

Irrational Artistic Ideas of the First Half of the 20th Century as an Inspiration for the Architecture of the Later 20th and Early 21st Centuries

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Abstract

By applying the methods of categorisation, comparison and analysis of written sources, this article aims to reveal how Surrealist artistic ideas may have influenced – through the intermediary of the Postmodern movement – architectural trends up to the present time. The paper is organized into three parts, each dedicated to one of the most important Surrealist architectural concepts: the synthesis of the arts, fluidity, and formalistic superficiality and spontaneity. Each section describes how these ideas were underlined in Surrealist art and theoretical texts, compares them to some examples of Postmodern and contemporary architecture, and explains how these ideas were nurtured from the time they emerged until the time they materialized in architectural design.

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Introduction

[1] In 1924 the French essayist and poet André Breton (1896–1966) wrote the *Surrealist Manifesto*. It claimed that the object of art was no longer an external solid object, but the continuation of the subjective inner-self.¹ Surrealist art explored what is outside the borders of imposed social behaviour and what is essentially personal: the hidden erotic impulses, the unstable state of mind, dreams, nightmares and unconsciousness. Such ideas were important at the time, when contemporary Orphist, Suprematist, Neo-Plasticist and Constructivist artists were exploring universal artistic principles and their appeal to the global

¹ André Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), <https://tcf.ua.edu/Classes/Jbutler/T340/SurManifesto/ManifestoOfSurrealism.htm> (accessed 15 January 2017).

audience.² Universal artistic principles also appealed to Modernist architects, who essentially created the so-called International Style.³ As an opposition to artistic universalism, Surrealist art was similar to the art produced by the Postmodern cultural movement. The Postmodern attitude was based on the belief that no singular way to solving any cultural, social or spiritual issue exists. It was also no longer believed that any cultural environment, idea or standpoint were superior to another. This stance opposed globalisation and – importantly – the global spread of an international architectural style. The Surrealist artistic movement and the Postmodernist cultural movement both ensured that individual thought would become the object of both art and architecture. The bond between these similar ideologies provoked a truly unique opportunity to develop an irrationally artistic architectural expression.

[2] From the 1920s to the 1970s, various Surrealist artists expressed their opinion on architectural matters. The Spanish Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) wrote an article "On the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of *Art Nouveau* Architecture", in which he claimed that

*No collective effort has managed to create a world of dreams as pure and disturbing as these Art Nouveau buildings, which by themselves constitute, on the very fringe of architecture, true realizations of solidified desires, in which the most violent and cruel automatism painfully betrays a hatred of reality and a need for refuge in an ideal world similar to those in a childhood neurosis.*⁴

The *Art Nouveau* architectural style was notable for rich sculptural decoration and a synthesis of the arts, which were certainly not welcomed in Modernist architecture. However, such features were again revived in the 1980s and 1990s Postmodern architecture. Such an artistic synthesis of architecture and sculpture or highly decorated architecture has many analogues in contemporary architecture to this day.

[3] Surrealists expressed their personal approaches by choosing an architectural type perfectly suited to this endeavour: the individual house. However, the two most influential creations, the *Merzbau* (artist Kurt Schwitters, 1923–1937) and the *Endless House* (artist Frederick John Kiesler, 1959), were displayed, not as objects of architecture, but as a sculpture⁵ and assemblage⁶, despite the fact that they embodied the Surrealist understanding of a living space. Both these sculptures blurred the lines between distinct borders of space or separate surfaces – they introduced ideas of indeterminacy, continuity, fluid movement

² Will Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, New York 2013, 136-137, 150, 180, 188-189, 194.

³ Jonas Minkevičius, *Architektūros kryptys užsienyje*, Kaunas 1971, 16.

⁴ Salvador Dalí, quoted according to Thomas Mical, "Introduction", in: *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. Thomas Mical, New York 2005, 1-10: 4. See also Krzysztof Fijałkowski, "'Un salon au fond d'un lac': The Domestic Spaces of Surrealism", in: *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. Thomas Mical, New York 2005, 11-30: 21.

and also the spontaneous creation of unfinished, ever-changing and unplanned formalistic architectural expression.

[4] Many of these architectural ideas can be found in contemporary architecture. Fluid movement and distinctively vague, indistinct interior spaces are the trademark of such well-known architects as Zaha Hadid (1950–2016), Kendrick Bangs Kellogg (b. 1934), Jan Kaplický (1937–2009), Peter Cook (b. 1936), Lars Spuybroek (b. 1959) and Ma Yansong (b. 1975). Notoriously sculptural exterior expression is also the trademark of Frank Gehry (b. 1925) and some of the works of Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946). Both of these qualities are common to Japanese architect Arata Isozaki (b. 1931). The extent of the Surrealists' influence on contemporary architecture has never been previously researched. However, contemporary architectural trends such as Deconstructivism or Blobism are often treated as an extension of Postmodernism, which, in its turn, was heavily affected by the irrational Surrealist artistic ideas and concepts. In the mid-twentieth century, such irrational ideas could only be realized as conceptual designs; however, similar ideas are now a fundamental part of 21st-century architecture. This article will make the argument-based statement that those Surrealist concepts were a potent catalyst for the emergence of some of the architectural trends from the second half of 20th century right up to our present age.

The Synthesis of the Arts

[5] Such artistic movements as Orphism, Neo-Plasticism, Suprematism and Constructivism were based on research into universal and common rational artistic principles.⁷ For example, the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) wrote the *Dialogue on the New Plastic* (1919), in which he claimed that

*In naturalistic form, in naturalistic colour, and in naturalistic line, plastic relationships are veiled. To be expressed plastically in a determinate way, relationships must be represented only through colour and line.*⁸

In his own terms, the Russian painter Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935) published the *Suprematist Manifesto Unovis* (1924), which claimed that:

⁵ It had to be materialized in scale for MoMA's Sculpture Garden, see: Jason Farago, (review) "'Endless House' Expands the Definition of Home", in: *The New York Times* (Aug. 27, 2015), see: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/28/arts/design/review-endless-house-expands-the-definition-of-home.html?_r=0 (accessed 17 June 2018).

⁶ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 230.

⁷ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 136-137, 150, 180, 188-189, 194.

⁸ Piet Mondrian, *Dialogue on the New Plastic* (1919), <http://allenfisher.edublogs.org/files/2014/11/Pier-Mondrian-Dialogue-on-the-New-Plastic-1mXuqqz.pdf> (accessed 15 January 2017).

*The art of the present, and in particular painting, has been victorious on the whole front. Consciousness has overcome the flat surface and advanced to the art of creation in space. Henceforth the painting of pictures will be left to those who have been unable, despite tireless labour, to free their consciousness from the flat surface, those whose consciousness has remained flat because it could not overcome the flat surface. Through spatial consciousness painting has developed into the constructive creation of form.*⁹

[6] Such ideas were an exact match for the Gestalt psychology, which was developed at roughly the same time. The Gestalt psychology tried to explain that basic geometry is not derived from the natural environment, but is rather a product of the human mind. According to this theory, all individuals have a common understanding of space, order, colour and – subsequently – art. For example, when people see a group of similar random elements, mentally they are able to understand it as a structure or a composition.¹⁰ This universal principle of composition was emphasized in both the abstract art of the first half of 20th century and Modernist architecture. Universal principles were advocated by the leading global architects. For example, the Swiss-French architect and theorist Le Corbusier (1887–1965) and the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) shared an interest in the ideas of the German pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel (1782–1852) concerning the importance of elementary geometry to a child's mind.¹¹ Le Corbusier praised elementary geometrical figures as elements of the universe;¹² he claimed that primary forms are beautiful because they can be clearly appreciated, and that an inevitable element of architecture is the necessity for order, which brings satisfaction to understanding. The regulating line, according to him, was a guarantee against wilfulness.¹³ Architectural Gestalt psychology was also explored by the Norwegian architect and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz (1929–2000), who claimed that most humans possess several schemata related to architecture, such as topology or geometry. However, their experience of architecture is based upon special schemata within which they are looking for the forms they are used to seeing.¹⁴ French urbanist and cultural theorist Paul Virilio (b. 1932) was exposed to the ideas of Gestalt psychology at the Sorbonne in Paris, through teachers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Vladimir

⁹ Kazimir S. Malevich, *Suprematist Manifesto Unovis* (1924), <https://www.scribd.com/document/143287897/SUPREMATISM-MANIFESTO-UNOVIS-pdf> (accessed 15 January 2017).

¹⁰ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture*, Cambridge MA 1965, 152.

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Education and Human Development*, eds. Stephen J. Farenga and Daniel Ness, 3 vols., New York 2005, vol. 3, 931.

¹² Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, Berlin 2008, 224.

¹³ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, New York 1986, 2-3.

¹⁴ Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture*, 196.

Jankélévitch and Jean Wahl. He was recorded saying that he was a follower of Gestalttheorie.¹⁵ American architect and author Robert Venturi (b. 1925) also acknowledged that he based some of his theses on Gestalt psychology.¹⁶ The reason why Modernist architects brought Gestalt principles into the spotlight, may have been the current cultural environment. At the time, Global cosmopolitanism was still regarded positively, as was the so-called International Style in architecture.¹⁷

[7] Modernist architecture was essentially stripped of decoration.¹⁸ Despite that, it was still closely related to the ideas of abstract art. Many abstract artists in one way or another participated in architectural designs. To give a few examples, the Russian Suprematist artist El Lissitzky (1890–1941) was also an architect and worked with the Bauhaus art, design and architectural school (1919–1930) in Weimar, Germany.¹⁹ The Swiss-born abstract painter Paul Klee (1879–1940) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), an initiator of The Blue Rider, gained teaching posts there.²⁰ The Bauhaus school also kept in touch with Gestalt psychologists Wolfgang Köhler (1887–1967) and Rudolf Arnheim (1904–2007).²¹ Arnheim applied Gestalt psychology to his theories about art²² and architecture.²³ Simultaneously, the Dutch artistic movement De Stijl (1917–1931) included architects such as Jacob Johann Pieter Oud (1890–1963) and Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964), who collaborated with Mondrian and tried to apply the principles of modern painting to architecture.²⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s, the ideas of Russian Constructivist art were adapted by the ASNOVA (New Architects Association)

¹⁵ Steve Redhead, *We Have Never Been Postmodern: Theory at Speed of Light*, Edinburgh 2011, 59-60.

¹⁶ Robert Venturi, *Iconography and Electronics Upon a Generic Architecture: A View from the Drafting Room*, Cambridge MA and London 1996, 147.

¹⁷ Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 90.

¹⁸ Minkevičius, *Architektūros kryptys užsienyje*, 6-7; Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 92.

¹⁹ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 198.

²⁰ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 210-212.

²¹ Mine Özkar, *Rethinking Basic Design in Architectural Education. Foundations Past and Future*, New York and London 2017, 97.

²² Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, Los Angeles and London 2004, 24-25, 49-50, 54.

²³ Rudolf Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1977, 7.

group, led by Nikolai Ladovsky, who showed an interest in Gestalt psychology.²⁵ Le Corbusier collaborated with the Portuguese geometric abstract painter Nadir Afonso (1920–2013), who was also formally trained in architecture, for the design of the Unité d'habitation in Marseilles (1947–1952).²⁶ – Afonso later collaborated with the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer (1907–2012).²⁷ – From that time, primary colours became a trademark of Le Corbusier, who used them in numerous projects.²⁸ Le Corbusier himself painted and created coloured lithographs and tapestries, which often have only primary or basic colours;²⁹ his tapestries were intended to decorate the interior of the Sydney Opera House (architect Jørn Utzon, 1959–1973).³⁰

[8] In the same way that artists and psychologists were trying to discover universal artistic principles, Modernist architects were trying to express themselves in a way that would appeal to the global audience.³¹ Coincidentally, Surrealist artists also researched how the mind perceives certain shapes or

²⁴ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 194-196. Also Minkevičius, *Architektūros kryptys užsienyje*, 18.

²⁵ Özkar, *Rethinking Basic Design in Architectural Education*, 94.

²⁶ Jacques Sbriglio, *Le Corbusier: L'Unité d'habitation de Marseille et les autres unités d'habitation à Rezé-les-Nantes, Berlin, Briey en Forêt et Firminy = Unité d'habitation in Marseilles and the Four Other Unité Blocks in Rezé-les-Nantes, Berlin, Briey en Forêt and Firminy*, Basel, Berlin and Boston 2004, 241.

²⁷ Ian Mutuli, "Nadir Afonso Contemporary Art Museum by Álvaro Siza Vieira: A Geometric Exploration into Mathematical Art", in: *Archute* (27 August 2015), <https://www.archute.com/2017/03/14/nadir-afonso-contemporary-art-museum-alvaro-siza-vieira-geometric-exploration-mathematical-art/> (accessed 31 August 2018).

²⁸ The Unité d'habitation of Nantes-Rezé, Nantes, France (1952); the Chapelle Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp, France (1950–1954); the Palace of Justice (1952), the Palace of Assembly (1955) and the College of Architecture (1959) in Chandigarh, India; the Maison du Brésil in the Cité Universitaire in Paris, France (1957); the Unité d'habitation of Berlin-Charlottenburg, Germany (1957); the Sainte Marie de La Tourette monastery, near Lyon, France (1957–1960); the Unité d'habitation of Firminy (1964), the Maison de la culture de Firminy-Vert (1965) and the Church of Saint-Pierre in Firminy (completed in 2006); and the Pavillon (Centre) Le Corbusier in Zurich, Switzerland (1961–1965, finished in 1967).

²⁹ Like in the paintings *L'Illiade. Allons. Couchons-nous et goûtons le plaisir d'amour* (1959) and *Figure composition* (1959), in the colour lithographs *La femme rose* (1932/1961), *Composition* (1963), *Autrement que sur terre* (1963) and *Portrait* (1940/1943/1960), or in the tapestry *Les dés sont jetés* (1960), all previously in the collection of architect Jørn Utzon.

³⁰ Bruun Rasmussen Auctioneers of Fine Art, ed., *Modern Art: International Auction 857*, Copenhagen 2015, 76.

³¹ Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 89-90.

elements. In the 1930s the Spanish Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) created his paranoiac-critical artistic method, which he described as a "spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectivity of the associations and interpretations of delirious phenomena".³² This paranoiac-critical method was in some way reminiscent of the Gestalt psychology, however, instead of universal associations, Dalí emphasized his personal imagination, which produced multiple or ambiguous images instead of a universal structure. This justifies the claim that Dalí's creative method was in a way equal to the Rorschach test or pareidolia (allowing only him to see specific objects in otherwise indistinguishable spots or contours) – no one else's mind could have conceived of such images as are present in some of his paintings, e.g. the transformation of the shadow of the *Venus de Milo* into the figure of a bullfighter or the transformation of a crouching adolescent into a hand and an egg.³³

[9] Such an individual point of view foreshadowed Postmodernist art, but Surrealist art was postmodern not only for its exploration of individual subconsciousness, but also for its broad application of references to historical art pieces. Such paraphrases were used by Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), who founded the *Scuola metafisica* art movement and largely influenced other Surrealists,³⁴ as well as by René Magritte (1898–1967),³⁵ and of course by Salvador Dalí, whose artistic references spanned from Greco-Roman art³⁶ through Renaissance³⁷ and Baroque art³⁸ to the Age of Enlightenment.³⁹ It should be noted that Surrealist artists used well-known art objects as references, and represented them in a somewhat distorted fashion. In this process lies a remarkable analogy to human dreaming: it is widely known, that images we see when dreaming

³² Haim Finkelstein, *The Screen in Surrealist Art and Thought*, London and New York 2007, 287.

³³ See the paintings *The Hallucinogenic Toreador* (1969–1970) and *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937).

³⁴ Paintings *Piazza d'Italia* (1913), *Melancholy of a Beautiful Day* (1913), *The Song of Love* (1914) and *Metaphysical Interior with Head of Mercury* (1969).

³⁵ See the paintings *Dangerous Liaisons* (1926) and *Le principe d'incertitude* (1946), which were both inspired by the *Venus de' Medici* statue, and the painting [*The Ready-Made Bouquet*](#) (1956), inspired by the *Primavera* of Botticelli.

³⁶ See paintings *My Wife Nude Contemplating Her Own Flesh Becoming Stairs, Three Vertebra of a Column, Sky and Architecture* (1945), *Destino* (1946), [*The Hallucinogenic Toreador*](#) (1969–1970), [*Woman with Egg and Arrows*](#) (1978) and *Apparition of the Visage of Aphrodite of Cnidos in a Landscape* (1981).

³⁷ See paintings *Raphaellesque Head Exploding* (1951), *Galatea of the Spheres* (1952), [*The Virgin of Guadalupe*](#) (1959), *Untitled* (first study for *The Three Glorious Enigmas of Gala*) (1982), *After Michelangelo's Moses, On the Tomb of Julius II in Rome* (1982) and *Warrior* (1982).

consist of persons or objects we have seen at least once in reality. Dreams and visions are essentially eclectic and the images springing up in them have no underlying logic. In other words, the persons and objects that are revived in the dreams, are also seen in a somewhat distorted manner. This dream-like state of mind is exactly what attracted Surrealist artists.

[10] Another prominent feature, which draws Surrealist and Postmodernist art closer, is the blending of elite art and popular culture. This can be illustrated by two very similar sculptures, *Les menottes de cuivre* (*The Copper Handcuffs*) of 1931 by René Magritte and *Venus de Milo with Drawers* (1936) by Salvador Dalí. Both sculptures, based on the same famous classical statue of Venus, blur the distinction between masterpiece, cheap replica, mass production furniture and a simply erotic naked female body. Both Dalí's and Magritte's statues distort, mutilate and dehumanize the female figure. In Magritte's version, the stumps of Venus are covered with bronze seals ("handcuffs"), demonstrating that the sculpture is finite and attractive even if Venus has no arms;⁴⁰ Dalí's sculpture transforms the body into furniture, which, however, highlights even further the eroticism of this statue. Personal sexual impulses are always hidden from the public (literally "in the closet", or, in this case, a set of drawers), however, Dalí's sculpture suggests they can be revealed by tenderness – this idea being represented by the fluffy fur handles. It is interesting that these statues are based on a dehumanized (utensil-like) human figure – which is a common leitmotif in Surrealist art. The blurred distinction between elite art and cheap replica was later explored by the Postmodernist sculptor Michelangelo Pistoletto (b. 1933). His sculpture *Venus of the Rags* of 1967 again embodies the cheap replica of a nude classical statue against a background of everyday objects and brings "together the beauty of the past and the disaster of the present".⁴¹

[11] In the 1970s, such artistic images began to emerge in architecture. The German philosopher Wolfgang Iser (b. 1926) wrote about one of the first examples that used such a paraphrased sculpture in an architectural setting. In 1977, the architectural and design group Haus-Rucker-Co mounted the so-called *Nike Linz* upon the Linz Art University building (Fig. 1). This was a replica of the

³⁸ For example, the painting *Dalí's Hand Drawing Back the Golden Fleece in the Form of a Cloud to Show Gala the Dawn, Completely Nude, Very, Very Far Away Behind the Sun* (*Homage to Claude Lorrain*) (1979).

³⁹ For example, the painting *Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire* (1940).

⁴⁰ A similar artistic idea was represented in the film *Boxing Helena* (1993), directed by Jennifer Lynch. This movie, based on the image of the *Venus de Milo*, again shows how Surrealist artists (or artists who value Surrealist aesthetics) are drawn to 'mutilated' classical sculptures.

⁴¹ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 324-325.

famous Hellenistic *Nike of Samothrace*. The artistic idea behind this was to herald the revival of classical arts in contemporary culture.⁴²



1 Haus-Rucker-Co, Nike Linz, 1977, mounted upon the Linz Art University building (photograph: Dromedar61, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nike_Linz_20161024.jpg)

Despite this postmodern notion, the aesthetics of the *Nike Linz* are purely Surrealistic. The original Greek sculpture had an exact artistic purpose – to depict a winged woman (the goddess of victory) in an expressive and naturalistic manner. The contemporary designers, in contrast, chose to replicate an already broken and mutilated statue as a finite art object. Of course, such an appearance only strengthens the metaphor of how classical art emerges victorious against time. However, ancient society would have never approved of such a battered depiction. Also, the *Nike Linz* was installed in a somewhat unusual position, high above the roof, almost as a cardboard cut-out, and her 'flight' is even more highlighted by the modern mounting – the unmistakably evident metal truss. A modern observer is, however, fine with such a distorted representation and can better understand the meaning behind its mutilated form.

[12] An exceptional example of the synthesis of Surrealist art and Postmodern architecture is the façade of the central police station of the 12th arrondissement in Paris (architects Manolo Nunez-Yanowski and Miriam Teitelbaum, 1991). The building is decorated with twelve replicas of Michelangelo's "Dying Slave" (Fig. 2). In a truly Postmodern manner, this sculptural feature is oriented to both educated society and common folk. To the latter, the twelve figures evidently represent the twelfth district and the slave subject clearly depicts imprisonment. On the other hand, educated people would know that Michelangelo (1475–1564) originally

⁴² Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 105.

sculpted his slave figure for the tomb of Pope Julius II to represent not physical, but moral, emotional and spiritual captivity.



2 Central police station of the 12th arrondissement, avenue Daumesnil 80, Paris, 1991, architects Manolo Nunez-Yanowski and Miriam Teitelbaum (photograph: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Commissariat_central_de_police_de_Paris_12e_arrondissement,_3_August_2014.jpg)

The way these replicas are represented in the police station is no doubt Surrealist: a weak and relaxed pose and classical nudity serve as a homoerotic motif; the fragmentation and mutilation of the human body (the slaves are pierced), and a mechanically precise, almost industrial repetition of the single figure echo the subjects of anxiety and dehumanisation. The architecture of the Postmodern police station bears a strong resemblance to *Art Nouveau* styles, justifying its Surrealist-like sculptural aesthetic. As mentioned before, some Surrealist artists were greatly inspired by the *Art Nouveau* architectural style, and this is probably the reason why the police station of the 12th arrondissement expresses both Surrealist and *Art Nouveau* features.

[13] Probably the most prominent and unique examples of such a synthesis of the arts are the works of Sacha Sosno (1937–2013), a French artist and sculptor of Baltic descent. His first sculptural contribution to architecture was to the Hôtel Elysée Palace in Nice, France (architect Georges Margarita, 1988). This hotel features a 26 meter high bronze replica of Antonio Canova's *Venus Italica* incorporated into its main façade (Fig. 3).



3 Hôtel Elysée Palace, Nice, France, 1988, architect Georges Margarita, sculptural decoration by Sacha Sosno (photograph: Валерий Дед, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2009-08-27_-_panoramio.jpg)

The section of the original statue chosen for the colossal application provides a voyeuristic element: the topless female figure is inserted into a narrow space between the planes of the façade. This section was not chosen of necessity – Sosno repeated the same composition in the lithograph *Interieur – exterieur* (2008) and in the sculptures *Il faut en toute chose préférer l'intérieur à l'extérieur* (1984, 1985) and *Oblitération* (1990).⁴³ It provides a typically Surrealist expression of a distorted human body – Venus is depicted as sliced fragments. This sculptural element is also set to be appealing to both intellectuals and the common public. During the Neo-Classical artistic period, art lovers much discussed which of the ancient Venus statues depicted the ideal of female beauty in the best way, the recently discovered *Venus de Milo*, kept in Paris, France, or the *Venus de' Medici*, kept in Florence, Italy. This somehow represented the artistic rivalry between France and Italy.⁴⁴ Around the same time, replicas of the *Venus Italica* by Antonio Canova (1757–1822), which were basically altered versions of the *Venus de' Medici*, became popular. The replica of the *Venus Italica* used for the façade can serve as a reminder that the city of Nice was a focus of disagreement between the Italian and French peoples, as both countries commandeered this city in their histories. Viewers ignorant of the historical or artistic background can simply associate Venus with everything stereotypical of the resort – bathing, beauty and eroticism.

[14] Another sculpture of Sacha Sosno, the *Hommage to Romain Roland*, was similarly inserted into the façade of the [Lycée Technique de Bagneux](#), France (architect Yves Bayard, 1999). This kind of synthesis of the arts was taken to extremes in the Library of Nice (architects Francis Chapus and Yves Bayard, 1997). The shape of this building is basically an enlargement of Sosno's sculpture

⁴³ Both sculptures, instead, utilize the figure of the *Venus de Milo*.

⁴⁴ Gonda Van Steen, *Liberating Hellenism from the Ottoman Empire: Comte de Marcellus and the Last of the Classics*, New York 2010, 55.

Tête au carré (1996, 1998, 2010).⁴⁵ It depicts a human head, sliced and embedded into a cube – a typical Surrealist body distortion (Fig. 4). However, when applied to the library building, this form illustrates the phrase "to think outside the box", and expresses that human thought is individual, but basic knowledge is objective and abstract, like regular geometry. It also provides a metacommentary on how the typical architectural geometry ("Gestalt") can preferably be replaced by more peculiar sculptural forms.



4 *Tête Carrée*: Bibliothèque municipale à vocation régionale, Nice, France, 1997, architects Francis Chapus and Yves Bayard, concept: Sacha Sosno (photograph provided by the author, 2011)

[15] Sosno's artistic ideas entered the architecture of the 21st century. His sculpture *Un bon gardien* (2007, 2008, 2013) was used as a concept for the architecture of the [Polygon Riviera](#) shopping centre in Cagnes-sur-Mer, France (architects Philippe Caron, Frédéric Ducic, José Ignacio Martínez Galán and Sacha Sosno, 2014–2015). One pavilion of this shopping centre is shaped as a male head, sliced between two rectangular blocks. Also, in 2011, Sosno collaborated with Lithuanian architect Rytis Daukantas in order to turn his two statues *Au-delà des blocs* (2003) and *La paille dans l'œil du voisin* (1985) into architectural projects (which, however, were never realized). The first project was based on the shape of two prisms connected by the torso of the *Venus de Milo*.⁴⁶ The second sculpture was turned into the project of an Art Gallery building.⁴⁷ It was shaped as

⁴⁵ Also reproduced numerous times in variations as *Première Tête Carrée* (1980), *Hommage à Fidel* (2000), *Tête Carrée oblitérée* (2011), *Tête Carrée aux arêtes* (2008), *Tête Carrée à ciel ouvert* (2008, 2012), *Tête Carrée aux chiffres...* (2010) and *Tête à étages* (2012).

⁴⁶ See the model of this project at the official Sacha Sosno website <http://www.sosno.com/#overview1> (accessed 28 December 2018).

⁴⁷ See visualizations of this project at the official Rytis Daukantas website <https://daukantas.wordpress.com/about/> (accessed 28 December 2018).

a replica of the head of Michelangelo's *David* pierced by a cuboid, with a humorous nod to the French locution "la paille dans l'œil du voisin" which literally translates as "a straw in one's neighbour's eye".⁴⁸

[16] These buildings and projects attracted attention from popular media and the internet; however, they should not be simply qualified as novelty architecture. Sacha Sosno provoked the tension between the acknowledged artwork and mass produced objects. He reproduced his own sculptural ideas numerous times, using different materials, or turned them into objects of a different art form, that is in architecture or print. This concept – to turn sculptural artworks into architecture that appeals to both the general public and intellectuals – is itself postmodern. Every architectural piece of Sosno expressed Surrealist art themes – eroticism, dehumanisation (through multiplication and mutilation) of the human body as a symbol of angst, and the dream-like usage of historical art references. Every single architectural concept is an example of individual creativity, fine Surrealist art and brave and unique embodiments of Postmodernist ideas in contemporary architecture. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, Sosno's and the following creations have been comparatively rare examples of such architectural Irrationalism.

[17] In 1999 the Swiss architect Mario Botta (b. 1943) designed a wooden pavilion at the shore of Lake Lugano in order to commemorate Baroque architect Francesco Borromini, a native of the region, on his 400th birthday. Botta made a scale wooden replica of the church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rome; however, the architect omitted its exterior completely (Fig. 5). The pavilion instead was a literal cross section of the church, wherein the interior was used as some sort of mould form or even an imprint, and displayed exteriorly. Botta is not a Surrealist artist; however, this pavilion represented a typical Surrealist expression – it was a paraphrase of a historical artwork, which was depicted in a mutilated (sliced into half) fashion and realized in an unusual (that is in a landscaped, rather than an urban) context. It also blurred the borders between architecture and sculpture. This pavilion, located at the shore of Lake Lugano until 2003, had no other practical purpose, but to serve as a monument to Francesco Borromini.

⁴⁸ The expression harks back to Luke 6,41; in English, it reads: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"



5 Mario Botta, (temporary) Pavilion for Francesco Borromini in Lake Lugano, 1999-2003 (photograph: LittleJoe, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Carlo_alle_Quattro_Fontane_\(Lugano\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Carlo_alle_Quattro_Fontane_(Lugano).jpg))

[18] However, the newest example of artistic synthesis could be the William Barak apartment building in Melbourne, Australia (architectural bureau ARM Architecture, 2015). This 85-meter-tall building is decorated with a relief portrait of the spokesman for Aboriginal social justice William Barak (1824-1903; Fig. 6). The portrait itself is created using the gaps between white panels bolted onto black balcony slabs, so the portrait is recognisable by the same pareidolia method, which helped Salvador Dalí to see objects in otherwise undistinguishable spots.



6 William Barak apartment building in Melbourne, Australia, 2015, architectural bureau ARM Architecture (image: AnyaLee, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elevation_for_the_William_Barak_Apartment_Complex_\(Building_5\),_ARM.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elevation_for_the_William_Barak_Apartment_Complex_(Building_5),_ARM.jpg))

In addition, the building is decorated with circular portholes, some of which are filled with aluminium discs that form a pattern spelling out "Wurundjeri I am who I am" (the famous quotation of William Barak)⁴⁹ in braille. This however has no functional purpose, because the audience, that is forced to use braille due to blindness, can't see this installation. This can only be interpreted as a sculptural effort to immortalize the memory of W. Barak through the use of a visual code.⁵⁰ The portrait itself, enlarged to the scale of a high-rise building, creates a surreal atmosphere when viewed against the skyline of historical Melbourne buildings. Though contemporary architecture is nowadays dominated by other artistic trends, these scarce examples of a Postmodern synthesis of architecture and sculpture show that this artistic method will still be valid in the future.

The Formalism and Spontaneity of Architecture

[19] Another artist who has made a significant impact on contemporary architectural ideas, was the German poet and artist Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948). He followed the succession of styles from Impressionism (1914-1917) to

⁴⁹ See the description of this artistic idea at the official website of ARM Architecture, <http://armarchitecture.com.au/projects/barak-building/> (accessed 17 June 2018).

⁵⁰ This "appropriation" of a leader of the Aborigines for a high-rise building containing luxury flats not affordable to the aboriginal community, was heavily criticized. See <http://theconversation.com/melbournes-new-william-barak-building-is-a-cruel-juxtaposition-38983> (accessed 31 December 2018).

Expressionism (1917), Abstraction (1917–1918)⁵¹, and Constructivism (1919), and eventually associated himself with Dada⁵². In 1936/37 he participated in The Museum of Modern Art's (NYC) first exhibition on "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism".⁵³ In 1919 Schwitters invented the meaningless word "Merz", which he applied to all his further creations. In 1923 he commenced his most known artwork, the *Merzbau*, a structure which was installed in his studio and which was one of the very first artistic assemblages.⁵⁴

[20] The *Merzbau* was an interior creation, which seemingly had Cubist expression; this structure had no functional logic and was presented to the public as an assemblage, rather than interior design or architecture. However, this art piece is important as an architectural visionary work, because it counteracted Modernism in several aspects. Firstly, this structure emphasized the contrast between truly individual living space and a Modernist flat. Modernist flats at the time were created by deciding what side of the building and what size spaces are the most efficient for sleeping, working and eating.⁵⁵ In such way, a person had no involvement in creating his own personal space – it was designed by somebody else, by the professional architects, who supposedly know what is best. In contrast, the *Merzbau* was created as the author thought best: he picked different elements or utensils from his surroundings and applied them as he wished. The *Merzbau* was also made of randomly found elements. The creative process of this structure was not planned and was truly spontaneous, in contrast to premeditated architecture.

[21] Secondly, this creation was never a finite structure: Schwitters kept adding new layers on top of the existing surfaces. In such a way, the *Merzbau* resembled rustic or tribal architecture, which has a tendency to ever change according to different needs. In comparison to Modernist architecture, the *Merzbau* was a living structure. Modernist architecture was essentially based on Functionalism, but was not liable to change in any way and often had a monument-like quality. One could not simply rebuild any iconic Modernist villa, or switch rooms designed exactly for sleeping, eating and other premeditated activities. However, it is natural that over any given period, the personal needs of every individual change, so architecture should be capable of adapting to these changes equally. Despite these constant changes, the *Merzbau* never lost its conceptual value as an architectural piece, which is uncommon. Normally, if the subsequent owners of a building decide to change its structure, for example, by adding another floor,

⁵¹ Elizabeth Burns Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, New York 2000, 19.

⁵² Dietmar Elger and Uta Grosenick, eds., *Dadaismus*, Cologne et al. 2004, 62.

⁵³ Michael White, "Dada Migrations: Definition, Dispersal, and the Case of Schwitters", in: *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, ed. David Hopkins, Chichester 2016, 54–69: 66.

⁵⁴ Karl Ruhrberg et al., *Art of the 20th Century*, Cologne and London 2000, 124, 462.

⁵⁵ Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 96.

room, or wing, its architectural expression will suffer. Usually we imagine architecture as a finite object, which can lose its artistic value if one tries to rebuild or to modify it. But the *Merzbau* was adaptable to change. Its architectural expression (or concept) lost no value despite its ever-changing appearance.

[22] This adaptability tackled the basic ontological problem of architecture – the scientification and professionalisation of architecture defining it as a creation process of finite and clearly determined objects and separating it from the spontaneous creative processes performed by prehistorical communities. To this day improvisational architecture is extremely rare in Western societies – few such *sui generis* architects like Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926) or Friedensreich Hundertwasser (1928–2000) are recognized. In most cases irrational architecture is characterized not by an impulsive creative process, but by an expressive but carefully calculated – and thus no longer truly irrational – design. Another important aspect of the *Merzbau* is the fact that it did not refer to universal artistic principles or Gestalt psychology, but was fully self-contained in terms of form: It was reminiscent of natural forms – some sort of geometrized cavern. This completely formalist expression contrasted with the architectural reasoning performed by Modernist architects.

[23] The original *Merzbau* was destroyed during World War II.⁵⁶ However, it was restored for the Tate Gallery in London in 1981–1983 by Peter Bissegger.⁵⁷ Coincidentally, Deconstructivist architecture emerged exactly in the 1980s. The common perception is that Deconstructivist architecture was primarily influenced by Suprematist art.⁵⁸ Some iconic examples demonstrate how architectural perception informed by Deconstructivist theory was applied to contemporary buildings.

[24] Most architectural designs of the Canadian-born American architect Frank Gehry are based on formalistic, even superficial exterior appearance. For example, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California has a comparatively simple inner space, but it is shelled by an extremely complicated, multifaceted structure. Original sketches by Gehry show that the exterior shape of this building was purely improvisational – it had no practical purpose or symbolism *per se*.⁵⁹ In fact, Gehry uses his creative imagination in a very similar way to Dalí's method. Gehry is able to envision certain architectural forms by looking at other pieces of art. For example, the Hieronymus Bosch painting *Christ*

⁵⁶ Gompertz, *The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art*, 230; also Ruhrberg et al., *Art of the 20th Century*, 124, 462.

⁵⁷ Karin Orchard, "Kurt Schwitters: Reconstructions of the *Merzbau*", in: *Tate Papers*, no. 8 (Autumn 2007), <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/08/kurt-schwitters-reconstructions-of-the-merzbau> (accessed 5 January 2017).

⁵⁸ Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture*, ed. James Leggio, New York 1988, 11-12.

⁵⁹ Barbara Isenberg, *Conversations with Frank Gehry*, New York 2009, 113.

Mocked (The Crowning with Thorns) inspired the design of the Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem; the scene of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing in the 1936 movie *Follow the Fleet* inspired the design of the so-called Dancing House in Prague. Even spontaneous doodles allow Gehry to see certain architectural elements in them; f. e. Gehry drew "anything" on a paper napkin, launching his participation in the competition for the design of the Fishdance Restaurant in Kobe, Japan.⁶⁰

[25] Another prominent Polish-American architect, Daniel Libeskind, used outrageously expressive exterior forms to contrast with the historical context of some designs, e.g. the addition to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (2002–2007) and the Bundeswehr Military History Museum in Dresden (2001–2011). His latest design, the K18 skyscraper in Vilnius (2016–2018), is based on highly sculptural and visually active expression, which has no reference to the surrounding buildings (Fig. 7).



7 Daniel Libeskind, design for the K18 skyscraper in Vilnius, 2016–2018 (public display on the construction site, photograph provided by the author)

Similarly, the Mo Modern Art Museum in Vilnius, designed by Studio Libeskind and Do Architects (2017–2018), also features heavily contrasting, yet much simplified forms of this sort when compared to the surrounding historical architecture (Fig. 8).

⁶⁰ Isenberg, *Conversations with Frank Gehry*, 79, 113, 158–159, 268–269.



8 Mo Modern Art Museum, Vilnius, 2017–2018, architects: Studio Libeskind and Do Architects (photograph provided by the author)

[26] Such formalism was sometimes criticized, fearing that this tendency would soon become "the new International Style".⁶¹ However, Deconstructivist architecture must be evaluated in the context of the persistent belief, that architectural expression, based on a particular artistic subtext or functional requirement, is a must. For example, the Titanic Museum in Belfast (CivicArts & Todd Architects, 2009–2012) is an expressive building in its own right and can be compared to the world-famous Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (architect Frank Gehry, 1991–1997); however, the designers of the Titanic Museum still tried to explain its form as a metaphor of an ice crystal and a ship's bow (Fig. 9).⁶²



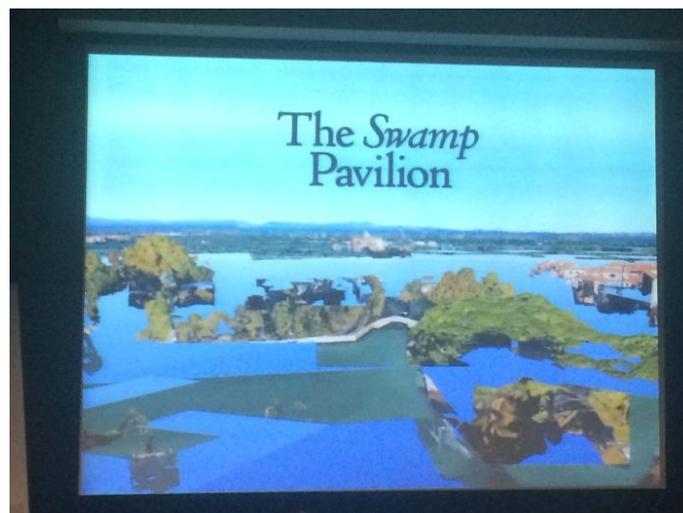
9 Titanic Museum, Belfast, 2009–2012, architects CivicArts & Todd Architects (photograph: Wikimedia Commons)

⁶¹ Rimantas Buivydas, "XX a. architektūra: iracionalizmas", in: *Archiforma* 1999, no. 2, 71–77: 77.

⁶² See <https://titanicbelfast.com/BlankSite/media/PDFs/TSP-NewEvolution3.pdf> (accessed 15 October 2018).

On top of that, the museum is now decorated with the *Titanica* brass sculpture, a figure with outstretched arms, that can be interpreted as an humorous nod to the famous Hollywood movie. In the context of such traditional thought, the freedom to design any exterior appearance just for the sake of it is still fresh. The origins of this artistic idea can be traced right back to the famous Surrealist *Merzbau* installation.

[27] The irrational creation of the *Merzbau* is also echoed in contemporary ideas of "de-architecture". Such ideas provoke different understandings of architecture and are opposed to ideas of prefixed, unnatural, static, rational and unchangeable architectural spaces. It is interesting to see how such ideas develop against different artistic backgrounds, but still claim the title of architecture (just as the *Merzbau*, which was presented as a sort of sculptural work). Lithuanian conceptual artists Nomeda Urbonienė (b. 1968) and Gediminas Urbonas (b. 1966) were responsible for the design of the Lithuanian pavilion in the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale. The authors based the architecture of this pavilion on irrational categories - indeterminacy, borderlessness and nature-inspired forms. The whole artistic idea relied on the contrast between the forms of power (architecture) and elemental forms. According to the authors, Venice is a perfect example of this kind of balance. It is irrational as a whole, because it was impossibly built on water. However, right now, water is reclaiming the city. On a smaller scale, the Giardini della Biennale were primarily used to represent the highest geopolitical powers: only the strongest countries were allowed to build their pavilions there. Architecture was used as a sign of power, while the lagoon itself can symbolize those affected by that power. According to this, the two Lithuanian artists shaped the pavilion as an artificial swamp, or swamp-like folly (Fig. 10).



10 Nomeda Urbonienė (b. 1968) and Gediminas Urbonas (b. 1966), *The Swamp Pavilion*, project for the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale (public presentation, photograph provided by the author)

[28] Swamps highlight the relationship between human and nature, and the idea of superior and conscious-free natural laws, which can not be completely

controlled by human activity. Nomeda Urbonienė and Gediminas Urbonas sought to create an indeterminate object, based on human and elemental processes, art, science, architecture, urbanism and all other disciplines.⁶³ In this conceptual project, we see irrational architectural principles: the architecture of the pavilion was created not by architects, but by artists; it was presented not as an architectural, but rather a sculptural or interdisciplinary piece (a folly), and it was based on spontaneous processes rather than on a finite design. The so-called *Swamp Pavilion* however conveyed the most topical issues of contemporary architecture and even urbanism (according to its authors): it invited us to think whether we are ready to modify architecture, given the fact that in the near future, with the sea-level rise, we all will have to deal more and more with the element water in our daily lives. – Such conceptual work is based on ideas which can be traced right back to the *Merzbau* created by Kurt Schwitters.

The Changed Spatial Parameters

[29] The Surrealist art movement influenced contemporary architecture by stimulating change in the concept of space itself. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Modernist residential architecture was designed according to universal principles of convenience and functionalism. As Krzysztof Fijalkowski noticed, Surrealist artists were essentially opposed to such de-individualisation of private space; e.g. Romanian-born poet, essayist and performance artist Tristan Tzara (1896–1963) wrote in the Surrealist-oriented literary magazine *Minotaure* that the unconscious mind longs for rounded, irregular, inter-uterine architecture.⁶⁴ The American architectural researcher Stephen Philips claims that a similar idea was realized by the Austrian-American architect and artist Frederick John Kiesler (1890–1965), who designed the so-called *Endless House* in 1959. According to Kiesler himself,

*The Endless House is called "Endless" because all ends meet, and meet continuously [...] [not] amorphous, not a free-for-all form. On the contrary, its construction has strict boundaries according to the scale of your living. Its shape and form are determined by inherent life processes [...] rather sensuous, more like the female body in contrast to sharp-angled male architecture. [...] When the moment comes and we want to move a wall way out, to breathe more fully – yes, when we want the ceiling to be higher, or the whole area to change into another shape – that is where the Endless House comes in.*⁶⁵

⁶³ The concept of The Swamp Pavilion as well as the events and activities that took place in the course of the Biennale, are presented at <http://www.swamp.it/> (accessed 17 December 2018).

⁶⁴ Krzysztof Fijalkowski, "'Un salon au fond d'un lac': The Domestic Spaces of Surrealism", in: *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. Thomas Mical, New York 2005, 11–30: 22.

⁶⁵ Frederick John Kiesler, quoted according to Stephen Philips, "Introjection and Projection: Frederick Kiesler and his Dream Machine", in: *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. Thomas Mical, New York 2005, 140–155: 149–151.

In fact, Kiesler had created an ambiguous structure, in which the dwellers had to interpret how to better use these inner spaces themselves.

[30] The *Endless House* was a biomorphic structure with strained curved surfaces. Because of both, concept and form, it can be called a first prototype of biomorphic Deconstructivist architecture. It repealed the differentiation of separate surfaces and created one fluid continuous space. About three decades later, these architectural features became a key characteristic of Deconstructivism. However, in 1959 the costly *Endless House* was not realized in full scale in the sculpture garden of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, as originally intended. A model, though, was exhibited in the MoMA's "Visionary Architects"-exhibition in 1960.⁶⁶ It is important to notice, that the *Endless House* was also seen as a sculpture, rather than as a rational architectural piece.

[31] Even though not implemented, this particular design inspired numerous projects of residential housing, e.g. the social housing block in Ivry-sur-Seine near Paris (architects Jean Renaud and Renée Gailhoustet, 1969–1975), which is reminiscent of a sharp-cornered maze, but was designed according to the study of natural organic shapes and their harmonious relationship with the human body. Worth mentioning are also other irrational houses, which foreshadowed Deconstructivist aesthetics: the Garcia House in Los Angeles (architect John Lautner, 1964), the Sculptured House on Genesee Mountain in Colorado (more popularly known as the Sleeper House, architect Charles Deaton, exterior completed in 1963, but the building was fully accomplished only in 2003), the Prairie House in Norman, Oklahoma (architect Herb Greene, 1960–1961), the Steel House of sculptor Robert Bruno in Texas (Fig. 11), which the sculptor created himself from 1974 to 2008, and the Errante Guest House (Hospedería del Errante) in Ciudad Abierta, an architectural project commenced in 1970 near Valparaíso in Chile (architect Manuel Casanueva Carrasco, built from 1981 to 2008).⁶⁷

⁶⁶

See

<https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2016/spelunker/exhibitions/4146/#img14> (accessed 17 December 2018).

⁶⁷ Dominic Bradbury, *The Iconic House: Architectural Masterworks Since 1900*, London 2009, 168; David A. Driskill, Marvin R. Platten and James T. Davis, *Architecture Across the Curriculum: Learning by Design*, Austin TX 1999, 3; Ada Louise Huxtable, *On Architecture: Collected Reflections on a Century of Change*, New York 2008, 300; Fernando Pérez Oyarzun, Rodrigo Pérez de Arce and Horacio Torrent, *Chilean Modern Architecture Since 1950*, ed. Malcolm Quantrill, College Station TX 2010, 38.



11 Robert Bruno, *Steel House*, Ransom Canyon, Texas, 1974–2008 (photograph: Leaflet, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bruno_Steel_House_2018.jpg)

These buildings are notable for their distinctive organic and fluid expression, which makes them similar to the *Endless House*. They all relate to the concept of biomorphic architecture, as opposed to architecture based on Gestalt psychology (see above), which was advocated by the German architect and author Hugo Häring (1882–1958).⁶⁸

[32] In the 1970s, Polish-born German painter and architect Engelbert Kremser (b. 1938) created a few conceptual architectural photomontages that are strikingly similar to contemporary Deconstructivist architecture.⁶⁹ He was one of the pioneers of organic architecture, and his several realized designs were similar to those of Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926). For example, the Café am See at Britzer Garten park in Berlin (1985) is somewhat similar to the Parc Güell in Barcelona (1900–1914). The American architect Kendrick Bangs Kellogg (b. 1934) also adapted the same aesthetics. Some of his projects are noticeable for indistinguishable surfaces – e.g. the High Desert House in Joshua Tree, California (around 1990 – early 2000s), which has no walls, but is formed entirely of vertical support columns and natural boulders. To date, it is typical to think that Deconstructivist aesthetics developed together with computer-aided design technology.⁷⁰ I would like to question this assumption, because similar expressions were already well developed by numerous architects (J. Renaud, R. Gailhoustet, E. Kremser, K. Bangs Kellogg) before CAD became established. However, such visionary ideas were essentially pushed aside because of the lack of technical ability to manifest such ideas quickly and at a large scale. They were

⁶⁸ Peter Blundell Jones, *Hugo Häring: The Organic Versus the Geometric*, Stuttgart and London 1999, 186.

⁶⁹ Available online: <http://www.engelbertkremser.de/fotomontagen.html> (accessed 19 June 2018).

⁷⁰ Algimantas M. Mačiulis, "Iracionalumo apriškos XX a. užsienio ir Lietuvos architektūroje / Irrationality in Global and Lithuanian Architecture of the 20th Century", in: *Urbanistika ir architektūra* 34 (2010), no. 3, 151–160: 158.

only applied to comparatively small-scale residential houses, and the construction process itself often took years if not decades. But through the features of individuality, impracticality and eccentricity such trends can be traced right back to the Surrealist concept of uterine-like ambiguous living spaces – opposing some statements according to which the development of parametric architecture is directly linked to the introduction of CAD from the 1960s onwards.⁷¹

[33] Computer-aided design and advanced construction technology have enabled such architecture to be widespread and dominant in the contemporary world, as evident in buildings designed by Zaha Hadid. The MAXXI – XXI Century Art Museum in Rome, Italy (1998–2010) is designed in such a way that the walls of the building transform into floor, ceiling, and screen projections, and openings to the beautiful panoramas of the city. They emphasize the continuity of movement, but adapt to the desired scenario. A similar concept of fluid space underlies the design of the Vilnius Guggenheim Hermitage Museum (not realized, 2008), as well as of the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan (2007–2010; Fig. 12): E.g., the concert hall scene is enfolded with surfaces that flow out and transform into floor, walls, ceilings and balcony railings.



12 The Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan, 2007–2010, architect: Zaha Hadid Architects (photograph: Asif Masimov, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heydar_Aliyev_Center_2.jpg)

A very similar concept also informs the design of the New Century City Art Center in Chengdu, China (Zaha Hadid Architects, 2010). The roof and walls of this building transform into the main entrance arc, terraces, a stepped fountain and the pavement. Another example is the Beko textile factory conversion (into a

⁷¹ Algimantas M. Mačiulis, "Iracionalumo apraiškos XX a. užsienio ir Lietuvos architektūroje / Irrationality in Global and Lithuanian Architecture of the 20th Century", in: *Urbanistika ir architektūra* 34 (2010), no. 3, 151–160: 153–154. Also Vytautas Pliadis and Tatjana Grigorjeva, "Generatyvinio algoritmo sukūrimas ir taikymas projektuojant spraguotas plienines konstrukcijas / Creation and Application of a Generative Algorithm for Designing Rod Gap Steel Structures", in: *Mokslas – Lietuvos ateitis / Science – Future of Lithuania* 5 (2013), no. 5, 498–505: 499.

leisure centre) in Belgrade, Serbia (Zaha Hadid Architects, 2012). The wall surfaces overflow into patios, pavements and other surfaces.⁷²

[34] Despite numerous examples, fluidity can not be credited to Zaha Hadid alone – a similar concept was also applied to the Harbin Opera House in China (MAD Architects, 2015; Fig. 13).



13 Harbin Opera House, China, 2015, architectural bureau: MAD Architects (photograph: Pressimad, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harbin_Opera_House_.jpg)

The leading architect Ma Yansong claimed that

*it's shape is very organic. When I saw this, I thought this would be a strong pathway towards understanding this place. [...] I want to bring some continuity of experience. So, when they see an organic building, people think, this works well in the landscape. When they enter, I want to bring this continuity inside. When they see the auditorium, when they sit down, they'll still have this sense of continuity. When they go up the stairs, and then sit somewhere, they will still feel they are sitting in this theatre in a wetland, not somewhere else. So it's important to have continuity.*⁷³

[35] Undistinguished fluid surfaces are the key factor of HtwoOexpo, the water pavilion in Neeltje Jans Island, The Netherlands, designed by NOX/Lars Spuybroek (b. 1959) in 1994–1997.⁷⁴ The flowing interior lines of the building are reminiscent of *Art Nouveau* art and architectural decoration.⁷⁵ Since some Surrealist

⁷² See the visualisations of these projects at the official website of Zaha Hadid Architects: <http://www.zaha-hadid.com/> (accessed 29 December 2018).

⁷³ Julian Worrall, "Harbin Opera House", in: *Icon*, no. 151 (January 2016), 73-75.

⁷⁴ Editor's note: When published on December 31st, 2018, the text erroneously attributed the authorship of the HtwoOexpo interactive museum to Jan Kaplický. This false attribution was corrected by February 4th, 2019. We wish to apologize to Lars Spuybroek for this mistake.

theoretical texts reference Art Nouveau as a source of inspiration, Spuybroek's water pavilion can be connected to Surrealist aesthetical preferences.⁷⁶

[36] The same concept of continuous movement and fluidity was emphasized in the architecture of the *La Cité du Vin* wine museum in Bordeaux, France (architectural bureau XTU Architects, 2016), as the authors claimed that

*this building does not resemble any recognisable shape because it is an evocation of the soul of wine between the river and the city [...] every detail of the architecture evokes wine's soul and liquid nature: seamless roundness, intangible and sensual.*⁷⁷

Similar features were used in the Vennesla Library and Culture House, Norway (architectural bureau Helen & Hard, 2012). Here the interior walls seemingly transform into book shelves or private reading zones. It is also visible in the architecture of the Leixões Cruise Terminal in Porto, Portugal (architect Luís Pedro Silva, 2015). The whole building suggests a twisted ribbon, in which the surface transforms from walls and roof to embankment pavement. Such iconic buildings as the Graz Art Museum in Austria (architects Sir Peter Cook and Collin Fournier, 2003) and the Himalayas Center in Shanghai, China (architect Arata Isozaki, 2003) also introduced the idea of bionic ambiguous architecture with fluid surfaces.

[37] The influence of the *Endless House* can also be underlined considering the fact that it was essentially seen as a conceptual sculpture, and contemporary Deconstructivist architects are seemingly able to easily cross over to sculpture or design. Frank Gehry has designed furniture, jewellery and household items. He also designed the *Fish* sculpture in Barcelona (1992) and stated that this particular sculpture has helped to develop his trademark architectural expression based on fluid architectural forms:

*And that's when I started with this fish shtick, as I think of it, and started drawing the damn things, and I realized that they were architectural, conveying motion even when they were not moving. I don't like to portray it to other people as a complicated intellectual endeavor. Most architects avoid double curves, as I did, because we didn't have a language for translation into a building that was viable and economical. I think the study of fish allowed me to create a kind of personal language.*⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Lars Spuybroek, *The Architecture of Continuity: Essays and Conversations*, Rotterdam 2009, 251–252.

⁷⁶ David Pinder, "Modernist Urbanism and its Monsters", in: *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. Thomas Mical, New York 2005, 179–190: 185.

⁷⁷ Marco Rinaldi, *Opening of the Cité du Vin by XTU* (2016), <http://aasarchitecture.com/2016/06/opening-cite-du-vin-xtu.html> (accessed 14 May 2017).

⁷⁸ Brianna Rennix and Nathan J. Robinson, "Why You Hate Contemporary Architecture: And If You Don't, Why You Should...", in: *Current Affairs. A Magazine of Politics and Culture* (31 October 2017), <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2017/10/why-you-hate-contemporary->

Zaha Hadid also had been invited to work with jewellery, cosmetic containers and other design objects. Daniel Libeskind, in turn, also designed a sculpture, *The Life Electric*, dedicated to physicist Alessandro Volta, on the shore of Lake Como in Italy in 2014–2015 (Fig. 14).



14 Daniel Libeskind, *The Life Electric* sculpture at the shore of Lake Como, Italy, 2014–2015 (photograph provided by the author)

Conclusion

[38] The Postmodern cultural movement had several ideological aspects in common with the Surrealist artistic movement. Surrealists tried to individualize art by using what was essentially personal or uncertain: dreams or nightmares, and erotic impulses. Such themes were opposed to universal artistic principles as explored by current abstract art movements. Some Surrealist artists turned universal artistic principles (often based on Gestalt psychology) upside down and instead of exploring how the human mind creates order and structure in abstract compositions, they often explored pareidolia-like imagery and mixed or distorted paraphrases of historical art. It is known that the unconscious human mind mixes different elements of reality into illogical visions, so the Surrealists reintroduced a certain kind of eclecticism into art. Therefore individualism was a central theme of Surrealist art.

[39] Surrealist art was common to Postmodernism not only in concept, but also in form. Surrealist art often crossed the line between an elite art object and its cheap duplicate or replica. Surrealist artists often depicted the human body; however, in order to highlight the subject of angst or dehumanisation, they often produced duplicated images of the same form, or liked to depict a mutilated human body (most often mechanically repeated, broken or pierced classical statues). Such features were extremely compatible with Postmodernism, which reintroduced quotations and an appreciation of historical art, and aimed both at the intellectuals (who could appreciate high art) and the broad public.

[40] It is already widely discussed how universal artistic principles affected Modernist architecture. The artistic impact on Postmodern architecture is a less researched topic. Both movements, Surrealism and Postmodernism, were opposed to un-diversified artistic principles (Surrealist art challenged established common social norms and typical thinking, Postmodernist architecture opposed the global spread of an international architectural style) and ensured that individual thought would become the object of both art and architecture. The bond between similar ideologies presumably afforded Postmodernism the opportunity to embrace irrational artistic architectural expression.

[41] First of all, Surrealist artists tried to affect architecture with the rehabilitation of sculptural décor and the synthesis of the arts. Surrealists were reminiscent of and appreciated the highly decorative *Art Nouveau* style. These ideas, though, generally came to fruition in the Postmodern architecture of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. There are some notable examples, but the most worthy artist, who essentially used the synthesis of arts, was Sacha Sosno. His contribution to architecture (Hôtel Elysée Palace, Lycée technique de Bagneux, Library of Nice) has a distinct Surrealist expression (and explores common themes), and these are successfully applied to Postmodern architecture. Such contributions now feature rarely, but are still in use in contemporary architecture, the examples of which are such buildings as the Polygon Riviera shopping center in Cagnes-sur-Mer or the William Barak apartment building in Melbourne, Australia.

[42] Many sources claim that contemporary architectural trends are the extension of Postmodern architecture. Therefore it is possible to discover a connection between Surrealist art and 21st-century architectural trends. One distinct connection can be found in two major conceptual artworks – the *Merzbau* and the *Endless House*. Surrealist artists tried to reshape the form of personal residential spaces, so that they would lose the prefabricated nature of Modernist flats and houses. The previously mentioned artworks introduced new ideas of spontaneous, never-ending design processes and organic, fluid, ambiguous and undetermined interior spaces. At the time, both of these creations were understood more as sculptural works, despite the fact that they both tackled architectural issues. This can be interpreted as another sign of artistic synthesis so common to Surrealist architectural ideas. Concepts like the *Endless House* and the similar visionary photomontages of Engelbert Kremser could not be materialized at the time of their creation due to high costs and lack of reasonable technology. However, the same ideas were reflected by the pioneers of organic architecture (Engelbert Kremser and Kendrick Bangs Kellogg) and realized in a few eccentric individual houses mostly located in the United States (the Garcia House in Los Angeles, the Sculptured House on Genesee Mountain, the Prairie House in Norman, Oklahoma, and the Steel House in Texas). This new understanding of space could not yet be adapted to large scale objects, because the construction process of even the smallest residential houses took years or even decades to finish. Tendencies changed with the introduction of computer-aided design processes; however these processes themselves were not catalysts of "parametric" aesthetics. Such (Deconstructivist-like) expression existed

decades before, and it can be directly linked to the visionary artistic ideas of the Surrealists.

[43] Irrational expression is the predominant architectural trend nowadays, and it is possible to see a direct link between these manifestations and Surrealist concepts. Architectural fluidity (explored by the *Endless House*) is represented by such buildings as the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, the Harbin Opera House in China, the La Cité du Vin wine museum in Bordeaux, the Graz Art Museum, the Himalayas Center in Shanghai and many others. Formalistic architectural expression (explored by the *Merzbau*) is represented by such buildings as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Bundeswehr Military History Museum in Dresden. Sometimes their architectural expression is deemed controversial, but only because the freedom to design any exterior appearance just for the sake of it is still not fully embraced as a valid architectural artistic principle. Deconstructivist architecture is often deemed showy and based on superficial external expression, while the overall sculptural quality of architecture is still often associated with kitsch or novelty architecture. Such trends can be easily criticized for being self-centred, however, compared with similar Surrealist concepts they can acquire a valid conceptual background and can be understood as a natural evolution of Postmodern architecture. One can easily trace a direct link between Surrealist artistic ideas and current architectural trends. In this way Surrealist architectural ideas manifest as a conceptual basis for the development of various contemporary architectural trends.

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