



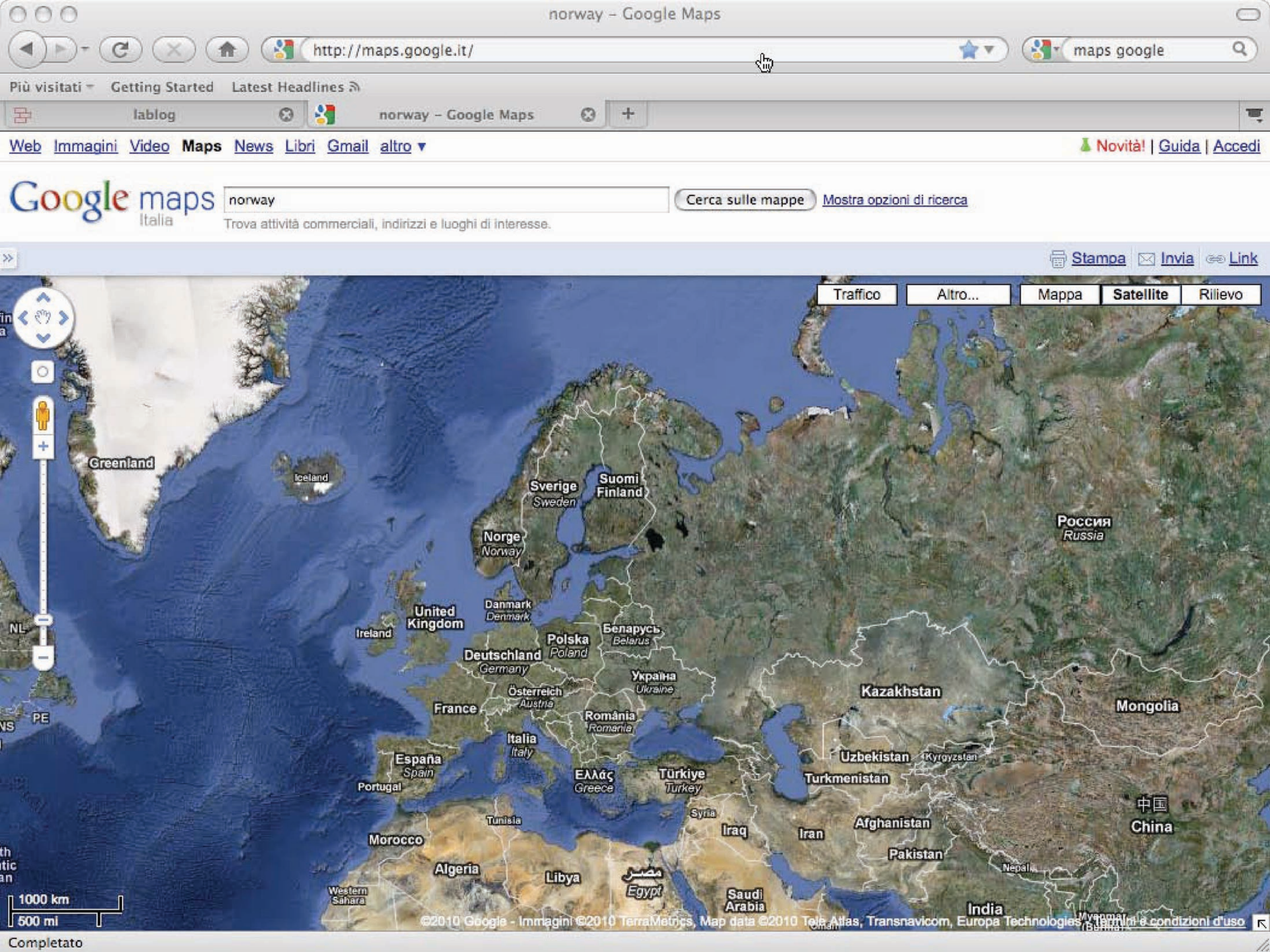
nineteen thirties nordic architecture

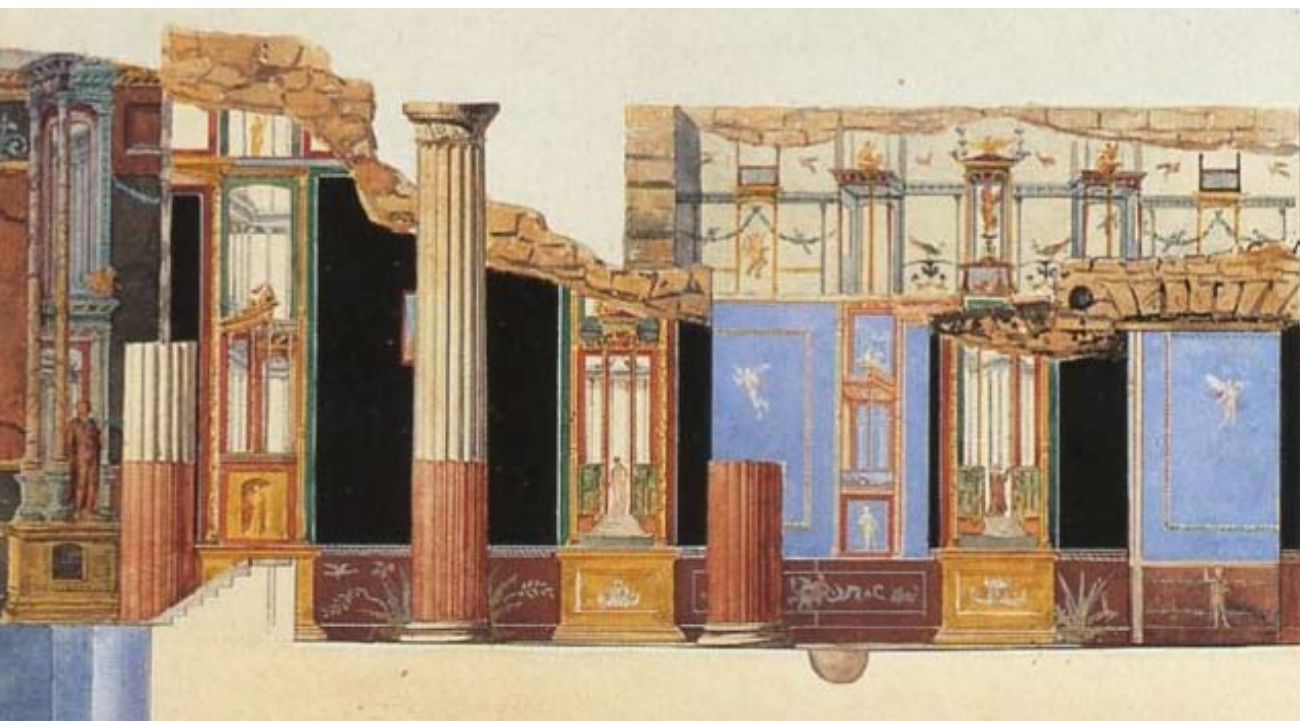
NIGHTLANDS

Nordic Building



Christian Norberg-Schulz





Pompei, interior decoration
Gustaf Dahl, 1866

Il viaggio come tropo della modernità: i “Nordici” spostamenti dislocamenti conoscenza e memoria

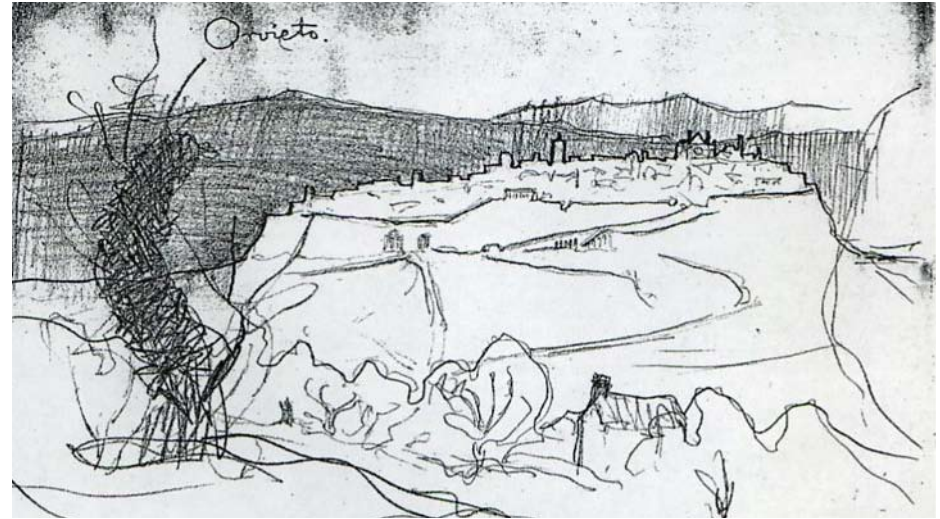
Per quanto concerne la specifica tradizione nordica del viaggio di formazione, essa viene a concretizzarsi con chiarezza e struttura per la prima volta nei primi anni dell'Ottocento, con l'avvento della moda del viaggio in Italia come momento di perfezionamento della propria formazione e come momento di immersione diretta nella Storia per esperirla di persona (secondo una schietta tradizione nordica: quello dell'esperienza diretta appunto). Il tratto più originale di questa caratteristica nordica, che fa propria una tradizione di antica origine negli altri paesi europei (quella del Grand Tour appunto), consiste nella originale capacità - una volta rientrati in patria - di negoziare tra locale e internazionale; nel modo di vivere la Storia e di misurarsi e confrontarsi col Passato, quello grande, quello Collettivo. Cioè con la capacità di relazionarsi ai diversi Canoni interpretati e incarnati dalle opere e dai luoghi meta dei viaggi.



Taormina, the Theatre
Ragnar Ostberg, 1897



Piazza Pio II
Hilding Ekelund, 1922



Orvieto, landscape
Armas Lindgren, 1902

Viaggi dedicati sicuramente all'esperienza diretta della Classicità ma, come testimoniano i resoconti (appunti, schizzi, foto, ecc.), anche dedicati ad interessi ben più ampi di quelli coincidenti con la classicità rinascimentale. In primo luogo, emergono dai racconti i Paesaggi (intesi come sistema complesso di Natura + Intervento antropico), poi con egual interesse e attenzione la classicità rinascimentale e la tradizione medioevale.

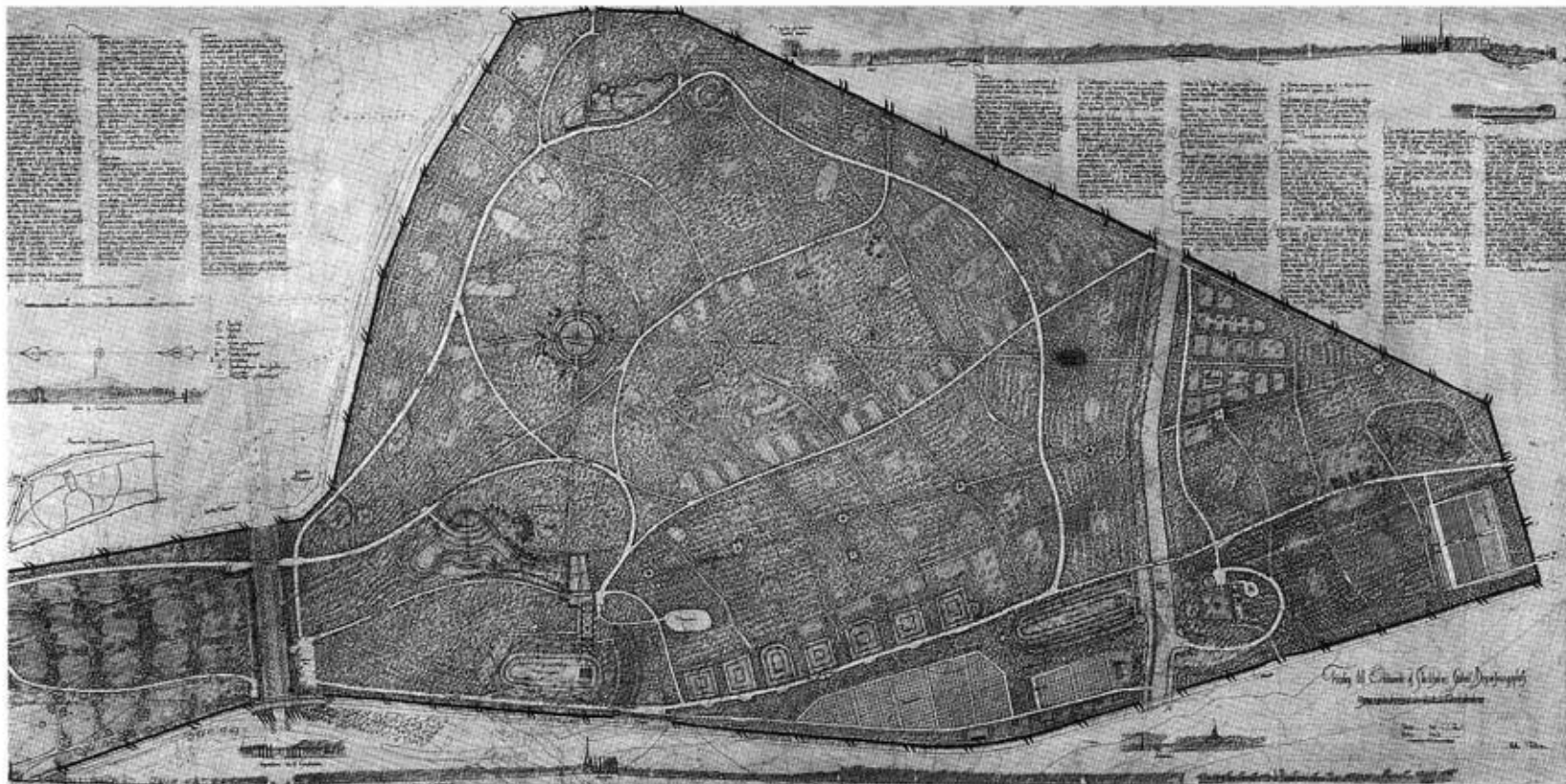
The Anglo-Indian writer and critic Salman Rushdie suggests that 'newness enters the world' through mimicry, imitation and repetition. In the repetition of a style, a language, there occurs the release of something more, of something that exceeds a previous location. In transit and translation, the copy, the citation, can open up a potential move beyond the merely 'exotic' to suggest another way of being in time.

**Alla ricerca delle ragioni del fare, dall'interno:
la conoscenza di opere e di maestri (e il viaggio necessario) come
momento fondativo del proprio fare**

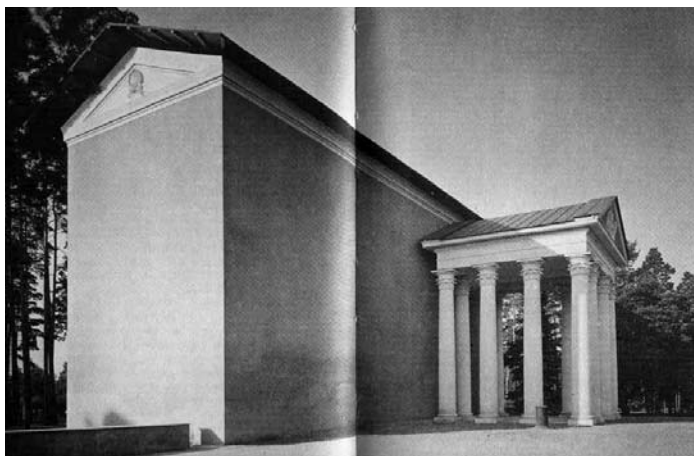


Roma, "casolare"
E. Gunnar Asplund, 1914

L'indipendente spirito nordico:
autonomia e libertà
dell'atteggiamento culturale degli architetti del Nord
(un tratto genetico-culturale)



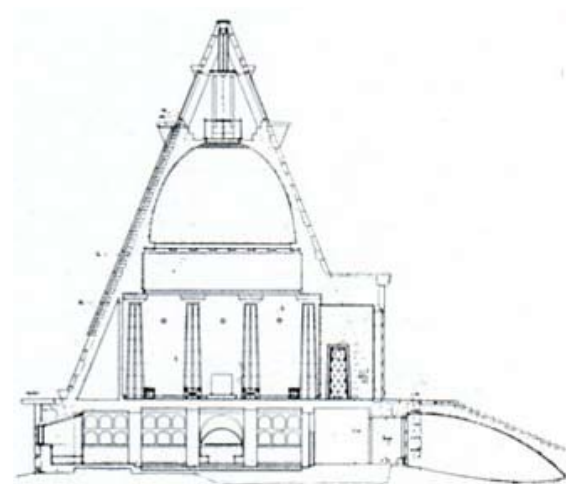
In questo senso
acquistano particolare
significato quei momenti
della storia dell'architettura
nordica dove più forti
appaiono essere i legami
con il Canone, come nel
caso ad esempio del
Classicismo Nordico,
ma anche dello stesso
Funzionalismo.



Sigurd Lewerentz
Resurrection Chapel, Woodland Cemetery
Stockholm, 1927



Kay Fisker
Social Housing
Copenhagen, 1923



A. H. Bjiercke, G. Eliassen
Project for a Monument
Oslo, 1923

Così durante I primi anni del Novecento, “[...] sfruttando liberamente la riserva di esperienze offerte dalla tradizione e mescolando le suggestioni prodotte dall’architettura classica italiana alla tradizione costruttiva locale, senza quell rispetto servile per la correttezza della storia dell’arte, essi (gli architetti del nord) intrapresero la ricerca di una moderna, atemporale sintesi (H.O. Andersson, Il classicismo moderno nel Norden, in Classicismo Nordico, Milano 1988, p. 23).



E. Gunnar Asplund
Stockholm Exhibition, 1930



Lo stesso accade per il Funzionalismo: pensiamo infatti al rapporto che esiste in Norvegia tra il viaggio organizzato dall'associazione degli architetti in Olanda e la diffusione del razionalismo dopo il 1928. Oppure alla diffusione del Funkis causata dall'Esposizione di Turku del 1929 e di Stoccolma del 1930.





Arne Jacobsen
Novo Industry
Frederiksberg 1936



Sven Markelius
Collective Housing
Stockholm 1935



Arne Korsmo
Villa Sternesen
Oslo 1939

Fabio Mangone, Gennaro Postiglione **The regional faces of internationalism**



The Nordic lands and rational architecture¹

The long decade between the Stockholm Exhibition and the villa Mairea, between the first assertions of the new generation, those born at the turn of the century (such as Pauli Blomstedt, Arne Korsmo, Erkki Huttunen, Arne Jacobsen, Modens Lassen, Yrjö Lindegren) and Asplund's final retirement, appears in the Nordic lands as an intense and, in part at least, a contradictory period. Its most immediate feature is the process whereby a committed and avant-garde internationalism, arriving with great *éclat* at the end of the Twenties, was succeeded by a jealous vindication of specific regional identities, thus foreshadowing an approach that in the Forties became in many ways the dominant one.



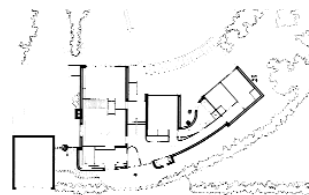
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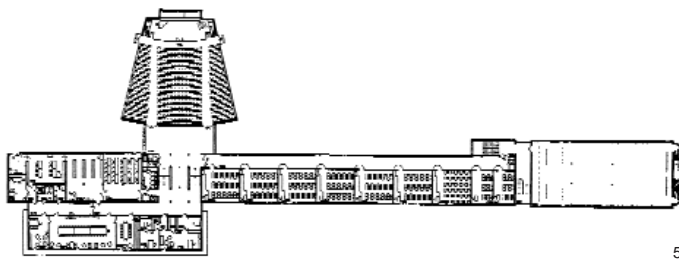


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1./2. Sven
Markelius:
collective housing
Stockholm,
1934-35
(SMA)
3./4. Mogens
Lassen:
Sølystvej 11
Klampenborg,
1939
(DMFA)



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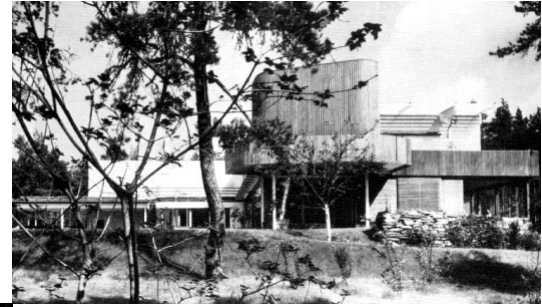


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- 5./6. Nils Ahrbom,
Helge Zimdahl:
Sveaplans School
for girls
Stockholm,
1934-36
(SMA)
7. Ove Bang:
Villa Ditlev-
Simonsen,
Oslo,
1936-38
(NAM)
- photo: Teigens
Fotoatelier
8. E. G. Asplund:
Göteborg Town Hall
1937
(SMA)

As a rule, in the early Thirties, modernist iconography is internationalist, and deliberately so, because – as the authors of *Acceptera* firmly state – “The new form represents the coming of age of propositions common to the time, and develops in a new ‘style’ which is spreading everywhere, as a deliberate change of direction.” All the same, international awareness did not rule out a certain difference between the foreign models and their derivations in the Nordic countries: a difference which was understood as a sort of constant in the Scandinavian tradition. As early as 1921 Aalto emphasised the particular character of the shapes derived from faraway nations but transfigured by the Nordic’s “young & innocent eye”²¹, while in 1927 the Norwegian Lars Backer, presenting his Skansen restaurant – the work which in many ways inaugurated Nordic functionalism²² – was careful to point out that “the new

architecture is international in the same way that modern technique is, or the materials we employ to build the machines that we use. In each case, there is still room for national characteristics.”²³



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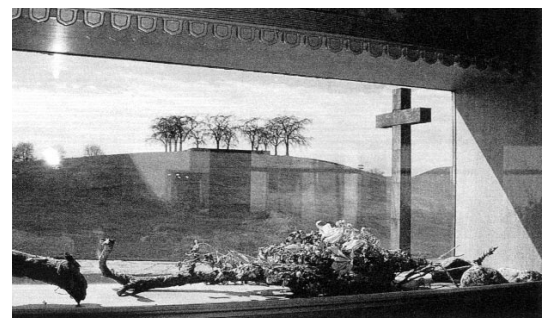


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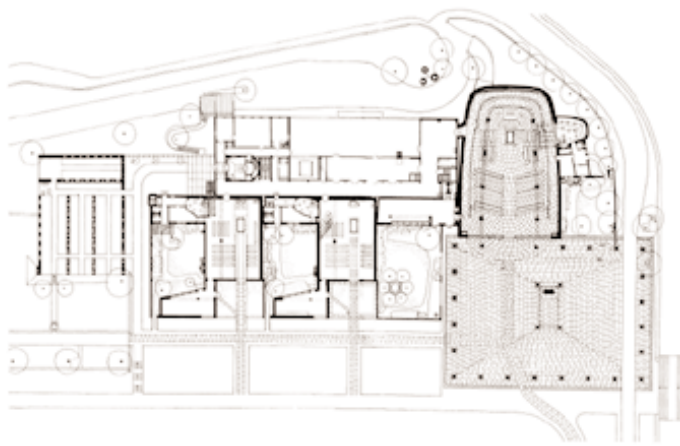


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9. Alvar Aalto:
Villa Mairea
Normarkku,
1937-39
(MFA)
10. Lars Backer:
Skansen Restaurant
Oslo,
1925-27
(NAM)
photo: Teigens
Fotoatelier
11. Kaj Gottlob:
The school by the
sound
Copenhagen,
1937
(RDAFA)
12.
Sigurd Leweretz:
Woodland cemetery
Crematory chapel
Stockholm
(SMA)



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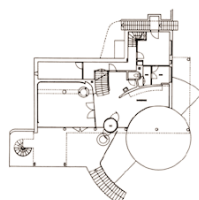


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13. Erik
Gunnar Asplund:
The South
Crematory Complex
Woodland
Cemetery
1936-40
(SMA)
14. Erik Gunnar
Asplund,
Sigurd Lewerentz:
Woodland
Cemetery
Stockholm,
1916-40
(SMA)
- 15./16. Arne
Korsmo:
Villa Stenersen
Oslo,
1939
(NAM)



16



17



18



19

- 17. Arne Jacobsen:
Novo Industries
Frederiksberg,
1936
(RDAFA)
- 18. Erik Bryggman:
The book tower
Turku,
1934-35
(MFA)
- 19. Erkki Huttunen:
Nakkila Church
Nakkila,
(MFA)

Wenche Findal **Machines for dreaming**



“We are convinced that, for some reason, there is a precise connection between bathing and desire; and that there is in fact an antique creed which celebrates the secrets of these places of delight”.
Louis Aragon¹

Internationally, the cult of light, the exalting of the body and the dream of a gilded existence were among the key elements of modernism. The motto “light, air and green” was, however, coined in southern European lands; and when the inhabitants of the North finally found the resolve to declare themselves Modern – just a little before the start of the Thirties – they unreservedly embraced models which had been designed for warmer climates. Some types of construction, devoted to leisure and escapism, which were used all the year round in southern Europe, were also adopted in the North, where the summer lasts for a couple of months, and sunny days are relatively few. Their conditions of climate and sunlight are common to all the Nordic countries: during the brief summer months, with their mild temperatures, the nights are so light as to be mistaken for day; while the rest of the year the days are short and cold, and light is short supply. The summer, so short and so frenetic, is lived to the full; during the other seasons people stay in their own dwellings, kept warm and artificially lit.



Max Söderström 1934

Two low horizontal pavilions with huts and changing facilities, one for men and one for women, were built in the shelter of the great meadows of Strandparken, so that as much as possible of the broad expanse of sand would be available to bathers. The geometric shapes of the short side of the facade, with its play of horizontal and vertical lines and reliefs, clearly drew its inspiration from the formal language of Art Nouveau, and this gave it a heroic, modernist tone. The cloakroom building was in reinforced concrete⁴ and covered in part with ceramic tiles. Then there were kiosks, scattered along the beach, sinuous and sensual in shape; painted in vivid colours and partly papered with advertising posters, they made a dynamic contrast with the rigorous changing-pavilions. From the point of view of shape, the curved lines of the kiosks derived from Arne Jacobsen's attachment to compositions playing on the juxtaposition of elementary stereometric shapes, and this,



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in the lido, became a very effective visual and functional highlight. This ultramodern architecture was ephemeral, though (the kiosks were meant to be dismantled each autumn), and served to signal the fleeting nature of its function.

For reaching the resort by sea, Arne Jacobsen designed a disembarkation pontoon for the steamers that came direct from Copenhagen. Two lifeguard towers guaranteed the establishment's safety; the small cylindrical structures had the shape of small barrels topped with a sheltering roof, and supported by a bundle of solid wooden trunks. The lookout towers were clearly inspired by the bridges of ships, and were painted in marine colours, with great stripes of white and blue.



4

1. Arne Jacobsen:
Bellevue Strandbad
aerial view
Copenhagen,
1938
(RDAFA)
2./3./4. Arne
Jacobsen:
Bellevue Strandbad
Kiosks on the
seafont
Copenhagen,
1931
(RDAFA)



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5. Arne Jacobsen:
Bellevue Strandbad
kiosk on the
seafront
Copenhagen,
1931
(RDAFA)
6. Arne Jacobsen:
Theatre bill
from the Bellevue
Stradbud
(RDAFA)
7. Arne Jacobsen:
Tickets and
ice-cream
wrappings of the
Bellevue Strandbad
(RDAFA)



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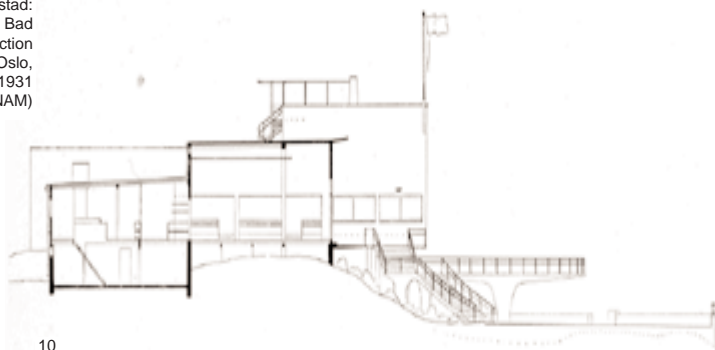


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8./9. Eyvind
Moestue and Ole
Lind Schistad:
Ingenierstrand Bad
Restaurant
Oslo,
1931
(NAM)
photo: Teigens
Fotoatelier
10. Eyvind Moestue
and Ole Lind
Schistad:
Ingenierstrand Bad
Section
Oslo,
1931
(NAM)



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13



14



16



15

13. G.Blakstad,
H.Munthe-Kaas
Kunstnernes Hus
(artists home)
Oslo,
1930
(NAM)
- 14./15. L.Backer
Restaurant Ekeberg
external view
Oslo,
1929
(NAM)
16. G.Blakstad,
H.Munthe-Kaas
Kunstnernes Hus
(artists home)
Oslo,
1930
(NAM)

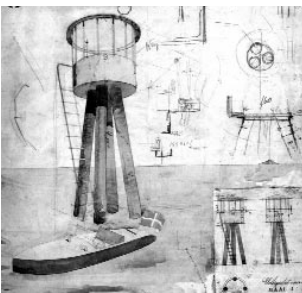


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1. Aragon cit. in Flora Fischer, In den Tempeln der Badelust, Architekturen der Sinnlichkeit, (Münich-Lucerne, 1986), p. 16.
2. The other participants were the architects Sven Risom, Mogens Lassen and Henning Jørgensen.
3. Sørensen in Arkitekten, (Copenhagen, 1932), p. 127.
4. Thau, Carsten and Kjell Vindum, Arne Jacobsen, (Copenhagen, 1999), p. 244.

5. Byggmästaren, (Stockholm, 1937), p. 180.
6. Thau, Carsten and Kjell Vindum, Arne Jacobsen cit., p. 244.
7. The body of the construction along the shore is still in use today; the theatre has been restored, and the restaurant wing has been converted into flats.
8. Eyvind Moestue and Ole Lind Schistad, "Ingierstrand bad", in Byggekunst, 1934, p.150.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Norway's national festival.
13. E. Moestue and O.L. Schistad, "Ingierstrand bad. Ny restaurantbygning", in Byggekunst, 1934, p.87.
14. Mushroom constructions were the result of modernist experiments with iron and concrete. The first international architect who designed a similar work was Robert Maillart.
15. E. Moestue and O.L. Schistad, "Ingierstrand Bad. Ny Restaurantbygning" cit., p. 88.
16. L. Aragon, In paysan à Paris, 1926.
17. I am not counting the beach hotels that have been built along the coast.

12. Arne Jacobsen:
Bellevue Strandbad
lifeguard towers
sketch
Copenhagen,
(RDAFA)
13. Eyvind Moestue
and Ole Lind
Schistad:
Ingierstrand Bad
Restaurant
perspective drawing
Oslo,
1934
(NAM)



12

Nicola Flora, Paolo Giardiello: **1927-1940: Oslo public buildings**

Norway: a large land with a little people and a few towns “worthy” of this term. However History reminds that a long time ago this nation had a primary role in European events: in about 1000 the terrible Vikings, the nord-men, came down from their lands to France and then to the South of Italy founding a Kingdom. After the terrible plague, the Swedish warriors invaded their lands casting them into the “long night” which would end only after five centuries. For ever deeply free men, without being serfs, traders and sailors respecting their traditions, the Norwegian people became modern middle classes in the 19th century, when the religious sense of Nature emerged in their art. Severe and firm Lutherans, conscious of their phisical limits against the Powerful Nature, they found in Peer Gynt the realization of their love-respect of their white hills, enlightened by a pale sun just for a few days in a year. Ibsen and Grieg told and set to music universal longings and desires. This nation, who during the Swedish Kingdom had been trying to modernize importing examples of architecture from the German Classicism, had some difficulty in finding its architectural dignity. Architects related to Europe and particularly to Berlin with an inferiority sense. Classicist buildings begun to contrast the traditional wooden architecture. This divergence of attitude created a so particular local situation that it would produce original results, real “contaminations”.





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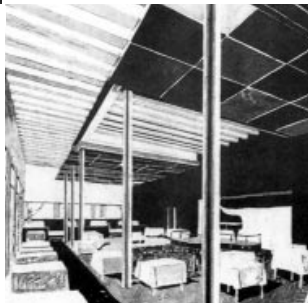
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1. E. Moestue,
O.L. Schistad:
Ingierstrand Bad
front view
Oslo,
1934
(NAM)
2. O. Bang
Samfunnshuset
(workers house)
Oslo,
1940
(NAM)
- 3./4. G. Blakstad,
H. Munthe-Kaas
Odd Fellow
Oslo,
1934
(NAM)
5. E. Moestue,
O.L. Schistad:
Ingierstrand Bad
working scetch
interior view
Oslo,
1934
(NAM)

Finally we could ask ourselves why either the Norwegian critics or the international ones have for so long ignored this movement and just now they are starting a critic revaluation. Today technique itself creates new needs and progress is reduced to the publicity of new futurible demands. We have lost the meaning of a so mad rush towards novelty, overlooking the damages it has produced. Even architecture looks for different ways of expression, but it does not find real meanings to communicate. In most cases it ends to show itself, it delights in sophisticated technical ways of representation, proposing temporary images which will be overwhelmed by new technologies. On the other hand, the attempts to return to the past and to the historic styles are as ridiculous. Looking at the history of architecture with the architect's curious eye, without ideological prejudices can help us to search for the sense, and then for the language to express it, like in the case of Rationalism.

We will be modern if we can find the coincidence between form and substance, considering that, in absence of valid subjects, it is better to keep silent, waiting for moments in which there will be really something to say or to do.



4



2

1. F. Reppen
Residences
Professor Dahls
Gt. 31
perspective
Oslo,
1931
(NAM)
2. O.Sverre
Office building
Oslo,
1934
(NAM)
3. F. Reppen
Residences
Professor Dahls
Gt.31
Oslo,
1931
(NAM)
- 4 E.Moestue
Ingeniers house
Oslo,
1931
(NAM)



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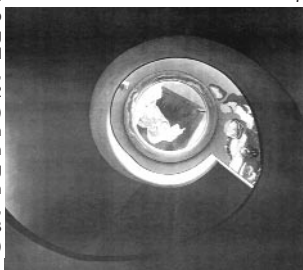


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5. E. Moestue,
O.L. Schistad
Ingeniørenes Hus
Oslo,
1931
(NAM)
photo:
Teigen Foto Atelier
6. L. Backer
Horngården
perspective
from the first
version
Oslo,
1930
7. L. Backer
Skansen Restaurant
view from the main
stairs
Oslo,
1927
(NAM)
photo: Teigen Foto
Atelier
8. O. Bang
Samfunnshuset
(workers house)
Oslo,
1940
(NAM)
9. G. Blakstad,
H. Munthe-Kaas
Odd Fellow
Oslo
1934
(NAM)
- 10 Mogenstjerne-
Eide:
Sparebanken Oslo
og Akershus (saving
bank of Oslo and
Akerhus) Oslo,
1932
(NAM)
- 11 O. Mendelsohn
R.E. Jacobsen
Office building
Doblouggården
Oslo,
1933
(NAM)



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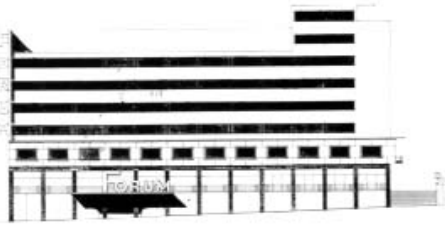
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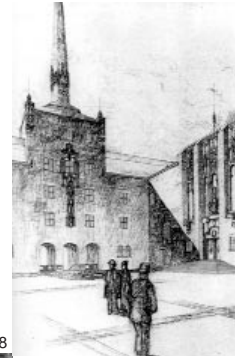
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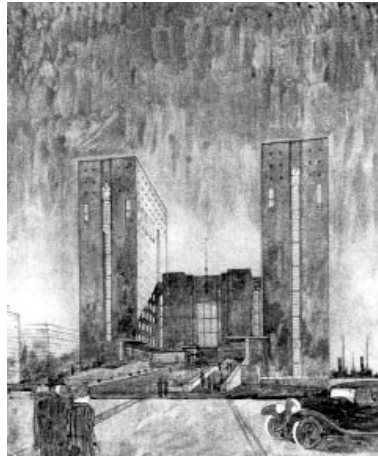


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6. G. Blakstad,
H. Munthe-Kaas
Odd Fellow
perspective
Oslo,
1934
(NAM)
7. A.Arneberg,
M.Poulsen
Oslo Rådhus
(Oslo town Hall)
Oslo,
1950
(NAM)
8. A.Arneberg-
M.Poulsen
Oslo Rådhus
(Oslo town Hall)
side view directed
toward the city
Oslo,
1950
(NAM)
9. A.Arneberg,
M.Poulsen
Oslo Rådhus
(Oslo Town Hall)
perspective from
the competition,
first version
Oslo,
1950
10. L. Backer
Skansen Restaurant
Oslo,
1927

10



Elina Standertskjöld **The links between Finland and Scandinavia**



In the years between the wars, cultural exchanges between Nordic architects were particularly frequent, even more frequent than today we might venture to say. This was due in part to the fact that Swedish was then the mother-tongue of most Finnish architects, and in part to means of transport. In fact, before the advent of air traffic, the journey by sea to reach Stockholm was often the first stop of a journey through the Continent. Moreover, in the Twenties personal relationships grew stronger because many Finnish architects left their country to work in Swedish architectural firms. The rise of functionalism in Finland has been dated back to 1928, even though the new architecture did not manifest itself concretely until 1929.

Functionalist urban planning and housing programmes Finnish architects showed great enthusiasm for the new urban planning approach they had discovered through international exhibitions and publications. The greatest influence was Le Corbusier, and his urban model became the ideal: a large-scale urban plan, with plenty of green areas, a bright, healthy urban environment where the various activities were separated into different areas. The works of Le Corbusier and the book *Die rationelle Bebauungsweisen*, published after the CIAM meeting held in Brussels in 1930, could be found on the bookshelves of many Finnish architects. The objective of the CIAM meeting was to continue the debate on the theme dealt with the year before, that is “Die Wohnung für die Existenzminimum”, and to concentrate this time on master plans. The book presented various housing estates built in different European countries, among which two projects Alvar Aalto

conceived for Turku, in which several parallel blocks are incorporated into the old urban pattern. Because of the economic crisis of the early Thirties, only a few of the planned functionalist housing estates could be completed in Finland. Numerous projects were nonetheless prepared and many articles were written in the topic by Finnish architects. In 1930 on the Swedish magazine *Byggmästaren* Aalto described the reform of the block pattern Carl Ludvig Engel had planned for Turku in 1927. Five years later, P.E. Blomstedt presented a similar proposal for the commercial area of the centre of Helsinki based on the principle that “the ideal could be attained through the regeneration of the unhealthy urban structure”.

1. Gunnar Asplund:
The Stockholm
Exhibition
Stockholm,
1930
(MFA)
photo: Erkki
Huttunen
2. Finnish
architects travel to
Sweden
(MFA)
photo: Tausti
3. The graphic
design of the Turku
exhibition
advertising towers
was inspired by
Bauhaus colours
and letters.
1929
(NAM)
4. Alvar Aalto and
Erik Bruggman:
The Turku
exhibition
plan
Turku,
1929
(NAM)



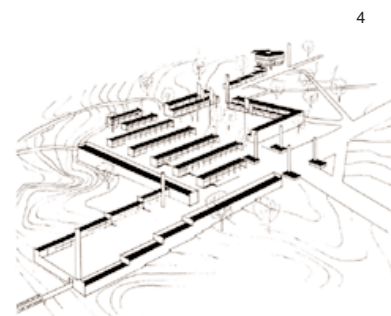
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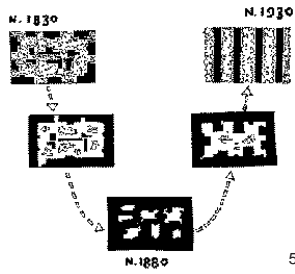
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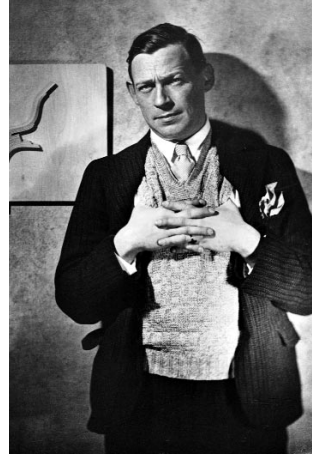
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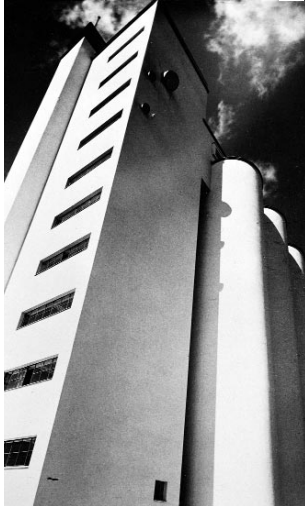
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5. P.E. Blomstedt:
A model for
neighbourhood
structural change
in the Thirties
(MFA)
6. Erik Bryggman:
Vierunmäki sports
training centre
Vierunmäki,
late Thirties
(MFA)
photo: Roos
7. Alvar Aalto:
Pamio Sanatorium
Turku,
1928-30
(MFA)
8. Alvar Aalto:
The housing estate
close to Sunio
industrial area
designed in the late
Thirties
(MFA)
9. Alvar Aalto
in the Thirties
(MFA)



6

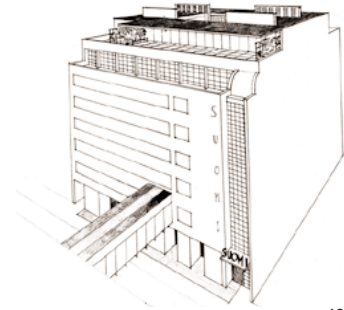
10



12



13



10. Erkki Huttunen:
Vyborg mill and
corn silos

Viipuri,

1932

(MFA)

photo: Roos

11. Erkki Huttunen:
SOK office building
and warehouse

Oulu,

1938-40

(MFA)

photo: Roos

12. The interiors of
Helsinki Exhibition
Center

the large halls

could be built

thanks to the

modern concrete

structure

1930

(MFA)

photo: Roos

11

13. Erik Bryggman:
project for the
"Suomi" competition
1928

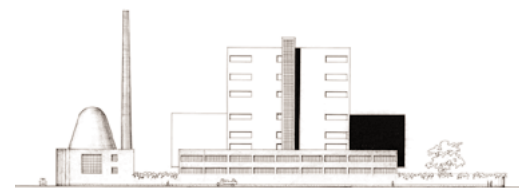
(MFA)

14. P.E. Blomstedt's
project for "Oy
Alkoholiliiike Ab"
main factory and
warehouse

Helsinki,

1934-35

(MFA)



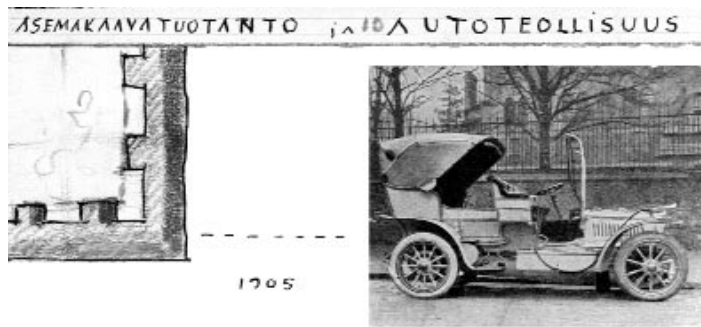
14



16



17



15

15. P.E. Blomstedt:
A model
to illustrate how the
increasing car traffic
alters urban
masterplans
late thirties
(MFA)

16. Erkki Huttunen:
Hamina
cooperative store
in the Thirties
(MFA)

photo: Roos

17. Alvar Aalto:
Turun Sanomat
newspaper building
1929
Turku
(MFA)



Conclusions

Finland became independent in 1917 and immediately from the Twenties onwards Finnish intellectuals, who were open to new ideas, turned their attention to Western Europe and made their country a fertile ground for functionalism. They wanted to break their connections with Russia, their former motherland, while at the same time strengthening their personal and historical relationships with the Nordic countries. The improvement of means of transport made travelling easier, and Finnish architects were able to see the architecture of their neighbouring countries and have first hand experience of the new European trends. Functionalist ideas reached Finland above all through Swedish architects and the new doctrine affected all sectors, but in particular had a major influence on urban planning and low-cost housing programmes. The Stockholm exhibition also contributed to diffusing the new theories, since it launched innovative

proposals regarding "minimum apartments", standardisation, projects for hospitals and for standard cooperative stores. These innovations were also rapidly adopted in Finland. The American influence, on the other hand, was visible in the projects for industrial complexes and in the development of prefabricated wooden houses, since in the Twenties Fordism and Taylorism were embraced by Nordic architects. Although in Finland research into the diffusion of Fordism is still in progress, there is no doubt however that at least in the Thirties the design of factories was influenced by these theories. And finally, the innovative use of concrete structures increased during the work for the Olympic Games, as Finnish architects were stimulated to find new solutions for modern sports facilities, even more innovative than those of neighbouring countries.

18. Hilding Ekelund:
The boating stadium
Helsinki
1940
(MFA)
19. Hilding Ekelund
and Martti Välikangas:
The "Olympic Village"
a residential area
for the Helsinki
Olympics
Helsinki,
1938-40
(MFA)
photo: N. E. Luickberg
20. Hilding Ekelund:
The cycle racing stadium
Helsinki,
1940
(MFA)
photo: Heikki Hauas
21. Yrjö Lindgren
and Toivo Jäntti:
The Olympic Stadium
which became the
national symbol of
modern Finland
Helsinki,
1938
(MFA)
photo:
Heikki Hauas



19



20



21



18

