

Lecture Notes

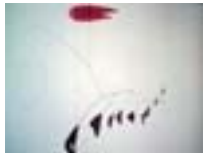
Syllabus 2/23 - 1. MONDRIAN AND DE STIJL AND 2. EARLY MODERN ARCHITECTURE

CALDER:

- Calder - an American who lived a lot in Paris. Influenced in 1920's by Constructivism's implications of movement – time and space -- & started making mechanized, kinetic sculptures. Made “The Circus” – mechanical wire circus performers. MONDRIAN came to see Calder's Circus and loved it.
- Calder came to Mondrian's studio and admiring his work suggested that Mondrian should add physical movement to his work to which Mondrian responded with emphatic horror, “My paintings are fast enough”



- **01_ White Frame – 1934 - Calder**
 - Actually has a motor and physically moves. Combines relief sculpture & painting and movement



- **02_ Lobster Trap and Fish Tail – 1939 - Calder**
 - Mobile – Calder inspired by Rodchenko's Constructivist hanging concentric circles. 3 main elements hung together so wind moves them. Calder also made “stabiles” next (stationary sculptures)

1. MONDRIAN AND DE STIJL:

- **Mondrian** - most innovative founder and creative force behind ideas of DeStijl – a style which would influence all aspects of art and architecture from WW I to the 50s.
- **Mondrian was the most invested in deStijl as a profound philosophy**
- **deStijl = “the style.”** This group felt EVERYTHING should follow this style (buildings, paintings, clothing, decorative arts of all kinds). Everything should follow this new modern design, and contribute to making a better, more utopian world.



- **04_The Red Tree – 1908 – Mondrian**

- Not in book. Mondrian's early style.
- Graduated from Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam, Holland. Influence of Van Gogh very obvious here.



- **03_The Flowering Apple Tree – 1912 - Mondrian**

- Not in book but important to talk about.
- After going to Paris in 1912, you can see how he is influenced by new styles of fauvism and cubism.
- Simplifying, breaking down with analytic cubism creating grid



- **06_Color Planes in Oval - 1913-14 – Mondrian**

- One step more nonobjective from flowering apple tree
- Beginning to think in terms of elemental geometric relationships between simple colors and horizontals and verticals
- Experimented with oval
- Influenced by Kandinsky's book The Spiritual in Art, and Theosophy
- **Develops aesthetic theory about why horiz and vert are so important:** they are the basic elements characterizing the sum totality of the universe which is composed of polar opposites which are kept in balance (a yin/yang, positive/negative type balance). Through nonobjective form, he would not just **represent** this balance, he would make the paintings **become** the actual balance
 - **Dynamic Equilibrium** = a way to describe the harmonic balance. Opposing horiz and verts have a tension between them, but they balance each other with their dynamism
 - **Pure Plastic Reality** = through nonobjective form, he would not just **represent** this balance, he would make the paintings **become** the actual balance. The form IS the content.



➤ **07_Rhythms of a Russian Dance – 1917 -**

VanDoesburg (not in book)

- Mondrian return to Holland to find a like mind in Van Doesburg.
- Trying to find a mathematical system of order and clarity as a response to chaos that was going on in rest of the world
- Confined to horiz and vert lines and simplified color



• **05_Composition in Color A – 1917 – Mondrian**

- Mondrian's equivalent expression to VanDoesburg's Rhythms of a Russian Dance.
- Trying to find a mathematical system of order and clarity as a response to chaos that was going on in rest of the world
- Still had too many dimensions – sideways, up and down, forward/backward movement. Goal was simple polar opposites so it failed with too many dimensions. But he WAS successful getting a sense of dynamic equilibrium = sense of balance and motion.



➤ **08_Cafe L'Aubette – Van Doesburg and Arp**

- Designed mid 1920s
- Abstraction Creation Group – wanted to get away from ideologies and just do abstract
- Radical plan for cafe/cinema -- Laid out in grid pattern with booths and chairs. New way of organizing space.
- Problem: diagonals! Mondrian devastated because of diagonal, and left Holland and turned back on deStijl never to return.



➤ **10_Construction of Volume Relations – 1921 – Vantongerloo**

- Sculptor from Belgium who came to Holland through Paris.
- Use of ‘Construction’ not accidental
- Rodchenko did similar sculpture
- Made according deStijl principles: horizontals, verticals



• **09_Tableau II – 1921-25 - Mondrian**

- Same as 11. Trying to arrange elements with sense of movement but it's not moving. There's balance that IS the content.



• **11_Composition with Red, Blue and Yellow – 1930 - Mondrian**

- Pure Plastic Reality – Mature Mondrian – What's it about? Mondrian tried to achieve dynamic equilibrium thru his means: primary colors & black and white; verticals and horizontals.
- **Dynamic equilibrium:** Huge field of red tries to push out, but there's just enough yellow and blue and black and white to keep red from leaping out. That's the dynamic part.
 - **Pure Plastic Reality:** The fact that these parts are creating this relationship means they are embodying this dynamic equilibrium themselves. It's not a representation; it actually IS a microcosm of the way the universe is put together. The FORM IS the CONTENT. It's the reality of the plastics (balance and harmony of the elements).



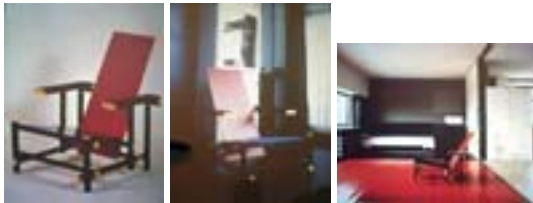
12_Broadway Boogie Woogie – 1942-43 – Mondrian

- Mondrian couldn't take World War II so he went to Paris and then moved to America early 1940s
- Manhattan embodied everything he loved. Horiz and vert grid, dynamic, everything moving but always kept in balance
- Discovered jazz, blues and boogie woogie music. Loved it, perhaps for its mathematical similarity to his art



13,14,15,16_Schroeder House – Utrecht – 1924-25 – Rietveld

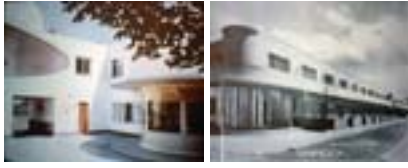
- Exterior no longer pictured in textbook.
- Designed according to principles of deStijl
- **Part of what enabled this kind of new modern construction was new technology.** After Chicago fire of 1871, Adler and Sullivan (architects) led the way in rebuilding with new technology from France and Gr. Britain. Rather than solid masonry or wood, they used reinforced iron skeleton c/o it had greater tensile strength. Enabled them to build straight up without flying buttresses and load bearing walls.
- **Rietveld has made a Mondrian painting in 3 dimensions!**
- **He's conceived architecture according to deStijl**
 - clean, clear, primary colors
 - as a series of free, open spaces
 - horizontals and verticals (grid)
 - walls can be moved around aesthetically



17,18,19_Red and Blue

Chair – 1917 – Rietveld

- Chair – aesthetics outweigh the comfort factor
- No truth to materials here. Altho they did use wood, it was painted (hardwood floor, and the chair itself).
- Altho tilted to form diagonal, Rietveld more ok with diags (Mondrian was the idealist and stickler on this point)
- One of the most famous, important objects from deStijl



20, 21_ Workers' Housing Estate –

Holland 1924-27 – Oud

- Oud a little different in his concerns from others
- Looks bleak to our eyes, but when conceived it was a wonderful new utopian concept to improve the lives of the people
 - Modern technology (re-enforced steel skeleton enabling hanging non-load bearing curtain wall)
 - Repetition of identical units
 - Mass produced with new materials
 - Economical to build and for large numbers of workers to afford
 - Neat, efficient, all the same = democratic. Influenced by Socialism and social reform.

2. EARLY MODERN ARCHITECTURE:

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) an architectural apprentice at Adler and Sullivan (firm who were at the forefront of rebuilding Chicago after 1871 fire. Modern skyscrapers are sometimes referred to as “Chicago Style” because this is where skyscrapers were born). Worked on Japanese pavilion in 1893 Chicago World Exposition. Influenced by Japanese style. Left firm to forge out on his own.

Wright was a lousy engineer. All his homes are now sinking, or leaking or compromised in some way.



22,23_ Ward Willits House – 1902-3 –

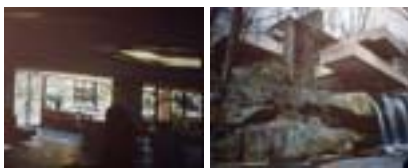
Wright

- Designed 1903. Infl. by Japanese architecture
- Japanese understood the principle organization of nature.
- Japanese had sense of **organic architecture: in harmony with surroundings** and materials the way things in nature do. Truth to the nature of materials important to Wright.
- Early example of his architecture leading to Prairie Style. Emphasizes long horizontal planes with vertical planes shifting between them, similar to lay of the land in Illinois = the prairie.



24,25,26,27,28_Robie House, Chicago – 1909 - Wright–

- Robie House is quintessential **PRAIRIE STYLE** architecture.
- Wright, 1908, famous treatise: The Cause of Architecture, where he lays out his theories of architecture:
 - Understanding of natural relationships so important to Japanese art and aesthetic.
 - Truth to nature! If you use wood, don't paint it, stain it, so it relates to environment
 - Each home should be as individual as its owner. (While he "tailored to the individual", there was still always his unmistakable "Wrightness" in his houses)
- Interior decoration, he says, should only be used as appropriate to the structure. Superfluous design and decoration is ridiculous.
- Wright often centers space around fireplace. Ceilings often low.
- Cantilevers made possible by new technology – re-inforced steel
- Dining room – all furniture designed by Wright. Everything must harmonize
- Windows – decorative motif based on local plant form abstracted and repeated



29, 30_Kauffman House – Falling

Water – Bear Run, PA - 1934-37 - Wright

- Built over a spring in rock formation on hill
- Staircase in center of house where you can walk down to spring
- Indigenous materials harmonize. Cantilevers pick up on levels of rocks and organization of environment.

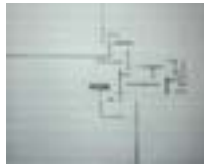


31,32,33_Guggenheim Museum – 1957-59 - Wright

- Organic architecture based on chambered nautilus
- Museum designed for urban site. Stands out AGAINST the environment this time
- Circular interior ramps curve upward.



- **34_Model for Glass Skyscraper – 1919 – van der Rohe**
 - Hallmark of **INTERNATIONAL STYLE** = originality
 - Never built; model for utopian concept for architecture; uses all-glass sheathing suspended on a central core
 - Van der Rohe very controlling, doctrinaire: “less is more” attributed to him



- **35,36_ Brick country House – 1923 – drawing and plan – van der Rohe**
 - **INTERNATIONAL STYLE** in domestic architecture (vs. skyscraper)
 - **Units essentially rectangular/square are arranged in flexible space with moveable, non-loadbearing walls**
 - **Floorplans are reminiscent of Rhythms of Russian Dance (see #07). International Style owed such a debt to the ideas of deStijl and Mondrian, Vantongerloo, and vanDoesberg**



37_Workshop Wing (Shop Block) – Bauhaus – Dessau – 1925 – Gropius

- **EPITOME OF INTERNATIONAL STYLE:**
 - **Curtain walls**
 - **Non-load bearing walls**
 - **Form follows function:**
 - **Windows allow natural light and air**
 - **Simple and efficient; economy of space**
 - **Interior space flexible and moveable to be changed if needed**
 - **Repetition of identical units**
 - **Exterior form reflects construction of interior**
 - **Allows for integration of exterior space with interior space; integration with surroundings**



- **38 Lakeshore Drive Apts – Chicago – 1951 – van der Rohe**
 - Twin bldgs built according to **International Style** principles:
 - simplicity, less is more, efficiency and form; exterior glass reflects sky so it integrates with surroundings, regular geometric units.
 - Called International Style because it's everywhere



- **39, 40 Johnson House – New Canaan CT – 1949 – Phillip Johnson**
 - Johnson's own private house – even had underground rooms
 - Trying to realize his theories and made house of glass



- **41 Domino House (drawing) – 1914 – LeCorbusier**
 - French architect associated with Utopian International Style
 - More efficient way to house people



- **42, 43 Villa Savoye - Poissy, France – 1928-30 – LeCorbusier**
 - **House is epitome of International Style**
 - Wrote treatise on architecture: “5 points of new architecture” provides elementary outline of the INTERNATIONAL STYLE: (p.334)
 1. **Pilotis** – pillar supports rising through open space of house
 2. **Free Plan** – non load-bearing interior walls create free flowing space
 3. **Free Facade** – wall as non-supporting skin/sheath
 4. **Horizontal strip window** running breadth of facade
 5. **Roof Garden** – flat roof as an additional living area
 - New idea of car as ultimate machine parking under house
 - Integrates inside and outside space



- **44_ Unite d'Habitation – Marseilles, France – 1947-52 –**

LeCorbusier

- Building commissioned for enlightened, utopian concept
- Self-contained little city
- Less is more; clean; geometrical; efficient
- Unsuccessful c/o people wanted to venture out and also wanted to furnish apartments with their own pieces that did not comply with Corbusier's rigidly clean aesthetic



- **45_AEG Turbine Factory – Berlin – 1908-9 – Behrens**

- German Architect independently wealthy
- Hired to re-design German Electric Co.
- **INTERNATIONAL STYLE**
 - Big glass windows to make better for workers inside
- Drawing on Roman basilica/greek temple
- **First LOGO/Corporate Identity: Gesamt Kunstwerk (total artwork)**
 - Roman style typography adapted and patented as a unique signature style
 - AEG in a honeycomb design (worker bees, factory etc.)