

Concepts of Modern Design: A Study of Art and Architecture Synergies in Early 20th Century Europe

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Abstract : Until the end of the 19th century, European painting dealt almost exclusively with the realistic representation of objects and landscapes, as can be seen in the work of realist artists like Gustav Courbet. Architects of the day typically made reference to and recreated historical precedents in their designs. The curriculum of the first architecture school in Europe, The Ecole des Beaux Artes, based on the study of classical buildings, had a profound effect on the profession. Painting exhibited an increasing level of abstraction from the late 19th century, with impressionism, and the trend continued into the early 20th century when Cubism had an explosive effect sending shock waves through the art world that also extended into the realm of architectural design. Architect /painter Le Corbusier with "Purism" was one of the first to integrate abstract painting and building design theory in works that were equally shocking to the architecture world. The interrelationship of the arts, including architecture, was institutionalized in the Bauhaus curriculum that sought to find commonality between diverse art disciplines. Renowned painter and Bauhaus instructor Vassily Kandinsky was one of the first artists to make a semi-scientific analysis of the elements in "non-objective" painting while also drawing parallels between painting and architecture in his book Point and Line to plane. Russian constructivists made abstract compositions with simple geometric forms, and like the De Stijl group of the Netherlands, they also experimented with full-scale constructions and spatial explorations. Based on the study of historical accounts and original artworks, of Impressionism, Cubism, the Bauhaus, De Stijl, and Russian Constructivism, this paper begins with a thorough explanation of the art theory and several key works from these important art movements of the late 19th and early 20th century. Similarly, based on written histories and first-hand experience of built and drawn works, the author continues with an analysis of the theories and architectural works generated by the same groups, all of which actively pursued continuity between their art and architectural concepts. With images of specific works, the author shows how the trend toward abstraction and geometric purity in painting coincided with a similar trend in architecture that favored simple unornamented geometries. Using examples like the Villa Savoye, The Schroeder House, the Dessau Bauhaus, and unbuilt designs by Russian architect Chernikov, the author gives detailed examples of how the intersection of trends in Art and Architecture led to a unique and fruitful period of creative synergy when the same concepts that were used by artists to generate paintings were also used by architects in the making of objects, space, and buildings. In Conclusion, this article examines the extremely pivotal period in art and architecture history from the late 19th to early 20th century when the confluence of art and architectural theory led to many painted, drawn, and built works that continue to inspire architects and artists to this day.

Keywords : modern art, architecture, design methodologies, modern architecture

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