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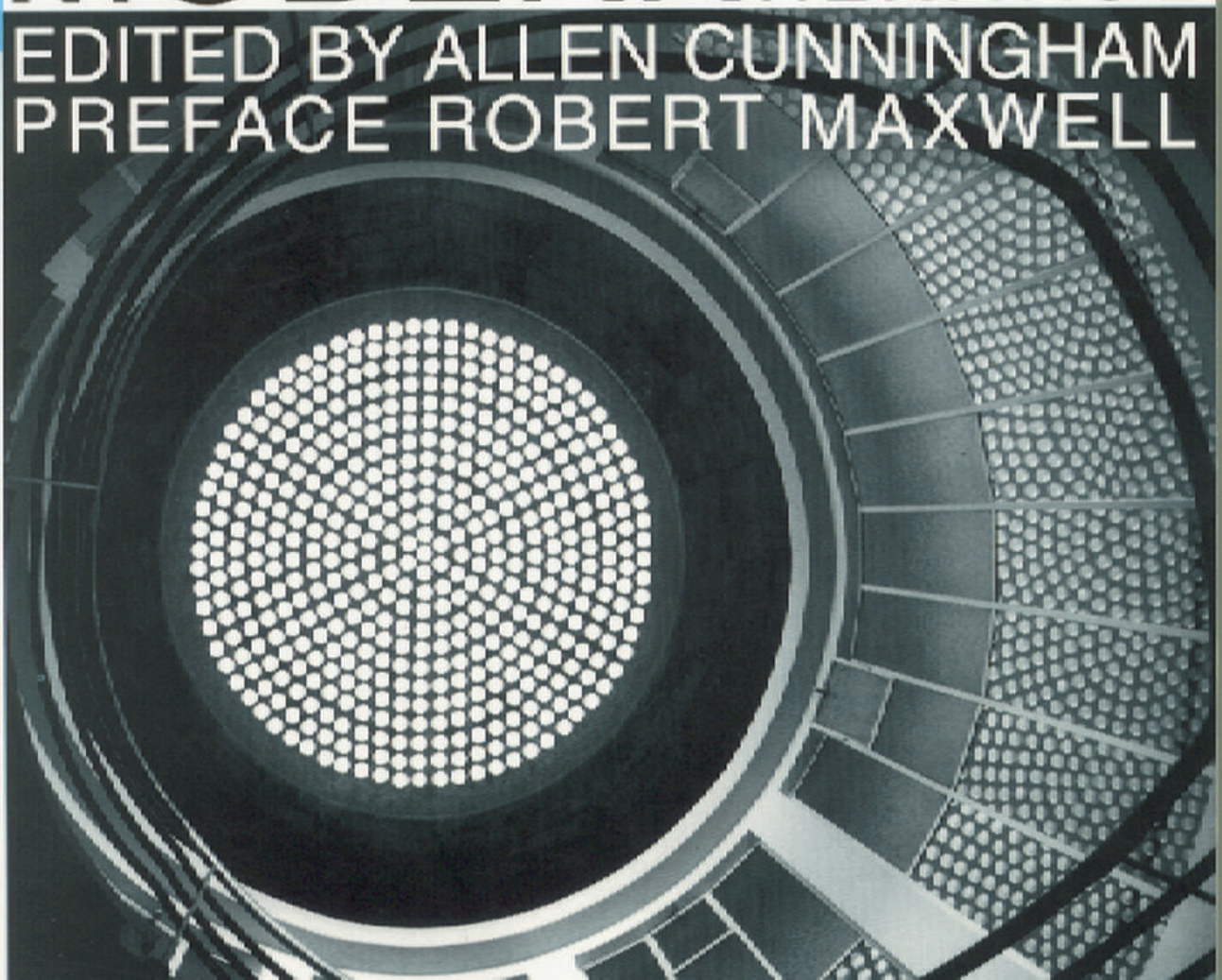
MODERN MOVEMENT HERITAGE

EDITED BY ALLEN CUNNINGHAM
PREFACE ROBERT MAXWELL



Modern Movement Heritage

In the twentieth century, architecture, urban planning and landscape during a brief, exhilarating and unique period were transformed in parallel with the theory of relativity, cubism and abstraction in art, twelve tone music, scientific method, rational philosophy, economic and social theory, medical science and industrialism. Modern architecture was a cultural imperative which expressed innovative ideas, the early buildings retaining their potency to this day. It is as much the spirit which generated these forms as the forms themselves which represent a crucial ingredient of our intellectual heritage.

The built inheritance, which epitomises the dynamic spirit of this century, employed advanced technology which has succumbed to long term stresses, and the functional requirements which the buildings originally met have changed substantially. The preservation of significant buildings presents a demanding economic and physical problem. The continued life of both icon and ordinary in an economically driven world depends first upon a shared recognition of their cultural and social value and second, upon their continuing economic viability. Reconciliation of these two key factors lies at the heart of an international movement launched in Eindhoven in 1990 known as DOCOMOMO, an acronym standing for DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the MOdern MOvement.

Modern Movement Heritage consists of nineteen chapters emanating from authors in eleven countries divided into three parts, Conjectures and Refutations, Strategies and Policies, and Case Studies; these are illustrated with 160 images. The Preface and Introduction by Robert Maxwell and Allen Cunningham provide an overview of the Modern Movement, its intellectual shortcomings, and its cultural significance.

Dedicated to Christopher Dean who knew for certain that modernism constituted the only hope for the future

Modern Movement Heritage

Edited by

Allen Cunningham

E & FN SPON
An imprint of Routledge
London and New York

First published 1998
by E & FN SPON

An imprint of Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-98281-9 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-419-23230-3 (Print Edition)

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Preface

Robert Maxwell

The documentation and conservation of historical artifacts produced during the high noon of the modern movement in architecture has something paradoxical about it, since the modern movement proclaimed the rejection of tradition and the end of history. The moment that celebrates the new while rejecting the old does not envisage the moment when the new itself becomes the old, still less that it may then be in need of support.

For the traditional progression of history, Modernism in architecture had substituted a progression of unlimited technological improvement, as if technology were truly outside of human culture, and could become the authentic measure. Abstraction—the method of science—was also seen as a means of generating new form independent from human foibles, and the act of abstraction was seen as the objective uncovering of a latent potency in nature, not as an exercise in personal caprice. The dichotomy between subjective and objective remained invisible. Modernism in literature and in the arts generally, did not produce a similar dichotomy, and no eyebrows are raised when attention is drawn to the way that such accepted Modernists as Joyce and Eliot, or Picasso and Braque, made abundant use from the beginning of allusion and innuendo, along with the unlimited possibilities provided through the new resource of abstraction. By claiming ontological purity, architecture claimed to be in possession of objective knowledge. Within architecture, the uses of allusion and innuendo became immediately suspect and in the 1970s, scandalous, by which time the ideology of Modernism as a technological progression had to be reasserted in order to preserve the purity of its originating principles in engineering, an attitude that briefly resulted in the style we call 'high-tech', which is already succumbing to the expressive impulse.

The paradox was fed by the polemical ideology of such protagonists of the modern movement in architecture as J.J.P.Oud and Le Corbusier, who led the way in identifying architecture with engineering, thereby seeing it as a subject that develops through research and discovery, where the interest will always be in the new and not in the already known. Decisions in architectural design would now result from rational analysis of the functions, replacing the traditional practice of starting from precedent, which was suffused by convention and custom. That alone would avoid old 'mistakes' and allow the emergence of new things. The irony of supposing that innovation could be cumulative, and the radical become the norm, was not appreciated.

In particular, buildings were to be regarded as experimental, that is, as individual experiments, no longer of interest once conclusions had been drawn. The lessons learned would be fed into a new mode of practice to be available to all, a practical fund of information always changing, always improving, an accumulation of technological know-how which would take its due place as a part of the march of science, confirming the goal of material progress, and creating an undeniable progression in which, just as steam power for automobiles would be utterly replaced by internal combustion, and the telegraph would be replaced by the telephone, so all current building materials would be replaced by reinforced concrete.

This creed was reintroduced into architectural education in Britain by Richard Llewelyn Davies at the end of the 1950s, a period when there was a widespread attempt to rescue the dogma of a scientific architecture and build up an objective body of research. Such an outcome would fulfil the promises that had first been made in 1910, the fateful year when Le Corbusier worked for a time in the office of Peter Behrens and came under the spell of engineering. There was a feeling that World War Two had interrupted the theoretical development of modern architecture, which should now resume its course. During the 1960s the short-lived Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm attempted to revive the radical approach of the pre-war Bauhaus. The redemptive force of the new was further revitalised in this period by critics like Marshall McLuhan, who saw each invention in communication technology as superseding the previous one, so that only the latest device had value. Under these impulses modernism itself took on a new face, the look of raw nature, the *vérité* of Brutalism. The Modernism of the 1920s was now seen as crypto-classicism, a revolution imperfectly realised, not sufficiently new. The New spoke of the future, and this voice was to remain a powerful influence which continues to exert its special appeal today.

Although in the heroic period of the 1920s there was artistic interest in new architecture, in the sense that it was discovering the form of the future, and so was innovative just as new art was innovative, there was a problem in deciding where the new-ness originated. If it resulted from an always improving field of objective knowledge, it could not exactly be a matter of the self-expression of the individual architect. In the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius maintained an ambiguous approach, praising individual artistic invention while encouraging group work as the true source of discovery and the means of achieving

equality with industrial methods. At the Bauhaus there had always been from its Expressionist beginnings a place for art within architecture, but this place was rendered ambiguous by the desire to appeal to abstract principles, and by the use of abstract forms, which were regarded both as a gauge of good intentions and as a means of penetrating surface appearance and arriving at fundamental structure. The aim was to achieve objectivity. The great sin was *formalism,* which implied that personal expression had run away with objective research.

But this was a position that was difficult to maintain. A doubt arose as to whether an architecture that developed out of scientific analysis was properly to be regarded as art. This doubt was most clearly expressed by Hannes Meyer, when he claimed that architecture was simply *function times economy*; that is, it constituted a discipline where the outcome was determined by purely material considerations. It is worth noting that Meyer maintained his extreme point of view for only a limited interval, before softening it by allowing that *all art is organisation,* in the way that natural forms already demonstrate a principle of organisation, thus restoring a version of the Renaissance theory which saw all art as following Nature.

This point of view was widely dispersed among artists and architects. Sir Leslie Martin once told me that for his generation, trying to bring abstract art to Britain in the 1930s, the model of fundamental design was taken from nature, in its patterns of growth, its structures of organisation, the geometry of its organisms. D'Arcy Thompson's book *On Growth and Form,* of 1917, was given oracular status in drawing attention to the way that nature, consulting no principle but natural law, produced such aesthetic miracles as the spider's web, the snail shell, the logarithmic growth of leaves on a stem, the 'crown' formed by one drop in falling into the bowl of milk, and so on (see Figures P1-P3). Since engineering design follows natural law, and architecture was now a branch of engineering, there was no longer room for personal expression. Personal expression would lead to the exercise of a personal judgement, in an act of selecting and composing. As Hannes Meyer said, the idea of *composing* a dockyard installation was enough to make a cat laugh. Composition was essentially arbitrary, a sign of human weakness; it did not have the authority of natural selection.

But while a quasi-scientific status was claimed for architecture in theory, the practice of architecture remained in the hands of gifted individuals, and their individual judgements fell short of the theoretical model, and at the same time exceeded it. This ensured that architecture, in following the laws of nature, did not converge into a single objective mode of operation, but diverged into a wide range of possibilities. The methodology called for the rational analysis of function, and this is exactly what each architect of note set out to do. But, while engaged in doing this, each one continued to look for support to what other architects were doing, and without their realising it, their innovative efforts took on a group ideology. The results reflected group values more than they conformed to a single principle taken from nature. So although Modernism became established as a radical methodology, we have no difficulty now in distinguishing the different characters of Scandinavian design, of Italian design, of Greek design, in a historical sequence. We can now be grateful for a theoretical inadequacy that allowed inconsistencies to develop and different characters to emerge, and ensured that individual buildings of the modern movement, while sharing a common purpose, ended up as a highly diverse and differentiated set of artifacts.

The stated aim of functionalism was to free architecture from traditional forms (like Corinthian columns) and allow it to attend to functional imperatives and to social reality. It saw itself as part of a revolution, both scientific and political, and politics was an essential sub-text that linked it to the artist's criticism of society and made it part of the avant-garde. The new arose as much in art as it did in science. In practice, working necessarily in isolation, each individual architect found it *easier* to be an artist than to be a scientist. So the model of the artist as innovator remained powerful within the profession, even if the status was often denied.

However, since the figure of the artist as redefined during the Romantic Movement had been endowed with redemptive status, he could not be seen as simply a craftsman, still less as a propagandist, but must be a visionary, seeking a new reality, a new truth. The newness he revealed had to be investigated for its unexpectedness, for the strangeness it brought to life. Only in this way could it renew the spirit. From this link with art, the new functionalism quickly became part of a formal language, a question of style: the sin of formalism became the norm of revisionism. By 1932 Johnson and Hitchcock could speak of the International Style, and praise the Villa Savoye as a work of art. Attention switches to the indirect qualities of the thing-in-itself. The object, in its very strangeness, attracts a gaze that is avid for meaning. So the meaning of a modern building was not to be restricted to its incidental place in an unfolding body of knowledge, but was to be interpreted as a step in creative

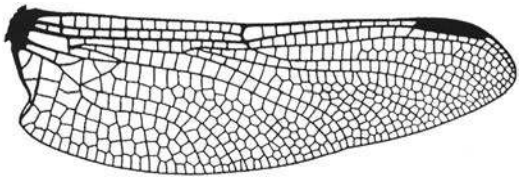

Figure P1 A dragonfly's wing

Source: On Growth and Form (D'Arcy Thompson 1917)

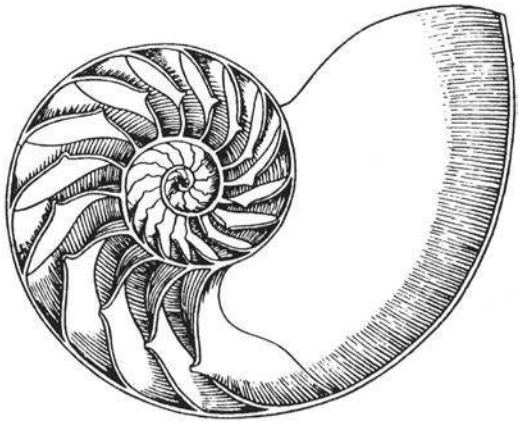

Figure P2 The shell of *Nautilus pompilius*

Source: On Growth and Form (D'Arcy Thompson 1917)

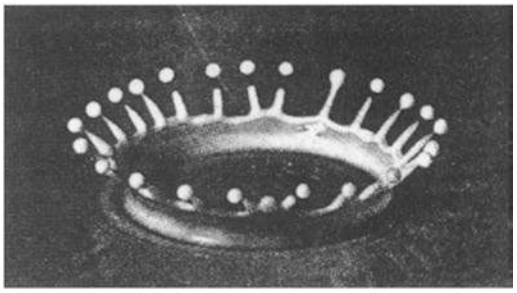

Figure P3 An instantaneous photograph of a 'splash' of milk

Source: On Growth and Form (D'Arcy Thompson 1917)

endeavour. It has taken half a century for the art of interpretation to turn back within architectural criticism, and explain the motives of Functionalism, the illusions it fostered, and the failures it engendered.

And ironically, many of these failures were technical. A ten-centimetre thick wall of reinforced concrete is a perfectly strong component of a two-storey house: fine as regards structure, but inadequate as soon as we factor in the requirements for sound insulation, surface decoration, energy conservation, weather protection. Yet it is amazing how many examples of modern construction are now at risk of falling down or being demolished because of inadequate construction. The conviction that reinforced concrete was the material of the future far outweighed the rational analysis of its physical properties. If we feel now that buildings showing these kinds of defects are worth preserving, it is not to economise on their replacement, but to recognise their value as a record of a quest, as part of a historical and cultural development that is crucial to our own identity; and in some instances, as an embodiment of values that make them part of an artistic and spiritual heritage.

Now we can ask a question that in the 1920s was not considered. Is Nature truly the model of the beautiful? Is it the basis of the *aesthetic*? Are the spider's web, the snail shell, the regular patterns of natural growth aesthetic? We see them as beautiful, but are they produced with the intention of being beautiful?

We are continually attracted by the beauty of Nature: the glory of sunsets, the sheen of still water, the blue of the summer sky, the colourful riot of the fall season, the majesty of the mountain range, the perpetual motion of the waterfall and its rainbow, and so on, without asking, as we do about human art: what does it mean? Such attributes are all part of Wordsworth's *pathetic fallacy,* an assumption that there exists a feeling *out there* analogous to our feeling *in here*. The natural world that we characterise as good is part of the biosphere we inhabit, only within which is human life possible, and

those terms of life cannot be anything but ours, and cannot be anything but good. Our good automatically becomes our beautiful. Our aesthetic derives from an ethic.

So then we feel a strange fascination when we see a snake swallowing a lizard live, or a bird swallowing a struggling fish, or a lion devouring an antelope, and we definitely feel a frisson when we note how the lion goes for the isolated calf or the injured animal, thus following natural law and the statistics of probabilities, but ignoring our sense of fair play. From this comes our cynicism, since the Nature that produces the good also produces the heartless play of chance. Cynicism is the failure to draw together the loose ends. The very existence of a Nature red in tooth and claw then becomes the justification for capitalism, where, to exercise just a little hyperbole, only the fittest survive and only the rich make money.

Chance is heartless, and innocence is not a property recognised by Nature. If today we review the list of the dead resulting from a plane crash we say, *what bad luck, how about suing the airline,* but we no longer see it as the result of a higher moral judgement, an act of retribution for sins not sufficiently acknowledged. The religious spirit that sees God as providence faces a problem every time populations are overwhelmed by earthquake or flood, resulting in the destruction of the innocent along with the guilty, and making impossible a theory of religion as retribution and reward. Voltaire exposed this problem in his discussion of the Lisbon earthquake, and insisted that chance is chance and not destiny. That, in a way, sums up modernity. Chance and complexity together destroy the narrative, along with the values that entered it. We are on our own now. In our materialistic system, we are by now almost incapable of distinguishing ethic from aesthetic. Yet we are discontent with the loss of meaning, meaning is what we desire to recuperate.

The search for an aesthetic that follows natural law and is not the result of arbitrary human intervention continues today in the fascination with more complex natural patterns, the appeal of *chaos theory*, the allure of *fractals,* the charisma of accident in principle as the escape from the *voulu*. It would seem that the same hunger for certainty that created architecture in the image of engineering is now at work re-creating architecture in the image of landscape, that is, as accident. Natural accident. To be within Nature is still an essential aspect that saves us from arbitrariness, and raises our work to the level of principle. We seem unable to free ourselves from the domination of the past except by inventing new myths with the power to exorcise.

The critic's hope of building into our assessment of the new a correction factor that would regularly allow for our illusion, seems over-optimistic. All that we produce today shines with an aura, entices us into the future. In a scientific age, the future takes on the redemptive role that was previously supplied by theology. To this extent our moral universe is greatly curtailed. But instead of certainty, we now work within credibility, and the credibility of our value system is always on the wane, and has always to be renewed. The problem for our ethics today is how to re-establish moral principles in a relativistic framework, how to maintain human value in a universe of heartless chance, and without the sanction of eternal punishment.

To return to the artifact half a century later is to visit the site of a loss, of a dereliction. But it is also to recover the site of a spiritual impulse that renders us back our humanity.

Robert Maxwell
London, November 1997

Introduction

Allen Cunningham

Architecture throughout history may be described in terms of the myths and technologies which influence its making. Classical architecture was evolved by, and served, the most successful empire in Western history for over six hundred years. The myths which surround and maintain this architecture through its origins, include the tabernacle in the desert and wood construction which dictated overall form and abstracted detail, proportional systems derived from the intervals of musical harmony, urban arrangements supporting ritual observances around an assembly of allegorical gods all dictating forms manifested in materials which carry Nature's imprint. Such characteristics are invoked by some to perpetuate for eternity an architecture supposedly dictated by rules divinely given and therefore an expression of Nature's order. This is a weighty, mythical inheritance which Modernism challenged. There is, however, no reasonable adjustment to these myths or the craft technology which supported them which might enable classical rubric to be transposed *in toto* to a period dominated by intellectual invention and technical developments unprecedented in history.

Semper and Viollet-le-Duc made possible a tradition of the new, and by the end of the nineteenth century a confluence of cerebral activity and industrial sophistication created conditions to which every nuance of human activity responded. Bertrand Russell summarised the inheritance:

> Western Europe and America have a practically homogeneous life which I should trace to three sources: (1) Greek culture; (2) Jewish religion and ethics; (3) Modern industrialism which itself is an outcome of modern science.[1]

From this the modern world and with it the modern movement evolved. However, as Aalto stated 'We cannot create new form where there is no new content'.[2] New forms were invented, inspired by new myths, to accompany the theory of relativity and the big bang theory of the origin of the universe, cubism, twelve tone music, psychology and sociology, the fourth dimension concept, industrialisation, scientific method, economic theory, rational philosophy and, not least, modern technology. A new architecture inspired by secular needs became the inevitable product of the prevailing intellectual, social and technical conditions.

Whereas the architecture which enriched past civilisations was evolved over periods ranging from hundreds to thousands of years, for that was the pace of history, the twentieth century has been in a hurry. When dynamic change, equated with progress, replaced the security of a perceived, static order, the expectations of a society in whose name traditional values appeared to have been abandoned were challenged and sometimes supplanted. Modern architecture evolved as a recognisable, fully fledged cultural phenomenon in less than one tenth the average time taken to conceive and construct a Gothic cathedral. Such pace has not only created perceptual anachronisms (suburban existence everywhere echoes popular 'taste' untouched by the value systems of modernism), but also encouraged specious declarations of its ephemeral and shallow intentions, its alien presence, and its death. Picasso expressed the difficulties with which the twentieth century artist must grapple when normative expectations are abandoned:

> Painters no longer live within a tradition and so each one of us must re-create an entire language…. No criterion can be applied to [us] a priori, since we don't believe in rigid standards any longer. In a certain sense, that's a liberation but at the same time it's an enormous limitation, because when the individuality of the artist begins to express itself, what the artist gains in the way of liberty he loses in the way of order…[3]

The myths and technologies surrounding the Modern Movement have provoked approbation and aversion, which dialectic is due for reappraisal.

Five conditions may be selected to illustrate the operative beliefs which signalled the transformation of architecture from the nineteenth century to versions of this productive art which continue to evolve around the world:

- proto-scientific methods were to be applied to architecture, thereby suppressing subjective licence in favour of objectivity—the implication being, if the right question is posed and rational procedures adopted, then the right answer will result;
- a belief in architectural determinism implied a causal link between architectural form and social behaviour, the integrity of the former leading to balance in the latter;
- technology was to be harnessed as a civilising force such that modern building would become, in Colin Rowe's words 'a *ritual celebration of the humane potential in a mechanised* society';
- synthetic cubism and abstraction[4] in fine art were transposed thereby introducing transparency and layering to replace perspectival space as a conceptual device, and surface devoid of symbolism;
- consequent upon the science of medicine and the identification of tuberculosis as the price paid for overcrowded, polluted nineteenth century cities, prescriptions for 'ideal cities' were sought which would unify architecture and planning into urban forms to create environments with sunlight, space and fresh air, expressive of human aspirations served by mechanised transport.

Style, dogma and reliance upon tradition were, therefore, replaced with the description of a *modus operandi*.

Such priorities represented a displacement of static values with dynamic imperatives, paradigm shifts insinuating connections between the efficiency associated with Nature, and timeless beauty. The tradition from which the pioneers of the Modern Movement sprang reflected the truth, purity and lucidity of the Enlightenment. In his *'Entretien sur l'architecture'*, Viollet le Duc had stated: 'In architecture there are two necessary ways of being true. It must be true according to the programme and true according to the methods of construction'. The dictum of Frank Lloyd Wright in America was 'Truth to Materials', a monograph on this architect being titled 'In the Nature of Materials' a moral imperative evolved in the wake of Ruskin's Seven Lamps of Architecture XVI in which he states: 'Touching the false representation of material, the question is infinitely more simple [than structural dishonesty], and the law more sweeping; all such imitations are utterly base and inadmissible.' In Vienna, Adolph Loos declared ornament a crime being wasteful, deceptive and primitive. In defining the house as a machine for living, Le Corbusier was asserting that architecture could no longer continue as the response to subjective stylistic preferences but must evolve as the outcome of analytical procedure borrowed from science, emulating Nature as revealed and analysed by D'Arcy Thompson, and exploiting technical advances. The adoption of rational methodology implied any deviation akin to falsification and this, combined with economy of means as an ambition, reactivated the Utilitarian maxim, the greatest good for the greatest number, an ethical dimension new to architecture. Duiker called this process 'spiritual economy'; beauty no longer lay in the eye of the beholder but in the integrity of the process. Hannes Meyer, who succeeded Gropius at the Bauhaus, adopted an extreme position repudiating architecture as art: 'All things in this world are a product of the formula "Function×Economics"; so none of these things are works of art' The 1937 prospectus for the Chicago Bauhaus offered a more palatable value basis: 'Art as the presentation of the significant and Science as the quest for reliable knowledge are mutually supporting. Each applies material for the other and each humanely enriches the other…' John Summerson identified the programme as the catalyst for a humanitarian agenda:'…the source of unity in modern architecture is in the social sphere, in other words in the architect's programme…[this being] the one new principle involved in modern architecture'. The programme has become 'a description of the spatial dimensions, spatial relationships and other physical conditions required for the convenient performance of specific functions …the resultant unity…is the unity of a process'.[5]

The extravagant ambitions for modern architecture have been questioned not only by traditionalists but also from within the cultural confines which it occupies. The modernist mind-set has, for example, been described by its detractors as combining physics envy, zeitgeist worship, object fixation and stradaphobia[6] which, if justified, would at best temper, and at worst remove the ethical dimension bestowed upon any version of formative ideologies. On this characterisation Modernism has continued along the traditional evolutionary path it claims so emphatically to eschew, and replaced a nineteenth century, eclectic, historically style-based inheritance with twentieth century, equally eclectic, pseudo-scientific method and imagery. The justification for this view is derived not from the heroic period of Modernism but from those who aped the imagery without regard for its agenda. An attempted escape from this bind has been the resort to the random expressionism of Postmodernism, hung off steel frames, contrived by culturally impoverished architects:

> Contemporary architecture bathes in the Pantheistic limbo of eclecticism. Torn between the dilemma for a frenetic search for novelty and an inherited social mission for a popular language, architecture leafs through history caricaturing remembrances…. Collective myth is systematically fractured into countless individualistic trivia, into fastidious and uncompassionate evasions of the human situation.[7]

The motives for a virtual abandonment of Modernist ideals stem from two sources, first the failure of much postwar architecture to meet political, social and technical expectations and second, the intellectual perception that Modernism had

been too narrowly prescribed to serve diversified cultural interests. Political realities have deflected the role of architecture linked to social purpose and it is now dominated by commercial patronage. Image conscious corporations worldwide promote rampant eclecticism devoid of any ideological, let alone ethical, substance. Architects are now perceived as the hired guns of consumerism. Heidegger stated the danger: 'What is constant in objects produced merely for consumption is their false surface.' Modernism has, of course, survived such distractions and Martin Pawley's 'technology transfer', resulting in the 'tendency towards a virtuoso preoccupation with the tools of architecture rather than with its goals'[8] merely indicates the swing of the pendulum between myth and technology by architects liberated from the straightjacket of dogma.

Where there continues an assault on the Modern Movement, it may be divided between professional criticism, the propaganda leeched from this source which feeds public prejudice and the more direct response of a visually uneducated public to an admittedly unfamiliar, experiential world. Criticism has fed on misunderstanding of its intentions derived from the very propaganda issued to publicise the cause. A revisit to *The International Style* of 1932 discloses why, from the start, misreadings have taken root, the first of which is implicit in the title, deceptive in two fundamental respects. First is the false inference that a monolithic, co-ordinated, international movement existed and second, that it could be adequately described in terms of its outward, contingent appearance. The compositional rubric as summarised is indicative of the superficial interpretation:

> The principles are few and broad…. There is, first, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than mass. Secondly, regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design. These two principles, with a third proscribing arbitrary applied decoration, mark the productions of the international style.[9]

This early attempt to establish Modernism as a new orthodoxy belied its true intentions. Among other myths which have perverted much of the discourse around Modernism and been presented as imperatives may be included functionalism and economy of means as ends in themselves, total detachment from precedent and exclusive resort to modern technologies. Modern architecture was even blamed for social breakdown.[10] John Entenza's commentary on the Eames' house is closer to expressing Modernism's intentions: This house presents an attempt to state an idea rather than a fixed architectural pattern, and it is as an attitude towards living that we wish to present it…a natural and unaffected development of a modern building idiom.'[11] Modernism is dependent upon clear methodology but open ended, an intellectual condition described by Whitehead as 'an adventure in the clarification of thought, progressive and never final. But it is an advantage in which even partial success has importance.'

The critical appetite has been fed by technical inadequacies matched against modern expectations and dogged a cause which has been misrepresented as a finite project. What has become ever more certain is the necessity for a patient, revisionist dialogue to define and demonstrate a humanist Modernism, the optimistic cultural seeds of which were planted during a decade of unparalleled, dynamic, creative, intellectual activity which proliferated flawed masterpieces and left public comprehension far behind. Anachronistic divides have opened up between technical and visual expectations, fibreglass temple fronts lead to well-tempered environments, high-rise, neoclassical gobbledegook symbolises computerised corporations, veneered Tudor façades and leaded float-glass windows shelter micro-chip households, state of the art electronics are slung between fibrous plaster Corinthian, televisions glow from period cocktail cabinets, video cassettes and compact discs are stacked in Rococo repro side tables, mobile phone conversations emanate from period, four-poster beds, infrared operated rustic garage doors protect state of the art automobiles. A comment relating to modern art is equally apposite to architecture: 'We simply cannot afford another century in which the tastes of the public and those of its aesthetic commentators are as dramatically divergent as they have been during the years of modernism.'[12] Central to inculcating comprehension of the Modernist ethos in order to bridge this palpable cultural divide are innovative educational programmes[13] and first-hand experience of its remaining physical manifestations.

The conservation of our Modernist inheritance as an international movement was launched in 1990 (See Appendix A). At the heart of the enterprise lies a paradox, how can the conservation of buildings dedicated to the future and to change, be intellectually justified?

> Architects of the Modern Movement were intent on building permeable borders: transparent walls, mobile installations and transportable houses. They even designed buildings which did not resist the wear and tear of time, but rather incorporated this inevitability into their structure…. The architects of the Modern Movement did not build fortresses or bunkers…. This makes the conservation of their permeable structures so difficult.[14]

The chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, Lord Gowrie, declared in 1994: 'If a building becomes redundant for the business it was originally built for it should be knocked down and replaced',[15] a sentiment the Futurists, Hannes Meyer or Mart Stam would have emphatically endorsed. In defiance of the sometimes ephemeral intentions however, the preservation of the object is, in our less certain times, crucial to the memory of the ideologies which spawned its making.

Figure 0.1 ‘The Ambassadors’ by Hans Holbein (1497–1543). Significant areas of this painting have been reconstructed (e.g. the skull) by the National Gallery restorers

The salient word is ‘redundant’, for there are two contending interests. A building might become economically redundant, a matter of calculation, or be considered culturally redundant, a matter of qualitative judgement. We must acquire skills in the former in order to sustain arguments around the latter, which require a critical and evaluative repertoire to establish a degree of precision to match the fiscal equation. In conservation, priorities must be clearly defined in order to temper such dictats as that of the noble lord who, if taken literally, would have promoted the demolition of the Maison de Verre, Villa Savoye and La Tourette, Casa del Fascio, Einstein Tower, Van Nelle factory and Zonnestraal Sanatorium, the Schroeder and Robie houses, and so on. Only hardened cultural philistines would have applauded such vandalism.

For a building owner, the economic life of the investment is paramount. Buildings have to pay their way by serving human economic activities. Owners may be unaware, or uninterested, in the historic importance of their property and given the need to adapt it to new requirements may readily sacrifice a unique architectural inheritance in the interests of economic viability; perhaps, in common with Wilde’s cynic, too many ‘know the cost of everything and the value of nothing’, indication of an educational void. The equation is complex and requires value judgements. Any attempt to place cultural values, which are eternal, on an ephemeral economic scale is essentially problematic, but such paradoxes must be addressed.

How may we equate our inheritance in qualitative terms? How is it possible to establish what place in our culture a work occupies? Arthur Koestler in ‘The Art of Creation’ describes the evaluations applied to the work of artists for as long as critical judgements have been consciously expressed:

> ‘The measure of an artist’s originality, put in the simplest terms, is the extent to which his selective emphasis deviates from the conventional norm and establishes new standards of relevance. All great innovations which inaugurate a new era, movement or school, consist in sudden shifts of a previously neglected aspect of experience, some blacked-out range of the existing spectrum. The decisive turning points in the history of every art form are discoveries which show the characteristic features already discussed: they uncover what has already been there: they are ‘revolutionary’, that is destructive and constructive: they compel us to revalue our values and impose a new set of rules on the eternal game.

To that may be added Walter Benjamin’s observation, which belies the myth that Modernism erupted from a fresh spring, because tradition is whatever claims an affinity with us: ‘The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being embedded in the fabric of tradition.’

A critical aspect in the evaluative process centres upon authenticity. There is on-going debate among historians, critics and philosophers concerning the tampering with paintings by restorers. On the one hand are the London National Gallery restorers who will re-create missing or deteriorated areas of paint, (Figure 0.1) and on the other are those who maintain the only authentic brush strokes are those of the original artist, and these alone should represent any art work regardless of the extent of deterioration. The questions concerning authenticity in architecture are equally apposite, and equally problematic but they lie at the heart of any activity under a conservation banner.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines:

‘Authentic’ – original, first-hand, real, actual, genuine [as opposed to counterfeit, forged etc.]