New Design Ideas

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WHY MODERN ARCHITECTURE CAN NEVER BE HUMANE

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Abstract. The historical origins of modern architecture are identified, and the approach of the main progenitors is examined. Their approach is flawed due to its lack of humanity, a thesis that is explained with examples. This inappropriate architecture, instead of being rejected wholesale, became the established architecture after WWI. Evidence of the general dissatisfaction with this architecture is presented, and especially the impotence of the general population to alter this completely unsatisfactory situation. A dysfunctional type of "modern" architecture achieved universal hegemony largely through is the role of politicians. Finally, some strategies to reverse this this situation are outlined.

1.   Introduction

Going back one century to the introduction of so-called "modern" architecture, the public has been complaining and resisting the universal application of this style of building and design. Nevertheless, the International Style has spread all over the world, replacing all local building traditions. Resistance to this movement appears to have had little impact.

This contradictory phenomenon is traced back to political influences, whereby politicians adopted and promoted architectural modernism to suit their own agendas. Such support by a significant power group — actually several independent power groups sharing the same aims — overcame any resistance by individuals. Which is where we find the situation today.

2.   Characteristics of an inhumane architecture

The see why modern architecture can never be humane, the questions of what is modern architecture and what makes architecture humane have to be answered in some general manner. We gather together a number of avant-garde arts movements that had their roots in the later 19th century when the term **modernism** was coined.[1] Central to the whole concept of modernism was the -idea that all previous creative attempts, in whatever field, were irrelevant, and everything had to be new and different. As the poet Ezra Pound proclaimed, "Make it new!" was the touchstone of the movement, which saw all culture of the past as being obsolete.[2]

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism
[2] ibid.

This slogan had two consequences: (i) almost everyone hated it, and (ii) a small group of persons came into being who claimed to like it, while accusing everyone else of suffering from the 'you-don't-understand-it' syndrome. This focus was stated explicitly by the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset[3] in his 1925 essay, aptly called 'The Dehumanization of Art.'[4] In this essay he states that 'Modern art has the masses against it, since it is in essence anti-popular.'[5]

Perhaps the most alien form of modernism was modern music, which was often atonal.[6] The cultured world was deferential towards is 'squawks and thumps — **we knew we were supposed to appreciate ugly music**,' wrote Susan Sontag.[7] And it wasn't only ugly music that 'we knew we were supposed to appreciate,' it was ugly everything else: painting, sculpture, films, poetry, plays and, of course, architecture. Instead of modern architecture, maybe it should be called **atonal architecture**. As the 20th century wore on, almost all modernist activities were shunned by the general public except for two; the visual arts and architecture. Against all common sense, these unpopular expressions became the establishment.

Fig.1. The glass-covered Fagus Factory of 1911

An early catalyst for modern architecture was Adolf Loos' 1910 lecture on Ornament and Crime, which subsequently became a seminal essay. In this, he introduced a sense of the "immorality" of ornament, describing it as "degenerate", and its suppression as necessary for regulating modern society.[8] So this became the 1st commandment of modern architecture — **all ornamentation is forbidden**, and this commandment is still obeyed today.

Around that same time the first 'modern' building was built; it was called the Fagus Factory.[9] This was a factory built for Carl Benscheidt, who was starting a new company to make shoe lasts (the wooden form around which a leather shoe is stitched). He

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[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Ortega_y_Gasset
[4] https://monoskop.org/images/5/53/Ortega_y_Gasset_Jose_1925_1972_The_Dehumanization_of_Art.pdf
[5] see page 66 of The Dehumanization of Art
[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonality listen to this for example - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IgtbuetWjA
[7] p186, The Cultural Cold War, by Frances Stonor Saunders.
[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ornament_and_Crimesee https://www.academia.edu/11390518/Ornament_and_crime?auto=download for pdf
[9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fagus_Factory

commissioned an experienced architect, Eduard Werner,[10] to design the factory. Benscheidt was satisfied with Werner's design except for one thing; he didn't think that the façades looked 'modern enough.' Benscheidt's new factory was next to a busy railway line and everyday thousands of passengers would see his factory, and as he was a go-ahead business man he wanted his new factory to promote a **modern image**. To this end, he employed a young unknown architect named Walter Gropius[11] to re-design Werner's façades; he did this by basically re-designing the walls as glass walls.

Fig.2. Glass fantasies: Mies Van der Rohe in 1921 (Left) and Le Corbusier (Centre) and Gropius (Right) in 1922

It is unclear why Gropius thought that covering the factory with glass was modern, or why Benscheidt agreed with him, but it could have been the influence of Paul Sheerbart.[12] Sheerbart, an eccentric writer who became convinced that everyone should live in all-glass buildings, published his best known work, *Glass Architecture* (*Glasarchitektur*) in 1914.[13] So this became the next commandment of modern architecture; **use as much glass as possible for the façades**. Of course, as was already well-known, putting people into glass boxes caused them problems with too much light, glare, heat gain, and also heat loss; in other words it was not functional. So ad hoc shop awnings festooned the building to make it livable, except when architectural photographs were taken.[14] This also became a commandment: **buildings have to look functional, not be functional**, a slogan that became known as the 'machine aesthetic.'

Then came the utterly disastrous First World War, whose carnage and mass destruction prompted some to question the validity of the 'old ways'; this gave an impetus to modernism, but only a tiny one. However, in the rarefied world of the self-proclaimed avant-garde elite, modernism, in all its forms became *de rigueur*, and small amounts of modernism got produced, including a little bit more modern architecture.

From the post-WWI avant-garde hothouse, three names of influential modern architects emerged, they were Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier[15] and Ludwig Mies van der

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[10] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_Werner_(Architekt)
[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Gropius
[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Scheerbart
[13] https://hts3.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/scheerbart-glass-architecture.pdf
[14] Benscheidt employed an professional photographer to take picture of his building which he had made into a book, at his own expense, He would hod out copies of the book to potential clients. Naturally, for the photographs, the awnings were removed. See https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2016/february/too-much-light
[15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Corbusier

Rohe.[16] Eventually all three achieved the status of gurus in what became a modern architectural movement. During the 1920s and 30s, none of them was able to build a large body of work, but this didn't stop them producing megalomaniacal glass fantasies on paper.

Fig.3. Expensive and uncomfortable chairs designed by, Left — the Bauhaus, Centre — Mies van der Rohe and Right — Le Corbusier

Fig. 4. Gropius' 1925 Bauhaus aquarium

Gropius had less time for more glass fantasies, as he had became director of the notorious Bauhaus technical school.[17] It's not easy to succinctly describe the Bauhaus, but the basic idea was to train a type of modernist designer, a task in which it basically failed. The idea of a designer was quite new, as up to then most things were designed by the people who made them, which had the distinct advantage that the designs were practical. This didn't happen in the Bauhaus, as no one had any real experience of making things, so 'the experience gained bore little relation to industrial practice.'[18] But here again the idea was that "things were to look as if they were made industrially", rather than to be able to be made industrially. With the arrogant pose that these modern architects took, they were under the impression that they could design 'anything', even though they had no idea how things were made or produced industrially. Here are three expensive and uncomfortable chairs designed by the gurus of the modern movement.

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[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludwig_Mies_van_der_Rohe
[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bauhaus
[18] page 102,Industrial Design by John Heskett

Having fantasized about a glass skyscraper in 1922, between 1925 and 1926 Gropius designed new buildings for the Bauhaus school.[19] He indulged himself with an orgy of glass, which locals dubbed 'the Aquarium'.

However, there was a much more sinister side to the Bauhaus, which initially was embodied in Johannes Itten.[20] He was put in charge of the **Vorkurs**, or introductory course for all students to take.[21] This was basically a brain-washing process where new students were 'encouraged' to forget everything they had previously learned, and re-see the world through Itten's demented vision. To help this, students were fed a macrobiotic mush, which landed some of them in hospital, and to purge their bodies with enemas.[22] The culmination of this mind and body cleansing was a mental state that facilitated the production of a 'thing' that bore no resemblance to anything the student had previously seen.
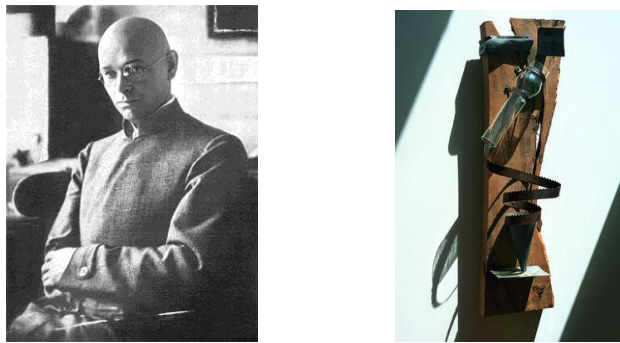

Fig. 5. Left the demented Itten, and Right a student's 'thing'

Although Itten was soon replaced (as being too far out even for the standards of the Bauhaus), and the macrobiotic mush was no longer served, the Vorkurs he had established carried on, and on and on. So, to this day, students at schools of architecture around the world are re-programmed by some form of the initial Vorkurs. The reader might be surprised that the first year studios taught at all of our architecture schools are hardly changed versions of this set of brainwashing exercises.[23] Having been re-programmed, the student is then supposedly able to see the merits of architectural modernism and, and, at the same time, be oblivious to normal people who 'just don't understand.'

To help new converts to modern architecture, in 1926 Le Corbusier helpfully announced five more commandments, which he called the Five Points of Architecture.[24] These five new commandments, upon which all architecture from then on had to be based, were:

> 1 — **All buildings should be raised on a grid of columns,**
> 2 — **Internal planning should be free of technical constraints,**
> 3 — **Façades should also be free of technical constraints,**
> 4 — **Windows should be horizontal strips as long as the building**
> 5 — **Roofs should be flat, and used as gardens.**

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[19] https://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/en/architecture/bauhaus-building.html
[20] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Itten
[21] https://www.bauhaus100.com/the-bauhaus/training/preliminary-course/johannes-ittens-preliminary-course/
[22] https://www.metropolismag.com/architecture/bauhaus-perversions
[23] Nikos Salingaros (20017) What Architectural Education Does To Would-Be Architects, Common Edge, 8 June 2017. https://commonedge.org/what-architectural-education-does-to-would-be-architects/
[24] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Corbusier%27s_Five_Points_of_Architecture

The inanity of these commandments is obvious; however to the re-programmed architect they were, well, commandments, and can be seen ad nauseam as they pop up worldwide.

Fig. 6. The Five points of architecture appear in Portugal in the 1990s

But modern architecture didn't only come as sterile boxes; some architects favoured more flamboyant shapes; Hermann Finsterlin's[25] 1924 Glass House for example.
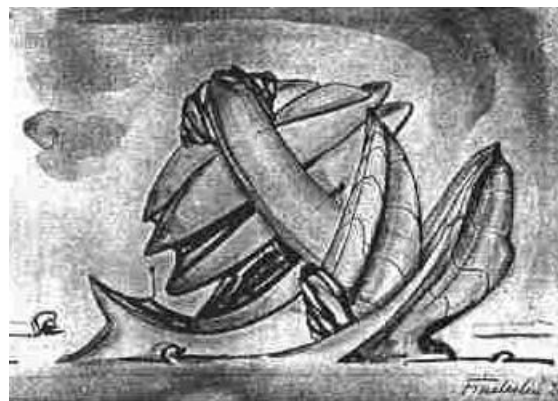

Fig. 7. Finsterlin's version of *Glasarchitektur* in 1924

Finsterlin didn't realise a single one of his randomly curved projects, but as technology and money became available, strangely curvy modern architecture began to be built from the 1950s. There was no functional reason for these buildings being willfully shaped, they were just out to get notice for the architect and others involved. Here are two that got built.

So it can be seen that modern architecture, better called atonal architecture, is basically a fraud when it claims to be logical and functional whereas it is the opposite, just producing expensive attention-seeking objects. Modern architecture is riddled with illogical diktats none of which make any sort of sense; that roofs should be flat in all climates, which, for practical reasons, if no other, is perhaps the most idiotic.

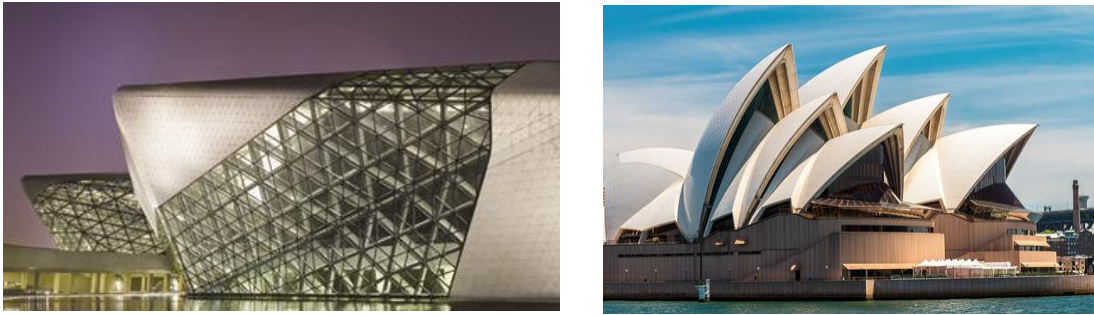[25] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Finsterlin

Fig. 8. Two wilfully shaped opera houses

So that's modern architecture, succinctly defined by Nancy Banks-Smith[26] when she said 'If you have to keep the lavatory door shut by extending your left leg; it's modern architecture.'[27] And that modern architecture is not liked by the general public is hardly surprising as it is not really supposed to like it.[28] There is a mountain of evidence that common persons don't, as every survey shows: 'A 2001 BBC list of 'Britain's worst buildings' was entirely composed of modernist, or post-modernist, tower and slab blocks, dating from the 1960s to the present day. A 2004 list of the ten worst and ten best buildings in Britain, spontaneously given by a sample of 2,000, also listed no recent building in the 'Best Buildings' list and named exclusively recent buildings among the ten worst buildings list. A 2005 survey had very similar findings.'[29]

Of course architects know all this; way back in 1997, architect Vernon Gibberd wrote 'In the first place ordinary people didn't like modern architecture very much, and with familiarity seemed to like it less and less'.[30] But architects don't care, because they don't think the opinion of the general public is of any value or relevance. When French architect Patrice Cavel was asked if the public had been consulted, he answered 'I'm very democratic, but the public is not competent to judge.'[31]

So there is little doubt that modern architecture does not satisfy the majority of ordinary humans, which could be seen as **defining it as inhumane**. But the crucial question is, is there a reason or reasons for this dislike, rather than just suffering from the 'you-don't-understand' syndrome? As it happens there is, as much technical work has shown.

There is a long history of psychologists testing people for preference of geometrical shapes, by only relatively recently had technology became available that tracks exactly how people look at buildings instinctively, that is in the first very few seconds.[32] Various conclusions can be drawn from these studies, but a central one is that people are programmed[33] through human evolution to require **hierarchical complexity**.[34] What this

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[26] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy_Banks-Smith

[27] p417, The Art of Looking Sideway by Alan Fletcher

[28] see reference 3

[29] p77, Of Streets and Squares by Maddalena Iovene, Nicholas Boys Smiths and Chanuki Illushka Seresinhe

[30] p121, Architecture Source Book by Vernon Gibberd.

[31] https://archpaper.com/2015/11/chartres-cathedral-destructive-restoration/

[32] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328144080_Where_Do_We_Look_An_Eye-Tracking_Study_of_Architectural_Features_in_Building_Design_Proceedings_of_the_35th_CIB_W78_2018_Conference_IT_in_Design_Construction_and_Management

[33] what is meant by programmed is that it is an universal human need, devolving, it could be assumed, from humans' long history of being hunter-gatherers

[34] Indentifying this essential requirement is an important factor in the seminal work of Christopher Alexander with the publication of 'A Pattern Language' in 1977 and of Nikos Salingaros in many of his publications, especially his 2006 A Theory of Architecture

means is that in most situations, not just in the appearances of buildings, people want some visual complexity, but it has to make sense in some overall way. The two extremes of this are: lack of complexity causing dullness leading to boredom and perhaps depression, and chaotic complexity leading to anxiety and panic.

This concept about the need for complexity can be illustrated by a tree, something that is universally considered beautiful. It has visual interest at every level from the trunk to the smallest leaf, but the whole tree makes sense to the observer. The opposite can be seen when a modern artist makes a tree sculpture of neon tubes.

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Fig. 9. Trees with (Left) and without (Right) hierarchical complexity

Both these extremes occur in modern architecture, but there is nothing in the middle.
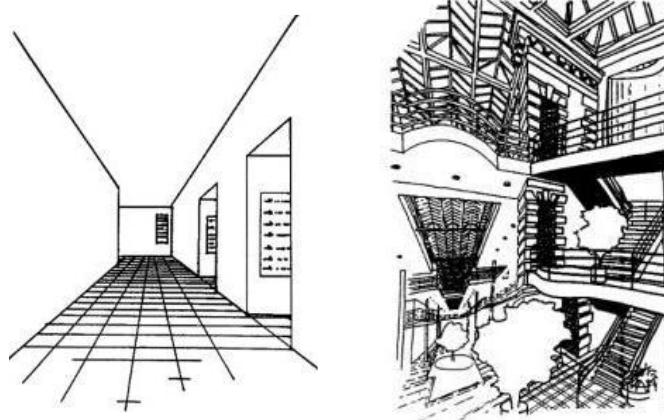

Fig. 10. Modern architecture jumps from tedium to chaos, with no intermediate stage

The three stages: dullness, satisfaction and anxiety can be illustrated by juxtaposing the images of three actual buildings.

Fig. 11. Architectural dullness (Left), satisfaction (Centre) and anxiety (Right)

In the book '*Of Streets and Square*s'[35] the authors summarize what architecturally suits most people because of their innate sensory needs.

(1) What most people like, most of the time, is fairly predictable;
(2) Living in places that you find attractive is good for your mental health;
(3) Façades should 'live' and have variety in pattern;
(4) Some façade complexity is good, but not too much. Coherence matters too;
(5) Some colour is nice
(6) People seem to prefer some symmetry in their façades.

These conclusions are not exactly rocket science, but incomprehensibly they appear to be beyond the 'highly trained' architectural community. Why is this? It is because practitioners tend to be divorced from normal life, as they are devotees of a sect. The idea of architects being a sect was advanced by Peter Blake,[36] who goes on to say that that modern architecture is '…quite clearly a religion as irrational as all others…Like all religious cultists, the members of the sect treat their critics (that is almost everyone who isn't an architect) with patient condescension: those…who don't know what's good for them; but the cultist, to whom the Truth has been revealed does know, and he or she will ram it down the non-believer's throats even if it chokes them.'[37] Salingaros examined this sect aspect further.[38]

So what is clear is that the so-called modern architecture is not fit for purpose; it does not satisfy the general public. Architects are well aware of this, but are completely indifferent to the global effect of their endeavours. Interestingly, architects pose as a serious profession; however whilst a professional has a duty to its client, it also had a social responsibility to the public,[39] so it is clear that architects do not comply with this wider responsibility, as they design buildings that cause mental stress to a large proportion of the general public.

The obvious question now arises: how on earth did this dysfunctional situation come about? Unfortunately, the explanation is not straightforward, but, nevertheless clarification is essential. In the 1930s, due to a number of economic/social situations, totalitarian dictators became commonplace; Hitler and Stalin being the most prominent and powerful. Although ideologically opposed, they both shared a common aversion to

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[35] see ref.27
[36] p149 of Form Follow Fiasco, by Peter Blake
[37] ibid. p149.
[38] Nikos Salingaros (2019) The Rise of the Architectural Cult, Inference: International Review of Science, Volume 5, Issue 1 (13 December 2019). https://inference-review.com/article/the-rise-of-the-architectural-cult
[39] **Social responsibility** is an ethical framework and suggests that an entity, be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act for the benefit of society at large.- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_responsibility

modernism in areas of creative endeavour. Architecturally, this meant they both favoured some form of monumental classicism.

Fig. 12. Nazi (Left) and Soviet (Right) classical architecture

With the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945, global peace did not ensue, because their erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, became the new enemy of the alliance of Western democracies, causing the onset of the Cold War.[40] Initially seen as a possible hot war, as each side continually increased their belligerent potential, it was gradually understood that there was also a cultural cold war; a war for hearts and minds. In comparison to the West, which to all intents and purposes was defined by the USA, the Soviets could boast of superior intellectual and artistic achievements; Tolstoy, Chekov and Prokofiev, which they compared to American hotdogs, Hollywood movies and comics. The USA realised something had to be done, so with covert financing by the CIA,[41] they set up the Congress for Cultural Freedom.[42] This shady organization was to present to the world the intellectual and artistic achievements of the Western Democracies and particularly those of the USA. Whereas the Soviet bloc was pedaling classical music, social realistic painting and classically based architecture, the USA had to showcase the opposite, as the expression of an open and democratic socio-political system.

In addition to offering consumer goods and pastel painted cars with tail fins, superior art had to be offered by the USA. Socially realistic paintings, Prokofiev, Gorky and other Soviet intellectual achievements needed to be confronted with superior 'free-world' offerings. As well as creating a number of intellectual magazines and periodicals for this very purpose,[43] art based on modernism was strongly promoted by concerts, performances, and travelling exhibitions. Centres for American culture were opened all over the place, including a string of Amerika Haüser[44] in Austria and Germany; these were located in buildings built in the new modernist style.

In terms of painting, Abstract Expressionism was a favourite cultural weapon; concerts of atonal music were offered, and modernist architecture was showcased in the 1953 exhibition called 'Built in the USA: post-war architecture.' It was produced by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, better known as MoMA.[45] Presented was work by a wide range of USA-based modern architects, many originally coming from Europe as refugees or opportunists.

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[40] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War
[41] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency
[42] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_for_Cultural_Freedom
[43] Encounter magazine being perhaps the best known - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encounter_(magazine)
[44] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amerika_Haus
[45] The catalogue can be found here https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_3385_300062025.pdf

Fig 13. Modern Architecture in guise of a cultural centre

Fig. 14. Part of the modern style pavilion for the 'Built in the USA exhibition'

On page 12 of the catalogue, what people might think of modern architecture is partially addressed:

'The American public, amateur and professional, was strongly, **if not cordially**, interested in the Museum's presentation of the new architecture and in the few examples which had been built in this country. The immediate and extremely **important influence was on students**, to whom the new way of building **came as revelation of a challenging new world. Only the most open-minded of the older architects were at all convinced. The others ... were skeptical, or flatly hostile. The strongest opposition came not from the traditionalists but from those powerful and successful architects** who had built our "modernistic" skyscrapers...

As the highlighting shows the new modern architecture is presented as progressive, coming as a **revelation** to students**, whereas **the older architects were skeptical, or flatly hostile.**

The ground for the confrontation with architects opposed to "modern" architecture had already been prepared in the late 1930s, especially in the USA. It was spearheaded, in 1936, by the unlikely Joseph Hudnut,[46] who, with the encouragement of the dean, created the first school of modern architecture at Harvard. Up to then architecture had been taught by following a Beaux-Arts syllabus pioneered at the prestigious Parisian École des Beaux-Arts.[47] Hudnut, who had followed such a course himself, threw

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[46] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Hudnut
[47] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole_des_Beaux-Arts

architectural history books out of the library, destroyed the classical plaster casts that had been used to teach students to draw, and had a new building photographed before decoration had been added to make it look more functional. However, his coup de grace was the appointment, in 1937, of Walter Gropius as a professor of architecture.[48] In fact, Hudnut did not want Gropius to create a new architectural Bauhaus, but this is exactly what Gropius did. Hudnut was no match for the urbane smooth operator, and sunk into obscurity, whilst Gropius went from strength to strength as he trained, and sent out far and wide evangelists for the new architectural religion.

Fig. 15. 1952 Modern architecture from the Exhibition[49]

Something similar happened in Great Britain, where converts to the new architectural religion stealthily took over architectural power bases like the Royal Institute of British Architects. In 1958, an invitation-only conference was held in Oxford to determine a new path for architectural education; and it was strictly modernism.

A prime example of the new approach was Donald Gibson,[50] a hard-line modernist architect, and who had partially trained at Harvard under guru Gropius. At the ridiculously early age of 29 he was appointed as Coventry's first City Architect and Planning Officer.

Fig.16. The centre of Coventry in 1917 and in 1940

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[48] Gropius had left Hitler's Germany because in spite of considerable efforts it became clear he would NOT be appointed as the Chief Architect of the Third Reich — see Artists in Nazi Germany. Mies van de Rohe followed a similar path.
[49] see Catalogue p44
[50] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Gibson_(architect)

He immediately started to re-model the charming city centre along modern architectural lines. Luckily for him, in November 1940, the Luftwaffe flattened most of the medieval centre of Coventry. After further destruction, in 1942 the Third Model was produced.

Fig.17. Model of 1942 planned rebuilding[51]

It is not easy to find out what people thought of Gibson's various plans to completely rebuild the centre of Coventry along modernist lines, but the City Engineer, Ernest Ford, disagreed with almost everything and came up with separate ideas, which were ignored.[52] The result certainly didn't please A.N. Wilson,[53] who wrote that it had the 'predictable hideousness of a post-war town'[54], a view many would agree with.

From the middle of WWII onwards, the Allies repaid Nazi Germany for the blitz by obliterating many German cities, including Berlin of which 80% was destroyed. After the war, Berlin was in the part of defeated Germany controlled by the Soviet Union. So with the onset of the Cold War, Berlin, which was split into four sectors, was on the front line.[55] Between 1949 and 1961 a huge boulevard called the Stalinallee was built in East Berlin as a flagship project.[56]

In response, the West countered with Interbau 1957, which was presented as a model for the city of tomorrow, and to demonstrate the superiority of the West over the East.[57] Built in the Hansa Viertel district of Berlin, 54 modern architects from 13 different countries had their designs built there.

It was rumoured that the CIA secretly funded some of the building work[58] as well as secretly funding the distribution of books promoting modernist design in Western Europe, including copies of the book about Interbau Berlin 1957.[59]

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[51] https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/19596a3c-5096-3380-bb67-4b71ac0e6db9?component=360e28f4-2424-323b-8a07-93422934e459

[52] https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/lifestyle/nostalgia/amazing-old-plans-show-what-13721053

[53] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._N._Wilson

[54] p413-4, After the Victorians, by AN Wilson

[55] Eventually the four sectors became West Berlin, part of Western Europe, and East Berlin part of the Soviet bloc.

[56] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl-Marx-Allee

[57] http://architectuul.com/architecture/berlin-interbau-1957

[58] See Berlin Today by Joseph Hajdu

[59] p31, Hot Books in the Cold War

Fig.18. Walter Gropius Haus at Interbau 1957

By supporting modern architecture for purely political reasons, the USA gave it to the so-called free world as the architecture of choice, and, as has been seen, architectural professions in both the USA and the UK were more than ready to oblige. So from the late 1950s, modern architecture became **the established architecture,** whereas people brave, or foolish enough to challenge it, were dismissed as being 'against progress', were 'stuck in past', wanted to 'turn the clock back,' and so on.

Gradually, it became a requirement that to become an architect, a full-time course had to be passed at an accredited school of architecture, which meant 5 to 6 years of being programmed to think that modern architecture was the only architecture allowed.[60] Any student who questions the modern architectural diktats is given short shrift, basically 'shape up or ship out.' This totalitarian approach is hardly surprising, as all three of modern architecture's gurus, Le Corbusier, Gropius and Mies van de Rohe, were partial to fascist regimes to different extents. Le Corbusier was an active supporter of fascism and tried desperately, during WWII, to work for the French Vichy Nazi puppet regime, and was lucky not to be **branded a Nazi-collaborator** after the war. Both Gropius and Mies van der Rohe went to considerable lengths to ingratiate themselves with the Nazi regime in Germany; both hoping to be appointed to be **the official architect of the Third Reich**. It was only after it became obvious that they wouldn't succeed that they left Germany, Gropius in 1934 and Mies van de Rohe in 1937.[61]

All three of the gurus had worked in the office of Peter Behrens, whose dictatorial style of management was much admired by Le Corbusier, and who later copied it himself when he could. Behrens joined the Nazi party in 1934[62] in Austria. Mies' biographer wrote of him that he had 'authoritarian instincts,' and a 'refusal to acknowledge the validity and diversity of human claims.'[63] And it didn't stop there. Philip Johnson, who welcomed Mies to America, was the first head of the architectural section of MoMA and wrote the Preface[64] to the catalogue of the 'Built in USA' exhibition, was a fervent admirer of Hitler, being described by Michael Sorkin[65] as an 'out and out Nazi'.

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[60] At the time of writing few schools of architecture teach non-modern architecture, the University of Notre Dame being the best-known - https://architecture.nd.edu/

[61] See Corbusier as Life b, Fox Weber, Artists Under Hitler by Petropoulos, and Architects of Fortune by Elaine Hochman

[62] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Behrens

[63] page xv of Architects of Fortune

[64] page 8 of catalogue

[65] p186 All over the Map by Michael Sorkin

But there were people willing to challenge the totalitarian view of the architectural establishment; one coming from a most unlike quarter, the Royal Family. In 1984, it was the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Institution of British Architects — the controlling body of establishment architectural modernism. A gala dinner was organized, and Prince Charles was invited as the main guest. Naturally he was expected to give a speech, which he did.[66] Assumedly the gathering of the great and good of modern architecture expected to be bathed in royal emollience, but they were in for a shock. Starting quite predictably, Prince Charles then inserted a knife, which he relentlessly drove in, culminating in a phrase that was to become famous. Describing the winner of a recent competition for an extension to the National Gallery, he said 'what is proposed is like a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend.' It caused uproar. The winning scheme was cancelled and architects were up in arms; Prince Charles became, and largely remains, a figure of hatred for most architects.

That wasn't the end of it. Prince Charles intended to do something about the state of architecture, so he sponsored a school of architecture where non-modern architecture would be taught. The Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture opened in 1986, and, following a number of name changes, it still exists as The Prince's Foundation.[67] One could summarize what it does as teaching everything that schools of architecture don't. It never received RIBA accreditation, so by following its course could not lead to someone becoming an official architect. (Insiders tell of lengthy intrigues that prevented the accreditation needed to compete on level ground with all other schools of architecture.)

To his credit, Prince Charles didn't stop there. He wrote a book; 'A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture,' which was the basis of a BBC television documentary; [68] and both the book and the TV programme were popular with the general public. And he went further. A large land-owner, he commissioned a whole suburb to be built on land he owned in Dorchester — Poundbury.[69] Starting in 1993, and following the master plan of Léon Krier,[70] it has been a great success, except in the eyes of many architects who regard it as pastiche.

Fig.19. Poundbury: general view of Middlemarsh Street

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[66] https://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speech/speech-hrh-prince-wales-150th-anniversary-royal-institute-british-architects-riba-royal-gala
[67] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Prince%27s_Foundation
[68] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Vision_of_Britain:_A_Personal_View_of_Architecture
[69] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poundbury
[70] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A9on_Krier

Poundbury keeps expanding but modern architecture also continues to be built on a global scale. The modern architectural establishment is entrenched globally and the general public continues, in the main, to hate what the establishment does. Is there a way out of this idiotic impasse? It seems unlikely without political intervention, because, in spite of Prince Charles' efforts, the modern architectural establishment is oblivious to the real need of the vast bulk of the public. But the public have little power, so **any alteration has to be imposed by politicians**. Of course politicians pay lip service to modern architecture, by opening carbuncle after carbuncle buildings without a word of criticism, so it's always interesting to see them when they are officially photographed; prime ministers or US Presidents for instance with their cabinets.

Fig. 20. Tony Blair's 1997 Cabinet and President Obama's 2009 cabinet

As can be seen from these photos, when such powerful people chose to have an important photo taken, not **a hint of modernism is present**; not the carpet, the chairs, the paintings or the interior design; absolutely nothing. Clearly if Blair or Obama were mad about modernism, they have the power to demand a modernist setting to present their cabinets, but they didn't do that.

How to interpret this curious discrepancy? Perhaps with so much on their plates, why would politicians pick a fight with the modernist architectural establishment, unless voters were demanding it? The explanation is that the voters aren't, officially that is, because no political party sees it as an issue, when clearly it should be.

So what can be done? What could be done is for members of political parties to see that this IS an important issue that must be put on the political agenda. Policies have to be formulated that give the general public what they want and need: that is humane architecture in appropriate urban settings.

3.   Conclusion

This essay reviewed the history of the modern movement in architecture. We listed some lesser-known or even largely unknown facts usually hidden from the general histories, and which the general public remains ignorant of. Those pieces of information paint a very different picture from the glowing histories of the International Style of architecture that serves as the justification for much of world construction today.

We propose instead a radically different, and more humane architecture, which draws upon human physiological and psychological needs. Furthermore, we believe that the solution to the inhuman architecture we see erected all around us today requires political action. Not aligned to any particular party, but backed to the hilt by our elected leaders. It is time for politicians to stop being servants of the architectural establishment, and to stop neglecting the real human needs of their constituencies.