

AFTER THE MANIFESTO

EDITED BY
CRAIG BUCKLEY

ARCHITECTURE

THEORY BOOKS

WESBADEN

AFTER THE MANIFESTO

**WRITING, ARCHITECTURE, AND
MEDIA IN A NEW CENTURY**

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THE MANIFESTO**
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MANIFESTO FEVER

MARK WIGLEY

THE AIM HERE is to quickly take the pulse of the manifesto in architecture, and to try to grasp its evolving role. A manifesto is a weapon. It is a challenge to the status quo, a call for action, a call for change. You use a manifesto to change things. But this is already far too simple, because a manifesto is not only a call to arms. It is also a form of action in its own right. The most famous example, of course, is the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, but we could also use the *Anarchist Manifesto* of 1850. The gesture of making a manifesto is already a very complicated act, more of a performance than anything else.

There is no such thing as a small manifesto. Manifestos conjure whole worlds. A manifesto never simply appears in our world. It is a polemical document thrown into and against our world. There is always a violence to the throw. One world hits another. The violence does not come from force but calibrated disdain. The hit undoes the existing situation by treating it as unreal and unworthy. The manifesto unravels the existing environment without apparent effort, exuding confidence in its own better world. The manifesto has no doubt. It does not arrive as a utopian dream but as a sudden reality that renders unreal what came before. The manifesto-effect, the sense of encountering a manifesto, is the sudden sense of an undoing, the coming undone of what was taken for granted. There is a double act with every manifesto, the manifesto effect and then the effect of the manifesto, the effect of the effect—neither of which is obvious.

The aesthetics of the document are critical. The statement is always an aesthetic statement, even when the very theme is an attack on aesthetics. Indeed, it could well be that the act of undoing a world is necessarily aesthetic, even a rendering of the existing world as a form of ugliness or inadequacy. The look, texture, rhythm, sound of the document are mobilized and every element of the manifesto has to collaborate in a singular concentrated statement. The internal rigor of a manifesto is extreme with the subservience of all parts to the whole, no part subservient to any other part, and every collaborating point at the same level with the same weight. The manifesto galvanizes the aesthetics of horizontal order to disorder existing worlds. The anti-hierarchical document has many basic forms: points, principles, formulas, credos, programs, notes, demands, theses, positions, reports, retorts. There are many different ways to do it, each of which has a different kind impact and none of which is straightforward.

At first glance it seems like it is not so complicated. The whole point of a manifesto is that it appears uncomplicated. The word "manifesto" comes from *manifest*, "to be clear," so one could say that the manifesto

minimalism to render clarity

form is about a kind of polemical clarity. It is clearer than any other document you can find. It is well organized, it is well ordered, it is compact, it makes points, it is super-edited. There is no word or punctuation mark in a manifesto that is not doing work. You could even say that a manifesto is a modern instrument or a machine, that it is industrial. It has a rhythm to it—tick, tick, tick. The points are numbered one, two, three, four, five, six. The relentless beat of this modern machine creates a sense of forward movement carrying the reader to an inevitable and better place.

But this sense of rhythmical progress is a kind of a trick, a ruse that crafts an invitation to blindly nod in assent. The manifesto does not simply appear in a particular moment and have a particular historical effect. Every manifesto positions itself in time, creates a sense of linear momentum, but can only do so by being outside of that time. The change it calls for is not a change within a space or time but a change of space and time. In the end it's not very clear who writes a manifesto, or who reads it, or even where or when a manifesto is read—and after all, what does it mean to read a manifesto? Can a call for a change of worlds simply be received or obeyed? All of the apparent clarity of the performance disguises something very complicated. What I want to suggest is that a manifesto is never simply written, and it's never simply read. For a manifesto to do its work, it does not have an author or even a reader as such. The point of a manifesto is to change the status of the writer and the reader. It wouldn't be a manifesto if, at the end of the day, the writer and reader are still in the same places.

Every manifesto carries a signature, although it cannot really be signed by one person. Even if there is a single name, that person will use the word "we." And the "we" is not the we of the writer, but the we of the reader. For a manifesto to work, the person who reads the manifesto has to countersign it, in a sense. The readers have to add their signatures by affirming what they read. And the manifesto is thrown into and against a space—so the signing of the manifesto, the throwing of the manifesto, and the reader's counter-signing of the manifesto are never quite what they seem. It is not a linear process. A manifesto does not simply ask for us to make a change in the future. Most manifestos are retroactive. Most describe something that has already happened. Or to say it another way, if a manifesto is a call for action, this action can come before the manifesto, during the manifesto, or after. It doesn't matter. Thus the great trick of the manifesto is that there is a complete disconnect between the call for action and the action itself.

In the same way, the action that is called for is never simply a construction or a production. The manifesto is always itself very well constructed, one could even say beautifully constructed, but its main purpose

is a kind of undoing, a kind of deconstruction, a dissolution of authority. You cannot simply call for action without depowering an existing system. Of course this means that to make a manifesto you need to construct an enemy, you need a status quo—an "establishment"—that should be changed. Architects dream of construction, which already raises the question of how to write a manifesto for construction that will deploy a kind of destruction or undoing to achieve this. An existing dominant architecture will be visualized and treated as unreal, undone to make way for the arrival of the new. The new will move. It will be a movement. You need an image of something that is not moving in order to make a movement. So one of the first gestures of a manifesto is to stop things from moving, to make an image of a static establishment, then urgently call for movement—and making things look like they are not moving is usually more difficult than the movement itself. The real art of the manifesto is to make it seem that the world is still, waiting for the manifesto.

In this way the manifesto has to construct an invitation for itself. It has to create a space for its own performance. It could easily be that 90 percent of the manifesto is creating the space for the act. To produce the sense of establishment that gets challenged, the manifesto cannot simply be placed in the space of the establishment that doesn't yet exist until visualized by the manifesto, or simply outside that space, but must be launched in a liminal space that acts as a kind of incubator. The classic site for a manifesto is a newspaper or a magazine or a theater—spaces of negotiation and debate. The audience, by definition, is neither an insider nor an outsider. It belongs neither to the manifesto nor to the establishment, but sits between them in what might be thought of as a kind of democratic space.

This means that a manifesto is not simply launched by a new group against an old establishment. The manifesto actually creates the possibility of a new group by constructing the image of an old group. It creates an interior space, a space that you can occupy, by negating and working against a new image of what is said to be the old establishment. The call for action is launched by the innovative construction of a description of what supposedly already exists. Radical prescription is inseparable from radical description.

Now, usually there are no visual images in a manifesto of what is being rejected, or what is being called for. It is unusual to have images in a manifesto. Normally it is only words, but these words have been compacted into a kind of image. The manifesto itself is an image—its production is literally the production of a work of art. All the classic formal

features—the shape, the typeface, the rhythm, the frame, and so on—are extremely important.

This is not necessarily an *avant-garde* work of art. The manifesto is one of the key tools of the *avant-garde*, and the *avant-garde* in its military sense might require this call to arms. The *avant-garde* needs the manifesto, but the manifesto doesn't need to be *avant-garde* and in a sense cannot be. It has a radical relationship to the existing world but not to the world it calls for. It's more like a stamp, or a seal of approval. In fact, a manifesto aspires to be semiofficial, even bureaucratic. It is a set of instructions, a set of rules, and there is no deviation acceptable. It has all of the roles of a seal or signature. The signature of the manifesto is not outside the document—it is the document. The document authorizes certain things in the world. Every manifesto, no matter how radical, aspires to be the law. This means that if there is an aesthetic of the manifesto, it is the aesthetic of the law itself. Perhaps when we think about the *avant-garde* manifesto, we shouldn't think so much about destruction but about projecting a kind of law and authority. Even the *Anarchist Manifesto's* assault on all forms of government is carefully assembled as a linear argument framing key points under carefully organized headings that begin with the section called "Anarchy is Order."

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Finally, no manifesto exists alone. It is always part of a sequence. It's not just points one, two, three, it's manifestos one, two, three. In the original sense of a "manifest," this document would be on the side of a ship announcing what's inside or attached to a public building announcing the new laws that have been passed. Literally each of these manifests would be placed on top of the previous manifests. So to read a manifesto, you have to read it on top of another manifesto, which is on top of another one, and so on. Manifestos are layered on top of each other, and each of these layers has its own precise history. The discourse of the new is always archeological. And yet you cannot write a simple history of the manifesto, since each manifesto is by definition a reworking of time and each mode of writing history has itself been impacted by specific manifestos.

The question becomes more precise when looked at with regards to ideas and representations of so-called modern architecture. Modern architecture is full of manifestos—they are everywhere. This should be no surprise, because the manifesto is the most efficient form of propaganda. It is itself thoroughly modern. It is reduced, streamlined, telegraphic, stripped. It's not by chance that the history of the manifesto coincides with that of modern architecture. It could even be argued that the aesthetics of modern architecture were the aesthetics of the manifesto, that architects tried to craft the manifesto-effect with buildings. At the very least, if you

think in a more boring linear way about modern architecture having a proto-modern phase, early modern phase, canonical phase, postwar, late modern, all these different overlapping phases—the manifesto is always there in that history. So to ask what happened to the architectural manifesto might simply be to say, "What happened to modernity in architecture?"

The manifesto is all about reduction. It aspires to efficiency. Yet its length is not the key measure. What counts is how sharp the point is. In a way a manifesto is an argument sharpened to a point, so if you can sharpen a text, you can produce a manifesto. Each manifesto, therefore, has its own history of sharpening, distilling, cutting, cleaning, refining, and crafting the most perfect document. But even in the most reduced statements, there are never only the points. You cannot make a manifesto with "one, two, three, four, five," because first you have to say, "Here is the manifesto." There is always a frame to the points. "One, two, three, four, five" are not points, but numbers. For you to think of them as points means already that you have accepted the theory of the manifesto, and often the full force of a manifesto is established in the framing of the manifesto, not in the points it contains. We could probably play a trick in which we introduce new points into famous manifestos, modify or remove some, and nobody would notice the difference. In fact, this often happens. There could even be the possibility that the strongest manifestos are the ones that can absorb or foster movement within the points.

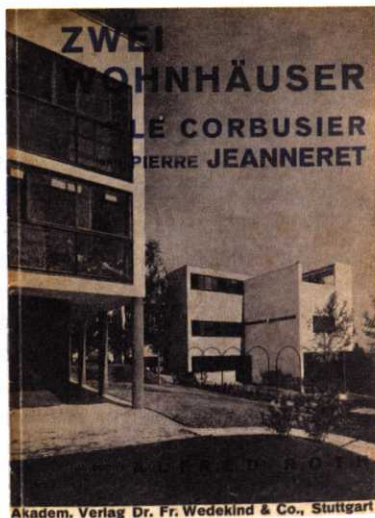
Take the most obvious example, Le Corbusier's "Five Points of a New Architecture," perhaps the most famous manifesto in architecture, signed with his cousin, Pierre Jeanneret, who rarely shows up in discussions of the points. The manifesto was published multiple times, and the differences between its publications are a vital part of its history in the field. We should start with its first publication in *Zwei Wohnhäuser* of 1927, a book by Alfred Roth that documented Le Corbusier and Jeanneret's two houses for the Weissenhof Siedlung exhibition, commissioned by Mies van der Rohe. It is in the context of those buildings, and the exhibition itself as a kind of manifesto, that the "Five Points" appear. The manifesto gets a striking double-page spread in the book with the number of each point enclosed in a bold circle and the double signature underneath in bold.

But before the "Five Points" even appear as such, they are framed in a sequence of layers. First, by the book with its photograph of the two completed houses on the cover (1). Second by the title of the manifesto. Third by the signature of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, as already prominently announced on the frontispiece of the book: "Fünf Punkte zu einer neuen Architektur von Le Corbusier und Pierre Jeanneret." Fourth by the short

introduction to the work of the architects that precedes the manifesto and the long essay and accompanying photographs that follows it celebrating the design, construction and completion of the two buildings at Weissenhof. Fifth, by the frame written into the manifesto itself made by a few introductory and concluding sentences before and after the points (2).

Two houses, two architects, five frames, and five points. We only read the points after seeing the houses on the cover, as if the points explain what we have already seen, as if the five points have been fused into a built image but can be separated out again in the text. The double signature is that of the two architects, again binding the architecture to the words and the words to the architecture—their double signature being doubled on the frontispiece with title of the architecture in capitals and the title of the manifesto smaller and uncapitalized, as if crucial but subordinate. The manifesto itself is experienced as the work of architects, an architectural work. What came first, the words or the design, remains permanently and productively ambiguous. The title of the manifesto has its own page with a drawing of the two houses underneath—as if the photograph on the cover is reality and drawings come between idea and reality, moving the ideas into the world or visa versa. The opening and closing sentences of the written frame inside the manifesto negotiate the uncertain direction of this exchange, hovering between the inside and the outside of the points. They point to the points that point to the architecture or, more precisely, point to that which can only be seen as architecture through their lens—so called

1 Cover of *Zwei Wohnhäuser* by Alfred Roth (1927)

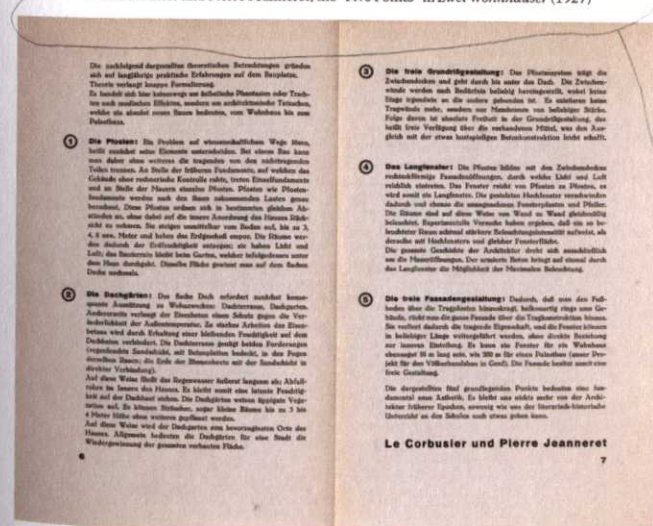


modern architecture being in the end, and from the beginning, a new way of seeing things.

The framing text begins by announcing that "the theoretical considerations set out below are based on many years of practical experience on building sites." The points have been distilled from hard labor. They are the retroactive product of work rather than the proactive generator of work. The text ends by announcing, "The five essential points set out above represent a fundamentally new aesthetic." Modesty is never an option in a manifesto. Every word and concept is essential.

The five points appear explicitly inside a precisely worded frame. Even this frame is itself the result of editing and distillation. Le Corbusier had published points earlier in a 1927 issue of *L'architecture vivante* when he was trying to diagnose the meaning of the expression "l'esprit nouveau" that had been the title of his own magazine. He performs the diagnosis by using five numbered points, each of which is elaborated using a very compact clipped manifesto-like language. He is for "precision," "economy," and "clarity." He is against "regrets," "souvenirs," "distrust," "timidity," "fear," and "inertia." The five compact statements had formed the opening of his 1924 speech at the Sorbonne where they described the 100 images he presented of the shocking new reality of modern technological life organized into a visual narrative, like that of a film, as he put it. The rapid sequence of images accompanied by the sound of his voice reading the staccato points formed a unique manifesto followed by an extended

2 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, the "Five Points" in *Zwei Wohnhäuser* (1927)



Find English Translation

argument that was his attempt to summarize all of the thinking of *L'Esprit nouveau* starting in 1920—and in fact the transcript of the lecture was published in the *Almanach d'architecture moderne* of 1925, which was originally meant to be the last issue of *L'Esprit nouveau*. In other words, the whole body of thought that runs through the issues of *L'Esprit nouveau* is reduced down to these five sets of short sentences, which were republished on one page like a typical manifesto after a page of drawings of the latest Farman aircraft as the opening of the Spring-Summer issue of *L'Architecture vivante* in May 1927, just before the Weissenhof exhibition opened in July. The Weissenhof houses will likewise be presented as the latest distillation of all the lessons learned in the previous designs.

The year 1927 was the year of the points for Le Corbusier. He starts to be obsessed with points, and not just any number of points—five. Half of ten. It is a number that is connected to the body, as you can count it with one hand. If you think Le Corbusier's hand is not important, you're wrong. His hand appears relentlessly in his work—one hand. He is a one-handed architect. One eye, one hand. But in fact the order of the points changes and there even used to be six points, which were edited down to five. Le Corbusier originally had the "suppression of the cornice," the only negatively defined point on the list, and it oscillated between being the fourth point and the last one. The argument for the suppression was quite elaborate, lengthy, and important, but was stripped away at the

3 Le Corbusier, the Six Points in a lecture from May 1927.

un tel standard du cœur; de vouloir formuler un système qui ne serait pas équilibré sur les constantes éternelles de l'âme humaine.

Notes bien que ceux qui formulent un tel rationalisme suraigu sont eux-mêmes les moins rationnels, individus mal contrôlés par une raison instable, ou peuples encore follement sentimentaux par manque d'équilibre. La « machine à habiter » est devenue la catapulte dont jouent, par exemple, les Slaves et les Germains. On m'a fait dire bien des fois depuis deux ans: « Attention, vous êtes un lyrique, vous vous perdez ». Et pourtant un esprit rationnel m'avait conduit à quelques apports dont peut se flatter la machine à habiter :

- Le toit-terrasse-jardin (?) (recherche de technique pure);
- les maisons sur pilotis (?) (recherche de technique pure);
- la fenêtre en longueur (?) (recherche de technique pure);
- la suppression de la corniche (?) (recherche de technique pure);
- le plan libre (?) (recherche de technique pure);
- la façade libre (?) (recherche de technique pure).

J'ai répondu: « oui, je prétends à faire des poèmes, parce que m'arrêter en deçà ne m'intéresse pas. Mais je n'admets de poème que s'il n'est pas fait de « mots en liberté »; je désire un poème fait de mots solides au sens défini et groupés en une syntaxe claire ».

La « machine à habiter » est sur le chemin de l'architecture. Elle apporte une solution inévitable au nouvel équilibre d'une société machiniste. Mais un équilibre social n'existe à vrai dire que sur l'instigation d'un credo, que par la manifestation d'un lyrisme.

Nier le credo, supprimer le lyrisme, est tout d'abord humainement impossible; et si cela était, ce serait priver le travail de sa raison même: servir à la bête, et au cœur, et à l'esprit. La « machine à habiter » ne marcherait pas, faute de nous donner la nourriture spirituelle.

Où en est l'architecture ?

Elle est au delà de la machine.

LE CORBUSIER.

(*l'Esprit nouveau*, 1^{er} mai 1927.)

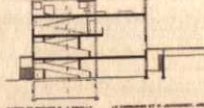
last minute. Le Corbusier listed the six points in lectures in May 1927 (3) and all six were still laid out in great detail in the Autumn-Winter issue of *L'Architecture vivante*, with the 1926 projects for Villa Stein and Villa Meyer used as the models and analytical technical drawings included inside the description of each point (4).

In the process of editing down to the five points in the manuscript of July 24, 1927 that was translated in *Zwei Wohnhäuser*, each of the descriptions also change from a lengthy discussion to a short one. Then Le Corbusier finally published the five points in the first volume of his *Oeuvre complète* in 1929 in a still more compact form. Now that the points had been established as law, the frame is stripped away, although the introductory sentence about the theory having been derived from hard practice has now been absorbed into the first point. The most minimal version of the frame remains within the very points it framed. Le Corbusier has in every way become more efficient—which is not true of his readers. There is a set of drawings on the facing page in the *Oeuvre complète* that actually have nothing to do with the five points (5). They do not connect with the points, there are not even five of them, and yet architectural historians teach students all over the world that they belong together. The text to the drawings says in passing that the facade is entirely free and refers to the horizontal window, and you can see something like the free plan, but it is not described as the free plan. There is almost nothing of the five points there.

4 Le Corbusier "Suppression of the cornice" from *L'Architecture vivante* (1927)

planifier se présente en quatre-à-cinq; les façades en sont plus que des membranes légères de verre isolées en de fenêtres.

La façade est l'âme; les fenêtres, sont des interruptions, peuvent servir d'un bord à l'autre de la façade.



LE CORBUSIER

VI. LA SUPPRESSION DE LA CORNICHE. — L'architecture pour elle, veut dire encore quelques mois d'une des caractéristiques déterminantes de l'architecture actuelle: le refus pur de la suppression de la corniche, qui, en ce moment, a souvent un problème grave et délicat des problèmes contemporains. De même qu'il n'y a plus de murs porteurs, plus de toitures en combles, en un autre sens, nous sommes à l'architecture primitive, grave de considérer: il n'y a plus de corniche possible. Pas de toit, pas de toit, pas de corniche, élimination complète d'une évolution technique. Quelles conséquences architecturales, alors ?

Supprimer la valeur de la corniche, c'est indiquer une grave rupture aux habitudes anciennes et cela nous a valu déjà pas mal de protestations plus ou moins méritées. Mais de point de vue technique, admettre que la corniche doit être supprimée, c'est apporter un élément capital à la solution d'un des problèmes de l'architecture.

À l'origine, la corniche répondait à une idée: supporter quelque chose. La rampe primitive, ce fut le toit débordant le mur qui le soutenait, principe à l'origine de toutes les constructions primitives, puis, dans l'architecture grecque, on a supporté les poutres faisant saillie, par des corniches de pierre; ensuite, on a pu sur les corniches une plate-bande sur laquelle on a fait reposer les éléments de la toiture: la corniche était son. Elle est donc le fait d'un élément de la toiture: la corniche était son. Elle est donc le fait d'un élément de la toiture: la corniche était son. Elle est donc le fait d'un élément de la toiture: la corniche était son.

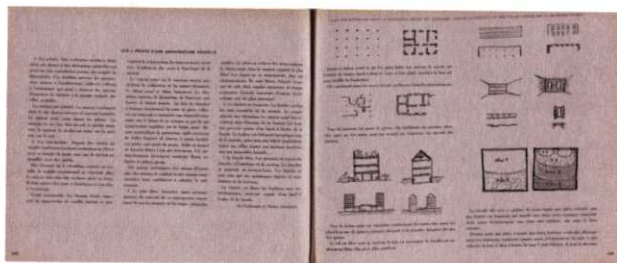
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So desperate we are for images that the drawings are often reorganized to look like five. The actual content of the five points is not nearly as important as the aesthetics, the appearance of system, of law. The classical aesthetics of order is displaced onto a set of five points. And the *Oeuvre complète* that now wraps the points clearly aspires to the status of law. The work is rendered as canonic, enabling the readers to feel unified. When Le Corbusier compacts the *Oeuvre complète* into a single summary volume in 1960, the five points now appear in parallel columns in three languages, reinforcing the esthetics of the law—even of the law behind the law—acting as a kind of touchstone of confidence for the readers who might even be able to recite the points, each known by the mantra of just two of three words.

The purpose of a manifesto is to create the sense that you are just about to jump off some kind of amazing cliff toward the new, but it is also to create a sense of solidarity. We will all jump off this cliff together. Or even, we have already jumped off. If you read a manifesto, it tells you that you're in a particular situation and you have a particular decision to make. Either you fly into modernity or you crash. It is too late—solid ground is behind. The language is that of imperatives. You should, you will, you won't. The central issue with the manifesto is always authority. And of course there is a very strong tradition of manifestos being central to the extended arc of modern architecture—and modern architecture was always interested in authority, CIAM being perhaps the most obvious example of the attempt to legislate the theories, set up in 1928 as a counter authority to the academic establishment that had blocked Le Corbusier's entry to the League of Nations competition in 1926. Manifestos have an intimate relationship to law; they self-consciously incubate law.

The examples continue, almost endlessly, and it's important to recognize that there is not an opposition here between the past and the future. Historians write manifestos. Almost all the great historians of architecture—whether Sigfried Giedion collaborating on "The New Monumentality"

6 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, "Les 5 points d'une architecture nouvelle," in Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre complète*.



statements or Reyner Banham collaborating with the "The Non-plan"—were manifesto writers. Each manifesto constructs a gap between the past and the future, a kind of cliff edge that didn't exist before the manifesto was written, which finds the future in a polemic about the past.

This brings up the critical question: How can it be that an architectural movement calling for a new form of construction uses a technique, the manifesto, which is fundamentally destructive at its core? How are destruction and construction galvanized in the manifesto? The *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909 is the most important example here. Its celebration of destruction embodied in an automobile crash was first read by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti on the stage of a theater in Turin, reinforcing the idea of performance. There were some fifty Futurist manifestos that were shouted at theatrical events before they began any kind of Futurist work. More precisely, the manifestos were the work. A half-a-million manifestos were dropped from the Campanile in Venice, and another half million were dropped from an airplane. The manifesto is always performance, always multiple, always overflowing.

The *Futurist Manifesto*, as with its ever-expanding progeny, is not just about motion and speed; the manifesto itself is a motion machine, or a kind of accelerant. Marinetti said that there is an art to making manifestos which he possessed. He cruelly edited all of his colleagues and changed their texts—there being of course no difference, where the manifesto is concerned, between production and criticism. Manifestos are produced out of criticism. But Futurism, of course, puts us right on the edge of Dada, and Dada is the key example here because Dada can be seen as the art of destruction, the art of disillusion, the antiauthoritarian gesture *par excellence*. If Dada is anti-authoritarian at its core and the manifesto is an aspiration to authority, then we start to see the stakes of examining these texts. If we can understand a Dada manifesto, we might understand the architecture manifesto a little bit better. At first one might assume that Dada must be at one end of the spectrum—fully anti-authority—and architecture at the other end of the spectrum, fully authority. I want to suggest otherwise. Dada danced with architecture and vice versa—an odd but intimate and long-term couple.

The Dadaists would perform multiple manifesto readings and publish the outcomes in places like their *Bulletin Dada*, which gathered the manifestos from a "matinée" on February 5, 1920 (6). At that particular event, Francis Picabia's manifesto was not just read in front of the audience but was read by ten different people. The multiplying manifestos talk about their own status, even turning that talk into the main point. Here is

the opening line of Tristan Tzara's "Dada Manifesto" of 1918: "To launch a manifesto you have to want A, B and C and be against 1, 2 and 3. You have to work yourself up and sharpen your wings to conquer and circulate lower and uppercase As, Bs, and Cs to sign, to shout, to swear, to organize prose in a form that is absolutely and irrefutably obvious. I'm writing this manifesto to show you that you can perform contrary actions at the same time in a single fresh breath. I am against action." That is the essence of a Dada manifesto—a call for action, which is the call to be against action. He goes on: "I am also for continual contradiction and affirmation, too. I am neither for nor against my own manifesto. I won't explain myself because I hate common sense." You use the language of common sense to say you hate common sense. The very last line is, "To be against this manifesto is to be a Dadaist." So, the reader is asked to not simply sign the manifesto, but to sign by reinstating that you are against the manifesto that you've just read. Only when you say you are against the manifesto are you with the manifesto. Only then you are signing it.

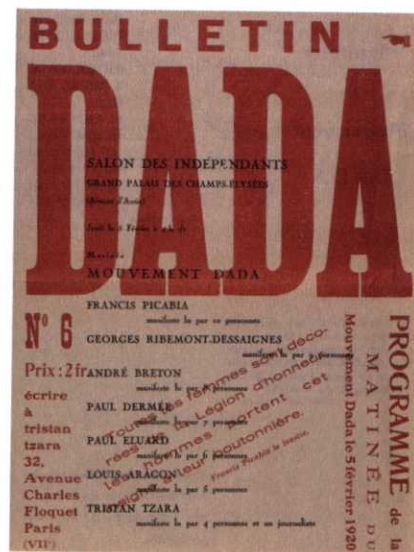
Likewise, Hans Richter, one of the founders of Dada with Tristan Tzara and Hugo Ball in Zurich, insisted that "Dada is pure revolt." The limit case of revolt is the manifesto. Architecture cannot be divorced from this. On the contrary. Not by chance was *L'Espace nouveau* founded in 1920 by Le Corbusier, Ozenfant, and the poet Paul Dermée, who participated in that year's Dada manifesto blitz. Likewise, Richter, who would make films about

architecture and published a magazine with Mies van der Rohe, contributed to the architectural magazine *De Stijl*, which was filled with manifestos and linked to Dada through the figure of one of its editors, Theo van Doesburg, who was also head of the Netherlands Dada unit. In van Doesburg's magazine *Mécano*, of 1920–1924, there was symptomatically a manifesto in the first issue, and van Doesburg wrote many anti-art manifestos under pseudonyms in 1921, 1922, and so on (7). His architectural work and theorizing cannot be separated from these statements. This brings us up to the Surrealists, adding another archeological layer of manifestos: André Breton's "The Surrealist Manifesto," (1924) through to Salvador Dalí's "Yellow Manifesto," also called the "Catalan Anti-Art Manifesto" (1928), with their ever-present concern with architecture. Soon we are already on the edge of the dissident Surrealists, the COBRA group combining the subgroups of Christian Dotremont, Constant, and Asger Jorn, who gathered together with a manifesto against Surrealism and against Surrealist manifestos and wrote extensively about architecture and even developed architectural projects. Constant's subgroup founded the magazine *Reflex*

7 George Ribemont-Dessaignes, "Manifeste à l'hulle," *Mécano*, 1922.

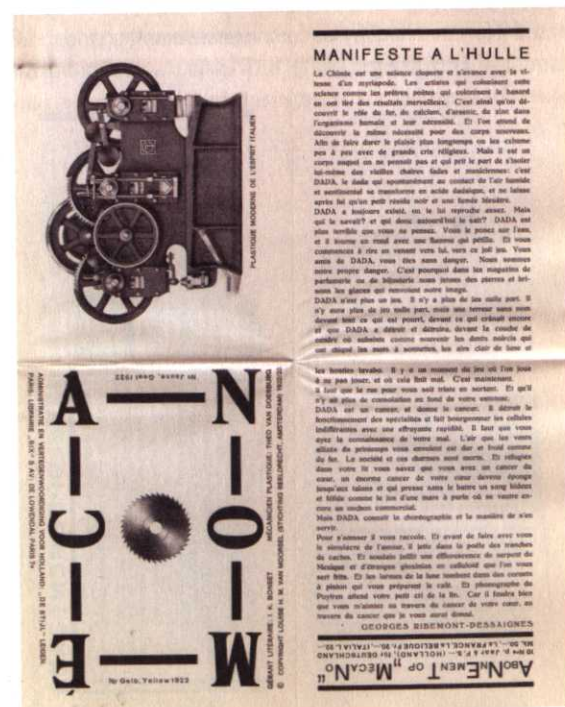
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6 Cover of *Bulletin Dada* 6 with a list of Dadaist manifestos (1920).



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in 1948. There exists a photograph of Corneille and Constant reading their own issues of as if impressed with the work of someone else—this sense of the manifesto coming as a shock to its author, as if having written itself, being a key part of any manifesto's performance (8). Countless photographs show radicals clutching their manifestos, their radicality being an effect of the manifesto rather than the other way around.

More manifestos layer onto the original manifestos, and we eventually reach the Situationist International, which is formed at the intersection of the COBRA group and Guy Debord's group, the Lettrist International. Once again it might feel like we have left architecture behind and we are heading off deep into the world of revolutionary politics and anti-aesthetics. Wrong. The Situationists repeatedly identified architecture as the real battleground of their work, and of course held up Constant's New Babylon as the model of their project until he resigned. Almost every second article in the *Situationist International* is explicitly architectural and often takes the form of manifestos, starting with Chtcheglov's 1953 "Formulary for a New Urbanism," which was published five years later in the first issue; Constant and Debord's "The Declaration of Amsterdam" in issue number two of 1958; and the beginning of the first full explanation of Constant's project named "New Babylon" by Debord in issue number three, alongside the "proclamation" of the Dutch group; with issue four delivering the key "International Manifesto" of the Situationists in 1960.

Manifesto after manifesto emerges. Architecture without manifesto becomes impossible. The Metabolist group founds itself with a manifesto

8 Corneille and Constant reading *Reflex* (1948).

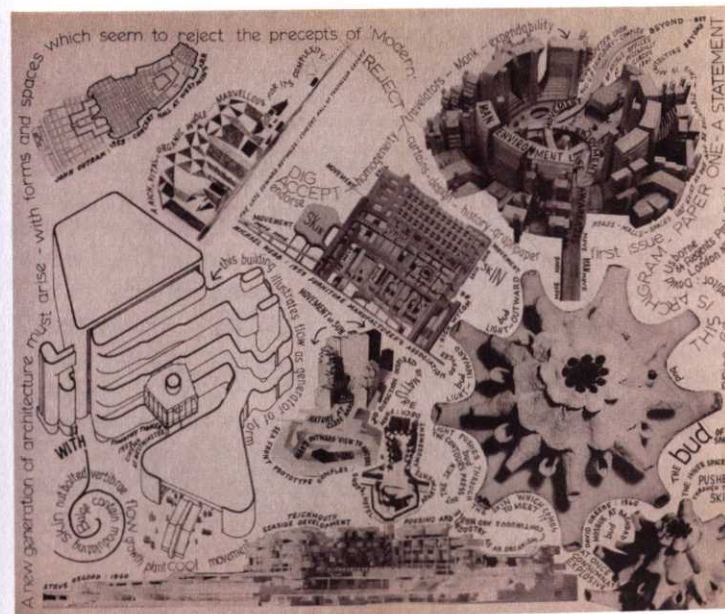


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in 1960. *Archigram* magazine's first issue in 1961 takes the form of a manifesto. On the first page just the words appear; on the second page the same words are then wrapped around the images, which is an extremely interesting move (9). The statement concludes: "A new generation of architecture must arise with forms and spaces which seem to reject the precepts of 'Modern' yet in fact retains these precepts. WE HAVE CHOSEN TO BY-PASS THE DECAYING BAUHAUS IMAGE WHICH IS AN INSULT TO FUNCTIONALISM." That's a classic manifesto—basically asserting, "We are more modern than the modern."

Similarly, Superstudio and Archizoom are both organized around a manifesto. The manifesto written for the exhibition *Superarchitettura*, in which they first exhibited work in 1966, says, "Superarchitettura is the architecture of super production, super consumption, super induction to consume the super market, the super man, and super gas." (10) One of the most influential bodies of work produced in the postwar period comes out of this single manifesto sentence. Brevity is sometimes at the core of the idea—the shorter the text the bigger the claim, perhaps most polemically in the case of Hans Hollein's three words "Everything is architecture" in 1968 that radicalized the subversive project of their natural correlate, his tiny Architecture Pill of the year before, a "nonphysical environmental control

9 Peter Cook and David Greene, manifesto from *Archigram* 1 (1961)



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kit" that could chemically turn everything into architecture. But once again this is not a small text reaching out to a big world, or even one author reaching out to a big audience. The manifesto destabilizes its author. Bernard Tschumi makes a decisive reflection on the necessarily masochistic relationship of author and manifesto in the 1978 catalogue of his exhibition *Architectural Manifestos*, arguing that the author is quickly alienated from the text and bound to violate the very rules that it drafts:

Manifestos resemble contracts that the undersigned make with themselves and with society. As with all contracts, manifestos imply certain rules, laws and restrictions. But they soon become independent from their authors. At this point, a masochistic relationship begins between the author and the text itself, for the manifesto-contract has been drafted by the very person who will suffer from the restrictions of its clauses. No doubt such carefully devised laws will be violated. This self-transgression of self-made laws, adds a particularly perverse dimension to manifestos.

The list of architects from the postwar period who worked through manifestos and against their own manifestos in trying to reform modern architecture from within is endless. These are examples that need to be thought through because in the hands of such architects, images became an increasingly key part of the manifesto—as with the Smithsons, Aldo van Eyck, and Yona Friedman—not illustrating an argument but being the argument (11, 12). The texts have often been gathered without the images in books that become standard textbooks as if there had been no evolution in the manifesto form. Interestingly, though, those collections of manifestos seem to describe a period that has ended. Did the manifesto die? If the manifesto is so profoundly modern, did postmodernism mean the end of the manifesto? With Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, it certainly meant the idea of a "gentle manifesto," but he would say he is not and has never been postmodern. Rem Koolhaas used the "retroactive manifesto" to be hypermodern rather than postmodern. The hard-core postmodernists anyway came out with their own manifestos—the New Urbanist manifestos being the most obvious example.

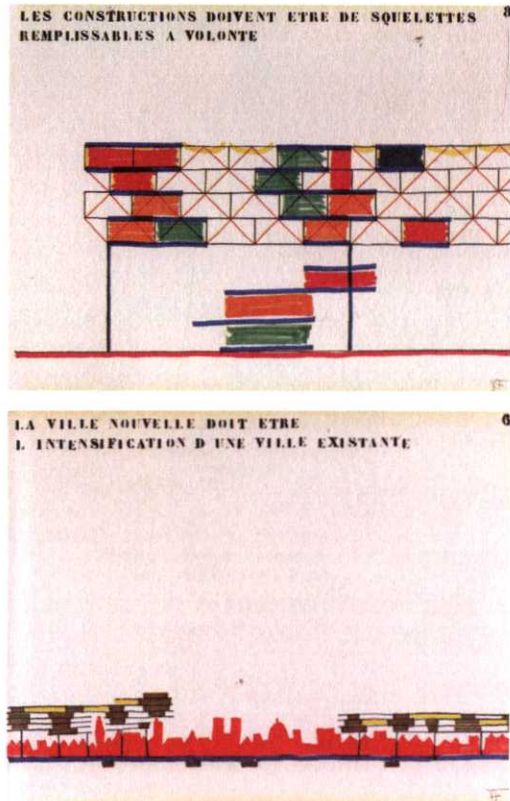
But now we are in a period of a super-abundance of manifestos. There are manifesto marathons and journals with fifty different architects being asked to write manifestos. At the Architectural Association at one point, if you wrote your own manifesto you would get a beer. That's sort of the ratio now—one beer, one manifesto. Endless books are being produced



about manifestos. The manifesto is a document with no excess, hyper-stripped-down, but millions of these documents appear. In other words, there is an abundance of documents without any abundance in them.

So there is a continuous avalanche of documents that are trying to be deeply meaningful in ways that are absolutely uninteresting. This could just indicate that I am nostalgic for the arrival of the modern—the modern as the very sense of arrival, the shock of new things and modalities arriving. But I think the proliferation of the manifesto form as it's currently practiced acts as prophylactic against change—as if nothing will arrive other than the empty promises. Manifesto as weapon becomes manifesto as anesthetic. The strangeness of the manifesto-effect is lost when every architectural studio has a manifesto department or thinks of itself as a manifesto department. The manifesto is not something that can be

11 Yona Friedman, *L'Architecture mobile* (1956)



commissioned. It has to be the uninvited guest. What is going on now is that the students of architecture are being invited to produce a surplus of manifestos in a kind of parody, a massive unwitting Dada event of countless manifestos being fired off in all directions, simulating thereby that they are still trapped within a modern paradigm that has no impact outside schools. The machine logic of the manifesto they reproduce, the rat-tat-tat of words like that of a machine gun, hurt no one in an electronic age of entirely different rhythms where new kinds of performance will undoubtedly be incubated, new calls to action that reinvent those who make them and those who read them. Nostalgia for the modern manifesto might be the first victim.