

defend and glorify its advance guard of artists, no matter how advanced or how extreme, if it intends to deliver its Art from inevitable death.

6. — So we call upon the English public to support, defend, and glorify the genius of the great Futurist painters or pioneers and advance forces of the vital English Art—ATKINSON, BOMBERG, EPSTEIN, ETCHHELLS, HAMILTON, NEVINSON, ROBERTS, WADSWORTH, WYNDHAM LEWIS.<sup>3</sup>

F. T. MARINETTI

Italian Futurist Movement (Milan).

C. R. W. NEVINSON,

Art Rebel Centre (London).

## FUTURIST ARCHITECTURE      ANTONIO SANT'ELIA

11 July 1914

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Architecture has not existed since the year 700. A foolish motley of the most heterogenous elements of style, used only to mask the skeleton of the modern house, goes under the name of modern architecture. The new beauty of cement and iron is profaned by the superimposition of carnivalesque decorative encrustations that are justified neither by structural necessity nor by our tastes, encrustations that take their origins from Egyptian, Byzantine, or Indian antiquities, or from that stupefying efflorescence of idiocy and impotence that has taken the name of *neo-classicism*.

Such architectural panderings are warmly received in Italy, and the rapacious ineptitude of foreign architects is passed off as inventive genius, as the newest architecture. Young Italian architects (those who attain their originality by the clandestine perusal of trade journals) flaunt their talents in the new quarters of our cities, where a happy salad of little ogival columns, sixteenth-century capitals, Gothic arches, Egyptian pilasters, rococo volutes, quattrocento putti, and swollen caryatids take the place of a style, presumptuously assuming monumental airs. The kaleidoscopic appearance and reappearance of new forms, the proliferation of machines, the daily expansion of novel needs imposed by the speed of communications, the agglomeration of people, the demands of hygiene, and a hundred other phenomena of modern life, are no cause for perplexity to these self-avowed renovators of architecture. They obstinately persevere, armed with rules laid down by Vitruvius, Vignola, and Sansovino<sup>1</sup> along with some little publication of German architecture that has come to hand, in restamping the centuries-old image of

foolishness over our cities, cities that should instead be the immediate and faithful projection of ourselves.

Thus, in their hands, this expressive and synthetic art has become a stylistic exercise, a rummaging through a hotchpotch of old formulas meant to disguise the usual passéist sleight-of-hand in brick and stone as a modern building. As if we, accumulators and generators of movement, with all our mechanical extensions of ourselves, with all the noise and speed of our lives, could ever live in the same houses and streets constructed to meet the needs of men who lived four, five, or six centuries ago.

This is the highest imbecility of modern architecture, which is perpetuated through the mercantile complicity of the academy, that forced residence for intelligence where the young are constrained to an onanistic recopying of classical models, instead of having their minds opened to research into the limits and into the solution of that demanding new problem: *the Futurist house and city*. The house and city that should be spiritually and materially ours, where our restless activities might unfold without seeming a grotesque anachronism.

The problem of Futurist architecture is not a problem of rearranging its lines. It is not a question of finding new moldings, new architraves for windows and doors; nor of replacing columns pilasters, and corbels with caryatids, hornets, and frogs; not a question of leaving a façade bare brick or facing it with plaster or stone; it has nothing to do with defining formalistic differences between new buildings and old ones; but with raising the Futurist house on a healthy plan, gleaned every benefit of science and technology, nobly settling every demand of our habits and minds, rejecting all that is grotesque, heavy, and antithetical to our being (tradition, style, aesthetics, proportion), establishing new forms, new lines, new harmonies for profiles and volumes, an architecture that finds its *raison d'être* solely in the special conditions of modern living and its corresponding aesthetic values in our sensibility. Such an architecture cannot be subject to any law of historical continuity. It must be as new as our state of mind is new.

The art of building has been able to evolve through time and pass from one style to another while maintaining the general character of architecture unchanged, because in history there have been numerous changes of taste brought on by shifts of religious conviction or the succession of political regimes, but few occasioned by profound changes in our conditions of life, changes that discard or overhaul the old conditions, as have the discovery of natural laws, the perfection of technical methods, the rational and scientific use of materials.

In modern life the process of consequential stylistic development comes to a halt. *Architecture becomes dissevered from tradition. One begins again, by necessity, from the ground up.*

Calculations of the resistance of materials, the use of reinforced concrete and

iron, exclude “architecture” as understood in the classical and traditional sense. Modern structural materials and our scientific concepts absolutely do not lend themselves to the disciplines of the historical styles, and are the chief cause of the grotesque aspect of modish constructions where we see the lightness and proud slenderness of girders, and the slightness of reinforced concrete, bent to the heavy curve of the arch, aping the stolidity of marble.

The formidable antithesis between the modern world and the old is determined by everything that was not previously there. Into our lives have entered elements whose very possibility the ancients could not have suspected; material contingencies have crystallized, mental attitudes have arisen, with thousandfold repercussions: first, the formation of a new ideal of beauty, embryonic still and obscure, but already stirring the masses with its fascination. We have lost the sense of the monumental, the massive, the static, and we have enriched our sensibility with a *taste for the light, the practical, the ephemeral, and the swift*. We feel that we are no longer the men of the cathedrals and ancient moot halls, but men of the Grand Hotels, railroad stations, giant roads, colossal harbors, covered markets, glittering arcades, reconstruction areas, and salutary slum clearances.

We must invent and rebuild our Futurist city like an immense and tumultuous shipyard, active, mobile, and everywhere dynamic, and the Futurist house like a gigantic machine. Elevators must no longer hide away like solitary worms in the stairwells, but the stairs—now useless—must be abolished, and the elevators must swarm up the façades like serpents of glass and iron. The house of cement, iron, and glass, without carved or painted ornament, rich only in the inherent beauty of its lines and modeling and yet extraordinarily *ugly* in its mechanical simplicity, as big as need dictates and not merely as municipal zoning rules permit, must rise on the brink of a tumultuous abyss: the street itself, which will no longer lie like a doormat at the level of the thresholds, but plunge several stories deep into the earth, gathering up the traffic of the metropolis, connected for necessary transfers to metal catwalks and high-speed conveyor belts.

*We must abolish the decorative.* We must resolve the problem of Futurist architecture without cribbing from photographs of China, Persia, or Japan, nor stultifying ourselves with Vitruvian rules, but with strokes of genius, equipped only with a scientific and technical culture. Everything must be revolutionized. We must exploit our roofs and put our basements to work, depreciate the importance of façades, transfer questions of taste out of the field of petty moldings, fiddling capitals, and insignificant porticos, into the broader field of the *grouping of masses on a grand scale and plans of vast disposition*. It is time to have done with monumental and funereal commemorative architecture. We should blow sky-high all those monuments, pavements, arcades, and flights of steps and we should dig out our streets and piazzas and raise the level of the city.

I OPPOSE AND DISDAIN:

1. The pseudo-architecture of the Austrian, Hungarian, German, and American avant-garde;
2. All classically solemn architecture, hieratic, theatrical, decorative, monumental, graceful, or pleasing;
3. The preservation, reconstruction, reproduction of ancient monuments and palaces;
4. Perpendicular and horizontal lines, cubic and pyramidal forms—static, grave, oppressive, and absolutely foreign to our newest sensibility;
5. Use of materials that are massive, bulky, durable, outdated, and expensive.

I AFFIRM

1. That Futurist architecture is the architecture of cold calculation, bold audacity, and simplicity; the architecture of reinforced concrete, iron, glass, textile fibers, and all those replacements for wood, stone, and brick that make for attaining the maximum of elasticity and lightness.
2. That Futurist architecture is not, for all that, an arid combination of practicality and utility, but remains art, that is, synthesis and expression.
3. That oblique and elliptical lines are dynamic, that by their very nature have an emotive power a thousand times superior to that of perpendiculars and horizontals, and that there can be no dynamically integrative architecture that does not make use of them.
4. That decoration, as something superimposed on architecture, is absurd and that *only from the use and disposition of raw, naked, or violently colored materials can the decorative value of Futurist architecture be derived.*
5. That just as the ancients drew their inspiration in art from the elements of the natural world, so we—materially and spiritually artificial—must find our inspiration in the new mechanical world we have created, of which architecture must be the most beautiful expression, the most complete synthesis, the most effective artistic integration.
6. That the idea of architecture as the art of organizing the forms of buildings according to preestablished criteria is dead.
7. That architecture must be understood as the attempt, to be pursued with freedom and boldness, to harmonize man and his environment, that is, to render the world of things into a direct projection of the world of the human mind.
8. That from an architecture so conceived we must not expect the birth of habitual lines and forms, because Futurist architecture will be fundamentally short-lived and transitory. *Our houses will last less time than we do. Every generation will have to make its own city anew.* This constant renewal of the architectural environment

will contribute to the victory of *Futurism*, which is already being affirmed in *Words-in-freedom*, *Plastic dynamism*, *Music without continuous steady rhythm*, and the *Art of Noises*<sup>2</sup>—Futurism, for which we fight with no holds barred against passéist cowardice.

## THE ANTINEUTRAL SUIT: FUTURIST MANIFESTO

GIACOMO BALLA

11 September 1914

Humanity has always dressed itself with **modesty, fear, caution, or indecision**, forever wearing the mourning suit, the cape, or the cloak. The male body has been habitually diminished by **neutral** shades and colors, degraded by black, stifled by belts, and imprisoned by folds of fabric.

Until now men have worn suits of static colors and shapes, draped, solemn, heavy, uncomfortable, and priestly. They were expressions of timidity, melancholia, and **slavery**, a negation of the muscular life, which was suffocated by the antihygienic passéism of heavy fabrics and boring, effeminate, or decadent half-colors. The mood and rhythms of **saddening peace**, funereal and depressing.

### TODAY we want to abolish:

1. All of the **neutral** “cute,” faded, *fanciful*, murky, and humiliating colors.
2. All pedantic, professorial, and Teutonic shapes and hues. Designs with stripes, checks, and **diplomatic little dots**.
3. Mourning suits, which are not even fitting for gravediggers. The heroic dead should not be lamented but rather commemorated by us in red clothes.
4. The **mediocrity** of moderation, the so-called good taste and harmony of colors and forms that curb our enthusiasm and slow down our pace.
5. The symmetrical cut and **static** lines that tire, depress, sadden, and bind the muscles; the uniformity of awkward lapels and all creases. Useless buttons. Starched collars and cuffs.

We Futurists want to liberate our race from every **neutrality**, from fearful and enervating indecision, from negating pessimism and nostalgic, romantic, and flaccid inertia. We want to color Italy with Futurist audacity and risk, and finally give Italians joyful and bellicose clothing.