Purism and the Object-type: Tradition and Modernity, Art and Society

by

Jamie Morra

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Thesis Sponsor:

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Date

Lynda C. Klich
Signature

December 18, 2017
Date

Maria Antonella Pelizzari
Signature of Second Reader
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... ii

2. List of Illustrations ........................................................................................................... iii

3. Introduction. *Purism: The Origins of The Object-Type* ................................................. 1

4. Chapter I. *The Object-Type in Painting: A Search for Constants* ................................. 16

5. Chapter II. *The Object-Type in Architecture: Stability through Stylization* ............... 38

6. Chapter III. *The Object-Type from Painting to Film: Fragment of the Real* ............... 57

7. Epilogue: *Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau* ....................................................................... 77

8. Bibliography ...................................................................................................................... 81

9. Illustrations ....................................................................................................................... 88
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1 Susan L. Ball, Ozenfant and Purism: The Evolution of a Style, 1915-1930 (PhD diss., Yale University, 1978), iii.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Amédée Ozenfant, *Bottle, Pipe, and Books*, 1918  
   Oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 23 5/8 in. Musée de Grenoble, France

2. Amédée Ozenfant, *Church at Andernos*, 1918  
   Pencil on paper, 13 ¾ x 19 ¾ in. Collection Larock-Granoff, Paris

   Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 28 ¾ in. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris


   Oil on canvas, 39 1/3 x 31 8/12 in. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

   Oil on canvas, 50 7/12 x 75 3/4 in. Kröller-Muller State Museum, Otterlo

7. Fernand Léger, *Contrast of Forms*, 1913  
   Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 32 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York


13. Amédée Ozenfant, *Flask, Guitar, Glass and Bottles on a Green Table*, 1920
   Oil on canvas, 32 x 39 1/3 in. Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland

   Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 28 7/12 in. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris


   Oil on canvas, 31 7/8 x 39 ¼ in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York

17. Amédée Ozenfant, *Accords*, 1922
   Oil on canvas, 51 ½ x 38 ¼ in. Honolulu Academy of Arts

   Oil on canvas, 57 5/8 x 35 1/8 in. Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland

19. Amédée Ozenfant, *Doric Vases*, 1925
   Oil on canvas, 51 ¼ x 38 ¼ in. Collection Larock-Granoff, Paris

   Oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 25 ½ in. Indianapolis Museum of Art

21. Fernand Léger, *The Mechanic*
   Oil on canvas, 45 ½ x 34 ¼ in. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

22. Fernand Léger, *Siphon*, 1924
   Oil on canvas, 25 ½ x 18 in. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

23. Charles Édouard Jeanneret, perspective of a *Dom-ino* module, 1915
   India ink and black and colored pencil on printing paper. *Le Corbusier before le Corbusier*, 214.


30. *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

31. *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

32. *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

33. Fernand Léger, *Men in the City*, 1919
   Oil on canvas, 57 3/8 x 44 11/16 in. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

   Oil on canvas, 91 x 117 ½ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art


37. *Charlot*
   Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
   MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

38. *Katherine Murphy*
   Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
   MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

39. *Hat*
   Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
   MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

40. *Bottles*
   Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
   MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

41. *Triangle*
   Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

42. *Kiki de Montparnasse* (grin)
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

43. *Washerwoman*
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

44. *Pistons*
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

45. *Gears*
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

46. *Kiki de Montparnasse* (head rotating)
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

47. *Mannequin legs*
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

48. *Charlot* (in pieces)
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.


52. *Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau*, 1925, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

53. Fernand Léger, *The Baluster*, 1925
Oil on canvas, 51 x 38 ¼ in., Museum of Modern Art, NY

INTRODUCTION

Purism: The Origins of The Object-Type

There is no work of art without a system.
Amédée Ozenfant, 1920

Purism, founded by Amédée Ozenfant (b. Aisne, France 1886-1966) and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (b. La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland 1887-1965), was one of many avant-garde art movements in France that responded to the devastation of World War I. The seeds of Purism were planted by Ozenfant who first mentioned the term in his 1916 essay “Notes sur le cubisme” (Notes on Cubism) in the last issue of the short-lived wartime periodical L’Elan (Vitality). Aligning Purism with Cubism, he wrote, “Cubism has assured itself a place of true importance in the history of the plastic arts, because it has already partly realized its purist aim of cleansing plastic language of extraneous terms...CUBISM IS A MOVEMENT OF PURISM.”2 “Notes sur le cubisme” highlighted the historical precedence of Cubism while also critiquing what Ozenfant viewed as its inadequacies, such as its illegibility and elitism.

A year after the publication of “Notes sur le cubisme,” Ozenfant and Jeanneret met and quickly formed an alliance fueled by their shared interest in a reappraisal of artistic production in post-war society, marked indelibly by the creation of technologies brought on by the war. A convergence of industry and science led to innovations such as the assembly line and the widespread use of industrial materials, which caused a rapid

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maturation of warfare. Thus, the same advances that propelled society towards
tmodernity, were the ones that led to the great loss of life. Furthermore, everyday life was
greatly changed by advances in transportation and the spectacle of consumer society,
which consisted of a huge increase in marketable goods available to the individual.

In addition to the attendant aesthetic conditions of postwar Paris, where Cubism
was still a specter, artists also had to contend with the sociological conditions of a
changing urban environment. Modernity was a world described by subjective excess and
there were radically different artistic responses to the speed, fragmentation, and
alienation of urban life. Some artists embraced the hybrid culture merging men and
machines that was briskly forming. Others reacted against this hastened pace, where
everything seemed too fast, too much, too often. The Purists, straddled this divide by
embracing both technology and history. Purism wished to present itself as idealistic
movement that legitimized the formal qualities of industrial production by depicting
objects representative of French manufacture and culture as subject matter. This
proposition soon pitted Purism as an accessible post-World War I counter to Cubism, an
art for all. As Kenneth Silver notes for the Purists, “The ways and means of Cubism are
meant to look out of date: instead of indeterminacy, simultaneity, the mutability of time
and space, the Purists will substitute something stable and durable.” In this period of
artistic and nationalistic renewal, the Purists yearned to create order out of chaos, to make
the fractured whole again.

To cement their new alliance, Ozenfant and Jeanneret wrote together “Après le
cubisme” (“After Cubism”) for the catalogue of the first Purist exhibition at Galerie
Thomas in Paris from December 22, 1918 to January 11, 1919. This year marked both the

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end of the war and the beginning of an incredibly influential and fruitful relationship between the two artists that would last nearly ten years. France, devastated economically and psychologically by the tremendous loss of life and infrastructural damage wrought by the war, tried to find a way forward that would honor historical developments while embracing modern industry. Purism began as a vehicle for its founders to expound on their theories about society through a visual language that they hoped would promote peace and harmony. It quickly expanded into a campaign against obfuscation in art, evinced by the numerous treatises the Purists published that envisioned an artistic movement that could fuse progress with the past.

“Après le cubisme” continued the claims made in “Notes sur le cubisme” and furthered the argument that Purism was a pursuance of standards. Clearly defining the artists’ shared beliefs, it proclaimed:

PURISM expresses not variations, but what is invariable. The work should not be accidental, exceptional, impressionistic, inorganic, contestatory, picturesque, but on the contrary general, static, expressive of what is constant…PURISM fears the bizarre and the “original.” It seeks out pure elements with which to reconstruct organized paintings that seem to be made by nature itself.⁴

This declaration outlined the main tenets of Purism, a movement grounded in an intellectual dogma that called for the representation of actual objects whose meanings were self-evident and devoid of the “obscurity” found in Cubist canvases.⁵ Ozenfant and Jeanneret derided Cubism as an “ornamental art—simple paintings by good painter-decorators smitten with form and color—[which] has become the object of an abstruse

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⁵ Goodman, “Après le cubisme,” 138.
religion.”6 For them, art would no longer be just a reflection of society or a decorative gesture, but one that was associative and relational, based on math and the symmetry of nature; through Purism, they argued, Cubism would be completely purified of any ambiguity.

With “Notes sur le cubisme,” Ozenfant had clearly positioned Purism both as a by-product of, and threat to the legacy of Cubism. “Après le cubisme” in-turn served as a Purist primer, defining its terms of production as an analysis between subject matter and formal modes of representation. The latter manifesto acknowledged the alienation of the modern worker from the object of his toil. As it read,

Mass production methods imposed by the machine effectively hide from the worker the final result of his efforts. However, thanks to the rigorous programs of modern factories, manufactured products are so perfect that they give labor teams cause for collective pride…This collective pride replaces the old artisanal spirit by elevating it to more general ideas…Current evolutionary trends in work lead through utility to synthesis and order.7

This statement suggests that in their canvases they hoped to laud the products of labor as a celebration of the conquest of the industrial over the artisanal. The war had made standardization imperative, and in turn the subject of Purist art would be the manufactured object, in all its moral and visual purity.

In October 1920, almost a year after publishing “Après le cubisme,” Ozenfant and Jeanneret founded the journal L’Esprit Nouveau (The New Spirit) as an outlet for their Purist ideals. It stands as the most cohesive joint effort of the two artists. Contributors included the Belgian writer Paul Dermée, as editor in its initial issues, and well-known

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7 Goodman, “Après le cubisme,” 142.
friends and associates such as Victor Basch (a French politician and philosopher), Maurice Raynal (a French art critic), George Waldemar (a Polish art critic), Ozenfant and Jeanneret themselves (using pseudonyms as a collective entity and individually, Ozenfant appears under six different names and Jeanneret three). Twenty-eight issues of *L’Esprit Nouveau* were published between 1920 and 1925. The contents consisted of reviews and articles covering topical issues on the visual arts and beyond, in the fields of science, medicine, transportation, aviation, music, and more. *L’Esprit Nouveau* also featured advertising for products ranging from domestic to sporting-goods.

Most importantly for this thesis, *L’Esprit Nouveau* highlighted through the images reproduced therein what Ozenfant and Jeanneret denominated the *objet-type* (object-type), a strategic modality of image making that outlined a proscriptive vocabulary of stylized and standardized mass-produced objects. Object-types became the primary subjects—and building blocks—of Purist artistic production. With these objects, which joined tradition and technology, Ozenfant and Jeanneret sought to render classic values of balance, harmony and order. A focus on standardization was the cornerstone of Purism, which Ozenfant and Jeanneret were attempting to incorporate into the language of the avant-garde. Despite the fundamental importance of the object-type to the understanding of Purism, this concept has been sparsely acknowledged and not studied in great depth. Through a focus on the object-type, this thesis draws a corollary between the social and aesthetic concerns of the Purists. It explores the diverse employment of the object-type, highlighting its adaptability and elaborating its role in Purism’s aesthetic and social program.
The object-type is one part in the triad of Purist logic. “Après le cubisme” included what is likely the first allusion to the concept of the object-type, stating, “Here is a room; I try to define the interesting plastic elements that a painter might extract from it: I note the patterned wallpaper, the pieces of wood in the tables, some pieces of paper on the table, a potted palm, a knife, a violin; there is also a seated woman.”

This statement describes the setting and subject matter of Purist painting at its earliest stages. Ozenfant and Jeanneret used this text to underscore their goal of creating a plastic language that would extol the virtues of a new era, one that would construct order through a rigorous use of established models. Their three-part blueprint for creating this language has been outlined by Susan Ball, Ozenfant’s biographer: “The most important factors were (1) the means by which to procure the sensation of mathematical and lyrical order, (2) the choice of subject—the “Purist element”—and the development of this “object-type,” and (3) the method for rendering the chosen elements.”

This formula leaves little room for ambiguity. For an artwork to be deemed “Purist,” it had to meet these criteria. The work had to especially adhere to the second tenet, since the object-type set Purism apart from techniques of the movement’s avant-garde contemporaries.

The object-type can be more specifically defined as a standardized unit made of reproducible elements, and its vocabulary included both objects such as containers (vases, glasses, bottles, plates, pipes), string instruments (violin, cello, and guitar) and architectural components such as cornices, columns. Taking cues from industrial design, modern commodity culture, and classic still-life compositions Ozenfant and Jeanneret

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8 Goodman, “Après le cubisme,” 155.

established the object-type from recognizable and reproducible objects, as a prescriptive approach to picture making. In addition to its formal significance, the object-type held a social orientation for painting. Given the objects’ streamlined visual appearance, they became the embodiment of machine-age labor praised by the artists. The Purists thus wielded the object-type, a vocabulary of succinct and legible elements, as both a creative tool and a symbol of technological progress and enduring ideals.

The object-type is typically mentioned in passing by key Purism scholars, who have noted its philosophical and formal import in the larger Purist movement, but have not examined these tenets in the development of the object-type itself, nor its employment in diverse mediums.\textsuperscript{10} Purism has been examined and acknowledged as a movement of import in the modernist canon, but discussions of the object-type have glossed over its use as a tool for shaping a view of modernity as a social construct. Calling upon the work of Purism scholars throughout, this thesis foregrounds the importance of the object-type as a formal and conceptual tool. The object-type emerges as an ideological readymade used by Ozenfant and Jeanneret to frame their writing and painting practices as analogous developments. As the following chapters will illustrate, the object-type had far-reaching applications that spread beyond the picture plane into the mediums of architecture and film.

Although Ozenfant is typically given due credit for the nascent phase and formation of Purist ideals, other scholars have examined the origins of the object-type

\textsuperscript{10} The most recent scholarship on Purism has been done by Françoise Ducros, Carol S. Eliel and Tag Gronberg who compiled and edited the most comprehensive exhibition of Purist work at LACMA in 2001, and published the accompanying catalogue, \textit{L'Esprit Nouveau: Purism in Paris, 1918-1925}. There does not exist any singular scholarship on the idea of the object-type.
through Jeanneret’s interest in early modernist German design movements.\textsuperscript{11} Reyner Banham suggests that Jeanneret’s visit to Germany in 1910 to study the Werkbund may have had a great influence on the formation of the object-type.\textsuperscript{12} There, Jeanneret was exposed to the ideas of Hermann Muthesius, Bruno Paul and others who were establishing the \textit{Typisierung} (which loosely translates to a general concept of types) and \textit{Typenmöbel} (type-furniture, which consisted of fabricated units used to construct a range of modernist furniture) as new modes of production made possible by modern manufacturing innovations.

Jeanneret went on to develop a distilled understanding of the object-type that he later applied to his architectural projects. In \textit{L’Art décoratif d’aujourd’hui (The Decorative Art of Today)}, published in 1925,\textsuperscript{13} he outlined his belief in the type as both model for production and extension of the human body, and he defined the decorative arts as aestheticized “tools” for fulfilling needs that are common in the daily life of all humans. This reasoning demonstrates Jeanneret’s understanding of the object-type as a reaction to basic human needs, underscoring its social significance. Stanislaus von Moos eloquently summarizes the object-type from this perspective:

\begin{quote}
For Ozenfant and Jeanneret, these \textit{objets types} symbolize the virtues of the new industrial world: its order, its anonymity, and its purity – in short, its ‘purism.’ The term was intended to convey more than just a new approach
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Sources on the German Werkbund in this thesis come primarily from writing on Charles Edouard Jeanneret’s early years. Primary scholars consulted are: Allen H. Brooks, Reyner Banham, Francesco Passanti, Maria Stavrinaki, Stanislaus von Moos.


to painting; it stands for the distinctive characteristics of modern thought. Seen in retrospect, it represents a synthesis of French enlightenment and German Werkbund pragmatism. In the Purist world, engineers occupy center stage...Haunted by the moral and aesthetic virtues of modern engineering, they develop a kind of rationalist cosmology in which nature functions as a machine whose adherence to physical laws is the very reason for its beauty. Within this Neoplatonic perspective, painting serves as the medium through which eternal reality and the universal pursuit of harmony are reconciled and made real.14

Françoise Ducros corroborates this claim, outlining the Purist’s appropriation of Darwin’s theory of evolution toward a progressive model of mechanical production: “The physio-psychological analysis of the language of art is reinforced by another principal that Ozenfant takes credit for, that of “mechanical selection,” which drew on a peculiar parallelism between human evolution and the evolution of objects. That principal led him to search for models— “object-types,” or standards—whose structure matched the gestalts of the grammar of art.”15 Kirk Varnedoe similarly notes that the social significance of the object-type was bound to Ozenfant’s ideas regarding natural selection. As he writes,

Ozenfant saw evolutionary theory as revealing, not a world of struggle and conflict, but a refining progress that eventually ground away unproductive variety to hone organisms down to their best, most economically functional design. The anonymous forces of mass utility worked in a similar way, he felt, to shape the same kind of inevitable, necessary forms. Thus reductive streamlining emerged as the proper expression of mechanical, natural, and social laws together; and the same basic sources of authority—experimental science and evolutionary biology—that had incited nineteenth century artists to reveal the strata of social types underlying the variety of individual appearances now incited their

twentieth century counterparts to impose the vision of ideal forms that best fit the coming unified society.\textsuperscript{16} These scholars thus demonstrate that the formal and conceptual aspects of the object-type were given shape and weight by Ozenfant and Jeanneret through a calculated language of sociology, industry, and aesthetics.

The object-type positions Purism both in terms of the avant-garde, as well as the avant-guerre. Ozenfant and Jeanneret were not ambiguous about the relationship of their work to artistic achievements of the past, as the first issue of \textit{L’Esprit Nouveau} announced with an article on Georges Seurat by the painter Roger Bissère. Von Moos notes that by doing so, the artists made clear that “if Seurat’s achievement had been to rationalize Impressionism, the Purists’ ambition is now to rationalize Cubism.”\textsuperscript{17} Ball elaborates this claim, suggesting that with Purism Ozenfant “offered not only a way to salvage what he thought was viable about Cubism, but also a new method for making an art that was relevant to the modern machine age and, at the same time, was based on a Neo-Platonic theory of constant and universal forms and sensations.”\textsuperscript{18}

A challenge to Cubist iconography is made obvious in the choice of Purist subject matter, the still-life or café tableau, and the material things they converted into object-types. But the Purists felt that the Cubists had muddied their canvases with experimental compositional strategies. Whereas the Cubists transformed the still-life genre by moving


\textsuperscript{17} Von Moos, \textit{Le Corbusier, Elements of a Synthesis}, 56.

around a fixed object to depict it from different angles and perspectives, the Purists chose
the most typical or identifiable view, representing the object as invariable.

By adopting the format of the manifesto, by this point a requisite of the avant-
garde, the Purists also engaged with the Futurists, whose interest in mechanical
production and machines had set the stage for Ozenfant’s and Jeanneret’s further
investigation into factory-made objects. The Futurists were concerned with issues of
labor and class but found tension in the difficulty of making thrilling work about the
drudgery of factory life, and ended up prioritizing dynamism. For the Purists, an interest
in the still, static image represented progress, not motion. Their subject matter and setting
exemplified the domestic, interior, and private space of the home, in opposition to the
exterior and public realm of the street that the Futurists offered.

Kenneth Silver expands on the Purists’ interest in industry and their claim to
fabricated objects of utilitarian simplicity by placing them in line with the
contemporaneous “Return to Order.” This tendency shared with Purism a similar concern
with the state of the nation after the war, albeit, he argues, with differing approaches.
Ultimately, the deployment of objects vs. subjects distinguished Purism:

Without recourse to the *commedia dell’arte* or to classical figures, the
post-war Frenchman was expected to see himself in the things of his
manufacture, to locate his identity in the bottles and glasses of these Purist
still-lifes. As if in “total harmony” between “himself and what he makes,”
he was to recognize his own heritage in the venerable tradition of
Baccarat, Limoges, and Sèvres, to celebrate through these mute
arrangements of time-honored vessels his victory and even his survival. Of
course, it was imperative that the French not meditate too long on real
buildings and real people, that they not see themselves as they really were
after 1918: burnt-out, ravaged, and mutilated...Nothing less than an
extraordinary, renewed sense of *elan*, the “new spirit,” would suffice to
see France through her recovery. When the Purists wrote that “a painting
surface should make one forget its limits, it should be *indifferent,*,” they
were also talking about Frenchmen in the wake of the Great War, who
could afford to be neither too sensitive nor too vulnerable. Far better to contemplate a purified and enduring collection of French objects then to concentrate on the uncertain, ephemeral, and vulnerable products of nature.\textsuperscript{19}

The “mute arrangements” Silver refers to are the common Purist ensembles of object-types within their still-life paintings. These static designs became the backbone of the movement, dictated by a set of guiding principles that determine their compositional strategies. The order exemplified in these canvases sought to pacify the viewer, reminding her/him of a quotidian France that was calm and collected, recovered from the chaos and destruction of war.

Purism’s insistence on what Ball has called “that which is invariable in form, that which is permanent, that which endures in time” placed it in contrast to contemporary artistic movements such as Dada and Surrealism.\textsuperscript{20} The systematic approach to subject matter exemplified by the object-type countered automatic techniques and chance. Ara Merjian elaborates:

Le Corbusier and Ozenfant’s fetishization of objects as sources for utopian change rivaled that of the surrealists in the wake of the Great War. But while the former insisted upon method and need, prosthesis and precision, Breton and his cohorts turned to objects and spaces—even the most banal—as the source of unruly desire. If chance formed the new god of surrealism’s secular modernity, the Purists sought to banish its very existence—whether from the city itself or from the aesthetic imagination in which it was rehearsed, anticipated, dreamed.\textsuperscript{21}


The object-type did indeed become a fetish object of sorts for Ozenfant and Jeanneret; it embodied the ideals of honest and modest design, and its purity stood for a near religious order much in contrast to Surrealism’s irreverent view of modernity.

The sterility of the anonymous object-type is perhaps most differentiated from the gruesome reality of the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Artists like George Grosz and Otto Dix depicted a psychological city through renderings of bodies in pieces. Their portraits were a reminder of life after the war as opposed to a redemptive portrayal of classical ideals and industry as models of progress. Ozenfant and Jeanneret’s interest in “economy and efficiency” as the hallmark of modern industrial society was part of a dogmatic attempt to remake the world through a narrow lens. 22 Their hope was that through their proselytizing vision of a pacified and aestheticized world, art would accurately reflect culture, one that was measured, clear and harmonious as opposed to the German model of a world beyond redemption. The Purists believed that France would be redeemed by industry, and the technological tools of war would instead become the tools of peace and progress. This vision of a peaceable future is exemplified by the object-type, to which the ideals of Purism are bound inextricably.

In this thesis, I employ an in-depth study of the object-type as a fundamental base for three types of Purist expression: painting, architecture, and film. The technology lauded by the Purists, and first explored in painting, not only influenced industry but also introduced tools for creative production in architecture, photography, and cinematography. Chapter I focuses on the development of the object-type and its role in painting in its nascent and mature forms through a close analysis of works by Ozenfant,

Jeanneret, and Fernand Léger. This chapter demonstrates how the writings of the Purists developed in parallel to their visual output. Chapter II examines the architecture of Jeanneret (who adopted the name Le Corbusier in 1923 after the publication of *Vers une architecture*) whose early housing projects were a direct reaction to the social and physical landscape of postwar France. Jeanneret’s adherence to the laws of the object-type helped create a set of guiding principles that led him toward an increasingly reductive model of architectural invention. Chapter III establishes the film *Ballet mécanique* by Fernand Léger (b. Normandy, France 1881–1955) as illustrative of tenets of the object-type transformed through the technologies of cinema.

The three main figures of the Purist movement, Amédée Ozenfant, Charles Édouard Jeanneret and Fernand Léger, all shared a background in architectural studies, and the image of the *constructeur* is key to understanding the reconstructive aims of Purism and its key constituents. The object-type was the tool that they would use to accomplish this rebuilding. Amidst the new concerns of the postwar era, artists searched for new ways to represent the conditions of a transformed society. Purism was born of a new spirit that sought pristine order amid the chaos that had ensued and aimed at doing so through math, science, and mechanization. Postwar society, or the period of “re-construction,” mandated a reassessment of visual culture, namely as a means of

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23 The main source for the influence of Purism on Léger’s practice during this period comes from The Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue, *Léger and Purist Paris*, 1977 with key texts by John Golding and Christopher Green.

24 In the first issue of *L'Esprit nouveau*, 1920, “Sur la Plastique” is signed Ch.-E. Jeanneret et A. Ozenfant. “Trois rappels a MM. les Architectes,” is also co-authored, but with the pseudonyms Le Courbusier-Saugnier, adapted from Jeanneret’s maternal grandfather’s last name Lecorbésier (his mother’s was Perret) and Ozenfant’s mother’s maiden name. It is arguably when Jeanneret begins to separate himself from Purism, beginning in 1923 and formalizing in 1925, that he fully transitions to using the moniker Corbusier. Since this thesis is concerned primarily with his relationship to Purism, and discusses works he created before fully adopting the moniker Le Corbusier, I will use Jeanneret throughout to refer to him and his work (except when quoting the works of other scholars).
mediating modernity with traditional techniques of art-making. The object-type provided a framework for numerous types of construction, based on cultural values, human needs, and the desires of a new world irrevocably influenced by technology.
CHAPTER I

The Object-Type in Painting: A Search for Constants

PURISM fears the bizarre and the “original.” It seeks out pure elements with which to reconstruct organized paintings that seem to be made by nature itself. The craftsmanship should be sufficiently secure not to hinder the conception.

PURISM does not believe that a return to nature means a return to copying nature. It allows for any distortion that is justified by the search for what is constant. All freedoms belong to art save that of not being clear.

“Après le cubisme,” C.E. Jeanneret and A. Ozenfant, 1918

The object-type is an article of everyday use that could be found in any French home; its depiction was fundamental to all Purist artistic production. This chapter examines its theoretical development and practical applications in painting. Primary examples of the object-type included tableware: vessels, plates, cups and bottles. Secondary items encompassed musical instruments and architectural elements. The Purists transformed these typical objects into object-types through a technique that prized line and silhouette over definition and dimension. By reducing the objects to shape alone, without modeling, only essential aspects such as form and contour remained. This purification process rendered the object-type both ascetic and aesthetic, it also helped the Purists translate the objects from the Cubist still-life into their own artistic language.

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The object-type developed as part of a strategic positioning of Purism within pre
and post-war art movements. As the written dictates of the movement over time delimited
the object-type in theory, the depiction of these objects also became more polished in
practice. But the adolescent stage of Purism presented inconsistencies, which the release
of “Après le cubisme,” on the occasion of the first Purist exhibition (December 22, 1918-
January 11, 1919), demonstrates. This treatise outlines the importance of ideas over
execution, stating,

PURISM aims to conceive clearly, to execute faithfully, precisely, without
waste; it turns away from troubled conceptions, from summary, bristly
execution. Serious art must banish all technique deceptive as to the real
value of conception. Art is above all a matter of conception. Technique is
only a tool that humbly serves the conception.  

But the declaration also claims,

Let’s perform a statistical analysis of forms according to their yield of
beauty: at the bottom, inorganic matter in which the eye discerns no clear
plastic law, magma, thus little beauty; then come inorganic objects
(minerals, manufactured objects, etc.); above, landscape; higher still, the
human figure. An example will prove to serve that because we are men,
there is a plastic hierarchy of forms that explains the discrepancies
between their respective beauty coefficients.

And yet only two paintings in the show depicted the human figure, and both were
portraits. In fact, after this exhibition both anthropological and biological subjects
would be eliminated from the Purist repertoire.

The exhibition presented thirty works (twenty by Ozenfant and ten by
Jeanneret), revealing the nascent model of Purism and the emergence of the
object-type in fits and starts. In these early works the object-types were not fully
fleshed out enough in theory or practice to communicate a cohesive visual

26 Goodman, “Après le cubisme”, 165.

narrative about the importance of subject-matter for the Purists. Nonetheless, the exhibition demonstrated important experimentation with amount of detail, subject matter and formal technique. Ozenfant’s Bottle, Pipe, and Books from 1918, suggests that the earliest stages of Purism did not depict objects in their most pure form but as identifiable objects (fig. 1). The wine bottle features a label and a cork, details that would become extraneous to the object-type. Beneath what appears to be a rigid cloth lies a book peeking out from the corner with a distinct although illegible cover page. These are specific objects, but not yet an object-types.

During this first stage of Purism, Ozenfant and Jeanneret unequivocally privileged form over symbolic function. In “Après le cubisme,” they assert: “The value of painting derives from the intrinsic qualities of plastic elements and not from their representational or narrative potential.”28 Ozenfant’s drawing Church at Andernos, 1918, also included in the exhibition, illustrates this denial of narrative (fig. 2). The simple pencil drawing contains a limited formal vocabulary comprised solely of primary shapes. It is a minimalist rendering of a sacred place devoid of decoration or context. Two cylinder-shaped apses protrude from a rectilinear building topped by a triangular roof that mimics the shape of a modern grain silo. The church is depicted as a platonic ideal; an object-type, transformed into an invariable subject composed of primary forms. This drawing reveals a shift from exterior to interior, from landscape to still-life, and hints at the formation of the object-type through a deliberate elimination of detail.

Jeanneret’s *The Fireplace*, 1918, also included in the exhibition, combines aspects of the previous two works discussed (fig. 3). The painting suggests an abstract landscape, a series of shapes (possibly a dwelling) in the foreground, the horizon melting into the background. Closer inspection reveals a mantel on which sit two closed books and a white cube; below the mantel lies a cropped architectural detail. The painting demonstrates Jeanneret’s enduring interest in form and space. The exhibition, as a whole, showcased experimentation both conceptually and formally, and helped position the movement as a wedge between Cubism and the “Return to Order.” Although works of varied subject appeared, the Purists would soon take an increasing interest in the still-life genre specifically and the object-types within these works would come to be seen as symbolic of both culture and capital, sites of production, consumption and display.

After the first Purist exhibition, the ideas of the movement began to crystallize. Ozenfant and Jeanneret dedicated themselves jointly to painting, working together in Ozenfant’s studio. This shared space likely resulted in a more refined dialogue between their visual and written outputs, and led to the creation of *L’Esprit Nouveau*, whose inaugural issue was released less than a year after the first exhibition. Although there were slightly different formal approaches to the object-type made by Ozenfant and Jeanneret, for the most part the development of the ideals of Purism and the object-type had begun to take place in something of an aesthetic vacuum, seen in the generally similar approach both artists took to technique and subject matter. Purism and the deployment of the object-type became a sober, hermetic, and researched exploration, mixed with a speculative if not utopian view of the future through a formula of optic inquiry. During this period, before the second Purist exhibition at Galerie Eugéne Druet
(January 24-February 4, 1921) ideas about modernity and capitalism came into relief in the Purist project, and the conceptual development of the object-type through text and the larger *L’Esprit Nouveau* project helped frame Purism as a legitimate avant-garde enterprise.

In October of 1920 with the publication of “Sur la Plastique” in the first issue of *L’Esprit Nouveau*, the relationship between the visual and written language of Purism became codified. The essay, subtitled “Examen des conditions primordiales” (“An Examination of Primordial Conditions”) outlined phenomenological reactions to color and form. Subcategories of analysis in the essay included: Standards, Primary Elements, Rhythm, Composition, Modules and Consequence. Following preliminary formal explorations in the first exhibition and during the period after, Ozenfant and Jeanneret began exploring the social resonance of the object-type. They hoped that the pure, mundane objects that proliferated in their canvases would suggest that the state of the nation was reflected in the state of its production. Ozenfant and Jeanneret made this link explicit in a diagram they used to illustrate “Sur la Plastique” (fig. 4). The caption reads “Cézanne a dit, après que tous les grands maîtres l’aient connu: Tout est sphères et cylindres,” (Cézanne said, all the great masters knew: Everything is spheres and cylinders).29 The illustration presents an ancient European city as an example of ordered urban design, above it sits a drawing of a cylinder, triangle, square, rectangle and sphere. The authors thus suggest that order is a harbinger of peace and stability, hinting at a relationship between the object-types, the constructed paintings, and post-war France.

This symbolic notion of harmony or unity being linked to the city or the citizen also evokes the idea of the collective being more powerful than the individual.

In addition, this image accompanying the essay points to Cézanne, one of the founders of Modernism in France, as a forefather of Purism. Jeanneret’s *Nature morte à l’œuf*, 1919 illustrates the constancy of Cézanne’s forms as an important precursor of the object-type (fig. 5). In the back-left corner of the canvas sits a Bordeaux bottle, recognizable by its distinctive shape, distinguished by its straight sides and broad shoulders (cylinder); in front of it a small cornice (square, triangle), a Picardy glass is propped in front of the architectural detail. To the right, a stack of plates (cylinder) casts a shadow onto a bottle of milk bottle (cylinder) that echoes the columnar aspects of the stack of plates and adopts the indents of the Picardy glass. Tucked behind the bottle are two pipes (cones). The foreground features an open book (two squares), to the left another bottle of wine, with orthogonal perspective providing a glimpse down to the cylindrical glass dimple at its base. Behind the bottle is a small jug (sphere, triangle, cylinder). To the jug’s right a measuring tool (triangle), an envelope (square), and finally the oeuf (sphere), its geometrized form isolated against the dark brown of the table. The eye is guided by the forms sloping upward from the flat pages of the book toward the columnar bottles and plates pressed against the back wall. The topology of the painting demonstrates not just a theoretical proposition of harmony, but also a formal arrangement that is static, serene, staged.

By establishing their rubric from historical precedents—both ancient and modern—the Purists could claim that the use of these “primary forms” placed their movement in an ennobling tradition. They made this relationship unambiguous in the
fourth issue (January 1921) of *L’Esprit nouveau*, when they published “Le Purisme,” a synthesis of their earlier texts “Notes sur cubisme” and “Après le cubisme.” Ozenfant and Jeanneret again made use of Cézanne’s language for Purist aims by establishing the key components of the object-type as, “the cube, the sphere, the cylinder, the cone and the pyramid.” The development of the object-type through Cézanne’s dictum both brings to the fore the primacy of shape employed in their methodical approach to painting and connects it to their growing understanding of its social relevance.

One of the important ways in which the object-type was tied to collective or social issues was through the convoluted relationship between humans and objects that it staged. Even though after the first exhibition, the human figure was never depicted in their paintings, the object-type was both an extension of human needs and a byproduct of mechanical production. In “Le Purisme,” Ozenfant and Jeanneret explain:

> In all ages and with all people, man has created for his use objects of prime necessity which responded to his imperative needs…man has created containers: vases, glasses, bottles, plates, which were built to suit the needs of maximum capacity, maximum economy of materials, maximum economy of effort. In all ages, man has created objects of transport: boats, cars; objects of defense: arms; objects of pleasure: musical instruments, etc., all of which have always obeyed the law of selection: economy. One discovers that these objects are true extensions of human limbs and are, for this reason, of human scale, harmonizing both among themselves and with man.

Through the object-type the Purists proposed a relationship between society and technology, but ultimately their compositional strategies positioned the viewer in the world of aesthetics not production. These strategies helped ensure that the object-type

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31 Herbert, *Modern Artists on Art*, 57.
would not become a mere fetish object, nor would be an anthropomorphization of the means of manufacture.

During this period between the two exhibitions, Ozenfant and Jeanneret honed the object-type as the solitary subject matter of the movement. Nonetheless, even though avoiding representation of the human figure, Ozenfant and Jeanneret endowed the objects with a sense of subjecthood. Through articles and advertisements in *L’Esprit nouveau*, Nina Rosenblatt argues, the Purists make a case for the object-type as an effect of “modern subjectivity:”

In Le Corbusier and Ozenfant's celebrated formulations, the products of machine manufacture themselves take on the aspects of neutrality and restraint that an earlier set of arguments had attributed to human beings. The self-sufficiency of these mass-produced objects is reinforced by the images selected to accompany the very arguments that assert their quasi-evolutionary adaptation to human use-photographs of glassware, office furniture, and dental equipment in which the human presence hovers, ghostlike, but is almost never seen.32

Rosenblatt thus proposes the object-type as a surrogate for the body. She suggests that Purists negated human form but understood it as a departure point in an increasingly modern world where subjective experience is framed by technologies that implicate the body. The idea that objects and subjects can have shifting and interchangeable relationships is one of the most radical propositions extended by the Purists. They postured the object-type not just as emblematic of national pride and progress but also as an extension of bodily needs and desires.

Fernand Léger was another artist at the time, who was deeply invested in the relationship between bodies and machines, and like the Purists, was concerned with an ideology of painting that often-featured inanimate objects as subjects. In 1920 Léger met

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Jeanneret and became a close associate of the Purists. Léger’s work in contrast to the Purists, however, did depict actual bodies, as geometric constructions of lines, shapes (Cézanne’s pure unmodulated forms) and color, in simple relation to one another. And although they are often abstracted, his bodies are not faceless just as his buildings are not without facade. Briony Fer argues that Léger translated his own version of the object-type, turning the deluxe object into an object of use. She notes that Léger’s painting demonstrates “a concern with the formal order of a painting.” As she indicates, the use of geometric form and pattern, can refer to traditional artistic categories and at the same time to a view of modernity in which forms are standardized, translated into the norms of mass-production…For Léger to choose, for example, the motif of odalisques, current though this was in the early twenties, meant taking a theme traditionally associated with luxury, with the exotic and with voluptuousness in the French tradition, and transforming it into something close to a utilitarian object.33

During the war, Léger was still working in the Cubist idiom as seen in the example of *The Card Players*, 1917, made during a period of convalescence on the front (fig. 6). In this painting, the packed picture space containing overlapping planes, stereo-metric forms, primary colors, and multiple viewpoints reflect his personal Cubist style. This painting is related formally to his prewar *Contrast of Forms* series, which was purely abstract, but it demonstrates that he was already thinking about the mechanized body as a result of his experience at war (fig. 7). After Léger returned to Paris his work shifted toward a more refined, or cleaned up, aesthetic, as Fer suggests, centered on the figuration of the body through technology. The influence of the Purist sensibility and the object-type on his work became more pronounced during this period as he further defined the relationships between subjects and objects in his œuvre.

33 Briony Fer, “Standards of Efficiency” in Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars (New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Open University, 1993), 147.
The shift in Léger’s work can be understood in relationship to the further development of the object-type, which, by 1921 was recognized as the primary Purist visual apparatus. At this point the ideological foundations of the object-type were understood to be associated with topical concerns. The publication of “Le Purisme” that year further outlined these ideas. This article was released in conjunction with the second Purist exhibition and attested to a more parallel development between text and imagery. Notably in this exhibition all canvases adhered the 40F format (a standard French canvas measurement of 100 x 81 cm.), which linked them to the Golden Ratio. In “Le Purisme” Ozenfant and Jeanneret declared,

The old masters used the golden section, as well as others, such as the harmonic section, to modulate their works: but they used them as divisions of lines, not of surfaces. Once the composition is built upon the formal bases of this firm geometry, there is still unity to attain, the factor of order. The module comes in at this point. Unity in plastic art, the homogeneity of the creator’s ideas with his means, is the homogeneous relationship of the surface or volume with each of the elements brought into play. The modular method is the only sensible way of bringing about order; it lets the smallest element measure the largest (give or take the necessary corrections and optical illusions); it provides what the old masters called proportion. “Co-modulation” permits organization; without it, there is no plastic art, only piles of stones or spots of color.

The use of the Golden Ratio helped the Purists to establish firm ideas about the formal arrangements of their paintings in accordance with proportion and scale. This statement also foreshadowed Jeanneret’s use of the same ideas in his architectural designs, specifically with regard to the modular construction of homes (as will be discussed in Chapter II).


35 Herbert, Modern Artists on Art, 62.
Jeanneret and Ozenfant appropriated the concept of the Golden Ratio in the essay “Les Tracès Regulateurs” (“Regulating Lines”) published under the names, Le Courbusier-Saugnier, first issued in *L’Esprit nouveau*, issue no. 5 (February, 1921). To illustrate the article, Ozenfant and Jeanneret overlaid diagonal lines onto images of the façades of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, the Palazzo Senatorio in Rome, the Petit Trianon in Versailles, the Villa Schwob in Switzerland (designed by Jeanneret) and Ozenfant’s home and studio in Paris (designed by Jeanneret and his cousin Pierre) (figs. 8-12). Although none of these designs are “classical,” Jeanneret uses historic examples that built on classical ideas of harmonic form, juxtaposed with two of his own designs, to argue that “Regulating Lines” (the Purist paraphrase of The Golden Ratio) create order through proportional relationships of mass and volume in relation to human scale throughout time. David Batchelor explains,

> These parallel illustrations give graphic form to a claim made throughout Jeanneret’s and Ozenfant’s writing of the time: the ‘order’ they extolled was the same as the order underpinning Classical architecture. The claim made for their paintings, therefore, was not merely that these were smartened up forms of Cubism, but rather that they represented a modern development of the classical tradition of ancient Greece.

This organizational model could be applied to any construction in any medium and Ozenfant aimed to assert so in his article titled “Reponse de Monsieur de Fayet,” in *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 17 (June, 1922), which featured reproductions of his, *Flask, Guitar, Glass and Bottles on a Green Table*, 1920 and Jeanneret’s, *La Bouteille de vin Orange*,

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The paintings were overlaid with “Regulating Lines” to demonstrate their adherence to the Golden Ratio (fig. 15). These diagrams aimed to tie Purism and in turn the object-type to a systemized precedent. This systematization also served to point out what was truly modern about Purist painting. Unlike traditional still-lifes that position a group of objects in relation to one another and the space around them on a horizontal plane, Purist arrangements fill the canvas. The use of the Golden Ratio also enabled Ozenfant and Jeanneret to deny traditional perspective, and instead create tilted picture planes in which spatial order is broken down, creating tension between two and three dimensions.

The works in the second Purist exhibition not only exemplified the use of the Golden Ratio, but they also revealed further formal refinements characteristic of the mature phase of Purism. These developments were: the elimination of detail (resulting in purposeful distortion of the object-type), a unique approach to perspective (producing an exaggeratedly flattened picture-plane), and a more overt allusion to classicism (through an increased sense of order). These advances can especially be seen in Jeanneret’s *Still-Life*, 1920 (fig. 16). This painting depicts a scene with bottles, pipes, a guitar and architectural elements, all sanctioned images in the regime of the Purist object-type. The back row contains a guitar case, a half-empty Bordeaux bottle, and the top of a bell. All these objects sit on something below the table edge that cuts across the canvas. On the table sits a guitar, a “purified” stack of plates, and two pipes that surround a Picardy

38 Written under one of Ozenfant’s pseudonyms (Fayet), this was a convoluted response to Gino Severini’s response to “Fayet’s” criticism of his book, *Du Cubisme au classicisme. Esthétique du compas et du nombre*, 1921. The first lines reference Severini’s use of the Golden Sections stating: “Monsieur Severini n’a pas apprécié ma critique de son livre. J’ai dit: Voilà un artiste qui va vers la science et la science l’engloutit, et, faisons de la géométrie une culture de l’esprit, un correcteur des écarts de la sensibilité excessive, mais ne remplaçons pas le mysticisme de la sensibilité par celui de la section d’or ou du triangle.”
glass. In the foreground is a cornice fragment and a milk bottle. The use of axonometric perspective underlines the influence of architecture, and has the effect of pushing the object-type to the foreground. The static shapes are compressed onto one another, forms echo and overlap, emphasizing the absence of volume.

The second exhibition marks a clear division between mature and early Purism. In the early Purist paintings color had been used as an accessory. In “Après le cubisme,” Ozenfant and Jeanneret had expounded: “Color is wholly dependent on material form: the concept “sphere,” for example, precedes the concept “color:” we imagine spheres as colorless, planes as colorless; we don’t imagine colors independent of some support.”39 In Ozenfant’s Bottle, Pipe, and Books, 1918, he used grey to support a perspectival arrangement that positions the architecture (space) and objects (subject) in formal relation to one-another (see fig. 1). In turn, in Still Life, 1920 the artist employed color naturalistically to demarcate space and depict objects as they appear (see fig. 16). The ground is black, the objects, relatively true to color, are arranged to contrast subtly with one another. In both of these works, the artist used color in a manner analogous to the use of contour, as a visual aid to create relationships between disparate objects and shape the total composition. In “Le Purisme,” however, Ozenfant and Jeanneret established a more fully formed argument for the use color in accordance with its physical qualities and role in the composition. As they wrote,

Our mind reacts to colors as it reacts to basic forms. There are brutal colors and suave colors, each appropriate to its object…thus blue cannot be used to create a volume that should “come forward,” because our eye, accustomed to seeing blue in depths (sky, sea), in backgrounds and in distant objects (horizons), does not permit with impunity the reversing of

these conditions. Hence a plane that comes forward can never be blue; it could be green (grass), brown (earth).\(^\text{40}\)

For the Purists, color helped create unified canvases tied to a rigid grid of formal components, based on the established standards of the object-type.

This calculated use of color had a retinal effect of further flattening the object-types, making them more invariable and static and creating a sense of harmony within the canvas. As von Moos notes when comparing the work of Ozenfant and Jeanneret at the time, it reveals barely perceptible yet interesting differences. Whereas Ozenfant exhibits a delight in the delicate shading of colours, the slightly perfumed atmosphere of elegant interiors, and the tender outlines of objects, Jeanneret shows a more pointed interest in the sculptural effects of his ‘objects,’ accentuated through sharp shadow effects. At the same time, these ‘objects’ are more forcefully incorporated into the picture’s overall composition by way of a ‘marriage of contours’ (as he called it) and by a rigorous limitation of the colour palette to either warm or cold tones.\(^\text{41}\)

The Purists describe this concept of “marriage of contours” or “common contour” as a reaction to Cubist compositional arrangements. This concept is an extension of the idea of type, and points out that the organizational strategies of the Purists were grounded in their conceptual understanding of the importance of the object-type as both a formal element and a symbolic subject. In an article titled “Idees Personnelles,” in issue no. 27 of \textit{L’Esprit nouveau}, 1924 (November), Ozenfant and Jeanneret explained this process:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Purism does not recognize the right of reforming objects beyond a certain limit; it chooses therefore its points of departure from things arranged normally with deformation and modified according to type. This explains, for example, the marriage of objects by a common contour; the liaison of elements with regard to creating a unique object in the painting, often}
\end{quote}

\(^{40}\) Herbert, \textit{Modern Artists on Art}, 64.

resolved in cubism by an alteration of the senility of the object. In Purism this is obtained by organic arrangements.\textsuperscript{42}

This limited deformation or reformation described by the Purists allowed for the depiction of actual objects in a way that deployed abstraction to reduce them to pure form, while leaving them recognizable. This process was hinted at in the earliest Purist works, but coalesced more deliberately in the works shown in the second Purist exhibition. For example in Ozenfant’s \textit{Flask, Guitar, Glass and Bottles on a Green Table}, 1920 the foreground features a wine glass, a liquor bottle, a water bottle, behind which appears a guitar, in flat shape alone, without strings, acoustical cutouts or any identifying detail apart from silhouette (see fig. 13). The forms appear as mere suggestions of their referent. Behind the wine glass sits a milk bottle half full, its liquid contents halting at the edge of the far side of the table. Bisecting the milk bottle vertically is what is likely the neck of a lute. The curves of the wine glass, the Bordeaux bottle, and the guitar, drawn to produce a particular resonance, are what establish the object-type, always distorted in service to the composition.

During the mature phase of Purism the overall conceptual concern of the Purists remained to assert art as a reflection of society, which they saw as a linear model of progress, aimed at safeguarding peace and order. The object-type, however, became more simplified, as the compositions became more complex. Ozenfant’s \textit{Accords}, 1922 exemplifies this period (fig. 17). The artist uses contour in this painting to introduce transparency as an extension of this technique. Françoise Ducro notes:

The changes taking place in Ozenfant's work would lead him henceforth to reduce the volumetric density of objects and to turn his attention to their contour and the effects of transparency that focus on the plane in painting. This effort prevails in his paintings of this period. Objects are organized in accordance with a metaphor from the discourse on painting, the “marriage of objects by virtue of common contour”--that is, liaisons that group objects by lines that delimit them, an artistic aim related to gestalt and topology, as well as a metaphor for his love of painting.43

At this point the object-types are no longer singular or distinct, they are flattened and overlapping, their colors and forms begin to mingle. The deflated shapes have become pure form, abstract in their organization but still legible in their execution. In this final phase of Purism, the object-type becomes a recognizable template that can be repeated within the composition or from painting to painting. These recurring shapes and relationships communicate constancy within and across the canvases.

Susan Ball describes the aesthetic of the later canvases. As she observes, “The “setting” is likewise reduced. At this stage some indication of architectural milieu, however nebulous, was crucial to the composition of a Purist painting…This ‘room’ merely stands for an interior architectural space and would be impossible either to identify or reconstruct.”44 Although the setting is reduced, and the rendering of the object-types themselves became pared down, the number of objects increased as transparency became a key feature of the final stage of Purism in conjunction with a destabilized picture-plane. In *Vertical Still Life*, 1922, Jeanneret denies all reference to actual space (fig. 18). The composition contains a series of overlapping contours illustrating beakers, glasses, bottles, instruments, all segmented by color. A sill juts


forward, abutted by a drawer panel, on which the objects rest, or lean. Traditional perspective is refused as the ledge is immediately abutted by an adjacent white cube, pulling the right side of the canvas taut. The object-type has become a stencil, a means of composing stringent and strategic compositions that play with forms as a way of communicating that order and invariability are still a viable lens through which to view a world in which perspective has been permanently altered.

Although it may seem paradoxical to Purist goals for order and harmony to be unfixed and disorienting, Ozenfant and Jeanneret believed that “ordinary perspective with its theoretical rigour only gives an accidental view of objects.”

They wanted to eliminate the possibility of perspectival accidents, meaning that they wanted to control the way in which these objects were viewed. Their goal was to force the “objectness” of the object-type, never abandoning their aim for it to be seen as pure form, without any nuancing of perspective, shadow or light. Katherine Fraser Fischer extends this idea, by examining the progression of these theories on perspective:

Le Corbusier distinguished between the viewing of nature and the viewing of painting. Nature has a moral existence independent of the eye; indeed it puts the eye at a loss, only revealing itself in fragments. A painting, on the other hand, must cater to the eye for its existence. In Le Corbusier’s thinking, a painterly feature like a silhouette was preserved from such unsightly natural accidents as foreshortening in order to perform two functions: to give information about the form of an object as we know it in its integrity, and to participate in a complete and self-sustained composition. By linking depth to silhouette, Le Corbusier freed form from the conventional accidents of lighting that obscure it by shadow as often as they illuminate it.

45 Herbert, Modern Artists on Art, 58.

This use of silhouette provided a sense of sameness among the objects, stripping them of all surface embellishments and volumetric form, further reinforcing the relationships between the object-types in each painting. Silhouetting was also an extension of the concept of “common contour,” which described how disparate objects might be coupled through shared linear characteristics, creating a network of overlapping optics. Similarities among types were highlighted through stylistic rendering.

This explicit use of silhouette and transparency in the late stage dovetailed with the inclusion of architectural elements. Earlier works discussed included such elements (see figs. 3 and 16), but the late phase fuses object-types with architectural details, collapsing time and space (historical with modern, interior with exterior). In Ozenfant’s, *Doric Vases*, 1925, featured in the *L’Esprit Nouveau Pavilion*, both title and form suggest a corollary relationship to architecture (fig. 19). The brick hue and quotation of columns used to simulate facades on the object-types expresses a parallel interest in tradition and a constructive approach to painting. Kenneth Silver notes the importance of the monumentality imbued in the later works through the considered inclusion of architecture. As he writes,

although the extreme abstraction of Purist paintings—the compression of space, simplification of forms, implied transparencies—accounts for their “modern” look, a rather old-fashioned notion of hierarchies (specifically, Charles Blanc and André Michel’s academic concept of architecture as the primary discipline from which the other arts descend) endows the paintings with their monumental sense of wholeness. Ozenfant’s forms, particularly the fluted bottles and glasses he painted so often, begin to resemble Roman arcades and Doric columns: the large simple objects have the monumentality of built structures and cast shadows that seem closer to those in De Chirico’s *piazza* at high noon than anything in the history of still-life. Indeed, the very title of a work like *Les Vases Doriques* of 1925 conflates still-life and architecture, just as the images themselves represent this superimposition. Jeanneret’s paintings, if less literal in their architectural references, are perhaps even more architectonic in their
structure: especially in the early 1920s, the objects are highly modeled and set in a clear, readable space.\textsuperscript{47}

In early Purist paintings, architectural elements appeared in the background to help distinguish the setting as an interior space. In these later paintings, as unique approaches to perspective and distortion become important identifiers of Purist painting, the architectural elements move to the foreground or as with the example of \textit{Doric Vases}, merge with the object-types as suggestions of durability and permanency.

The Purist painting was invariably a still-life arrangement featuring spare décor, and a flattened perspective and its implementation of the object-type was an investigation into industrial production through a diagrammatic approach to painting. This systemized approach to painting helped avoid sentimental interpretation. Ara Merjian asserts, “as much as Le Corbusier and Ozenfant insisted…upon subject matter (as opposed to outright abstraction) as the domain of painting, they recoiled from “the sign.”\textsuperscript{48} Unlike the canvases of the Surrealists or Metaphysical painters whose imagery held a haptic or sensory power, Purist painting, populated by the object-type, symbolized the virtues of progress but not projection of desires. Nina Rosenblatt explains how the stringent subject matter of the Purists further situated their conceptual strategies apart from those of other modern art movements:

Purist painting was never intended as a diagram for a union between art and industry that was taking place beyond its edges. On the contrary, it was the only site upon which aesthetic perception, the “modern optic”…could be reconciled with the mass-produced object without passing through the subjective conditions of either labor or


consumption...the very banality of the type-object was intended to curb the promiscuous projections of association, memory, and desire that attached to traditional motifs. 49

Rosenblatt keenly observes that Ozenfant and Jeanneret selected specific objects to avoid associations with Marxist ideology. But the object-type did not completely escape potential projections, nor was it strictly a formal element. Like the emblems of café culture depicted in the Cubist tableau, the object-type straddled a space between medium and message. As Purist ideology developed, the object-type became implicated in conceptual strategies that addressed concerns with consumer culture and capitalism, positioning it ultimately as an icon of industry made by and for the everyman.

As previously stated, Léger also had an interest in the binary relationships between bodies and machines that were implicated by consumer wants and needs. The object-type helped him make links between these visually disparate themes. As Léger increasingly incorporated the Purist vocabulary into his work, he developed a new style of painting that reflected a distinctly purified sensibility. Carol S. Eliel explains,

Léger’s work increasingly reflected his assimilation of the Purist aesthetic. *Man and Woman*, painted only one year after the definitive version of *The Mechanic*, suggests to what extent Léger by 1921 had broken down the human figure into its component geometric elements (and further dehumanized it by eliminating facial features). The environment in which the figures are placed also seems increasingly geometric, mechanical, and mechanized. Architectural elements creep into the figure as well; the woman’s right arm in *Woman in Front of the Window*, 1923, reads like a column, akin to Jeanneret’s stack of plates in his 1920 canvas *Still Life*...all of the forms are clean geometries, and almost every suggestion of modeling and three-dimensionality has been effaced. 50

Like the Purists, Léger exalted mass-produced object-types and decried ornamentation through the use of primary forms. But as *Man and Woman* reveals, stylistically his work

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differs from Ozenfant and Jeanneret’s, and these differences reflect the enduring interest in both abstraction and figuration that visually differentiated his work from the Purists (fig. 20). But as Eliel suggests, The Mechanic represents a shift for Léger that brings his work closer to Purism (fig. 21). The canvas is less populated, and Léger begins to incorporate identifiable everyday objects.

Another example of this stylistic shift is Léger’s Siphon from 1924 wherein a disembodied hand becomes an object-type (fig. 22). This shift can be attributed to Léger’s adoption of Purist concepts. The flat, silhouetted forms in this painting in particular echo the classic object-types, a glass, architectural elements, and primary forms that hold space in the same way as Ozenfant and Jeanneret’s object-types. The components used to create the manufactured siphon are the same used to create the bulbous hand that activates it, all formed by Cézanne’s cylinder, cone, and sphere. In this painting, the hand becomes a tool, a human limb-object, undifferentiated from the products of manufacture.

Léger’s Siphon reinforces the Purist idea that technology had begun to seep into every aspect of life; public and private, domestic and industrial spheres were collapsing into one-another. By instituting a vocabulary of mass-produced objects as subjects, the Purists had revealed this mechanized state of the modern man. The object-type, in its triumph of over the decorative object or object deluxe suggests a relationship to capitalism shaped the commodities intrinsic “use-value” and “value-form,” social and formal relationships that over time have led to the selection, production and presentation of specific objects. Jeanneret furthers this concept in “Des Yeux qui ne Voient Pas: III. Les Autos” stating, “Standardization is imposed by the law of selection and is an
economic and social necessity,” suggests that he believed that the object-type realized its goals of becoming a means of describing the mechanical selection that was taking place in society as a reaction to modernity. It also suggested that the object-type could become its own model for production, seeing serial production as a means of honing or standardizing the object-type. Ball proposes:

The Purist interest in economy and efficiency led logically to questions of the mechanical reproduction of painting. The mechanically selected Purist elements depicted in Ozenfant and Jeanneret’s paintings formed the standardized, albeit limited vocabulary of Purism. By extension, the painting itself becomes an “object-type” which also has been perfected and was replicable.

Both standardization and reproduction would become tools of modern marketing.

Similarly the object-type became the tool of its own production, recognizable, and repeatable ad infinitum. Purism mandated the creation of works of art that took specific shape through the employment of the object-type, in-turn reproducing and promoting objects that Ozenfant and Jeanneret deemed valuable in order to ennoble a capitalist regime of images that would be representative of French values and culture.

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52 Ball, 122.
CHAPTER II

The Object-Type in Architecture: Stability through Stylization

The problem of the house is a problem of the epoch. The equilibrium of society today depends upon it. Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituent elements of the house.

Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, 1923

For Charles-Édouard Jeanneret the object-type translated the concept of stability through stylization, and its ideology easily transferred from painting into other forms of expression. Not surprisingly, he appropriated the object-type from painting as a model for modular construction in architecture. This chapter examines Jeanneret’s architectural works through the lens of the Purist object-type by studying three early and unrealized designs: the Dom-ino House (1914), the Citrohan House (1920) and the Ville Contemporaine (1922). These projects and other ancillary examples demonstrate the adaptability of Purist ideas and ideologies. They also reveal a sequential and philosophical progression in terms of Jeanneret’s proposition for the rebuilding of post-war France, from the single-family unit to the large-scale housing project. The widespread need to construct affordable housing for those displaced after the war was the impetus for Jeanneret’s explorations of the object-type as a building block.

Given the necessity of rebuilding after the war, Jeanneret looked to the Purist ideals embodied in the concept of the object-type, with the aim of making housing to

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meet directly what he termed “type-needs.” In *L’Art décoratif d’aujourd’hui* (*The Decorative Art of Today*) published in 1925, he crystalized his belief in the “type” as a model for construction, explaining that “types” are determined by the user, they are a naturally occurring phenomena put into the cycle of production. He wrote:

> To search for human scale, for human function, is to define human needs. These needs are ‘type’. We all need means of supplementing our natural capabilities. ‘Human-limb objects’ are type objects responding to type needs…The ‘human-limb object’ is a docile servant. A good servant is discreet and self-effacing, in order to leave his master free. Works of decorative art are tools, beautiful tools.\(^{54}\)

These “needs,” such as household accessories and furniture, went beyond the necessities of water, shelter, and sustenance. Jeanneret believed that his homes would dignify both these everyday objects and the everyday citizen. Moreover, Jeanneret saw an expanded vision of the object-type as a systematic approach not just for the objects arranged in a room but also for the rooms arranged in a home, and the home ultimately as a reproducible cell itself.

Jeanneret expressed an early sense of attraction to the concept of types and their potential uses beyond painting long before he met Ozenfant and jointly developed the theories of Purism fully. In *Voyage d’orient*, a diaristic account of his 1911 trip to the Balkans, Istanbul, Prague, Bucharest, Greece and Italy, he wrote,

> I am obsessed, deep inside me, with the notion of symbol, with a type-expression of language limited to the value of a few words. Vocation is the origin of this: the system of masonry and scaffolding, of volumes, of solids and voids, gave me an understanding, perhaps too comprehensive, of the vertical and the horizontal, of the meaning of length, depth, height. And it led me to see these elements, even these words, as holders of infinite meanings that should not be diluted, since the word in itself, in its

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absolute and strong unity, expresses them all.\textsuperscript{55}

Francesco Passanti clarifies how these concepts evolved: “More than the cultural content of types…what mattered to Le Corbusier was their aesthetic potential as symbols, and this considerably broadens the architectural implications.”\textsuperscript{56}

During his 1910-11 residence at the Deutscher Werkbund in Germany, on a grant from his school in his native La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, Jeanneret had learned about the theories of Hermann Muthesius. Passanti explains that Muthesius’ promotion of \textit{Typsierung} (typification) “called on German designers to rally around a few standardized designs, so that German products would both foster a uniform cultural tone within Germany and have enhanced recognition abroad.”\textsuperscript{57} He continues, describing the clever marketing of this nationalistic ideology:

By skillfully playing on the ambiguities of the German root word \textit{Typ}, which covers industrial standardization, marketing brands, and vernacular types alike, Muthesius suggested that industrial mass products have the same ability to embody organic culture that vernacular types have—solutions perfected anonymously and collectively, representative of their society precisely because of the anonymity of the process that had embedded the collective identity into the form.\textsuperscript{58}

Jeanneret’s time in Germany helped him conceive of typification as an edifying model that went beyond structural or aesthetic concerns. Werkbund philosophy outlined the role consumer products could play as emblems of modern society and progress. For Jeanneret,


\textsuperscript{57} Passanti, "Architecture: Proportion, Classicism and Other Issues," 90.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
this concept translated to framing the object-type as a condition of social values. In addition, his five-month apprenticeship there with Peter Behrens (artistic director of Allgemeine Elektricitat Gesellschaft, at the time) would have given him additional exposure to the possibilities of industrial design beyond consumer goods.

Jeanneret thus understood the object-type as symbol of progress—a means of manufacture that could help transform the concept of vernacular architecture. Jeanneret saw language as a symbolic extension of architecture, and as a way of defining its forms. He used language to define his architectural types and buttress their meanings, creating a taxonomy of construction much like the object-types of Purist painting, that would similarly be seen as a legible and distinct style.

Jeanneret’s insistence on the implementation of a legible, accessible system of signifiers to promote his concept of societal improvement went beyond postwar patriotism and a sense of duty that the war precipitated. Maria Stavrinaki explains,

Even if Le Corbusier did not at all share the Futurists' radically redemptive vision of the war, he thought, as they did, that warfare on a national scale had taken over the best that political revolution had to offer: war had absorbed the latter's dynamic potential, that is, revolution's vocation to accelerate time while neutralising revolution's socio-economic effects. The anti-materialist basis of his political thinking convinced him that war was a kind of Aufhebung of the political action; it was above all a technological and moral revolution, capable of intensifying technological progress, imposing the authority of the victor, forging hardened individualities, and extracting the nation from its bourgeois torpor….In sum, if war compressed and hastened time, revolution diluted and finally blocked it. It was a matter of nationalism on the one hand and the absorption of revolution by means of war on the other: these were the two main ideological axes that underpinned Le Corbusier’s antagonistic interpretation of architecture in France and Germany as of 1910.59

In 1914, after witnessing the devastation of the first months of World War I, Jeanneret

began designing the *DomINO House*, building on the ideas of the type that he had gleaned from his studies in Germany. The plan was a modular unit that would become the template for his architectural types, a glossary of modern building materials. These architectural types were all pre-fabricated. The base material was concrete, and the components accompanying this structural and practical material were windows, doors and structural columns. The project had been discussed previously with his childhood friend Max DuBois, but the war advanced a formal proposal of the project. This endeavor represents Jeanneret’s first attempt to merge the social and aesthetic concerns of the era, one where the built environment met the domestic needs of its inhabitants’ directly.

The basic design of the *Dom-ino House* was a square free-plan comprised of reinforced concrete slabs overlain on columns, with an exposed staircase (fig. 23). The *Dom-ino House* also employed reusable formwork (molds), a huge innovation that brought savings in both time and materials. The *Dom-ino House* was a single-family dwelling that could be stacked to create a multi-family configuration or complex. Eleanor Gregh argues that, “the *Dom-ino* system so liberates the elements of architecture from the exigencies of structural necessity as to reduce to a minimum the limits on the architect’s freedom to design both functionally and aesthetically.”⁶⁰ Jeanneret’s new form of architecture, like Purism in painting, involved the establishment of basic standard units or types that distilled design to its essential form.

The use of the object-type in architecture meant that the house would be constructed from parts, both symbolic and practical, that would form a whole. These parts or types, like the object-type, would be dictated by the inhabitant. Jeanneret’s

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architectural types, like the Purist object-types, were readily available and factory produced. The early architectural types seen in the Dom-ino design are: cast concrete, structural columns (specifically placed to allow for an open-plan), and large swathes of glazing, also enabled by the structural columns (fig. 24). Doors and windows would not just be factory produced, but industrial in aesthetic as well. The interiors were an extension of the unadorned exteriors, featuring the object-types of Purist painting, devoid of unnecessary embellishment. These objects of use would hold their own coefficient of beauty through design. The house would serve as a tableau, a symbolic emblem of domestic development that fused social concerns with type-needs through a shared visual language of attainable materials.

The Dom-ino House also embodied a confluence of the domestic and industrial spheres. Gregh asserts that with this design Jeanneret proclaimed that the “alliance between the engineer (master of the new economic constructional techniques) and the architect (master of proportion) can be the means of effecting a transformation in domestic building.”61 All the elements of the house were to be factory produced, and afterward the main components (slab, columns, windows, stairs) would be installed by specialized workers. This model also gave the inhabitant agency, seeing as clients could then complete the remaining interior construction themselves by adjusting non-loadbearing walls as they saw fit (fig. 25). This attempt at architectural standardization outlined the problems facing the role of the architect and the future of architecture, drawing a direct line from Jeanneret’s earlier exploration of types in Germany. As Stavrinaki established, “the Werkbund’s objectives were twofold: it sought social


10 Stavrinaki, “Big Flower, Small Root: Germany, War and Revolution According to Le Corbusier,” 164.
reconciliation on a national scale, and, at an international level, it strove to secure commercial domination for Germany.”

Through his use of the ideology of the object-type as a series of architectural types, Jeanneret aimed to accomplish the same positioning for French reconstruction. Given that the design was meant to be stacked or combined in multiple units and groupings, it positions collective identity as a potential result of urban planning, wherein the urban denizen becomes a type as well.

The Dom-ino House introduced concrete as one of Jeanneret’s key architectural types; its implementation was one of the democratizing principles of his model for postwar reconstruction. He viewed concrete not only as practical solution, but a stylistic one. Passanti explains, “Since the turn of the century, the French discourse about reinforced concrete saw the architectural problem of concrete precisely as one of defining the cladding, not as one of displaying the frame.”

In 1913 the French architect Auguste Perret (whom Jeanneret worked with in 1908) lent Jeanneret a copy of Adolf Loos’s recently translated “Ornament or Crime” and “Architecture.” In these essays Loos denounced ornamentation as symptomatic of “degeneracy.” In “Architecture,” he claimed, “The path of culture leads away from ornamentation to unadorned plainness. The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use.” Jeanneret followed this dictum by employing unadorned concrete as his principal building material.

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63 Passanti, "Architecture: Proportion, Classicism and Other Issues,” 95.

64 Passanti, "Architecture: Proportion, Classicism and Other Issues,” 89.

Loos was probably another source for Jeanneret’s understanding of architecture as an evolution of, or container for, type-needs. He wrote, “A building should please everyone, unlike a work of art, which does not have to please anyone. A work of art is a private matter for the artist, a building is not. A work of art is brought into the world without there being a need for it, a building meets a need.”  

The influence these essays is made apparent in Jeanneret’s later rejection of the instability of Cubism in “Après Cubism” (and subsequently in painting), and his embrace of simplified and spare designs for buildings. He sought to remove aesthetic excess and imbue the new era of architecture and art with a purified vision for the future, a moralistic and esthetic approach to everyday life. Jeanneret’s use of concrete can be credited directly to his work with Perret (a foremost proponent of the material in France). Kenneth Frampton describes the dialectic between ancient and modern as a topical issue the Purists later grappled with. This issue can be retraced to the architecture of Perret, who, Frampton claims, “saw the concrete frame as the sole agent which was capable of resolving that one hundred and fifty year old conflict between the structural authenticity of the Gothic and the immutable values of classical form.”

Although never realized by Jeanneret in his lifetime, the Dom-in House became


67 It is also worth noting that, when Jeanneret moved to Paris in 1917, he served as an architectural consultant for S.A.B.A. (Société des applications de béton armé) a company owned by Du Bois that manufactured concrete for national defense projects. Around this time, Jeanneret also founded S.E.I.E. (Societe d’Entreprises Industrielles et Études), a small concrete block factory. Although the use of reinforced concrete would become ubiquitous as a modern building material and synonymous with Jeanneret’s work, these initial endeavors had little success, as both fell into finical misfortunes. After he met Ozenfant and established Purism, part of his goal, especially with the parallel textual and creative practices, was to establish himself as an intellectual and an artist, and to separate himself from these earlier failed enterprises.

the prototype for many future designs. In the *Dom-ino House* Jeanneret introduced his main architectural types (concrete, columns, glazing) which were analogous to the standard shapes used in Purist painting to construct object-types, and credited earlier to Cézanne in “Sur la Plastique” (“On the Plastic”).69 He established them retroactively as “primary forms” in “Trois rappels à MM. les Architects” (“Three Reminders to Architects”), published in the first issue of *L’esprit nouveau* in October, 1920. In the section titled “First Reminder: Mass” Jeanneret proclaims,

> Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are made to see forms in light; light and shade reveal these forms; cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders or pyramids are the great primary forms which light reveals to advantage; the image of these is distinct and tangible within us and without ambiguity.70

Jeanneret thus expanded the model of these Cézannian bases to architecture by claiming that ideas of economy, scale, and proportion could apply equally to the construction of a painting or a home. A year later in the July 1921 issue of *L’Esprit nouveau*, he made a nearly identical assertion in the essay “Des Yeux qui ne Voient Pas: III Les Autos” (“Eyes Which Do Not See: III Automobiles”):

> In architecture, the quantum of interest is achieved by the grouping and proportion of rooms and furniture; a task for the architect. And beauty? This is an imponderable which cannot function except in the actual presence of its primordial bases: the reasonable satisfaction of the mind (utility, economy); after that, cubes, spheres, cylinders, cones, etc. (sensorial).71


These ideas of economy and efficiency in production, and the implementation of the object-type in architecture, were undoubtedly influenced by contemporary programs of systematized labor, which had a huge impact on American and European industrialization. As Mary McLeod asserts, “Le Corbusier was arguing for an expansion of the very conception of the architect's role to embrace the consideration of social problems. Taylorism and new industrial methods were the only way the architect could continue to be relevant in a society threatened with potential destruction.”72 The embrace of these techniques was an embrace of efficiency both formally and technically. Kirk Varnedoe explains the appeal of managerial methods by observing that this is, a major tool for social reform. In Europe especially, the war had provoked revulsion against the era of liberal capitalism that had led up to it. And a technique to help eliminate the waste and conflict of that era’s laissez-faire individualism initially seemed a salutary step toward shaping a society that would be more harmonious as well as more productive.73 McLeod explains how Jeanneret expressed his ardent interest in these strategies through his writing. She notes, “The word “Taylorism” appears in almost every one of his books from Après le cubisme (1918) to La Ville radieuse (1935); Ville Contemporaine and Plan Voisin, premised upon speed, efficiency, and economy, were architectural visions of the American industrial utopia made manifest.”74 Jeanneret’s designs fused Darwinism and Taylorism, the factory and the market, evolution and standardization in design, all of which he believed were led by consumer-driven needs.


74 McLeod, "Architecture or Revolution": Taylorism, Technocracy, and Social Change,” 133.
The roots of Taylorism’s appeal in France had been sown by the theorist Henri de Saint-Simon in the nineteenth century. Like the Purists would do later, Saint-Simon praised the engineer, efficiency, and a form of socialism that was reflected in Jeanneret’s larger scale housing projects. In the same way that the Purist painting was meant to be legible, the Purist home was meant to be for the common man. This socialist interest was manifested in architecture through simplified design and the use of affordable, reproducible parts. In addition, these management models unquestionably held a similar appeal to the guidelines of the object-type, as readily employable building blocks.

Jeanneret expanded on these ideas to use the Purist object-type as the foundation for a system of construction that moved Cézanne’s shapes (or bases) into concepts (or types) and would transport his ideology from two to three dimensions. The Citrohan House, conceived by Jeanneret between 1920-22, spoke directly to these interests in industrial design and in the concepts of “speed, efficiency, and economy” embodied by Taylorism (fig. 26). Drawings of the house first appeared in the December 1921 issue of L’Esprit nouveau, in the article “Esthétique de L’Ingénieur Maison en Série,” later reprinted in Towards a New Architecture as “Mass-Production Houses” (fig. 27). Modeled on the basic structure of the Dom-ino House, conceptual framework of the Citrohan House issued from the Purist object-type by emphasizing utility, form and function. The Citrohan House differed from the Dom-ino House in that it featured a double-height living room. It otherwise presented similar foundations. The proposal included a free-plan, columns sited into reinforced concrete slabs, and relatively spare interiors (fig. 28).

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The *Citrohan House* also included large expanses of glazing. The open plan and horizontal windows were to serve as framing devices for the objects-types contained in the home, much like the painted canvases of the Purists populated by the requisite object-types, which presented a cropped view of domestic tranquility and order.

The name of this design was a deliberate play on the popular French car manufacturer Citroën, meant to evoke ideas about speed and efficiency in opposition to the calm and stillness of a home. Jeanneret understood the house as a stationary object much like the Purist still-life. In contrast, he claimed in “Des Yeux qui ne Voient Pas”: III Les Autos” that the automobile “is an object with a simple function (to travel) and complicated aims (comfort, resistance, appearance), which has forced on big industry the absolute necessity of standardization.” He understood these evolutions in design as a result of a process standardization that could apply to any type of construction, be it a building or an automobile. In the article, he illustrated an example of the Doric temple in juxtaposition to the Delage automobile to describe how a process of refinement yields something classic, if not classical (fig. 29). Here he could claim that the house was linked to the temple, both of which had been built on standards, but shaped by use.

This juxtaposition of ancient and industrial made a symbolic suggestion that anything constructed of standards and refined by societal needs could be understood as a vernacular-type or archetype. Jeanneret’s conception of the object-type in painting as an example of a contemporary model of collective identity and an embodiment of ideals and industry dovetailed with his equation of architecture and automobile technology. This

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idea about the potential understanding of types was likely influenced by Werkbund ideology. As Passanti explains,

by conflating the two discourses in the term Typisierung, Muthesius bestowed on the products of industry the same ability to embody organic culture that vernacular types were deemed to have, thus enlisting in support of expanding industrialization concepts originally advanced by those who would rather contain it…Le Corbusier caught well the range of Muthesius’s argument and condensed the whole-industry, temples, and all into two iconic pages of his book Vers une architecture.78

In the Citrohan House, Jeanneret applied the notion of “domestic economy” that he later codified in Towards a New Architecture. In line with the rejection of ornamentation that “Après le cubisme” called for in the plastic arts, Jeanneret denigrated deluxe objects in the home. This aversion was surely influenced by Loos, but Jeanneret had also taken notes from Thorstein Veblen’s Theory of the Leisure Class, 1899 which outlined an inverse relationship between labor and leisure. As Briony Fer notes,

Veblen’s was a theory of commodity consumption which stigmatized decoration by allying it to the leisure classes’ (unconscious) desire to display what he called ‘conspicuous waste’ – to show they were consumers without being producers, leisured and thus untarnished by the world of productive labor.79

As Jeanneret and Ozenfant had sought to demonstrate, the refined aesthetic of the object-type was a moralizing model for architecture as well. In fact, the Citrohan House reveals that Jeanneret wanted a home to function in the same way as a car, built for performance,


leading to his famous dictum that the house is “a machine for living in.” This is Purist language par excellence; a reminder of the object-type as a treatise on painting, devoid of excess embellishment.

The use of the object-type in architecture actualized the Purist proposition of standardization by creating a system based on type needs and attainable materials. Like the *Dom-in House* and *Citrohan House*, the *Ville Contemporaine* (1922) was an unrealized project, but a much more ambitious attempt to achieve the goal of renewal through the use of architectural types in modular construction (figs. 30-32). An un-sited concept, it could be adapted to many urban zones. It contained a cluster of skyscrapers, with both office and residential areas. Green space surrounded the buildings, with clear divisions between vehicular and ambulatory routes. The basic units were loosely established from the *Dom-in*, and in turn the *Citrohan House*, comprised of concrete columns and glazing. Jeanneret’s first presented the *Ville Contemporaine* (“Contemporary City for Three Million Inhabitants”) at the Salon d'Automne in 1922. This vision for the future borrows indiscriminately from the past, particularly from the garden city movement popularized by Ebenezer Howard in England and promoted by Georges Benoit-Lévy in France. In Jeanneret’s plan, the use of modern industrial materials and repetition of standard forms mimics the blueprint for the object-type in painting, but the scale and objective moves it from the private house to take on greater dimension in the public sphere.

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The Ville Contemporaine elaborated on the single units of the Dom-ino House and Citrohan House designs to constitute an entire city made up of stacked vertical and horizontal cells. This design represents an evolutionary extension of the object-type by constructing more complex structures from modular units. Nonetheless, at its very basic, this design still called upon Jeanneret’s earlier interests in primary forms, which here become the object-types of architecture. As Carol S. Eliel describes,

At the heart of this ordered environment lie “horizontals…pyramids, spheres and cylinders”—exactly those forms that Corbusier exalted in the architecture of antiquity and on which he based even his earliest paintings and drawings. True order is achieved when these pure geometrical forms are repeated as modular units, which Le Corbusier referred to as “cells.” This repetition of a basic architectural form is required to give unity and coherence to the city. 82

The effect of these “cell cities,” Jeanneret contended, would bring a collective or unified sense of order and peace, just as the object-type brought to painting. He believed in the redemptive value of architecture as an organizing principle for the demands of an increasingly urban populace, and felt that order was beauty, and that beauty would yield peace. This ideology had its origins in the founding principles of Purism and its materialization as a response to the sociological conditions of post-war France and the aesthetic conditions of Cubism. In the essay “Esthétique de L’Ingénieur Maison en Série,” 1921, Jeanneret synthesizes this argument, claiming this approach to urban planning as symbolic of efficiency on both a micro and macro level. He writes, “Mass-production is not an obstacle to Architecture. On the contrary, it brings unity and

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perfection in detail and offers variety in the mass." The shift for Jeanneret from painting to architecture helped him to institutionalize the object-type; his desire for purity and reproducibility became synthesized through a modern vision that would revolutionize design.

Through modular construction, an architecture geared toward mass reproduction, Jeanneret could move the social ideals of the object-type from theory into practice. As Nina Rosenblatt suggests,

One might argue, in fact, that therein lay its [the object-type’s] appeal as a rationale for a modern aesthetic: as a rhetorical readymade, the mass subject of aesthetic speculation was a given, a commonplace that needed no specific source or systematic explanation. Its very banality provided suitable ballast for the loftier and more extravagant claims made by Le Corbusier and others to have discovered a style that could encompass the totality of modern life. Along with the myth of the machine, the mass individual allowed Le Corbusier to insist that an essential human condition united the type-object the private villa, and the urban plan.

Through the object-type Jeanneret analyzed modern subjectivity in order to translate societal conditions into compositional strategies for urban design. Marybeth Shaw notes, “If one imagines a spectrum which places "realism" at one extreme and "utopianism" at the other, the [Ville Contemporaine] would sit definitively in the realm of utopian urban designs. It was an abstract invention for a new city form.”

These projects demonstrate the intersection of the utilitarian and utopian that became emblematic of Jeanneret’s architecture (as Le Corbusier). In 1923, in Towards a New Architecture, he declared,


Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituent elements of the house...If we...look at the question from a critical and objective point of view, we shall arrive at the ‘House-Machine’, the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too) and beautiful in the same way that the working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful.86

This quote demonstrates the role of the object-type for Jeanneret, developing his interests in architecture beyond the structural. By using these standards, the painter or architect was free from previous limitations of engineering and could create new models that endorsed progress and order through industry.

The stringent guidelines of Purism established the object-type as a standardized unit made of reproducible elements, which in the case of painting encompassed mainly containers and string instruments. For Jeanneret, the object-types and the concepts that informed them could shift mediums, and he expanded these articles of everyday use to the construction elements that constituted a house. The object-type led Jeanneret toward a singular design philosophy that incorporated Purism’s primary forms and object-types into a set of construction values, which he codified in his 1926 publication “Five Principles of a New Architecture.” The text formalized a set of guidelines that had been in development since his earliest work in Switzerland.

These principles became for Jeanneret and his disciples the foundations of modern architecture: 1. Pilotis, or structural columns used to elevate the building off the ground; 2. Free plan, or the separation of load-bearing columns from exterior walls. 3. Free façade, bound to the independent exterior and interior structures; 4. Horizontal windows, implying that, without structural requirements the façade could support a strip of windows providing even illumination throughout a room; 5. Roof garden that replaced

the green space lost to the footprint of the house. For Jeanneret, the object-type, like the elements defined in these Five Principles, amounted to a way of looking at architecture through its constituent parts. He believed that architects could employ this set of defined components based on principles of industry and ethics as a standardized practice. Thus, as the object-type created a repeatable building block for painting, the Five Principles were implemented towards the creation of a systematized and affordable approach to building.

The Five Principles also consolidated Jeanneret’s desire to create an alliance between architecture and industry. Similar to the object-type of Purist paintings, the model suggested by Jeanneret with the Five Principles had both practical applications and ideological relevance. The objects produced under the Purist dictates extended from human needs but were described by the lack of human hand since they were mechanically produced. The house, understood as a controlled environment, followed the same tenets of the object-type. It became a platonic form; a vessel shaped by use and need. Jeanneret conceptually converted the motifs of Purist painting into the geometry of a living space. These components were easily manufactured i.e. reproducible and much like the Picardy glass and the Bordeaux bottle, whose shapes were honed by use. As Stavrinaki explains,

Le Corbusier kept apart what the Bauhaus combined. If the former distinguished between the forms stemming from machines and the sphere of pure art, the latter, it was claimed, would provide industry with 'nothing', that is, as Le Corbusier would write…with 'decorators who are an undesirable and superfluous quantity'. In the Darwinist world, or more precisely, in the Taylorist world of after 1918, superfluous properties eliminated themselves, inasmuch as the factory and the market knew how to reject what could not be assimilated for their functioning. Things had clearly changed since the inception of the war.87

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The disorder of the postwar period was the common conceptual ground of Jeanneret and Ozenfant’s collaborative efforts but their eventual schism in 1925 centered on medium, as Jeanneret forged ahead in architecture and Ozenfant continued to ground his practice on canvas. Ozenfant encouraged Jeanneret to paint, but ultimately Jeanneret was a constructor and the mandate for housing after the war led Jeanneret away from creating still-lifes of reproducible objects to conceptualizing a home made of reproducible parts. Although he continued to make paintings and would go on to produce murals (in tandem with architectural projects) throughout his life, after the Purist period his primary focus was architecture. In his hands, the object-type transitioned from subject matter to rubric, the foundation of a system of production meant to define modern man and his accessories. The object-type also continued to hold a social (or symbolic) significance, as demonstrated by the projects described in this chapter, homes that, for the architect, upheld the values of simplicity, efficiency, and progress. The concept of the object-type helped him to develop prototypes that he envisioned as mass-producible, utilizing modern innovations and efficiency.
CHAPTER III

The Object-Type from Painting to Film: Fragment of the Real

Did you know what a foot was before seeing it live in a shoe, under a table, on the screen? It is as moving as a face. Before this invention, you never had the shadow of an idea about the personality of fragments. Cinema gives “the fragment” personality; it sits in a frame, and thereby creates a “new realism” whose implications may be incalculable.88 Fernand Léger, 1933

This chapter analyzes the object-type’s extension from painting into cinema, specifically Fernand Léger’s 1923-24 film Ballet mécanique (Mechanical Ballet). Léger’s writing and paintings during the Purist period provide an entry point into the film made with composer George Antheil and Dudley Murphy, and with assistance of Ezra Pound and Man Ray. The paintings that guide this analysis are Men in The City, 1919 and The Mechanic, 1920 (fig. 33 and see fig. 21). Both works demonstrate a keen interest in the ways in which industry and capitalism had begun to shape society and subjectivity through the dissemination of mass-produced objects.

Léger, following the war, in which he served as a sapper in Argonne from 1914-1916, experimented with abstraction and figuration in concert. He was also interested in standardization and used geometric forms throughout his oeuvre to symbolize both ancient and industrial standards of production. Through the object-type, he discovered a tool that would help him communicate these concerns and bridge mediums. Ultimately, through film, Léger came to communicate the potential of the object-type in a direct manner, without overt stylization.

The paintings Léger worked on during the Purist period reflect his interest in expressing the reality of urban life without recourse to total abstraction. *Men in The City* specifically uses cinematic techniques of contrast, cropping and montage to translate the hastened nature of urban existence onto the flat space of the picture plane. *The Mechanic*, in turn, demonstrates a marked shift after meeting the Purists. Léger’s interest in cinema as a medium and an ideological tool to connect the tenets of Purism had far-reaching implications on the idea of the object-type.

To begin with, Léger used technology as a device to communicate the immediate sensations of urban life without relying on any strict or familiar form of visual realism. Trained as an architect, he worked as a draftsman until he took up painting in earnest in his mid-twenties. In 1909, at the age of twenty-eight, he moved to Paris from his native Normandy. By this time, artists had turned the grand European tradition of representation on its head. History painting and the narrative, allegorical canvases of the past had no place in a world where objects and optics were mechanically reproducible, so he faced new artistic challenges. As Anna Vallye explains,

> The real question for Léger was how to make, through the most direct and uncompromising “objective” confrontation with present-day life, an art form that was not an imitation of that reality but rather its “equivalent,” addressing modernity on its own terms and even “competing” with it. His solution was to treat modernity not as subject matter, but as “raw material,” so that one could almost employ street signs, bowler hats, bottles, wheels, and gears in the same way as one would employ oil paint.  

Vallye outlines how Léger deployed modern consumer culture as a means of communicating ideas about subjectivity, suggesting that he believed modernity conflated objectivity and subjectivity by encouraging individuals to see themselves in commodities.

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Léger’s object-types, which Vallye points to as “street signs, bowler hats, bottles, wheels, and gears,” were not only signifiers of needs, but also of latent desire. He used them to expose new and modern appetites.

In 1921 Léger and Jeanneret were included in a show at Léonce Rosenberg’s Galerie de l’Effort Moderne, titled *Les Maîtres du Cubisme* (Masters of Cubism). Ozenfant later recalled that, at this time, Léger,

> was ripe for the appreciation of Purist conceptions, being one of the first to realize that we were not suggesting that painting should imitate our own, but were advocating vigour, honesty, objectivity. From 1920 on, his paintings, vivid in color, have grown more and more into valiant odes to the “modern object.”

Ozenfant suggests that although Léger’s paintings do not resemble Purist still-lives, they evoke the ideals of Purism because they laude objects themselves. Léger put the object-type at the service of the medium in a way that differed from that of Ozenfant and Jeanneret, whose discrete depictions of everyday objects muted their unique qualities. Instead Léger used a technique that prized the formal arrangements of object-types as means to overcome the sentimentality he felt that realism often embraced, as he sought to convey the immediacy of modern life.

For Léger, narrative painting was not just overly emotional; it was *retardataire*. The object-type helped him position his work as part of a modern dialectic. In the 1925 essay “La machine esthétique: ordre géométrique et vérité” (“The Machine Aesthetic: Geometric Order and Truth”) he explained,

> The painter is caught between a realistic figure and an invented figure, which become the objective and the subjective...It is necessary to retain what is useful in the subject and to extract from it the best part possible. I

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try to create a *beautiful object* with mechanical elements. To create the beautiful object in painting means breaking with sentimental painting.\(^{91}\)

Like Ozenfant and Jeanneret, Léger sought a distillation process to render only the essential or “useful” parts of the subject. The object-type, because of its inherent legibility, helped him overcome sentimentality in favor of the simultaneity that characterized urban life.

The modern metropolis challenged the post-World War I painter to transform its dizzying pace into a flat two-dimensional space. *Men in the City* (1919) embodied Léger’s conception that the art of modern life was not merely representational, but rather, it reproduced the sensations and animated nature of the city (see fig. 33). This painting also emphasized Léger’s interest, much like the Purists’s, in the use of silhouette to trace formal links between men and machines. The title is already an indication that this a painting about the body in the built environment, and this symbiotic relationship is made explicit by his use of the same forms to describe both humans and machines, fusing instead of juxtaposing the two. Léger corroborates this claim later in “L’esthétique de la machine: ordre géométrique et vérité:”

> In the search for vividness and intensity, I have made use of the machine as others have used the nude body or the still life…The manufactured object is there, a polychrome absolute, clean and precise, beautiful in itself; and it is the most terrible competition the artist has even been subjected to.\(^{92}\)

*Men in the City* describes the new world with chunky overlapping shapes and matte color. The “man” in the foreground is ambiguous, a machine or a mannequin constructed from wedge shapes on one side and more rounded hollow forms on the other, with his


neck modeled out of a metal tube rising into a Brancusi-esque recessed face. Brancusi during this period was also examining ways to depict the body or the bodily through his own version of a machine aesthetic wherein the cold materiality of marble and bronze merged with his abstracted forms to communicate an individualized vision of modernity. In Léger’s vision of this hybridization, or formal contamination, the lower half of the man fades away, morphing into a gridded form that could be a traffic sign, a windowpane, an advertisement, or a series of abstract shapes. Both this man and the figure at left, composed of a few volumetric, tube-like shapes merely hinting at human form, demonstrate that abstraction has nearly erased the body, effectively fusing man with machine.

The detritus of war on a social, structural, and emotional level made the body of the first half of the twentieth century come into view in different ways. War left an indelible pock of technology’s destructive power on the body. Men at the fronts witnessed its damage first-hand and citizens of the metropolis in-turn beheld men who had fallen victim to weapons technology to be rehabilitated by the technology of the prosthesis. Epilepsy, nervous ticks, and hysterical convulsions became visible signs of shell shock. Examples of uncontrollable urges and deviant biology were depicted by German Neue Sachlichkeit painters through a version of hyper-realism, while other modernist painters moved away from reality altogether, embracing chance and the unconscious and joining Dada and Surrealism. The object-type helped Léger render a distinct form of embodiment that relied on both representation and abstraction. He used shapes and symbols to construct bodies made of component parts, like a wounded soldier
stitched back together, a worker merging with his work, or a man becoming an advertisement.93

Léger spoke of his time spent at war as an experience with mechanization, and it is likely that his ideas about the ways in which the body became implicated by tools of warfare influenced his perception of the body in relation to the urban environment. For Léger, the uneasy atmosphere created by the wake of war was a culture of strident color, commodity, and alienation. In a 1938 essay titled “Couleur dans le monde” (“Color in the World”), he wrote,

The man of 1921, having returned to normal life, retains inside himself the physical and moral tension of the harsh war years. He is changed; economic struggles have replaced the battles at the front. Manufacturers and merchants face each other brandishing color as a weapon of advertising. An unprecedented, confused riot of color explodes on the walls. No curb, no law has come to temper this overheated atmosphere that shatters the retina, blinds us, and drives us mad.94

Through his distinctive implementation of the object-type, Léger intended to communicate what it felt like to be a citizen of this modern metropolis, a place where objects and people were constantly in conversation thanks to shop windows, advertisements, the arcades, etc). Men in the City demonstrates this sensation of anonymity amidst the morass of color and a shift from subjectivity to objectivity that was a result of economic and social revolutions occurring in post-WWI industrialized societies. This liminal space, where people and technology were constantly in contrast, became Léger’s subject matter after his return from the front.


The elements of Purist painting, especially the object-type, became useful tools to communicate the new ways in which Léger envisioned the body as a mechanized series of parts that make up a whole. Danny Marcus describes the socio-economic conditions that contributed to these phenomenological experiences of disembodiment brought on by modernity as such:

Capitalism was seen as a source of cultural dynamism, an engine of new modes of subjective experience. One of these modes...was to become nobody in particular: to merge with the crowd, to renge on the obligation to be an individual. It should be remembered that the possibility of faceless life was openly supported by 20th-century capitalism, which accepted token demonstrations of subjective belonging in exchange for relative freedom in the arena of bodily intensity.  

For Léger, the object-type emphasized a relationship between the body and the city, and facilitated a synthesis of abstraction and figuration. This formal strategy spoke to the fragmenting and restless nature of modern life and one can say that Léger was purifying the metropolis like the Purists purified the Cubist still-life. In his hands the detritus of war (excrement, blood, organs, etc.) became clean, metal, flat, bright, shiny and merchandisable.

Seeing as the Purist still-life issued nearly wholesale from the shop window filled with the new industrial products of daily life, Léger recognized the object-type as a capitalist readymade. He saw these objects as framing devices both in art and life. For him, this process meant making something seen and known. Léger acknowledged this in his essay “Notes sur l'élément mécanique” (‘Notes on the Mechanical Element’), written in 1923:

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There are window displays, absolutely perfect modern compositions, impossible to make use of; they are no longer raw materials but finished works. It becomes then a question of numbers, for if this production answered human demand, there would be nothing left to do. They answer a need, they retail art.  

In *Men in The City*, a man at far right appears only in profile, his face filled with solid blue color, and his body merely suggested by one simple continuous line. The flatness and graphic qualities of the figure, and other elements of the painting, recall modern-day advertisements. This depiction turns man himself into a commodity (an object of desire or projection) drawing our attention to the empowerment of the object at the expense of the human subject. Tag Gronberg notes:

> In a manner similar to that of Le Corbusier, Léger lauded the shop-window displays for their didactic potential, in particular their ability to draw attention to ordinary, everyday commodities. Like Le Corbusier, he dismissed the “deluxe object,” which he saw as part of a misconceived system based on a “hierarchy of objects.” For Léger the shop window’s staging of the commodity was not dissimilar to modern cinema’s projection of the image: both made the previously unacknowledged or overlooked seen. Both Léger and Le Corbusier were concerned to remedy the problem of “eyes which do not see.” But where Le Corbusier sustained the Loosian demand for unobtrusive components of modern life, Léger celebrated the concept of urban spectacle.

The figures in *Men in the City* are part of this spectacle. They are nameless and faceless in the crowd, flattened and without personality. They have become absorbed into the packed space of the city, where facades become anthropomorphized and bodies become mechanized.

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Léger made his hybrid figures contiguous with the trappings of city life, where mechanical and phenomenological excess represent the dual nature of modern existence. As references to systemized labor in the previous chapter suggest, in capitalist society the worker had similarly become identified by his work. Léger addressed this idea in *The Mechanic*, suggesting that individuals embodied the machines in the factories where they worked and the ones they used daily in their homes (see fig. 21). This modern laborer, despite his accoutrements (cigarette, rings, tattoo), remains nondescript, a type rather than an individual, because of the simplified and recognized forms the artist uses to construct him. Léger’s approach both elevated and obscured the worker. His figures alluded to the sociological phenomena of the working class, its production, and consumption. But typologizing these figures in a manner similar to the Purist object-types, also suggests the ways in which machines had begun to mediate the body and become implicit in the construction of subjectivity. In *Ballet mécanique* Léger employs the object-type to tell a story about the lyrical relationship between man and machine, going so far as to draw a metaphor between the two. He creates a direct line between type-needs and object-types by employing the object-type as a symbolic synthesis of human needs and desires.

In his painting, *The Mechanic*, Léger’s translation of the object-type also signals the melding of worker and mechanized world. His upright body and the sharp angles of his pose connect with the factory and abstract forms behind him. The cigarette and the flattened smoke circles echo the smokestack of the factory to his left. Lines in the background mimic a road or assembly line belt. These pared-down graphics resonate with the architectural constructions of Jeanneret, who like Léger wished to distill the urban environment down to its most essential elements. They also evoke the silhouetted object-
types of the later Purist period. Briony Fer further explains that Léger’s painting demonstrates, “the way in which a concern with the formal order of a painting, the use of geometric form and pattern, can refer to traditional artistic categories and at the same time to a view of modernity in which forms are standardized, translated into the norms of mass-production,” much like the object-type.98

A language of formal binaries (black, white and primary; flat and voluminous) describes Léger’s practice. He made use of colors and shapes in contrast to one another to draw attention to the disjointed, frenzied, yet beautiful nature of modern life. Claiming the “law of contrasts,” he stated in 1923, “I group contrary values together; flat surfaces opposed to modeled surfaces; volumetric figures opposed to the flat facades of houses; molded volumes of plumes of smoke opposed to the active surfaces of architecture; pure, flat tones opposed to gray, modulated tones or the reverse.”99 For Léger the “law of contrasts” aimed to create a visual dialectic. He saw these juxtapositions, specifically between bodies and machines, as a phenomenon of his time, but he also understood there were increasing overlaps between the two. Léger used this technique to point to disjuncture, as opposed to the harmony the Purists extolled with the concept of “common contour,” but he also used it to fuse oppositional objects and subjects.

The “law of contrasts” was one way Léger translated his ideas about the object-type from painting to film. In *Ballet mécanique* he implemented this technique to demonstrate a relationship between pattern and production. Léger also used juxtaposition in *Ballet mécanique* to push his philosophical concerns about the tenuous relationship

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between subjects and objects through his framing of the object-type as a character. He understood the relationship between machines and humans ultimately as fragile, but saw the potential of cinema as a reifying medium, a way of bringing new life to the mundane and every day by focusing on aspects in the city that often get ignored. Through cinematic devices Léger’s *Ballet mécanique* communicated a non-narrative account of the sensations of modern life.

In his writing, Léger explicated his interest in the potential of cinema as a medium capable of fusing disparate modes of subjectivity. This transpires in an essay he wrote for film-maker Abel Gance, who in 1922 commissioned Léger to write a review of his influential film *La Roue* (The Wheel). In this text, Léger suggests that Gance established that cinema, previously interpreted as “almost completely descriptive, sentimental, and documentary,” could share qualities of fine art such as “the fragmentation of the object, the intrinsic plastic value of the object.”

His analysis draws attention to the ways in which cinema can accurately describe the sensations of modern life by elevating and aestheticizing commonplace objects:

> The mere fact of projection of the image already defines the object, which becomes spectacle...You will see moving images presented like a picture, centered on the screen with a judicious range in the balance of still and moving parts (the contrast of effects); a still figure on a machine that is moving, a modulated hand in contrast to a geometric mass, circular forms, abstract forms, the interplay of curves and straight lines (contrast of lines), dazzling, wonderful, a moving geometry that astonishes you.

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Léger saw cinema as a medium that could translate a subjective experience into an objective one. His review explains that cinema produces “the projected image,” and thus, that the medium is not tasked with replicating the natural environment. Instead its value lies in,

*making images seen*…80 percent of the elements and objects that help us to live are only noticed by us in our everyday lives, while 20 percent *are seen*. From this, I deduce the cinematographic revolution is *to make us see everything that has been merely noticed*...The dog that goes by in the street is only noticed. Projected on the screen, it is seen, so much so that the whole audience reacts as if it discovered the dog.102

Léger saw distraction and desensitization as symptoms of modern existence that required remediation. He believed framing attention was one way in which the artist, through technology, could interplay relationships between subjective and objective experience and return agency to the audience. By making things merely “noticed,” or seen, isolated objects become invested with a sense of importance and the everyday is exalted. In this sense, the object-type was an intrinsic element of Léger’s cinematic vision.

For Léger, the ultimate potential of cinema manifested in the invention of the actor-object, according to a unique take on the object-type that merged technology (as a subject) and framing (as a technique). This idea crystallized the moment in *La Roue* when “the mechanical element plays a major role, and where the machine becomes the leading character, the leading actor.” He describes this moment as a “plastic state (referring to painting/sculpture) …presented to us through an infinite variety of methods, from every aspect: close-ups, fixed or moving mechanical fragments, projected at a heightened speed that approaches the state of simultaneity and that crushes and eliminates the human

102 Ibidem.
object, reduces its interests, pulverizes it.”103 This actor-object, like the object-type, disavows narrative description. It describes the conditions under which an object becomes a subject, when a symbol becomes invested with so much meaning that it performs, as an actor would.

The idea of the actor-object unmistakably originates from Purist language, in which Léger was deeply immersed by now. In addition to Léger’s writing for various publications, which dovetailed with Purist ideas about the intrinsic value, both plastic and theoretical of the object, his art and writing also appeared in *L’Esprit Nouveau*. In Issue no. 4 (January 1921), Maurice Raynal wrote about his work in an article titled “Fernand Léger,” noting that in his pre-war work his use of bold forms and colors was a reaction to Impressionism and Realism. In issue no. 13 (December 1921), Ozenfant’s review of “Le Salon d’Automne” equates Léger’s painting *Le Grand Déjeuner* (1921) to a modern ship in terms of comparable and proportional elegance.104 For the final issue no. 28 (January 1925) Léger created a poetic outline of his and Murphy’s film in the article “Ballet Mécanique” (fig. 35-36).

In his cinematic work, Léger promoted a correspondence between the formal devices used in painting and technical aspects of filming and post-production. Montage became an important tool that facilitated a compression of time and space and helped replicate the sensations of the metropolis. He described it as a “purposeful contrast through slow motion and speed up.” As he wrote, montage “aims to work out in the


104 Written under the pseudonym Fayet.
movies an interest in the isolated object on the screen, as well as in painting." The City, a related painting to Men in The City from the same year, draws attention to overlaps between the two mediums with relation to montage (fig. 34). This is an idea that has been elaborated recently by Vallye who has claimed that,

the rapid “cuts” from foreground to background, combined with the prevalence of black and white hues, invite comparisons to cinematic montage… The painting also evokes other arts that call for collective reception in an urban context. In spite of its conventional medium and support, Léger retrospectively identified The City as a “mural painting,” oriented to the public space of the street.

In addition, the scale of The City (91 x 117 ½ in.) is an unambiguous nod to the movie screen. The visual emphasis on simultaneity in his painting, and its relationship with film, marked a way forward for Léger to elaborate his vision of the object-type.

In Léger’s hands, the technologies of film gave the object-type new dimensions, allowing him to present a simulation of the urban experience that was mitigated by the banality of the subject-matter. In 1924 Léger wrote “Le Spectacle: Lumières, Couleur, Images en mouvement, Objet-Spectacle” (“The Spectacle: Light, Color, Moving Images, Object-Spectacle”), in which he declared,

Speed is the law of the modern world. The eye must “be able to choose” in a fraction of a second or it risks its existence, whether it be driving a car, in the street, or behind a scholar’s microscope. Life rolls by at such a speed that everything becomes mobile. The rhythm is so dynamic that a “slice of life” seen from a café terrace is a spectacle. The most diverse elements collide and jostle one another there. The interplay of contrasts is so violent that there is always exaggeration in the effect you glimpse.

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Speed and simultaneity defined Léger’s use of the object-type in film. In Ballet mécanique, he employs the cinematic tools of contrast, close-up, deep and shallow focus, framing, montage, simultaneity, repetition and scale. These formal devices, combined with the object-type, enabled Léger to imitate the sensations of modern existence in a way painting never could.

Léger’s singular filmic output testifies to the potentials of cinema as a tool that transcends narrative or documentary functions without relying solely on abstraction. It is also his most overt display of the object-type. He confirms the primacy of the object in “Ballet mécanique,” an eponymous unpublished text from 1924, explaining the conditions of the conception of the film. As he wrote,

At that time, I was doing paintings in which the active elements were objects freed from all atmosphere, put in new relationships to each other. Painters had already destroyed the subject, as the descriptive scenario was going to be destroyed in avant-garde films. I thought that through film this neglected object would be able to assume its value as well. Beginning there, I worked on this film, I took very ordinary objects that I transferred to the screen by giving them a very deliberate, very calculated mobility and rhythm.108

He further described the intended effect of the film in his essay for L’Esprit nouveau, in which he declared, “We ‘persist’ up to the point that the eye and mind of the viewer ‘can’t take it anymore’ ['ne l’accepte plus']. We exhaust its spectacle value right up to the moment that it becomes unbearable.”109

Ballet mécanique runs just over sixteen minutes in length, accompanied by a cacophonous orchestral track with intermittent sounds of sirens blaring or shift bells


ringing. The film begins with opening credits announcing, “The first film without scenario,” followed by “Charlot presents The Mechanical Ballet.” Charlot, a paper cut-out figurine carrying a bowler hat and cane, a nod to Charlie Chaplin’s Tramp character, moves about the frame in a staccato manner (fig. 37). Composed of and surrounded by chunky shapes comparable to *Men in The City*, he similarly suggests the ways in which, for Léger, formal relationships between subjects and objects come into relief in the city (see fig. 33). In his films, Chaplin employed slapstick to exhibit similarly the physical toll modern work and life enacts on the body, and its herky-jerky motions are reflected in Léger’s fragmented body.

Léger introduces speed and simultaneity early on, using rapid cuts that mimic the visual process of taking in the modern landscape from a vehicle. He explains in the unpublished “Ballet Mécanique” text,

> Contrasting objects, slow and rapid passages, rest and intensity—the whole film was constructed on *that*. I used the close-up, which is the only cinematographic invention. Fragments of objects were also useful; by isolating a thing you give it personality. All this work led me to consider the event of objectivity as a very new contemporary value.

In the film, angles and viewpoint vacillate between straight shots and inverted images wherein the camera takes on the perspective of the quotidian objects, or object-types depicted, which included: bottles, chairs, hats, machines, mannequin parts, pots and typewriters. The use of the close-up creates a similarly formal equation, staging a subjective encounter between the viewer and the objects.

In the second scene a woman (Katherine Murphy, wife of Léger’s collaborator on the film, Dudley) swings, wryly smiles, and enjoys bourgeois leisure time (fig. 38). In the

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110 Chaplin’s “Tramp” character was first seen in *Kid Auto Races at Venice*, 1914.
following scene, the camera moves in and out of focus on a mirrored gazing globe. In subsequent scenes, an inverted camera creates a disorienting anti-retinal, anti-narrative viewing experience. Following the garden scene with Murphy appear a rapid series of still, isolated items: a straw hat, a grouping of wine bottles, a triangle, and an image of the mouth of Kiki de Montparnasse (a well-known Parisian cabaret singer and artist’s model, frequently photographed by Man Ray) (fig. 39-42). Léger’s object-types, mentioned above, are dizzily interspersed throughout the film. These elements spin like a roulette wheel, primary shapes mingling with reflective metallic fragments. Léger employed this kaleidoscopic effect to suggest the infinite multiplicity of the manufactured world and to demonstrate that these shiny objects of consumption stand in stark contrast to the natural world. The repetition of these forms also serves as a reminder of the assembly line and mechanical production, creating an analogy between the human body to a series of cogs and pistons.

In Ballet mécanique, Léger thus employs the object-type to create both the mise-en-scène and sensation of modern life. As Richard Brender notes,

> For purists, the manufactured object, with its evolution of design completely subordinate to efficiency and human need, served as the model for the esthetic…Clearly, the gears, bottles, hats, pots, etc. could not but strike a responsive chord. Perhaps even more to the point was Léger's desire to use these in pursuit of purely abstract ends. Through his use of the form cut, Léger reduces these objects to their common geometric elements. In purist terminology, these correspond to "primary sensations...determined in all human beings by the simple play of forms and primary colors."\(^{112}\)

*Ballet mécanique*, like Léger’s paintings, foregrounds a series of binaries: interior vs. exteriors, fragmentation vs. wholeness, stillness vs. chaos, labor vs. leisure, nature vs.

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culture, humans vs. machines. Ultimately Léger, like the Purists, wished to accurately produce an aesthetic of modernity. As opposed to the harmonies esteemed by Ozenfant and Jeanneret, Léger recognized a series of oppositional forces at play that could be used strategically to reinforce the relationship between the modern and the ancient, the human and the mechanical. As Carol S. Eliel notes, “The title alone suggests that, like the Purists, Léger was striving to combine the contemporary and the timeless, in this case the energy of the machine and the elegance of classical ballet.”

In one of the film’s most referenced passages, a washerwoman climbs a flight of steps. Once she reaches the top, she immediately starts over from the bottom (fig. 43). This scene recurs twenty-three times, spliced intermittently with an image of an engine piston firing repeatedly (fig. 44). This technique not only correlates the washerwoman to the machine, but it also projects desire onto the mechanical apparatuses. The sexual connotations of a female body being interspersed with a pounding piston support this claim, as does the use of systematic frontality by positioning the viewer as a voyeur or part of an erotic act. Even though she is a coarse, older, working-woman, Léger still makes her a locus of desire. This fetishization is made explicit by images of Kiki de Montparnasse (a recognized sex symbol) similarly juxtaposed with pulsating mechanisms throughout the film (see fig. 39, 44, and fig. 45). Léger returns repeatedly to the close-up of Kiki’s painted smile, broadening to a full tooth grin, or montaging cropped scenes where just her eyes are visible (see fig. 42). These sites of sensorial pleasure spliced with stills of commonplace objects and sexualized machines stage a subjective encounter wherein the viewer is meant to make formal liaisons amongst incongruent objects.

Toward the end of the film, Léger splices a mannequin’s legs with images of Montparnasse’s’ head spinning around like a cake in a refrigerator display (figs. 46, 47). A surrogate for the human body, the mannequin in Ballet mécanique, is also at once an overtly commercial symbol and a reminder of the post-war wounded body. This imagery draws attention to Léger’s interest in a sense of disembodiment, which for him is reflected into the modern condition. He makes this concern explicit with the portrayal of Charlot in the second to last scene wherein the figure dances around the frame and then abruptly disassembles (fig. 48). The shapes that comprise his body separate and dance on their own, then fall into a pile and are swept away. Only the head remains bobbing through the frame for a moment before the final scene of Murphy again in the garden, sniffing flowers. Leger’s use of the object-type throughout the film draws awareness to the dichotomy between nature and culture. His engagement of the object-type also points to the fragmentation of the modern subject (object) in contrast to the wholesomeness of the romantic subject.

The object-type, as a readymade site of subjectivity, helps Léger demonstrate how the body has become as fragmented as vision has in modern society. As Christopher Townsend suggests, “In their satire…both film and ballet also establish a distinctive critique of the technology of film itself as implicated in a modernity where the individual can be easily and indifferently annihilated by the demands of the state.”114 Townsend argues that the body of the twentieth century was being redefined by technology. As discussed throughout, this phenomenological condition was ultimately the goal of Ballet mécanique.

114 Christopher Townsend, 'The art I love is the art of cowards': Francis Picabia and René Clair's Entr'acte and the Politics of Death and Remembrance in France after World War One” in Science as Culture, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2009, 1.
Léger used the Purist object-type to draw attention to the power of objects as symbols of urban culture and capital. He made apparent the importance of the machine in his œuvre as the source from which his bodies were born. He saw himself as an inventor, and he understood that the object-type embodied the everyman and not the individual. Léger’s hybrid bodies used technology as a lens to explore abstraction and figuration. He managed to find a way out of the problems of representation that modernity posed by fashioning an association between machines and humans, creating a grey area where they become one in the same in the move from an industrial society to a technological world. By using cinema to highlight these conditions of modernity, Léger, in his only foray into the medium, succeeded in communicating that the power of the principals and ideals of Purism did not exist merely in a vacuum. Léger adapted the formal language of Purism and the object-type to position identity as a construct of culture and cultural artifacts. He extended the theories of Purism to aid an argument that beneath the banality of these object-types were hidden social signifiers, which referenced an endless cycle of products and producers within the capitalist machine and the city.
EPILOGUE

Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau

The pavilion was meant to showcase the superiority of enlightenment over enticement.  

The final issue of *L’Esprit Nouveau* appeared in January of 1925. From April to October of that same year the “Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes” ("International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts") was held in Paris. This World’s Fair for design and architecture sought to highlight new trends in Europe and abroad. The Purists’ contribution to the exhibition, the *Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau* (fig. 49), was the last group effort of the movement and represented a synthesis of Purist ideals. Jeanneret had written a series of articles published in *L’Esprit Nouveau* from December 1923 through 1924 concerning the upcoming Exposition. As Christopher Green notes, Jeanneret,

demanded a new anti-decorative, functional approach to interior design, according to which all furnishings and fittings were treated as ‘tools’ and nothing more, and they extended the ‘type-object’ idea to include all the most fundamentally useful, most formally Purist of modern, mass-produced products—lamps, typewriters, filing-cabinets, etc. 

In 1925, these texts were collectively published as a book titled *L’Art décoratif d’aujourd’hui* (The Decorative Art of Today). The irony of this gesture against decorative

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art, at the exposition for decorative art, was surely not lost on Jeanneret who corroborated this in the design for the pavilion. Green has also commented on this:

Only the structure is a work of design by the mind that created the environment, the rest was claimed to be a work of selection almost in the Duchamp manner from standard products, *objets-type*, already on the market, and the homogeneity of the whole came largely from the adaptation of the structure to an aesthetic derived from certain classes of *objets-type*, and the rejection of any standard products that did not answer this aesthetic…Thus, the pavilion, taken as a whole, gave visual form to all the main themes of the articles on design that had appeared in *L’Esprit Nouveau*.

This thesis confirms what Green’s quote implies. Though the Purist object-type is typically seen as a strict binding compositional strategy in painting, it was applicable to a variety of mediums. The *Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau* put on public display what Jeanneret had first articulated in his unrealized architectural projects, revealing how the object-type extended to a home and the furnishings and decorations within it. Thus it took the still-life out of the frame and placed it into the world. The pavilion was a cell design based on the *Citrohan House* - what Jeanneret termed a “cell-unit.” The interior was decorated with the requisite object-types, and meubles-types (type-furniture), which Jeanneret had begun referring to as “equipment.” This designation included cupboards, wardrobes, shelves and seating (figs. 50, 51). The inclusion of Persian rugs and South American pottery created a dialectic between artisan and machine-made objects. As Reyner Banham notes,

The standard dwelling that was finally presented as ‘Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau,’ and particularly its equipment, turned out to be an elegant but straightforward protest against the very concept of handicrafts and interior decoration that the show was intended to reaffirm…His message was that

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industry was now capable of supplying the apartment and the entire household with mass-produced furniture.\textsuperscript{118}

Lastly the house was decorated with works of Purist art. Paintings by Ozenfant, Léger’s \textit{Baluster} (1925) hung next to Jeanneret’s, \textit{Still Life from the Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau}, 1924 (figs. 52-54). Juan Gris’ \textit{The Green Cloth}, n.d. was with Ozenfant, \textit{Doric Vases} (1925) in the mezzanine (see fig. 19). There were also two sculptures by Jacques Lipchitz, one inside and one outside.

Although Jeanneret had been theorizing about the object-type in architecture, he had few concrete examples up until this time. This situation would soon shift as he was beginning to get many commissions in the mid-1920s.\textsuperscript{119} As this final chapter of Purism demonstrates, the possibilities of the movement in painting were finite, at least in Jeanneret’s view. In order to achieve greater diffusion, the ideals of the movement needed to be expressed in other art forms. After this period Jeanneret would be known definitively as Corbusier, a celebrity architect, but also a version of an archetype, with his circular glasses and bow-tie. Ozenfant would continue painting but return to the figure. Léger would examine relationships between humans and machine vacillating between overt and abstract demonstrations of ways in which these forms converged.

As this thesis has pointed out, in the postwar years, the Purists were not just constructors, but re_constructors whose increasing concern with the implications of technology on art and life helped them recognize that this epoch would be shaped more than ever by the user. They understood that capitalism and consumer culture had begun to


shape irrevocably the ways in which bodies and minds interacted with one another and one’s surroundings. This belief bonded Ozenfant and Jeanneret with Léger, whose interest in technology’s effects on the body were more pronounced. Ozenfant and Jeanneret extended an ergonomic understanding of object-type as an extension of the human needs, which were inextricably linked to desires of consumer culture. For all of them, the object-type became a way of envisioning the dynamics of production and consumption that characterized modern life in post-World War I France.
Abel, Richard. “American Film and the French Literary Avant-Garde (1914-1924)” 


Townsend, Christopher. “’The art I love is the art of cowards:’ Francis Picabia and René Clair’s Entr’acte and the Politics of Death and Remembrance in France after World War One,” Science as Culture, Vol. 18, No. 3, 16.11.2009, 281-296.


ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Amédée Ozenfant, *Bottle, Pipe, and Books*, 1918
 Oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 23 5/8 in. Musée de Grenoble,

Fig. 2 Amédée Ozenfant, *Church at Andernos*, 1918
Pencil on paper, 13 ¾ x 19 ¾ in. Collection Larock-Granoff, Paris
Fig. 3 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *The Fireplace*, 1918
Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 28 ¾ in.
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

Fig. 4 “Sur la Plastique,” *L’Esprit nouveau*, issue no. 1, October 1920, 43.
Fig. 5 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *Nature morte à l’oeuf*, 1919
Oil on canvas, 39 1/3 x 31 8/12 in.
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

Fig. 6 Fernand Léger, *The Card Players*, 1917
Oil on canvas, 50 7/12 x 75 3/4 in. Kröller-Muller State Museum, Otterlo
Fig. 7 Fernand Léger, *Contrast of Forms*, 1913
Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 32 in., Museum of Modern Art, New York

REGULATING LINES

of this race and of this epoch, and in accordance with the static data of the constructive principles applied to it, the regulating line comes in to rectify, correct, give point to and pull together all the parts on the same unifying principle, that of the triangle 3, 4, 5, which develops its effects from the portico right up to the summit of the vault.

REGULATING LINES APPLIED TO NOTRE DAME, PARIS:

Fig. 8 Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, built between 1163 and 1345. Images from “Regulating Lines” first issued in *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 5, 1921, 563-72, partially reprinted in “Une Villa de Le Corbusier 1916,” *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 6, 1921, 694. Later reproduced in *Towards an Architecture*, 65-83.
Fig. 9 Palazzo Senatorio, Rome, built between the 13th and 14th centuries. Images from “Regulating Lines” first issued in *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 5, 1921, 563-72, partially reprinted in “Une Villa de Le Corbusier 1916,” *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 6, 1921, 694. Later reproduced in *Towards an Architecture*, 65-83.

Fig. 10 Petit Trianon, Versailles, built between 1762 and 1768. Images from “Regulating Lines” first issued in *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 5, 1921, 563-72, partially reprinted in “Une Villa de Le Corbusier 1916,” *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 6, 1921, 694. Later reproduced in *Towards an Architecture*, 65-83.
CONSTRUCTION OF A VILLA. 1916:
The general mass of the façades, both front and rear, is based on the same angle (A) which determines a diagonal whose many parallels and their perpendiculars give the measure for correcting the secondary elements, doors, windows, panels, etc., down to the smallest detail.

This villa of small dimensions, seen in the midst of other buildings erected without a rule, gives the effect of being more monumental, and of another order.

Fig. 11 Villa Schwob, Switzerland, 1916. Designed by Charles Edouard Jeanneret. Images from “Regulating Lines” first issued in L’Esprit nouveau no. 5, 1921, 563-72, partially reprinted in “Une Villa de Le Corbusier 1916,” L’Esprit nouveau no. 6, 1921, 694. Later reproduced in Towards an Architecture, 65-83.

Fig. 13 Amédée Ozenfant, *Flask, Guitar, Glass and Bottles on a Green Table*, 1920
Oil on canvas, 32 x 39 1/3 in. Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland

Fig. 14 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *La Bouteille de vin Orange*, 1922
Oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 28 7/12 in.
Fondation Le Corbusier. Paris
Fig. 16 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *Still Life*, 1920
Oil on canvas, 31 7/8 x 39 ¼ in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Fig. 15 Image from “Réponse de Monsieur de Fayet” in *L’Esprit nouveau* no. 17, 1922, n.p.
Fig. 17 Amédée Ozenfant, *Accords*, 1922
Oil on canvas, 51 ½ x 38 ¼ in. Honolulu Academy of Arts

Fig. 18 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *Vertical Still Life*, 1922
Oil on canvas, 57 5/8 x 35 1/8 in. Kunstmuseum Basel Switzerland
Fig. 19 Amédée Ozenfant, *Doric Vases*, 1925
Oil on canvas, 51 ¼ x 38 ¼ Collection Larock-Granoff, Paris

Fig. 20 Fernand Léger, *Man and Woman*, 1921
Oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 25 ½ in.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Fig. 21 Fernand Léger, *The Mechanic*, 1920
Oil on canvas, 45 ½ x 34 ¼ in. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Fig. 22 Fernand Léger, *Siphon*, 1924
Oil on canvas, 25 ½ x 18 in. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Fig. 23 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, perspective of a Dom-inó module, 1915, india ink and black and colored pencil on printing paper. *Le Corbusier before le Corbusier*, 214.

Fig. 24 *Maison Dom-inó*, 1914, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 25 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, ground floor with proposed layout for "Type B", 1915, gelatine print, *Le Corbusier before le Corbusier*, 216.

Fig. 26 *Maison Citrohan*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 27 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, “Mass-Production Houses,” 241.

Fig. 28 *Maison Citrohan*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 29 Le Corbusier-Saunière, “Des Yeux qui ne violent pas…III: Les Autos,” (Eyes Which Do Not See: Autos) in *L’Esprit nouveau* 10 (July 1921), 1140-41.

Fig. 30 *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 31 *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

Fig. 32 *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 33 Fernand Léger, *Men in the City*, 1919
Oil on canvas, 57 3/8 x 44 11/16 in. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Fig. 34 Fernand Léger, *The City*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 91 x 117 ½ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art
Fig. 35-36 “Ballet Mécanique” by Fernand Léger in *L’Esprit Nouveau* no. 28 (January 1925), (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), n.p.
Fig. 37 Charlot
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 38 Katherine Murphy
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.
Fig. 39 Hat
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 40 Bottles
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
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Fig. 41 Triangle
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 42 *Kiki de Montparnasse* (grin)
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.
Fig. 43 Washerwoman
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 44 Pistons
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.
Fig. 45 Gears
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 46 Kiki de Montparnasse (head rotating)
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.
Fig. 47 Mannequin legs
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Fig. 48 Charlot (in pieces)
Fernand Léger, Hermann Dudley Murphy, *Ballet mécanique* (film still), 1923-1924, Silent black-and-white film, transferred to high-definition video, 16 min.
MoMA, acquired from the Artist © 2017 (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.
Fig. 49 *Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau*, 1925, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

Fig. 50 *Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau*, 1925, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 51 Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau, 1925, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris

Fig. 52 Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau, 1925, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris
Fig. 53 Fernand Léger, *The Baluster*, 1925
Oil on canvas, 51 x 38 ¼ in., Museum of Modern Art, NY

Fig. 54 Charles Édouard Jeanneret, *Still Life from the Pavilion de l’Esprit Nouveau*, 1924, Fondation le Corbusier, Paris