architecture," from "Thoughts on Style," in *The Inland Architect and News Record* XVI:5 (November 1890), p. 59.

been at the time thousands of years old, we find the tabernacle gorgeously ornamented as related in scripture.

Its partitions were mere curtains of the most precious kind. This most original fashion of partitioning off was retained by Solomon in the gorgeous construction of his stable temple. Palaces in olden times had partitions merely fashioned in this style. The king was equal at least to a demi-god and was entitled to fashion his domicile accordingly. Even in later times we find partitions thus made. Think of Polonius stabbed by Hamlet when listening behind a partition made of cloth.

But partitions were, with the process of culture, made of solid material. Yet, wherever they thus appear, they are not artistically treated as structural parts. They are decorated in a manner to represent curtains, and at no time become an expressed mechanical element. Do we not at the present day decorate the entire within parts of an edifice exclusively in this fashion?

35 LOUIS SULLIVAN
from "Ornament in Architecture" (1892)

In the heyday of functionalist thinking in the mid-twentieth century, the first point made by Sullivan in this essay – that a building could be "well formed and comely in the nude" – was generally interpreted as a precocious statement of his later axiom regarding form following function. What was seldom mentioned regarding this essay is the second point made here by Sullivan – that ornamental treatment endows a building both with life and individuality. This point also better characterizes Sullivan's own approach to design in the 1890s, when his most prolific period as an architect was also his most profuse in terms of his ornamentation of the building fabric.

I take it as self-evident that a building, quite devoid of ornament, may convey a noble and dignified sentiment by virtue of mass and proportion. It is not evident to me that ornament can intrinsically heighten these elemental qualities. Why, then, should we use ornament? Is not a noble and simple dignity sufficient? Why should we ask more?

If I answer the question in entire candor, I should say that it would be greatly for our aesthetic good if we should refrain entirely from the use of ornament for a period of years, in order that our thought might concentrate acutely upon the production of buildings well formed and comely in the nude. We should thus perforce eschew many undesirable things, and learn by contrast how effective it is to think in a natural, vigorous and wholesome way. This step taken, we might safely inquire to what extent a decorative application of ornament would enhance the beauty of our structures – what new charm it would give them.

Louis Sullivan, from "Ornament in Architecture," in *Louis Sullivan: The Public Papers*, ed. Robert Twombly. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 80–1.

If we have then become well grounded in pure and simple forms we will reverse them; we will refrain instinctively from vandalism; we will be loath to do aught that may make these forms less pure, less noble. We shall have learned, however, that ornament is mentally a luxury, not a necessary, for we shall have discerned the limitations as well as the great value of unadorned masses. We have in us romanticism, and feel a craving to express it. We feel intuitively that our strong, athletic and simple forms will carry with natural ease the raiment of which we dream, and that our buildings thus clad in a garment of poetic imagery, half hid as it were in choice products of loom and mine, will appeal with redoubled power, like a sonorous melody overlaid with harmonious voices.

I conceive that a true artist will reason substantially in this way; and that, at the culmination of his powers, he may realize this ideal. I believe that architectural ornament brought forth in this spirit is desirable, because beautiful and inspiring; that ornament brought forth in any other spirit is lacking in the higher possibilities.

That is to say, a building which is truly a work of art (and I consider none other) is in its nature, essence and physical being an emotional expression. This being so, and I feel deeply that it is so, it must have, almost literally, a life. It follows from this living principle that an ornamented structure should be characterized by this quality, namely, that the same emotional impulse shall flow throughout harmoniously into its varied forms of expression – of which, while the mass-composition is the more profound, the decorative ornamentation is the more intense. Yet must both spring from the same source of feeling.

I am aware that a decorated building, designed upon this principle, will require in its creator a high and sustained emotional tension, an organic singleness of idea and purpose maintained to the last. The completed work will tell of this; and if it be designed with sufficient depth of feeling and simplicity of mind, the more intense the heat in which it was conceived, the more serene and noble will it remain forever as a monument of man's eloquence. It is this quality that characterizes the great monuments of the past. It is this certainly that opens a vista toward the future.

To my thinking, however, the mass-composition and the decorative system of a structure such as I have hinted at should be separable from each other only in theory and for purposes of analytical study. I believe, as I have said, that an excellent and beautiful building may be designed that shall bear no ornament whatever; but I believe just as firmly that a decorated structure, harmoniously conceived, well considered, cannot be stripped of its system of ornament without destroying its individuality.

36 MONTGOMERY SCHUYLER
from "Last Words about the World's Fair" (1894)

Among the foremost architectural critics of the late nineteenth century was Montgomery Schuyler, who in 1891 was active in starting the *Architectural Record*. He wrote essays on a range of themes, from Leopold Eidlitz to the Romanesque Revival to Chicago Architecture, but here he turns his eye to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Although later critics, led by Louis Sullivan, strongly criticized the buildings at the Exposition, this was not the impression shared by most architects or observers at the time. Henry Adams, for instance, noted that the exhibition was "the first impression of American thought as a unity," while Charles Eliot Norton, President of Harvard University, saw the "magnificent structures" as producing a "superb effect." Schuyler follows these two men in his praise, but with one very interesting qualification. Earlier in this review he had lauded the buildings (he was critical only of Louis Sullivan's Transportation Building) as "the most admired group of buildings ever erected in this country." In further analysis, he goes on to explain what he means by this statement. He praises the unity of their formal (Renaissance) language, again their magnitude or colossal scale, but above all he lauds their theatricality or power of fanciful illusion. If an embittered Sullivan (in 1924) saw the buildings only as "naked exhibitionism of charlatanry," Schuyler views the spectacle in a quite different and perhaps more revealing light. The effect of the event of 1893 on the collective American psyche, in fact, was not unlike that of the Great Exhibition on the British psyche in 1851. The new inventions, the automobiles, the Bessemer furnaces, the rapidly constructed rows of exhibition palaces – all documented not only a growing industrial and economic might but also the future possibilities of the young country.

There is still another cause for the success of the World's Fair buildings, a cause that contributes more to the effect of them, perhaps, than both the causes we have already set down put together. It is this which at once most completely justifies the architects of the Exposition in the course they have adopted, and goes furthest to render the results of that course ineligible for reproduction or for imitation in the solution of the more ordinary problems of the American architect. The success of the architecture at the World's Fair is not only a success of unity, and a success of magnitude. It is also and very eminently a success of illusion.

What the World's Fair buildings have first of all to tell us, and what they tell equally to a casual glimpse and to a prolonged survey is that they are examples not of work-a-day building, but of holiday building, that the purpose of their erection is festal and temporary, in a word that the display is a display and a triumph of occasional architecture. As Mr. Burnham well described it, it is a "vision" of beauty that he and his co-workers have presented to us, and the description implies, what our recollections confirm, that it is an illusion that has here been provided for our delight. It was the task of the architects to provide the stage-setting for an unexampled spectacle. They have realized in plaster that gives us the illusion

Montgomery Schuyler, from "Last Words about the World's Fair" (1894), in *American Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 571–3.

of monumental masonry a painter's dream of Roman architecture. In Turner's fantasias we have its proto-type much more nearly than in any actual erection that has ever been seen in the world before. It is the province and privilege of the painter to see visions and of the poet to dream dreams. They are unhampered by material considerations of structure, of material or of cost. They can imagine unrealizable centaurs and dragons, gorgons, hydras and chimeras dire and in turn affect our imaginations with these.

[. . .]

Such a pleasure and such an illusion the architects of Jackson Park have given us. The White City is the most integral, the most extensive, the most illusive piece of scenic architecture that has ever been seen. That is praise enough for its builders, without demanding for them the further praise of having made a useful and important contribution to the development of the architecture of the present, to the preparation of the architecture of the future. This is a praise that is not merely irrelevant to the praise they have won, but incompatible with it. It is essential to the illusion of a fairy city that it should not be an American city of the nineteenth century. It is a seaport on the coast of Bohemia, it is the capital of No Man's Land. It is what you will, so long as you will not take it for an American city of the nineteenth century, nor its architecture for the actual or the possible or even the ideal architecture of such a city. To fall into this confusion was to lose a great part of its charm, that part which consisted in the illusion that the White City was ten thousand miles and a thousand years away from the City of Chicago, and in oblivion of the reality that the two were contiguous and contemporaneous. Those of us who believe that architecture is the correlation of structure and function, that if it is to be real and living and progressive, its forms must be the results of material and construction, sometimes find ourselves reproached with our admiration for these palaces in which this belief is so conspicuously ignored and set at naught. But there is no inconsistency in entertaining at the same time a hearty admiration for the Fair and its builders and the hope of an architecture which in form and detail shall be so widely different from it as superficially to have nothing in common with it. Arcadian architecture is one thing and American architecture is another.

37 LOUIS SULLIVAN
from "Emotional Architecture as Compared with Intellectual" (1894)

In one of Sullivan's more revealing essays, the architects speaks of intuition, imagination, inspiration, and the "Great Spirit" that should animate the work of the architect. The essay is explicitly pantheistic or Emersonian in its worldview. If the classical and Gothic styles for Sullivan represent the objective and subjective sides of human imagination, the new "Poetic Architecture" now arising shall transcend these limitations and partake of that

Louis Sullivan, from "Emotional Architecture as Compared with Intellectual: A Study in Subjective and Objective," in *The Inland Architect and News Record* 24:4 (November 1894), p. 34.

larger organic wellspring of Nature. This essay strikes to the core of Sullivan's personal philosophy, and it is particularly relevant in that it was written shortly before he began work on the Guaranty Building (1894–5) in Buffalo, NY.

It was a pure, it was a noble art, wherefore we call it classic; but after all it was an apologetic art, for while possessing serenity it lacked the divinely human element of mobility. The Greek never caught the secret of the changing of the seasons, the orderly and complete sequence of their rhythm within the calmly moving year. Nor did this self-same Greek know what we now know of nature's bounty, for music in those days had not been born; this lovely friend, approaching man to man, had not yet begun to bloom as a rose, to exhale its wondrous perfume.

That the Gothic architecture, with somber, ecstatic eye, with its thought far above with Christ in the heavens, seeing but little here below, feverish and overwrought, taking comfort in gardening and plant life, sympathizing deeply with nature's visible forms, evolved a copious and rich variety of incidental expressions, but lacked the unitary comprehension, the absolute consciousness and mastery of pure form that can come alone of unclouded and serene contemplation, of perfect repose and peace of mind.

I believe, in other words, that the Greek knew the statics, the Goth the dynamics of the art, but that neither of them suspected the mobile equilibrium of it – neither of them divined the movement and stability of nature. Failing in this, both have forever fallen short, and must pass away when the true, the *Poetic Architecture* shall arise; that architecture which shall speak with clearness, with eloquence and with warmth of the fullness, the completeness of man's intercourse with nature and with his fellow men.

Moreover, we know, or should by this time know, that human nature has now become too rich in possessions, too well equipped, too magnificently endowed that any architecture hitherto can be said to have hinted at its resources, much less to have exhausted them by anticipation.

It is this consciousness, this pride, that shall be our motive, our friend, philosopher and guide in the beautiful country that stretches so invitingly before us.

In that land, the schools, having found the object of their long, blind searching, shall teach directness, simplicity, naturalness; they shall protect the young against palpable illusion. They shall teach that, while man once invented a process called composition, nature has forever brought forth organisms. They shall encourage the love of nature that wells up in every childish heart, and shall not suppress, shall not stifle the teeming imagination of the young.

They shall teach, as the result of their own bitter experience, that conscious mental effort, that conscious emotionality, are poor mates to breed from, and that true parturition comes of a deep instinctive, subconscious desire. That true art, springing fresh from nature, must have in it, to live, much of the glance of an eye, much of the sound of a voice, much of the life of a life.

That nature is strong, generous, comprehensive, fecund, subtile; that in growth and decadence she continually sets forth the drama of man's life.

That, thro' the rotating seasons, thro' the procession of the years, thro' the march of the centuries, permeating all, sustaining all, there murmurs the still, small voice of a power that holds us in the hollow of its hand.

D. CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF GERMAN MODERNISM: SPACE, FORM, AND REALISM

Introduction

Throughout much of the twentieth century, German architectural theory of the last decades of the nineteenth century remained an area virtually untouched by historians. Various reasons led to this vacuum of research. One was the destruction of the German university system (and its famed scholarship) during the 1930s, as nearly every major German art historian of the period fled into exile. Another reason was Germany's military aggression and the massive destruction wrought by World War II, which for many decades made the study of German thought unpopular in both Europe and North America. The result was that most histories of modern architecture were written without citing any Germanic contributions prior to the twentieth century, and even the

German "pioneers" at the start of the century were viewed simply as pioneers, that is, as scouts operating without any prepared intellectual terrain.

A more critical examination of the matter will reveal that just as Britain, France, and North America provided significant contributions to the fostering of an international modern movement, so too did Germanic theory. The German contribution, however, formed somewhat differently and unfolded in three areas. First, there was a particular Germanic fascination (throughout the arts) with psychology and in particular a psychology of form – how the eye and brain perceive and interpret form. Such an approach intuitively strips forms of their symbolic content, where they may then be seen as "pure form" or forms acting without stylistic trappings. This abstraction of form, secondly, leads one to focus on other elements of the architectural experience, such as light and space, which in German architectural theory becomes other favorite theme of deliberation. The rich German heritage in this regard goes back to Immanuel Kant and German philosophy in general. Thirdly, in Germany – and here we have the legacy of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Carl Bötticher, and Gottfried Semper – there had also been a long tradition of theorizing about iron as a new building material. This interest, in parallel with theorizing in France, rapidly accelerated in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, as Germany expanded economically and grew into a major world power. When these three variables are taken as a whole, it is clear that the so-called German pioneers of the early twentieth century were scarcely pioneers in their formal innovations, but in fact were architects working upon a substantially developed theoretical basis. Saying this another way, there is a quite discernible line of theoretical development in German thought that runs from Karl Friedrich Schinkel through Gottfried Semper to Peter Behrens or Walter Gropius.

38 RICHARD LUCAE
from "On the Aesthetic Development of Iron Construction, especially its Use in Spaces of a Significant Span" (1870)

In Volume I we saw Richard Lucae present a lecture in 1869 on the meaning and significance of space in architecture (229). This address, given to the Berlin Association of Architects in 1870, follows on the same theme, but now frames it specifically with regard to iron. The question posed to the profession is: What are the aesthetic possibilities of iron, and how has the use of the material affected contemporary architecture? Lucae's response is ambivalent. On the one hand, he greatly admired the audacious structural feats of the new material and its roof trusses, as well as the overall spatial effects of "suspension" or "soaring." On the other hand – both conceptually and perceptually – he could not get used to the unfamiliar thinness or slightness of the material. As he notes below, his generation was raised on the aesthetics of stone or mass, that is, forms shaped by superfluous mass. Iron, by virtue of its mathematical precision and economy of form, disallows superfluity and demands in fact a whole

Richard Lucae, from "Über die ästhetische Ausbildung der Eisen-Konstruktionen," trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (January 13, 1870), pp. 10–13.

new aesthetics of form. Lucae, however, also realizes that this issue is at heart a generational issue born of visual habits. And like Gottfried Semper, he commends this aesthetic issue to the succeeding generation of younger architects to explore – those who will be raised upon and therefore who will be accustomed to iron's thinner proportions.

If we pose the question of whether the use of iron has until now exerted a decisive influence on the development of our architecture, we cannot unconditionally answer it with a "no," nor can we answer it with a "yes!" Aesthetically, perhaps we can say "no," because I believe that in the nature of iron itself there are a number of factors that make it extraordinarily difficult to treat artistically.

One of its main properties in this regard is the costliness of the material, which in many cases forces us to be content with the least weight for constructional purposes, and this seems to preclude the beauty of mass from the start. For, Gentlemen, as I have remarked earlier in another forum, *the purely mathematical construction is no more a finished artistic result than is the human body with its muscles and ligaments lying open, or even as the skeleton is a living creature of nature*, and therefore I maintain that the beauty of an architectural system is partly due to the fact that there is a surplus of mass beyond the material necessary for support. [. . .]

The second reason why the aesthetic cultivation of iron construction is difficult is the slight corporeality of iron itself. Iron lacks, as it were, the materiality by which we can display beauty, and if we give it greater corporeality than it must have in order to fulfill its functions, then we will not only be lacking in the principles of art but we will also commit an untruth. We improve it (analogous to stone architecture) in suitable places to achieve an art form, but when we do so we rob iron of a characteristic property of its aesthetic appearance that we should protect under all circumstances – namely that it remains delicate and yet must evoke the impression of strength. [. . .]

But the introduction of iron into monumental building in many respects also meets with a prejudice. I will concede the fact, gentlemen, that with our generation the eye must first become accustomed to the new visual proportions related to the use of iron. A succeeding generation that has grown up with iron construction, just as we have grown up with stone construction, will in many cases have that fully undisturbed sense of beauty that still today leaves our generation unfulfilled, because we feel the tradition of beauty so dear to us is under attack.

39 FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
from "The Use and Abuse of History" (1872)

If the nineteenth century can be seen in architectural terms as the century of industrialization – as the power of the machine to redefine or reshape society and its forms – it should also be seen in a complementary sense as the century of history. The second half of the eighteenth century "rediscovered" Greece as the wellspring of Western civilization, but the nineteenth century not only extended the historical panorama to the Middle East, Egypt, and Asia, but it also filled in the details of Western culture by providing the first great histories of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque periods. The result architecturally was the phenomenon of historicism or the symbolic use or sanctioning of historical forms for contemporary usage – be it a Gothic church or a Neoclassical Parliament building. But this great dependence of history also had its critics, among them the young philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In his view, history in the second half of the nineteenth century had become a destructive or inhibiting factor stifling contemporary artistic development and crushing the modern spirit. He wrote this essay at a time when he was still close to the artistic circle of Richard Wagner and Gottfried Semper, but in a forceful way this polemic serves as a mighty declaration of independence from the historical past. The great menaces here are the over-reliance of the present generation on historical models as well as the growing monopoly of the middle-class's "good taste" over artistic matters. The result is the first manifesto to view modernism as an ideological creed.

What is the use to the modern man of this "monumental" contemplation of the past, this preoccupation with the rare and classic? It is the knowledge that the great thing existed and was therefore possible, and so may be possible again. He is heartened on his way; for his doubt in weaker moments, whether his desire is not for the impossible, is struck aside. Suppose one should believe that no more than a hundred men, brought up in the new spirit, efficient and productive, were needed to give the deathblow to the present fashion of education in Germany; he will gather strength from the remembrance that the culture of the Renaissance was raised on the shoulders of such another band of a hundred men.

[. . .]

Consider the simplest and commonest example, the inartistic or half-artistic natures whom a monumental history provides with sword and buckler. They will use the weapons against their hereditary enemies, the great artistic spirits, who alone can learn from that history the one real lesson how to live, and embody what they have learned in noble action. Their way is obstructed, their free air darkened by the idolatrous– and conscientious–dance round the half-understood monument of a great past. "See, that is the true and real art," we seem to hear; "of what use are these aspiring little people of today?" The dancing crowd has apparently the monopoly of "good taste," for the creator is always at a disadvantage compared with the mere onlooker, who never put a hand to the work; just as the armchair politician has ever had more wisdom and foresight than the actual statesman. But if the custom of democratic suffrage and numerical majorities be transferred

Friedrich Nietzsche, from *The Use and Abuse of History* (1872), trans. Adrian Collins. New York: Macmillan, 1967, pp. 14, 16–17.

to the realm of art, and the artist put on his defense before the court of aesthetic dilettanti, you may take your oath on his condemnation; although, or rather because, his judges had proclaimed solemnly the canon of "monumental art," the art that has "had an effect on all ages," according to the official definition. In their eyes there is no need nor inclination nor historical authority for the art which is not yet "monumental" because it is contemporary. Their instinct tells them that art can be slain by art: the monumental will never be reproduced, and the weight of its authority is invoked from the past to make it sure. They are connoisseurs of art primarily because they wish to kill art; they pretend to be physicians when their real idea is to dabble in poisons. They develop their tastes to a point of perversion that they may be able to show a reason for continually rejecting all the nourishing artistic fare that is offered them. For they do not want greatness to arise; their method is to say, "See, the great thing is already here!" In reality they care as little about the great thing that is already here as that which is about to arise; their lives are evidence of that. Monumental history is the cloak under which their hatred of present power and greatness masquerades as an extreme admiration of the past. The real meaning of this way of viewing history is disguised as its opposite; whether they wish it or no, they are acting as though their motto were: "Let the dead bury the – living."

40 ROBERT VISCHER
from "On the Optical Sense-of-Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics" (1873)

The science of psychology was yet another creation of the nineteenth century. Although its roots in Germanic philosophy lay with Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, and above all Johann Friedrich Herbart, it receives a clearer definition as a science in the second half of the century with the appearance of Karl Albert Scherer's *Das Leben des Traums* (The life of the dream, 1861), Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophie des Unbewussten* (Philosophy of the unconscious, 1869), and Wilhelm Wundt's *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (Principles of physiological psychology, 1874). One of the first individuals to apply these new theories to art was Robert Vischer, the son of the noted aesthetician Friedrich Theodor Vischer. The father, in fact, set up the problem in 1866 by discussing the "buoyant life" inherent in architecture: its linear and planar suspension of bodies, the movement of lines rising and falling in space, and its capacity "to express the whole outer and inner life of nations." Robert follows by developing a theory that could be applied to all the visual arts, which he encapsulated under the new concept of *Einfühlung*. Literally "in-feeling," the term is difficult to translate in the sense that Vischer intended, but it generally rendered by the term "empathy." For Vischer, the concept of empathy is not a casual transference of emotions toward the object of artistic contemplation, but a more thoroughgoing transference of the metaphysical self into the object, that is, a pantheistic urge to merge with the world. The psychological problem, as Vischer first

Robert Vischer, from *Über das optische Formgefühl: Ein Beitrag zur Aesthetik* (1873), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Publication Programs, 1994, pp. 91–2.

formulates it, is how artistic form comes to be perceived as symbolic, how it is that we invest a building, for instance, with certain emotions. His reference to the "association of ideas" of course underscores the affinity of "empathy theory" with earlier picturesque theory. And, like its eighteenth-century counterpart, Vischer's short dissertation would spawn volumes of research that would have a profound effect on architectural thinking.

The term "symbolism of form" was first defined and applied to aesthetics in a systematic way by Karl Köstlin; he based it in particular on the notion of "associations of ideas." The author began his analysis by referring to music, where the aural forms evoke a living, "reminiscent" visualization of "themes," which "in themselves specifically characterize" these (aural) forms, so that upon hearing them "we can believe that we can see and perceive these themes together with the sound" ("sweet, mild" tones are conducive to mental tranquillity). Further, music "indirectly imitates the theme symbolically through allusions to the imagined theme." With regard to spatial phenomena, we are also conscious that "one form can remind us of another, can be a symbol for another form, as when body size becomes a symbol of spiritual greatness, significance, and maturity." "All quantitative characteristics of form recall their corresponding qualitative ones; all sensuous characteristics remind us of the corresponding mental characteristics of form." "Just as the human mind is sufficiently active to be reminded of something by seeing something similar, it is also sufficiently occupied with, directed toward, and conscious of itself to find everywhere resemblances between external things and its own mental states, experiences, sensations [*Empfindungen*], moods, emotions, and passions. It finds in everything a counterpart to itself and a symbol of its humanity."

The longer I concerned myself with this concept of a pure symbolism of form, the more it seemed to me possible to distinguish between ideal associations and a direct merger of the imagination [*Vorstellung*] with objective form. This latter possibility became clear to me with the help of Karl Albert Scherner's book *Das Leben des Traums* (The life of the dream). This profound work, feverishly probing hidden depths, contains a veritable wealth of highly instructive examples that make it possible for any reader who finds himself unsympathetic with the mystical form of the generally abstract passages to arrive at an independent conclusion. Particularly valuable in an aesthetic sense is the section on "Die symbolische Grundformation für die Leibreize" (Symbolic basic formation for bodily stimuli). Here it was shown how the body, in responding to certain stimuli in dreams, objectifies itself in spatial forms. Thus it unconsciously projects its own bodily form – and with this also the soul – into the form of the object. From this I derived the notion that I call "empathy" [*Einfühlung*]. Soon, however, I realized that this notion would only in part explain the symbolism of form, for the effect of light and color, the contour, and the pure line cannot be described by empathy. Here one can only assume a direct continuation of the external sensation into an internal one, a direct mental sublimation of the sensory response. At the same time I became aware of the all-important distinction between sensory and kinesthetic stimuli. I placed this distinction at the head of my basic scheme, from which I distinguished between a sensory "immediate feeling" and a kinesthetic "responsive feeling" – analogously, between a sensory and kinesthetic empathy.

41 CONSTANTIN LIPSIUS
from "On the Aesthetic Treatment of Iron in Tall Buildings" (1878)

As psychology was laying the basis for a new understanding of architectural form, industrialization was advancing forward in the 1870s and defining form in its own way. Among those excited about the new formal and spatial possibilities of iron was Constantin Lipsius, a native of Saxony. Lipsius was trained at the Dresden Academy of Arts under Georg Hermann Nicolai, but he was a self-styled Semperian and in fact wrote an important biography of Semper in which he praised his master's realism. Later, Lipsius was also the architect of the (much underappreciated) Dresden Academy of Fine Arts (1883–94). In 1878 Lipsius delivered a major address to the union of German architects and engineers, in which he picked up the theme earlier raised by Richard Lucae. The talk is a classic expression of the idea that form follows function, but at the same time Lipsius acknowledges that work remains to be done. It also underscores the anxiety of architects who were witnessing the proliferation of new scientific inventions while feeling inadequate to respond architecturally in a way equal to the efficiencies of modern times.

The powerfully developed natural sciences have impressed their signature on our times. Their demands have transformed our living conditions and influenced our views on lives in significant ways. And just as science – metaphysics aside – strives for tangible results, the whole direction of our time is primarily pointed toward the functional. With unswerving energy, we are seeking to deny hindrances contrary to the fulfillment of modern needs; with the aid of the many resources offered by the progressive and exact sciences, we are seeking to overcome the limits of space and time. We see this rather conspicuously and convincingly in the practical uses of physics and chemistry, in the telegraph (mail delivery by air pressure), and in all the utilities that facilitate commerce, such as spectral analysis and the telephone. It is simply astonishing how audaciously and fearlessly the present time acts, ventures, and investigates. Thus we can maintain that there has never been a time that has displayed such a wealth of intelligence in these areas!

Among the technical sciences, engineering powerfully distinguishes itself as a true child of our time. Standing on thoroughly modern and real soil, it is entirely functional in its orientation; it strives with a ruthless logic to create the most naked, relentless truth, leaving aside everything aesthetic to other fields. The slighter the expense of material, the more minimal the dimensions in achieving maximum loads – all the greater the triumph! And because purely technical purpose does not need the clarification of beauty, because its appearance is only the expression of the function that it fulfills, the form has become function. Because its purely purposeful structure finds its self-clarification and its necessity in the construction itself, it is therefore often convincing and to a certain degree aesthetically satisfying. The distinct clarity of a bridge . . . with its iron arches spanning free of supports

Constantin Lipsius, from "Ueber die ästhetische Behandlung des Eisens in Hochbau," trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 12 (1878), pp. 360–3.

over hundreds of meters, accords us the convincing certainty of its functionality and a certain joy with its victorious overcoming of large difficulties and with the mathematics that calculated the load-bearing capacity of the construction so beautifully in advance.

[. . .]

And through the use of iron, which in a technical sense allows the wildest dreams of the engineer to become reality and which, as a supported and supporting material, permits roofs and room dimensions of a scale that no previous human generations could have imagined, we now expect talented results in an aesthetic sense, that is, the promise and immediate blossoming of a new, strange art. I am also of the opinion that this material, with its incalculable properties and with its inherent formal laws, will and must be influential in the development of a new architectural style. But the use of a new constructional resource, whose logic in a practical sense is still not fully recognized and become dominant, will not give birth to a new era of architecture without something more. And if Semper thought that architects were unjustifiably blamed for the lack of invention because nowhere had a world-historical idea pursued with force and vigor announced itself, and if he was convinced that if such an idea did appear that someone among the younger colleagues would be capable of giving it a suitable architectural expression – we should still not accept it yet as a positive certainty.

Our view of the world has changed, and the ideas that ruled the world of Rousseau and the French Revolution have fallen into ruins. Yet the dawn of a new art has still not broken. We have sought much, and out of the efforts to impose a past style we have at least gained an understanding of the nature of each style, of making clear what is enduring and transient in them. But just as our time is one of seeking and struggling, so also is our art. A new style cannot be invented overnight. Through the work of generations it forms itself in and with the spiritual content of the time; it is bound to the known and given. [. . .] And how wrong is the expectation that a new constructional idea can *ex abrupto* be transformed into a finished gown. First and foremost we must learn to understand and grasp the new material in its particularity before we can determine the limits of its aesthetic appearance. And therefore engineers are right when they make the structural functions of iron the object of their investigations, when they construct from a functional perspective. On the basis of these functional experiences with iron, we architects, however, have the task of countering with a formal aesthetic viewpoint.

42 CONRAD FIEDLER
from "Observations on the Nature and History of Architecture" (1878)

In 1878 the second edition of Gottfried Semper's *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts* appeared, which put his great study before a new generation of readers. Conrad Fiedler found himself to be "astounded again and again by his revelations"; at the same time he was puzzled by how a book of such "originality and daring" could be written by an architect whose buildings "tediously wind their way through their historically prescribed course." Fiedler had just published his first important book, *Über die Beruteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst* (On judging works of visual art, 1876), which put forward his psychological theory of "visibility" (*Sichtbarkeit*). With it, Fiedler attempted to upend idealist aesthetics by underscoring the personal or cognitive nature of art, that is, art as a medium that can be understood only through a psychology of perception. When Fiedler read Semper's book, he was attracted to Semper's discussion of the spatial development of Roman architecture (vol. 1, 228). In this review of Semper's study, Fielder attempts to advance the architect's model by pointing out that not only was "space" a new aspect of Roman architectural development but space, as a conscious idea, was more fully developed during Romanesque times. Thus architects now can escape from the current plague of historicism by studying Romanesque buildings, where "space" emerges for the first time as an abstract component of the design. Architects can thereby dismiss the historicist "dressing" (*Bekleidung*) of walls and explore this new medium for its own creative values, "the new evolution in architecture."

A tendency toward the vertical has often been termed the distinguishing characteristic of medieval architecture, in contrast to a tendency toward the horizontal in the architecture of antiquity. Certainly the structural idea of the Middle Ages was not based on the union of supporting and nonsupporting parts but rather on the possibility (arising from the new structural use of stone) of letting the spatial shell – unified, uninterrupted, coherent – rise from the ground, or rather, letting it be borne by the ground. The vaulting does not seem to be supported by the wall; rather, the walls seem to join together at the crown of the vault; or alternatively, the vault appears to continue through the walls down to the ground. This is the simple starting point of the new evolution in architecture.

The earliest Romanesque buildings, preserved only in their vaulted crypts, convey the impression that the new idea of spatial enclosure had as yet taken only a very rudimentary form; the few articulations of form are unwieldy and awkward, and the massive material seems to have been reluctant to accept even the most general features of the new formulation. Soon, however, we recognize by individual signs the intrinsic and continuous development of that original idea: material and construction are progressively made to deny their identity and are reduced to a mere means of expressing the form. We first become aware of this through the peculiar form of wall construction. From the outset, the Romanesque wall was not what walls had been in the architectural system of antiquity. The tapestry-dressed [*bekleidete*] stone wall of antiquity must be seen as the monumental art-form for a concept of

Conrad Fiedler, from "Observations on the Nature and History of Architecture" (1878), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems of German Aesthetics 1873–1893*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Publication Programs, 1994, p. 142.

spatial enclosure derived from the use of textile hangings for the purpose of shutting off inner space from the outside world. Here, by contrast, the idea of enclosing space seems to have been planned in stone from the beginning. It was a matter of expressing the idea of a continuous enclosure by means of a wall and at the same time of elevating the heavy material into a free expression of that idea.

43 HANS AUER
from "The Development of Space in Architecture" (1883)

Built upon the spatial insights of Gottfried Semper and Conrad Fiedler was this essay by Hans Auer. A Swiss citizen by birth, Auer studied architecture in Zurich under Semper, before moving to Vienna to join the office of Theophil von Hansen. He became one of Hansen's most trusted designers and worked on the design of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, the Vienna Stock Exchange, and the Austrian Parliament. But Auer's architectural career was defined by his winning the international competition for the new Swiss Parliament, built between 1894 and 1902. Few historians today, however, recognize his important contributions to theory with three lengthy essays in the early 1880s. In the first, "The Influence of Construction on the Development of Architectural Styles" (1881), Auer breaks somewhat with Semper by insisting that construction should take priority in modern architectural theory, although he too stresses the importance that should be given to space in design. In the third, "Modern Style Questions" (1885), Auer considers at length the whole issue of style and its cultural ramifications. In between these two writings lies this pivotal essay of 1883, in which Auer becomes the first theorist to sketch out the notion that spatial development is not only the "soul" of architectural creation but also the generative force in the development of a new style. The two selections are from the beginning and concluding pages of his essay.

Architecture has two souls. One relates to the earth and is subordinate to practical purpose; the other, like a free angel, reaches up into the higher regions and is self-sufficient in her service to free beauty. This dualism is seen also in the cultivation of space. The form of its basic surfaces, their length and breath, is ordered by practical demands and is directly conditioned by purpose. But height goes far beyond human needs and it is that which affects the soul of the spectator with pleasant, imposing, uplifting, and all-powerful effects. The more those in the past wanted to emphasize the sanctity of a space, the more they sought greater height. In the proportions of height to extension lies one of the most beautiful moments of spatial creation, which the architects of antiquity as well as of the Renaissance sought to explore, even by the establishment of defined proportional ratios.

Through the activity of the ordering human mind and under the force of practical necessity the required columns and pillars were grouped in series and rhythmic regularity within the spaces. In this way space received its articulation, its proportional division, like every other work of art and nature. From it arises that painterly beauty, that perspectival

Hans Auer, from "Die Entwickelung des Raumes in der Baukunst," trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 48 (1883), pp. 66, 74.

charm, that variation in levels of illumination, in short, that wealth and richness of inner form that is able to impress space as a true work of art – all of which we describe as the *poetry of space*.

Whereas space is created from the discussed factors by artistic activity, the demands of *purpose, construction*, and *beauty* should be completely in balance, so that none of these elements dominates the other. Space at the same time impresses a definite form on its veil, namely the exterior appearance of the building.

Space is the soul of the building, which fills out the body and characterizes it from without. Just as the soul is bound to the body and likewise the body to the soul, both dependent on the other, so space affects not only the exterior appearance of the body but it also, for its part, is conditioned by the interior constructive organism. The selected or traditionally prescribed way of building conditions both the physiognomy of the space and the combined exterior appearance down to the smallest detail.

* * *

We live with a seeming chaos of artistic concepts, with a confusion of the most varied artistic viewpoints, such as probably have never existed. This condition characterizes our time as a *transitional period*. The traditional ways of building have lost their rationale; through them the spatial art has nowhere to go. We live today in a period in which a new style is forming under the unstoppable influence of a material that shakes its brazen fist at all past traditions – namely, *iron*. We live in one of those moments in which intensified needs put new demands on techniques, which have always (as noted above) prepared and created a new style. In our century the production and preparation of iron have made such an impact that they have called forth significant social upheavals. In connection with them are the tasks that been put to architecture, which now, with the help of iron, can be solved. Architecture has not everywhere grasped its firm feet, but it is striding from victory to victory in such a way that most modern buildings more or less wear the stamp of the iron century itself.

44 JOSEF BAYER
from "Modern Building Types" (1886)

Another of the unsung theorists of the 1880s was the Austrian Josef Bayer. A shrewd critic, he was a close friend of Johannes Brahms as well as being a self-styled Semperian, and, even though he was not an architect, he devoted much of his attention to discerning the architectural trends of his day. Bayer felt strongly that the new style – modernity – was indeed taking shape in all the arts, if in fact it had not already appeared. It is found, he argued, not in the decorative language of the traditional styles but rather in the whole "social" direction of bourgeois society: in its horizontal, multifunctional buildings, functionally articulated in parts, built close to the ground. Bayer's critique is a classic statement of the time, and it is indicative of the great optimism found in the earlier stages of Germanic modernism.

Josef Bayer, from "Modernene Bautypen," trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Baustudien und Baubilder: Schriften zur Kunst.* Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1919, pp. 282–3, 286–7.

Whoever is a complete, living architect and a true son of his time will also find today that it is a joy to build. The straightforward element that brings the needs of the present into our building practices will on the other hand be offset by the size of the projects, and a creative architectural talent will understand how to master this matter-of-factness with an energetic composition and a meaningful layout. Architecture must once again understand how to fall in with the so-called "materialist" age, which incidentally spends large sums on building, just as literature has long since done. The task of architecture, like literature, is to represent the characteristics of the age; it has, in general, to design the artistic image of space, just as literature is called upon to express the spiritual image of life in its particulars, following its changing and moving multiplicity.

The architecture of the present is *social*, just as in the past it was monarchical, aristocratic, and religious. This also completely defines the design of the new building types, to the extent that they have already developed or at least been prepared.

* * *

No! We no longer live in the age of tower building. [. . .] Not only in art but also in politics, in society, in practical efforts, in scientific research – everywhere we ask more of an outlook than an outlook; we ask for a perspective, a point of view. Our living direction is likewise subject to horizontal laws; it is gauged, it fixes its goal in a straightline way – and this must above all define the spatial-symbolic art of building in its composition. Our entire modern direction necessarily leads to the visual perspective, to the powerfully emphasized rhythm of the masses, and no more upward to the romantic tower-realm of the jackdaw nester. This also particularly conditions the floor plans of our public buildings. Their principle is spatial articulation, clear arrangement, and integrating unity once that arrangement has been clearly and forcefully expressed. Multiple functions need also – as it is easy to understand – a multi-articulated, monumental housing. The great modern buildings that fully bear the stamp of our age are *groupings of buildings*.

45 HEINRICH WÖLFFLIN
from "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture" (1886)

Building fast upon the psychological aesthetics of Robert Vischer and Conrad Fiedler was this doctoral dissertation of Heinrich Wölfflin. The task here is specifically to write the outline for a psychology of architecture, or to answer the question with which he opens the dissertation – "How is it possible that architectural forms are able to express an emotion or a mood?" Wölfflin was keen to eliminate kinetic or

Heinrich Wölfflin, from "Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur" (1886), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems of German Aesthetics 1873–1893*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Publication Programs, 1994, pp. 151, 182–3.

physiological explanations. He prefers to base his psychological answer entirely on the notion of "empathy," and thus turns (as the first except shows) to a recent theory of musical form to explain how and why we respond to architectural forms in the way we do. Taking the analogy of musical form, however, leads Wölfflin into difficulties, and in the end his analysis of architecture becomes quite conventional (classical) in that he goes on to find pleasing architectural forms in such attributes as symmetry, regularity, and numerical proportions. Only a few years later, architects such as Henry van de Velde and August Endell would be attracted to Wölfflin's theory, but would also seek to construct an empathetic theory of architectural form outside of these classical parameters.

Yet toward the end of his dissertation (see the second excerpt), Wölfflin seeks a breakthrough in another regard: by transposing his empathetic psychology of form (discerned by an individual) into a collective psychology of form (the formal attitude of a culture). In essence, he follows the lead of Gottfried Semper in arguing that architectural styles follow very directly from the "attitude and movement of people" of a given period. The Gothic style, for instance, reflected a more general Scholastic outlook that stressed precise (pointed) concepts. This became the basis of Wölfflin's famous methodology of artistic "formalism," which dominated his art history throughout the early part of the twentieth century. But such formalism also carries with it an important architectural implication. Germanic architectural theory since Semper had largely been in open revolt against the Hegelian idea that styles operate in fixed cycles determined by the intellectual development of a culture. Wölfflin essentially transposes Hegel's philosophical idea into a psychological guise, thus allowing the notion of historical destiny once again to be reclaimed. Historical determinism becomes, in fact, one of the central premises of the German Modern Movement in the first part of the twentieth century.

If we did not have the ability to express our own emotions in sounds, we could never understand the meaning of sounds produced by others. We understand only what we ourselves can do.

So here, too, we must say: *Physical forms possess a character only because we ourselves possess a body.* If we were purely visual beings, we would always be denied an aesthetic judgment of the physical world. But as human beings with a body that teaches us the nature of gravity, contraction, strength, and so on, we gather the experience that enables us to identify with the conditions of other forms. Why is no one surprised that the stone falls toward the earth? Why does that seem so very natural to us? We cannot account for it rationally: the explanation lies in our personal experience alone. We have carried loads and experienced pressure and counterpressure, we have collapsed to the ground when we no longer had the strength to resist the downward pull of our own bodies, and that is why we can appreciate the noble serenity of a column and understand the tendency of all matter to spread out formlessly on the ground.

[. . .]

We have seen how the general human condition sets the standard for architecture. This principle may be extended still further: any architectural style reflects the *attitude and movement of people* in the period concerned. How people like to move and carry themselves is expressed above all in their costume, and it is not difficult to show that architecture corresponds to the costume of its period. I would like to emphasize this principle of historical characterization all the more energetically because I am unable here to pursue the idea in any detail.

The Gothic style will serve as an example.

Lübke saw it as the expression of spiritualism. Semper called it lapidary scholasticism. According to what principles has it been judged? The *tertium comparationis* is not exactly

clear, even though there may be a grain of truth in both descriptions. We will find firm ground only by referring these psychological observations to the human figure.

The mental fact in question is the tendency to be precise, sharp, and conscious of the will. Scholasticism clearly reveals this aversion to anything that is imprecise; its concepts are formulated with the greatest precision.

Physically, this aspiration presents itself in precise movements, pointed forms, no relaxation, nothing bloated, and a will that is everywhere most decisively expressed.

Scholasticism and spiritualism can be considered the expression of the Gothic period only if one keeps in mind this intermediate stage, during which a psychological feeling is directly transformed into bodily form. The sophisticated subtlety of the scholastic centuries and the spiritualism that tolerated no matter divested of will can have shaped architectural form only through their bodily expression.

Here we find the Gothic forms presented in principle: the bridge of the nose becomes narrower; the forehead assumes hard vertical folds; the whole body stiffens and pulls itself together; all restful expansiveness disappears. It is well known that many people (especially university lecturers) like the feeling of rolling a sharply angled pencil between their fingers in order to sharpen their thoughts. A round pencil would not serve the same purpose. What does roundness want? Nobody knows. And the same is true with the Romanesque rounded arch; no definite will can be recognized. It ascends, but this upward impulse finds a clear expression only in the pointed arch.

46 ADOLF GÖLLER
from "What is the Cause of Perpetual Style Change in Architecture?" (1887)

Very much in line with the psychological formalism of Wölfflin is this exceptionally important tract by Adolf Göller. This little known theorist and architect taught at the Stuttgart Polytechnikum in the early 1880s, where he became much attracted to the psychological models put forth by Hermann Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt. His application of perceptual theories to architecture here yields some very dramatic results. His thesis revolves around two concepts: the cultivation of a cultural "memory image" and the baneful effect of psychological "jading." In essence, each generation is reared with a collective image of the architectural forms with which it is familiar, and over time these forms and proportions become jaded, that is, architects tire of using the same forms and begin to pursue proportional deviations (explaining, for instance, the passing of the high Renaissance into mannerism). Thus over a period of time a style becomes used up, as it were, and a new style is created with a new memory image. Taking his model one step further, Göller chooses to disregard entirely the historical and symbolic

Adolf Göller, from "Was is die Ursache . . ." (1887), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems of German Aesthetics 1873–1893*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Publication Programs, 1994, pp. 194–5, 198.

content of style (e.g., the spirituality of a pointed arch), and focus his analysis on what he calls "pure form," or the simple visual play of forms, lines, light and shade. The result is a remarkable analysis of abstract architecture stripped of all historical associations. This appreciation of abstract forms, Göller concludes, is in fact the "noblest or the richest" source of aesthetic pleasure for the art of architecture. The three short excerpts cited here reveal this small treatise to be one of the most important of nineteenth-century theory.

I would like to make this phenomenon – this law – the subject of my address, in which I will venture to offer the fruit of some reflections on our attitude toward the beauty of form. I shall endeavor to identify the psychological causes from which our sensibility to the beauty of the decorative forms of any architectural style changes with time and to show how the individual's attitude to individual form accounts for the inevitability of perpetual style change in architecture. The path no doubt leads through a distant field, but permit me to reach out beyond the framework of our curriculum – so that we at the Technische Hochschule, in responding to an academic question, can express our grateful and happy participation in today's national celebration.

I

The impression that works of architecture and the fine arts make on us is the product of numerous individual effects, which separate themselves distinctly into two main groups. The first is a series of feelings that are based more or less on clear thoughts about the work of art in question, the second is a pleasure of a more external kind that has nothing to do with thoughts but arises directly out of viewing the form or image. The former impression is based on the *intellectual content* of the work of art, the second on its *beauty of form*. This latter, perhaps less valued aspect of beauty – this beauty of pure visible form, considered free of any ideal content – will be the subject of my address. It is defined as *an inherently pleasurable, meaningless play of lines or of light and shade*.

[. . .]

Certainly the content of architecture is not restricted to the expression of its structural achievement. Many works also have the capacity to touch the depths of our soul. Architecture can endow its creations with the expression of soaring aspiration, solemn gravity, festive joy, and splendid power. Even a utilitarian work can wear its rank and character, judiciously expressed, on its face. How we arrive at a feeling of sublimity or gravity or festive cheerfulness from viewing abstract forms and ornaments will probably for a long time to come remain a deep psychological mystery. Only a lengthy chain of unconscious ideas can lead us from one notion to the other. Especially the powerful impression of great masses and the elevating effect of a high, wide space flooded with light give a feeling whose causes may well be active in the deepest reaches of the human soul.

Yet even without pursuing the trail of such impressions, we can conclude directly from experience that our feeling for such an expression, and likewise our pleasure in any building with a well-defined character, does not in the least prevent us from judging and appreciating the beauty of pure form in and of itself. Here, as with the structure, it is possible to show by focusing on the small parts that beautiful architectural form would not

altogether cease to be pleasing if the expression were not present or if the building were deprived of its character.

Architecture is, after all, the true decorative art, the true *art of visible pure form*. The beauty of pure form is not the noblest or the richest, emotionally speaking; but it is the first and often the only source of aesthetic pleasure in works of architecture.

47 CORNELIUS GURLITT
from ''Göller's Aesthetic Theory'' (1887)

Göller's remarkable model for explaining the aesthetics of architecture did not go unnoticed. The perspicacious critic Cornelius Gurlitt wrote a book review of Göller's writings for the German architectural journal *Deutsche Bauzeitung*. Gurlitt was ebullient over the ramifications of Göller's argument. He likened it to the relativism espoused by Claude Perrault in the seventeenth century, because Göller had essentially reduced all historical styles to the particular period's ''memory's image'' – hence no one style could be deemed superior. More importantly, as the first excerpt shows, Gurlitt felt that Göller's model would end the Hegelian hegemony underpinning architectural historicism, by shifting the emphasis from purposeful content (a historical style) to pure form. In the end, Gurlitt chides the Stuttgart theorist for only one thing – his restriction of pure form's aesthetic pleasure simply to architecture. For by extending the same model to painting and sculpture, Gurlitt (in his own act of great originality) now argues, we have the rationale for abstract art! This tendency Gurlitt now reduces to the term ''realism,'' a word that was to gain increasing currency in Germany in the 1890s and become an early synonym for modernism.

Göller shows that there is also a beauty of pure form, which he altogether opposes to Hegelian aesthetics. He says that there are certain combinations of lines, light, and shadow that, although indeed meaningless, nevertheless please our eye and mind. Thus he cites the ''purely decorative'' ornament, the play of lines and light on a cornice, which is applied *not* for functional reasons (that is, the functions have nothing so say), but is perceived by us to be beautiful simply for its form. How is it that one column can be beautiful and another ugly if both express their functions very well? Can we, then, infer the mass of details from their purpose, or from those proportions that give us pleasure? The Ionic column, whose volutes no one has been able to explain, whose spiritual content was perhaps unknown even to the Greeks and completely meaningless for us, is yet beautiful because of the form. It is therefore not true to say, as Hegel wants, that a work of art must be ugly if it lacks the spiritual content that determines this beauty. How else could the very meaningless ornament of a Persian carpet or arabesque be beautiful?

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Cornelius Gurlitt, from ''Göller's ästhetische Lehre,'' trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, in *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 21 (1887), pp. 603, 606.

But what is important is not only what can be read in Göller's books. A far greater booty will be reserved for him who logically applies the theory of the beauty of pure form to painting and sculpture – that is, for he who demonstrates that the world of form, to a great extent now removed from intellectual content, can also greatly affect our sense of beauty in these arts. He will also show by this how proper it was for German art to pass from the content-laden manner of [Peter] Cornelius to realism, or from the world of ideas to that of the sensuously felt form.

48 FERDINAND TÖNNIES
from *Community and Society* (1887)

Modernism in architecture was not simply an aesthetic preference for certain forms or approaches to design, it was a more deep-seated shift in how one looks at the world, one carrying both psychological and sociological implications. One of the first sociologists to ponder this issue of modernity was Ferdinand Tönnies, who received his doctorate in classical philology at Tübingen in 1877 and ten years later produced this ground-breaking study. The title of the book plays off the German words *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). The former is the union of people found in agrarian life, that is, a knowing relationship or social bond formed with each member of the community, based on trust and rural neighborliness. Society or life in the large city, by contrast, is an artificial union, one predicated on social conventions and laws and presuming a measure of anonymity in social relations. Not only are human personalities affected by these respective lifestyles (and not always for the better), Tönnies argues, but so are human outlooks on a range of issues, including aesthetics.

This whole development, from its primary to its subsequent manifestations, can also be conceived as a transition from an original, simple, family communism and village-town individualism based thereon, to an independent, universal, urban individualism and, determined thereby, a socialism of state and international type. The latter is inherent in the concept of Gesellschaft, although in the beginning it exists only as an actual interrelation between all capitalistic powers and the state, which maintains and promotes order in the social organization. Gradually attempts are made to impose a uniform regulation on the social organization and labor itself through the mechanism of the state, but success in this would necessarily dissolve the entire Gesellschaft and its civilization. This same tendency necessarily implies a dissolution of all those ties which bind the individual through his natural will and are apart from his rational will. For these ties restrict his personal freedom of movement, the salableness of his property, the change of his attitudes, and their adaptation to the findings of science. They are restrictions on the self-determined rational will and on the Gesellschaft in so far as trade and commerce tend to make property or property rights as mobile and divisible as possible and require unscrupulous, irreligious,

Ferdinand Tönnies, from *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), trans. Charles P. Loomis as *Community and Society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988, pp. 234–5.

easygoing people. The state, too, feels the restrictive influence of these ties, and hastens the tendency toward their dissolution, and considers enlightened, greedy, and practical people its most useful subjects.

The development of these forces and contrasts and their struggle for supremacy are common to the two spheres of culture and their people of which we may believe ourselves to have definite knowledge. One is the South-European classic culture which reached its acme in Athens and came to an end in Rome, the other is the North-European modern culture which followed it and, in many respects, was influenced and furthered by it. We discover these similar developments under an enormous variety of historical facts and conditions. Within the general uniform process to which all elements contribute, each of these has its own hidden history, which is determined partly by the general development, partly by causes of its own, and which, impeding or furthering, interferes with the whole.

The concepts and findings which have been presented in this book will help us to understand the tendencies and struggles which have come down from earlier centuries to the present period and will reach out into the future. To this end, we conceive the whole development of Germanic culture, which rose upon the ruins of the Roman Empire and, as its heir, expanded under the beneficial influence of the Church, as in a state of constant progress as well as decay.

49 CAMILLO SITTE
from *City Planning According to Its Artistic Principles* (1889)

Walter Benjamin called Paris the "capital of the nineteenth century," and the city, as a symbol of modernity and progress, was redefined in the 1860s and 1870s through the new boulevards and urban changes of Georges-Eugène Haussmann. Thus when Vienna decided to tear down the old city walls and ramparts (the walls that had saved the city from Ottoman conquest in 1689), city officials looked to Paris for inspiration. They replaced the old walls and broad glacis separating the old town from the suburbs with a new boulevard – the *Ringstrasse* (Ring Street) – and connected it with a series of traffic arteries and squares. The regularity of the new urban forms differed radically from the irregularity of the old town, and here Tönnies's issues of community versus society meet head on. The person to step forward to challenge the new urban model was Camillo Sitte. He was the son of an architect, trained in the applied arts, and his home was very much a hub of Viennese cultural life. His book on city planning quickly became the Bible of those opposing the newer "straight streets," but Sitte's theory is not so succinctly summarized. His book is replete with numerous plans of old irregular streets and squares (mainly taken from Italy), but he argues that they should not be copied for their own sake. They should be studied, rather, for the psychological lessons they exemplify with their urban scale, diverse and comfortable pedestrian spaces, and overall urban vitality.

Camillo Sitte, from *Die Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (1889), trans. George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins, in *Camillo Sitte: The Birth of Modern City Planning*. New York: Rizzoli, 1986, pp. 224–5.

Straight lines and right angles are certainly characteristic of insensitive planning, but are apparently not decisive in this matter, because Baroque planning also used straight lines and right angles, achieving powerful and truly artistic effects in spite of them. In the layout of streets it is true that rectilinearity is a weakness. An undeviating boulevard, miles long, seems boring even in the most beautiful surroundings. It is unnatural, it does not adapt itself to irregular terrain, and it remains uninteresting in effect, so that, mentally fatigued, one can hardly await its termination. An ordinary street, if excessively long, has the same effect. But as the more frequent shorter streets of modern planning also produce an unfortunate effect, there must be some other cause for it. It is the same as in the plazas, namely *faulty closure of the sides of the street*. The continual breaching by wide cross-streets, so that on both sides nothing is left but a row of separated blocks of buildings, is the main reason why no unified impression can be attained. This may be demonstrated most clearly by comparing old arcades with their modern imitations. Ancient arcades, nothing short of magnificent in their architectural detail, run uninterruptedly along the whole curve of a street as far as the eye can see; or they encircle a plaza enclosing it completely; or at least they run unbroken along one side of it. Their whole effect is based on continuity, for only by it can the succession of arches become a large enough unity to create an impact. The situation is completely different in modern planning. Although occasional outstanding architects have, in their enthusiasm for this magnificent old motif, succeeded in providing us with such covered walks – as, for instance, in Vienna around the Votive Church and at the new Rathaus – these hardly remind us of the ancient models, because their effect is totally different. The separate sections are larger and much more sumptuously carried out than almost any ancient predecessors. Yet the intended effect is absent. Why? Because each separate loggia is attached to its own building block, and the cuts made by the numerous broad cross-streets prevent the slightest effect of continuity. Only if the openings of these intersecting streets were spanned by a continuation of the arcade could any coherence result that might then create a grandiose impression. Lacking this, the dismembered motif is like a hoe without a handle.

For the same reason a coherent effect does not come about in our streets. A modern street is made up primarily of corner buildings. A row of isolated blocks of buildings is going to look bad under any circumstances, even if placed in a curved line.

These considerations bring us close to the crux of the matter. In modern city planning the relationship between the built-up and open spaces is exactly reversed. Formerly the empty spaces (streets and plazas) were a unified entity of shapes calculated for their impact; today building lots are laid out as regularly shaped closed forms, and what is left over between them becomes street or plaza.

50 AUGUST SCHMARSOW
from *The Essence of Architectural Creation* (1893)

With Heinrich Wölfflin having put forth the outline for a psychology of architecture and having advanced, more broadly, his methodology of formalism, it was perhaps inevitable that an alternative model should be proffered – both for architecture and in opposition to Wölfflin's emphasis on form. That a young rival of Wölfflin should also put forward this challenge is hardly coincidental. In 1893 August Schmarsow won a professorial chair from the University of Leipzig over the applications of both Wölfflin and Robert Vischer. For his inaugural lecture, Schmarsow chose to challenge Wölfflin's formalism with a lecture that carried the intriguing title "The Essence of Architectural Creation." Schmarsow, like Wölfflin before him, returned to Gottfried Semper for the start of his deliberations on space, and in this regard he seems to have been unfamiliar with the earlier theories of Conrad Fiedler and Hans Auer. Schmarsow, however, went further than his two immediate predecessors in constructing what was essentially a phenomenology of the human spatial experience and its centrality to architectural design. Although Scharmow's lecture was widely read within art-historical circles, it scarcely resonated among architects. And there is the additional historical irony in that when Sigfried Giedion and Bruno Zevi – a half-century later – came also to define architecture in identical terms, they seem to have been unaware of Schmarsow's earlier effort.

Let us now try to bring within a single historical perspective the varied phenomena that immediately suggest themselves when we first consider this theme. From the troglodyte's cave to the Arab's tent; from the long processional avenue of the Egyptian pilgrimage temple to the Greek god's glorious column-borne roof; from the Caribbean hut to the German Reichstag building – we can say in the most general terms that they are all without exception *spatial constructs* [*Raumgebilde*], whatever their material, duration, and construction, and whatever the configuration of their supporting and supported parts. "The one essential feature is the enclosure of space," says Eduard von Hartmann; but his qualification – "for a specific purpose" – overshoots the mark. The reference to the human need for protection against the hardships of the external world, or indeed any other reference to a specific purpose, is premature as long as we are pursuing an aesthetic investigation. External stimuli provide only the contingent cause, the occasion for the exercise of human skill. Yet even the smallest human attempt to make a spatial enclosure presupposes that the person has some notion of the intended spatial construct. Thus we come to the final precondition: the predisposition to the intuited form [*Anschauungsform*] that we call space.

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Psychologically, the intuited form of three-dimensional space arises through the experiences of our sense of sight, whether or not assisted by other physiological factors. All our visual

August Schmarsow, from *Das Wesen der architektonischen Schöpfung* (1893), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems of German Aesthetics 1873–1893*. Santa Monica, CA: Getty Publication Programs, 1994, pp. 286–7.

perceptions and ideas are arranged, are ordered, and unfold in accordance with this intuited form; and this fact is the mother lode of the art whose origin and essence we seek.

The intuited form of space, which surrounds us wherever we may be and which we then always erect around ourselves and consider more necessary than the form of our own body, consists of the residues of sensory experience to which the muscular sensations of our body, the sensitivity of our skin, and the structure of our body all contribute. As soon as we have learned to experience ourselves and ourselves alone as the center of this space, whose coordinates intersect in us, we have found the precious kernel, the initial capital investment so to speak, on which architectural creation is based – even if for the moment it seems no more impressive than a lucky penny. Once the ever-active imagination takes hold of this germ and develops it according to the laws of the directional axes inherent in even the smallest nucleus of every spatial idea, the grain of mustard seed grows into a tree and an entire world surrounds us. Our sense of space [*Raumgefühl*] and spatial imagination [*Raumphantasie*] press toward spatial creation [*Raumgestaltung*]; they seek their satisfaction in art. We call this art architecture; in plain words, it is the *creatress of space* [*Raumgestalterin*].