THE DIALECTICAL CONSTRUCTION

Modern art & architecture in Post-war Europe (1947-1960)

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THESIS

Art & Modern Architecture in post-war Europe (1947-60):

ABSTRACT & PRESENTATION

This research started six years ago as an intuition, which little by little found an argument and brought me to look back to recent history...

Nowadays there is a lack of clarity and consistency in the relation between architecture and art. In many cases, either art is dismissed and architecture is driven only by technical means and analytical thinking, or art is superficially used as an inspiration without an understanding of the aesthetic principles that ground it. This research is an attempt to question our current understanding of the role of art in architecture. It looks back into a paradigmatic moment in recent history, where the question was addressed causing the first big crisis of the Modern Movement: the post-war European reconstruction period (1945-1960), when the criticism drafted by Aldo van Eyck & A&P Smithson to the rationalistic tendency of the late CIAM unveiled the fact that the artistic principles that grounded the Modern Movement were falling into oblivion.

Facing the overwhelming task of the European reconstruction, the CIAM architects were having difficulties defining the role of art in architecture. The mainstream of CIAM was considering only the satisfaction of the material needs, relying exclusively in analytical thinking and technical means to do so. From CIAM 6 (1947) to CIAM 9 (1953), Aldo van Eyck and the Smithsons criticized the approach of CIAM for overlooking the emotional aspects of the reconstruction. If architects focused exclusively in analytical thinking to solve the material aspects, overlooking the irrational nature of human behavior, cities would become inhuman. CIAM was obliterating the fact that modern art had grounded the Modern Movement in architecture, and made architects aware of the limitations of rational thinking in architectural design. Within the early Modern Movement an exclusively rationalistic approach was considered irrational.

Van Eyck’s and Smithsons’ understanding of the role of art and aesthetics made them aware of the limitations of a rationalistic approach in architecture. They shared a vision of modern architecture grounded in art; according to which, architecture should rely in technical and artistic means in order to fulfill both, material and emotional needs- two complementary aspects mixed in everyday life. The artistic principles that grounded Van Eyck’s and Smithsons’ conception of architecture can be traced back to the emergence of modern art: from Dadaism to ‘Art Brut’. They were present in their early work: from the exhibitions designs for Cobra and the Independent Group, to their projects on the city such as the Van Eyck’s playgrounds or the Smithson’s Golden Lane grid. Art nourished their work in terms of perception and design: The artists’ perception brought them to consider more the emotional aspects of human behavior and to consider architecture's potential to give room to such behaviors. In order to do so they integrated the irrational means used by artists, such as sensual knowledge, imagination and intuition, in their design process.
Although this research is grounded in historical facts its approach and goals are operative. It drafts a critical-analysis of the parallelisms and divergences between Van Eyck’s & Smithsons’ projects in relation to art in order to learn from them. At the same time, it tries to point out aspects of modern art that were overlooked and had resulted determinant for architecture’s later development, such as the transformation of art in commodity foreseen by Dadaists like Duchamp. Ultimately it attempts to analyze the relation art & architecture in a paradigmatic moment of recent history in order to awake our consciousness, and establish some criteria regarding potentialities of art and aesthetics in current architectural theory and design.

At CIAM Van Eyck argued that “Art has capacity to satisfy emotional needs” Why he believed so?

Van Eyck’s idea of Modern Art was grounded in Viena School of aesthetics, he learn it through CW Giedion wife of Sigfried Giedion, both students of Worringer and Wolfflin. Carola embedded the young Van Eyck with her notion of abstract art and Sigfried introduced it in architecture history

The idea of modern art as abstract art, as a form of knowledge that produces spiritual relief in man satisfying his emotional needs was articulated in Worringer’s thesis abstraction and empathy 1907. Grounded in the analysis of history art in terms of volition started by Riegl was very influential for the artists of the Blaue Reiter and its content spreaded over Europe.

Worringer’s thesis criticized the current idea of art in Europe for it was restricted to the narrow scope of Classical art. Art was as a product of empathy, “objectified self-enjoyment”. If the artist enjoyed a pantheistic relation of confidence with the outer world, his work would be driven by empathy producing Naturalist art, an approximation to the organic of life.1 Worringer argued that such a definition of art did not provide an explanation of other forms of art that might be considered the product of equal or higher forms of understanding.

If the artists experienced a pantheistic relation with the world, empathy would lead his work, but if the artist experienced the inner wrest inspired in man by the phenomena of outside world, his work would be leaded by an “urge to abstraction”, man’s endeavor to redeem the individual object from the outer world to render it absolute. The result would be Style in art, pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion of the world.

Art always aimed to redeem the individual object from the outer world, therefore the “urge to abstraction” was the primary impulse in art

It was the primitive impulse “before cognition”, before men developed ways of understanding nature.

1 Not because the artist desired to give the illusion of a living object, but because the feeling for the beauty of the organic form that is true to life had been aroused, and because the artist desired to give satisfaction to this feeling, which dominated the absolute artistic volition. Worringer clearly detached Naturalism in art from the mere imitative impulse. See Worringer's Chapter 2: Naturalism & Style. P-27
But abstraction resulted also the most elevated impulse “above cognition”. In the very early stages it was driven by instinct and in the more evolved civilizations was a form of understanding.

Worringer’s emphasized the capacity of abstract art, to bestow happiness as a transcendental way of understanding, that had implicit a recognition of the limitations of rational understanding as a form of knowledge.

Worringer’s ends his thesis by pointing at the higher capacity of scientific knowledge to provide the feeling of assurance that transcendental art had provided before, from the Renaissance onwards, understanding broke away from instinct and trusted merely to itself “Science emerged, and transcendental art lost ground. For the world picture set out by science… now offered man who put his faith in the cognitive capacity of the understanding the same feeling of assurance that the transcendentally predisposed man had reached” with abstract art.²

But the war came and the faith putted by western civilization in the world-picture set out by science, together with its idea of progress felt into a big crisis.

Modern art movements gave form to abstract art.

The world-picture set out by Modern Science grounded in rational-logic was complemented by a world picture set out by abstract art grounded in what I would call intuitive transcendental logic.

It tried to bridge the thing in the mind and the object (thing in itself) developing devices to apprehend the object and to create object that would produce spiritual relief.

Devices such as the process of enstrangement that changed our current way of beholding. The mind imagined & articulated an idea that driven by intuition created a new object.

Through the creative process the mind reached a new stage of consciousness of the new object created, that provided him a new vision of reality.

A new world picture is set out as a result of a change in the way of beholding (Wolfflin thesis).

According to De Stijl, Suprematism or Brancusi such a process resulted in the production of the elementary.

“elementary is not an end in art, but one arrives to it in spite of oneself , in approaching the real sense of things”

² See Worringer P-134. It follows “The old art had been a joyless impulse to self-preservation; now, after this transcendental volition had been taken over and calmed by the scientific striving after knowledge, the realm of art seceded from the realm of science. And the new art, which now springs to life, is Classical art. Its colouring is no longer joyless like the old. For it has become a luxury activity of the psyche, an activation of previously inhibited inner energies, freed from all compulsion and purpose, and the bestower of happiness. Its delight is no longer the rigid regularity of the abstract, but the mild harmony of the organic being” p-135
This idea of art embodied a criticism to rational cognition providing an alternative logic.

As we can see in this diagram this is the notion of art that Van Eyck & Smithsons’ related to architecture. This diagram done at Doorn meeting traces an arrow from the art movements to 1947 the moment when they drafted their criticism to CIAM.

I want to propose an understanding of art in relation to architecture in four categories. From a mere superficial apprehension of art to its understanding as a form of knowledge whose inner structure is related to architecture. I am going to illustrate to what extent Van Eyck & Smithson arrived to a deeper understanding of this categorization of art & architecture.

In a first degree the relation art & architecture can be established in terms of OBJECT, we can look at the form of the work of art or its content. We can learn from the object in itself or from the idea (the thing of the mind) that produced such an object. A relation in terms of OBJECT.

We can reach a deeper degree of understanding by learning from the devices used to bridge the gap between the object and the subject in terms of PROCESS. Like the Dadaist use of chance or paul klee’s exploration of his “own uncorrupted imagery” that brought him to a return to “devices of pre-logical expression” that are created by us and not inherited.

Or we can understand the powerful process of enstrangement as an artistic device. Where the object “urinary” or language itself is enstranged in order to “make perception long and laborious” considering that “the perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. Art being a means of experiencing the process of creativity where the artifact itself is quite unimportant.

In order to do so, the subject himself, the artist, must also perform the process of enstrangement of oneself in the creative process, like Hugo Ball did in the reading of Karawane poem. The device of enstrangement in modern art evolved from the enstrangement of the object in the Dadaist ready-made to the enstrangement of the subject in the surrealist drift and found-object, or the enstrangement of oneself that brought Dubuffet to draw like a kid or a fool…
A process that Paolozzi and Henderson came to know personally from Giacometti and Duchamp respectively. Paolozzi was very much inspired by Giacometti and attracted by his personality when he came to meet him at his studio in Paris. Henderson owned one of Duchamp's Green Box, containing notes for the painting of the bride with statements like “To put aside is an operation.” Visiting the poor neighbourhoods of Bethal Green the Smithson found the kids playing in the street and re-discovered the street. They saw kids playing/drawing on the street and Paolozzi child-like drawings that brought them to draw like kids over the existing fabric of the city and an endless building and their vision of the city.

It could be said that the Smithson’s witnessed the definition of art given by the artists of the IG not as a mere production of objects, but as the establishment of relations between the objects (IMAGES) and the real World. Something they experienced in the design for the PARALLEL OF LIFE & Art exhibit. (ICA 1953), a dadaist treedimensional collage that established visual relations between the forms of nature and the forms created by man without providing any logical argument (very Dadaist).

The Smithsons’ understanding of art in terms of an intuitive logic that establishes relations brought them to explore the idea of the “found object” in the street as the “As found” element of the city that was considered in relation to the other elements of the city: house, street, district, city.

And to think about the architecture of the city as the materialization of relations (human associations) instead of the city as a gathering of monuments. As Modrian said “The culture of particular forms is approaching its end, the culture of determined relations has begun” this was Van Eyck’s favourite quote of Mondrian.

Van Eyck rejected any superficial relation of art & architecture in terms of OBJECT.

He understood that art could nourish architecture in a deeper sense: in terms of its DEVICES, like enstrangement, imagination and intuition.

He understood that architecture could learn from art as a transcendental intuitive logic. Such a definition of Modern art mirrored the definition of modern architecture, and embodied the criticism to the rationalistic approach drafted by art. Such a criticism was performed by Van Doesburg’s idea of merging Dadaists and Constructivists the rejected the idea of the utilitarian purpose of art. Van doesburg gathered at the doors of the Bauhaus Tzara, Schwitters, Moholy-Nagy, Lissitzky, ad arp among others to remind Gropius about the limitations of the rationalistic approach in architecture education.

Among the De Stijl members at the congress was Van Eesteren, who in 1947 recruited the young Van Eyck for the Dutch group at CIAM 6 (1947). Where the criticism drafted by Van Eyck to the rationalistic tendency of the late CIAM unveiled the fact that the artistic principles that grounded the architecture of the Modern Movement were falling into oblivion.
“The old struggle between imagination and common sense ended tragically in favor of the later...”

**IMAGE 20 - IMAGINATION & INTUITION**

“Imagination remains the only common denominator of man and nature. The prime detector of change...”

Explicitly referring to the work of Brancusi, Klee or Mondrian Van Eyck said

**IMAGE 21 CONSCIOUSNESS**

“new consciousness is already transforming man’s mind...they have turned our senses to a new dimension...CIAM is first and foremost an affirmation of this new consciousness... one in which grace is expressed in life as it is in art”

LE CORBUSIER “Finally the imagination among the CIAM!”

Following Worringers thesis he defined Style as the result of the materialization of a collective idea of abstract art

**IMAGE 22 URGE TO ABSTRACTION LEAD TO PRODUCTION OF STYLE**

“Everything the architect, the painter and the sculptor makes must necessarily be a reflection of a collective idea if it is to be relevant to civilization. That is why we must sacrifice everything in favour of style...Style is the result of a collective idea; formalism of a limited idea. This current sustains our collective idea and finds its expression in style. It is naturally subject to flux: it is in fact flux itself. It follows, that what is style at a given time may become formalism at the next...”

Lastly Van Eyck understood the logic of abstract art so well that he was able to materialize it in some of his projects, the playgrounds and the orphanage. A logic whose final stage was what he called the ELEMENTARY, when the object produced approaches to the real sense of things...An object in common for both Art & Architecture

**IMAGE 23**

According to Brancusi abstract art arrived at the elementary in approaching the real sense of things. Van eyck argued that architecture should approach to the real sense of things, that is to the elementary in terms of human behavior. Architecture would reach elementary forms if it looked after the elementary in terms of behavior

**IMAGE 24**

A clear example of it was his design for the playgrounds from 1949. Departing from a close understanding of kids behavior, playing, Van Eyck developed a series of forms, of archetypes, that he happened to find in his tryp to Sahara in 1951.

**IMAGE 25**

He worked with the elementary in terms of behavior and reached archetypes that were elementary in terms of its primitive-geometric forms. As he had learned from Arp’s and Brancusi’s work, Van Eyck developed iterations of the same forms, the same archetypes-abstract forms.

**IMAGE 26**

He organized them in every site according to what I would call a logic of determined relations.
The object itself is quite unimportant, what is important is the relation, horizontal vertical, color-proportion, etc.

He placed a main first element according to the site, usually the sand-pit, according to which he placed the next element, and so on, no linear logic can be found in the design of the hundreds of playgrounds. A logic of determined relations that like Brancusi’s carving and polishing of the stones lasted for years

Aldo van Eyck and the smithsons understood abstract art as a transcendental art, what I defined as a transcendental logic that is intuitive in so far as it operates driven mainly by non-rational means though ultimately results a product of thought. Therefore being rational in a humanistic sense inso far as it recognizes the limitations of reason (as Panofsky define it “the conviction of the dignity of man based on both, the insistence on human values (rationality & freedom) and the acceptance of human limitations (fallibility and fraility) from this two postulates resulting responsibility and tolerance”)

As I pointed before both Van Eyck and the Smithsons assumed that the world-picture set out by abstract art as a transcendental logic that fulfilled man’s emotional needs could be mirrored in architecture, and its object, the elementary translated into architecture as I explained mainly in terms of behavior. Working on the assumption that if art arrived to the elementary in approaching the real sense of things, the same logic would give birth to the materialization of elementary human behavior.

But I would argue that there is an ultimate stage in the relation art & architecture that none of them reached and that results essential for architecture. The fact that the understanding of art as transcendental art as it was defined

As a transcendental intuitive logic, is in fact arbitrary, that it could be otherwise.

Both Van Eyck and Smithsons lacked the understanding of art’s relation to architecture in terms of CONSCIOUSNESS of the world picture set out by abstract art. They understood the logic that governed abstract art but not how this logic mirrored certain reality. The CONSCIOUSNESS that art is a logic that relates to reality but we can’t tell if it is true or not. WE have to understand it as a world picture that mirrors reality produced by a logic that is different from that of science but equally helpful for us. Helpful because it provides us an understanding of how man produces and consumes a form of knowledge whose ultimate aim is condemned to fail, namely approaching the thing in itself.

Helpful if we understand it not as a production of an individual but as a social product. Whose capacity to transcend is determined by the social forces that produces drive it

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3 E. Panofsky “The history of art as humanistic discipline” 1939-40
ART & THEORY IN POSTWAR EUROPEAN AVANT-GARDE ARCHITECTURE (1945-1960):
London – Alison & Peter Smithson and the Independent Group
Amsterdam – Aldo van Eyck and the C.O.B.R.A. Group

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0. EX PARIS ALIQUID NOVUM?

0.1. EXILED AVANT GARDE: ZURICH

Tristan Tzara
dedication of *La Main Passe* to Aldo Van Eyck, 1947

Marcel Duchamp
*Green Box* (1938) owned by Nigel Henderson
“Dada wanted to replace the logical nonsense of the men of today by the illogically senseless”

Hans Arp

The first chapter of this inquiry is devoted to summarize some ideas, characters and events from the early European avant-gardes that are influential in the emergence of later art movements after the Second World War, namely: The Independent Group in London and the C.O.B.R.A. Group in Amsterdam. Among the early artistic movements before the First World War, the emergence of the Dadaist movement is chosen as a point of departure because its work and ideas strongly influenced the young generation of artists and architects gathered around those two groups. The Dadaist spirit of revolt against the war, the idea of progress and established hierarchies, for they restrict human freedom, and its appeal to imagination as source of knowledge that nourishes human awareness of reality, nourished the humanistic sensibility of these artists and architects.

For the purpose of this research, the story of the emergence of Dadaism serves as a thread introducing ideas, works and characters that are important in so far as they influenced the way of thinking and the early work of Alison & Peter Smithson and Aldo Van Eyck. Although for chronological and historical reasons starting with Dadaism is quite convenient for this study, it does not mean that the ideas pointed out in this introductory chapter are exclusive from this movement. The early European Avant-gardes had several ideas in common and established a convoluted dialogued full of subtle variations where the slight differences between the works of art are as important as the things they share in common. Include reference to C.W. Giedion synthetic vision

The first World War, 1914-1918, gathered many artists and intellectuals in Zurich, giving birth to Dada-Zurich when Hugo Ball founded the Cabaret Voltaire with Emmy Hennings, Hans & Sophie-Taeuber Arp, Marcel Janco and Tristan Tzara. As the war ends, Dada spreads all over Europe and of course goes to Paris, where the avant-garde artists returned after their forced exile due to the Nazi occupation. Dada’s ‘enfant terrible’ Tristan Tzara and Hans Arp both arrive in Paris around 1920, invited by Francis Picabia. Dada-Paris will die and be reborn as the Surrealist movement with the publication of André Breton’s Surrealist Manifesto by the end of 1924.

The second World War, 1942-1946, brought two couples together, Sigfried & Carola-Weckler Giedion, and Aldo & Hannie Van Eyck to Zurich. It was the Surrealist movement who brought the young couple Aldo & Hannie Van Eyck to meet C.W. Giedion. It happened when Aldo and Hannie were sitting in Café Select on the Limatquai when they noticed that a Surrealist exhibition was taking place in a Gallery above, the Galerie Gasser (Zurich), which included works of Dali, Ernst, Tanguy and Klee. Carola-Weckler Giedion introduced Aldo Van Eyck to the avant-garde artists in Zurich and sent him to Paris with messages for Giacometti, Tzara, Leger, Braque, Pevsner, Vantongerloo, Nelly Van Doesburg and Brancusi. Every time Van Eyck went to Paris he lodged in Nelly Van Doesburg’s house in Meudon. The pilgrimage to Paris took place again once the Second

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5 Hans Arp, Piet Mondrian, Constantin Brancusi...
6 See Strauven …
World War ended in 1945, as the artists gathered in Paris, ‘capitale du XIXe siècle’, looking for what was left from the avant-garde art spirit. At that time Aldo Van Eyck visited Paris as well, in November and January 1945, where he met Tristan Tzara before moving to Amsterdam. All the artists of the Amsterdam C.O.B.R.A. Group: Corneille, Constant and Appel, (All of them related with Van Eyck) visited Paris between 1946 and 1947.

The British sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, that was meant to be Alison & Peter Smithson’s friend, lived in Paris from 1947 to 1949. In 1947 Nigel Henderson visited him; through Peggy Guggenheim they both met Hans Arp and visited Leger, Braque, Giacometti and Brancusi at their studios.

The movement from the exile to the gathering in Paris articulates this first part of the study; within it I will introduce some of the concepts of avant-garde art that will be relevant in the dialogue with architecture. Some of them will be explained through their translation into a specific work of architecture, like the Maison d’Artiste by Cornelis van Eesteren and Theo van Doesburg (1923). In the second chapter I will explain how the artists, later on involved in a dialogue with architects, gathered in Paris after the World War around 1947. These first two chapters will draft some ideas coming from the early European Modern Art that happened to be very present in Aldo Van Eyck’s thinking and in the Independent Group debates.

0.1.1. EXILED ARTIST IN ZURICH 1914-18
“In 1914 Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Man Ray, then in New York, had created dada (hobby-horse) that left nothing to be desired. But great was their distress, for they found no name for it. And because it was nameless, we in Zurich knew nothing of its existence…

Dada was against the mechanization of the world. Our African evenings were simply a protest against the rationalization of man…” Hans Arp.

Hans Arp’s statement points out two main attributes of Dadaism: it is relatively unapproachable, since “they found no name for it”, and is to a certain extent inaccessible, after its self-conscious ‘lack of sense’; if we don’t really want to do the spiritual effort jump to the other side of our comfortable “common-sense”. Dada is consciously unapproachable for its ‘lack of sense’ was a reaction against any human attempt to establish a ‘common sense’. The Dadaist identified this “common sense” with the contemporary mechanization and rationalization of the world that had brought Europe into the war. To some extent the story of Dada is the story of the struggle against the ‘so called’ reason and common sense carried on by artists, intellectuals and architects during and after the 2nd World War. The struggle continued after the war, although the movement as such disappears. Dada was a state of mind: “Dada reste” was Tristan Tzara’s dedication of La main passé to Aldo Van Eyck the 24th of January 1946.

It is relatively difficult to fix the origins of Dada to a specific place and date, to answer the questions, what and when. Dada surveys give different places and dates of birth to Dada, after all “only Spanish professors and … care about the dates” claimed Arp. What was Dada? “Do not trust anything that calls itself ‘Dada history’ however much be true of dada, the historian to write about it does not yet exist…”

Motivated by Marcel Janco’s statement I consider fair enough for the purposes of this research, a departure from C.W. Giedion’s conception of Dada, working on the assumption that she strongly influenced Van Eyck’s ideas about Dada. For the purposes of this research, it is more important to know what Dada meant for the artists, intellectuals, and architects related to this research than to try to elucidate an accurate historical definition of dada, if possible.

C.W. Giedion’s approach in Art History combined the most sophisticated insights at that time from the Viennese School together with a personal acquaintance of the artist themselves. She studied under Wolfflin in Munich, who introduced her to his Principles of Art History and Spinoza’s philosophy. Later she studied under Wilhelm Worringer in Bonn where she made acquaintances with her future husband, Sigfried Giedion. Carola completed her PhD under Paul Clement on the German Baroque; whereas Sigfried did it on Neoclassical art under Heinrich Wolfflin, both in 1922. Once the Giedion’s established in Zurich trough Hans Arp, they met Max Ernst, Mondrian, Giacometti, Kurt Schwitters, Constantin Brancusi, Joyce, Klee, Antoine Pevsner, and Carola devoted herself to the study of Modern Art. In Zurich C.W. made acquaintance with Hans Arp, who according to Strauven introduced her to the most important contemporary artists. In this way she also became friendly with Max Ernst, Piet Mondrian, Alberto Giacometti, Kurt Schwitters, Constantin Brancusi, James Joyce,

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7 Hans Arp, ‘Looking’ in Jean Arp, Moma, 1958
8 Marcel Janco, Creative dada in Dada: Monograph of a Movement. Switzerland, A. Niggli, 1957 (p.-18)
9 See bibliography
10 Strauven p.77
Paul Klee and Antoine Pevsner, and therefore, decided to focus her art historical attention primarily on the twentieth century avant-garde.  

C.W. Giedion’s early work Modern Plastik (Zurich, 1937), explains the current situation of modern art as a result of an evolution or change in human perception and awareness that inspires new plastic forms. This argument is indebted to Wölfflin’s idea, “Different times give birth to different art. Epoch and race interact”, exemplified in his analysis of the transition from renaissance to the Baroque in the book Principles of Art History. At the same time, C.W. Giedion analyzed Modern Art in terms of Alois Riegl’s Kunstwollen. Riegl himself did not give a very specific definition of the term, although we can find it Abstraction and Empathy (1908), the thesis dissertation of C.W. Giedion’s professor, William Worringer: “By ‘absolute artistic volition’ is to be understood that latent inner demand which exists per se, entirely independent of the object and of the mode of creation, and behaves as will to form. It is the primary factor in all artistic creation and, in its innermost essence; every work of art is simply an objectification of this a priori existent artistic volition”. According to Riegl the “artistic volition”, the inner will that moves the artist to create in a certain manner, runs parallel to the contemporary man’s relationship to the sensorial perceptible appearance of things, our perception of everyday life. C.W. Giedion explained Modern Art in similar terms: “That these images are so simple is a direct reflection of our attitude to life. In contrast to that of the preceding age our own signifies the subordination of the individual, and his re-acclimatization to nature and experience. This change implies part of the psychological and social evolutions of our age.” According to C.W., a common Kunstwollen moved different artists in different corners of Europe to develop a language with a common Zeitgeist as a result; in spite of the wide divergences of idiom among the different artistic movements C.W. Giedion identifies a common aim and a common basic language in all of them.

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13 It follows “…We must first establish how many general traits a style contains before we can give it the name of national style in a special sense. However profoundly Rubens may impress his personality on his landscape…we cannot admit that he was an expression of ‘permanent’ national character to the same extent as contemporary Dutch art…His art is powerfully affected by a particular cultural current, the mode of feeling of Roman baroque, and so it is, rather than the ‘timeless’ Dutch artist, who challenges us to form an idea of what we must call ‘period’ style.” Principles of Art History, The problem of the development of style in later art. Heinrich Wölfflin, 1932. p.9.
14 See the Conclusion of Alois Riegl, Spätrömische Kunstindustrie, (Late Roman art industry, 1901) and editor’s Introduction in The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s, Christopher S. Wood Ed. Zone Books, New York, 2003.
15 Abstraction and Empathy, Wilhelm Worringer. Ivan R. Dee pub. Chicago, 1997 (p-9)
16 “It is not a form of aesthetic self-indulgence, disdainfully remote from daily life, but a vital creative force intimately associated with the general cultural development of our age” See Carola Giedion-Welcker, Modern plastic art, elements of reality, volume and disintegration. English version by P. Morton Shand. Zurich, H. Girsberger, 1937. (p.8-17)
18 Giedion, Modern plastic art. P.8
But it was Worringer’s thinking what determined more C.W. Giedion’s analysis of Modern Art. To some extent she grounded it in Worringer’s original argument from his thesis Abstraction and Empathy (1908). Worringer’s thesis was the first argument in modern aesthetics that criticized the narrowly European outlook that had defined art exclusively in terms of Classical art. According to Worringer such a biased consideration of art had brought to a partial definition of kunstwollen in art as empathy. T. Lipps had defined artistic expression as a product of empathy, as “objectified self-enjoyment”. If the artist enjoyed a pantheistic relation of confidence with the outer world, his work would be driven by empathy (objectified self-enjoyment), and the result would be Naturalism in art, an approximation to the organic and the true of life.¹⁹ Worringer argued that such a definition of art did not provide an explanation of other forms of art that might be considered the product of equal or even higher forms of understanding. Worringer departed from Lipps definition of empathy and contraposed to it the urge to abstraction in art. According to Worringer if the artists experienced a pantheistic relation with the world, empathy would lead his work, but if the artist experienced the inner wrest inspired in man by the phenomena of outside world, his work would be leaded by an “urge to abstraction”, man’s endeavor to redeem the individual object from the outer world to render it absolute. The result would be Style in art, pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world. In abstraction the artist feels the urge to wrest the single thing, rendering its individual materiality independent of the ambient of the external world and the subject. According to Worringer, the artist had two main solutions to do so: on the one hand, the avoidance of the representation of space and suppression of depth relations, the “rendering of closed material individuality within the plane”, and, on the other hand, “amalgamation of the representation with the rigid world of the crystalline geometric”²⁰ In the process of suppression of space and depth relations imagination plays an important role: “…It is a question of imagination, not of perception. For only in the reproduction of this closed whole of the imagination could man find an approximate substitute for the absolute material individuality of the thing, which is forever beyond his reach” Worringer argued that the “urge to abstraction” was the primary impulse of all art since all art aimed initially to redeem the individual object from the outer world, it was the primitive impulse “before cognition”, before men developed their ways of understanding nature. But abstraction resulted also the most elevated impulse “above cognition”. Worringer provided the example of the art of the “ancient cultural aristocracy of orient” (Egypt), that had recognized the limitations of man’s capacity to understand the world and leaded them to try to transcend in order to satisfy their inner need for redemption: “no knowledge was able to stifle the consciousness of man’s limitation…his helplessly lost situation in the universe…For this anguish did not stand, as with primitive man, before cognition, but above it. There is one great ultimate criterion for mankind’s relation to the cosmos: its need for redemption”¹⁹

¹⁹ Not because the artist desired to give the illusion of a living object, but because the feeling for the beauty of the organic form that is true to life had been aroused, and because the artist desired to give satisfaction to this feeling, which dominated the absolute artistic volition. Worringer clearly detached Naturalism in art from the mere imitative impulse. See Worringer’s Chapter 2: Naturalism & Style. P-27
²⁰ The avoidance of the representation of the space and depth is done by “restriction of the representation to extension vertically and horizontally” Worringer. P-39
Worringer considered art as a transcendental way of understanding grounded in intuition and nourished by imagination. Worringer’s thesis drafted a strong criticism to the current idea of art in Europe that was restricted to the narrow scope of Classical art notion. Classical art relied on Goethe’s assumption that the artist’s “human nature knows itself one with the world” and art as a product of such a feeling. Whereas Worringer presented art as the result of man’s struggle with the outer world; a struggle that in the very early stages was driven by instinct and in the more evolved civilizations was a form of understanding, it covered the path of humankind’s struggle for knowledge from intuition to understanding. Worringer’s thesis operated as Picasso’s Demoiselles d’Avignon in so far as it opened the question of what art is, to other conception than the one drafted by “European civilization”. Worringer’s drafted his criticism to European notion of art from the fact that although classical-european tradition perceives the transcendental feeling in art, it overlooks the fact that “in the real core of the process of artistic creation, the activity of form-determining will” emerges as a way of understanding, as an intuitive explanation of whose origin man is not able to grasp otherwise. For Worringer all definitions of art at that time were just definitions of classical notion of art that depicted only the urge to empathy and naturalism in art, as a result of man’s urge to alienate oneself from individual being. Where art was regarded as a “luxury activity of the psyche, in which it discharges its surplus of vital energy”, no more and no less than “objectified self-enjoyment” (T. Lipps). Worringer contra poses to this the phenomenon of “non-classical, i.e. transcendental art” where man need for self-alienation does not bring him to escape identifying himself with the object of pleasure, he seeks deliverance from the fortuitousness of humanity as a whole, from the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence trying to “to create for itself a picture of things that shifts them far beyond the finiteness and conditionality of the living into a zone of the necessary and abstract”, to redeem things from all the illusions of sensory perception. Creating a form of knowledge, an intuitive form of knowledge that seeks for universal and permanent values regardless the lack of understanding grounded in rational thinking. Hence transcendental art aimed at “de-organicising the organic” for abstract forms, liberated from finiteness of life, for they are the only ones that can provide repose to man. Worringer thesis unveiled the creative potentialities of abstraction in art as a form of knowledge driven by intuition and nourished by imagination. But the most important thing is that Worringer emphasized the capacity of art, and mainly of abstract art, to bestow happiness as a transcendental way of understanding, that had implicit a recognition of the limitations of rational understanding as a form of knowledge.

21 “The primal artistic impulse has nothing to do with the rendering of nature. It seeks after pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world-picture” p-44
22 See Worringer p-128
23 See Worringer p-132
24 See Worringer p-132
25 Worringer departed from Lipps notion of empathy and his own notion of abstraction, for him “These two poles are gradations of a common need, which is revealed to us as the deepest and ultimate essence of all aesthetic experience: this is the need for self-alienation” But Worringer already points out in the first part of the book to the higher consistency of abstraction: “in the urge to abstraction the intensity of the self-alienative impulse is incomparably greater and more consistent. Here is not characterized, as in the need for empathy, by an urge to alienate oneself from individual being, but as an urge to seek deliverance from the fortuitousness of humanity as a whole, from the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence in general, in the contemplation of something necessary and irrefragable. Life as such is felt to be a disturbance of aesthetic enjoyment” p-23-24
26 “…these abstract forms, liberated from all finiteness, are the only ones, and the highest, in which man can find rest from the confusion from the world picture. These inter-relationships afford the decisive perspective for the authentic history of the evolution of that human expression of life that we call art” See Worringer p-134
This idea was conducted by the members of the Blaue Reiter into artistic production spreading it all over Europe, and by C.W. Giedion in her early aesthetic theory of modern art shaping the Van Eyck’s notions on aesthetics.

Worringer’s ends his thesis by pointing at the higher capacity of scientific knowledge to provide the feeling of assurance and rest that transcendental art had provided before, where understanding and instinct co-existed. According to Worringer from the Renaissance onwards, understanding broke away from instinct and trusted merely to itself “Science emerged, and transcendental art lost ground. For the world picture set out by science… now offered man who put his faith in the cognitive capacity of the understanding the same feeling of assurance that the transcendentally predisposed man had reached only along the laborious and joyless detour of complete de-organicisation and denial of life”.27 From this perspective Worringer’s conclusion merely urged to reconsider all art of the past that relied in abstraction, beyond the narrowly European outlook. The text written in 1908 could not foresee the crisis of the “world picture set out by science” as a form of knowledge produced by the First World War in 1914

INCLUDE REF OR EXPLANATION OF WORRINGER !!!! ABSTRACTION !!!!!

For Giedion, Plastic Art had been an essential part of human culture, a sort of intermediary realm between men and the gods, nature, life and death; only in the Renaissance did the estrangement between art and life started producing a lack of contact with nature, religion and his society. According to her Modern Art derives its technique from the classical sources and tries to reestablish an articulation between the everyday of our society and nature playing a civilizing role. There are two points all the artistic movements share in common: a rejection of classical anthropomorphic ideals of beauty and sensual-sentimental individualist points of view; and a search for a more objective human outlook, for they are aware that the human angle, the human scale, has ceased to be a universal norm. The synthetic view of a common basic language in Modern Art, and the civilizing role that Art played since antiquity, connecting man with nature, will be very present in Aldo Van Eyck’s intervention at CIAM 6, the “Statement Against rationalism”.

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27 See Worringer P-134. It follows “The old art had been a joyless impulse to self-preservation; now, after this transcendental volition had been taken over and calmed by the scientific striving after knowledge, the realm of art seceded from the realm of science. And the new art, which now springs to life, is Classical art. Its colouring is no longer joyless like the old. For it has become a luxury activity of the psyche, an activation of previously inhibited inner energies, freed from all compulsion and purpose, and the bestower of happiness. Its delight is no longer the rigid regularity of the abstract, but the mild harmony of the organic being” p-135
It was through Arp that C.W. Giedion came to know what Dada was, and it is precisely C.W. Giedion’s book on Arp where she summarizes Dada’s concerns and ideas: Dada was against, the artists “were in rebellion against the prevailing moral standards and the ‘official’ taste”\(^\text{28}\); against their society and against themselves, they “parodied their own complicated and pointless everyday life, while the bloated nationalism that surrounded them only led to crises and wars…” Considering the war senseless they were optimistic enough to start building from non-sense as a critic to the common-sense and the false idea of progress: “these knights-errant of non-sense were also constructive, and strove for a new art and a new life, spiritualized and simplified. They radically repudiated ‘universal progress…culture was to be found among the so-called barbarian primitives, and there was real barbarism in our over-organized, bureaucratic and mechanized civilization…” According to C.W. Giedion the main point of Dada is their “revolt against a rationalistic universal system that had become untenable, against the superficial idea of beauty on the classical model, against moral hypocrisy?” and their main device to pursue such a thing was “the elementary force of ‘thought sprung from fantasy’ in opposition to a view of the world originating in so-called common sense”. But C.W. Giedion did not considered Dada anti-humanistic for being against reason, civilization or the classical model of beauty, mainly the opposite; acting against the idea of “reason” was the only way to restore the lost of humanity produced by a universalizing system emerged from the Enlightenment. According to C.W. Giedion the Dada artists intuitively sensed the growing opposition between the ideas of Vico and Descartes. They wanted to destroy the common perception of reason, to dethrone reason’s vain will to define a universal truth.\(^\text{26}\) They used reason to show the world that there is no universal reason, and therefore it can’t be the only mean to pursue truth. They destroyed but not for the sake of it, they destroyed “so that the lousy materialists may recognize in the ruins what is essential” said Jean Arp. The Dadaist attitude was a logical consequence towards the war. The Dada artists destroyed the so called humanistic principles that

\(^{28}\) All the following quotes of C.W. Giedion in this paragraph are from this text: Carola Giedion-Welcker. Jean Arp. Translation by Norbert Guterman, New York, H. N. Abrams, 1957 (p. 7).

\(^{26}\) As Arp put it “To destroy the swindle of reason perpetrated on man in order to restore him to his humble place in nature”
propelled Europe into devastation in order to rebuild a new humanity, a new humanistic perception:

“Behind the allegedly nihilistic attitudes lay a profound belief in long-forgotten beauty and humanity”

CLARIFY FINAL CONCLUSION
ABOUT CW GIEDION HISTORICAL APPROACH....

0.1.2. ART AND CHILDHOOD

« Les choses ne sont pas difficiles a faire, ce qui est difficile, c’est de nous mettre en etat de les faire »

« quand nous ne sommes plus des enfants, nous sommes deja morts »

C. Brancusi
The early Dada-Zurich performances had a certain air of masquerade; the artists were usually disguised with self-made masks of cubist inspiration and primitive aura. Yelling, barking, roaring or reciting stanzas such as “karawane” the Dadaists aimed to experiment a feeling of self “enstrangement” and to project that same feeling to the spectators. The performances were essentially a device to produce such a feeling, for them art was essentially a means not an end in itself, as C.W. Giedion pointed out: “…All of them were anxiously seeking ‘the true, buried face of their time, its basic essential features, the cause of its affliction and the possibility of its awakening’ Art should be only ‘an occasion, a method’” Giedion quotes Hugo Ball’s Die Flucht aus der Zeit, ‘Escape from time’\textsuperscript{30}, in order to explain the Dadaists conception of art as a device with a very specific goal, the search for the true basic essential features of our time.

The Russian term ‘ostraniene’ or “Enstrangement”\textsuperscript{31} was coined around that time by Viktor Shklovsky in his essay “Art as device”: “By enstranging objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and “laborious”. The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant”\textsuperscript{32} As for the Dadaists for Shklovsky art is considered a mean and not an end in itself. I have not been able to trace any evidence of relation between the Dada-Zurich and the Russian Formalist; although Hugo Bäll was very interested in the socio-political ideas emerging in Russia at that time, together with his friend Fritz Brupbacher studied the work of Bakunin and Kropotkin\textsuperscript{33}. Hugo Bäll in his personal diary uses the word “distantiation” (detachment) as a device to change the text or our “writing of life”, a term that could be related to “ostraniene”: «12th March 1916...La distanciation c’est la vie elle-meme. Soyons neufs et inventifs de fond en comble. Changeons chaque jour l’écriture de la vie »\textsuperscript{34} In another moment of his diary, after is first performance at the Voltaire and the reading of his Dada manifesto Ball is more clear about his idea of “enstrangement” in a reference to Arquimedes “C’est dans l’homme que se trouvent les leviers qui permettent de faire sortir notre monde usé de ses gonds. Il n’est nul besoin d’aller chercher un point d’appui à l’exterieur, dans l’univers, comme le faisait ce mecanicien de l’Antiquité »\textsuperscript{35} There is a relation between the conscious or unconscious use of “ostraniene” by the artists and constant references to the child, childhood and play. Hugo Ball saw childhood as an essential reference for artist, a new world of opportunities, a world with its own laws emerging from child’s own fantasy and not dictated by the exterior adult world: “August 5, 1916- Childood as a new world, and everything childlike and fantastic, everything childlike and direct, everything childlike and symbolical in

\textsuperscript{31} The translation of the Russian term ‘ostraniene’ as “Enstrangement” is coined by Benjamin Sher. Previous translations of the term are “estrangement” and “defamiliarization”. See Translator’s introduction in Viktor Shklovsky, Theory of Prose. Dalkey Archive Press, Illinois 1991
\textsuperscript{32} Viktor Shklovsky, Theory of Prose, Dalkey Archive Press, Illinois 1991. (p.6)
\textsuperscript{33} WHEN THEY MET ????????Fritz Brupbacher was a libertarian socialist publisher of the journal Der Revoluzzer and organized leftwing radical roundtables. Hugo Bäll and Emmy Henning met him in an event devoted to the political situation in Russia and joined the weekly roundtable organized by Brupbacher. They were all familiar with the work of Bakunin and Kropotkin. See The Star of the Cabaret Voltaire by Hubert van den Berg in Dada Zurich: A clown’ game from Nothing (p.76) from Crisis and the arts: the history of Dada / Stephen C. Foster, editor. Vol.II
\textsuperscript{35} i.b.i.d. p.59
opposition to the senilities of the world of grown-ups... Childhood is not at all as obvious as is generally assumed. It is a world to which hardly any attention is paid, with its own laws, without whose application there is no art, and without whose religious and philosophic recognition art cannot exist or be apprehended... The credulous imagination of children, however, is also exposed to corruption and deformation. To surpass oneself in naïveté and childishness—that is still the best antidote  

Surpass oneself could be considered a clear reference to a personal “enstrangement” of our consciousness that would bring us to the creation of enstranging objects, and would bring the perceptual process in art to its fullest richness. As for Shklovsky for Hugo Bäll art is a mean of experiencing the process of creativity, the artifact itself is quite unimportant. 

Hugo Bäll and Sophie Taeuber with costumes by Marcel Janco, Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, 1916. 

The early Dada found in the childlike, fool or primitive attitude of their performances not an end in itself, but a mean to elaborate a critical attitude facing a decadent society. It provide them a new sensibility, according to Ball: «… l’art n’est pas un but en soi- cela demanderait une naïvete moins écortchée- mais nous y voyons l’occasion de formuler des critiques à l’égard de notre temps et de développer une véritable sensibilité pour cette époque…»  

The development of a true sensibility as Ball put it, or the search for “a new consciousness” as De Stijl will manifest later on for a new man and a new modern society that would emerge from the war was a common goal of many artistic movements at that time.


37 According to Viktor Shkolovsky “If the complex life of many people takes place entirely on the level of the unconscious, then it’s as if this life had never been. And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man has given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By “enstranging” objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and “laborious.” The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant” See Theory of Prose

The Dadaist primitive or childlike art found in the paintings of Paul Klee an overwhelming example, and a direct source of inspiration. Klee was in communication with the Dada-Zurich since November 1916 when Tzara ask him for a contribution to the Galerie Dada exhibition. Klee’s contribution to the first three Dada exhibition (The first two were of artists from Der Sturm: Ernst, Feininger, Johannes Itten, Kokoschka, Kandinsky, etc.) culminated with a great exhibition organized by the art critic Waldemar Jollos. In June 1919 Klee traveled to Zurich to visit the Dadaist in person he meet Tzara, Janko, Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, and Arp whom he knew since they meet in the Moderne Bund (1912). As Marcel Janko accounts the Dada artists found in Klee’s work an elaborated inquiry in the creative power of children and the primitives: “In his beautiful work we found all our efforts to unravel the soul of primitive man, to delve into the unconscious and the instinctive forces of creation, to discover the pure, direct, creative sources hidden in children. This exhibition was a revelation for us.”

Klee’s pursuit for a new language brought him back to the very elements of design but his primitivism derives from premises completely different from those that underlie a child drawing. This point was made by C.W. Giedion in her book on Paul Klee; she quotes Klee’s diary from 1909 “If it is true that my work produces at times an effect of primitivism, the explanation lies in the fact that I have disciplined myself to get along with a limited number of levels of reference. It is an economy adopted as an ultimate professional principle, and thus is really the very opposite of true primitivism.” The return to the ultimate and elemental was Klee’s primary concern. The child drawings are an exploration and conquest of reality whereas the artist “uses them in conscious transformations marking a return to fundamental elements”. In Klee’s childish paintings, the ultimate goal of the “ostraniene” experienced by the artist behaving like a child is not at all art, but to find in himself his own “uncorrupted imagery”, a return to devices of “pre-logical expression”, that are created by us and not inherited. According to Klee the child drawings are kept pure and uncontaminated “A child, Klee wrote [note: Cf. A. F. Geist, Paul Klee, E. Hauswedell und Co., 1948] ‘draws and paints as it thinks. Its pictures-provided they are kept pure and uncontaminated- are proof of the surrounding world. They have in their spontaneity a code of laws entirely their own. They allude to distant states, profound and tender, long since lost and very hard to recover’ (fig.1)”

In the same text C.W. Giedion quotes Hugo Ball, Boccioni, Franz Marc as other artists who make reference to childhood, in this sense but the most interesting quote for us is Hugo Ball’s right after the paragraph mentioned above: “Perhaps the point at issue is not at all art (here taken in a purely aesthetic sense) but uncorrupted imagery” Klee’s development of his early linear style admired by the Dadaists came after a return to “devices of prelogical expression”, according to C.W. Giedion Klee’s “first concern was what he called ‘the culture of pure elements’ and hence the priority of constructive thinking in art”

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39 i.b.i.d. (p 80) “The great event of the Galerie Dada was the Paul Klee exhibition organized by a friend of ours, Jollos, the art critic. It had an enormous success....”. See also Marcel Franciscono, Paul Klee, his work and thought, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991 (p.219-220)
40 Marcel Janco, Creative Dada in Dada. Monograph of a movement. (p 26)
42 i.b.i.d. p.XXX
The small, the playful and an almost neurotic obsession with apparently unimportant things where the artist looks, and explores through endless iterations was discovered by some Dadaists in Klee’s paintings. Waldemar Jollos lecture the 31st May 1917 brought Hugo Bäll to write on his diary “April 1, 1917- Yesterday Dr. Jollos lectured on Klee…one might also speak of Klee as follows: He always presents himself as quite small and playful. In an age of colossal he falls in love with a green leaf, a little star, a butterfly wing; and since heaven and infinity are reflected in them, he paints them in. The point of his pencil, his brush, tempts him to minutiae. He always remains quite near first beginnings and the smallest format. The beginning possesses him and will not let him go. When he reaches the end, he does not start a new leaf at once, but begins to paint over the first one…”

The sense of play as an ultimate state of mind for enhancing creativity was very present among the Dada, Hans Arp was one of his early promoters. In the case of Arp, experimentation, play and chance are related as a joyful attitude towards the creative process. According to his Dada fellow Richard Huelsenbeck, Arp was always full of the essential Dada spirit, the irony, as Hugo Bäll had pointed out the Dadaist is a man who laughs about himself: “The playfulness is easily seen in Arp’s work and in his constant experimentation. He was always willing to give a new idea a chance, in art and in life. But underneath, Arp has always possessed…a tremendous singleness of purpose: he never plays and forgets himself playing…”45 As in the case of Paul Klee, Arp’s playful character never lost its basic seriousness. Apparently Arp acted as sort of counselor of the Dada-Zurich, he had met Braque and Picasso in Paris and had belonged to the Blaue Reiter, through him the young Dada gathered around the Voltaire learned about Picabia. Although he was always present together with Sophie Taeuber they did not want to participate very much in the activities of the Cabaret. At that time Arp was struggling with himself to know which direction his work should take. Certainly Arp found certain relief and feeling of lightness in Dada “This was the miracle of Dada that it gave all of us the courage to say what seemed to be impossible to convey to anybody, and this courage benefited Arp more than any of us, as he was shy and detached by nature…”46

Arp’s defense of the primitive and the playful runs parallel to Klee’s endeavor in the development of his own language. According to Bäll the work of Arp was a search for simple forms « Lorsqu’il défend le primitif, il pense à la toute premier ebauche, qui est abstraite et se refuse à toute forme de complication ultérieure. Le sentiment doit disparaître, tout comme la reflexion qui ne commence que sur la toile. Son amour va au cercle et au cube, aux lignes nettes et incisives… ce qui lui importe, c’est moins la profusion que la simplification… » Simplification and elementary run parallel for both artists although the emphasis of Arp is put on what he called imagination. According to Bäll for Arp the main goal of the artist is to purify his own imagination in the development of his own language « Il voudrait purifier l’imagination et mettre tous ses efforts au service de la decouverte non pas tant du tresor de ses images, mais de ce qui les fonde. Il pense donc que les images de l’imagination sont deja des syntheses. L’artiste qui ne travaille à partir de l’imagination

45 See ‘Looking’ by Jean Arp in Arp. MOMA ed. N.Y., Distributed by Doubleday, 1958 (p-19)
46 Richard Huelsenbeck, Arp and the Dada Movement, in Arp. MOMA ed. N.Y., Distributed by Doubleday, 1958 (p-19)
autonome et libre se trompe sur l’originalité. Il se sert d’un matériau déjà agencé et ne réalise donc que des assemblages »

Acting like kids, fools or primitives the Dadaists felt completely free to experiment. The process of “enstrangement” or detachment freed their minds and bodies, and this freedom made them conscious of the artificial laws and constraints imposed by society during the so-called process of civilization. Thereon the Dadaist struggle to overcome such constraints for they restricted human freedom and creativity; the new consciousness and the freedom to experiment were interwoven in the search for a new language. Common language was their first source of experimentation: in poems such as “L’almirall cherche une maison à louer” read simultaneously by Huelsenbeck, Tzara and Janko, or poems without words as “Karawane” by Hugo Ball; the Dadaists experimented with the first and most elementary mean of civilization, Language, in this process imagination played an essential role as an intellectual source of creativity opposed to reason.

0.1.3. AN APEAL TO IMAGINATION

47 Hugo Ball. Dada a Zurich: Le mot et l’image 1916-1917 (p. 18-19)
48 As Marcel Janco accounts Viennese professors of psychology “disciples of Jung and Adler” visited the Voltaire to “analyze” them, so when the performance was over the Dada expounded their faith in “a direct art, a magical, organic, and creative art, like that of primitives and children”. Marcel Janco, Creative Dada in Dada. Monograph of a movement. Ed. By Willy Verkauf. Adacemy Ed. London. 1975. (p 21)
49 The Dadaist from Zurich were inspired by Marinetti’s “Words in freedom” were the words were arranged randomly and mixed with onomatopoeias. All these texts can be found in The Dada Reader: a critical anthology by Dawn Ades ed. University of Chicago Press, 2006.
“...My gouaches, reliefs, plastics were an attempt to teach man what he had forgotten- to dream with his eyes open. Even then I had foreboding that men would devote themselves more and more furiously to the destruction of the earth...” Hans Arp 50

The early Dadaist performances, poems, paintings and collages emphasized the use of imagination in the creative process. The Dadaist evenings were a protest against the excessive rationalization of man and an exploration in new artistic means, commonly considered as primitive or childish. In this exploration the Dadaist did not discarded reason as opposed to imagination, but rescued its capacity to steal man away from the outer world carrying him off into an inner one, where he find his own devices of “pre-logical expression” and rebuild his own uncorrupted language, a new language created by him and not inherited, as Arp claimed “…My gouaches, reliefs, plastics were an attempt to teach man what he had forgotten- to dream with his eyes open…”

The praise of imagination as an instrument of knowledge can be traced until the antiquity certainly related with humanist such as Dante’s Divine Comedy: “O imagination, you who have the power to impose yourself on our faculties and our wills”, Erasmus fools, Loyola’s Spiritual exercises. It certainly found a revival in german romanticism, Novalis: .... The idea of imagination as communication with the world soul or as an instrument of knowledge following alternative channels to those of scientific knowledge was illustrated by Jung’s method and Freudian analysis respectively51.

Reason through the scientific outlook and its technical application for commercial and military purpose provided western civilization power over the whole world. The struggle for power among the European nations brought the continent to devastation as reason and its technical apparatus originally a mean to improve human life became a mere device to obtain economic benefit or power. The Dadaists ironically criticized this behavior, as Theo van Doesburg expressed in his Dada manifesto, Wat ist Dada? (1923): “Le Dadaiste reconnaît a l’homme quelques valeurs positives: l’instinct de domination et le besoin de s’entre-devorer les uns les autres”52 The artists witnessing this disaster could have blamed on “human will”, human evil-nature, but although ironically they criticized humankind, they remained optimistic towards human capacity to recover its humanity. For this purpose they found in the child and the primitive a point of depart to ground their experimentation. From there, each artist developed its own personal device, its own variation on the same theme: imagination, chance, non-sense or the so-called “irrational” and later on “surreal”, were just devices to challenge their own pre-conception of the aesthetics in art.

Reason and mechanization are seen by Arp as dangerous agents that blind human sensibility. In the same way that machines, symbols of western “civilization” are turned into a bitter joke in the work of Raoul Hausman, Picabia, or Duchamp, Arp’s objects arranged according to the laws of chance aimed at “purifier l’imagination et mettre tous ses efforts au service de la decouverte non pas tant du tresor des images, mais de ce qui les fonde” Hugo Bäll in his diary (1916) talks

50 Hans Arp, ‘Looking’ in Jean Arp, Moma, 1958
51 This point is made by Italo Calvino in Six memos for the next millennium in the chapter on Visibility. For a comprehensive history on imagination see Jean Starobinsky “The Empire of the Imaginary”
52 Theo van Doesburg, Wat is Dada?
about Arp’s personal struggle to balance the excessive “rationalization” of Western world insight using imagination. Arp’s struggle to develop his own language emerges from a sophisticated conception of imagination, for him it is more important to discover and understand the sources of our imagination than to focus just in the image as an end result. Departing from such an idea of Imagination, coming from Dadaism and other Avant-garde movements, Aldo Van Eyck opened his intervention at CIAM 6 (Bridgewater, 1947) warning the CIAM: “The old struggle between imagination and common sense ended tragically in favor of the later…CIAM knows that the tyranny of common sense has reached its final stage…”53 After denouncing the unbalance between reason and imagination, Van Eyck remembered the CIAM its origins and spiritual foundation emerging from the avant-garde art movements: “A new consciousness is already transforming man’s mind. During the last fifty years or so… CIAM is first and foremost an affirmation of this new consciousness. The achievement of men like Le Corbusier, Mondrian or Brancusi compels us to believe, surely, that we are indeed approaching a brighter era; one in which grace is expressed in life as it is in art” Art is not an end in itself but a mean for the development of a new consciousness, an expression of grace. And architecture plays an essential role for such a grace to be manifested in the design of human environments hence should never be considered an end in itself. Aldo van Eyck closed his intervention questioning CIAM’s rational and mechanistic conception of progress in the design of human environment “Does CIAM intend to ‘guide’ a rational and mechanistic conception of process toward an improvement of human environment? Or does it intend to change this conception?” Van Eyck’s intervention was immediately backed by Le Corbusier who exclaimed “Enfin l’imagination entre les CIAM”54 This moment is important for several reasons: It symbolizes an encounter between two generations preceding Le Corbusier’s later recognition of the Team Ten, Van Eyck remembered the CIAM its origins and its goals using C.W. Giedion arguments and his own personal background - as a free spirit that lived his youth through the war crossing borders, educated in Britain and Zurich, inspired by his acquaintance of Paris artistic milieu and his trips to Italy- behaved as a sensitive well educated son whose sharp and intelligent complain awakes the sleepy conscience of his elders.

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53 This and the following quotes of Van Eyck intervention at CIAM 6 are to be found in Statement against rationalism, in Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998 / Aldo van Eyck. Francis Strauven and Vincent Ligtelijn eds. Amsterdam: SUN, c2008. (42)

54 Francis Strauven and Vincent Ligtelijn, Introduction to Chapter 2, i.b.i.d. (p.30) Certainly the crucial importance of the imagination for Aldo van Eyck emerged from the influence of his father, the poet and philosopher Pieter Nicolas van Eyck (1887-1954). P.N. van Eyck conception of imagination as the most important faculty of cognition was developed in his most fundamental essay "Critical research and imagination" and is based on Spinoza’s notion of "scientia intuitiva". See Strauven, Francis. Aldo van Eyck: the shape of relativity. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998. (p.49-55)
Acting like kids, fools or primitives the Dadaists felt completely free to experiment. The process of “enstrangement” or detachment freed their minds and bodies, and this freedom made them conscious of the artificial laws and constrains imposed by society during the so-called process of civilization. Thereon the Dadaist struggle to overcome such constrains for they restricted human freedom and creativity; the new consciousness and the freedom to experiment were interwoven in the search for a new language. Common language was their first source of experimentation: in poems such as “L’almirall cherce une maison a louer” read simultaneously by Huelsenbeck, Tzara and Janko, or poems without words as “Karawane” by Hugo Bäll; the Dadaists experimented with the first and most elementary mean of civilization, Language, in this process imagination played an essential role as an intellectual source of creativity opposed to reason.

55 As Marcel Janco accounts Viennese professors of psychology “disciples of Jung and Adler” visited the Voltaire to “analyze” them, so when the performance was over the Dada expounded their faith in “a direct art, a magical, organic, and creative art, like that of primitives and children”. Marcel Janco, Creative Dada in Dada. Monograph of a movement. Ed. By Willy Verkauf. Adacemy Ed. London. 1975. (p 21)

56 The Dadaist from Zurich were inspired by Marinetti’s “Words in freedom” were the words were arranged randomly and mixed with onomatopoeias. All these texts can be found in The Dada Reader: a critical anthology by Dawn Ades ed. University of Chicago Press, 2006.
0.1.4. DADA WAS NOT MODERN

The new consciousness Van Eyck refers at CIAM, emerged from core of the artistic movements from the early 20th century, as a new consciousness of humankind based in a new perception of time. The current perception of time in the Western civilization, rooted in the idea of progress and history, Science and technology, Culture and tradition, was challenged by the several of these artistic movements. Dada was not the only, but certainly was among the artistic movements that challenged more deeply the blind fascination for the idea of progress.

Unlike the Futurists the Dada-Zurich did not reject the art from the past, mainly the opposite since they borrowed the name of their Cabaret from a main figure of Classic literature. The eponymous name of the Cabaret Voltaire illustrates the Dadaist identification with the satiric attitude of the Enlightenment and its main protagonist, Candide the optimist; painfully disillusioned as he witnesses and experiences great hardships in the world. Right after the inauguration of the Cabaret, Hugo Ball refers not only to Voltaire, but to Rimbaud and to Baudelaire in his personal diary: « 15 juin 1916. Je ne sais si, en depit de tous nos efforts, nous pourrons aller plus loin que les sauvages et que Baudelaire ; si malgre tout, nous ne restons pas que des romantiques... »57 Tristan Tzara in his Dada Manifesto from 1918 expressed his love for ancient art: “I love ancient art for its novelty. It is only contrast that connects us with the past”58 Certainly this vision of the past was echoed in Aldo van Eyck statements such as “To discover anew implies to discover something new”59 and his fascination for ancient and classical architecture; like the Smithson’s who did not completely shared Reyner Banham’s fascination for the Futurists and praised Wittkover studies on Renaissance architecture.60 Hence although the Dadaist can be considered a radical avant-garde movement, such an attitude emerged from an understanding of certain principles still valuable whose intellectual foundations follow the humanist tradition from the Enlightenment to the Romanticism.

Grounded in ideas coming from the past, Ball’s first invitation to the Voltaire was open to all kind of artists at that time. Many of their contemporaries such as Apollinaire, Kandinsky and Marinetti collaborated in the first and only issue of the Cabaret Voltaire (1916).61 The Zurich Dadaists certainly found an inspiration in Marinetti’s revolt and borrowed certain ideas developed by the Futurist such as the “Brutism” and the simultaneous poem; although the Futurist used it to simulate the multiple stimuli from the city whereas the Dada use it as a provocative experiment on the idea of simultaneity. According to an early Dadaists such as Richard Huelsenbeck, they dismissed Futurist art for being too realistic: “Through Tzara we were also in relation with the futurist movement and

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carried on a correspondence with Marinetti... We regarded Marinetti’s position as realistic, and we were opposed to it. Abstraction in art was the cornerstone of Zurich Dada and unlike the Futurists they placed art over the machine as Bäll stated in his diary: “13 avril 1916. L’art abstrait (que ne cesse de préconiser Arp). L’abstraction est devenu l’objet de l’art. Un principe formel en detruit un autre ou: la forme détruit le formalisme. En principe, le siècle abstrait a été surmonté. Le grand triomphe de l’art sur la machine.”

Hence the Dadaist started to detach themselves from the Futurists agenda which for being too realistic, excessively fascinated with the machines, and softly started to turn into nationalist and political propaganda. Although respectful with some artists coming from the past the Dadaist rejected any kind of established and inherited systems of knowledge that has not been questioned and contrasted with the present. All along his Dada Manifesto published in 1918 Tristan Tzara criticizes different systems of knowledge emerging from reason, logic or science since they constrain human freedom. The manifesto ends up abolishing as well memory, archeology, the prophets and future, as an alternative to all that creates an established convention Tzara praises freedom, contradiction and LIFE: “...abolition of memory: Dada; abolition of archeology: Dada; abolition of the prophets: Dada; abolition of the future: Dada; absolute and unquestionable faith in every god that is the immediate product of spontaneity: Dada... Freedom: Dada Dada Dada, roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE”

If the early Dada-Zurich criticism to the idea of modernity and progress had produced a split with the Futurist, it produced a whole controversy in the sanctuary of German modernity at that time, the Weimar Bauhaus. After moving to Paris with Picabia and Arp, Tzara had made acquaintance with Van Doesburg who brought him to the Dadaist-Constructivist congress in Weimar (September 1922); at the doors of the Bauhaus, facing some of the faculty and students, Tristan Tzara stated: “… Dada is not at all modern. It is more in the nature of a return to an almost Buddhist religion of indifference... Dada is immobility.” As I will account later own Van doesburg always aimed to bring together these two apparently opposed poles of the artistic expression the Constructivist “machine aesthetic” and the Dadaist critic of the idea of “progress”; the De Stijl magazine advertised Mecano (Van Doesburg’s Dadaist publication) as an “international periodical for spiritual hygiene, machine aesthetics and Neo-Dada”

The denial of the revolutionary and avant-garde perspective was one of the main points of the true Dadaists. According to Andrei B. Nakov the rejection of the evolutionary idea of “progress”

64 Marc Dachy pointed out that the Futurist propagandistic attitude unlike Dada had some nationalistic connotations and wanted to have official recognition. See Marc Dachy, Dada, a Transparent Transformation: An essay on Tristan Tzara, in Dada - Constructivism: the Janus face of the twenties. Juda, Annely & David Eds. Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 1994.
65 in Motherwell (p.78 & p.81-82)
can be found as well in Suprematists (Malevich), Neoplasticists (Mondrian, Van Doesburg), in Kandinsky and in "Concrete artists" such as Moholy, Arp and Sophie Täuber. According to Nakov the critic to the idea of progress came together with the critic to the logic of history as a realization that relied upon the technological advances produced by the development of the pure sciences. As I mentioned before this idea brought to an early split of the Dadaists with Marinetti beautifully illustrated in the first page of the journal Cannibale (no. 1 of 25th April 1920) that shows a picture of Tzara sitting in Picabia’s car below which is printed “Revolutionary Gentlemen, your ideas are as narrow minded as those of a ‘petit bourgeois from Besançon’” Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto from 1909 praised a “roaring racing car” as more beautiful than the “Winged Victory of Samotrace”, the Dadists made fun of him for they consider their vision too simplistic. Later on Picabia openly manifested his opposition to the evolutionary point of view of the Surrealists in the cover of the last number of the magazine 391 “Journal de L’instantanéisme” over a Duchamp portrait it reads: “L’instantanéisme ne veut pas de hier, L’instantanéisme ne veut pas de demain… L’instantanéisme ne croit qua ajourd’hui, L’instantanéisme veut la liberte pour tous… L’instantanéisme ne croit qu’au mouvement perpetuel…” The Dadists rejected any system of hierarchies and easily understood that man could be imprisoned by his future as easily as he ad been imprisoned by his past through ages, hence considering themselves cynics-in the classic Greek sense of the word- they rejected the popular fascination for wealth, power, health or fame, and customs or conventions that enslaved human freedom.

Bottom left: Duchamp’s close friends Tristan Tzara (left) and Francis Picabia (right) in Picabia’s Mercer. (From Cannibale. No. 2. 1920) Bottom right: Cover of 391 (no. 19, last number—October 1924) edited by Picabia, who made the portrait of Duchamp, which, according to Robert Lebel, is a photograph of Duchamp with the features of the boxer Georges Carpentier superimposed.

68 Andrei B. Nakov, Dada gives me an intolerable ‘malasie’ in Dada - Constructivism: the Janus face of the twenties. Annely & David Juda Ed. Juda Fine Art, London, 1984. All the references to Nakov arguments are extracted from this text
There are two main points in common between Suprematists, Neoplasticists, Concretists and the Dadaists: the first one is related with the idea of what is commonly known as abstract art. Arp used the name concrete in order to avoid the misleading connotation of the word “abstract”, as an abstraction of a “figurative” image that we identify with the real object. Later on in 1951 Aldo Van Eyck used Arp’s term and referred to Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Malevich, Lissitzky and Pevsner as the “non-figuratives” considering the work of Constant like that of Mondrian: “He is concrete, just like Mondrian. He is, like Mondrian, not abstract!” Concretion was defined by Arp in the following terms: “…Concretion signifies the natural process of condensation, Hardening, coagulating, thickening, growing together. Concretion designates the solidification of a mass. Concretion designates curdling, the curdling of the earth and the heavenly bodies…” The work of art as a natural creation of man, as a real creation regardless any reference to the visual representation is beautifully illustrated in one of Arp’s most famous statements: “…art is a fruit out of man like the fruit out of a plant like the child out of the mother. While the fruit of the plant grows independent forms and never resembles a balloon or a president in a cutaway suit the artistic fruit of man shows for the most part a ridiculous resemblance to the appearance of other things. Thus man thinks he is able to live and to create against the laws of nature and he creates abortions. Through reason man became a tragic and ugly figure. I dare say he would create even his children in the form of vases with umbilical cords if he could do so. Reason has cut man off from nature” The idea of the work of art as a natural creation of man, the rejection of art as a “mean of representation” of the world was strikingly represented by Malevich’s Black square; that represents nothing, a primitive symbol in so far as it aims to express the feeling of rhythm, Malevich’s intimate “sensation of non-objectivity”. As a clear silent statement of the common ground of contemporary art movements it was published in Dadaists magazines such as Zenit, Ma, Vesch/Gegenstand/Object and in the issue of Schwitters’ Merz “Nasci” 8/9 (1924). According to Nakov the work of Suprematists, Neoplasticists, Concretists and the Dadaists shares in common a “material sublimation of existence going beyond the ‘positive’ boundaries of known experience”. All these artists have in common a certain will to transcend the positive-immediate level of the material, which produced a certain “dematerialization of the work of art”. Such a sublimation of man creations has certainly a Nietzschian aura, and according to Nakov is a consequence of the Dadaist refusal to accept any solid or authoritative form.

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69 In the opening speech for a Constant exhibition Amsterdam Van Eyck uses the term abstract talking about work of the group Creatie. He criticizes it for being a misunderstanding of the true principles of Neoplasticism See Constant and the abstracts in Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998 / Aldo van Eyck. Francis Strauven and Vincent Ligtelijn eds. Amsterdam: SUN, c2008 (p.66)
The second point in common of these artistic movements is their concern with the idea of the “elementary”, the search for elementary forms emerges from their tendency to “non-figurative” art. The search for elementary forms and the experimentation with materials were interwoven, as A.B. Nakov argues: the “emphasis [is] placed on the formal-creative aspects of the materials themselves”. The concern with the “elementary manipulation of the materials” is clearly expressed in Tzara’s 1918 Manifesto “(constructive artists) don’t want to give an illusion by the means of colour on canvas, but work directly in iron, wood, glass, etc…” The search for the elementary forms and the elementary manipulation with materials are interwoven and can be found in the work of the different artistic movements mentioned before: the Dadaists Marcel Janco’s “Construction 3” published in Dada 1 (1917) or Moholy-Nagy’s Nickel-Plastik published in Mecano, Blue (1922), the work of the
Suprematist artists such as Malevich’s black square and Lissitzky’s Prouns, and work of the Neoplasticians such as Mondrian who reduced the means of painting to horizontal and vertical lines and primary colors applied in the canvas in such a way that the traces of the brush were still visible. Among the artists who work in an inquiry towards the elementary, Jean Arp and Constantin Brancusi are of paramount importance for this study for their influence in Aldo Van Eyck. Brancusi’s statement “La simplicité n’est pas un but dans l’art, mais on arrive à la simplicité malgré soi, en s’approchant du sens reel des choses” can be found in C.W. Giedion book on Brancusi. That same quote is used by Aldo Van Eyck in his Report concerning the interrelation of the plastic arts and the importance of cooperation-prepared for CIAM 6 (1947) it was not published but printed copies were send to Sigfried Giedion and other CIAM members. Van Eyck started the text quoting Arp’s definition “Art concret est un art elementaire”, an art that aims to transform the world, save man from vanity, simplify his life, re-identify man with nature. In the text Van Eyck claims that art should reveal the elementary whether it be complex or not, for that purpose man should rely on imagination: “Form should be a medium not an end. The difference between limited forms and elementary forms lies exactly in this distinction. The former merely tickle the primary senses, which explains their universal popularity: the later penetrate the infinite resources of imagination, the only faculty with which we are able to receive and transmit style or grace…” For Van Eyck as for the Dadaists, imagination is the common denominator of man and nature and the key form of knowledge for freedom in Art: “Art should be liberated from the tyranny of limited forms: from the tyranny of causality… of metronomical time… of classical harmony and other static values…of common sense, for common sense was always the enemy of imagination”.

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74 A misunderstanding of the rich Neoplasticist idea of “non-figurative” painting with a narrow minded idea of abstraction brought Max Bill to dismiss Mondrian’s subtle brushwork. “When Max Bill returned a Mondrian he had borrowed from C.W. [Giedion] for an exhibition, Aldo [Van Eyk] noticed to his dismay that the Swiss constructivist had considered it necessary to paint over the original to produce a uniform, neutral surface” See Francis Strauven, Aldo van Eyck: the shape of relativity. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998 (Footnote p.86)
76 This text was written before Van Eyck’s intervention at CIAM. Together with Van Eyck’s “Statement against Rationalism” summarizes Van Eyck’s early critic to CIAM’s rationalism. Found in Strauven, Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998 / Aldo van Eyck (p.32)
77 According to Strauven by “Grace”, Aldo van Eyck “meant the beauty of natural behaviour in animals and mankind, in the flight of a bird or a gracious gesture”. See footnote nº3 Chapter 2 “Advocate of the avant-garde in post-war CIAM (1947-1953)
78 Report concerning the interrelation of the plastic arts and the importance of cooperation, in Strauven, Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998 / Aldo van Eyck (p.34)
If the notion of elementary is analyzed in linguistic terms, it could be said that the “elementary manipulation of the materials” pursued by the Dadaists artists found its richest development in the literary forms, mainly in poetry. As mentioned before Hugo Bäll and Tzara were completely aware of classical revolutionary precedents such as Baudelaire or Rimbaud, and late experimentations with the formal expression of poetry and chance such as Mallarme’s “Un coup de dés”. Early explorations and experiments with words and letters in poetry such as the work of the Russian formalist might have been known by Tzara who was in touch with Marinetti since the publication of the Futurist manifesto in Le Monde (1909). Marinetti was familiar with the work of Russians formalist such as Klebnikov, who together with David Burliuk and S. Miasoedov experimented with the word “as itself alone” in A jam for judges I, and in The Impressionists’ Studio (1908). As A. B. Nakov points out Kruchonykh, Klebnikov, and Klucenyh experiments aimed to give a new meaning to the word and to the letter, with a common desire to reach a pre-cultural or pre-traditional level through their work (Both words culture and tradition being understood in the sense of an ‘established culture’ or ‘established tradition’). “The word as such” by Kruchonykh and Klebnikov (1913) was both a statement were the word is considered in itself alone, as a work of art, and a strong critic to what they considered a misinterpretation of their work by the Futurists: “a work of art could consist of a single word and simply by the skillful alteration of that word the fullness and expressivity of artistic form might be attained…The work of art was both perceived and criticized…merely as a word…the Italians caught a whiff of these Russian ideas and begun to copy from us like schoolboys, making imitation art…the Italians had started with tendentiousness. Like Pushkin’s little devil… And who would trust a weapon like that? These Italians have turned out to be a noisy self-promoters, but inarticulate pipsqueaks as artists.”

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80 i.b.i.d. p-255
0.1.5. DADA & LANGUAGE

« Je voulais laisser tomber le langage lui-même, ce sacré langage, tout souillé, comme des pièces de monnaies usées par les doigts des marchands. Je veut le mot là ou il s’arrête et là ou il commence. Dada c’est le coeur des mots... Toute chose a son mot, mais le mot est devenu une chose en sol. Pourquoi ne le trouverais-je pas, moi? » Hugo Bäll

Dada was a protest, Dada was against conventions, and therefore Dada’s first enemy had to be language, our ultimate convention, the one that grounds our thinking. Hugo Bäll’s manifesto read the 14th July of 1916 denounces language as a rational wall isolating nations. The word Dada, meaning different things in different languages aims to be international, to gather together: « Dada a son origine dans le dictionnaire. C’est terriblement simple. En français cela signifie ‘cheval de bois’. En allemand ‘va te faire, au revoir, a la prochaine’. En roumain ‘oui en effet, vous avez raison, c’est ça, d’accord, vraiment, on s’en occupe’, etc. C’est un mot international. Seulement un mot, pris en tant que mouvement... » Conventional language is abolished for is considered the origin of rational thinking, our first home, our first prison to put it in Nietzsche’s words, “the prison house of language”. Tzara’s motto ‘Dada means nothing’ is a statement against meaning, against language conceived as a one-dimensional structure were the definition of the word is turn into a dogma. The rejection of a system imposed or already given to us is achieved trough the process of “enstrangement” of one-self as it was performed by the Hugo Bäll in the reading of Karawane the 22nd of June 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire. Under his cubist costume of shiny red, blue and gold cardboard with a conic stripped hat, static on the floor, immerse in the darkness of the scene, Hugo Bäll read Karawane. With a sacred melodic cadence, spelling vowels he has the vision of a pale and thrilled child, overwhelmed as witnessing a funeral, tied, trembling and avid to the words of the priest. While shaking slowly his arms Bäll spells the last stanzas, as the bulb light fades little by little he disappears immerse in the darkness. The goal of the “enstrangement” as a technique is to create something of our own, something that really pertains to us, as Bäll puts it: «Je lis de vers qui n’ont d’autre but que de renoncer au language conventionnel, de s’en debarrasser... Je ne veux pas de mots inventes par quelqu’un d’autre. Tous les mots ont ete inventes par les autres. Je reivindique mes propres bêtises, mon propre rythme et des voyelles et des consonnes qui vont avec, qui y correspondent, qui soient les miens »

The image and the word were considered one, and the new images were found in the elementary components of the words, the letters. The Zurich-Dada were aware of Marinetti’s “Parole in liberta”, if a phrase is what enables our vision-depiction of the world through language, the word was detached from the phrase and used with freedom. But unlike the Futurists who still used the word to depict the city, the Dadaist used the “word as such” and the “letter as scuh” like the Russian

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81 Hugo Ball. Dada a Zurich: Le mot et l’image (1916-1917) p-11
82 In the First Dada Manifest, read the 14th July by Hugo Ball at the Cabaret Voltaire. See Hugo Ball. Dada a Zurich: Le mot et l’image (1916-1917) p.9
83 i.b.i.d. 51-52. Hugo Bäll notes on his diary from 23th June 1916
84 i.b.i.d. p-10
formalists had done it\textsuperscript{85}. As mentioned before, I could not find any evidence of Hugo Bäll or Tristan Tzara contact with the Russian poets but certainly they were aware of the aesthetic manifestation of it through the painting of the Suprematists and Constructivists works, such as Malevich’s Black square (1913). Dada tried to give to the letter the imaginary richness of the spell detached from any conventional sense or meaning. The letters arranged free from any convention would give birth to new kind of phrase, but not for the sake of newness. As I pointed before the Dadaist use of an elementary and recognizable device for us like the letter, in the form of a poem or a performance, is not an end in itself but a mean to awake certain sensibility in the beholder: «Le vocable, investi de magie, a invoque et engender une phrase nouvelle... suggèrent mille idées a la fois sans les nommer, cette phrase a fait resnoner la nature irrationnelle, originellement ludique, mais refoulee, de l’auditeur ; elle a réveillé et fortifie les couches les plus profondes de la mémoire »\textsuperscript{86}


\textsuperscript{86} See Hugo Ball. \textit{Dada a Zurich: Le mot et l’image} (1916-1917) p-48
“I write a manifesto and I want nothing, yet I say certain things and in principle I am against manifestoes, as I am also against principles... I write this manifesto to show that people can perform contrary actions together while taking a fresh gulp of air; I am against action; for continuous contradiction, for affirmation too, I am neither for nor against and I do not explain because I hate common sense”

Tristan Tzara. Dada Manifesto 1918

Dada’s critic of one of the most elementary conventions of language, the co-existence of opposites, explains its singular rejection of modernity and change. For a Dadaist it is possible to say yes and no at the same time, the co-existence of two things at the same time in the same place was Dada’s first challenge of the current conception of temporality. It dismantled the conventions of language, our first prison, and was the first step towards dismantling the convention of time, our ultimate prison.

The dialogue between two or more apparently contradictory or opposed states of being emerges from the Dadaists challenge of the classical principles of logic, such as Aristotle’s principle of contradiction. For a Dadaist it is possible to predicate of the same thing, at the same time, and in the same sense, the absence and the presence of the same quality: “…Order = disorder, ego = non-ego, affirmation = negation: supreme radiations of an absolute art. Absolute in the purity of ordered and cosmic chaos” said Tzara in his 1918 Manifesto87. The Dadaists played as well with the Law of identity, according to which an object is the same as itself: \( A \equiv A \); to some extent this law is challenged by any artist who gives himself a new name, and it was brought to an extreme by some Dadaist like Theo van Doesburg or Marcel Duchamp, who started to have several identities at the same time. Such schizophrenic condition of the artists was mirrored in the evolution of the different artistic movements at that time and to some extent reflected the identity crisis of Europe at that time. Certainly, the ongoing co-existence of opposite beings or nations (similar but different), with strong character, great sense of identity, and great ideas, it is a very European condition and defines its identity. Such a dialogue between love and strife of two opposed states was characteristic of the wide array of artistic movements emerging in Europe during the two world war periods. It was through dialogue, friction, agreement and disagreement that the different artistic ‘isms’ evolved, defined themselves and in fact share a common identity as it was early identified by C.W. Giedion88. Later on, the synthetic-logic labor of the historians and the unapproachable distance that time places between our sensibility and the sensibility of past times tends to present those artistic movements more isolated or independent than they really were. The pseudo-scientific labor of historians creating definitions were one “ism” equals one thing makes more difficult to understand that two isms might be different but complementary and even the same thing for the artists that took part in them. Certainly it was not the first time in history that art challenged the classical principles of logic, or the

87 At the same time that relativity was enounced 1905-12 and Saussure developed his Course in General Linguistics from 1906-13, published in 1916). Many artists before searched for that nothingness of meaning, and many other found it through their will to express opposites at the same time, as Tzara expressed in his Dada Manifesto (1918)

current perception of time and space, what is extraordinary about the Dadaist artists is that they were completely aware of what they were doing.

The challenge of the Principle of Identity brought to some artists to develop work in completely different directions, after a co-existence in time of two apparently opposed states of being in the same person. Among them, one of the most extravagant characters we can find at that time is Christian Kupper: alias Theo Van Doesburg Neoplasticist artist founder of De Stijl, alias I.K. Bonset founder of the Dadaist magazine Mecano, and Aldo Camini, Dadaist-Italian poet. Van Doesburg’s wife Petronella Petro adopted the name Nelly van Doesburg and the Dadaist alias Petronella van Moorsel as well. It is worth to note that in 1920, the same year that I.K. Bonset “was born” somewhere in the Netherlands, Rose Selavy, Marcel Duchamp alter ego, “was born” in New York, ; as Duchamp clearly stated: “Sense and non-sense are two aspects of the same thing and the non-sense has the right to exist. Do you see what I mean?” In other cases the co-existence of opposite’s states of being is less extravagant and is manifested only through the work of an artist completely integrated in the academia, as in the case of the Bauhaus professor Paul Klee. Some of his paintings at that time such as Separation in the evening (1922) illustrate the co-existence of opposites that might happen in one being as it happens in nature. Light’s double nature as wave and quantum as illustrated by Einstein’s relativity challenged Euclid’s geometry, and certainly might have inspired Klee’s painting at that time, The Architecture of the plane (1923). Klee himself was at that time, striving between such a rational exploration in the nature of geometry and light, inspired by the late scientific discoveries, and more irrational or “pre-logic” explorations with childish painting as illustrated in The Puppet theater painting from 1923.

Paul Klee’s The Puppet theater & The Architecture of the plane (1923), and Separation in the evening (1922)

It was Mondrian who introduced Van Doesburg to Parisian Dadaism, and Mondrian himself expressed publicly his sympathy for the Dada family and signed several letters in 1920 as “Piet-Dada”. He agreed that “The principles of the contrary [should] dominate the entire work” but rejected the Dada acceptance of the laws of chance as a creative device. But as Aldo Van Eyck noted, in general terms, Mondrian recognized that his work and that of a Dadaist such as Max Ernst are to some extent the same: “I recall here what Mondrian at a Max Ernst show in New York told a journalist who was putting the usual provoking questions. This: ‘Max, vous savez, il fait la meme chose que moi, mais dans l’autre hemispher’ ”. Mondrian’s rejection of Dadaist arbitrariness, and the fact that he did not favor an increasing literary involvement of Van Doesburg in Dadaism at the expense his engagement in the visual arts, is a possible explanation for Van Doesburg’s creation of his alter ego I.K. Bonset. Mondrian’s character stricter than Van Doesburg’s would allow for certain irony in a joke but not for a deviation in the elementary principles of De Stijl, in fact later on, Van Doesburg’s acceptance of dynamic forms in his paintings produced the rupture between the two.

What it is important about the co-existance of opposites for these artists is that brought them into a new conception of time and space. If yes equals no, past may equal future. Past and future, knowing and not knowing are linked by our immediate and fleeting present. But past, we do not certainly know the past, we just remember, and this remembrance is inaccurate. We have a memory, but is strongly shaped by our relatives and dictated by the institutions of our time. Hence the present, spontaneity was Dada’s claim in the search for man’s freedom. Tzara’s Manifesto La premiere Aventure celeste de Monsieur Antipyrine, detached Dadaism from Futurism by negating evolution or change. Tzara welcomed the co-existance of two opposite states and disliked the future: “it is for and against unity and definitely against the future; we are wise enough to know that our brains will become downy pillows that our anti-dogmatism is as exclusivist as a bureaucrat that we are not free yet shout freedom”.

As early as in 1919 Van Doesburg had come to know Tzara’s Manifesto and Vingt-cinq poèmes (Both from 1916) as well as four issues of the Dada journal (Zurich 1917-19) as he mentioned in a letter to his friend the poet Antony Kok. Van Doesburg and Mondrian agreed completely with the Dadaist acceptance of opposite states of being individual-universal as we can read in De Stijl Manifesto from 1918: “The conflict of the individual and the universal is reflected in the world war as well as in art today”. The Dadaist use of art as an “enstrangement” device, a device that provide us a new consciousness of ourselves through the creative process and as beholders of the artistic work, was clearly summarize in De Stijl third point of the Manifesto: “The new art has revealed the substance of the new consciousness of the age: an equal balance between the

90 Piet Mondrian, Le Neoplasticisme (Paris: l’effort Moderne, 1920) 8-9
91 This point is made by Hubert F. van den Berg in Theo Van Doesburg’s De Stijl, and Dada (p-119). Some other members of De Stijl had peripheral contacts with the Dadaism “Vilmos Huszar’s participation in the 1923 Dada-Touendes, Corn Van Eesteren’s participation in the Dada-Constructivist Congree in September 1922 and contributions to Mecano in 1922-23, and Mondrian’s jokey signature ‘dada Piet’” in Dada, Van Doesburg and De Stijl, Jane Beckett. Dada: studies of a movement / edited by Richard Sheppard. Chalfont St. Giles, Eng. : Alpha Academic, 1980.
93 See Hubert F. van den Berg, Theo Van Doesburg’s De Stijl, and Dada. P119-120
96 See Hubert F. van den Berg, Theo Van Doesburg’s De Stijl, and Dada p-111
Van Doesburg visit to Paris on 17th March 1921 is important because illustrates his emergence of his apparently contradictory evolution as a Neoplasticist & Dadaist, in that visit he met both Mondrian and Tzara separately. This visit was of decisive importance for him since his understanding of Dada until that date had been only through publications. Jane Beckett made this point in the essay Van Doesburg and de Stijl and argues that Tzara confirmed Van Doesburg view that the essence of Dada consisted in negation for the purpose of generating mystical insight: “Yes and No,- No is the strongest stimulus to Yes” wrote I.K. Bonset in Het andere Gezicht (Published in De Stijl nº4, April 1921). In the same way, Beckett explains the naissance of Theo Van Doesburg’s third alter ego: Aldo Camini as a “synthesis of his understanding of Parisian ideas and Italian metaphysical writing”. Camini who made his appearance in De Stijl June 1921 also rejected the Futurists and welcomed the co-existence of yes & no: “Every hypothesis is simultaneously false and correct, Yes and No, one and the same... Dada the abstract concrete messiah of our time (De Stijl no. 6 (June 1921), 86)

Van Doesburg move to Weimar brought him closer to the Bauhaus, since 1919 he had been in contact with the Bauhaus professor Lionnel Feininger, and to the German Dadaists. Raoul Haussman and Hannah Höch, Kleebilder collages strongly influenced Van Doesburg; they illustrated a fusion of metaphysical content and mechanical analogy. To some extent they were similar to Kurt Schwitter’s Merzbaus. And in both cases involved the very Dadaist polarity deconstruction-reconstruction: the free destruction of old images allowed for a new reconstruction of the pieces in the creation of new images for a new time.
At that time Van Doesburg’s double condition as Dadaist and Neoplasticist is at his summit. The deep understanding of Dada manifested in I.K. Bonset collages such as “La matière denaturalise. Destruction 2” and “Reconstruction” from 1922 runs parallel to experimentation in poetry towards elementary means of expression\(^\text{100}\). Van Doesburg’s evolves from the “X-Beelden” (1920), “X-images” poems in which words are loosely tied to objects and meanings, to the “Letterklankbeelden” (De Stijl, 1921), “Letter-sound-images” poems were letters are arranged without meaning “according to its abstract sound values”. At the same time Van Doesburg published his first public discussion on Dadaism, the article “Dada” in the Nieuwe Amsterdammer, both I.K. Bonset’s poems were published in De Stijl nº11 (Nov. 1921). Around that time as well Bonset published the “Het andere gezicht” in De Stijl, were paying tribute to the intuitive philosophy of Bergson and Nietzsche states: “Dadaism- When behind ‘non-sense’ a sense is hidden, which is a deeper than that of the standard, ‘non-sense’ is not only allowed but even necessary. Thus Dadaism will create new supersensible [or: transcendental] standards\(^\text{101}\).

In 1922, van Doesburg launched Mecano a “journal for the distribution of Neo-Dadaist conceptions and spiritual hygiene” that merged Dadaism and Constructivism. Devoted to Van Doesburg’s own Dadaist-constructivist understanding of the machine age, Dada propaganda and critic to the intellectual and artistic establishment joined together works such as: Geoge Vantongerloo, PLastie (1917), Max Ernst Photo-mechanic Composition, Raoul Hausmann Construction (Elasticum, 1920), and Mechanical-head (1919), Moholy-Nagy Nickel-Plastik and Relief S (1921) and texts by Mondrian, Tzara and I.K. Bonset. Van Doesburg had hoped for an appointment as a teacher to the Bauhaus, however the expressionists Lothar Schreyer and Kandinsky got the positions instead, hence Mecano launched a campaign against the expressionist element in the Bauhaus, the “Balance of the State of the Bauhaus in Weimar” signed by van Doesburg, Mondrian and Cornelius van Eesteren denounced how De Stijl was being excluded from the Bauhaus.\(^\text{102}\). Van Doesburg attempts to be admitted in the Bauhaus culminated in the “International Congress of Constructivists and Dada in Weimar” in September 1922 at the doors of

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\(^\text{100}\) See Hubert F. van den Berg, Theo Van Doesburg’s De Stijl, and Dada p-132
\(^\text{101}\) In Mecano, no. 4-5 Bonset attacks as well the Neo-Classicist and Paul Klee. See Hubert F. van den Berg, p-115-116
\(^\text{102}\) See Hubert F. van den Berg, Theo Van Doesburg’s De Stijl, and Dada p-142
the Bauhaus\textsuperscript{103} where Tzara speech summarized Dadaist critic to the Bauhaus principles: "Ladies and Gentlemen: I don’t have to tell you that for the general public and for you, the refined public, a Dadaist is the equivalent of a leper. But that is only a manner of speaking. When these same people get close to us, they treat us with that remnant of elegance that comes from their old habit of belief in progress. At ten yards distance, hatred begins again…" \textsuperscript{104}

At this point I would like to jump ahead in time from Weimar 1922 to Bridgewater 1947, from the Dadaist-Constructivist Congress to the Congress International de Architecture Mondiale C.I.A.M. I would like to trace some parallelisms between two interventions held at those congresses: Tristan Tzara lecture at the doors of the Weimar Bauhaus, and Aldo Van Eyck intervention facing the CIAM old guard. I would find a strict comparison between the two senseless but I think it is important to outline the "aura" they share in common in so far as they both are: a reaction towards an institution whose "raison d’être" emerged from the spirit of the artistic movements in Europe, and a reaction that denounces how the "raison d’être" is being betrayed or forgotten after an excessive obsession with power and values such as "reason" or "function". These ideals, propelled by and technological development, provided humankind with an immense power over nature, a power that previous generation could have not ever imagined. The will to power brought the fragile politics of "balance of power\textsuperscript{105}" among the different colonial empires to the First World War and the treatise of Versailles into a dance of clowns to Keynes dismay, resignation from the Treasury in 1918\textsuperscript{106}: "…The policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation, of degrading the lives of millions of human beings, and of depriving a whole nation of happiness should be abhorrent and detestable,--abhorrent and detestable, even if it were possible, even if it enriched ourselves, even if it did not sow the decay of the whole civilized life of Europe…If we aim deliberately at the impoverishment of Central Europe, vengeance, I dare predict, will not limp. Nothing can then delay for very long that final war between the forces of Reaction and the despairing convulsions of Revolution, before which the horrors of the late German war will fade into nothing…." Three years after this text was written Tzara made his statement in Weimar, in the early 1930s the Weimar Republic will collapse and Keynes predictions became real. Aldo van Eyck statement is made when the CIAM has to face the challenge of European reconstruction after the Second World War.

Hence is not a surprise that both statements are in one way or another "Statements against rationalism". Like any other Dada statement Tzara’s lecture in Weimar was a statement against rationalism, the idea of progress and modernity, at the doors of the paradigm of established modernity in the 1920s, the Bauhaus. Tzara’s statement opens arguing Dada is not modern, further

\textsuperscript{103} The main participants include: Bauhaus member allied with De Stijl in Weimar (Max Buchartz, Peter Röhl, Harry Scheibe, and Walter Dexel) the splinter-group from Düsseldorf (Hans Richter, Werner Graeff, El Lissitsky, Moholy-Nagy, and Alfred Kemeny), two of Van Doesburg's Stijl course students (Hans Vogel and Bernard Sturzkopf), Cor van Eesteren, and the Dadaist Hannah Höch, Kurt Schwitters, Hans Arp and Tristan Tzara. See Hubert F. van den Berg p-154 and Jane Beckett p-17

\textsuperscript{104} All the following quotes from Tzara are from the same text, \textit{Lecture in Weimar 1922}, in \textit{The Dada painters and poets : an anthology}, Edited by Robert Motherwell. Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989 (p.78)


\textsuperscript{106} John Maynard Keynes was the British financial representative for the Treasury to the 1919 Versailles peace conference. Keynes analyses and prediction of the damaging effects of the Treaty, among them an extension of the war, were ignored. British Prime Minister Lloyd George won the 1918 elections promising harshly punishment to Germany, right after the Treatise Keynes resigned from his position in the Treasury. See John Maynard Keynes, \textit{The economic consequences of the peace}. New Brunswick, N.J. : Transaction Publishers, c2003.
on he detaches his position from that of the Bauhaus Modern masters “…You are mistaken if you take Dada for a modern school, or even for a reaction against the schools of today… There is no logic. Only relative necessities discovered a posteriori, valid not in any exact sense but only as explanations…” In the same line Aldo Van Eyck’s “Statement Against rationalism” is enounced facing the paradigm of established modernity in the late 50s, the CIAM, denouncing its unbalanced in favor of reason “The old struggle between imagination and common sense ended tragically in favor of the later…CIAM knows that the tyranny of common sense has reached its final stage…”

Tzara denounces the so called “intelligence” as a hierarchical value, an institution that pursues rational work “…Intelligence is an organization like any other… It serves to create a state of hierarchy. To set up classifications for rational work… fortunately life is something else and its pleasures are innumerable. They are not paid in the coin of liquid intelligence…247”. After Giedion’s remark Van Eyck denounces hierarchical values “…The deplorable hierarchy of artificial values upon which contemporary existence has come to rest is beginning to totter…”

Tzara claims for spontaneity as a product of human free will that really represents us “…What we want know is spontaneity. Not because it is better or more beautiful than anything else. But because everything that issues freely from ourselves, without the intervention of speculative ideas, represents us….” And values life over art, introducing art in the everyday life, Dada reduces art to inicial simplicity “…Art is not the mot precious manifestation of life…Life is far more interesting. Dada knows the correct measure that should be given to art: with subtle perfidious methods, Dada introduces it into daily life, and vice versa. In art, Dada reduces everything to an initial simplicity…” Van Eyck claims for imagination as a creative device to overcome outworn values dictated by common sense, the only common denominator of man and nature to stimulate a “universal revaluation towards the elementary”, and placed life over architecture, the elementary requirements of man's environment over the functional architecture: “Although architecture… answers very tangible functions, ultimately its object differs in no way from that of any other creative activity… the more tangible functions-those implied by the word functionalism- are only relevant in so far as they help us to adjust man’s environment more accurately to his elementary requirements”

Both criticized a group of intellectuals, artists and architects that were loosing the point, forgetting that what gather them together was an idea of a New Consciousness. Van Eyck reminded the CIAM that a “new consciousness is already transforming man’s mind…they have turned our senses to a new dimension…CIAM is first and foremost an affirmation of this new consciousness… one in which grace is expressed in life as it is in art” This New Consciousness was argued by Neoplasticists, Dadaists, Constructivists as an awareness a device towards a new sensibility to enrich our conception of a new life, not an end in itself, the Nieuwe Beelding was useless in itself. Tzara argued: “Dada is a state of mind. That is why it transforms itself according to races and events. Dada applies itself to everything, and yet it is nothing, it is the point where the yes and the no and all the opposite meet, not solemnly in the castles of human philosophies, but very simply at street corners, like dogs and grasshoppers… Like everything in life, Dada is useless… Dada is without pretension, as life should be”

According to Van Eyck the question at stake is that of the balance between the two opposites, common sense and imagination: “The old struggle between imagination and common
sense ended tragically in favor of the later” Imagination and common sense, reason and Dada. Tzara brought the microbe of Dada, “where the yes and no meet”, to the doors of the Bauhaus and ended his statement with a last clarification: “Perhaps you will understand me better when I tell you that Dada is a virgin microbe that penetrates with the insistence of air into all spaces that reason has not been able to fill out with words or conventions.” The Dadaist microbe did not manage to enter, neither Tzara nor Van Doesburg were able to do it. I would say that if that if the microbe of Dada would have infected enough the brain of the Bauhaus Masters, Van Eyck’s question asked at the end of his statement: “Does CIAM intend to ‘guide’ a rational and mechanistic conception of process toward an improvement of human environment? Or does it intend to change this conception?” would have never been necessary.

END CONCLUSION NOT CLEAR...DEVELOP

The Constructivist-Dadaist Congress at Weimar 1922
0.1.7 NIEUWE BEELDING & DADA: STATIC & DYNAMIC

“CIAM extended the inherent weaknesses of the Bauhaus climate-teutonic, stale, didactic derivative – instead of its strength. I was laughed at when I mentioned Schlemmer and Klee at Bridgewater. Only Moholy and Breuer (atrocious architect) and Herbert Bayer were allowed. And no Mies, oh no, no Mies! Too near De Stijl, and the Bauhaus hates De Stijl because it got what it stood first hand from Van Doesburg and some Russians passing by”

Aldo Van Eyck, Letter to Giedion on the dissolution of CIAM
Undated manuscript, obviously written shortly after 10 Dec. 1960

The term Neoplasticism coined by Mondrian and Van Doesburg was a translation of the term Nieuwe Beelding, a Dutch neologism that aimed to express the idea of New Consciousness of time as appears in De Stijl Manifesto from 1918: “1. There is an old and a new consciousness of time. The old is connected with the individual. The new is connected with the universal. The struggle of the individual against the universal is revealing itself in the world-war as well as in the art of the present day” The word beelding was a neologism coined by Schoenmaekers coming from his theosophist and mathematics theory published in his book *Principles of Plastic Mathematics* (1916). As Van Doesburg accounts in 1929, Schoenmaekers influence on Mondrian was strong, several terms and an extensive reference to opposites internal-external, horizontal-vertical, representation-expression used by De Stijl are to be found in Schoenmaekers book as well: “This fundamental idea we expressed in the word Gestaltung [Dutch: beelding] in the sense of creative achievement. The word Gestaltung had been revalued; it meant for us superrational, the a-logical and inexplicable, depth coming to the surface, the balance of interior and exterior, the spoils of the creative battle we fought against ourselves. A new terminology came into existence (note: Mondrian’s method of expression was based for the greater part on the new philosophy of Dr. Schoenmaeker’s “plastic mathematics”)*

The Nieuwe Beelding (Neoplasticism) and the new consciousness of time claimed in De Stijl Manifesto is same thing. The Nieuwe Beelding is a new consciousness of language, a new consciousness of our perception of space, hence a new consciousness of time. Schoenmaekers analyzed the relation between the writing and the visual, raising the question “How is it that many Modern fine artists come to talk and write about their work?” and claimed for a new art that expressed a “new insight into relative objectivity” a new art “without words”. Taking mathematics as a key example he argued that thought can not exist independent from perception. The Nieuwe Beelding for De Stijl is a new plastic-thinking that comes after a new perception of the individual in relation to his outside, to the objects outside, to the universal. The consciousness of man should be more concern with universal values than with individual ones. The new perception of space integrates in the term *Beelden* (Image), several Dutch verbs that have to do with the perception of the image and its representation: *Verbeelden*, to imagine or represent (Ver means twist, change, hence refers to imagine creating your own fantasy), *Inbeelden*, to imagine (In meaning in, when the fantasy is provided by someone to you), *Uitbeelden*, to express or represent (Uit means out, hence implies a more expressionistic representation) and *Afbeelden*, to depict or to represent (Prefix Af meaning to separate, to take away). Hence the several terms summarizing subtle variations in the

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108 Dr. Schoenmaeker
109 See Hubert F. van den Berg. P. 132 and De Stijl and Dutch Modernism by Michael White (p.24-25)
110 Hubert F. van den Berg. P. 132
whole process of perception-knowledge-expression are synthesized in one word. The Nieuwe Beelding departs from the universal; outside-inside is perceived as a continuum, the linguistic differentiation: Verbeelden ≠ Inbeelden ≠ Uitbeelden ≠ Afbeelden is dismissed Verbeelden = Inbeelden = Uitbeelden = Afbeelden in a continuum. Ver, In, Uit and Af were prefix defining the position of the object in relation to the beholder-painter, these different relations are erased in the search for an expression with an static absolute value, a Nieuwe Beelding. A new meaning-value not provided by the object, a non-figurative meaning provided by the inner volition of the artist willing to build (English) - bilden (German) – beelding (Dutch) a new Beeldend (plastic, provocative) for a new world.

The experimentation and evolution of the concept of Nieuwe Beelding in Mondrian and Van Doesburg were different. Mondrian remained faithful to the horizontal-vertical compositions and explored dynamism within those constrains only later on, when moved by the surrealist Manhatan of the 40s (Broadway Boogie Woogie, 1942-43). Van Doesburg combined Neoplasticism and Dadaism, evolving from the static horizontal-vertical values of the Neo-plasticism to dynamic-relative values propelled by the Dadaist co-existence of opposites and Albert Einstein’s new Theory of Relativity.

For Van Doesburg’s alter ego I.K. Bonset, the role of Dadaist acceptance of the “non-sense” (“onzin”) as not just ordinary madness but as a “conscious deviation of a standard, which has rusted and turned into a dogma” is the necessary precondition for the creation of new values (nieuwe warden). A “true disorder” substitutes an “untrue order”, a first step towards a “true order” of a necessary “new world”111

The term Nieuwe Beelding integrated into a continuum the different positions of the object in relation to the beholder or painter, aiming for an expression with a static absolute value, a Nieuwe Beelding. According to relativity accelerated motion and being at rest in a gravitational field area are identical ….

The Neoplasticist dualism individual-universal, interior-exterior is turned into a Dadaist equality yes=no. In his Dadaist manifesto “Wat is Dada?” published in De Stijl (1923) Van Doesburg refers to Einstein as a fellow Dadaist (Together with Chaplin and Bergson), Van Doesburg negates evolution and change: “Dada nie l’évolution. Tout movement suscite un counter-mouvement de force egale, ils s’annulent l’un l’autre. Rien ne change fondamentalement. Le monde demeure toujours pareil à lui-même. Dada abolit le dualisme couramment admis entre matiere et spirit, entre homme et femme, et cree ainsi l’indifferenzpunkt, un point situe au-dela de la conception humaine du temps et de l’espace »112 Dada provides us an arquimedean point, the ‘indifferenzpunkt’ in such a way that we are aware that our current conception of tridimensional space is nothing but an illusion we create: ‘Dada acquiert la capacite de mettre en mouvement le point de vision et de distance fixes qui nous tient prisonniers de nos representations (tridimensionelles) illusories’. Providing a new perception of space Dada is unveiling and bringing a new perception of time, the fourth dimension113:

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111 Quoting I.K. Bonset collection of aphorism “the Other Face” (“Het andere gezicht” published in De Stijl in June-August-September 1920) van den Berg makes this point. See Hubert F. van den Berg p.117
112 The term indifferenzpunkt is a clear reference to Nietzsche, see Theo van Doesburg, Wat is Dada? (La Haye, De Stijl, 1923) in Archives Dada: chronique. Marc Dachy, ed. Paris: Hazan, c2005.(p.361)
113 “One of the important connections with Dada was Van Doesburg’s concern with the expression of a fourth dimension. One of the central arguments in Wat is Dada? Is that of counter-movement: ‘every movement causes a counter-movement of equal strength and the two cancel each other out’(p.10). By negating the duality
« D’ou il devient possible d’envisager le prisme universel non plus sous l’angle d’une seule facette, mais dans son ensemble. En ce sens, Dada apparait comme l’une des manifestations les plus fortes de la quatrieme dimension, transposée au sein du sujet. De chaque ‘oui’, Dada voit le ‘Non’ correlatif. Dada est oui non »

There is no evolution, no dualism; every yes implies a no insofar as every movement causes a countermovement of equal strength. Such awareness in relation to our perception of language and space-time provides us a vantage point from where a new aesthetic conception can be born. Van Doesburg turned into architecture these ideas together with Cornelis van Eesteren, who attended the Constructivist-Dadaist Congress; Van Doesburg contribution to the Maison particuliere project with van Eesteren were a series of drawings entitled “Counter-construction (Analyse de l’architecture)” dated from 1923, the same year than the Dada manifesto ‘Wat is Dada?’ was published in De Stijl.

From Van Eesteren’s design of the Maison Particulier (1923) Van Doesburg developed a series of ‘analytical studies for the application of color to architecture’. The same year they continued working together in the design of the Maison d’Artiste, were the idea of the countermovement was brought one step further, a centrifugal-centripetal spatial distribution is develop breaking the rigidity of the tridimensional cube, the Euclidean space, and the Newtonian laws of gravity:

« …La nouvelle architecture est anti-cubique, c’est-à-dire que les differentes spaces ne sont pas comprimés dans un cube fermé. Au contraire, les differentes cellules d’espaces (les volumes de balcons, etc., inclus) se developpent excentriquement, du centre à la périphèrie du cube, par quoi les dimensions de hauteur, de largeur, de profondeur, de temps, reçoivent une nouvelle expresion plastique.

of mind and matter, Dad creates a point of indifference beyond man’s understanding of space and time. We are therefore no longer imprisoned in a three dimensional world, as Dada is able to mobilize the optical and dimensional viewpoint. In this connection Van Doesburg claims: ‘Dada is one of the most powerful manifestations of the 4th dimension transposed into the subject’ (Wat is Dada?, 11) See, Dada, Van Doesburg and De Stijl, Jane Beckett in Dada: studies of a movement, edited by Richard Sheppard. Chalfont St. Giles, Eng. : Alpha Academic, 1980.(p-22)

Ainsi, la maison moderne donnera l'impression d'être planée, suspendue dans l'air, de s'opposer à la gravitation naturelle »

The three dimensions Length, height and depth (x, y, z) are conceived with the fourth (Time) materialized through a rotational composition developed in height. A spiral distribution of the spaces following the centrifugal movement of the artist walking up the stairs. Is counter-balanced by the centripetal strength of the structural core that holds the structural slabs.

Cornelis van Eesteren and Theo van Doesburg, Plans 1st, 2nd, 3rd floor, Maison d’Artiste, 1923

The spiral movement has an endless history in architecture, nevertheless it is very present in the cover of Mecano nº 4-5, num. blanc, 1923 both in the shape of a circular saw and a propeller machine. This illustrations by I.K. Bonset can bring us to think that the academically accepted notion of van Doesburg as an artist-architect fascinated with machine aesthetics should not be taken too literally. I would argue that machines are represented as means, not ends. The saw for its Dadaists destructive-constructive capacity and the propeller for its centrifugal-centripetal static dynamism capable of elevate our living conditions above the existenz minimum

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The spatial distribution according to time is seen as the aesthetic manifestation of Einstein’s superseding of Newton’s gravitational law. Van Doesburg traces a parallelism between logic and geometry. Dada’s negation of the contradiction principle (Aristotle) brought Van Doesburg to challenge the Euclidean space after the new scientific discoveries. Van Doesburg interest in science emerged together with the foundation of De Stijl and his interest in Dadaism: “Since his time in Weimar—since 1921, then—he had resumed his study of literature on the theory of relativity and the fourth dimension, which had started to interest him back in 1917… They reached their first climax in the counter-constructions of the Maison Particuliere and the Maison d’Artiste”
In 1924, Van Doesburg did drawings stressing the spatio-temporal aspect: ‘Constructions des couleurs dans la 4eme dimension de l’espace temps’ or simply ‘Construction de l’espace-temps’. Van Doesburg found a representation of the fourth dimension in the Tesseract developed by the British mathematician Charles Howard Hinton (1853-1907). The Tesseract, also called an 8-cell or regular octachoron, is the four-dimensional analog of the cube. The tesseract is to the cube as the cube is to the square. He shares his thoughts with his Dadaist friend Hannah Hoch: “…On May 21 1925 he wrote to Hannah Höch in Berlin: ‘artistically I have been developing a schematic representation for the new space. Have now acknowledged the tesseractic space as the only universal space in which to express form (including film). I am quite sure that mathematical and lucid knowledge is needed, and that all film, architecture, Proun, etc. experiments, no matter how interesting, are based on aesthetic speculation’.”

Theo Van Doesburg Tesseracts with arrows indicating centripetal and centrifugal movement in four-dimensional space (ink on tracing paper, both 19.5cm x 24.9 cm); Van Doesburg Collection, R.B.K. (AB 4857 and AB 4858)
Van Doesburg conception of Nieuwe Beelding as a new perception of time and space in relation to architecture was very present in Aldo Van Eyck practice and theory. Van eyck deep understanding of Van Doesburg ideas came after his acquaintance of Van Doesburg’s wife, Nelly van Doesburg, the architect Cornelis van Eesteren, who attended the Constructivist-Dadaist Congress and worked together with Van Doesburg in several projects, and the painter R.P. Lohse. Right after the 2nd World war shortly after the liberation of France (Autum 1944), C.W. Giedion sent Aldo Van Eyck to Paris as “a delegate of the Zurich Circle”\(^{119}\) and he always lodged Nelly van Doesburg’s house at Meudon, who soon came to call him ‘my son’. Some time after Van Eyck made acquaintance with Cornelis van Eesteren in Zurich who had come to met Sigfried Giedion. After a recommendation of the Giedions and Nelly Van doesburg Van Eesteren offered a job to Aldo in the Town Planning division of the Public Works Department of Amsterdam in 1946\(^{120}\).

One of the most important illustrations of Van Eyck’s thinking, the Otterloo Circles, it includes the ‘Counter-construction’ analytical drawings from the Maison d’Artiste (1923). Among the texts included in the image we can read

“When is architecture going to bring together opposites qualities and solutions?”

Van Eyck referred to Van Doesburg drawing in a lecture at Delft as follows:

“It could have been a Mondrian, it could have been a formula by Einstein, it could have been \(E=mc^2\), it could have been a Picasso painting of 1911, it could have been many things, it could have been a bit of Finnegan’s Wake...But there it is, as a kind of symbol of change and movement. Of the continuum if you like, of the fourth dimension: the Non-Euclidean concept of everything. Just a different behavior, a different movement”\(^{121}\)

\(^{119}\) See Strauven p.98

\(^{120}\) i.b.i.d. p.99

0.2. FROM THE EXILE TO PARIS 1947
0.2.1. Rendez-vous a Paris et alleiurs....:

Once the 2nd World War ended, the city of Paris steadily recovered its artistic activity; the arts capital of the nineteenth century still exerted the attraction over young artists who came to visit the studios and exhibitions of the renowned avant-garde figures that had not left Europe during the Nazi occupation.\(^{122}\) Although New York was already emerging as an artistic center, Paris was still the reference for the mainstream of the young artists facing the re-construction of Europe. Before the Independent Group\(^{123}\) and the COBRA Group\(^{124}\) were founded in London and Amsterdam respectively, some of its members visited Paris. Aldo Van Eyck visited as well Paris after its liberation. As a correspondent of C.W. Giedion he made the acquaintance of the mainstream of Modern Artists. Although both groups emerged from the avant-garde art of the war period, they faced the current socio-political situation of the European reconstruction in very different ways: COBRA departed from a strong criticism to Breton's Surrealism and adopted a strong political agenda of Communist inspiration; whereas the Independent Group was less critical with their artistic past and more interested in architecture and the influence of technology in the everyday life, hence their socio-political agenda welcomed the emerging consumer society represented by the United States economical boom. Nevertheless, both groups shared a Dadaist-surrealist air of revolt against the established systems of knowledge and hierarchies and a common search for elementary principles in human life as a source for artistic inspiration.

The Dadaist revolt led to two different positions in the IG and COBRA facing the emerging consumer society; the transformation of the work of art in commodity had been slowed down by the parenthesis of the two world wars. Once the Second World War ended in 1945 it was propelled by the USA economic boom and the European reconstruction. Certainly any strong generalization about the stands of any of both groups risks inaccuracy. They both lasted very little, and the divergences among its members were strong. But in general terms it could be said that the IG looked west and the COBRA looked east. Although both emerged from Dadaist-Surrealist sources, the Independent Group was strongly influenced by Duchamp, but COBRA departed from a radical break and was critical of Breton late Surrealism, for it tended to separate the artistic view from the political convictions. COBRA had a communist party "aura" led mainly by Christian Dotremont's strong political convictions, backed by Constant and Asger Jorn who drafted a strong critic to functionalist architecture and its main heralds like Le Corbusier. Although Aldo Van Eyck remained skeptical of Cobra’s criticism of functionalist architecture and Mondrian, one of Van Eyck’s main references, he

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\(^{122}\) After the Allied breakthrough in Normandy on August 1st 1944, the liberation of Paris took place the 25th August. On 7 May 1945, the Germans signed the Instrument of Surrender at Rheims, France, officially ending the war in Europe.

\(^{123}\) The Independent Group was a group of young artists, architects and historians connected with the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Around 1952 "meetings of people at the ICA some of whom taught at the Central School of Art and became Independent Group members before Richard Lannoy's organized sessions". See The Independent Group: post-war Britain and the aesthetics of plenty. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, c1990.

\(^{124}\) COBRA is the acronym for the cities were the main artists of the Group came from: Karel Appel, Cornelis and Constant from Amsterdam, Christian Dotremont from Brussels and Asger Jorn from Copenhagen. The "Groupe expérimental hollandaise", COBRA-Amsterdam was founded in November 1948 and lasted until 1951. See Willemijn Stokvis, Cobra: la conquête de la spontanéité. Paris: Gallimard ; [s.l.] : V+K publishing, c2001.
enjoyed their proximity. For him they had some Dadaist aura not so distant from the spirit of De Stijl.\textsuperscript{125} On the other hand The IG members, like Banham or MacHale, were astonished by the technological wonders of American consumer society and values, and although certainly criticized the Modern Movement, saw themselves as its followers.\textsuperscript{126} Moreover as Anne Massey pointed out, from the early 50s the “ICA acted as a gateway to Europe for American high culture”. American interests were channeled into the ICA through Anthony Kloman, brother in law of Philip Johnson (Director of the Architecture department at MOMA and former American cultural attache in Europe), who lectured on Modern Architecture in July 1951.\textsuperscript{127}

0. The future members of both The Independent Group and COBRA visited Paris around 1947 and made acquaintances of the same great figures of Modern Art. During 1946 and 1947, all the artists from the COBRA group visited Paris: Constant, Karel Appel and Corneille from Amsterdam; Asger Jorn from Copenhagen; and Christian Dotremont from Brussels. Around that time too Nigel Henderson and William Turnbull visited Eduardo Paolozzi, who was living there since 1946.\textsuperscript{128} Two Galleries in Paris gathered together some future members of the Independent Group and the COBRA Group: the gallery Drouin, showing the work of Dubuffet (‘Le Foyer de l’art brut’,\textsuperscript{129} and Portraits exhibition, Fall 1947), and the Miro exhibition at the Gallery Loeb (Fall 1946). Nigel Henderson and Paolozzi visited Dubuffet’s Foyer. Karel Appel and Corneille got there when the exhibition had already closed, but were lucky enough since the owner allowed them to take a look to the portraits exhibition of Dubuffet works that had just closed. The future members of Cobra-Amsterdam, Constant Nieuwenhuys, and Cobra-Copenhagen, Asger Jorn had met in Paris at the Miro exhibition in Gallery Loeb (Fall 1946). This fact illustrates that both groups emerged inspired from the late surrealism and found in the first “Art Brut” a clear manifestation of their early artistic concerns.

The artists from the IG and Aldo Van Eyck enjoyed a close and personal acquaintance of the Modern Artist that strongly impressed their young spirit. As art students, Paolozzi, Henderson and Turnbull met at the Slade School of Art in London but displayed a healthy skepticism for the school. Henderson and Paolozzi shared a strong interest for “all things French” and Surrealist art; they were stimulated by the Surrealist art collections of Margaret Gardiner and Roland Penrose, friends of Henderson’s mother Wyn Henderson. Thanks to her Paolozzi had his first solo exhibition in 1947. Economically and morally encouraged by the success, he decided to move to Paris in June. William Turnbull was the first to visit him, settling there the following year. With Paolozzi they visited the

\textsuperscript{125} Reference from Strauven....
\textsuperscript{126} The figure of Le Corbusier was very present among the IG. He inaugurated the first exhibition organized by Richard Hamilton at the ICA, On Growth and Form. See Massey p.30
\textsuperscript{127} Through charitable trust from a MOMA Trustee, Kloman involved the ICA in the Unknown Political Prisoner competition, a propaganda exercise on behalf of the CIA to promote american values. See Anne Massey p.84
\textsuperscript{129} In June of 1948, Dubuffet, along with five others?Jean Paulhan (a writer, linguist, and Editor of the La Nouvelle Revue Fran?aise), Andr? Breton, Charles Ration (a Parisian dealer in African art), Michel Tapi? (an art critic), and Henri-Pierre Roch? (a translator, journalist, and novelist)?officially established in Paris La Compagnie de l’art brut, an association dedicated to the discovery, documentation, and exhibition of art brut.
Henderson visited Paris in August 1947; they went to visit Peggy Guggenheim, Wyn Henderson’s friend, at the Hotel de Crillon, and met her with Hans Arp, who generously invited them to his studio, showing them some of his tips to sculpt shape cuts in wood. Unlike in London, the young artists found a great openness and generosity from established artists in Paris. According to Paolozzi, “all the artists he wanted to meet were in the phone book”. Both friends visited: Braque, Giacometti, Leger and Brancusi studios. Aldo van Eyck had visited these entire same artists in his several visits to Paris years before. In autumn 1944, shortly after the liberation of France, C.W. Giedion sent Aldo Van Eyck to Paris as “a delegate of the Zurich Circle”. He visited Giacometti, Tzara, Pevsner, Vantongerloo, and Brancusi, always lodging in Nelly van Doesburg’s house at Meudon. Aldo returned to Paris very often to visit art galleries and bookshops. He visited Braque and Leger as well and always visited Hans Arp, who lived at Meudon very close to Nelly van Doesburg house. An artist that personifies a modern language of primitive “aura” that had strong influence in members of both groups was Constantin Brancusi, Van Eyck referred to him constantly: “La simplicité n’est pas un but dans l’art mais on arrive a la simplicité malgré soi, en s’approchant du sens reel des choses”, and he was very present in his architecture. Such a fascination for Brancusi was shared by Nigel Henderson, referring to him in a letter he wrote to his wife: “Good!-another myth in perspective at last” And of course in William Turnbull’s work as well: the sculpture Sungazer (1956) for This is Tomorrow exhibition held at ICA, or his Ancestral Totem (1956) are two contemporary totems that contrasted horizontal and vertical weights with great simplicity, elementary shapes and means aiming to express lightness like Brancusi’s “Poisson” (1918-28)
1. The fascination of Dadists and Surrealists for primitive art was an essential common influence in both the Independent Group and COBRA. It is important for it led them to a common fascination for the Dubuffet and Giacometti, whose work was giving birth to a new aesthetic, and raised anew very important ethical questions regarding the value of the work of art. Primitive art had been a constant reference for all Modern Art. The IG members were completely aware of it after Herbert Read's exhibition at the ICA in London (1948) “Forty thousand years of Modern Art”, including primitive art and modern works, such as Picasso’s Demoiselles and Arp’s sculptures:

“The art of primitive people is no longer to us merely a manifestation of the disgusting idol worship of savage and cannibals. We have discovered in it powers of invention and expression which fill us with amazement and seem to point the way to new forms of art which can combine primitive vitality and vision with modern technique and sensibility…”

The outstanding exhibition on African art at the “Musee de l’homme” in Paris gathered and shocked the spirit of young artists from both groups. The interest of COBRA in primitive art first emerged from COBRA-Copenhagen, mainly Asger Jorn, and the artists from the Linien Group. Motivated by the work published in magazines such as Minotaure or Cahiers D’art, the Danish artists visited the “Musee de l’homme” in the early forties. Later on Henderson and Paolozzi visited it in 1947. According to Henderson, it was “a fine ethnographic collection that eats up anything I’ve ever seen”, an exhibition that both friends visited “again, and then again.” Paolozzi was able to visit Tristan Tzara’s library, some Duchamp pieces, and his art collection, one of the most interesting private collections of primitive art at that time. Together with Henderson he went to listen to Tzara’s lectures on Surrealism at the Sorbonne. At the same time it was Tristan Tzara who introduced Aldo to a wide range of Surrealist and Dadaist literature (Arp, Breton, Eluard, Péret, Ribemont-dessaignes, himself and others), and to his extensive documentation on non-European art. Apart from Tzara and Arp, some other figures from Dadaism, like Max Ernst and Kurt Schwitters exerted great influence in both groups.

2. Both the IG and The Cobra artists found in the praise of primitive art by Dubuffet and the sublime roughness of Giacometti’s sculpture a strong source of inspiration for their work. If Surrealism was an art movement coming from the past that nourished the young artists, in the work

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135 It was mainly Dubuffet who drew a strong critic to the “culturization” of the work of art. See “In praise of Savage Values” in Prospectus et tous écrits suivants / réunis et présentés par Hubert Damish. Paris : Gallimard. Translated by Kent Minturn in Anthropology and Aesthetics, No. 46, Pollemical Objects (Autumn, 2004), pp. 259- 268
137 See Stokvis p.129. Makes reference to Asger Jorn and Robert Dahlmann article on the exhibition published in the magazine Nyt Tidsskrift for Kunstindustri, nº1, Copenhagen, jan. 1939, p.5-6. The scandinavian artists were guided by the archeologist P.V. Glob who collaborated with Cobra magazine
139 "Hat er in london den surrealismus kennengelernt un sich mit seinen freuden dafür begeistert, so kann er jetzt bei mary reynolds und tza bedeutende sammlungen dadaistischer sowie surrealistischer kunst und literatur studieren. ’Es war ein grobes Glück für mich, ihre (M. Reynolds) umfassende Sammlung dadaistischer und surrealisterischer relicte der vorkriegszeit so ausführlich studieren zu können, besonders alle ihre Beispiele aus Marcel Duchamps früher Arbeit’… die zweite wichtige quelle für paolozzi ist tristan tzaara mit seiner bibliothek und kunstsammlung” Winfried Konnertz, Eduardo Paolozzi. Ko in : DuMont, c1984. p. 38
of Giacometti and Dubuffet founded explicitly manifested their most intimate ethic and aesthetic concerns. ‘Le Foyer de l’art brut’, the exhibition that inaugurated the “Art Brut” showed Dubuffet’s work together with primitive art and works of alienated-mad. Dubuffet’s search for elementary means in the every day life, in the layman, his critique to the strong relation between art and high culture, and his search for truth in art certainly may have inspired both, the early manifestations of Pop art in the IG, and Cobra’s communist fascination with the astonishing similarities between popular arts from different cultures. The work of Giacometti was published in Cobra and his work was included in the second COBRA exhibition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Liege (1951).\textsuperscript{140} Eduardo Paolozzi came to know Giacometti through Tzara and visited his studio several times.\textsuperscript{141} Paolozzi’s admiration of Giacometti is illustrated in one of the last sculptures he did in Paris, Forms on a Bow (1949). Certainly, through the personal experience and work of Henderson, Paolozzi and Turnbull, Dubuffet’s “Art Brut” and Giacometti’s work were present in the IG. Paolozzi’s work was considered close enough to that of Dubuffet and included in Michel Tapie’s book Un Art Autre (1952).\textsuperscript{142} Dubuffet bought six photographs from Henderson exhibited at the Milan Triennale and the ICA in 1954 and wrote him to praise and encourage his work.\textsuperscript{143} Later on a Jean Dubuffet exhibition opened at the ICA (1955) following Independent Group discussions on his work and Giacometti’s\textsuperscript{144}.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{Brunnen für das Festival of Britain, London 1951}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image2.png}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image3.png}
\caption{See Walsh on Henderson p.30. Some of these stressed photographs were collected by Henderson’s friend Francis Bacon who shared certain psychological fragility}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image4.png}
Certainly Aldo van Eyck’s acquaintance of the avant-garde milieu was more intense than Paolozzi’s and Henderson’s. C.W. Giedion had a close relation with many of the avant-garde artists, and was a great specialist in modern art and wrote some of her earlier books on their work. She introduced Aldo to many of the artists and influenced his vision of Modern Art. Nevertheless, Nigel Henderson and Paolozzi found in Peggy Guggenheim as well, friend of Henderson’s mother, a fairy godmother who introduced them to the artistic milieu in Paris. Although those kinds of contacts were not so indispensable, since Henderson and Paolozzi like Van Eyck and the COBRA Group experienced the generosity and openness of these artists who felt more or less united for a same cause, and were completely aware of the importance of cooperation among them. Certainly, the young artists from the COBRA Group did not experience such an intense relation with the avant-garde art milieu as Henderson or Van Eyck. Neither did the Smithsons or Banham in the case of the Independent Group. But the influence of Van Eyck in the case of the COBRA Group, and that of Henderson, Paolozzi and Turnbull in the Smithsons and the Independent Group debates, certainly shaped their interpretation and conception of the Parisian art scene, still considered the epicenter of avant-garde art.

Some members of the Independent Group and the entire COBRA group had contact with the modern art milieu that grounded their conception of art in the spirit of the avant-garde from the beginning of the century. The fact that both groups of young artists visited the same exhibitions illustrates the fascination of these young artists had for what was left from Dadaism and Surrealism and emerging artists like Giacometti and Dubuffet. The acquaintance of consolidated artists such as Brancusi (1876-1957), Arp (1886-1966), and Tzara (1896-1963), respectively together with the younger emerging artists such as Giacometti and Dubuffet (Both born 1901) marked a transitional influence from Dadaism, Surrealism and Art Brut was very present for both groups of artists onwards. The Dadaist “ready-made”, the Surrealist “object-trouve” and the Brutalist criticism to the transformation of the work of art into a commodity of the emerging “Cultural” market will be, to some extent, present in both the Independent Group and the COBRA Group. The Brutalist “aura” is equally present in both. In fact in COBRA-Copenhagen emerged almost parallel to Dubuffet’s Foyer, not as much as a criticism to the market of Galleries and Museums lest numerous in Copenhagen of course, but in its formal aspects and the experimentation with the art of fools, primitives and kids. Concerning the Dadaist influence, the strong ties of Duchamp with the Independent Group members made a difference. The “As found” object was considered as an “objet trouve” catalytic in the creative process, but at the same time as a “ready-made” charged with the irony, double-meaning and cultural critique of the Dadaists. Besides, there are the more obvious divergences on the political stance of both groups; the Cobra departed from a strong Communist ideology and defined itself trying to be as cohesive, international and organized as a Communist party, whereas the Independent Group could not have been less formal, and didn’t think of themselves as a group, enjoying the welfare state economical improvement while fascinated with “American culture”

145 Pierre Alechinsky artist from the Cobra Group referred to their visits to van Eyck “When he lived in the center of Amsterdam we never failed to visit him. We were always sure to find some intellectual nourishment at his place, it was like a spring in the desert” Strauven note 162 on p.123.
0.2.2. THE INDEPENDENT GROUP & MODERN ART:

The transition from Dadaism to Surrealism is marked by the strong influence of psychology and psychiatry in the world of art. Freud’s Studies on hysteria (1895), The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) and Introduction to psychoanalysis (1917) together with Jung’s Psychology of the Unconscious (1912) marked a new era in western civilization conception of folly, dreams, imagination and human behavior not strictly determined by reason. Dada was a protest against the war and established systems of values; Surrealism emerged from it and relied on the value given to the unconscious by Freud. Breton’s Surrealist Manifesto from 1924 begins following the Dadaist denounce of the constraints exerted to imagination by the process of civilization and the materialist idea of progress: “Cette imagination qui n’admettait pas de bornes, on ne lui permet plus de s’exercer que selon les lois d’une utilité arbitraire »146. Breton criticized the rationalism in vogue that relied on empiricism and immediate usefulness “…Elle est garde par le bon sens. Sous couleur de civilisation, sous pretexte de progres, on est parvenu a bannir de l’esprit tout ce qui se peut taxer a tort ou a raison de superstition, de chimere; a proscrire tout mode de recherche de la verite qui n’est pas conforme a l’usage »147. In an open reference to Freud, Breton outlined the freedom of our inner will and imagination that happens when we dream; and defined surrealism in a very Dadaist manner for it is a co-existence of two opposed states of being: "Je crois a la resolution future de ces deux etats, en apparence si contradictories, que sont le reve et la realite, en une sorte de realite absolue, de surrealite"148. The imagination of the fools is praised by Breton for their inobservance of the established conventions and their truthiness. Nevertheless it is important to point out that Freud did not show any interest in Breton’s interpretation that the subconscious was better than conscious mind, when Breton visited him in Viena during the summer of 1921.149 Breton’s Surrealism was strongly criticized by Picabia for being “a poor imitation of Dada”

The IG did not followed Surrealism in vogue within the ICA board

n a way slightly similar to the Dadaists, the informal and convoluted nature of the group makes very difficult any categorical statement. For the shake of clarity, the present inquiry focuses on the point of view and concerns of certain members of the IG that where close to Alison and Peter Smithson at the time of the projects analyzed. Hence, initially, it will consider mainly the work and ideas of Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, with whom the architects worked together in two exhibitions that marked the beginning and the end of the IG, namely, the Parallel of life and art exhibition organized at the ICA from the 11th September through 18th October of 1953, and the This is Tomorrow exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery in March 1955. The Smithsons and Paolozzi met as teachers at the Central School of Arts in 1951. Together with Nigel Henderson they formed something of a “splinter group” within the IG.150

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147 i.b.i.d. p.20
148 i.b.i.d. p.24 Certainly the fools were fascinated with Breton as much as Breton and the surrealists were fascinated with the obscure side of mind; Breton’s 2nd Surrealist Manifesto starts an extract of the Annales Medico-Psychologiques from November 1929 denouncing and regretting the success and popularity of Breton’s Nadja among the fools. i.b.i.d. p.67
150 Anne Massey, p.79 and p.99
At a certain stage the influence of Richard Hamilton and Reyner Banham are strongly considered as well. Among the “theorists” of the IG. Reyner Banham, Tony del Renzio and Lawrence Alloway. This survey focuses mainly on Banham’s arguments for they were closer to the Smithson’s concerns. Among the artists of the IG, the work and ideas of Richard Hamilton are taken into consideration for his early relation with Eduardo Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson (whom he met at the Slade school of art in 1948), and his common concerns with Banham and John McHale regarding the relation of technology, design and art.

Duchamp, Henderson & the Ready-Made:

“Can one make works which are not works of art”

Marcel Duchamp, 1913

1. Duchamp’s first ready-made Wheel (1913) marks the beginning of Dadaism in New York; the Fountain (1917) propelled the emergence of Pop Art in England. It was not the Fountain itself but the “logic” behind that piece developed in Duchamp’s later works, such as The Green Box (1938), that influenced the Independent Group artists at the ICA. When Duchamp made his first ready made he had no specific idea in mind, maybe just an idea of pleasure and uselessness. It was not intended to be shown it was for his own use: “Something to have in my room the way you have a fire, or a pencil sharpener, except that there was no usefulness. It was a pleasant gadget, pleasant for the movement it gave.”

Duchamp had an ironic critical attitude towards the artistic milieu that challenged the current conception and acceptance of what should be Modern Art: “…I have disliked this ‘artistic life’ in which I was involved.—it is the exact opposite of what I want. So I have tried to somewhat escape from the artists through the library…” The 1917 Independents Exhibition held in the Grand Central Palace in New York, mainly controlled by Walter Arensberg-wealthy businessman and modern art collector friend of Duchamp since his arrival to Manhatan, produced one of the most influential events on contemporary art: the rejection of one art piece submitted for the exhibition by the president of the Society’s board of Directors Mr. George Bellow. The piece, R. Mutt’s Fountain, was submitted by Duchamp, who together with Arensberg and Joseph Stella bought it at J.L. Mott Iron Works (at 118 Fifth Avenue) after a spirited conversation at lunch. The piece was rejected regardless of Arensberg’s passionate defense of it: “A lovely form has been revealed, freed from its functional purpose, therefore a man has clearly made an aesthetic contribution…this is what the whole exhibit is about, an opportunity to allow the artist to send in anything he chooses, for the artist to decide what is art, not someone else.” Once rejected Duchamp took it and brought it to Alfred Stieglitz’s Gallery “291”, who, at Marcel requests, immortalized the art piece in a photograph.

In September 1936 Duchamp travels back to Europe. By the end of 1937 Andre Breton asked him to design the Exposition Internationale du Surrealisme that took place the 17th January 1938. Duchamp skipped the opening of the exhibition, together with Mary Reynolds they travel to
London to hang a Jean Cocteau exhibition at the Galerie Guggenheim-Jeune. 155 It was through Peggy Guggenheim that Nigel Henderson first met Marcel Duchamp at that time. Among the Independent Group artist, Nigel Henderson had a privileged background that led him to a deep understanding of modern art. After working in Paris surrounded by surrealist originals at Nancy Cunard’s Hours Press, Henderson’s mother, Wyn Henderson, returned to London. Living in Gordon Square, she got involved with Virginia Woolf’s Bloomsbury Circle. Within the artistic entourage in London she became close to Dylan Thomas and ended up managing Peggy Guggenheim’s Gallery, Guggenheim-Jeune. Peggy Guggenheim first met Duchamp at Mary Reynolds’ house in Paris. 156 Peggy had rebelled against her family’s bourgeois respectable live in New York moving to Europe, hanging around with unsuitable men and becoming an art dealer. It was Duchamp who introduced her to modern art. At that time she could not distinguish one work from another: “He taught me the difference between Surrealism, Cubism, and abstract art. Then he introduced me to all the artists. They all adored him and I was well received wherever I went”. The young Nigel Henderson found in Peggy Guggenheim a kind of “fairy godmother” who introduced him to some of the avant-garde artists in Paris around the 30s. Through her he made acquaintances with Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy, but it was Duchamp who made a great impression on him.157 Nigel Henderson met Duchamp in one soirée at Mary Reynolds’ flat in Paris. Although unfamiliar with Duchamp’s work according to Victoria Walsh, the young Nigel Henderson was knocked out by Duchamp’s personal magnetism and the two fell into easy conversation. This meeting was later consolidated when Duchamp visited London to hang the opening exhibition of Guggenheim-Jeune in 1938 and asked Henderson to help him:158

“In that long day I spent with Duchamp a couple of years before the war hanging an exhibition of Cocteau’s drawings of hands and fingers and boring narcissus-featured androgynes-a day that both hung in the air forever and passed in a puff of smoke like hashish dream- Duchamp quietly drew me out and extracted my interest in science and an expression of a wish to fly. He told me he thought I ought to fly and conserve my interest in science. ‘Throw nothing away’. All said so gently, ironically, serenely- it was almost like hearing the voice from within”159

157 Victoria Walsh, Nigel Henderson: parallel of life and art; foreword and afterword by Peter Smithson. London: Thames & Hudson, c2001 (p-xxxx)
159 Letter to Chris Mullen (See James King The last modern: A life of Herbert Read in Victoria Walsh, Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art, Thames & Hudson, London 2001
According to Walsh, through this informal relation with the artistic milieu in Paris, Henderson gained the confidence to believe that he could become an artist, and ended up in possession of one of Duchamp's main pieces, the Green Box (September 1934)\(^{160}\). Richard Hamilton borrowed Henderson's copy of the Green Box and tried to translate Duchamp's notes through a French-speaking fellow for a lecture on the Large Glass at the ICA. The lecture was a disaster since the audience considered Duchamp's note a joke and Hamilton ended up mailing his interpretation of the Green Box notes to Duchamp wondering whether he might have misunderstood them. Duchamp put Hamilton in contact with George Hamilton at Yale and the two of them worked together in the English translation of the notes for publication\(^{161}\).

Duchamp’s influence propelled in two different places, New York and London, the emergence of different kinds of what has been labeled “Pop-art”. In New York it happened in the late 50s and it emerged in the very much classical conception of an art piece, in the painting of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauchenberg-who in 1958 had visited the Arensberg collection in Philadelphia. In the early 50s in London, “Pop art” emerged not as the result of an “artistic piece” created by an artist but as an artistic concern for the products of “popular culture”. The IG artists developed their idea of “Pop-art” and the Pop collages from “ready-made” material they found in the comic strips and the ads from consumer society emerging at that time in the USA. Whereas the COBRA group were mainly fascinated by popular-ancient imagery, the Independent Group artists were enthusiastic about a serious analysis of the current “popular culture” of American society that was being imported into Europe. In fact the first Independent Group meeting consisted of Eduardo Paolozzi’s collages from American magazines through an epidiascope at the ICA in April 1952.\(^{162}\)


The emergence of the IG’s battle field, the I.C.A. (Institute of Contemporary Arts), and the landing of Surrealism in London are tied together. According to Roland Penrose the ICA begun with the International Surrealist exhibition at New Burlington Galleries in 1936. It was followed by the already mentioned exhibition “40.000 thousand years of Modern Art” in December 1948. 1950, the year that petrol and milk rationing ended in England, marked the emergence of the future Independent Group members activity: works at Hunstanton school designed by Alison & Peter Smithson begun that year, Richard Hamilton and Nigel Henderson collaborated in the ICA exhibition “James Joyce: His life and work”, and the works of Paolozzi, Turnbull and Hamilton are included at the ICA exhibition “1950: Aspects of British Art”. The ICA in London was the institutional platform that gathered the Independent Group members. Some of them had initially met at the Slade School of Art in the late 40s (Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, William Turnbull and Richard Hamilton), whose similar concerns on Modern Art strengthen their friendship mainly after their visit to Paris. Whereas the ICA board members, such as Hebert Read, remained tied to Surrealism and the Bauhaus the IG members relied on a more Dadaist spirit of criticism. According to Massey, the IG, the influence of Dada and the philosophy of Logical Positivism and Existentialism, “arrived at a new understanding of modernism which emphasized the history of science and technology and gloried in the disorder of human existence as opposed to the preciousness of metaphysical art”

Giacometti, Paolozzi & the Objet-trouve:

The two years Paolozzi spent in Paris from 1946 to 1947 completely transformed his work and enriched his understanding of Modern Art. Since the mid 40s in London, inspired mainly by the work of Max Ernst, Duchamp, Man Ray and Schwitters, Paolozzi had been exploring the technique of collage in his Scrapbook and other works, such as “Head of Demeter” (1946) or “Nike des

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164 This point is made by Anne Massey in chapter 3 (p.33) where she adds that IG also “deconstructed modernist design theory”
165 Anne Massey, p.33
Paionios” (1946).\textsuperscript{166} Following his friend Raymond Mason, Paolozzi moved to Paris to get away from the “Soft and weak tradition of British art”.\textsuperscript{167} His early enthusiasm for the Dadaists was nourished in Paris, where he could study closely the work of the Dadaists. He visited the big Surrealist exhibition organized by Breton and Duchamp at the Galerie Maeght (July/August 1947) and discovered the work of Picabia at the Galerie Colette. Fascinated by Picabia’s work, he visited several of his exhibitions, including Picabia’s retrospective “491. 50 ans de plaisir” at the Galerie Maeght (March 1948). The work of Picabia particularly impressed Paolozzi who certainly founded in the work of the early Dadaist a free and abstract play with the same elements he had been working on.\textsuperscript{168}

Francis Picabia (French, 1879-1953). Alarm Clock I (Réveil matin I), illustration on the title page of the journal Dada, no. 4-5: Dada Anthology, Tristan Tzara, editor, Mouvement Dada, May 1919, National Gallery of Art, Washington. Paolozzi collage “Nike des Paionios” (1946)

At that time in Paris, Paolozzi learned about Dadaism from the same source as Van Eyck: Tristan Tzara’s personal library and art collection. Tzara’s collection of art works and texts covered almost thirty years of Modern Art. Together with Mary Reynolds’ collection, it gave the opportunity to Paolozzi to study the originals works from the Dadaists. The work in freedom performed by Picabia, Duchamp, Arp, their reliance on chance, and the irrational and intuitive work materialized in Ernst and Schwitters collages, shocked the young Paolozzi: “Tzara besab die ‘Chinesische Nachtigall’ von Max Ernst. Sie war ein grobes, starkes symbol für mich’...’die moisten dieser arbeiten der frühen Dadaisten und auch von Kurt Schwitters scheinen mir zu laut, manchmal sogar zu infantile und zu albern in ihrem Protest gegen ernsthafte Handwerk-liekheit und geegen alle kunst...Ich bin, in der Tat, sehr für die kunst”.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{166} See Winfried Konnertz. P.33
\textsuperscript{167} “Picabia hat mich sehr beeindruckt” Paolozzi quote from Winfried Konnertz. P.33
\textsuperscript{168} Paolozzi quote from Winfried Konnertz. P.36
\textsuperscript{169} Paolozzi quote from Winfried Konnertz. P.42
What overwhelmed Paolozzi’s spirit as sculptor was not the exploration of the Dadaists’ work, already known for him, but the discovery of Giacometti’s work and personality. During his time in Paris, Paolozzi visited, together with Henderson and Turnbull, Brancusi’s atelier, but unlike Henderson who felt great admiration for the Rumanian sculptor, Brancusi’s work left him indifferent. Paolozzi was a rough man, certainly not a cultivated person with enough interest in non-figurative art to fully appreciate Brancusi’s work, as Henderson or Van Eyck were. Paolozzi’s early works, the collages he had been doing in London before his arrival to Paris, like “Nike des Paionios” (1946), relied on the human figure or at least departed from it. Paolozzi found what he was looking for in Giacometti, as an artist and a sculptor. One who struggled and succeed in materializing an image of modern man’s condition. Giacometti’s sculpture materialized not a specific man, not a human being as an object, but a human in relation with the space and the objects surrounding him:

“In space, says Giacometti, there is too much. This too much is the pure and simple coexistence of parts in juxtaposition. Most sculptors let themselves be taken by this. Giacometti knows that space is a cancer of being, and eats everything: to sculpt, for him, is to take the fat of space; he compresses space, so as to drain off its exteriority. This attempt may well seem desperate; and Giacometti, I think, two or three times came very near to despair… Once he had a terror of emptiness; for months, he came and went with an abyss at his side; space had come to know through him its desolate sterility. Another time, it seemed to him that objects, dulled and dead, no longer touched the earth, he inhabited a floating universe, he knew in his flesh, and to the point of martyrdom, that there is neither high nor low in space, no real contact between things.”

Alberto Giacometti in his studio looking at a “Head of Simone de Beauvoir” in plaster (1946), and Giacometti’s studio 1947 by Brassai

As much as Giacometti influenced Paolozzi, this one influenced the Independent Group with his work and personality. Nevertheless Paolozzi was not the only member of the IG whose sculpture was strongly influenced by Giacometti, the work of William Turnbull at that time was certainly indebted to Giacometti’s influence.

IMAGE OF TURNBULL SCULP::GIACOMETTI....

In this context, another important element from Giacometti in relation with Surrealism that had a strong influence in the Independent Group is the “Object Trouvé”. Regardless the specific

170 He saw as well Leger’s “Ballet mechanique”. See Winfried Konnertz. P.47
importance of Paolozzi or Turnbull spreading it, the concept of the "As found" played an important role in the IG. Within the IG a whole aesthetics was developed departing from it by Alison & Peter Smithson. The idea of the “Objet Trouve” emerges from Giacometti’s relation with Breton in his early period within the surrealism movement. The “ready-made” was an already crafted object, designed with specific purpose that the artist disrupts by using it in a purpose-free art. The “Objet-trouve” in itself is not important; it is important in so far as its finding plays a catalytic role in the artist’s mind. Breton and Giacometti visited a flea market were the finding of an ancient sculpture played such a catalytic role, for it aroused Giacometti’s inspiration, giving birth to his sculpture “invisible object” (1936). Breton developed this idea further on in the article, “L’équation de l’objet trouve”:

“A la pointe de la decouverte, de l’instant ou pour les premières navigateurs une nouvelle terre fut en vue a celui ou ils mirent le pied sur la cote, de l’instant ou tel savant put se convaincre qu’il venait d’etre temoin d’un phenomen d’un phenomene jusqu’a lui inconnu a celui ou el commenga a mesurer la portee de son observation, tout sentiment de duree aboli dans l’enivrement de la chance...C’est a la recreation de cet etat particulier de l’esprit que le Surrealisme a toujours aspire...Aujord’hui encore je n’attends rien que de ma seule disponibilite, que de cette soif d’errer a la rencontre de tout, dont je m’assure qu’elle me mantien en communication mysterieuse avec des autres etres disponibles, comme si nous etions appeles a nous reunir soudain...”

Giacometti working in the “invisible object”. Photo of the final sculpture in plaster by Man Ray (Around 1936)

One of the things Paolozzi saw at that time was a room covered by Duchamp with cut outs from National Geographic magazine, “as found” objects and hanging sculptures by Calder important for this inquiry in so far as it may have been influential for the idea of Parallel of Life and Art exhibit: “


173 Winfried Konnertz. P.40
0.2.3. C.W. GIEDION, VAN EYCK & MODERN ART:

The relation of Van Eyck with the Giedions begins around 1942 when Aldo Van Eyck made the acquaintance of C.W. Giedion in a Surrealist vernisage, where he acquired his first painting, an Yves Tanguy composition (1938). C.W. Giedion introduced Van Eyck to the core of the modern artists living in Zurich and Paris: Giacometti, Tzara, Leger, Braque, Pevsner, Vantongerloo, Nelly Van Doesbourg, and Brancusi; at the same time, her wide knowledge and deep intellectual insight shaped Van eyck’s conception of modern art: “Carola Gideon-Welcker...She opened my windows – and I haven’t closed them since…” Among the artists Van Eyck met in Paris, Brancusi, Arp and Tzara shook his sensibility more deeply. Arp encouraged Van Eyck to make a series of ink drawings from Sophie Täuber’s sketches, stressing the necessity of cooperation among the artists, an idea that Van Eyck will carry on in the architectural realm:

“...he wanted them to illuminate poems of his he wished to publish. I worried about my interpretations wherever her pencil lines were vague and ambiguous, but Arp waved my anxiety aside saying that I should regard what I was doing as cooperation- the effort of two people, not one, this time: that was how it should be in art- the way one day will be, he said. I was flattered, eased and a lot the wiser...the Alsatian poet...”

1. Tristan Tzara’s spontaneity and rebel spirit was very present in Van Eyck’s ideals, Tzara’s motto “Juste ce qu’il faut de souterrain entre le vin et la vie” a dedication for Van Eyck’s one-year old daughter was widely used by Van Eyck for subsequent publications on architecture. Tzara dedicated as well Annie van Eyck’s copy of “L’Homme approximatif”, with a Max Ernst quote: “L’oeil toujours neuf au detour des choses”. The spirit of continuous curiosity and childlike fascination should be constantly renewed for an ultimate Dadaist like Tzara. Although the Dadaist as a group had been dissolved into the surrealism movement or spread in different corners of Europe, Tzara reminded the young Van Eyck that Dada’s spirit was still alive: “Dada reste” was Tzara’s dedication of “La main passé” to Van Eyck the 24th of January 1946, Zurich.

2. But the artist who shook Van Eyck’s spirit more was Brancusi: “For us, Brancusi was the summit of what art could mean” both for his personality and his work. Certainly the studio of the Rumanian artist in Paris was one of the epicenters of the Paris avant-garde, where he received the visit of his close friends like Duchamp and Tzara, and. Brancusi welcomed as well the visit of young artists, the future members of the Independent Group: Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson and William Turnbull visited his studio. For these young artists Brancusi’s atelier had certainly the special

REFERENCE!!
177 This point is made by Van Eyck himself and Strauven, see Aldo van Eyck: The Shape of relativity. Van Eyck’s quote is from “Ex Turico alliquid novum” Francis and Vincent Ligtelijn (p-20)

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aura of a timeless capsule overcrowded of sculptures illuminated by the skylights, as Van Eyck stated: “I wish you could have seen Brancusi unveiling his gleaming bird and fish. He really unveiled the timeless mystery and splendor of heaven and ocean”¹⁷⁹.

3. Among the artists that van Eyck met in Zurich through C.W. Giedion, it was R.P. Lohse, with whom van Eyck had an on going dialogue on the relations between art and architecture for many years. Lohse had come to know Van Eyck’s work in 1948, when the magazine Bauen+Wohnen¹⁸⁰ run by Sigfried Giedion and Richard Paul Lohse published Van Eyck’s conversion of a tower room in Löffler house (Zurich 1944-45).¹⁸¹ Lohse painting had evolved from an early Suprematism into a Neoplasticism charged of rhythm after he saw Mondrian’s Broadway Boogie-Woogie (1942-43)

INCLUDE LOHSE EARLY PAINTING AND NEOPLASTICIST PAINTING….

The work of R.P. Lohse was strongly admired by C.W. Giedion. According to her: “What carries Lohse beyond the foundation of highly-developed systematics and methodical consistency is the genuine poetical sensibility he is filled with”¹⁸² From Dadaists to Neoplasticists. Van Eyck experienced the co-existence of complementary opposite points of view in Modern Art. He referred to all of them in Giedion’s terms as the “Great gang” and illustrated their strong solidarity, referring to anecdotes such as Mondrian’s answer to a provoking question at the opening of a Max Ernst show in New York: “Max, vous savez, il fait la meme chose que moi, mais dans l’autre hemisphere”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ From “A tribute to Carola Giedion-Welcker” in forum, 1959, n°9, p.322 and Francis and Vincent Ligtelijn (p-133)
¹⁸⁰ Bauen + Wohnen, 1948 no. 2, and in A decade of New Architecture, Girberger, Zurich 1951)
¹⁸³ From “Ex Turico aliquid novum” Francis and Vincent Ligtelijn P.19 Another anecdote that illustrates the solidarity between artists is tell by Van Eyck in the opening speech for the Van Doesburg exhibit. In Rotterdam: “…at a gathering in Zurich in honour of Van Doesburg, someone thought he could please Van
CW Guide on concepts influential on Van Eyck

C.W. Giedion not only introduced Van Eyck to Modern artists in person but to some extent shaped his early conception of Modern Art. C.W. Giedion published several books on artists that Van Eyck refers constantly, such as Brancusi, Klee and Arp. In fact many of Van Eyck's quotes of these artists are to be found in C.W. books.184 Several of the concerns she summarizes in Modern Plastik (Zurich, 1937) are to be found in Aldo Van Eyck’s work and theory as well:

1. First, C.W. Giedion started Modern Plastik art with a very simple statement: “Plastic art is VISIBLE and TANGIBLE. It is derived from the formation of actual bodies” according to her “Art is always a product of nature, she refer to it as a being or bodies, it might be a figurative or non-figurative but is after all a product of man's nature “Man becomes thing-like, the thing becomes man-like.”185 She does not understands abstract art as an “abstraction” from nature, detached from it, mainly the opposite she relies on Arp’s idea of art as a fruit of man “Art is a fruit out of man like the fruit out of a plant like the child out of the mother...”186

2. The second important aspect of Giedion’s conception is the emphasis placed on the power of imagination and intuition in the artistic creation (IMAGINATION and Spinoza’s “scientia intuitiva”, van eyck against logical thinking and for spinoza’s “clear knowledge”: “We call clear knowledge which comes not from our being convinced by reason, but from our feeling and enjoyment of the thing itself, and which surpasses the others by far”) How Dada and Surrealism share in common the artist capacity to fuse individual & community through the work with elementary objects of the everyday life:

“Dadaism created a metaphysic of banality by discovering the plastic vitality that emanates from nameless or unnoticed things, and their unsuspected powers of self-expression…Surealism dissolves the wall between our inner and outer life. It permeates dreams with reality and reality with dreams, confronting or fusing the psychical and the physical, the conscious and the subconscious, the individual and the community…”

3. Among the Dadaists Giedion was fascinated wit the originality of Arp's uncompromising elementalism, his repetitive organic forms “identical beneath their mutations, which he uses as symbols of a single pre-existing master-form” According to Giedion, Arp finds in nature a common elemental prototype that is always present, he gives form to it, is to be found in a snowflake, a stone

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185 C.W. giedion quote in Strauven p.79

186 The text was first published in the magazine Transition in 1932, in a piece called 'Notes from a Dada diary'. Included in ARP. Moma.1958. See the text by C.W. Giedion On some Arp Reliefs

or the works of man, and it always emerges according to the rhythms of nature “All Arp’s work mirrors a state of cosmic flux. Movement is conveyed by the suggestion of growth into shape, or by the rhythms of ebb and flow”188 This conception was very present in Van Eyck early ideas about art ad architecture summarized in the Report concerning the interrelation of the plastic arts and the importance of cooperation for CIAM 6, Bridgwater, 1947 where he stated: “Art should always be natural, it should produce its own forms naturally instead of reproducing those of nature artificially…Art should reveal the elementary whether the elementary be complex or not” What is important about Van Eyck point is the context in which he argues. The young Van Eyck is reminding to the CIAM members an essential component of Modern Art that was being left behind, the idea that architecture should produce its own “natural” forms instead of reproduce those of nature artificially through emulation or the so-called abstraction. For that purpose the search for elementary forms that re-unite man and its community with nature must be achieved.

The search for elementary forms is ultimately related with the Dadaist obsession with the co-existence of elementary opposites. Hans Arp referred to the Dadaist period in Zurich in Blakian terms « Nous aspirons a un ordre nouveau qui put retablir l’équilibre entre le ciel et l’enfer »189 In C.W. Giedion refered to Brancusi, Joyce and Klee as artists in which life constantly vibrates within a double aspect of the heavenly and the hellish “Scarcely do we hear the angel singing, than the demons start pinching. According to Brancusi, ‘God and the Devil are not separate beings, not fixed either here or there, but exist everywhere and at once”190 The expression of fundamental opposites using elementary means of visual language was used by Van Eyck’ in his theory and practice. A beautiful example is the issue of the magazine Forum nº12191, devoted to the twin phenomena such as “Night & Day” the magazine illustrates with an eclipse the co-existence of twin phenomena in nature as it happens in the cities. Images of old cities during the day (Hadramaut) and new cities at night (New York) are contrasted so is the different behavior of the people, the speed of the traffic lights at night and a pedestrian main street in a sunny afternoon. The city is presented as the ultimate architectural event of nature where both, night and day, the sun and the moon co-exist, an eclipse of complementary and opposed human behaviors.

In the architectural realm of the building the co-existence of opposites was clearly elaborated by Van Eyck’s re-interpretation of traditional architecture. An image of a child sitting on the doorstep of his house was used by Van Eyck192 to illustrate an architectural space where the kid feels both outside and inside his house, brave enough to explore the outside and fearful enough to remain at home. In the same way the play-pool areas of Van Eyck’s Orphanage in Amsterdam (1955-60) were playful areas outside but inside the building.

188 Modern plastic art, elements of reality, volume and disintegration. C.W. Guideon, 1937
190 From C.W. Guideon, Constantin Brancusi, Basle/Stuttgart 1958, p. 196.
192 Forum 8 (1959)
One last important aspect of C.W. Giedion conception of Plastic Art is a consequence of her synthetic vision that will be very present in Van Eyck’s architecture theory. If Plastic Art is an essential part of human culture that connects men with nature and the universe, spatially, it is as well an essential aspect that unites human kid in time, therefore primitive art and Modern Art are united for they aim the same values and as things are still present in our world. Giedion considers that an analogous movement to Modern Art happened in other aspects of culture such as Architecture, poetry, music, philosophy and physics. In this terms she sees a formal affinity between the purely utilitarian mechanisms of modern industry and the utopian experiments of Modern Art: “It is no longer possible to remain blind to the direct formal affinity between the purely utilitarian mechanism of modern industry, transport and publicity, and those so-called utopian experiments in art which, in part at least, had anticipated them” Art is seen as an essential aspect of human culture that connects the individual with the universal through time, for the same reciprocal stimulus between art and technique that gave birth in the first dawn of plastic art to Primitive art produced at a different scale nowadays the so-called Modern art.

According to C.W. Giedion the last scientific discoveries in Physics “radically modified our conceptions of space, time and motion; and …mass… now considered as a factor conditioned by speed” This is direct allusion to the relativity’s theory, very present as well in Van Eyck’s theory. Quote from Modern Plastik art p.17
“CIAM extended the inherent weaknesses of the Bauhaus climate-teutonic, stale, didactic derivative – instead of its strength. I was laughed at when I mentioned Schlemmer and Klee at Bridgewater. Only Moholy and Breuer (atrocious architect) and Herbert Bayer were allowed. And no Mies, oh no, no Mies! Too near De Stijl, and the Bauhaus hates De Stijl because it got what it stood first hand from Van Doesburg and some Russians passing by”

Aldo Van Eyck, *Letter to Giedion on the dissolution of CIAM*\(^\text{194}\)
Undated manuscript, obviously written shortly after 10 Dec. 1960

0.3.1 **Van Eyck’s intervention at CIAM VI, “Wij ontdekken Stijl”:**

“L'EMOTION, L'ART sont aussi nécessaires que l'eau et le pain…”

Le Corbusier intervention


Two years after the 2nd World War ended, the CIAM 6 took place at the Arts Centre in the eighteenth-century Castle Street, Bridgewater (England). Why Bridgewater? According to Sigfried Giedion “…the answer is simple enough. CIAM is a working congress and needed to go into rustication away from the distractions of a great city.” Europe’s main metropolises were facing reconstruction after the devastation produced during the 2nd World War. The conflict had produced atrocities such as the Nazi’s holocaust, that killed over 6 million people, and the Allies mass bombing of civilian areas, including Tokio and Dresden, the soviet Gulags, and the United States nuclear bombs over Nagashaki and Hiroshima, over 60 million people died in the whole world from 1939 to 1945. Certainly Dresden would have not been a comfortable meeting place for such elegant gentlemen as Walter Gropius or Le Corbusier. Among the reasons why these well-dressed architects did not hold the CIAM in the continent was the fact that it was very difficult for them to face the overwhelming task of reconstructing Europe, physically and morally. Such an enormous challenge required not only good planners, builders, architects or bureaucrats, but the courage to face the real problem, and the wisdom to reconsider the human values that brought Europe and the world into such a big crisis.

It was the time for the new generation to come and face the problem inspired by the natural blind bravery that emerges from youth. Some CIAM members saw it clearly, mainly S. Giedion and Le Corbusier; hence, they paved the way for the new generation to come. To some extent Giedion’s demand to reconsider the CIAM beyond the socio-economic and planning issues suggested a reconsideration of architecture’s role as, a form of art, and its foundational values in Western civilization. Giedion’s concerns for CIAM 6, which “Stirred the whole congress”, propelled a concluding resolution in which the CIAM recognized that the technological and industrial development should be placed under control by a “sense of human values.” This was a shared concern: Jaap Bakema, at the preparatory congress in Zurich, as a delegate of young Dutch architects, had submitted a proposal which emphasized the capacity of a free conception of space and expressive design to activate values like social justice, freedom and cooperation. For the Dutch juniors, architects should “make use of their artistic talent, not only to satisfy material needs,

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196 Sigfried Giedion, A Decade of New Architecture p.11
197 the soviet mass rape of german women or Operations such as Keelhaul, Katyn, the expulsion of Germans from areas outside the territory of post-war Germany and post-war Austria
198 In the introduction to the publication of the Congress entitled A Decade of Contemporary Architecture (1937-1947) S. Giedion summarizes the states of the arts in the whole world, the word “war” is not mentioned, the grief must have been certainly deep. See Sigfried Giedion. A Decade of Contemporary Architecture. Zurich, Editions Girsberger, 1954.
199 See Strauven p.118
200 See Strauven p.118 hence CIAM new intentions were “To work for the creation of a physical environment that will satisfy man’s emotional and material needs and stimulate its spiritual growth” Strauven footnote 159 on p.122
but also to stimulate the need for culture” and social righteousness.\textsuperscript{202} This concern was not new at CIAM; it emerged from the spirit of La Sarraz (1928), which aimed to “satisfy the spiritual, intellectual and material needs of present day-life.”\textsuperscript{203} Embedded in that spirit, Bakema’s statement for the congress, “Architecture & public opinion: social architecture – new architecture”, faced the issue of the war directly, expressed the current fear of a propagation of the conflict into a 3rd World War and emphasized architecture’s role as art able to stimulate freedom and peace:

“Now after the 2nd World War, public opinion is worried about the question: can the economic problem be solved without a third war? I think that a CIAM architect has the task to help prevent this third world war by means of his artmanship…I think that with our towns and buildings we can make the people feel that their lives can only be in harmony by their developing their own creative activity. Only then will the architect have the right to risk about being misunderstood by the public. Because he uses his artmanship, not for giving expression to his individual desires, but to stimulate the development of real freedom for everyone”\textsuperscript{204}

In tune with Van Eyck’s intervention, Bakema’s concerns arose from the spirit of Modern Art movements. As in the case of the Dadaists or the Suprematists, Bakema conceived architecture not as an end in itself, but as a means to illustrate and establish men’s relations among them and the creations of nature:

“Architecture must stimulate the feeling for the relationships that make real life; we must not work for form, aesthetics, architecture by themselves. Architecture is the special science (and art) by means of which the hidden relations between and in the natural things is made clear. Man can live without fear in the world if he knows about his personal relation to the whole (of creation)”

\textsuperscript{203} Jaap Bakema Archive, g.9-12, Netherlands Architecture Institute, p.1
\textsuperscript{204} i.b.i.d. p.1
\textsuperscript{204} i.b.i.d. p.1-2
In this context Van Eyck’s intervention at Bridgewater is important because it articulated, in a clear way, concerns present among the members of the older and younger generation, and it reintroduced ideas that had fallen into oblivion. Regarding the state of the arts at that time, it is more important to redefine architecture’s human values than to jump straight ahead into socio-economic or planning concerns. The role of architecture as an ultimate manifestation of those human values was inherent to the Modern Movement foundational concerns, and emerged from the Modern Art movements. Giedion had re-introduced into the CIAM debate the role of Architecture as a form of art. For Van Eyck art and architecture had a common goal: “Although architecture may ensure more tangible functions, its ultimate function differs in no way from other creative activity.” Van Eyck identifies the CIAM as such with the pursuit of a new consciousness. This had been as well the major goal of Modern Art. For Van Eyck “CIAM is first and foremost an affirmation of a new consciousness”. The renewal of human consciousness as major goal for architecture was pointed out as well by Le Corbusier in his intervention at CIAM: “La chose don’t il s’agit, la chose qui doit advenir, c’est la re-formation de la conscience individuelle”. In his speech, Le Corbusier pointed to “harmony” as the main goal of a collective enterprise. For Le Corbusier “harmony” was a poetical phenomenon to pursue as a result of architect’s new consciousness: “L’harmonie resultera de la reformation meme de la conscience individuelle ». The idea of a new consciousness and harmony or balance was present in almost all of the Modern Art movements. Some of them articulated it in its early principles, like in De Stijl first manifest:

“1. There is an old and a new consciousness of time. The old is connected with the individual. The new is connected with the universal. The struggle of the individual against the universal is revealing itself in the world-war as well as in the art of the present day...3. The new art has brought forward what the new consciousness of time contains: a balance between the universal and the individual”

De Stijl like Dadaism or Surrealism aimed to disrupt the entire static hierarchy of values contemporary society was still based upon, aiming for a civilization where more natural and elementary forms of existence took place. According to Van Eyck a civilization in which grace was expressed in life as it was in art. The new consciousness was manifested: as a new awareness of our language through the Dadaist performances, shaped in sculptures conceived like fruits growing from the artist’s hands as in Arp’s Concretions, and unveiled after a patient sculpting during years in an image that illustrates our relation with the universe as in Brancusi’s Totems. All of these issues in relation with our perception of time, our past and future, were the issues at stake that Modern Art dealt with, and that architecture, according to Van Eyck, should address. He is asking the CIAM to be critical with the ends that society is aiming at, and not just try to design beautiful means to pursue those ends. His question is at the same time an answer, be critical:

205 Architecture conceived as an art that shares C.W. Gledion conception of Modern Art as a whole
207 De Stijl Manifesto 1918, signed by Theo Van Doesburg, Robert Van’t Hoff, Vilmos Huszar, Anthony Kok, Piet Mondrian, Georges Vantongerloo and Jan Wils
208 “Although this consciousness… has probably been latent for a very long time, it is only during the last 50 years that its nature has begun to reveal… The immediate result of this fundamental current has been to disrupt the entire static hierarchy of values upon which contemporary existence was and still is based...” Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven, 2008. p.40.
“Does CIAM desire to direct and control the purely mechanistic and commercial attitude of improving human environment, regarding it as a true characteristic of our time and the time to come? Or does CIAM desire to transform this attitude, i.e. to criticize the background against which it projects its activity?”

For Van Eyck the reason why CIAM does not question the current values, the “purely and commercial attitude of improving human environment” is related with the very human blind acceptance of what is commonly considered “common-sense”: “…the age-battle between common sense (static) and imagination (dynamic) was lost by the latter…” Given to common-sense the architects should take for granted their duty of “direct and control the purely mechanistic and commercial attitude of improving human environment”. Van Eyck is not asking to go against common sense, he is merely outlining that common sense is not pointing in the right direction and furthermore, is not going to answer the problem. Only imagination is able to do that. Van Eyck’s last part of the intervention is a strong praise of the power of imagination, as opposed to that of “reason” or “common-sense”.

For him imagination is “the common denominator between man and nature. It is the only faculty with which we can receive and transmit the new spirit” Van Eyck praises imagination in the wide sense of the word, as it was praised by the Dadaists, not as a mere instrument for escaping the reality, but as an active instrument in the free production of ideas. His idea of imagination is also nourished by Spinoza’s praise of “scientia intuitiva”, considered superior to sensory or rational knowledge.209 Imagination will be for Van Eyck the source of « elementary forms », being these forms a medium not an end in itself, as Hugo Ball claimed «… l’art n’est pas un but en soi- cela demanderait une naïvete moins écorchée- mais nous y voyons l’occasion de former des critiques à l’égard de notre temps et de developper une veritable sensibilité pour cette époque…» 210

Van Eyck’s early concern was that the role of architecture go beyond the satisfaction of the mere “tangible functions”; his ultimate role did not differ too much from that of any other creative activity, namely, “to express through man and for man the natural flow of existence”211 (Bergson?). In order to restore architecture’s main function, Van Eyck asked the CIAM to look back to the principles of Modern Art, for they succeeded in awaking our awareness. Modern Art illuminated man’s consciousness. The artists understood that it was possible to create your own and new conception of time and space. The Modern artists and intellectuals created their own subjective idea of time and space as opposed to the collective idea of it promoted by the social conventions; they managed to give a comprehensible shape to various aspects of its nature in the form of a novel, a painting, a poem, a sculpture, or a work of architecture. How they did that? Van Eyck answers this question by introducing his idea of the “elementary”. The elementary as a “value” worth pursuing, or a “form” that gives shape to it. Van Eyck’s idea of the elementary is very similar to Brancusi’s notion of “simplicite”, illustrated in one Van Eyck’s favorite quotes of Brancusi: “La simplicite n’est pas un but

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209 Van Eyck was introduced Spinoza’s ideas by his father, P.N. Van Eyck who in 1941 sent him a copy of the Short Treatise together with his collected poems “Verzen”. Later on Van Eyck’s interpretation of Spinoza’s philosophy will be influenced by C.W. Giedion who learn it from Heinrich Wölflin in Munich. On the influence of Spinoza’s thinking on Van Eyck see Strauven’s Chapter I “The intellectual world of P.N. Van Eyck”


Dans l’art mais on arrive a la simplicité malgré soi, en s’approchant du sens reel des choses” In the same way for Van Eyck, the “elementary” was related to our intimate nature, something that emerges spontaneously from us, hence driven by “a priori” irrational means, that he usually expressed in terms of intuition or imagination:

“Form is a medium, not an end. The difference between limited forms and elementary forms lies exactly in this distinction. The former merely tickle the primary senses, which explains their universal unpopularity: the latter penetrate the infinite resources of imagination, the only faculty which we are able to transmit style or grace”\(^{212}\)

It was through an intuitive process where imagination played a major role that a style (Stijl) was created, a style whose ultimate function was the transmission of grace. This clear reference to the De Stijl spirit is extracted from the “Report concerning the interrelation of the plastic arts and the importance of cooperation”, printed and distributed by Van Eyck to the CIAM members previous to his intervention. The Report, together with the “Statement against Rationalism” (Van Eyck’s edited version of his intervention), and the text “We discover style” (Wij ontdekken Stijl his first article published in Forum magazine, March 1949,), summarize Van Eyck’s early concerns. The Report was written in English and Dutch, and Van Eyck was smart enough to not introduce the word Style (Stijl) in his intervention, since De Stijl ideas were not very welcomed at CIAM. Still it is included in the Report and is the title of Van Eyck’s first article for Forum.

Dada-Zurich (1914-18) was essentially a desperate protest against the war, useless in preventing the propagation of the conflict years later. These artists, intellectuals and architects killed people fighting in the war, or had suffered the painful vertigo of living in exile. Nevertheless, the younger generation that faced the spiritual reconstruction of humankind relied on the values and ideals concealed in the Modern Art movements. They were aware that a “new consciousness [had] begun to permeate mankind” as Van Eyck stated in the start of his intervention. A new consciousness emerging from the Modern art spirit and patent in different realms of human activity. The means are there, but Van Eyck warns the elders about the goals, he ended the edited version of his intervention at Bridgewater with the question posed at the CIAM members, and assuming his own responsibility as a young member:

“Does CIAM desire to direct and control the purely mechanistic and commercial attitude of improving human environment? Or does it intend to change this conception? Can there be any doubt as to the answer? A new civilization is being born. Its rhythm has been detected, its outline partly traced. It is up to us to continue”\(^{213}\)

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\(^{212}\) “Report concerning the interrelation of the plastic arts and the importance of cooperation” Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven p.33

\(^{213}\) Aldo Van Eyck “Statement against rationalism” Van Eyck’s edited version of his intervention at CIAM 6, published in 1951. Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven. p. 42
1. PROTO-BRUTALISM

Aldo Van Eyck
Cobra exhibitions (1949-51)

A & P Smithson, Paolozzi and Henderson
Parallel of life and art (1953)
“Up to now Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas its essence is ethical”
Alison & Peter Smithson,
The New Brutalism, Architectural Design, April 1957

“It is confessed on all sides that the emotions are the province of folly. Indeed, this is the way we distinguish the wise man from the fool, that one is governed by his reason, the other by his emotions. Thus the stoics banish all emotions from the wise man’s life, as so many diseases. Yet these emotions not only serve as guides for those who press toward the gates of wisdom, they also act as spurs and incitements to the practice of every virtue”
Erasmus of Rotterdam
The Praise of Folly. Folly speaks p.29

A fool Dutch was one of the early pioneers in the artist’s rebellion against the transformation of the work of art into a commodity of the cultural market. According to Nicolaus Pevsner Van Gogh believed that the peasants were in the right path and not the city dwellers that went to the art exhibitions, Van Gogh preferred “the simplicity of the popular color prints to the refinement of contemporary painting, and strove towards a similar simplicity of subject and technique”\textsuperscript{215}. True or not Van Gogh escaped from the city for he preferred and enjoyed to paint the country, where he had more contact with nature. So did Gaugin who escaped from Paris to live with the “savages” in Tahiti. We don’t know if they really loved the country that much, but certainly they hate it less for it provided them an open space to paint, freedom, hence the opportunity to display through their paintings their inner will. Through rough strokes of paintbrush, the exaltation of the pure texture of the oil painting, and humble scenes, Van Gogh addressed people matters and found in them a sacred and indestructible ideal in their shoes, their flowers, their fields, and their rooms that were his own. Unlike Van Gogh or Gaugin who left forever, the Modern painters of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century left the city and visited the “savages” but returned to the city. Following certainly the path of Paul Klee, Dubuffet and Asger Jorn visited the north of Africa at the same time, during 1947\textsuperscript{216}. Dubuffet returned again in 1948, the same year that Corneille visited North Africa for the first time, in spring 1948\textsuperscript{217}. Corneille will repeat that same trip together with Aldo & Hannie Van Eyck in 1951.\textsuperscript{218} All of them visited the north of Africa but did not stay there for too long, they returned to the “civilized” world and struggle to change it.

The notion of art as something associated to culture, in the elitist sense of the word, was questioned by Dubuffet’s anti-cultural position in the text “Asphixiante culture”\textsuperscript{219}. Dubuffet’s art Brut emerges from certain Dadaist and Surrealist principles, it is continuation of the same revolt, the same consciousness adopting different costumes. The social circumstances changed from the previous pre-war movements, in the late forties Europe faced a reconstruction propelled by the

\textsuperscript{216} Note especific date...
\textsuperscript{217} Stokvis 168
\textsuperscript{218} This is was the second time Van Eyck visited the North of Africa. During his time at the ETH in Zurich, Aldo made acquaintance of another Dutch student Fulco ten Houte de Lange; in their summer trip after the first academic year they went to Italy and crossed the Mediterranean to Tunisia. See Strauven p.64
naissance of consumer society in the United States, the fifties, the Golden years were to come. Sensitive to the transformation of the work of art in a cultural commodity Dubuffet foresaw it and reacted; according to his view the artists were loosing the point. In September 1948, Dubuffet together with Andre Breton, Michel Tapié, and others founded “La compagnie de l’art brut », a non-profit organisation, looking for art that emerges out of the cultural circles or established institutions. At the Foyer the customary art of established institutions is contrasted with the art brut, art of alienated mads.

The prospect for the exhibition “Notice sur la compagnie de l’art brut” (September 1948) illustrates their intentions: a critic to the early transformation of art piece in commodity of consumer society, they praise an art created without any attention to current conventions where spontaneity is valuable for its truthiness. Spontaneity is valued over technical skills, these are considered a constrain imposed by the institutionalized artistic system. The members of the Foyer are looking for creativeness and invention as manifested in every human being when he gets rid of constrains, masks and relies on spontaneity: ”Nous recherchons des ouvrages ou les facultés d’invention et de création, qui existent selon nous dans tout homme (au moins par moments) se manifestent d’une manière très immédiate, sans masque, sans contrainte”

Against established art, customary art, the art of the museums and galleries, the art critic and professional artists for they parasite artistic creation emptying it of content. According to Dubuffet the institutions turn art into a commercial activity completely unrelated with the real function of it. They want art to turn truth again, discreet, less visible, frighten away,

They found in the work of some fools these attributes, the fools are seen as outsiders, free of constraints imposed by society and outlined the arbitrariness in the distinction between fool and reasonable

their aim was clearly stated in the general statement issued for the legal registration of the association “Rechercher des productions artistiques dues a des personnes obscures, et présentant un caractère spécial d’invention personnelle, de spontanéité, de liberté, a l’égard des conventions et habitudes reçues. Attirer l’attention du public sur ces sortes de travaux, en développer le goût et les encourager »

Ig: Symposium on Paul Klee’s pedago

As the Smithsons complained in the text New Brutalism, the question raised by Dubuffet and others decades ago was not being addressed

220 Reference to Benjamin’s Work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction
223 i.b.i.d. 491
Certainly the spirit, the idea behind that devoid word, Brutalism, was not just a matter of “showing the frame structure” or leaving the pipes visible as in Van de Velde’s Haby Barber Shop (Berlin, 1901)\textsuperscript{224}

the surrealist as found and the elementary art brut

Is not just chance, chance? No

Ready-mades Duchamp, it is important because I choose it, I was looking for something, ready made of everyday life turned upside down…a work of art?

1 a work of art is a medium not an end. Duchamp in itself is stupid, senseless is only valuable as a choice made by the artist to manifest a critic…TO the CULTURIZATION of ART and its transformation, insertion in the emerging consumer society of the Golden Age at that time

2 a reaction was art brut’s search for true art, continues with the search for elementary means, once the non-figurative has been devoided of meaning by the affectation…new artists look for an art of “ourselves” just like Dada did.

3 Looking for spontaneity, again in the same sources that are identified with child-like, primitive, the art in the everyday life of humble people non-intelligent people “intelligence is an organization like any other” said Tzara

Always the search in the everyday life is a critique to affectation of art (Critical regionalism… “to discover something anew is to discover something new” Van Eyck)

4 Search for true art!!! An appeal to the most profound layers of human being…Why? To develop something really yours, a true reflection of your own insight and not determined (by family, society, school,…). . .to attain certain level of freedom in the definition of your own identity

5 Co-existence of opposites AGAIN

6 MADNESS as imagination a device in the search for ART as “a path of clairvoyance and knowledge through which man strives to arrest the truth…”

7 NO mention of the word image

“Il y a un cote sympathique dans son bouillonnement”

Marcel Duchamp on Dubuffet\textsuperscript{225}

DUCHAMP AND DUBUFFET

Duchamp and Dubuffet both addressed the problematic of authorship in contemporary art and the transformation of the art piece in commodity.

Duchamp submitted a provocative piece, a ready-made machine turned upside down signed by an inexistent author. The piece was provocative in two senses, being a urinary it challenged the jury to evaluate what is the boundary in art, what is allowed and what it is not. Something that has one purpose is used for another purpose, and that is nothing, art, contemplation. It is not just signed, it is selected by the author, and turned upside down, the craft might have been done by the mass production, the factory that produced the object, that is relatively unimportant, what is important is that the object is choose by the “artist”, who by the way does not exist, is an imaginary artist, hence the object is not important in itself it is important in so far as it has been chosen, not by a layman but

\textsuperscript{224} See Nicolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of modern design: from William Morris to Walter Gropius. Yale univ. press, New Haven 2005. p.86

\textsuperscript{225} See Marcel Duchamp, La vie a credit biography by Bernard Marcadé. Flammarion, Paris 2007. p.417
by an “artist”. The double irony of Duchamp act is that the so called artist does not exist, or is his “alter ego” R.Mutt; hence an object chosen by no-one or anyone may be turn into an art piece.

Before the same institutions that Duchamp played his ironic game, the artistic institutions, Dubuffet deployed his critic presenting art pieces of unknown artists creating an association a company, an independent organization, “la compagnie de l’art brut” and the “Foyer de l’art brut”. The foyer meaning a social center, a place that gathers people around, from old French foier that means fireplace, presented the work of artists that does not know that they are branded “artist” and doesn’t want to make such a thing

, I just have to sign it, and ; but at the same time, being signed by an imaginary author, and challenged the juror’s ethic and aesthetic for they discussed if it should be admitted or not;

GIACOMETTI

Giacometti’s atelier it was indeed an important meeting place

- Praise of primitive art, art of the fools…the layman…for they still retain certain level of freedom, hence their creativity is not damaged yet. Not saying that every fool, child or layman is a creative person, just saying that the one that it is, it will be in a way purer and stronger than he common citizen or cultivated scholar

- Draft an institutional critic for they distort the value and appreciation of the work of art. Distort the value in so far as it is still giving more importance to the object in itself than to the message, regardless the Dadaist dismissing of the object. From Hugo Ball quote in the beginning to Duchamp’s fountain, and the subsequent questioning of the original tht took place since Rodin’s sculptures.

- an appreciation for the aesthetics of scarcity of common’s man everyday life.

« Cobra art is like a child’s work and is therefore not art, or, Cobra ‘art’ is like the work of lunatics and is therefore not art either. Although the ‘is art/isn’t art’ did not degenerate into proposed sanctions that evening, as an adult healthy shock, one is taken aback by these Art=A and Art=B comparisons. Not because their cultural implications, no, but humanitarian ones, because if Art is equal to A and is also equal to B, then by a minor detour (via art, for Christ’s sake!) A=B, meaning that work by children and by lunatics amounts to the same. I thought of all those who seek psychological support from ‘experts’ who are themselves not even capable of distinguishing forms of expression of such different natures from each other!"226

Further on in the text outlines the fact that as in the case of Sophie-Hans Arp and Dotremont-Alechinsky drawings where the work emerges from a balanced dialogue, Appel and Van Eyck’s son drew together :

“...When my son was still a child he too did a couple of duet prints with Appel – double children’s work! – I saw them at it… now you, now me, now you again. My son disrupted – opened up – what had gone before just as precisely as Appel again and again restores the upsets – making what had gone before link up again. But from all this, and that’s the point, no rigid conclusion should be drawn: in art, alchemy is variable – and does not fail eternally. Art is alchemy!”

226 From Aldo Van Eyck "An evening of limbo in the Low Countries", in Stravuen and Ligtelijn p.81
1.1. ALDO VAN EYCK & COBRA EXHIBITS (1949-51)

Karel Appel, painting of animals dedicated to Tess van Eyck, 1949. Oil on canvas.
1.1.1. C.O.B.R.A. beginnings:

The Cobra artists in Scandinavia departed from some ideas and works coming from the art scene in Paris and developed their own interpretation of Modern Art. Later on they established a dialogue with artists in Amsterdam and Brussels who had developed as well their own language nourished by very similar artistic principles, since they were influenced as well by the Paris scene. The main characteristic of Cobra is their inquiry in the artistic processes not grounded in rational means. The Cobra artists were interested in the creative process of kids and fools because they were not guided by reason. At the same time they were interested in Ancient art and popular art because they found that reason in itself, was not at all governing its creative processes. They believed that the art of the kids, the fools and ancient art or popular art had a common ground and aimed at the expression of elementary ideas. In this process imagination, intuition and certain kind of rational knowledge were interwoven in man’s struggle to understand the world and provide an explanation and illustration of it.

The story of Cobra-Copenhagen can be traced back to 1893, when an important exhibition on Gauguin and Van Gogh took place in Copenhagen and led to the foundation of the first modern art group in Denmark, the Nabister Group. It was followed by the cubist group Lundstrom, and the Group Linien, whose first big exhibit in Sep. 1937 joined Henry Heerup, Sonja Ferlov, Egill Jacobsen, Egler Bille, Richard Mortensen, and the young Asger Jorgensen (Asger Jorn).\(^{227}\) The strong influence of Kandinsky led Asger Jorn to Paris, where he met Fernand Leger and worked with him on the decoration of Le Corbusier’s *Palais des Temps Nouveaux* (1937). This experience marked the beginning of Jorn’s strong rejection of Le Corbusier’s “*Esprit mathematique*” and functionalist architecture; instead, he enjoyed the less rational approach of Arp, Miro, Ernst and Paul Klee.\(^{228}\) The work of artists such as Miro or Arp, together with the strong influence of the magazines *Cahiers d’Art* and *Minotaure*, brought many Danish artists to visit the Musee de L’homme in Paris.\(^{229}\) The visit to the overwhelming primitive art collection strongly marked Asger Jorn’s fascination for ancient art and marked the beginning of a search for purity and elementary means in his work.

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\(^{228}\) Stokvis,p.123  
\(^{229}\) Stokvis, p.129
The search for elementary means in painting, the fascination for ancient art and the drawings of kids or fools were points in common shared by the early Cobra from Scandinavia with Dubuffet’s Art Brut. In September 1948, Dubuffet, together with Andre Breton, Michel Tapié, and others, founded “La compagnie de l’art brut” »,230 a non-profit organization looking for art that emerged out of cultural circles or established institutions. For the most part, the artists who became members of the Cobra Group in Denmark exhibited their work in the annual exhibition of the artists association, Host (1934-1950). These artists were: Else Alfelt, Ejler Bille, Svavar Gudnason, Henry Heerup, Egill Jacobsen, Asger Jorn, Carl-Henning Pedersen, and Richard Mortensen. Their gathering place was the house of the art collector Mme. Elise Johansen. In a clear reference to the French Minotaure, Asger Jorn launched the magazine Helhesten in 1941, whose main goal was “presenter dans des articles objectifs une image de relation unissant l’art aux autres secteurs de la vie culturelle...articles consacrés à l’archéologie, à la littérature, au théâtre, au cinéma, et à la musique.”231 The name of the magazine Helhensten (hell-horse), a tree-leg beast that announces dead, is a clear illustration of the group’s early concerns for primitive art. In their research on primitive and ancient art the artists were guided by the archeologist P.V. Glob and looked at Viking and medieval Scandinavian art, mainly the frescoes in the churches of small villages.232 The Scandinavian artists looked back at their past to find their own sources for an elementary art, a language of their own.233 The interest on ancient European art was shared by Dubuffet, who in the text “In Honor of Savages values” pointed out that the Europeans had “borrowed” the Classical art from the Greeks, who themselves borrowed it from the Egyptians. But this was an art foreign to the “European race, who is a savage and tempestuous man, does not express himself at all in our classical art” In the same text, Dubuffet defined this art as Art Brut: “I believe that it is in "art brut"-in this art which has never stopped being made in Europe parallel to the other kind, this savage art to which no one pays any attention, and which very often does not suspect that its name is art-that one can on the contrary find authentic and living European art.”

231 Asger Jorn editorial from Helhesten nº1. See Stokvis, p.129
232 Helhesten nº 5-6 11 Nov. 1944. From Stokvis p.129
The early Scandinavian Cobra followed the path opened by the Modern Art movements, such as Dadaism, Cubism and the Surrealism, exploring primitive art and the sources of imagination and creativity of the kids and the fools. In *Helhesten* nº1, Ejler Bille's text “Du fondement actuelle d’un art createur» praised the creativity of child drawings: "Tandis que les plus petit des enfants possede encore le rythme vital d’ou procede l’art, l’adulte l’a perdu". At the same time, the strong influence of the psychiatrist Sigurd Naesgard led the group to understand that creativity is always related to a certain psychological unbalance. Interested mainly in the way the fool’s creativity operates, *Helhesten* published the work of the Psychiatrist Dr. Helge Kjemin’s, “The Psychology of inspiration” (1942). This illustrates to what extent the early Scandinavian Cobra were researching in the sources of creativity that do not emerge from rational knowledge, but relied in the pre-logical basic means of kids mind or in the i-logical means of fools mind, a “rythme vital” mainly grounded in imagination and intuition.

Later on, Dubuffet’s *Foyer de L’art Brut* used the art of the fools to raise a strong critique of the “Culturization” of art and the transformation of the work of art in commodity. Although both, Cobra and Dubuffet, shared a fascination for the exploration of the sources of creativity looking at certain art from alienated mad, the Scandinavian artists never did not praise or analyze the art of the fools, as “outsiders” of the cultural market, in order to criticize it. Certainly, the potential damage to art of the emerging artistic industry of galleries and museums in the late 40s in Paris did not happened in Copenhagen during the early 40s.

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234 *Helhesten*, 2nd year, nº1. 30 Oct. 1942, p.6. Several articles were devoted to child drawing by Carl-Henning Pedersen and Jens Sigsgaard. See Stokvis p.129

235 See the article of the Psychiatrist Dr. Helge Kjemin on *Helhesten*, December 1942: “...Il apparait q la source d’inspiration d’un artiste est en realite la meme que celle dont procedent les representations delirantes et les hallucinations de certains malades mentaux... » Stokvis p.130
For Cobra, the work in freedom departing from imagination ran parallel to their fascination for popular art. This idea will be related in the future COBRA group with Communist ideas. At that time, they related the aesthetic similarity of popular-primitive art from different corners of the world (mainly in Europe) with the idea of international unity of the workers and peasants coming from the International Communist movement. The group Cobra from Belgium, led by Christian Dotremont, appeared after a split with the Surrealist movement in 1947. The lack of any tradition in painting in Belgium after the Second World War originated a group mainly formed by poets, strongly influenced by the work of Gaston Bachelard. The Surrealist exhibition held in 1947 at Galerie Maeght propelled the split in the Surrealist movement. Andre Breton’s late Surrealism, detached from politics, clashed with Christian Dotremont’s Surrealism, very attached to Communist ideas. Unlike Breton, who lived the war period in exile in New York, the younger generations lived the occupation of Paris and remained tied to the communist ideas that nourished the French resistance during the war. Dotremont strongly criticized Breton’s Surrealism for its religious mysticism in the text *Surrealisme Revolutionaire*, first published in *Les Deux Soeurs* n°3, February 1947. A year later Dotremont will publish the magazine *Le Surrealisme Revolutionaire* (Summer 1948) including Tzara’s « *Le Surrealisme et l’apres-guerre* », paintings from Asger Jorn, and other Danish, Czechs and Dutch artists.  

The Cobra-Amsterdam emerged from the friendship of Karel Appel and Corneille who met in the Amsterdam academy (1943-44); they both shared an early fascination for Van Gogh and the German expressionists. Later on, after a visit to Paris in 1947, the discovery of Dubuffet’s work also influenced the work of both artists. The discovery of Picasso’s paintings right after the war strongly influenced the young Appel. Thereon he relied on a wild primitivism and a strong use of color as his main devices. Corneille’s visit to Budapest in 1947 brought him to discover Klee and the Surrealist literature of Breton, Eluard and Aragon. That brought him to give more importance to imagination in his work. Hence, imagination and primitive art were two early concerns of the young Dutch Cobra. The Dadaist praise of imagination as a pre-logical device for creativity and the fascination for the primitive were two concerns shared in common between Cobra-Amsterdam and Van Eyck.

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236 Stokvis, p.158  
237 Stokvis, p.166
The Cobra Amsterdam came to terms when Karel Appel and Corneille met the artist Constant Nieuwenhuys through Aldo Van Eyck who introduced Constant to Karel Appel. Van Eyck first met Constant in spring 1947 when he asked him to see his Miro paintings. Constant had just arrived from Paris, where he visited the Miro exhibition at the Galerie Pierre Loeb and made the acquaintance of Asger Jorn. Constant had studied at the Amsterdam academy (1939-40), and he met very often with Appel and Corneille at the Social Work office. They decided to create an experimental art group, “REFLEX, Groupe experimental Pays-Bas.” The first exhibit of the group was held at the Santee Landweer Gallery, after a speech of the poet Louis Tiessen. It was completely ignored by the press. This young avant-garde saw themselves in Amsterdam, enclosed and isolated from the artistic debate going on in Europe, so they decided to establish contacts with the exterior.

The COBRA Group was founded after a split with the Surrealist group at the “Centre International de Documentation sur L’art d’avant-garde”, a congress held in Paris from 6-8 November 1948. The Belgium Dotremont, the Danish Asger Jorn and the Dutchs Appel, Corneille and Constant decided to create their own group for they did not want to dissociate their artistic point of view from their political convictions, the same reason that had brought Dotremont to split from Breton’s Surrealism. The main points in common shared by these artists were: a certain leftwing socialist idealism, a rejection of aesthetic norms imposed by civilization for they constrain human creativity, and a strong enthusiasm for what they called “Experimentation”. The term included in the name of the group “COBRA Groupe experimentale” illustrates the paramount importance these artists gave to the spontaneous use of imagination in the creative process. In general the group welcomed surrealism but rejected Breton’s apolitical position and the Parisian formalism “Salon des Realites Nouvelles”.

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238 They will publish as well the magazine Reflex; the first issue included Constant first Manifesto of the group only signed by him since it was not supported by all of them. Nevertheless the text included the agreement of the tree members to cooperate with the foreign artists Asger Jorn and Christian Dotremont. The magazine will include the work of the poets Jan G. Elburg, Gerrit Kouwenaar and Lucebert (Lucebert J. Swaanswijk). Soon after Cobra Amsterdam will enlarge including the artists: Theo Wolvecamp, Anton Rooskens, Jan Nieuwenhuys, Eugene Brands. See Stokvis’ chapter La Naissance du Groupe experimental en Hollande.

239 Stokvis, p.176

240 Stokvis, P.208
1.1.2. COBRA ideology:

“L’imagination est le moyen pour connaître la réalité”
Cobra nº4, p.21

Photograph of child drawing in the street,
From Cobra nº10 (Autumn 1961)

The strong determination of the young group of artists to become an international movement followed the creation of the Cobra journal and the celebration of three international exhibitions in Brussels, Amsterdam and Liege. The idea of the journal was that every city issued a number. The first issue was conceived in Copenhagen, the rest of them (nº 2, 3, 6, 7, and 10) in Brussels, except for the 4th, which was published in Amsterdam as a catalogue for the exhibition. The journal was the broadcasting platform of Cobra ideology. The wide array of collaborations makes it difficult and inaccurate to summarize its content. For the purpose of this inquiry, some arguments have been chosen for either their direct relation to Van Eyck’s thinking or because they run parallel to the IG concerns at that time. The most important argument of the early Cobra Journal in common is a strong critique to Breton’s surrealism—a vision of art as a fight where ethics and aesthetics are interwoven and artists adopt a strong leftist-communist aura, a praise of experimentation following desire as a main device for this fight, and an appraisal of popular art from different countries for their emergence from common elementary sources of creativity related to the art of the kids and fools. Hence, the primitive, the childish and the popular were seen elementary in so far as they related to the origin of culture and civilization. These concerns were developed in Cobra’s texts, such as Asger Jorn’s “Discours aux pingouins” (Cobra nº1), Constant’s “Ce notre désir qui fait la révolution” (Cobra nº4) and Christian Dotremont’s “Le grand rendez-vous naturel” (Cobra nº4).

Cobra’s 1st journal published in Copenhagen and run mainly by Asger Jorn included his text “Discours aux pingouins. L’automatisme”. In the text Jorn analyzed, from the point of view of “dialectic materialism,” Breton’s automatic writing, showing its inherent contradictions. According to Jorn, automatic writing is never an exclusive act of the psyche, for the writing itself is physical act. Not even the “automatisme psychique” inside the human brain is, strictly speaking, purely psychological. From a Marxist « materialistic point of view », for Jorn, “la pensée est une pensée de la matière...on pense nécessairement a quelque chose ». Jorn criticizes the Surrealists, since they relied on dreams, on the “oniric, for a purpose, whereas he praises a purposeless art whose only goal is to satisfy our most intimate desires:

« La fonction réelle de la pensée est de trouver les moyens propres a satisfaire nos besoins et desirs. Plus pre occupe du fonctionnement que de la fonction de la pensée et faussant même son fonctionnement, le surrealisme de Breton ainsi que le fonctionalisme architectural ont commence sur une base idealiste... »

241 See Asger Jorn “Discours aux pingouins. L’automatisme” Cobra nº4, p.8
Jorn argues for spontaneous expression and experimentation out of the any sort of rational control. He identifies bourgeoisie with the kind of control exerted with reason “notre but est d’échapper au regne de la raison, regne de la bourgeoisie, pour aboutir au regne de la vie.” The false idealist metaphysic conception of the bourgeoisie’s Moral and Aesthetics is confronted with their true moral values, “l’instinct de nos besoins” and the true aesthetics, “L’expression de nos desirs”. For the bourgeoisie aesthetics and moral values were not only distinct but dramatically isolated. From Jorn’s materialistic point of view, Aesthetics and Moral conform a dialectic situation: “le but de l’art est d’abord moral et ensuite esthetique-meme lorsque le desir devient besoin ! elle passe ainsi du general a l’individuel du besoin au desir, de la morale a l’esthetique ». Jorn’s argument runs parallel to Van Eyck’s critique to reason as a means to enslave human creativity and the praise of irrational means for creation. Both denounced the failure of so-called “functionalist architecture”.

Cobra n°4, issued as a catalogue of the exhibition with a striking cover entitled “La putain de classe,” opened with Constant’s text “C’est notre desir qui fait la revolution” (Cobra nº 4. 1950. p.3-4. After poet Louis Tiessen’s speech at the 1st Dutch Cobra exhibit. Stokvis p.175). With a revolutionary tone, similar to that of Jorn’s discourse, Constant denounces the failure of Western culture in providing or satisfying human “elementary” needs. For him that is the main argument for a revolution: “la satisfaction de notre desir elementaire, c’est la revolution ». Following Jorn’s argument, he states that the satisfaction of our needs moves us to discover our desires through experimentation, the ultimate condition for knowledge. Constant blames the individualism of the current society, for it focused on “artistic production” instead of “creation”. He differentiates production from creation, the former being a reproduction of existing knowledge the later being the making of something unknown:
“La culture actuelle, individualiste, a remplacé la création par la production artistique qui n’a produit que signes d’une impuissance tragique, que les cris de desespoir de l’individu enchaine par les interdictions esthétiques... Creer c'est toujours faire ce qui n'etait pas encore connu » (Cobra nº4, p.3). In the same way that Asger Jorn criticized Breton, Constant dismisses the “emptiness” of Mondrian’s abstract paintings for their lack of true spontaneity:

«...Alons remplir la toile vierge de Mondrian meme si ce n’est qu’avec nos malheurs. Le malheur ‘est-il pas preferable a la mort... ?...

Telle est notre reponse aux abstraits... leur spontaneite est celle de l’enfant revolte, qui ne sait pas ce qu’il veut, qui veut etre libre, sans pouvoir se passer de la protection de ses parents...mais etre libre, c’est comme etre fort : la liberte ne se manifeste que dans la creation ou dans la lutte, qui au fond ont le meme but : la realisation de notre vie...

Nous sommes condamnes a l’experimentation par les memes causes qui acculent le monde a la lutte... »

The Cobra artists witnessed the world as a fight and proclaimed art as a fight, pursuing the satisfaction of human elementary needs. In this sense it is interesting how they rely on the imaginary of the child. Cobra nº4 includes texts and drawings of kids mixed with the poems and paintings of the artists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claudine, 5 ans</th>
<th>Jean-Claude.</th>
<th>Simon, 6 ans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La baleine.</td>
<td>Le pissenlit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N’est-ce pas, Belette, quand on jette une limace dans l’eau, longtemps aprés elle devient une baleine?</td>
<td>Quand le petit pissenlit est jeune. Quand il va un organe, les petits parachutes s’en vont dans la terre et ça pousse un pissenlit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>je voudrais un chat qui ronflle un mouton qui fait des jeunes une vache qui donne du lait et un cahier pour les dessiner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kids texts included in Cobra nº4, bellow Constant’s text text “C’est notre desir qui fait la revolution”

All three extremes, the strong violence, the fight and the naïve, childish condition co-exist. The hardness of the Dutch reconstruction after the war was taking place at the same time that a new generation was growing and enjoying peaceful times, playing in the playgrounds designed by Aldo Van Eyck that started to populate Amsterdam. The child was present for both Cobra and Van Eyck as a reference for the labor of the moral and physical reconstruction. The texts and drawings published by COBRA praise fresh creative insight and the natural and spontaneous simplicity of a child’s expression. In the same way for the design of the playgrounds, Van Eyck took into account and understood children behavior in order to enrich his design.
If we compare Van Eyck’s design for the exhibition and the early playgrounds, we can find a similarity from the point of view of their composition. In both the exhibition and the playgrounds, Van Eyck played with the scale of a very simple geometric form that is organizing the space. In the exhibition he is using the rectangular shape of the canvases and the platforms on the floor, and in the playgrounds is using a rectangular composition of floor tiles of different color (Zaanhof playground) to organize the space. The canvases had different size in the exhibition so did the rectangles in Zaanhof playground or the circles in Jacob Thijssseplein playground.

Most of the paintings were small and in comparison the space was huge. Van Eyck asked Constant and Appel to make some paintings in a bigger format so that he would be able to play with a stronger variety of the scale of the paintings; hence he could freely play with different distances and alignments in the paintings. As he had experimented in the design of the playgrounds, the “play”
with the scale of a simple element led to a bigger freedom in the distribution. “Playing” with a contrast of the object in relation with itself, the scale of the painting or a circle, led to a “play” in the relation of every object with the others. The rhythm of scale and distance are tied together.
Although Van Eyck never fully engaged in COBRA, he was very close to them during the short life of the movement, and later on always remained sympathetic to its members. Older and more cultivated than them, Van Eyck’s relation with Cobra, and the importance of that relationship, relies not so much in any specific idea or work influential for him, but in the fact that he witnessed with them a recreation of the Dadaist spirit of revolt against established hierarchies of values, emerging mainly from an excessively rationalistic conception of civilization. According to Strauven, Van Eyck’s flat was a rendezvous place for Cobra.243 The image of Dotremont measuring Van Eyck’s Mondrian illustrates the open and friendly dialogue of Van Eyck with Cobra. Although Cobra criticized De Stijl purists paintings and Surrealism in a radical way that Van Eyck probably did not share, Van Eyck was open minded enough to consider Cobra as opposing but complementary components of the same reality. He valued the spirit of these young poets and artists, who by virtue of their narrowness were able to bring anew the Dadaist spirit, revitalizing the artistic debate in the Netherlands.244 Cobra’s critique of Mondrian was not new for Van Eyck; he had learned it from one of the De Stijl members, Theo Van Doesburg. Van Doesburg double condition as a Dadaist artist, and a Mondrian fellow Neoplasticist, was very familiar to Van Eyck. In fact, to some extent, Van Eyck’s conception of Neoplasticism had a double side of Dadaist spirit; his conception of Neoplasticism was closer to Van Doesburg’s than to Mondrian’s. This explains not only Van Eyck’s acceptance of Cobra’s critique of Mondrian, but also his design for the “International Cobra Exhibition” held in Amsterdam (1949).

The first artistic event that gathered the Cobra artists together was the annual exhibition held in Copenhagen, Host, November 1948. Thereon the COBRA movement held three exhibitions during its short existence: 19-27 March 1949 in Brussels, 3-28 November 1949 in Amsterdam and 6th October to 6th November 1951 in Liege. Nevertheless, the Amsterdam one, the “International Exhibition of experimental art”, including artists from ten different countries, is considered the first public manifestation of COBRA. The Cobra artists exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum thanks to the contacts of Eugene Brands, a member of the Dutch Cobra, with the Museum’s director at that time, Willem Sandberg.

242 Winter 1955-56 see Stokvis p.246
243 Strauven p.123
244 Strauven p.124-125
Aldo Van Eyck’s set of the exhibition can be considered a Neoplasticist design. But in a truly Neoplasticist design in Theo Van Doesburg’s conception of De Stijl. The fact that Van Eyck did a Neoplasticist composition similar to Mondrian’s paintings, for a group of artists that criticized Mondrian is striking.. According to Strauven, by doing a De Stijl composition of the paintings for the exhibit Van Eyck:

“Incorporated the vitalistic expressions of the experimental into Mondrian’s geometry of the universal. In so doing, he not only remained faithful to both Cobra and De Stijl, but he also raised the Cobra experiments above their one-sided instinctivism. By confronting the impulsive experiments of Cobra with their converse, by uniting them with their antipode within the new reality, De Stijl’s universal’s ‘aesthetics of relations’, he confirmed them as an integral part of that reality” 245

Strauven’s analysis in both “Aldo Van Eyck: The Shape of relativity” and “Aldo Van Eyck: collected writings” does not present the whole set of the exhibition. In W.Stokvis’ “Cobra: la conquête de la spontanéité” we find an illustration of an eccentric part of the exhibition, a small and hidden room with a steel cage where Van Eyck enclosed the poets of the group. The entrance room welcomed the visitors with Constant’s painting “Barricades” 1949, a huge canvases painted explicitly for the exhibition after Van Eyck’s proposal, with two figures one of them holding a sickle, a clear illustration of Cobra’s political agenda. Right after, in the second room, Van Eyck presented the work of the poets. In a tiny room filled with a big “cage” illuminated with gloomy lights containing fragments of poems mixed with quotes from Dotremont, Marcel Havrenne and Lenin, a Corneille tiny sculpture “L’Arbre de vie” and a bottle filled with Gide poems crumpled. In the wall the poets wrote “Il y a un Lyrisme que nous abolissons”, a clear rejection of Gide’s work.246 The constrained space of the second room expanded in the huge third room, where the paintings and sculptures covered floors and wall as if they would be a continuous plane. Certainly such a welcome sequence of rooms for the exhibition had nothing to do with the rigorous calm of horizontal and vertical lines of Mondrian’s composition. It illustrates Cobra’s spirit of revolt, and it could be interpreted as Surrealist or Dadaist gesture if we consider the set for the second room. In fact the importance given to poetry in the set of the exhibition is at odds with its depiction as a Mondrian-Neoplasticist set, since Mondrian always discouraged Van Doesburg’s to experiment poetry or literature for he did not consider them truly Neoplasticist.247 It was Van doesburg’s conception of Neoplasticism which welcomed poetry as an essential element, as we can see in his own work or in the content of De Stijl magazine.

245 strauven p.125
246 Stokvis p.242
247 See chapter 0.1.6 Dada &Constructivism: The co-existence of opposites. See Hubert F. van den Berg, Theo Van Doesburg’s De Stijl, and Dada. P119-120
"International Exhibition of Experimental Art" Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1949)
Views of rooms 3, room 4 (probably), room 5 (probably) and 7
Certainly once we look and consider the set for third room, we can think about a Neoplasticist composition in a continuous plane from the floor to the walls. The analogy of this continuous plane with the Neoplasticist composition is almost unavoidable. The interior design for the Aubette café by Theo and Nelly Van Doesburg and Hans Arp (1928), was certainly well known for Van Eyck. If we turn upside down the interior views of the small dance hall and compare it with Van Eyck’s distribution of the canvas in the exhibition, we find striking similarities. The canvases in the exhibition are ordered in a continuous plane walls-floor like the color panels over the walls-ceilings at the Aubette Cafe dance rooms. At the same time, a Dadaist room filled with poetry on the one hand and protest on the other hand, a balanced orthogonal composition, certainly can be interpreted as an illustration of Christian Kupper’s double condition: Van Doesburg, the De Stijl painter and architect, and I.K. Bonset the Dadaist poet (See Chapter 0.1.6. Dada & Constructivism: the co-existence of opposites).

The opening of the exhibition on the 3rd of November (1949) had a strong Dadaist character of protest. Dotremont gave a defiant speech with Watutsi drum music as a background in which he argued against “Le bourgeois endormi qui deambule sur les sentiers battus par la tradition.” He continued stating that Western art was just hypocrite, “Occident’s lie”. Cobra did not recognize any previous aesthetic conception and grounded their work in the “subconscious and the Eros”. As Aldo Van Eyck recounts, “Il regnait une humeur militante et Dadaiste parmi les artistes. En meme temps, l’atmosphere etait tendue-on avait trop peu dormi. C’etait noir de monde. On savait deja que la catalogue etait interdit”

Another very Dadaist moment of the Amsterdam exhibition was the scandal produced by Dotremont’s speech days later during a literary evening on the topic of experimental literature. This had impact in the press and provided a whole aura of controversy to the exhibition. The most Dadaist thing about the event was the fact that the scandal itself was produced by a
misunderstanding. Dotremont’s speech in French alluded to archeological excavations of the USSR in the Aral Sea. Some of the public who did not understand French believed that Dotremont’s speech was a sort of Communist manifesto, and protested by leaving the room. Dotremont continued his speech protected by Corneille, Constant and Van Eyck in front of him. Among the public, an angry carpenter arguing against Dotremont was thrown out of the room by Van Eyck and Constant. Dotremont continued impassively while some Cobra members sang *L’international*, the socialist anthem.

Dotremont’s speech was not at all a Communist propaganda manifesto but the second part of his text entitled “Le Grand Rendez-vous naturel” published in Cobra nº6. Dotremont traced a parallelism between the Soviet Union research on archeological sites of old civilizations Chwarsmiennes in the Aral Sea and the research and experimentation developed by Cobra. Like the soviets archeologists searching for the ancient traces of civilization, the cobra artists searched the deep traces of man “les traces que le sable du desert formaliste a effacees”. For him both were researches on sensibility—the sensibility of previous civilizations, of the unconscious and the subconscious, and of research on pleasure:

“*Il en ca ainsi des recherches sur la sensibilite, sur l'inconscient et le subconscient, il en va ainsi des recherches sur le plaisir (le plaisir qui va des mains aux yeux, et des yeux a tout l'espirit) dont les tableaux, les sculptures ici reunis dans cette exposition son d'excellentes exemples »*

For Dotremont both the Soviet Union research and the Cobra research had taken place during a war: the 2nd World War, in the case of the archeological survey in the Aral, and the current “Cold war,” emerging at the time of the Amsterdam exhibition. In the same way, the archeologist Cobra did...
not aim directly for the transformation of the world, but thought it would be an indispensable result of their activity. Contrary to other forms of art at that time, for Dotremont Cobra’s painting has nothing to do with the act of representation, the will to represent something: “parce qu’elle n’est pas signe devenu objet, ni objet devenu signe… elle n’est pas illusion mais tache, elle n’est pas dessin mais crachat ». He detached Cobra from other art movements: from “Naturalisme” for it is a reduction of reality to a mere illusory representation, from the “Old-Surrealisme” of Dali or Magritte praising the surrealism of Miro, Ernst and Tanguy. Finally, he detached their work from “Abstract Art”. According to Dotremont, « Abstract art » acts with a logic very similar to “Naturalisme”, reducing reality to “une panoplie, reduit la vie interieure a ce qui loin d’etre sa ‘structure’ est le coffrage que la raison voudrait lui imposer”. What is important about Dotremont’s attack of “abstract art” is that he identified Cobra art with the people. For Dotremont, the “abstract painting” did not manifest “L’intervention vivante du peintre, ni la vie spontanee de la matiere, ni la dialectique aturelle de la vie interieure et de la vie objective.” According to Dotremont, « La ‘peinture abstraite’ est celle que ferait Julien Benda, ce n’est pas celle que fait le peuple »

Several aspects of the Cobra Group were in common with the IG, although in Amsterdam, Brussels and Copenhagen those aspects took a different shape than in London. As has been argued previously, both groups emerged from the common ground of the Modern Art scene in the late 40s in Paris. Both felt strongly sympathetic with Dadaism, not only for its spirit of revolt but for its ultimate praise and concern for human condition. The scarcity of the after war period, as illustrated in the austere image of the studios of the artist for whom both the IG and Cobra felt admiration, paved the path for their common concern with the everyday life of common people.
Facing the moral reconstruction of Western civilization, the labor of the artist in both the IG and Cobra focused on an exploration of the deep traces of the human condition. This labor had been an early concern of Modern Art. In the case of Cobra, it led to an exploration initially in the fools, and later on in the kid’s creativity. In these terms Cobra’s exploration on how the child sees the world, paints and behaves ran parallel to Aldo Van Eyck’s early playgrounds designs.

Another point in common between Cobra and the IG was their concern with the exploration of other realms of knowledge running parallel to that of art. Certainly, previous famous journals of Modern Art had been introducing some ethnographical and sociological research, like “Cahiers d’Art” or the journal “Document”. In Cobra and certainly in the IG, this parallelism was enlarged to other realms of knowledge. The Cobra journal included the work of Poets, painters, sculptors and writers, together with striking images from biologist and archeologist (P.V. Glob). Like the Independent Group manifested in the exhibition “Parallel of Life and Art” (1953), the Cobra Group was also concerned with the exploration of the striking parallelisms between the phenomena of nature and those of popular art or human spontaneous action. Cobra nº2 opens with a statement for a “Pour un art naturel, comme le bris d’une vitre ou la croissance d’une ville.” In the same way Cobra nº3 published images from a video developed at the “Institut national de Cinematographie scientifique de France” together with an image of a traditional puppet from Indonesia.
1.2. PARALLEL OF LIFE & ART (1953)
1.1.1 Modern Art & “Parallel of Life and Art”:

“Technical inventions such as photographic enlarger, aerial photography, and the high-speed flash have given us new tools with which to expand our field of vision beyond the limits imposed on previous generations. Their products feed our newspapers, our periodicals and our films, being continually before our eyes; and thus we have become familiar with material, hitherto inaccessible.”

Text from the Catalogue of Parallel of Life and Art Exhibition, ICA, 1953

The Parallel of Life and Art exhibition (11 September through 18th October 1953) happened in an early stage of effervescence of the Independent Group within the ICA. It took place among many other events organized by artists and intellectuals that were revisiting ideas and works of Modern Art around the ICA. In 1953 several exhibitions took place apart from Parallel of Life & Art: an exhibition on the paintings and drawings of Le Corbusier250, the exhibition “Wonder and Horror of the human head” organized by Roland Penrose, and an exhibition on the work of Max Ernst. At the same time the group started a course of seminars entitled “Aesthetics Problems of Contemporary Art”.251 The Parallel of Life & Art exhibition was a result of mutual concerns of the artists Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson and the architects Alison & Peter Smithson revisiting ideas from Modern Art and Modern Architecture. The Smithsons had just arrived from the CIAM meeting at Aix-en-provence in summer of 1953 were they used Henderson’s photographs to show the flaws of the theoretical assumptions of CIAM in urban design.252 The exhibition not only represented an illustration of the potentialities of current technical inventions in the realm of visual arts, but also questioned the value of the image as a work of art and its function in society according to the principles of Modern Art. Parallel of Life and Art departed from principles of Modern Aesthetics and re-interpreted the Surrealist’s exhibitions performing a Dadaist tridimensional collage of images.

250 Le Corbusier visited the ICA the 12 May
252 A&P Smithson presented their version of the CIAM grid including of Nigel Henderson photographs to illustrate how the richness of community life in the poor areas of London relied in the use of street, an urban element that had been dismissed by the mainstream of Modern Architecture. Certainly at that time the relation among them was quite close, according to Peter Smithson initially Eduardo Paolozzi and his wife were going to join them to the CIAM meeting see Peter Smithson, Team Ten Primer
After their experience in Paris, Paolozzi and Henderson were revisiting some foundational concerns of Modern Art that provided some ideas for the exhibition. Some publications had special impact in Henderson such as Gyorgi Kepe’s Language of vision (1944). According to Kepes the aim of the artist should be a sort of “sociobiological synthesis” achieved through experimentation. For Kepes: “…without experimentation there can be no discoveries and without discoveries no regeneration. Although the research work of the artist is rarely systematic as that of the scientist they both may deal with the whole life, in terms of relationships, not of details” 253 Henderson’s photographs departed from an interpretation of the Dadaist x-ray photographs, such as Man Ray’s or Christian Schad’s, following a new experimentation with what he called “Stressed photographies”.

For Kepes the development of Art was based on artistic experimentation, and such experimentation deals with the establishment of relationships. That is precisely what the artists did in Parallel of Life and Art exhibition because they simply established visual relations between different aspects of life outlining the formal resemblance between biological forms and ancient art. For the artists, in the establishment of such relations, the sense of vision played an important role. In this sense another important publication that grasped Henderson’s attention resulting of paramount importance for the exhibition was L. Moholy-Nagy’s Vision in Motion (1947). 254 Moholy’s book is a very complete account of his personal view of Modern Art principles in different realms: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Cinema, Poetry, etc. Moholy-Nagy’s defined Vision in Motion in the following terms:

“…Vision in motion is seeing moving objects either in reality or in forms of visual representation as in cubism and futurism. In the latter case the spectator, stimulated by specific means of rendering, recreates mentally and emotionally the original motion.

Vision in motion is simultaneous grasp. Simultaneous grasp is creative performance-seeing, feeling, and thinking in relationship and not as a series of isolated phenomena. It instantaneously integrates and transmutes single elements into a coherent whole. This is valid for the physical vision as well as for the abstract”

Henderson freely cited Moholy-Nagy’s Vision in Motion as a key reference point for his work. Moholy-Nagy’s idea of Vision in Motion as a “simultaneous grasp”, and the act of “creative performance-seeing and thinking”, implies the co-existence of two relatively opposite actions in time and space. Such a challenge of the traditional principles of Logic was one of the main Dadaists contributions in Modern Art. Dada and De Stijl defined Modern Art as a “new consciousness”, hence awareness was conceived inn itself as a creative phenomena a “creative performance-seeing, feeling and thinking” in the eye of the artist. Moholy’s definition of Vision is directly related with the new consciousness of space-time of Modern Art that, quoting Moholy-Nagy: “integrates and transmutes single elements into a coherent whole”. The correlation of the single to the whole in a new conception of space-time was one of De Stijl’s main concerns, as we can read from the third point of their manifesto: “The new art has brought forward what the new consciousness of time contains: a balance between the universal and the individual”.

As for Moholy-Nagy, for Henderson, the main problematic was to balance reason and intuition, understanding and imagination, several layers of the process of perception-creation together in a proper balance. For Henderson the main problem of his generation was: “to bring the intellectual and emotional, the social and technological components into balanced play, to learn to see and feel them in relationship” As Victoria Walsh points out, Henderson concerns in this sense were similar to Moholy-Nagy’s who wrote: “Intellectual grasp has to be coordinated with the emotional. The spectator must be prepared to sense the underlying meaning of the artist’s approach not as a ‘verbalizable’…Later; after he (the spectator) liberates himself from traditional vision, he will be able to apprehend this emotionally and intellectually…” In line with the concern of Modern Art, the integration of both types of knowledge intellectual-emotional was for both Moholy-Nagy and for Henderson, very important in so far as it determined the balanced dialogue between technological development and humanistic concerns in society. As Henderson wrote in his notebook of 1951: “the problem of our generation is to bring the intellectual and emotional, the social and technological components into balanced play, to learn to see and feel them in relationship” As Walsh notes, Henderson’s experiments with photography deal not only with the formal representation of the movement but also with the viewer’s relation to such images. This is a very important point for the conception of Parallel of Life and Art, because at the exhibition the artists were challenging precisely that, the viewer’s relation to the images spatially and conceptually. Spatially through the creation of a set inspired in Herbert Bayer’s Diagram of 360º of Vision illustrated in Moholy-Nagy’s book, and conceptually, since the artists were gathering together photographs from the newspapers (The photo of Jackson Pollock at work from Times magazine) with reproductions of their own works (Paolozzi’s Plaster Blocks, 1952). This meant that the photograph of the original is shown instead of the original for it has the same visual-value. The original is substituted by the image, as Andre Malraux already had pointed out in his essay “Le Musee Imaginaire”: “Un crucifix roman n’était pas d’abord une
sculpture, la Madone de Cimbaue n’etais pas d’abord un tableau, même l’Athena de Phidias n’etais pas d’abord une statue » According to Walsh Malraux’s text was a reference for Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi among many other members of the Independent Group. Therefore original is substituted by a reproduction, and this reproduction is considered of equal value than the photographs that we can find in the journals. As the Smithson’s pointed out in the catalogue of the exhibition new technical inventions in photography were expanding our field of Vision physically and conceptually “Their products feed our newspapers, our periodicals and our films, being continually before our eyes; and thus we have become familiar with material, hitherto inaccessible” This aesthetic choice was already hinting a certain ethic in line with Dubuffet’s Brutalism for the artists considered the “images” created by and for the layman, of equal value as their art works, in the terms considered at the exhibition.

At the same time the artists outlined the strong influence that technical devices may have had in the ways of beholding everyday life. This was a common concern of many representatives of the Viennese school that shaped Modern Aesthetics and therefore Modern Art. Heinrich Wöfflin in XXXX pointed out that changes in the way of beholding may be of paramount importance producing artistic changes from one style to another. Wöfflin’s thesis “Principles of Art History, The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art” stated that in human beings: “…beholding is not just a mirror which always remains the same, but a living power of apprehension which has its own inward history and has passed through many stages…” He explained how stylistic shift in from the Classicism (XVI cent.) to the Baroque (XVII cent.) was produced by a change in the nature of artistic vision, a change in the way of beholding. Walter Benjamin’s “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” deals precisely with the same issues that concerned the Independent Group artists. Benjamin himself criticized and developed an alternative method to Wöfflin’s one. He explained how stylistic shift in from the Classicism (XVI cent.) to the Baroque (XVII cent.) was produced by a change in the nature of artistic vision, a change in the way of beholding. Walter Benjamin’s “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” deals precisely with the same issues that concerned the Independent Group artists. Benjamin himself criticized and developed an alternative method to Wöfflin’s one. He explained how stylistic shift in from the Classicism (XVI cent.) to the Baroque (XVII cent.) was produced by a change in the nature of artistic vision, a change in the way of beholding. Walter Benjamin’s “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” deals precisely with the same issues that concerned the Independent Group artists. Benjamin himself criticized and developed an alternative method to Wöfflin’s one. 

The subtle perception of the changes in the way of beholding, the artists awareness (consciousness), and his will to merge art and life regardless the use of technology, had been one of the aims of Modern Art painting and architecture as Van Eyck pointed out at CIAM: “CIAM is first and foremost an affirmation of this new consciousness. The achievement of men like Le Corbusier, Mondrian or Brancusi compels us to believe, surely, that we are indeed approaching a brighter era; one in which grace is expressed in life as it is in art” 

In this line, the Independent Group artists were outlining the great potential influence of visual media in changing people’s way of beholding. The exhibition was an illustration of such a change in the way of beholding of the artists, who, thanks to the technological developments in photography were able to establish formal relations between different aspects of life, from archeological settlements to cellular tissue.

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263 Aldo Van Eyck, Intervention at CIAM 6, Bridgewater 1947
264 At this point it is important to note that
1.1.2 “On Growth & form” and “Parallel of Life and Art”

Nigel Henderson, who had studied biology before becoming an artist, was still at that time fascinated with the biological depictions of the structural order of organic life. Henderson and Richard Hamilton shared these concerns, and it was Eduardo Paolozzi who at that time in Paris drew their attention to D’Arcy Thomson’s book, “On Growth & Form”.265 The book, very popular at that time, was not only influential for Henderson and Hamilton, but also other IG members like Roland Penrose.

D’Arcy Thomson’s book was a reaction against the established principles of Biology. He criticized the fact that biology lacked scientific rigor, in the sense that it had been unsuccessfully driven by a search of a “final cause” and a “teleological concept of end” to explain the phenomena of the living world.266 According to him that was not the only way the biologist could research:

“The use of the teleological principle is but one way, not the whole or the only way, by which we may seek to learn how things came to be, and to take their places in the harmonious complexity of the world. To seek not for ends but for antecedents is the way of the physicist, who finds ‘causes’ in what he has learned to recognize as fundamental properties, or inseparable concomitants, or unchanging laws, of matter and energy. In Aristotle’s parable, the house is there that men may live in it; but it is also there because the builders have laid one stone upon another. It is a mechanism, or a mechanical construction…(6)

Hence according to D’Arcy Thomson, forms in nature can be read as mechanical constructions. In fact for him both readings, the teleological and the interpretation of nature as a sort of mechanism are interwoven “like warp and woof, mechanism and teleology are interwoven together, and we must not cleave to the one nor despise the other; for their union is rooted in the very nature of totality…(7)” Later on in the text, D’Arcy refers to Galileo, Kepler and Newton for the great contribution of their theories is that enabled us to correlate phenomena. According to D’Arcy, Newton’s gravitational theory did not concern with the purpose of an apple falling from a tree but related its movement to the movement of the stars:

“…To correlate our particular phenomena with more and more of the physical phenomena around…So to weave a web of connection and interdependence with what the schoolmen called a ‘ratio cognoscendi’, though the true ‘ratio efficiendi’ is still enwrapped in many mysteries. And so handled, the quest of physical causes merges with another great Aristotelian theme-the search for relations between things apparently disconnected, and for ‘similitude in things to common view unlike’…The search for differences or fundamental contrasts between the phenomena of organic and inorganic, of animate and inanimate things, has occupied many men’s mind, while the search for community of principles or essential similitude has been pursued by few…(9)

Hence D’Arcy Thompson drew a critic to an experimental science such as biology for relying excessively in teleological concerns, in the purpose or aims of forms in nature. He aimed at

266 “Time out of mind it has been by way of the ‘final cause’, by the teleological concept of end, of purpose or of ‘design’ in one of its many forms (for its forms are many), that men have been chiefly wont to explain the phenomena of the living world…”D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, p.4
establishing relationships between the phenomena of the organic and the inorganic, being the labor of the scientist the establishment of such relations for they help us understand nature in their wholeness. The artist aim was similar; through the exhibition set and choice of images they aimed at establishing relationships between cells, humans and the stars as a way to describe their vision of nature. The work of art became purposeless in itself as Hugo Ball claimed “……” it is important in so far as it wakes our consciousness, hence the art piece in itself is not presented only its image, and what is important is the establishment of such a relations, as Van Eyck explained quoting Mondrian: “…Mondrian (said): ‘The culture of particular form is approaching its end. The culture of determined relations has begun’. So he was no longer concerned with things themselves, but with their connections, with the relation between one thing and another…He had to reveal this elementary relationship without the things themselves. The era of pure relationships begins: not for the things, but for the world between them…”

1.1.3 Duchamp’s “Green Box” & “Parallel of Life and Art”

Within the Modern Art movements, it was Dadaism, the strongest reference for the mainstream of the Independent Group artists. The artists closer to the Smithsons, Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and to some extent Richard Hamilton, were re-visiting the ideas and work of the Dadaists. This was illustrated in the publication of the “Uppercase” magazine by Theo Crosby that merged work of the young Independent Group members with that of the Dadaists such as Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters. Henderson, Paolozzi and the Smithsons developed a tridimensional collage of images without argument; no explanatory text was included in the catalogue, just a list of the images with their reference. Therefore, although the Parallel of Life and Art exhibition was concerned with the impact of “technical inventions” in the everyday life, and might have been inspired by scientific theories coming from biology, it emerges from the Dadaist device of collage or Montage. At the same time the setting, establishing parallelisms between images coming from different realms but with some aesthetic in common, produced certain difficulties in recognizing and relating the images to one another, producing a certain feeling of “enstrangement” in the recognition of the objects. There were two great Dadaists well skilled in the techniques of collage, and “enstranging” devices who were an important reference to Paolozzi and Henderson: Kurt Schwitters and Marcel Duchamp.

“Concerning enstrangement in the form of psychological parallelism…what is important…is for each of the parallel structures to retain its independence in spite of obvious affinities

The purpose of parallelism is the same as that of imagery in general, that is, the transfer of an object from its customary sphere of perception to a new one; we are dealing here with a distinct semantic change”(12)

“…the very hallmark of the artistic: that is, an artifact that has been intentionally removed from the domain of automatized perception. It is ‘artificially’ created by an artist in such a way that the perceiver, pausing in his reading, dwells on the text. This is when the literary work attains its greatest and most long-lasting impact. The object is perceived not spatially but, as it were, in its temporal continuity. That is, because of this device, the object is brought into view” (12)

“Aristotle, poetic language ought to have the character of something foreign, something outlandish about it… just as Sumerian might have been regarded as a ‘poetic language’ by an Assyrian, so Latin was considered poetic by many in medieval Europe… Bulgarian was regarded likewise by a Russian…

268 According to Massey whereas the ICA board relied more on Surrealism and the Bauhaus “…the Independent Group deconstructed modernist theory and re-evaluated the work of the Dadaists…” See Massey Chapter 3 “Growth and from: the founding of the Independent Group.

269 See Uppercase nº1, On the work of Eduardo Paolozzi, David Piper, John McHale and Magda Cordell. Uppercase nº2 Edward Wright on Kurt Schwitters and Richard Hamilton on Marcel Duchamp, Uppercase nº 3 on Alison and Peter Smithson and Nigel Henderson. See also Lawrence Alloway “Dada 1956” in Architectural Design, November 1956.
Let’s not forget that Pushkin’s contemporaries were horrified at his trite expressions. Pushkin employed folk speech as a special device of arresting the reader’s attention precisely in the same way that his contemporaries interspersed Russian words in their everyday Franch speech” (12-13)

Shkolovsky ends up referring to the current work of Velimir Khlebnikov in the creation of a new, specialized poetic language

"The catalogue of the exhibit did not contained any elaborated statement just a summary of each image depicting concisely what it was

Within the Dadaist artists, I would like to stress the importance of Marcel Duchamp’s works and ideas for the young members of the Independent Group. As it has been pointed out in previous chapters it was Nigel Henderson who had precisely helped him in the setting of a Surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Guggenheim-Jeune in London.270 Apparently the artists tried a similar strategy to that of Duchamp weaving a spider web between the canvases but they failed. Henderson owned a copy of Duchamp’s Green Box that was being translated into English by Richard Hamilton and George Heard Hamilton. Duchamp’s Green Box was a limited edition of 300 copies published in October 1934 by Rose Sélavy (Duchamp’s alter ego). It contained “93 documents (photographs, drawings and manuscripts notes of the years 1911-15) as well as a plate in color” related with Duchamp’s painting, “La Marie mise à nu par ses célibataires meme”. According to Hamilton the box supplemented the painting and a “complete appreciation of the painting is impossible without some knowledge of its contents”.271 The Green Box included the instructions for the painting of the Bride, and among the photographs we can find a Man Ray’s photograph entitled “Dust breeding” which resembles an aerial view of a cultivated area, and points at a parallelism between an inorganic element behaving as an organic one.

But the key elements of the Green box and the Bride were the challenge of the conception of the work of art and the spectator’s relation to it. Among the manuscripts notes in the box we can read: “Perdre la possibilite de reconnaître 2 choses semblables, 2 couleurs...2 chapeaux, 2 formes que arrivent...impossibilite de memoire visuelle suffisante pour transporte d’un semblable à l’autre... » Duchamp’s note deals precisely with what the Independent Group artists were doing,

270 See Chapter 0.2.2. The Independent Group and Modern Art
placing images with certain resemblance such an aerial photograph of an archeological site and a cell formation, were challenging the viewers capacity to recognize them.

In this sense it is important to outline the fact that initially the artists were designing the set for the exhibition in order to show their work in parallel. The plaster works of Paolozzi resembling biological formations on stone are contrasted with Nigel Henderson experiments with different materials exposed to photographic development in such a way that the light performad cell-like form structures.

Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi “Study for Parallel of Life & Art” (1952)

In a second study for the exhibit the work of both is mixed and the spectator’s scale and position in relation to the panels being considered:

Nigel Henderson “Study for Parallel of Life & Art” (1952)

As we can see, initially, the artists were considering exhibiting only their own work for they considered their art an illustration of the “phenomena of organic and inorganic”. But in the final display their work was not very present. Only two photographs by Henderson were finally included: a...
photo-image of coffe grounds and a photo of Paolozzi’s sculpture, *Plaster Blocks* (1952). In the final set of the exhibition the works of art are almost dismissed. There might be an aesthetical aura of the images influenced by the “Art Brut” at that time very present through the work of Dubuffet and Giacometti. But the main ideas coming from Dadaism and “Art Brut” are related with the challenge of the conception of the art piece, the “displacement” of the work of art, its substitution for an image, and its reconversion in a tridimensional collage of visual relations. The choice of the Smithsons, Henderson and Paolozzi is mainly ethic resulting in an aesthetic, as Peter Smithson complained in the late 50’s: “Up to now Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas its essence is ethical”

“We had for some time been interested in exchanging images from out own private ‘imaginary museums’. You will remember that this is the way in which Andre Malraux discusses the assemblage of photographic material in printed form, gathered together from many points scattered in space and time, and representing the creative work of artists of all ages and civilizations. In our own case, however, the contents of these museums extended beyond the normal terms of art, to include photographs produced for technical purposes. We often found that this exchange resulted in confirmation of our beliefs that we had happened upon something significant, that others too responded in the same way to the visual impact of a particular image. Up to a point, that is, we found that we had a common working aesthetic, although we could none of us formulate a verbal basis for it. Eventually, we decided to pool the material we already had and to continue to collect more in an attempt to elucidate what we had in common and the nature of the material moving us. At this point certain groupings began to declare themselves… these terms… then began to play back on our selection and condition the choice of further images”

Nigel Henderson

Manuscript from the Henderson coll. Tate archive

*Cited in Walsh p,92 & Dick van den Heuvel & Risselada ed, p,15*

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Dadaist aura and “Art Brut” The establishing of general principles of relationships between particular and general phenomena might be a common goal of science and art. The way they search for and establish these relations is different. The Parallel of Life and Art exhibition had no explicit argument, the reason why those specific images were selected was not given.

What varies is the methodology and final result, the search for truth. Science relied on mathematics reduction of the tridimensional representation of reality to one dimension, the numerical, in order to define true values grounded in the principles of logic. In Modern Art, Mondrian tempted to reduce the tridimensional space of the Naturalist art to its elementary means bringing art to the other side, Style (Stijl). Regardless the concerns for technology and science emerging from the readings mentioned above I would like to stress the point that
1.3. COBRA EXHIBIT. vs. PARALLEL OF LIFE & ART

(REWORK THIS PART)

- real vs. image (→ Banham’s building as an image)
- painting and poetry vs. photography
- Politics & art vs. Science & art
- Neo plasticist Composition vs. Duchamp’s Spatial Collage
- against abstraction vs. abstraction as de-contextualization

Is Van Eyck’s design for the exhibit COBRA like?

Both have a sort of brutalism in art as common source but parallel understood Duchamp, cobra did not.

Parallel of Life and Art relies on Duchamp idea the ‘as found’ object is important because I choose it not because there something inherent in the object itself. Whereas for cobra the objects have a value insofar as they represent elementary principles…

To what extent the exhibition design represented the true spirit of the Cobra Group? If the paintings were childish like, Should be the exhibit childish like? It may not, but I do not think that a Modrian like exhibit helped to understand Cobra’s claims.
Parallel of Life and Art and Cobra exhibits: Parallel = science and art, cobra = politics and art. Both have art in common but parallel understood Duchamp, cobra did not. Parallel of Life and Art relies on Duchamp idea the ‘as found’ object is important because I choose it not because there something inherent in the object itself. Whereas for cobra the objects have a value insofar as they represent elementary principles…

…The waves of the sea, the little ripples of the shore… They have also, doubtless, their immanent teleological significance; but it is on another plane of thought from the physicist’s that we contemplate their intrinsic harmony and perfection…

Nor is it otherwise with the material forms of living things

Organic evolution has its physical analogue in the universal law that the world tends, in all its parts and particles, to pass from certain less probable to certain more probable configurations or states. This is the second law of thermodynamics. It has been called the law of evolution of the world; and we call it, after Clausius, the Principle of Entropy273, which is a literal translation of Evolution into Greek

The introduction of mathematical concepts into natural science has seemed to many men no mere stumbling-block, but a very parting of the ways…(11)

Often and often it happens that our physical knowledge is inadequate to explain the mechanical working of the organism…But all the while no physical law, any more than gracity itself, not even among the puzzles of stereo-chemistry or of physiological surface-action and osmosis, is known to be transgressed by the bodily mechanism (13)

My sole purpose is to correlate with mathematical statement and physical law certain of the simpler outward phenomena of organic growth and structure of form, while all the while regarding the fabric of the organism, ex hypothesi, as a material and mechanical configuration…But I would not for the world be thought that this is the only story which Life and her Children have to tell…

1- Dadaist use of collage
A collection of images without a rational explanation
The exhibition is a Dadaist tridimensional collage.

It was Dadaist for it erased the boundaries between the phenomena of life and what is commonly considered art. Certainly the Dadaist motto of uniting “life and art” (Chapter 0.1.4
“…abolition of memory: Dada; abolition of archeology: Dada; abolition of the prophets: Dada; abolition of the future: Dada; absolute and unquestionable faith in every god that is the immediate product of spontaneity: Dada… Freedom: Dada Dada Dada, roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE” Tristan Tzara manifesto 1918) had adopted different costumes all along the development of different Modern Art movements, since its early foundations on Art Nouveau to the Bauhaus (Ref. to Pevsner)

In chapter 0.1.3, I outlined the importance that imagination had for the Dadaists, the Surrealists and to some extent to the rest of Modern Art movements in Europe. From the very early establishment of the intellectual principles of Western civilization, Imagination was praised as a powerful device driving human’s will and conception of the world: “O imagination, you who have the power to impose yourself on our faculties and our wills”.274 Certainly the development of conic perspective as a representational device for the production of images in the Renaissance period may have overwhelmed the eye of Florence citizens in a similar way that the technical inventions in the early 50’s shook the spirit of the Independent Group artists in London.

“Imagination remains the only common denominator of man and nature”
Aldo Van Eyck, Statement against rationalism

Although the initial idea emerged from reading of D’Arcy Thompson’s “On Growth and Form” the exhibition represents an early manifestation of the Dadaist spir

2- Initially the artist were going to show their work but finally did not. Depict 2 proposals

3- The images selected from different realms from Anthropology to Architecture are a collection of “objets trouves”, photographs taken from magazines or pictures of the work of artists such Pollock or Henderson. The exhibition is designed as a complex tridimensional ready-made of images as an overall ready-made. The images were not important “per se” since any apparent logic provided sense to the choice and distribution of the images. It was the artist’s choice what gave them value, together with the overall arrangement.

274 Dante, Divine Comedy. See Chapter 0.1.3
2. PLAYGROUNDS IN THE CITY & THE CITY AS A PLAYGROUND

Aldo Van Eyck Playgrounds (1947-55)

A & P Smithson Golden Lane (1952)
2.1. **VAN EYCK PLAYGROUNDS (1947-55):**

"Play, play, play... until the things fall in place!"

Yehuda E. Safran

Van Eyck’s designs for the playgrounds are a beautiful solution to a difficult task within the process of reconstruction after the war; its beauty emerges from its simplicity. They can be interpreted as a wise response to the uncivilized irrationality of the war, by providing a place for one of the most important non-rational civilized behaviors of mankind: playing.

Following the Dutch humanistic tradition inaugurated by Erasmus in the XVth century, in the XXth century Johan Huizinga pointed out the fact that our societies were more ruled and determined by certain kind of emotional means than by those that can be considered the result of rational thinking. If Erasmus had crowned folly as the ultimate ruler of mankind, Huizinga’s “*Homo Ludens*” (published in 1938) transfer the crown to play, one of follies’ most civilized descendants. Therefore, when Aldo Van Eyck had to face the problem of giving room to such a non-rational behavior, he was able to do it with certain easiness, since that succinct province of folly had already been explored by the Dutch humanist tradition. Moreover, if there is a fundamental element in play, that is, fun; an attitude deeply exploited by the Dadaists facing the war, like Hans Arp-whom Van Eyck had come to know very well-and was kindly depicted by Duchamp in the following terms:

“…*L’element le plus important apporte par Arp est l’humour sous sa forma la plus subtile, l’especie de conception fantaisiste qui confererent au movement Dada sa vivacite exuberante qui l’opposa aux tendances purement intellectuelles du cubisme et de l’expressionisme. Arp montre l’importance du sourire dans le combat contre les theories sophistiquées de l’époque…*”

Another important thing Arp taught the young Van Eyck was the importance of cooperation in art, something that Van Eyck may had experienced in the design of the playgrounds. The playgrounds have to be understood as a process within the framework of the European reconstruction. Therefore as a result of Dutch’s society will to reborn from the war, spiritually and materially. The Town Planning division of the Public Works Department of Amsterdam directed by

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275 Marcel Duchamp depiction of Hans Arp, 1949, see Marcel Duchamp: Duchamp du signe. Ecrits reunis et presentes par Michel Sanouillet et Paul Matisse. P-185

276 See 0.2.3 C.W. Giedion, *Van Eyck & Modern Art*. Mainly Van Eyck’s quote “Arp asked me to make a series of ink drawings based on pencil sketches his late wife Sophie Täuber had made...Arp waved my anxiety away saying that I should regard what I was doing as cooperation- the effort of two people, not one, not one, this time: that was how it should be in art- the way one day will be...” See, *Ex Turco aliquid novum* in Ligtelijn and Strauven p-21
Cor Van Eesteren played an important role in the materialization of Van Eyck designs. Back to Amsterdam after the war, Van Eyck got a position in the municipality thanks to the recommendation of the Giedions and the support of Nelly van Doesburg. Cor van Eesteren, a former member of De Stijl, offered Van Eyck a position of architectural designer in the Town Planning division of the Public Works Department of Amsterdam; he started working in the department ruled by Van Eesteren in October 1946. Van Eesteren had studied at the Bauhaus and became a young member of De Stijl when at the Dadaist-Constructivist Congress held in Weimar (1922), was asked by Van Doesburg to join the group. Aldo van Eyck had a great consideration of him as former member of De Stijl, and they got along very well, as Strauven accounts: “they often sought each other out at the end of the day to exchange ideas – ‘In for some Stijl?’ Van Eesteren would ask…”

At the same time, during his early period designing the playgrounds, Van Eyck took part in the Cobra exhibitions and became a sort of intellectual mentor for the Dutch Cobra. In March 1951, after designing the Cobra exhibits in Amsterdam (1949) and Liege (1951), together with his wife, the Cobra artists, Corneille, and others, Van Eyck visited the Algerian Sahara. Following maybe the steps of Paul Klee for whom both friends had great admiration, Van Eyck experienced the escape of western civilization pursued by modern artists since the time of Van Gogh and Gaugin. But Van Eyck travel was different for it was taking place after Gaugin’s paintings or Picasso’s Demoiselles d’Avignon; after the elementary plastic means of primitive cultures had already been used to reenact modern art giving birth to Cubism or some forms of Dadaism. At the moment when Van Eyck travelled to Africa he was using those same principles from modern art to reenact modern architecture in the design of the playgrounds, in the Algerian desert Van Eyck understood that he was using the idea of the “elementary” according to Arp, or Brancusi’s notion of ‘simplicite’, and he witness that it was clearly present also in the architecture of the Algerian desert. When Van Eyck got to Timoudi he found a grave that looked like his sandpit designed for the playgrounds inspired as I will argue later on by Brancusi’s or Arp’s work. He found architecture shaped by the sunlight from the desert like Brancusi’s sculptures had been shaped by the sunlight descending from the skylights of his studio. He found himself as a Tanguy’s shapeless surrealistic form in the middle of nothingness. Van Eyck understood the fact that if modern art had traveled backwards in time in the search of elementary forms, his designs for the playgrounds were experiencing that same travel in time, inspired by the artistic means to an architecture of the elementary.

_Cor Van Eesteren played an important role in the materialization of Van Eyck designs._

277 Within the Van Eesteren team at the municipality apparently the idea of providing playgrounds came out from Jaacoba Mulder. See Liane Lefaivre, “Space, place and play” in _Aldo Van Eyck, the playgrounds and the city_, Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum; Rotterdam : NAI Publishers, c2002. p-40

278 Strauven p.100

279 Among the them also Herman Haan and his wife and Ben Deume, vehicle mechanic. See Strauven p.144
Although the playgrounds have to be understood as a result of cooperation, Van Eyck’s contact with Rietveld or the influence of Cobra should not be in any case overestimated. The design of the playgrounds was a first intuitive draft materialization of several personal ideas. Certainly, Van Eyck’s early vision of modern architecture was nourished by a deep understanding of art principles. Although it is possible to relate ideas or conceptual/formal devices from certain painters or sculptors with Van Eyck’s designs, I don’t mean to say this was a conscious design process or that for him architecture equaled painting or sculpture. For Van Eyck, the boundaries between painting, sculpture and architecture were clear. Although the principles were the same, and both art and architecture pursued complementary ends, the ways to convey it were completely different for him as I will explain in the following chapter. The playgrounds were a very simple and fresh architectural design, nourished with ideas coming from art with a complete awareness of the limitations of architecture.
2.1.1. **Art & Architecture: abstraction vs. style**

“Art is a fruit out of man like the fruit out of a plant like the child out of the mother. While the fruit of the plant grows independent forms and never resembles a balloon or a president in a cutaway suit the artistic fruit of man shows for the most part a ridiculous resemblance to the appearance of other things. Thus man thinks he is able to live and to create against the laws of nature and he creates abortions. Through reason man became a tragic and ugly figure. I dare say he would create even his children in the form of vases with umbilical cords if he could do so. Reason has cut man off from nature.”

Hans Arp, ‘Notes from a Dada diary’ from Transition mag. (1932)

“Architecture is not an abstraction but a reality. Its inner strength lies in social equilibrium, while its constructive essence is determined by quite different factors, plastic, technical or biological…”

Theo Van Doesburg, “Futurism between whim and revelation: The Manifest of Sant’Elia” Het Bouwbedrijf vol.6, nº9, April 1929, p.179

Implicit in the aesthetic foundations of Modern Art is the criticism to cognition, the fact that in the early stages of civilization men are aware of the limitations of their cognition by instinct and in the most developed stages of civilization they are aware of it as a result of thought. Worringer thesis Abstraction and Empathy coined the modern conception of abstraction in art in a moment where art was conceived only in classical terms as a product of empathy and Naturalism in art. Worringer argued that if certainty and joy leads to empathy, it was uncertainty and fear what lead to abstraction. Worringer considered abstraction superior and more consistent than empathy mainly because in “the urge to abstraction” man’s innate need of self-alienation does not lead to an attachment to objects (objectified self-enjoyment) but to transcendental art. An art that tried to render the material individuality of the object independently of the ambient external world and the subject. Giving birth to form-values not determined by current conceptions of space-time that consequently are universal and a-temporal, and provide new forms of understanding. Worringer’s conclusion is that men are aware of the impossibility of a truly understanding and control of nature, initially in the early stages by intuition and ultimately in the most developed stages by thought. Therefore mankind is mainly a victim of fear-uncertainty aware of its incapability of understand the world, hence it is the urge to abstraction the main force driving men’s artistic creation:

“He is inhabited by a gloomy knowledge of the problematic nature and relativity of the phenomenal world. He is by instinct a critic of cognition. The feeling for the ‘thing in itself’, which man lost in the pride of his spiritual evolution and which has come to life again in our philosophy only as the ultimate result of scientific analysis, stands not only at the end, but also at the beginning of our spiritual culture. What was previously felt instinctively has finally become a product of thought”

Worringer’s thesis provided an aesthetic theory for the new Cubist art emerging in the work of Picasso and was immediately adopted by Der Blaue Reiter. From Loss to Mies and De Stijl both the notion of abstraction in art and the richness of the formal experiments of abstract painting and sculpture nourished architectural language as Van Eyck pointed out:

“What has been discovered in the field of form consciousness since Cezanne, by way of Seurat, the early Cubism of 1910-12, the Dadaism of Merz and Cabaret Voltaire, or Blaue Reiter,
Suprematism and De Stijl movement was carried over from the realm of painting to that of architecture. So the painter is relieved of the one sided duty (initially necessary and therefore meaningful) to suppress his need for direct expression in favor of purely formal experimentation. This duty will continue to apply to the architect for a long time to come: for the sake of man and the reality of life he will have to continue his laborious struggle with form...but the painter has always been a very different sort of animal. He is concerned with direct and pregnant physical expression; he makes form subservient to this urge.

For Van Eyck it was clear that in painting the artist made forms according to his "urge to abstraction".

The story of the aesthetic notion of abstraction in art is to some extent the story of the mainstream of modern art. Arp's notion of art "as a fruit out of man", as a creation completely detached from the mere imitation of nature, was already drafted in 1906 by W. Worringer's thesis Abstraction and Empathy, one year before Picasso's Demoiselles D'Avignon. Abstraction emerged all over Europe parallel in aesthetics theory and the artists' works during the first decade of the twentieth century. Worringer's thinking was influential for many artists and of paramount importance for Sigfried and Carola Giedion. C.W. Giedion's book Modern Plastik Art was grounded in Worringer's ideas and to some extent is an illustration of his main thesis in Modern terms.

Van Eyck's notion of art-arch was that arch = formal experimentation

Van Eyck aesthetics- CW Giedion – Worringer

According to Worringer's the original impulse for the artistic expression it was the artists' inner will; "the content of the absolute artistic volition, the urge" is to create resting points facing the "bewildering and disquieting mutations of the phenomena of the outer world". Worringer's conclusion of the 1st chapter points that "...This urge was bound to find its first satisfaction in pure geometric abstraction...(34-5)"

Worringer referred to 2 solutions in the urge for abstraction: suppression of space & use of geometric forms (not organic) in terms of the inner-will produced by man's need of self alienation.

In order to trace relations between ideas and works from modern art and the design of the playgrounds, I will first try to draft Van Eyck's initial conception on the relation between architecture and art. In general terms I would argue Van Eyck played a healthy balance between Arp's vision of human creations as "a fruit of man" and Van Doesburg notion of architecture as a reality, not as an abstraction.

On the one hand Van Eyck followed Arp's advice creating forms that did not resemble other things; following the laws of nature trying to understand the natural behavior of the child and developing a design process that did not relied exclusively in rational thinking.

2. search for elementary in Art and Architecture

"...There are few things of which I am so convinced as the necessity of achieving an universal reduction of everything toward the elementary; not only the elementary in form but also, and above all, the elementary in content (CONTENT IN PAINTING = BEHAVIOR IN ARCH). When Brancusi says that 'la simplicite n'es t...' what he means by simplicitie is what I mean by elementary.

280 Aldo van Eyck, Constant and the Abstracts, opening speech for the Constant exhibition at Le Canard gallery in Amsterdam on 16 February 1951. See Ligtelijn and Strauven p-64

281 Hans Arp might have been familiar with Worringer's thesis due to his close friendship with the Giedions, specially with C.W. Giedion, they both studied under Worringer in Bonn. See Chapter 2.3.3
We have come to a point where a start has to be made on elementary expression…"Constant and the abstracts

3. Experimentation in art and archi

where Van Eyck gives one his first statements about the role architects and artists:

“What has been discovered in the field of form consciousness since Cezanne, by way of Seurat, the early Cubism of 1910-12, the Dadaism of Merz and Cabaret Voltaire, or Blaue Reiter, Suprematism and De Stijl movement was carried over from the realm of painting to that of architecture. So the painter is relieved of the one sided duty (initially necessary and therefore meaningful) to suppress his need for direct expression in favor of purely formal experimentation. This duty will continue to apply to the architect for a long time to come: for the sake of man and the reality of life he will have to continue his laborious struggle with form…but the painter has always been a very different sort of animal. He is concerned with direct and pregnant physical expression; he makes form subservient to this urge."282

According to Van Eyck a big difference between architecture and art, is the fact that architects should suppress their need of direct expression in favor of purely formal experimentation. Whereas the artist makes form subservient to his urge to express, the architect must devote to “purely formal experimentation”. If we consider the fact that COBRA defined themselves as “Groupe Experimentale”, and Constant’s text for the catalogue of the Cobra exhibition “C’est notre desir qui fait la revolution” argued that the artists were “…condamnes a l’experimentation par les memes causes qui acculent le monde a la lutte... »283, it could be argued that experimentation was a process in common for both Van Eyck and Cobra. Formal experimentation, the struggle to find shapes that respond to the needs, whereas the artists’ needs might be purely emotional in the case of the architect the needs have a different nature not only emotional but also material.

Hence a comparison between Constant’s text, “C’est notre desir qui fait la revolution” (1950), included in the catalogue for the Cobra exhibition that Van Eyck designed, and Van Eyck’s opening speech for Constant exhibit (Amsterdam, 1951) unveils

4. Arch & Art are realities not abstractions:

On the other hand he may have inherited Van Doesburg conception of architecture as a reality that ultimately cannot remain in the realm of artistic abstraction but has to deal with the social reality where it may find its “inner strength”.

2.1 Constant and the Abstracts, Artists should not avoid reality

It was in the opening speech for the Constant exhibition at Le Canard gallery in Amsterdam (16 February 1951)

“…They don’t like children that’s why they paint abstracts…

Considering my own distrust and irritation with it, I can well Constant’s rejection of what currently presents itself as abstract. Because this rejection is essential both to his own work and to the development of painting as such…

282 Aldo van Eyck, Constant and the Abstracts, opening speech for the Constant exhibition at Le Canard gallery in Amsterdam on 16 February 1951. See Ligtelijn and Strauven p-64
283 «…Alons remplir la toile vierge de Mondrian meme si ce n’est qu’avec nos malheurs. Le malheur ‘est-il pas preferable a la mort… ?…Telle est notre reponse aux abstraits…mais etre libre, c’est comme etre fort : la liberte ne se manifeste que dans la creation ou dans la lutte, qui au fond ont le meme but : la realisation de notre vie…Nous sommes condamnes a l’experimentation par les memes causes qui acculent le monde a la lutte... » See Cobra nº 4. 1950. p.3-4.
Abstract artists have come to be closer to the conjurers. That’s why their work has become so meaningless… it is not constructive, so does not contribute to a formal language, but is a parasite of it. They are ‘truly’ abstract not so Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Malevitch, Lissitzky, Pevsner… But what does a painter, sculptor or architect do with this formal language, without a view of the new dimension from which it emerged and which it should manifest? In this case he uses the formal language as a trifle… not to come close to reality but to avoid it...

Without an awareness of reality the artist is a producer of artifice… Constant… He is concrete, just like Mondrian. He is like Mondrian, not abstract!… no different from the similarity between Guernica and Goya. Constant is a realist…”

2.2 Corneille and the Realists: Art as an extension of reality and not simply a depiction of it

The artists using his imagination searches for a formal language that can tell us something about the structure and rhythm of his world view. Such a new view turned into a painting or a sculpture is a broader transformed reality that is created, an extension of the reality that existed before.

“Corneille and Constant… every work they paint is an extension, an intensification of reality…”(68)

If we suppress excessively our inner will in order to make something that looks like what already exists (that is recognissable) we are betraying ourselves for being to realistics, whereas if we rely excessively in our inner will detached from reality it will become excessively abstract, disconnected with reality:

“After all, everyone who is genuinely creative knows that the difference between what he wants to express because an inner need, and its direct recognisability, must somehow divide his loyalties. Some opt for what they want to express and neglect the recognisability. Others opt for recognisability but neglect what they thought they wanted to express…”(69)

5. Use of imagination

It is the imagination not fantasy, the key element for creation out of reality for it will allow us to show things that otherwise would remain invisible

Art has always been born out of reality just like everything else. Reality certainly does not go back to reality just like that… Something else is needed for that. Imagination, not fantasy. It is with imagination that Courbet, Mondrian, Schwitters, Constant and Corneille approach reality, show us real wonders that would otherwise have remained invisible…(70)"

Corneille and the Realists, 7 Nov. 1951

a) Not Abstraction vs. experimentation? Mondrian & Cobra:

Cobra & the kids → playground designs → overcome functionalist arch

If art had illustrated the crisis of Western society values that ultimately propelled Europe into the two World war period, to some extent it could be felt that art had foreseen the catastrophic fate of Europe. Therefore if it had visionary qualities it may have healing qualities that may avoid a further propagation of the conflict into a third World War facing the rising authoritarian-fascist tendency of the U.S.S.R.
Constant critique to Mondrian (Cobra nº 4. 1950) (After poet Louis Tiessen speech at 1st Dutch Cobra exhibit. Stokvis p.175)

« Creer c’est toujours faire ce qui n’estait pas encore connu...Alons remplir la toile vierge de Mondrian meme si ce n’est qu’avec nos malheurs. Le malheur ‘est-il pas preferable a la mort... »

Constant
C’est notre desir qui fait la revolution
Cobra nº 4. 1950

b) Relation Playgrounds – Cobra paintings

On the relation between architecture and art Van Eyck stated: “1- As a cooperation: possible and desirable (but not yet), 2- As synthesis: possible but not desirable, 3- as integration: not possible and thus not desirable either. In the 1st case: synthesis is possible. In the 2nd case: cooperation is possible. The 3rd case: is theory, but art is practice. Integration = impotence“

1.1 1st Appeal to imagination

“Whoever prefers the miracle of reality to the banality of illusion; the natural to the surrogate...elementary to material perfection; whoever uses his imagination to rejuvenate himself and the community; in short, whoever has the courage and capacity to be free, is a danger to the state”

An Appe(a)l to imagination
Manifesto in defence of Karel Appel, Questioning Children 1949

1.2 Against abstraction vogue

“Victor, six years old, is Constant’s most loyal companion... Parisians are not all so nice. The don’t like children that’s why they paint abstracts...I can well understand Constant’s rejection of what currently presents itself as abstract. Because this rejection is essential both to his own work and to the development of painting...I am so convinced as the necessity of achieving a universal reduction of everything toward the elementary...elementary in content. When Brancusi says that ‘la simplicite n’est pas

284 Aldon Van Eyck, On the relation between architecture and art. Van Eyck’s response to an inquiry published in Forum, 1959, no.6. See Ligtelijn and Strauven p-159
un but dans l’art, mais qu’on arrive à la simplicité malgré soi, en s’approchant du sens reel des choses’, what he means by simplicité is what I mean by elementary…

Mondrian, Van Doesburg, Malevich, Lissitzky, Pevsner…the non-figuratives…
But what does a painter sculptor or architect do with this formal language, without a view of the new dimension from which it emerged and which it should manifest? In this case he uses the formal language as a trifle. He misuses it, performs tricks with it, not to come close to reality but to avoid it. He creates a vacuum, an arty formalism… Without an awareness of reality, the artist is a producer of artifice, art just an arty trick…

Constant…He is concrete, just like Mondrian. He is like Mondrian, not abstract!…
Mondrian: ‘The culture of particular form is approaching its end. The culture of determined relations has begun’. So he was no longer concerned with things themselves, but with their connections, with the relation between one thing and another… He had to reveal this elementary relationship without the things themselves. The era of pure relationships begins: not for the things, but for the world between them…”

Constant and the abstracts
Opening speech for Constant exhibit
Le Canard Gallery in Amsterdam 1951

1.3 Painting for the kids

“The small painting below is from a series Appel painted specifically for his friends’ children in 1950. Each of them went to his studio to choose one and take it home…”

A evening of limbo in the Low Countries
About an evening in the Vondel Park Pavilion 1951

Van Eyck playgrounds are non-figurative elementary architectures (real) really close to the kids (“users”) → overcome simplistic functionalism
2.1.2. **Playgrounds: The elementary & the logic of determined relations**

Back to the elementary an analysis of the primitive…

“The examination of various recent movements in art which follows has been undertaken…to prove that in spite of wide divergencies of idiom they have a common aim and common basic language”

*C.W. Guideon, 1937*

*Modern plastic art, elements of reality, volume and disintegration*

---

a) The elementary, the artists aim: Arp, Mondrian, Brancusi…

The task was to give room to a behavior that is the result of imagination, a behavior whose specific needs you cannot foresee and is not fixed. In empty voids all over the city with very different shapes and conditions. In order to accomplish these two things Van Eyck developed for years a design strategy that used elementary forms that established determined relations among them and with the existing site. In order to address the unpredictable child behavior Van Eyck noticed that the
elements should be elementary: “It must be elementary in that it must be respond to the child’s elementary inclinations and movements (the later does not completely cover the former) and activate his imagination.”

1- Van Eyck started from scratch the Elements of the playground are abstract forms.

Elementary forms are the basic geometrical forms from which architecture from western civilization has nourished. Our everyday life architecture has imbedded that forms, those forms have been shaped for centuries according to our specific needs and had resulted in other forms that are our rooms, squares, stairs, the human habitat created as a result of human action. Van Eyck provided very simple forms without a strictly determined use so the kids could, through playing, imagine the space surrounding that form and play as if it was real. If being a kid you are able to play with a simple form and enjoy, and that form is imbedded in the space of your everyday life when you are an adult, maybe you can play in it and transform your room in a sandpit or your table in a mountain, and still be alive: “quand nous ne sommes plus des enfants, nous sommes deja morts”

Although I introduced the idea of the elementary forms designed by Van Eyck as forms already imbedded in the architecture of Western civilization, it is important to note that he had witnessed how those elementary forms were to be found in other civilizations. Therefore the forms used by Van Eyck had something archetypical that transcended the boundaries of Western culture. What these forms had in common was man. Van Eyck believed that the architecture he had seen in Timoudi could not “have been so different in UR 5000 years ago”. He found in those villages time capsules were forms had been freeze in time under the heat and extreme conditions of the Sahara desert. Something similar to Brancusi’s studio in Paris, where the artist worked steadily for years shaping slowly the stone according to dictated of the sunlight coming from the skylights. The heat and the sun dictated the action of the inhabitants of the Sahara as the light and the cold dictated the sculpting of Brancusi for years.

b) The logic of determined relations coming from De Stijl. Elementary forms arranged according to a logic of determined relations relied on Mondrian’s motto: “The culture of particular form is approaching its end, the culture of determined relations has begun” and used very simple elements, he called who he worked on designed very simple elements

1- Van Eyck provided forms whose use was not determined by its shape

2-

3- If we provide the child a place they provide life to the city. If you provide a place to a child to play or to an adult to enjoy he is going to use it. That place will not be sense-less because the people use it. Now, play like joy or like game has not a strict definition. The word gets its meaning by the use we make out of it. Play and enjoy as behavior may be result of our imagination.

The meaning is provided to the place by the people who use it.

285 Aldo Van Eyck, After a heavy snowstorm. Brief for a 12-day student project – Washington University, St Louis, 1961. In Selected writings, Strauven and Ligtelijn ed. P.110
286 Aldo Van Eyck article “Building in the Southern Oases” Forum, 1953, no. 1, p.28-37
for they were determined by the negative irrationality of the war and

2-

3- Regarding the methodology the design and building process, the purely architectural values a very simple and naïve parallelism could be traced between the playgrounds and Brancusi’s “methode de travail concentrique”. Architecture and Sculpture as spiral-like process in time where stones are carved around a concern of endless content and a place as an answer to behavior changing slightly in time or punctual actions. I am stressing the parallelism between Brancusi’s method and Van Eyck’s design because it illustrates a non-linear process grounded in a critic to rational-purpose aimed thinking. How come Brancusi spent 10 years to finish an sculpture? Certainly because his perception of time is different from the rest of people. It is impossible to know to what extent Van Eyck carried in mind an specific idea in relation to Brancusi’s work because that would be at odds with my main argument, the linearity on specificity of any artistic influence in the design process.

i. Endless list of Van Eyck Playgrounds sources

In current historiography there are many references to potential sources of inspiration, both artistic and intellectual. Considering the richness of Van Eyck’s cultural background, the list of potential sources of inspiration for the playgrounds could be endless. In order to restrict I am going to focus in those coming from the artistic realm that may have conducted the design process. And I will depart with his explanation of the project As art devices They are important in so far as they are not a product of rational knowledge but a product of imagination conducted by intuition

Liane Lefaivre and A. Tzonis vision of Van Eyck as a “Humanist Rebel” provides a wide range of potential sources of artistic and intellectual inspiration in order to position Van Eyck’s projects in the humanist tradition. They slightly referred to Van Eyck’s rebellion against the mechanistic approach of the older pre-war generation as it was illustrated in the issue forum nº 6 August 1959, edited by van eyck (9)

a) Tzionis & Lefaivre – Van Doesburg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author: Liane Lefaivre</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title: Space, place and play</td>
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<td>Book: Aldo Van Eyck, the playgrounds and the city</td>
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- Parallel between Playgrounds and Cobra 4th issue (1949 exhibit) (29)
- Relation Smithsons & Van Eyck regarding the impact of the primitive and the children on the architects (36)
- Conceived as a constellation ----removes duality interior/exterior space (De Stijl)

Playgrounds can be seen as resembling Mondrian’s so-called Starry Sky paintings → artist moved away from classical, closed monocentric composition.

Author: Liane Lefaivre A. Tzonis

Book: Aldo van Eyck. Humanist Rebel

- Van Eyck rebelled against the mechanistic approach of the older pre-war generation forum 6 august 59, ed by van eyck (9)

- Van Eyck belonged to Team X…collectively they were perhaps more responsible than any other group for overturning the narrow, constricting functionalist tenets of prewar modernism and the postwar reconstruction carried out in its name.

I believe that this overturn is promoted by their understanding of the AG art and what Modern Arch was missing from that relation-dialogue with the arts. Mainly in the case of Van-eyck since the Smithson had the NEW-mechanistic view-approach of Banham as a strong influence…

- Syncretist whole: classical canon & anti-classical compositional rules (Mondrian Van Doesburg) and Non-Western design elements, borrowed from the Dogon (10)

- Building stood for a community …he called it ‘the inbetween’, notion from Martin Buber I and Thou) → architecture as dialogue (10-11)

- Building stood for a community …he called it ‘the inbetween’, notion from Martin Buber I and Thou) → architecture as dialogue (10-11)

- Redefine the operational concept of play, work, collective event and individual activity in order to arrive at a higher definition of functionality (11)

- After jaacoba mulder idea (Van Eesteren team) of turn away traditional gardens and provide playgrounds. Le Corbusier Athens Charter presented leisure as one of the basic functions of a city (= to housing, work, circulation, preservation of historical fabric) (18)

- Van eyck influenced by Sartre of grandiose philosophical systems as suffering from ‘the illusion of immanence’…Henry Lefevre Critique de la vie quotidienne 47, inspired by surrealist Louis aragon Le Paysin de Paris…ordinary forgotten areas of periphery were privileged places of poetic experience and social life..(51)

- Van eyck and Schwitters had a warm exchange of letters when he was working in the early phase of design -> Merzbau -> playgrounds were site specific (52)

- …The child became a model for the adult in the naïf, child-like-art-brut works by Jean Dubuffet which inspired cobra (58)...The new postwar importance of childhood also shaped representations of architecture and urbanism to a certain extent… Nigel Henderson’s photographs … had a major impact a the time and influenced Alison and Peter Smithson (61)

- The inbetweening city. Design as a dialogue for the ‘great number’. He starts reading Buber in Zurich as student ‘das Zwischen- the between’ van eyck uses it as ‘in between’. 62

Buber’s idea of dialogue as an essential determinant for good life…industrialization in germany caused conflicts opposition between community(primary groups)-company (social groups)...buber’s I and you…new concept of community through interaction based not on homogeneity but on the acceptance of each other's ‘opposition and complementarity’…65 through genuine dialogue…what counts in a genuine dialogue is the between…a being considers another as an other, as a clearly distinct being 66
ii. **Brancusi’s Methode de Travail concentrique:**

Strauven did not find ANY logic governing the whole design of the 60 first Playgrounds Van Eyck designed between 1947-1955

I would argue the logic is methodological- Brancusi’s methode de travail concentrique

Brancusi’s evolution of L’oiseaux sculpture as a concentric work towards an elementary form → the concentric method of working developed by Van Eyck.

It might be started with the playgrounds, were a design of elementary forms of different materials stablish a dialogue with the existing. These geometrical figures are combined in different ways as Brancusi combined the pedestals of his sculptures (Different materials stone, bronze, wood…different elementary forms combined: cross, circle, oval…) The design of the playgrounds was concentric: it was the same topic under different circumstances

> « Au lieu de proceder par definition anatomique, il s'agissait de creer un ensemble de formes sugestives et muables. Rythme general, mouvement decisif, intensite du volume ramene au minimum essentiel- tout le reste est sacrifie a cette exigence fondamentale « p. 21

L’oeuvre. Methodes de travail concentriques. Elaboration de la forme elementaire


Reading C.W. Giedion book on Brancusi: Chapter on L’oeuvre. Méthodes de travail concentriques. Elaboration de la forme elementaire...

“When Brancusi says that ‘la simplicite n’est pas un but dans l’art, mais qu’on arrive a la simplicite malgre soi, en s’approchant du sens reel des choses’, what he means by simplicite is what I mean by elementary…” Van Eyck’s quote CW Giedion’s book, Brancusi

**Brancusi’s portrait of Joyce…concentric spiral**

Van Eyck’s early projects are concentric

Evolution of L’oiseaux sculpture as a concentric work towards an elementary form → the concentric method of working developed by Van Eyck. It might be started with the playgrounds, were a design of elementary forms of different materials stablish a dialogue with the existing. These geometrical figures are combined in different ways as Brancusi combined the pedestals of his sculptures (Different materials stone, bronze, wood…different elementary forms combined: cross, circle, oval…) The design of the playgrunds was concentric: it was the same topic under different circumstances
Cobra 1947-51: Spring 1947 Van Eyck ‘received a Sunday morning visit from a rather shy man of his own age who asked to see his Miró paintings. It was Constant Nieuwenhuys… in the conversation that followed, they immediately became friends’ (123) Strauven

De Stijl or Cobra…‘ It was only some time later, in the winter of 1947-48, that Constant made the acquaintance of Appel and Corneille, whom he then soon brought into contact with Aldo…for a time his flat was effectively a rendezvous for the international Cobra movement ‘(123) Strauven

Van Eyck clearly stood for De Stijl, although he joined Cobra (footnote 162: in an interview with the author in Paris on 30 May 1982, Pierre Alechinsky stated in this connection ‘When he lived in the centre of Amsterdam, we never failed to visit him. We were always sure to find some intellectual nourishment at this place. It was like a spring in the desert’ (123) Strauven

Any of his early projects establishes a dialogue with the work of Cobra, although cobra strongly criticized Stijl Van eyck had already developed a language coming from Stijl through the painting of R.P. Lohse and Brancusi’s methode de travail concentrique.
A & P SMITHSON GOLDEN LANE (1952)
2.2.1 **Sociological Studies in East London by Judith Henderson:**

**a) The individual and the community**


*Family & Kinship in Est London,*
Willmott & Young.

Smithson's Diagrams of voluntary/involuntary association

“The village of the borough
Sometimes a person’s relatives are in the same turning, more often another nearby turning, and this helps to account for the attachment which people feel to the precinct, as distinct from the street, in which they live…”

*Family & Kinship in Est London,*
Willmott & Young

**b) The Street as place**

“Part one- Kinship on Bethnal Green …*Home and Street* …Most people meet their acquaintances in the streets, at the market, at the pub or at work. They do not usually invite them to their houses…Where every front door opens to street or staircase, and houses are crowded on top of one another, such an attitude helps to preserve some privacy against the press of people. The exclusiveness in the home runs alongside an attitude of friendliness to other people living in the same street.”

*Family & Kinship in Est London,*
Willmott & Young
2.2.2 Influence of N. Henderson on the Smithsons:

c) Recognition of yourself in the other RECOGNITION → REIDENTIFICATION:

Nigel Henderson work before moving to East End had a great charge of abstraction (photograms & collages, influence L. Moholy-Nagy) but his pictures of the kids illustrating their behavior, their answer to their situation...play

“Accident”- Let’s have it in inverted commas, please. Accident the subtle prompter in the wings of the unconscious- no friend to the BRASH- the coarsely confident or possibly? The VISUAL ENGINEER. Accident the great humbler...What we call SELECTIVE ACCIDENT to be good must function like the object trouvé- a chance set of “found” phenomena bringing about an order which you might ideally wished/invented to create from scratch. It is a question of RECOGNITION”

Undated notebook, Henderson collection. Tate archive
Victoria Walsh, Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art, Thames & Hudson, London 2001

FROM
The 4 functions- living, working, recreation, circulation-
(Le Corbusier Charte d’Athènes at CIAM 4th 1933)
TO
Smithsons CIAM 1953 idea of REIDENTIFICATION
Re-identifying
street considered as a circulation space by CIAM
street considered as a recreation space by the kids

Paolozzi met A&P Smithson in Central School of arts and crafts and introduced to Henderson in 1951. Recalling these “absolutely incredible” walks, Alison Smithson retrospectively described Henderson as “the original image-finder”, while Peter Smithson observed that “a walk with Nigel is to see the inanimate as animate, and these weird business of opening...other people’s eyes to see- to have an affection between objects and people”

The artist NH had the sensibility, the eye, the smell, the empathic willingness (predisposition) that enables him to perceive

d) HOW? Kids playing drawing → Artist playing → Architects playing drawing:

NH perception of kids attitude is empathic. He identifies himself with the kids playing in the street, after all he is playing in the street with his camera (Parallel behaviour of Cobra Artists)

“Clearly for NH, whose early years were defined by the oppressive bourgeois lifestyle of has grandparents...the lambent energy of the street life, the good-humoured tenacity of the locals, and the potential to move among both freely, unjudged, if not unnoticed, were both enticing and strangely liberating...”

Nigel Henderson. Parallel of Life and Art. Victoria Walsh

Kids draw on the street...they draw over the existing site...Golden Lane Urban structuring diagram
Continuous kid drawing on the streets...stretched building all over...

A&P Smithson drew lines over the existing site in order to create the arch-playground as kids drew line on their existing site in order to create their playground.

"In the old tradition, the street outside the house is the first point of contact where children learn for the first time of the world outside. Here are carried on those adult activities which are essential to everyday life (shopping, car cleaning, scooter repairs, letter posting, etc.) - THE STREET

Re-identifying man with his enviroment cannot be achieved using historical forms of house grouping (streets, squares, greens, etc.), as the social reality they represent no longer exists. The Golden Lane idea, a multilevel city with residential streets-in-the-air, is an attempt at another housing grouping.

From the multilevel street, people are in direct contact with the larger range of activities which give identity to their community - THE DISTRICT"

The Charged void: Urbanism. A&P Smithson

e) Empathic translation of Le Corbusier (Conversation with K. Frampton)

- Piece of street inside → Continuous Street outside
- isolated icon = discontinuity → continuity = street in the air
  (public space reaches every part of the building)
- corridor don’t touch ground → The deck touches the ground in certain moments

"The street is an extension of the house; in it children learn for the first time of the world outside the family; it is a microcosmic world in which the street games change with the seasons and the hours are reflected in the cycle of street activity"

Alison & Peter Smithson "Ordinariness and light"
Excerpt originally written in 1952

Discontinuous-Isolated-done vs. Continuous-'integrated'-in progress
f) **Henderson...Life happens in the street**

“Our cloth-capped man on his bicycle lives in the more compact geography, working near the living house, trading in the street or living over his small shop in a day to day economy without larder stores and credit accounts. A watch-repairer works in his window abutting the street in the medieval craftsman’s way. The empirical articles of his trade are scattered around him in an organic order, obedient to the logic of his seeing fingers. One shop front crowds another in that bizarre interplay of trade and sign that contributes to the complex texture of the city. Funeral parlour and Ice cream parlour share the universal symbiosis and, from the windows niche, the prurient headstone of an angel reassures us that in the midst of death we are in life”

“London” 1949. Henderson Collection, Tate archive


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2.2.2 Collage vs. painting: **Indep. Group collages → Smithson’s collage vs, Le Corbusier painting:**

From Painting to Collage as a representational device (and design device!!)
b. **PLAYGROUNDS vs. GOLDEN LANE:**
- Dialogue not with Cobra but with previous ag vs. dialogue with young ag
- From Doesburg-Arp compositions to Brancusi’s méthode de travail concentrique vs. From Le Corbusier’s Unite to a City Collage (collage of function and form)
- Network vs. megastructure
- Open function vs. specific function?
- Both represent a re-establishment of a dialogue with the city
  (balanced abstraction/empathy)
- ....
3. NEOPLASTICISM – (NEOPALLADIANISM) – NEOBRUTALISM
3.1. NAGELE PROJECT – NAGELE SCHOOL & ORPHANAGE PROJECT (1948-55):


Art as Techne: Neoplasticism from Piet Mondrian to R. P. Lohse

3.1.1. Early projects and R.P. Lohse:

a) R.P. Lohse concentrique compositions

“What amazed him, however, was that Aldo proved to be as fond of Surrealism as of Constructivism. ‘But Aldo, you are a split person! You consist of Miro and Mondrian and these two wage a continuous fight in your inner self!’: Aldo and Lohse held countless discussions not only on this duality but also on the relations between art and architecture, on possible analogies between the two and, especially, on the possibility and the extent to which the vision constructive art formulated in the flat plane might be transposed into architectural space.’” p.97 Aldo Van Eyck, Francis Strauven.

b) R.P. Lohse paintings and Van Eyck’s “Aesthetic meaning of number”
“Between 1942 and 1946, when I finally returned to Holland with my wife and Swiss-born daughter (Lohse…called her ‘die ägyptische Prinzessin’…

Two of his paintings in particular have been in my mind as though engraved there, almost since they were made around 1946. I have written and spoken about them on various occasions…Harmony in motion I called it. Surely the future lies in these beautiful pictures”

From “Ex Turico Aliquid novum”

Aldo van Eyck: Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998

“In order that we may overcome the menace of quantity now that we are faced with l’habitat pour le plus grand nombre, the aesthetics of number, the laws of…’harmony in motion’ must be discovered. Projects should attempt to solve the aesthetic problems that result through standarisation of constructional elements; through the repetition of similar and dissimilar dwelling within a larger housing unit”

Lohse paintings

Aldo van Eyck: Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998

c) From Harmony in Motion to the individual & the collective

Die Stijl→Lohse

Paintings → Aesthetic meaning of number → Conceptual model for CIAM l’habitat pour le plus grand nombre”
“The formal vocabulary with which man has hitherto imparted harmony to the singular and particular cannot help him to equilibrate the plural and the general. Man shudders because he believes that he must forfeit the one in favour of the other; the particular for the general; the individual for the collective; the singular for the plural; rest for movement…movement, as Lohse shows, does not necessarily imply chaos…Fearful of the monotony of number, repetitive elements in town planning are often needlessly combined into themes…”

Lohse & the aesthetic meaning of number
Forum, June 1952

3.1.2. Nagele Project and Neoplasticism:
Die Stijl conceptual framework → Lohse & early projects → Nagele Project for CIAM

“Mondrian or Miro?...After all Mondrian and Miro...were in the first place both partisans in the same great riot and against the same outworn hierarchy of values. With his plastic imagination Miro fascinatingly breached the suffocating fossilization that makes any form of metamorphosis impossible (It is a dog? Miró: Yes. Or is it a goose? Miro: Yes. Or it is a child? Miro: Yes). He breached the bastions behind which every phenomenon entrenches itself in isolation...in his own way he discovered the ‘interior of seeing’. In this way everything ends up back in man, like the animals in Noah’s ark. ‘Le monde dans un home, tel est le poète moderne’, said Max Jacob...

..In his Neoplasticism, Mondrian broke splendidly through the smothering fossilization of a world where one closes itself off from the other. In this universality all the contraries were put in balance. They freed themselves from the rigid bastion of their ‘particular’ form and restrictive meaning in order to enter into reciprocal, i.e. ‘pure’ relationships with each other. In Miro the world was made within one man, in Mondrian man was made relative within the world. Now, the first would be inconceivable without the second, and vice versa.”

Speech for the award of the 1962 Sikkens Prize
Speech held at Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum 11/3/1962
Aldo van Eyck: Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998

“Mondrian: ‘The culture of particular form is approaching its end. The culture of determined relations has begun’. So he was no longer concerned with things themselves, but with their connections, with the relation between one thing and another...

He had to reveal this elementary relationship without the things themselves. The era of pure relationships begins: not for the things, but for the world between them…”

Constant and the abstracts
- Ciam and Team X ‘fear’ to the AG artists:
  (Why CIAM Team X is not included in this inquiry)
  “Some people in the Team X had the same kind of fear of the past that CIAM had: a
  feeling that the past was something that had to be overcome and left behind…I tried to
  introduce the idea that we’d never get beyond CIAM in any way unless we found a way
  of shaking hands with the past, unless we found a method to deal with the past…
  Some people in Ciam and Tema X were almost completely disinterested in the
  avant-garde of the twentieth century: they were afraid both of the past and of the
  relevance of avant-garde art…
  You could talk about culture with Giedion and with a few others who ventured
  outside the architect’s narrow view that didn’t go beyond buildings. That was the
  trauma of CIAM, and Team X followed that up exactly”

Aldo Van Eyck interview
Team 10: 1953-81: in search of a utopia of the present
3.2. HUNSTANTON – PATIO & PAVILION – HOUSE OF THE FUTURE (1949-56)


Art & Techne: From Neo-Palladianism to New Brutalism

3.2.1. HUNSTANTON:

a) A& P Smithson Palladian affinities:

“Dr. Wittkover is regarded by the younger architects as the only art-historian working in England capable of describing and analysing buildings in spatial and plastic terms, and not in terms of derivations and dates…Dr. Giedion at a lecture at the ICA earlier in the year stated that during the 1950 at seminars both in Zurich and at the MIT the most discussed books of the year were Le Modulor and The Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism…”

Alison & Peter Smithson.

“Letter on Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism, Wittkover”

b) Hunstanton project & Palladio influence:

b.1) Relation Microcosmos and Microcosmos:

“The doctrine of the mathematical correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm was, of course one of the fundamentals of mediaeval thought” (note 3 p.15)
“The belief in the correspondence of microcosm and macrocosm, in the harmonic structure of the universe, in the comprehension of God through the mathematical symbols of centre, circle and sphere—all these closely related ideas which had their roots in antiquity and belonged to the undisputed tenets of mediaeval philosophy and theology, acquired new life in the Renaissance, and found visual expression in the Renaissance church” p.27

Architectural principles in the Age of Humanism R. Wittkover 1954

Relation between Absolute mathematics Applied mathematics
Pure forms visible forms
Immediately and intuitively perceptible

“In the original competition program there was a requirement for a headmaster’s house…This was given the format of a central top-lit general-use space enclose by subsidiary closed spaces. That is, it had, in miniature, the same spatial organization as the school itself. As was said at that time…the “microcosm of the macrocosm”

The Charged Void: Architecture A&P Smithson

b.2) Renais=From the temple to universe ➔ A&P Smith=From house to the city

“…Palladio’s statement on the macrocosm-microcosm relation between the universe and the temple- “We cannot doubt, that the little temples we make, ought to resemble this very great one, which by His immense goodness, was perfectly completed with one word of His”-we have an epitome of what Renaissance church builders endeavoured to achieve: the centrally planned church was for them the man-made echo or image of God’s universe and it is this shape which discloses “the unity, the infinite essence, the uniformity and the justice of God” p.21-22

Architectural principles in the Age of Humanism R. Wittkover 1954

“Tree is leaf and leaf is tree – house is city and city is house – a tree is a tree but it is also a huge leaf – a leaf is a leaf but it is also a tiny tree – a city is not a city unless it is also a huge house – a house is a house only if it is also a tiny city” Aldo Van Eyck

b.3) Showing the framing structure

About Giuliano da Sandallo’s S. Maria delle Carceri at Prato 1485
"The ratios are as simple and therefore as evident as possible. The depth of the arms, is half their length and the four end walls of the cross are as long as they are high, i.e. they form a perfect square. The entirely flat and plain surface of the walls and arches is framed by the pilasters and simple mouldings in the joints of the building, where the two surfaces meet. This structural skeleton is built in dark sandstone (pietra serena), while the walls themselves are given a white coat. Thus the dark articulations together with the white walls enhance the lucidity of the geometrical scheme." P. 19

Architectural principles in the Age of Humanism R. Wittkover 1954

b.4) Austerity & Simplicity of forms
"Palladio himself tackled the problem of the centralized church at the end of his life. His little church at Maser with the austerely classical portico follows the prototype of the most perfect ancient centralized building, the Pantheon. In plan a complete circle with chapels in the four axes, the cylinder is vaulted by the tranquil heaven of the semi-circular dome. And by excluding Bramante’s drum, Palladio managed to build up the interior from the two basic forms cylinder and semi-circle. The walls are white, there are no paintings and decoration consists of statuary." P.23

Architectural principles in the Age of Humanism R. Wittkover 1954

c) Hunstanton construction and the ‘as found’
Patio and Pavilion and N. Henderson pictures of Hunstanton…
3.2.2. PATIO AND PAVILION & Henderson-Paolozzi: 
Dialogue enderson-Paolozzi-Smithsons: From Parallel of Life and Art to Patio and Pavilion

a) D’Arcy Thompson’s → Henderson & Paolozzi → Parallel of Life and Art

“The search for differences or fundamental contrasts between the phenomena of organic and inorganic, of animate and inanimate things, has occupied many men’s mind, while the search for community of principles or essential similitudes has been pursued by few” p.7 D’Arcy Thompson’s, On Growth and Form

Image of parallel exhibit 1953

b) D’Arcy Thompson’s → Paolozzi sculptures → Smithson Snowball House 1956

Fig. 71. Three views of a foraminiferal shell (Tieghemma lamarckii). After Brach, From P. Grassé, Traité de Zoologie (Paris: Mason et Cie).

D’Arcy Thompson’s, On Growth and Form, Paolozzi, Contemplative object, 1951, A&P

Smithson Snowball House 1956

c) Patio and Pavilio = “Return” to elementary after influence of the Avant-Garde movements
3.2.3. **HOUSE OF THE FUTURE & Richard Hamilton-Banham:**

Dialogue Hamilton-Banham-Smithsons: From Man-Machine & Motion to Machine Aesthetic & the House of the Future

a) **R.Hamilton fascination for D’Arcy Thompson’s On Growth and Form**

Henderson fascination for organic life structural order (Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*).

“Henderson received a letter from Paolozzi in Paris drawing his attention to a book called On Growth and Form... He passed news of his recent discovery on to Hamilton... who voraciously read the book and enthusiastically declared ‘That’s it!’ The subject and content of the exhibition now generally established...”

Hamilton’s proposal begun by identifying Thompson’s book as the impetus behind the show, continuing:

…the visual interest of this field, were biology chemistry, physics and mathematics overlap, was considered an excellent subject for presentation in purely visual terms. **The laws of growth and form pertaining to the processes of nature are quite contrary to the processes of artistic creation.** However complex the form (Accepting Thompson’s hypothesis) it is the result of very precise physical laws; the complexities of art on the other hand, are the products of involved psychological processes. **Nevertheless, the painter and the sculptor have much to gain from the enlargement of their world of experience by an appreciation of the forms in nature beyond their immediate visual environment. It is the enlarged environment opened by scientific studies that we would reveal for its visual qualities”**


1951- On growth and Form exhibit. At ICA org. by Hamilton

“Newton did not show the cause of the apple falling, but he showed a similitude...between the apple and the stars. By doing so he turned old facts into new knowledge; and was well content if he could bring diverse phenomena under ‘two or three Principles of Motion’ even ‘though the Causes of these Principles were not yet discovered’...”

**The search for differences or fundamental contrasts between the phenomena of organic and inorganic, of animate and inanimate things, has occupied many men’s mind, while the search for community of principles or essential similitudes has been pursued by few”** p.7 D’Arcy Thompson’s, *On Growth and Form*
b) **2.1 D’Arcy Thompson’s → Dialogue Hamilton-Banham → Machine Aesthetic**

1953 – Hamilton teaching at Fine art dep Kings College planning an exhibit on “a visual survey of man’s relationship with the machinery of movement”
(Reading of Guideon Mechanization Takes Command)

1954 – Banham ceases to convene the IG –

Hamilton Transition paintings (1954) & Banham Machine Aesthetic article AR1954

“A racing car… is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samotrace” F.T. Marinetti

7th June 1955 – Banham lecture: Metal in Motion

May 1955 - **Man Machine and Motion exhibit by R. Hamilton**. Hatton Gallery, Newcastle

“Chapter II: On Magnitude

The principle of Similitude...

Speed & Size...

Size & Heat Gain ad Loss

Size and Jumping

Walking

Flying…” D’Arcy Thompson’s, *On Growth and Form*.

Image from Man, Machine and Motion exhibition

“The mechanical conquest of time and distance [through] the structures which man has created to extend his powers of locomotion…”


“Banham seems to have exerted a particular influence on Hamilton at this stage…Only four months before Man, Machine and Motion opened at the ICA, he [Banham] spoke on American car styling at one of the IG’s more informal meetings (Borax, or the Thousand Horse-Power Mink’ 4th March 1955), and on the day yhe show opened to the public, he delivered a lecture to the general ICA audience called ‘Metal in Motion’- a version of his IG talk…”


“But the zoologist or morphologist has been slow, where the physiologist has long been eager, to invoke the aid of the physical or mathematical sciences; and the reasons for this…rooted in old tradition and partly in the diverse minds and temperaments of men. To treat the living body as a mechanism was repugnant, and seemed even ludicrous, to Pascal; and Goethe…ruled mathematics out of place in natural history…” p.2 D’Arcy Thompson’s, *On Growth and Form*

Banham’s critique to Modern Movement for its lack of scienticism
“In Aristotle’s parable, the house is there that men may live in it; but it is also there because the builders have laid one stone upon another. It is a mechanism, or a mechanical construction, that the physicist looks upon the world; and Democritus, first of physicist and one of the greatest of the Greeks, chose to refer all natural phenomena to mechanism and set the final cause aside.” p.5, D'Arcy Thompson’s, On Growth and Form

Banham’s vision of house as a machine for living

Series of articles Architecture After 1960:
- Architecture After 1960 AR February 1960
- Stocktaking, AR March 1960

Image of Smithson’s Stocktaking article edited by Banham, AR March 1960

“Still, all the while, like warp and woof, mechanism and teleology are interwoven together, and we must not cleave to the one nor despise the other; for their union is rooted in the very nature of totality” p.5, D'Arcy Thompson’s, On Growth and Form

Banham’s dualism tradition and technology

FUNCTION & FORM
Modern Movement-Architecture

CHANGE-MACHINES + GROWTH & FORM
Futurism-Art  Biology-Science

TECHNOLOGY & TRADITION
Technology → Form?

Banham’s Theory and Design in the 1st Machine Age 1960 - AR architecture after 1960

c) D’Arcy Thompson’s → Hamilton Paintings → Dialogue Hamilton-Banham → House = Machine → House of the Future

R. Hamilton, D’orientation, (1952) & Smithsons House of the Future (1956)
Hydroids, D’Arcy Thompson’s, *On Growth and Form* and House of future aggregation

3.3. **HUNSTANTON vs. NAGELE SCHOOL – SHEFFIELD UNIV. vs. ORPHANAGE**

Hunstanton (1949-54) & Nagele (1954-56) Schools vs. Sheffield University (1953) & Orphanage (1955-60). Neo-Brutalism?

3.3.1 **NAGELE SCHOOL vs. HUNSTANTON:**
- Neoplasticism vs. Neopalladianism
- Decentered compositions vs. symmetrical proportions
- Showing armony in motion vs. Showing the framing structure
- Culture of determined relations vs. Microcosmos and Microcosmos
- ...

3.3.2 **SHEFFIELD UNIV. vs. ORPHANAGE:**
- Neo-brutalism vs Avant-Garde architecture?

3.4. **CONCLUSION:**

Avant-Garde Art and Architecture-Urbanism: International situationiste & New Babylon
Constant, the Artist as an Architect: Unitary Urbanism lecture (Stedelijk Mus. Amsterdam 1960)
LEISURE-PLAY-PLEASURE:- Playgrounds, Golden Lane, Orphanage, New Babylon…