

Walter Gropius, From “Reply to Workers Council for Art Questionnaire” (1919)

V. Art and state are irreconcilable concepts. They are by their very nature opposed. The creative spirit, vital and dynamic, unique and unpredictable, refuses to be limited by the laws of the state or be the straitjacket of bourgeois values. And if the state uses force to interfere with the free development of such `abnormal' creators it is actually cutting its own life's blood supply. Thus our age is suffocated by a world of shopkeepers, is trapped in a quagmire of materialism. The real task of socialism is to destroy the evil demon of commercialism in order that the creative spirit of the Volk might once more flourish. The mentality of our nation has already been profoundly shaken by the recent disaster and after the total collapse of the old life it has been made so sensitive that it might make Germany more receptive to the new spirit than any of the other European nations. For war, hunger, and pestilence have jarred us out of our obstinacy, they have aroused us out of our inertia and self-satisfaction, they have finally awakened our sleepy and lazy hearts. Through pain we have been taught once again to feel. Feeling is, after all, the source of inspiration, feeling leads to finding, to that creative power which organizes and structures, in short -- in the broadest sense - to a passion for building. And this passion for building, for structure this architectural spirit - is the natural antithesis to the world of shopkeepers, to the spirit of disintegration and destruction which is the deadly enemy of all art.

VI. Art exhibitions are the misbegotten creatures of an art-starved Europe. Since art is dead in the actual life of civilized nations it has been relegated to these grotesque morgues and there prostituted. Today a work of art no longer occupies a well-defined and hallowed place in the midst of the Volk, it is free as a bird and has become merely a luxury object in the salons of the bourgeoisie. An art exhibition is its warehouse and market. The Volk leaves empty-handed and has no conception of a living art. Therefore, in place of the old salon art exhibition, let us have traveling art shows in temporary, brightly painted huts or even tents, shows featuring not only paintings and sculptures but also architectural models, large and small or stereo and cinematic presentations of architecture. The task of future art exhibitions is to show painting and sculpture in the context of architecture, to show how they function in buildings and thus to make art once again living and vital.