

Zeitschrift:	Bauen + Wohnen = Construction + habitation = Building + home : internationale Zeitschrift
Herausgeber:	Bauen + Wohnen
Band:	14 (1960)
Heft:	9: Stufen und Grenzen einer lebendigen Architektur = Les étapes et les limites d'une architecture vivante = Stages and limits of a living architecture
Rubrik:	Summary

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 10.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Summary

Statement of Architectural Principles

The principles set forth below are intended to clarify briefly what the prerequisites of Modern Architecture are and what is essential to it. They are not procedural formulas but the expression of a fundamental outlook.

Prerequisites of Architecture

Architecture has an essential prerequisite: that something is built which serves a human purpose. This prerequisite constitutes the underlying basis of all architecture; without it there is no architecture, but it alone does not suffice to create a work of architecture.

The term "Architecture"

The term "Architecture" includes more than merely the individual building; it also comprises the planning of entire building areas, the interrelationships of structural elements and buildings and the relationships of buildings to streets and roads, urban neighbourhoods and outlying residential districts.

Unity of function, construction and form

The form of a building has to accord with its function and manner of construction. The ordinary definition of functionalism, however, is inadequate: form is not determined by function alone — form can lead just as well to new kinds of usage and construction. Every epoch must, on the basis of the altered circumstances confronting it, discover anew the unity of design, function and construction.

Construction

Construction is an essential factor in architecture and can not be dismissed

as something to be carried out as a routine matter of course. The science of construction—like technology in general—is not in every case immediately accessible to the reason; when it is applied, not only is the reason involved but at the same time the feelings as well. The process of construction, however, is to be kept under control of consciousness as far as possible.

Variety and Simplicity

We possess more technical possibilities than all former architects combined. The variety of the means at our disposal increases the number of possibilities, but jeopardizes the unity of the building. For this reason it is necessary to restrict oneself to the simple, but with these simple elements to create a wealth of effects serving man in manifold ways.

As distinguished from Sculpture

Architecture is to be distinguished sharply from sculpture, even from sculptural structures serving some utilitarian purpose. Whereas architecture rests on consistent laws of construction, sculpture is free from any such prerequisite.

As distinguished from past styles I

Modern Architecture is distinguished from earlier works of architecture mainly by its different conception of space. This space, characterized by the term "spatial field," is not closed but flows without constraint outwards, inwards, upwards and downwards. It is delimited by other spatial quanta. The new conception of space, however, does not exclude the closed space.

As distinguished from past styles II

It is not in keeping with the inmost essence of Architecture when styles of former periods are taken over and used in the present, because the prin-

ciples of design at a given time are related to a specific stage of development in construction engineering and to a very particular way of coming to terms with the environment.

Architecture as Service to Man

Architecture is a service to man. The design of a building always reflects man himself, his way of life and his relations to his environment.

Vital Architecture

Architecture—regarded as service to man—remains truly vital on the sole condition that it never fails to come to grips with the fundamental character of each new challenge confronting it and when it allows the design of each new building to proceed naturally from the exigencies imposed by the nature of the means employed. Any enrichment and formal differentiation are only authentic when they remain related to the fundamental character of the project in question. A one-sided approach to problems of design and proportion leads to rigidity and to formalism.

Mission

The highest mission of Modern Architecture consists in the creation of spatial fields which aid each individual in the meaningful shaping and direction of his life: "active" fields, when stimulation is demanded, "passive" fields, when the free unfolding of the individual's latent capacities would otherwise be inhibited.

Responsibility

Modern Architecture does not rest on any binding convention governing problems of design but on an inner responsibility to assist in some measure in the fashioning of an intelligent existence which is worthy of the dignity of man.

Jürgen Joedicke

Towards a living architecture . . . (pages 303—304)

Modern architecture* as a living form of the art of building cannot be regulated by any kind of formal canon; its constancy and unity rest on the inner bearing of those who feel under an obligation towards it.

At the beginning of its development there was the protest against the housing of millions of men that denied them their human rights and the accusation that the architecture of the nineteenth century had completely ignored the social responsibility laid upon it. Modern architecture replaces stereotypes and patterns, styles and categories of design, by a method of design that once again brings the activity of the architect back to that sole point from where the urgent problems of contemporary life may be solved: it states that social requirements, materials and construction, purpose and use, must constitute the point of departure for any plan. Thanks to the introduction of functionalism it was possible to open up a way through the circulation of stylistic imitations.

* The expression "modern architecture" is self-contradictory, as "modern" in the true meaning of the word can only refer to the present for its exemplification and not to events of twenty years ago. This concept, however, has become a distinctive label for the movement ever since Otto Wagner employed it as a title for a book in 1896. We are compelled to use it until a better term is generally accepted.

The idea of functionalism has been interpreted in varying ways. The literal exposition of Sullivan's formula that design is a consequence of function is misleading and can advance the claims of a materialistic view of architecture, for function, like construction, is by no means a fixed concept with a content that has to be accurately defined. The view taken of function changes in the course of time. The relationship between function and form, therefore, can only be a reciprocal one: formal ideas influence those about function just as much as function influences design. Functionalism says, for this reason, no more than that in the completed building form and function must cohere. Saying this shows up clearly that though functionalism is a method of design, it can in no wise be anchored to a specific category of design, for varying forms are conceivable that give evidence of the coherence desired.

Functionalism has been misunderstood in yet another way. Very often only the quantitatively measurable factors are taken to mean function—rather of the form that the arrangement of furniture in a kitchen is determined on the basis of the minimum expenditure of energy on the part of the housewife. Such considerations are necessary and useful but do not exhaust the idea of functionalism. Function comprises the whole totality of factors specifically entailed by a role. It is only possible to speak of a functional view of architecture when design is exposed to the stimulus of such a penetrating study of function.

Certain phenomena in contemporary architecture cannot be aligned with those fashionable forms of design that could always be met with. On the contrary, their

roots are to be found in the endeavours that modern architecture as such questions in general. At the present time we are confronted by a profound crisis in modern architecture itself. The end of modern architecture has already been predicted in the U.S.A. The fact that such statements do not come from outsiders or conservatively minded architects but rather from those who up to now have been called notable representatives of modern architecture shows how critical the position is.

Two questions are most pressing: what causes have favoured this development; what arguments are brought to bear to support these claims? The first of these two questions can only be answered when the current situation is viewed in relation to the past.

The law of differentiation and expansion operative in every form of development has led to an extension of methods and design from the initial purist phase of the twenties onwards. The present position of this development can, perhaps, be characterized with the term "total expansion of design;" the modern architecture of today makes use of every possibility and means, it is no longer bound—as was the case in the twenties, for example—to the primacy of certain overruling images. However, the plenitude of openings is confusing; the necessary and justified search for an extension of the vocabulary of design leads to a quest for novelty at any price. The often thoughtless hunting down of what is new, however, often leaves the natural feeling for quality and authenticity out of consideration. If the design of a building is cut off from its constituent factors, a narrowing

down of all problems to those which are purely concerned with proportion and shape comes about, and this endangers the stability of architecture. Instead of a living art of building there emerges an architecture that is academic and hampered with rules: this is the first danger to which modern architecture is exposed today.

Certain aims are supported by ideas that have become well-known and which at first sound perfectly reasonable. They argue that the purist simplicity of the earlier period must be overcome. What is required is an architecture that pays more attention than hitherto to human emotions. Such theoretical demands deserve nothing but support; error creeps in, however, as soon as this expansion and differentiation is sought from the outside, from the form, and not from the inner complex.

These claims are advanced on the basis of a different attitude to history. In the initial phase of modern architecture any form of connection with the past was rejected. Futurism urged the suppression of all the artistic monuments of past ages. This attitude was to be understood as a protest. There is no doubt that the consolidation of modern architecture has furthered the change of views apparent at the present time. The architectural designs of the past are recognized today in their true significance and the relations they bear to the present are underlined. So long as the past serves to confirm our own intentions and so long as the aims of our period are recognized, there is no danger of misjudgement and eclectic imitation.

Such a position, however, presupposes confidence in one's own strength; but