

Paper: Essay

Style: Oxford

Pages: 7

Sources: 4

Level: Graduate

Architecture and Zeitgeist

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Supervisor]

[Course]

The architecture of the Industrial Age is known in art history as functionalism. (Also receives other names like Rationalism, Modernism and International Style). Although it cannot be considered the only twentieth-century architectural movement itself is the most important. In fact the complex picture of the architecture of the twentieth century we can expose at the History of functionalism. This architecture is characterized by using materials from the industrial age: steel, glass and reinforced concrete. Also tends not to hide these external cladding materials but that clearly shows (Banham, 1966).

At least in the beginning, Functionalism is the commitment of social function of architecture; so rationalist and functionalist architects design buildings and urban structures taking into account hygienic issues, quality of life, etc. Often these concerns are addressed to the lower social classes. However there are plenty of megalomaniac and prestigious works also. Advent of functionalism in Europe primarily pure architecture stripped off all the accessories from the entire décor which ultimately abandoned modernism in favor of more constructive rationality.

This purification process was formally culminated in the figure of Adolf Loos (1870-1933) and in other German architecture around 1910. Loos focused his work on the rejection of any trace of ornamental historicism in architecture. For Loos there is an absolute identification between utility and beauty. Houses built in 1910 in Vienna Steiner were extremely geometric, flat roof and simple windows trimmed directly on the wall. However, in the 20th century, functionalism was again taking roots in Europe as the true architecture of the twentieth century. Three big players made this happen: Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe.

The years following World War II were proved to be the freehold of Functionalism in the architectural field. However, little by little, they were revealing some internal contradictions that questioned the principles of it and the style which was born as a progressive architecture to serve the people was drifting in megalomaniac constructions for large multinational companies. Functionalism was in danger of becoming a new academicism betraying the artistic avant-garde spirit that had encouraged its birth.

One of the first to realize these contradictions was Le Corbusier. So, after World War II architecture changes and innovative buildings begins to lift as L'Unité d'Habitation of Marseilles (1945-1952), the city Chandigarh in India (1950) and Notre-Dame Haut in Ronchamp (1950-54). In all of them, Le Corbusier avoids falling into the functionalist dogma posing a more human architecture, rich in meaning, varied and full of artistic values (Brooks, 1999).

He had established the principles on which, according to him, contemporary constructive renewal should be based. According to him, the house is a "machine for living" and this proposal was followed to the letter by the most advanced architects. The house should be, above all, a technical gear of perfection to fulfill its function of residence. However, these same followers missing other phrases of Le Corbusier as stating that architecture is the wise and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. What Le Corbusier meant by these words. His aim was to show how architecture not only makes practical sense, but also has a derived aesthetic aspect of their own physical presence. The architecture is a two-sided activity: the technical and artistic.

In the early twentieth century, Italian urban utopias also linked to Futurism. In Italy, Futurism also reached to architectural demonstrations. The outstanding representative Antonio Sant'Elia (1888-1916) performing projects and plans for the New Town, also drafted the

Manifesto of Futurist architecture with functional imaginary proposals (Behne, 1996). These early utopian projects were implemented in a number of concrete measures in the 20s and 30s. In the Athens Charter summarizes the fundamental principles that should be based on the new urban Functionalism. The urban model of the Athens Charter was open order, i.e. big and tall buildings separated by large open spaces (parks, gardens, roads). Each of these large buildings would be a "dwelling unit" to include not only the typical housing of Le Corbusier raised on stilts, but also would be topped by a flat roof would be located in the community services essential to enjoy the three pleasures essential: light, space and greenery. An example of this was the Marseilles Housing Unit designed by Le Corbusier. Another example of open order was the design of the city of Brasilia.

The Chosen Building

As discussed, Le Corbusier was of the opinion that building must assimilate the spirit of the industrial age, and thus should be based on machine. The houses should be planned by architects and engineers should design cars and airplanes. The homes are the "machines for living". In almost all of his projects he expressed this desire to identify architecture with modern industry. For its construction would follow the same processes of standardization and rationalization for making cars.

L'Unite d'habitation (dwelling unit) of Marseille (1945-1952) led to Le Corbusier the opportunity to implement some of the architectural ideas of the 30s: the formation of large housing blocks that integrate housing and collective services. The Marseille housing unit was calculated for a population of 1800 people, and consisted of houses in different sizes to meet different needs. In the flat roof stood community services (gym, nursery, swimming pool,

running track and small stage). It was built of rough concrete construction because metal retainer originally proved too expensive in this period of post-war shortages. This replacement material will influence the [Brutalist architecture] and many other complexes (Forty, 2000).

The building is an enormous construction of 140 meters long, 24 meters wide and 56 meters high, and provided an internal operation of more than 26 independent services. Each floor contains 58 duplex apartments accessible from a large three storey internal corridor, "streets in the air". Some apartments are on the ground and the lower corridor, others and the upper corridor.

Inside the building, apartment 337 intersect one another in the massive concrete lattice. Halfway up a two-story shopping area stretches along 135m of the building, which had also function rooms, a restaurant, a hotel, a laundry and other supply services.

Argument Development

This essay tries to ascertain that architecture of a time is influenced by the beliefs and movements of that time. Twentieth century is the century of cities, urban growth has been tremendous, and humanity has become urban. Therefore, urban planners and architects have had to raise the main problems of urban growth generates such magnitude. The problem is that these solutions have not always been put into practice (very high cost, economic, etc.). Therefore, as has always happened in the history of art, many urban projects have been in utopia or have only been able to implement in part.

The functionalist movement was the answer of all the architectural problems of urbanization. Le Corbusier attempted to apply his planning principles: open order, large blocks

with public functions, low density, green spaces collation, productive, residential, recreational, etc. The order of a building is in proportion, something that the architect must take the greatest care.

The Unité d'habitation in Marseilles, is the embodiment of a concept, exercised immense influence on the shape of the buildings in the towns and cities of the world. It is a piece of architecture which became a source of registration for all the architects who follow the principles of movement of functionalism. The architecture not only portrays the most popular belief and movement of its time but it also depicts a dynamic synthesis between art, Architecture and landscape. It has no parallel, but has proved challenging in encouraging other architects of the functionalist movement in designing residential buildings.

Unité d'habitation in Marseilles is an architecture that broke the mold established so far, Le Corbusier created with the Marseilles Housing Unit housing prototype that gave body to his ideal of integration of the individual in the community, his version of ideal life, and his effort to find a real solution of social problems. The most important thing about this building is the importance that Le Corbusier gives to purely aesthetic issues. This form is adapted to the landscape conditions of Marseille: ground plane between the sea horizon and the profile of the mountains with a mild climate that favors outdoor living. The building consists of a square block on stilts, a face has been covered with sun visor and the other with concrete and rough. It summarizes the five points at which the architect summarized his constructive language: use of stilts to lift the building from the ground, covered terrace, open plan (the skeleton structure to distribute within each plant according to interests independently of pillars and partitions), horizontal window run for the light to reach all corners and free facade.

Influence of Adolf Loos has been clearly depicted in Unité d'habitation's architecture. For example, he paid attention to housing and accommodation and had the belief that the clear logic and wisdom of project could have some effect on the forms of society. This building was a transitional step between the traditional homes, where floors were completely private and a new type of community housing, in which a balance is sought between the common and private, between the individual, family and the community.

Thus, it can easily be concluded after all the above discussion that Unité d'habitation de Marseilles is an architecture which clearly shows the influence of beliefs and movements of its time.

Bibliography

Banham, Reyner, 1966, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* New York: Reinhold Publishing Company.

Behne, Adolf, 1996, *The Modern Functional Building*, Michael Robinson, trans. Santa Monica: Getty Research Institute.

Brooks, Allen, H., 1999, *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds*, Paperback Edition, University of Chicago Press,

Forty, Adrian, 2000, *Function, Words and Buildings, A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, p. 174-195.