

aiaVT



The aiaVT newsletter is published by AIA Vermont,
the Vermont Chapter of the
American Institute of Architects.

Executive Director: Hanne Williams, Hon. AIAVT
aiaVT@madrivert.com

1662 Mill Brook Road
Fayston, Vermont 05673
p 802.496.3761
f 802.496.3294

aiaVT to update its website

steven clark, aia

AIAVT will be replacing its website in early December. We plan to have a quick presentation of the new site at the annual meeting.

The current aiaVT site has proven to be a very useful and an immediate way to communicate with the membership and the public. The amount of traffic has been gradually and constantly growing, since we launched the site in December 2002. Typically, the site is viewed by about 1300 different computers each month. There is a consistent annual pattern, highest traffic in March (1700 this year) and lowest in July (1200 this year), since we opened the site.

The initial reason the aiaVT board contemplated a new web site was a need to create a Learning by Design page for that new aiaVT program. The Learning by Design program received funding to further its mission of introducing design into local schools. One of their goals was a web page to announce their presence and resources to members and the public.

While the current site was designed to allow us flexibility in editing the content of the site, it was also designed to be very simple and had the disadvantage of being difficult to expand. We saw little reason to worry about expanding the web site back then. It also was designed in 2002, a generation (or more) in digital technology years.

cont.

**“Soft Modernism -
The World of the Post-Theoretical Designer”**
Mike Grimshaw

Link:

<http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=418>

“Architecture is either the prophecy of an unfinished society or the tomb of a finished one.”

— Lewis Mumford, 1934. [1]

Of all the varying impacts of postmodernity (whatever we can or cannot agree that to mean) one of the most ubiquitous has been the preponderance of Lifestyle as ‘a life of style’ — the “Wallpaper”ization [2] of the proposed environment we are meant to inhabit. The stylist, the designer, the imitator has sought to create a modernism within postmodern eclecticism. Yet this is a modernism that only embraces the totalitarianism internal to a mis-read Nietzschean-derived will to power and order.

While it could be argued that postmodernity was the triumph of theory over substance, it was a reversal of a Marxist derived modernism: now all that melts becomes solid in

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11.06:1

vermont access rules change

The Vermont Access Rules that govern access to buildings for people with disabilities are being updated to incorporate changes in the federal law concerning transportation facilities such as bus stations or airports, and to incorporate changes in State law concerning housing. The rules will now include more specific language from federal law to assist users who may not have easy access to federal law. The annex to the rules is being expanded to include information from the Federal Fair Housing Act, special provisions for children's use, specifications for ramp design and additional technical assistance. Clarification is provided for the use of elevators and platform lifts, the design of adaptable and visitable dwelling units, as well as the process to obtain a variance from the rules. Consumer information on adaptable features will now be required to be posted on site.

Please take the opportunity to review proposed rules. The Access Board is preparing to begin the administrative rulemaking process to update the rules. The Board is offering to meet with interested parties to hear preliminary comments on the rules prior to their next scheduled meeting in November. If you are interested in meeting with the Board prior to rulemaking please contact me for the time and date of the meeting. Please also get in touch with me by phone or email if you have questions or comments on the proposed rules.

Robert Howe, Assistant State Fire Marshal
(802) 479-7566
rhowe@dps.state.vt.us

aiaVT welcomes

Israel Smith, *aia of burlington*

The aiaVT board was generally happy with the graphic look of the current site, but wanted to upgrade the flexibility and general sophistication of the content we could present for our members and the public. We accepted a proposal from ecopixel, a web design and hosting service in Burlington.

Paul Hansen, ecopixel's owner, offered an open source web site management system which includes a large number of tools to construct web pages and a large variety of content types, giving us far greater flexibility in what we, ourselves, can create for the site. He is providing graphic design of the pages to give the site uniform graphics and visual organization. Open source is a unique internet-based software concept where the software is free and open for all to use and alter as they see fit. It also means independent programmers develop new tools and improve and update existing ones almost continuously. These upgraded and new tools can then be and installed on the site for our use.

There will be an updated look and somewhat different navigation system on our new site. In addition to a top menu, similar to the current site, we will have a left menu of sub-categories to more quickly find things. Both of these menus and their content can be changed however we wish to fit our needs. The new site will also be far more accessible to visitors relying on audio web browsing ability.

The graphics and color schemes will be new as well. We will be using aiaVT Awards, Entries and, we hope, member drawings as graphic images on nearly all pages. These images will change each time a page reloads. We ask any members, who are willing to share interesting and bold graphics, to send them to us to display on the web site. I mention bold because they will be quite small, similar in size to the current member listing images. Currently, we have awards photos and a couple drawings from various sources. The more different kinds of images we have, the more interesting the site will be. All images will, of course, include creation and ownership credits.

cont.

the air. Like melting substances, disorder became the form of representation. Like a melting substance, that which seemed ephemeral became attached, sometimes organic, sometimes as collage but always, and this is crucial, as a form of ornamentation. To understand the ethic of modernity too often the populist theory only goes back as far as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's gnomonic "less is more" (a statement that he seems to have appropriated from Peter Behrens).[3] This has resulted in what I term an aesthetic of lifestyle minimalism, the utterance as clichéd byline and style-fascist principle. This is not to launch a Wolfen attack upon Mies or modernism[4] but to rather state the need to place Mies and his reductionist modernist aesthetic within a wider context.

To do so, reference needs to be made to a lecture that laid out the principles for what became the modernist ethic: Adolf Loos' "Ornament and Crime." First given in 1908,[5] Loos' claim was that unnecessary ornamentation was a sign of arrested cultural

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11.06:2

Business Interiors and Steelcase offer Webinar to aiaVT members: *'Designing for Sustainability Through Lifecycle Thinking'*

On Thursday, December 7th at 2:00 all AIA-VT members are invited to register for a free Webinar from Steelcase titled "Designing for Sustainability through Lifecycle Thinking." The online seminar course explores how the buildings industry impacts global environmental issues; and how we can impact those issues in a positive way by re-examining phases of the product lifecycle. The presentation will be given by Allan W. Smith, VP of Global Environmental Strategy and Programs for Steelcase. The 1 hour presentation is worth 1 CEU credit for designers or 1 Learning unit for Architects. Registration is free for all AIA-VT members by following this link: <http://scwebinar.edcmag.com>

Business Interiors, Vermont's only Authorized Steelcase Dealer, will be offering a webinar viewing and late-luncheon at their Williston Showroom for those interested in participating in roundtable discussions on the topic of Green-Building Design and Sustainable Product Design.

If interested in joining this luncheon, contact Owen Milne at Business Interiors, 802.862.0434 x 7121 or via email at omilne@binteriors.com. Availability for the luncheon and roundtable discussion is limited and will be determined on a first-come-first-served basis.

Save the Date

aiaVT Annual Meeting & Design Awards Presentation will be held at The Kirk Alumni Center at Middlebury College on Wednesday, December 6th beginning at 6:00 p.m. more details to come.

The new site will also have expanded content compared to the current site. Since we can add new pages whenever we want, all aiaVT content can be available on the site. We will eventually have archives of all design awards and entries since 2003, when we started keeping digital images and documents. Our Events calendar will also include an archive of past events.

Generally, the organization of the site has not changed a lot, despite our efforts to try and improve it. We have tried to move some of the most heavily used pages to more easily found locations. A good example of this is the Job Bank, typically the third most visited page on the site. Events and the home page are the first two, in that order.

The newest pages on the site will be our Outreach Programs. aiaVT has started several new ones in the last couple years including Learning by Design, Construction, and the Society of Design Administrators. We will also have online forms for member listings, program registration and reservations to reduce some of the e-mail Hanne currently has to send.

As with all computer-based technology, the limits of what we can do with the new site are beyond our reach, since we are still learning how it works. That is probably a good thing since we, most likely, don't know what we will want in just a few years.

development, the expression of a primitive outlook, the signal of a criminal tendency or mark of a degenerate aristocrat. This resulted in unnecessary ornamentation being labelled a sign of deviancy. For Loos, the child or "the Papuan" may be free to scrawl and decorate because they had not yet 'come of age' in either a physical or cultural sense. Those however who lived in a mature, civilized culture, those who had achieved adulthood (culturally and developmentally (6)) would only unnecessarily disorder their world through deviance.

Crucially, this disorder, this unnecessary ornamentation included God. While Nietzsche had proclaimed the death of God some twenty years earlier and Marx had made him an opiate, Loos now made him an unnecessary ornament. God was no longer the great architect, the one who ordered the world. Rather, in an act of Gnostic reversal, God was seen at He who disordered humanity. This disorder can be traced back to Babel (Genesis 11: 1-10), the biblical briefing paper of modernist architects. The International Style was to be built out of the bricks of a scattered Babel, being an attempt to yet again build with one voice, one building that would reach to heaven. The flat top Miesian skyscraper had no need of the cathedral's spire pointing to heaven, its horizontal plane symbolized an attainable transcendence — not the finger pointing to the beyond. Modernism is an act of secularism, an attempt to order that which God was seen to disorder, an act of humanism over and against religion. As such modernism is both utopian and progressive -- and necessarily secular. It is the secular apocalypse, the attempt of living in an immanent kingdom of the absent God — as Thomas Altizer, prominent 1960s proponent of the death of God would claim:

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11.06:3

Includes case studies on projects that have achieved significant savings from commissioning.

COMMISSIONING GUIDE FOR BETTER BUILDINGS IN VERMONT IS NOW AVAILABLE!

The purpose of this Guide is to:

- Highlight the benefits of Commissioning for new construction and existing buildings
- Plan for an effective commissioning process
- Help you promote your commissioning services

Commissioning for Better Buildings in Vermont

The Guide provides valuable information for:

- building owners
- architects
- engineers
- maintenance staff
- anyone involved in a construction or renovation project

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www.encyvermont.com
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Efficiency Vermont
your resource for energy savings

new resource for design and construction professionals: commissioning guide now available from Efficiency Vermont

Efficiency Vermont has announced the availability of a new publication, Commissioning for Better Buildings in Vermont. Developed as a resource for designers, construction project managers and building owners, the publication provides an introduction to building commissioning, with a focus on new commercial buildings and major renovations. Available at no cost, the guide defines commissioning as a highly beneficial quality-assurance process that supports the success of a project team by verifying that complex, integrated building systems and equipment are installed and perform to meet project requirements. The process is designed to identify costly deficiencies in increasingly sophisticated building systems.

According to the guide, commissioning in the design phase can identify problems early. A recent study of hundreds of commissioned projects found that commissioning lowered construction costs by 4-9%, reduced change orders by 87%, and contractor callbacks by 90%. Energy savings found through the process often pay for commissioning costs in less than a year and continue to yield substantial savings over a building's life.

"This guide provides a comprehensive view of commissioning and shows how it meshes with the traditional design and construction process," says Jay Pilliod, a technical contributor to the guide and Director of Business Energy Services at Efficiency Vermont. "The benefits of commissioning are significant for the quality of design and construction and to an owner's bottom line. We are very pleased to provide this resource to the professionals designing, constructing and renovating Vermont's high-performance buildings."

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If there is one clear portal to the twentieth century, it is a passage through the death of God, the collapse of any meaning or reality lying beyond the newly discovered radical immanence of modern man, an immanence dissolving even the memory of the shadow of transcendence.[7]

Alltizer states that out of this has "come a new chaos" of Nietzschean forecast nihilism. Yet Alltizer was writing after the fact.

The rise of The International Style, [8] of Modernist Architecture from the 1920s onward plays out the first part of Mumford's aphorism. The banishing of ornament, the signal of God as deviance, the flat roof of an immanent transcendence, the purist white wall all sought to banish the chaos of not only fin de siecle ostentation and the horrors of World War One but was also an attempt to embrace the new hope of technology and a futurist

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Commissioning for Better Buildings in Vermont also provides a range of additional resources for those interested in, or engaged in, the commissioning process. Also available at no cost from Efficiency Vermont are two guides to constructing high-performance commercial buildings in Vermont and the northeast. The High Performance Design Guide, written for design professionals, and Benefits of High Performance; Building Owner's Guide, lead you through the process of designing and building commercial structures that are energy-efficient, cost less to operate, have a higher property value and a lower impact on the natural environment.

For free copies of these publications, contact Efficiency Vermont toll-free at 1-888-921-5990. Additional information is available at www.encyciencyvermont.com.

inspired machine age.[9] Loos' title was willfully mistranslated by those of a purist sympathy in the France of L'Éspirit Nouveau as "Ornament IS Crime".[10] It is this act that changed the nature of modernism. Those that followed the Purist manifesto came, in the non-theoretical implementation, to asset a form of sub-Nietzschean nihilism. The Loosian aesthetic is one of less; the purist aesthetic was one of imposed loss. Loos looked to banish the unnecessary, a reduction in the name of culture and civilization, the assertion of a humanist, modern, progressive ethic. The purist in contrast came to reduce for reduction's sake, a machine aesthetic in that technology was the raison d'être. The purist ethos was that of white purity (and control). The tying together of both whiteness and of a nascent International Style famously came together as a collective vision of a purist-influenced future in the exhibition at Wiessenhofsiedlung, outside Stuttgart in 1927. Sixteen architects were allowed to create a small estate of exhibition homes where "the only restriction was that they use flat roofs and white exterior walls." [11] As Wigley notes "the idea that modern architecture is white was successfully disseminated to an international audience." [12] This whiteness was not only the banishing of ornament but also the expression of a new religio-aesthetic principle. In 1922 Theo van Doesberg had declared: "...the coming style should spell out "religious energy" but not "belief and religious authority." [13]

Le Corbusier's purist re-statement was more apocalyptic:

The religion of beautiful materials is now no more than the final spasm of an agony.[14]

By 1930 van Doesberg was willing to claim white as the highest phase of development of humanity and whiteness as onto-theological:

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11.06:5



aiaVT is edited by Andrea Murray, AIA. Published views are the author's and not necessarily the views of AIA Vermont or any other organization.

Please send articles, notices, letters, and graphic submissions to:

Andrea Murray, AIA
Bread Loaf Corporation
Architects, Planners and Builders
1293 Route 7 South
Middlebury, Vermont 05753
802-388-9871 ext. 239
amurray@breadloaf.com

AIA Vermont reserves the right to edit articles for available space and determine appropriate content prior to inclusion. Submissions must be received by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

Vermont Green Building Network hosts upcoming residential green building workshop series

VGBN invites you to learn the latest experience in building green homes in Vermont. VGBN in conjunction with Building for Social Responsibility (BSR) will be co-presenting a series of workshops during the Fall and Winter of 2006-7 at various sites around the state. There will also be a public networking/reception following the workshops and a chance to submit posters of Green Home projects in Vermont. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FLYER FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

A one-day advanced residential green building training geared towards builders, remodelers, architects, interior designers, and other interested professionals. This in-depth training fully prepares professionals for VBG/LEED for Homes certification and introduces participants to Residential Green Building and the Vermont Builds Greener (VBG)/LEED for Homes Rating System. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FLYER FOR MORE INFORMATION.

When:

November 8: Waterfront Building, Burlington, VT December 5: Marlboro Technology Center, Brattleboro, VT December 12: Norwich Public Library, Norwich, VT January 31: RK Miles Building Supply, Manchester, VT February 21: Assoc. of General Contractors of VT, Montpelier, VT March 7: Middlebury, VT All workshops will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

cont.

WHITE This is the spiritual colour of our times, the clearness which directs all our actions. It is neither grey nor ivory white, but pure white.
WHITE This is the colour of modern times, the colour which dissipates a whole era; our era is one of perfection, purity and certitude.
WHITE It includes everything.
We have superseded both the "brown" of decadence and classicism and the "blue" of divisionism, the cult of the blue sky, the gods with green beards and the spectrum.
White pure white.[15]

As such, white represented an ontological tabula rasa on which the new modern, utopian future of humanity was to be written. The clarity of vision was built into being. Unmarked by a past of ornamentation, white buildings were to be a new Jerusalem of

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11.06:6

**Cost:**

\$250, including workbooks, if pre-registered.

\$275, if postmarked within 14 days of each scheduled workshop or at the door.

\$25 discount to BSR, VGBN and USGBC members with paid 2006 memberships.

POSTER COMPETITION:

Designers, Builders and Homeowners are invited to submit posters of Vermont Green Home projects. All posters will be displayed at the Residential Green Building Workshops at 6 locations around the state. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FLYER FOR MORE INFORMATION.

For information on how to edit your subscription, including unsubscribing, please go to the "Email Lists" page on the <http://www.vgbn.org> web site.

AIA-VT Members

Building for Social Responsibility, the Vermont Green Building Network and Efficiency Vermont would like to offer AIA-VT Members a \$100 discount on each registration fee for the Burlington green building workshop. We are holding the first workshop at the new Main Street Landing building at Lake and College on the Waterfront in Burlington. In addition to the full-day workshop, we will also be touring Seventh Generation's LEED certified office space at lunch and the Vermont Green Building Network will host a Networking Reception with a poster competition after the workshop. We hope you can join us.

the immanent secular kingdom. In her novel on the attempt to build a modernist utopian state in Israel, Linda Grant's narrator, Evelyn Serf, sums up perfectly this utopian dream in her description of the Bauhaus-inspired white city, Tel Aviv:

I was in the newest place in the world, a town created for the new century by its political and artistic ideologues: the socialists and the Zionists, the atheists and the feminists who believed with a passion that it was the bon ton to be in the forefront of social progress and in a place where everything was new and everything is possible, including a kind of rebirth of the human spirit.[16]

Caught between the Loosian-derived challenge to ornamentation and the modernist utopian hope of a blanket, international, progressive whiteness was what became known as Miesian modernism. This had the reductionist humanism of the Bauhaus, the

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11.06:7



Shoreham Housing Project receives smart growth endorsement

*barry lampke-
Development & Communications Director
Vermont Forum on Sprawl*

Burlington – The Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative is pleased to announce it has endorsed JBP Properties, LLC’s plan to construct housing on School Street in Shoreham. The Collaborative provides its Smart Growth Housing Endorsement to housing projects that incorporate smart growth principles and practices.

“We have been pleased by the support and input from townspeople who have helped us design this addition to Shoreham’s center,” says Jeremiah Parker, President. “Our goal is to provide a quality home constructed by local trades people.”

“These homes will be right in the village, a short walk from the school, post office, medical clinic, library and recreational facilities,” says Noelle MacKay, Executive Director for the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, coordinator of the Collaborative. “This project is a wonderful example of how developers can invest in the heart of a community. We’re pleased to endorse this project.”

The plans call for seven single-family homes adjacent to the town green. VHFA financing is available for qualifying buyers. Construction is expected to begin in November.

The Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative provides its Smart Growth Housing Endorsement to projects that:

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craftsmanship of the latent stonemason [17] and the utopian, progressive desire to order anew. At the centre of Mies’ vision was Baukunst, the art of building, the builder’s art, the art of construction. Mies saw himself as first and foremost a builder, not an artist or artisan. At the centre of his vision lay simplicity, order, discipline:

The entire striving of our epoch is directed toward the secular. The efforts of the mystics will remain episodes. Although our understanding has become more profound, we will not build cathedrals... We do not value the great gesture but rationality and reality [18]... Baukunst is the will of an epoch translated into space; living, changing, new. Not yesterday, not tomorrow, only today can be given form. Only this kind of building is creative. Create form out of the nature of the tasks with the methods of our times. This is our task.[19]

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11.06:8

- Maintain the historic development pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside;
- Develop compact, mixed-use centers at a scale appropriate for the community and the region;
- Enable choice in modes of transportation;
- Protect the state's important environmental, natural and historic features, including natural areas, water quality, scenic resources, and historic sites and districts;
- Strengthen agricultural and forest industries and minimizes conflicts of development with these industries;
- Balance growth and the availability of economic and efficient public utilities and services;
- Support a diversity of viable businesses in downtowns and villages, including locally-owned businesses; and
- Provide for housing that meets the needs of a diversity of social and income groups in each community.

· To date, nine projects have received the Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative's Smart Growth Housing Endorsement.

The Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative is a coalition of Vermont housing, business and environmental organizations working together to promote state policies and local practices that encourage smart growth. The Collaborative provides technical assistance to help Vermont communities plan for growth. It is also active in efforts to create a state growth centers program, address big box store proposals and explore alternatives to the Circumferential Highway. Visit www.vtsmartgrowth.org to see endorsed projects and learn more about the Collaborative.

What happened within the modernist ethos and aesthetic was that the International Style (inflected in a pursuit of purity represented by whiteness and underscored by the immanent, rationalist presentism of Mies) attempted to build the new Jerusalem in a manner that could manifest itself beyond context. The universal, international, modernist secular city was to be a city of order and discipline. Glass towers, the new secular cathedrals, reflected not the glory of the transcendent God but in their reflective planes, the glory of their human makers. The erasure of unnecessary ornamentation was rebuilt as the secular context in which modern society was to rethink. If the house had become, as Le Corbusier said, a machine for living in, then Mies had turned it into a machine for thinking in: Mies' buildings, before they are functional shelters or even objects of "aesthetic contemplation", are sources of "spiritual sustenance" — that is, of food for the mind... For Mies, as for Le Corbusier, the house was a machine à méditer. But where for Le Corbusier it was merely a machine to meditate in, for Mies it was a

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11.06:9

It's NESEA Time Again!

“This conference is a must-attend event for anyone working to implement positive environmental change through green buildings and renewables. It is an efficient way to get technical and practical knowledge.”

Sarah Hammond Creighton
Tufis Climate Initiative

“Our relationship with NESEA has been one of the most fruitful of all those we've been engaged with.”

Greg Watson
Massachusetts Technology Collaborative

“We received a number of great inquiries at the booth.”

Kimberly Rodriguez
Keyspan

“I exhibit at many trade shows, but NESEA-organized conferences always deliver the specific audience I need to reach.”

Stephen Thwaites
Thermotech Windows

NESEA's building energy conference & trade show returns to boston's seaport world trade center

MARCH 13 - 15, 2007

Building for a Changing Climate

The Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) invites you to save the date for BuildingEnergy07, the Northeast's premier conference and trade show for renewable energy and green building professionals. If you're committed to the practice of renewable energy and environmental sustainability, this is where you belong!

This conference has grown steadily every year by leaps and bounds as more demands are made to incorporate green techniques into building practices. Be among over 2,500 participants learning how to benefit from green building techniques and products.

BuildingEnergy07 features in-depth workshops and sessions by more than 150 experts on a wide range of topics - climate change in the U.S. and abroad, carbon stabilization, high performance buildings—including green hospitals, adaptive re-use, large scale renewables, daylighting, near net zero energy buildings, wind power, green design, integrated water systems, solar applications, financing green projects, green campus and institutions, human health issues.... and much more.

Building for a Changing Climate - BuildingEnergy07 is rising to new heights by expanding on the green building principles it has developed and shared over the

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machine to meditate with.[20] The Miesian aesthetic turned the whole city into a machine for thinking in and with: a thinking machine whose immanent weight sought the triumph of the human spirit over the holy.

By the 1960s western society had begun to attempt to live out the prophecy of the erasure of unnecessary ornament. The rise of secular man, the secular city, the cry (some eighty years after the fact) that "God is Dead" occurred against an urban backdrop that had already built these sentiments into being. For architecture the question became, what next? While Charles Jencks has located and dated the death of modern architecture to the blowing up of the Pruitt-Igoe Housing scheme in 'St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 p.m. (or thereabouts)',[21] this was more a symbolic purist expression similar in its destructiveness to the misquoting of L'Espirt Nouveau. Rather we need to go back to the late 1960s when Robert Venturi was attacking Miesian

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11.06:10



past 32 years. Come to hear international leaders in the field of climate change. Experts who influence U.S. and European policies will share the most up-to-date studies, information, and solutions that can make a real difference.

Public Forum: Wind Power in the Wild. Boston's NECN NewsNight anchor, Jim Braude, returns to moderate another provocative forum on Tuesday evening, March 13. Panelists include: Bill McKibben, author; Michael Kellett, RESTORE; and Eleanor Tillinghaust, Green Berkshires, Inc. FREE.

Trade Show -Hundreds of the latest green products are featured in the largest green building products and services show in the Northeast.

Whether you exhibit in the trade show or register as an attendee, you'll gain valuable information and contacts to help your business not only grow, but GROW "GREENER."

Who Should Attend: Architects, Engineers, Builders, Building Systems Designers, Climate Change Professionals, Developers, Institutional Facility Managers, Investors, Policy Makers, Real Estate Professionals, and Students in Related Fields. See the opportunities, the technologies and the programs that are shaping the culture and business of tomorrow.
Visit www.buildingenergy.nesea.org.

Join us in BUILDING FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE!

To exhibit in the Trade Show click here:

<http://buildingenergy.nesea.org/exhibit.php>

Sign up by November 3rd to be included in the Invitation to Attend (mailed to 50,000).

On-line attendee registration opens December 20, 2006.

BuildingEnergy07- Building for a Changing Climate
<http://www.nesea.org/>

grid and order, famously claiming "More is not less" and "Less is bore"[22] (what Tom Wolfe has termed bringing "modernism into its scholastic age"[23]). The move out of order, or rather beyond or after order — a post-order — is what lies at the heart of postmodernity. And crucially it found its most potent symbol in another tower.

Loos' aesthetic was strongly influenced by his time in America in the late 1890s. In fact he prophesized in his lecture "architecture" that "...the American worker has conquered the world. The man in overalls." [24] The American worker that had conquered Loos was Louis Sullivan who had covered his essentially proto-modernist buildings with rococo-esque ornamentation, essentially playing one off against the other, as if marking a transition point. [25] The young Adolf Loos was inspired by Sullivan and often cited him as an influence. What Loos noted was the iconoclastic nature of Sullivan's ornamentation. For to place the presence of ornamentation on top of the absence of the grid of the proto-skyscraper is to draw attention not so much to the decoration as to that

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11.06:11

which has been so decorated. Sullivan, by separating ornamentation from the building beneath opens up what, in Loosian dialectics, could be termed a secular space: a gap that became developed into the liminal universality of whiteness, or steel and glass. For once no longer intrinsic, decoration can be discarded as unnecessary. This gets played out in the sense that the whitewash (and indeed the grid of steel and glass) becomes what can be termed a liminal presence, occurring between structure and decoration, a liminality that is "neither simply bodily or abstract." [26] The other element that Sullivan's ostentatiously decorated modernism revealed was that while the underlying structure seemed to represent some universality, the applied ornamentation not only seemed to locate the building in a particular place and time, but also to date it. In other words the ornamentation stopped the structure from being modern "just now", becoming instead, contextually "back then." [27]

The Loosian-derived modernist aesthetic therefore sought towers whereby their presence alone was necessary ornamentation. Less is More for Mies because less signals more immanent presence, you see the immanent truth, you are not opiated by ornamentation.

Yet postmodernism, being after-modernism in a dialectical progression (a Hegelian progress?) sought "More as More." The fact that ornamentation had been deemed unnecessary made it what was now necessary. What brought postmodernism to public awareness in both physical form and through the pages of TIME magazine [28] (itself the apotheosis of modernist information) was Philip Johnson's AT & T Building. Just as it was ex-Barthians (who had stressed the complete transcendence of God) such as Altizer and Hamilton [29] who tended in the face of secular society to become 'death of God-ers' so it was the über-Miesian disciple, Philip Johnson who signalled his departure from the flattop grid of Miesian orthodoxy with his Chippendale-top ornamentation of the AT&T building in New York in 1978 (finished 1984). This heralded a new state of play. Here was ornamentation, decoration, postmodern eclecticism, the pointing up to heaven, yet in a manner that suggested we can remake the past and its traditions, in a personal, ironic, eclectic manner. No longer the flat-top Miesian slab, but neither the finger pointing to heaven, here the slanted pediment echoes pinching fingers, a hand pulling the transcendent down, a hand grasping for what may just be out of reach. A pointer that there was more than just the horizontal plane, yet what there is perhaps still out of reach...

Here was the return of ornamentation almost 20 years before Peter Berger recanted his secularization thesis. [30] If Loos had deemed God an unnecessary decoration back in 1908, it took over half a century for this to become sociological orthodoxy. Architecturally there had been almost forty years of building absence into being. Loos had meant less which signalled the loss of God, religion and transcendence. The modern mind was, it seemed, rational, logical, in sway to secular reason and scientific proofs and principles. Order and discipline as Foucault (Discipline and Punish 1975) attempted to show lay at the heart of the modernist aesthetic and sense of progress. Berger's promotion of a secularization thesis promoted a new secular orthodoxy subscribed to not only within sociological circles but also (interestingly) increasingly within liberal Judeo-Christian circles. The secular apocalypse was expected to occur not as some cataclysmic event but rather as a gentle withering away, a disenchantment, a slow withdrawal, the Arnoldian permanent low tide of Dover Beach. God and religion would be the preserve of the unenlightened and the deviant, the intellectually weak and the fundamentalist. To be modern would be to live without transcendence. Yet, increasingly, secular ideas attempted to exist in a postmodern environment. Less attempted to express itself in a world of More is More. Here something interesting occurred both architecturally and in the wider realm of human spirituality — yet at cross-purposes. What occurred was the triumph of the internal world. For in postmodern design

and architecture while the outside may have been eclectic, the inside was often the promotion of an austere, commodified minimalism. You entered the postmodern (literally through the door) and found yourself in the world of not less but no ornament. Purist sensibilities had triumphed at last. In the world of the individual however the reverse was happening. The purist sensibility of the radically secular individual was under challenge from the rise of "spirituality", that eclectic, commodified mix and match postmodern ethos where spiritually you could mix epochs, cultures, religious traditions — and invent new ones! You too could be the spiritual equivalent of the AT&T Building or that postmodern favourite, the Bonaventure hotel. [31]

Nowadays, as the globalized world seems to be uncritically embracing that which it calls postmodernism, as we see the return of 'unnecessary ornamentation' in piercing and tattoos, in the rise of spirituality and fundamentalism, architecture has conversely thrown off the ornamentation of postmodernism. In the last few years we have seen the beginnings of a move to what is termed 'soft modernism'. This is seen as a humanised update of the modernist box, perhaps a referencing to the order of the past, the enclosure of space, but now a space for living in. Order, control, discipline — but humanised, not sterile. [32] A casual modernism. [33]

Yet something more (or rather less) is happening. Modernity hinged on two broad axes — reduction (less/loss/order/control) and progress. Postmodernism acted as the polar opposite: excess (eclecticism/ornament/chaos/diversity) and relativism. If Modernism strove for an International Style, postmodernism promoted the vernacular. [34] If modernism sought an end yet to come, postmodernism stated the end has come and so let's celebrate its demise in carnival.

To attempt to understand the rise of soft modernism we perhaps need to think in terms of a Hegelian dialectic where modernity is the thesis, postmodernism its antithesis and soft modernism its synthesis — perhaps. For what is happening is a modernism without theory, without context, that exists as style alone. The reduction of the minimalist interior often occurs in the homes of those with eclectic forms of transcendent spiritualities. The lack of ornamentation occurs in the homes of those who are themselves unnecessarily ornamented. The reference point for this soft modernism is not some future utopia, nor some computer age futurism but rather a retreat from modernist progress in the fetishization of a retro modernism. Authenticity becomes a commodity of the simulacra. We have finally reached the Benjaminesque apotheosis: the pre-postmodern 'work of art' has finally lost its aura after the postmodern age of mechanical reproduction.

The life that is referenced in soft modernism, the minimalist interior, in a retro modernism is lived looking backwards, not forwards. This is not modernism but rather, kitsch. The stylist, the second rate draftsman, the architect who copies has ended up presenting the holographic museum. The reduction is now from the eclectic present, the retreat from vernacular to an unthought-out imposed retro-modernism that is dislocated in time and space. Less is now the loss of presence in the present. Like the narrative of Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* (1991) life is (almost) lived in reverse.

The stylist of minimalist, retro-Modernist interiors; the draughtsman/architect of humanised modernism (somewhat of course an oxymoron) now live out the second part of Mumford's aphorism. They live their lives in perpetual recurrence of an authenticity believed to lie on the other side of postmodernity. The clinical nature of their interiors, the attempt to resurrect the past as the new progressive, the promotion of Lifestyle and the style of life as worth living and emulating results in a dislocation in both time and space. It is not modern, it is not postmodern, it is merely inauthentic.

cont.

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It is also important to note what I term organic technological monumentalism as the other, very public expression of the inauthentic after postmodernity. Retro modernism is primarily a domestic expression (that is, 'the house' and or/ 'living space') of the pursuit of a technologized existence and as such: "...the ultimate statement of separation from normal humanity [where] the very rich and the very self-aware can live a life that is in itself a form of performance art, merely by dressing a certain way and inhabiting a certain space." [35]

Yet what is not noted is the close association retro modernism has with such newly iconic works as Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. These new, titanium clad, computer enabled/designed/generated (the jury is still out as to the degree the software really is "a tool not a partner," [36] not "a generative device but ...an instrument of translation" [37]) public/corporate buildings are themselves a form of performance art that unintentionally mimic Louis Sullivan's proto-modernist facades in that the focus is on the ornamented exterior as decoration to cloak the real intent of that it decorates. The inauthenticity of such buildings is that the public interest and debate is far more concerned with the exterior of the building than what it actually exhibits. In this sense the Bilbao museum is actually the exhibition of itself — (or indeed of Gehry + computer) — being ultimately a presence with no interior meaning. It is apposite that situated outside is Jeff Koons' kitsch classic topiary Dog as both the building and the dog represent the inauthentic excess of kitsch and the collapse of depth. For if retro-modernist domestic space mimics an imagined past dislocated to some cyborg future, and so stops it being modern, Computer Aided Design (CAD) dislocates the present from both history and the vernacular. Such retro-futurism is already dated and categorized — what Charles Jencks terms "Bilbaoism." [38]

Jencks' emphasis in this term is architecture that appears to be inherently self-referential. Yet such CAD emphasis actually shifts the reference from the prototypical building such as 'Bilbao' into the possibilities of software and new materials that reference therefore the exterior event as pure ornamentation. This exterior 'presence' occurs in a form that in its organic rhetoric actually creates a type of replicant cyborg architecture that is as minimalist (and inauthentic) as the return of the modified square white box.

While Jencks might have allocated the term 'ecstatic architecture' to such forms of architecture that appear so excessive as to induce "a trance-like state in the onlooker," [39] the ecstasy is here linked to a typical postmodern New Age/ neo-Romanticist focus on 'nature' as the location of the authentic. So Jencks refers to such 'non-linear/complexity architecture' as "closer to nature in its infinite variety" [40] with its computer-generated basis of fractals as 'self-similar, not modernism's same-similar.' [41]

Yet what 'organic' architecture really represents is the dislocation of 'nature' into a hyper-real transcendence of pure technology as un-natural presence. 'Nature' now becomes 'contemporary' (and so immediately dated and located) and as such signals a de-humanization of the built environment far more than the Miesian skyscraper or the square white box ever did — or does. For the modernist representations were attempts to locate the secular, humanist plane as the basis of authority and identity. The banishing of unnecessary ornament was articulated as a sign of hope, freedom and authenticity. 'Bilbaoism', in its pursuit of the artificial representation of the 'organic' as something that is identifiable — and desirable — as pure surface representation, is the architectural equivalent to Genetic Modification. Nature gets remade by technology into the representation of the essentialist forms of 'nature' - yet within an unreferenced oxymoronic purist manifesto. As Hans Ibelings notes of what he terms 'Supermodernism':

Today's minimalism, incidentally, is purer than ever before, thanks to improvements in technology and materials. [42]

So if the Miesian modernists located the expression of 'the contemporary' within human experience (i.e. the death of God and secular existence) what 'Bilbaoism' does is dislocate 'the contemporary' to replicant versions of techno-organics, where humanity itself becomes 'unnecessary ornamentation'. As such, the presence of such techno-organic shells is the flip side of the loss of presence of retro-modernism. CAD 'Bilbaoism' completely collapses function into form — or rather into the representation of technology as 'necessary ornament'. In other words all we get is hyper-presence where More is Less is All: the dismissal of Loss as irrelevant.

While Mark C. Taylor sees such moves as the evidence of an 'emerging network culture' [43] whereby, especially in Bilbao "form becomes complex" [44] and the modernist grid becomes "dynamic" and "organic," [45] there is an essentialist mis-reading occurring here that takes network technology as the location of 'the real'. So just as cathedrals pointed to a normative reality believed to exist external to secular experience, so too does CAD 'Bilbaoism' - only now technology replaces (the pre-modern) god as that which exists independently of humanity.

The challenge of Mumford is to seek what comes after the tomb. The minimalist retro tomb is empty, while in 'Bilbao' the 'tomb' may as well be empty... Do we worship the empty tomb?