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Collective Modernism  
Synthesising the Arts, Engaging in Society

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After the artist/writer Gregory Sholette sent out an inquiry in 2008–9 to 211 art collectives world-wide, he concluded that the reason explaining why artists got involved working as a group rather than as individuals had to do with a change in how collective work is appreciated in the art world. “The two most salient results revolve around the changing nature of collectivism after modernism,” writes Sholette, and he continues by stating that the “stigma against belonging to an artists’ group or collective has decreased in recent years.”<sup>1</sup>

As a professor teaching at an art academy, I do recognise the attitude described above. While individuality continues to play an important role, not the least for “branding” and maintaining an identity which the market can trust and predict, there is also a growing field of artists for whom this is increasingly uninteresting to them. These artists tend to find other ways and other forms of exhibitions, outside the established art scene. As a consequence, parts of the “Dark Matter” Sholette devotes his book to, i.e. the artist driven, alternative art scene, sometimes gets equally much attention as the established one. One could, for instance, point to the fact that the largest commercial art fair in Stockholm, called “Market”, plain and

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, New York: Pluto Press, 2010.

simple, both when it comes to attention from the press and from the crude numbers of visitors, is challenged from the alternative fair, tongue-in-cheekily called “Supermarket”, presenting mainly artist run initiatives.

However here I will look at Sholette’s polarity between individualism and collectivism from another angle and ask what happened when the individualistic artists of post war modernism assembled in groups with collective ambitions, i.e. not preliminary uniting under some stylistic banner or movement, but gathering in order to achieve something together? Because, contrary what one would gather from Sholette’s description above, this was a rather well-spread phenomenon in Europe (also, as Piotr Piotrowski has shown, in some countries in the eastern bloc)<sup>2</sup> during the first decades after the War. In short, their ambitions were to “synthesise” the art forms, but this should be understood as more than a mere merging of different art forms in a mutual expression; it was also an attempt to form a new artistic language for a new and democratic world. But if this was well spread, why do we so seldom read about it? Perhaps the geographical position can hint at some explanation to this; art history surveys of recent decades have had us looking at the U.S., rather than to Europe for the development of late modernism. By this change of focus, many things that happened in the “old world” got lost. Indeed, if one follows this trail of thought for a while, one can follow how already back then, American artists thought of their art as something different, and perhaps also more in tune with time, than what was left of not only European modernism but of Europe at large, which lay in ruins after the devastating war. Barnett Newman simply said good riddance to the European quest for “beauty” and instead pointed towards another drive, that he felt had hitherto been pushed aside; the “sublime” which Newman described to be at the core of contemporary American art.<sup>3</sup> In Europe, however, the non-figurative modernist art from the period between the wars would after the war play the role of a vessel for democracy, having been banned by the fascist. It therefor seemed to hold the future in its hands. In fact, many saw the new times as a revenge for abstraction, not only after the ban from

<sup>2</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, London: Reaktion Books, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Barnett Newman, “The Sublime Is Now” (1948), in John P. O’Neill (ed.), *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

fascism, but also after a long neglect from the official art scene: The first manifesto for *du Salon des Realites Nouvelles* from 1948 (thus the same year as Newman's essay) understands this scene for abstract art as a response to the "systematic exclusion of abstract art" that had been going on for thirty years, with the Venice biennale of 1948 as the most recent example.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, every kind of distinction based on geographical sites must be results of crude simplifications, and so is, no doubt, the one I am suggesting here between the modernisms labeled "European" and "American." I will, however, stick to this distinction for what one could call "operative" reasons. Firstly, it can be helpful for discussing differences between that what might be described in terms of "collective" and "individualistic" modernism, where the latter would be more privileged in the United States. Not only because the U.S. is the centre for the cult of the self-made man. The individuality of American modernism was also emphasised in the cold war politics, where it would be used in the propaganda as an antidote to communistic "collectivism."<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the difference between "collectivistic" and "individualistic" challenges another, more established idea about the differences between European and American modernism: namely the one between "idealism" and "pragmatism." European art is often labeled "idealistic" and thus clinging to an obsolete idea that has its roots in romanticism (not unlike the ideas promoted by Barnett Newman in 1948). This very duality has also often been used to measure how relevant and/or radical occasional European modernist artists have been. If they can be said to pass as "pragmatic," they are understood as more important and more contemporary than their "idealistic" colleagues.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Premier Manifeste du Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* (1948) p. 2, "Depuis trente ans les œuvres abstraites sont éliminées systématiquement de toutes les manifestations officielles, en France et à l'étranger, la Biennale de Venise de 1948 est le dernier en date de cet escamotage."

<sup>5</sup> See for example Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, London: Granta, 1999, or Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left*, London: Lowe and Brydone Ltd., 1966.

<sup>6</sup> The non-idealism of post-war American art has of course been questioned, not least through the exhibition *Trace du Sacre* at Centre Pompidou in Paris 2005, where the spiritual/religious sides of artists such as in Pollock and Barnett Newman were put into focus. However, this discussions lays outside the scope of this paper.

I concur with Gregory Sholette on that focus from the art field and from art history has for a long time been solely on the individual artists. However, as Michel Foucault's genealogy reminds us, we always look after that in history, which confirms what we know about the present.<sup>7</sup> Maybe the history writing of authors such as Sholette allows us also to re-think the importance of the art groups during modernity.

### Belonging

If history was a landscape in ruins for Barnett Newman, returning to the ideals of pre-war era served as a way of looking to the future for many European artists and architects. Here, they were striving to find a language that would work for all kinds of artistic expressions. Not simply to find the lowest common denominator which would mean that differences in style would only be variants of an underlying theme of "art." At least during the first decade after the war, the ambition seems to have been to find a mutual "theme" also in style, a visual Esperanto, a grammar that would suit painting, sculpture and architecture equally well. But the groups were not limited to these art forms, they also tended to embrace everything from dance to music and handicraft; a plurality that in itself seem to have carried another kind of idea of what the idea of a mutual artistic platform could mean, suggesting a quite open atmosphere. An important question is how "pluralistic" this all-embracing was: the "synthesis of the arts" seems to advocate a totality that would limit the possibility of variety of expressions. One can sense a dispositive of "discipline" here which opted both for an inclusion of any kind of art form and a narrow scope of visual (and audial) expression at the same time. One of my hypothesis is that this slightly paradoxical situation is closely connected to the political ambitions of the groups; creating a modern world, freed from traditional values and built on mutual understandings of rationality and democracy would do away with the very grounds of fascism itself.

Nevertheless, both Dutch architect and situationist Constant and Swedish artist Carl-Fredric Reutersvärd, who one would find difficult to

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

label even slightly “modernist,” joined the French *Groupe Espace* and the Swedish aspect, respectively, for short while; I will look more closely here at these two groups. This raises questions about belonging and why artists (or indeed anyone) joins a group at all. Without being able to develop the topic, one could perhaps discern between four different reasons. The first reason follows what Gregory Sholette described above; that the artists in question do not wish to partake in the commercialism following that the focus on individual artists and fix stars. We could call this the collective reason. The second reason would be that the individual artist in question approves the ideals behind the group; we could call this the ideological reason. Yet another, and perhaps as common reason, could be that the artist feels that s/he can benefit from joining or forming the group, be it financial support or a possibility to exhibit; we could call this the strategic reason. The fourth and possibly the most difficult one to pinpoint would be when the artist feels attracted to the momentum of the group to a greater extent than the ideology behind it. The group might appear as a place where things happen, that it carries a promise of any outcome imaginable. Following Gilles Deleuze, we could call this the virtual reason. Deleuze understood the virtual not as a possibility, but rather more as a situation, a part of the same real as the actual. In fact, they are interdependent of each other as a “circuit,” writes Deleuze, who also states that a purely actual object does not exist.<sup>8</sup> One could perhaps describe the virtual as all those possibilities that are given in a certain situation. Which in this case, would mean that someone might join a particular group because it seems to offer a potentiality beyond their own understanding. This energetic, virtual field is probably the reason for why the above-mentioned artists joined modernist movements, and one should perhaps always be open to the situation that any member may be attracted by any of and/or all these reasons (and perhaps even others that I have not considered here).<sup>9</sup> Regardless of why anyone joins a group, it also asks what kind of impact this has on the development of the individual artist. Of course, every artist always belongs to a context that influences him or

<sup>8</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “The Actual and the Virtual,” *Dialogues II*, London & New York: Continuum, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> I am here indebted to my colleagues at Konstfack for important input, most notably Katja Aglert and Thomas Elovsson.

her in one way or another, but one could assume that the effects are more readily visible upon actually joining a group. It would indeed be interesting to scrutinise more thoroughly the relationship between, for instance. Swedish artist Olle Bærtling's (to whom I will return later on) notion of "open form" and the discussions of spatiality in associations such as *Groupe Espace* and *aspect*, both to which he belonged.

### Collective modernism

I will now turn to the formation and faiths the two different artist groups, already mentioned above: *Groupe Espace* and *aspect*. I will do so partly from the perspective of Swedish artist Olle Bærtling (Figure 10.5–10.6), who today is probably the most prominent Swedish modernist artist. Bærtling is well-known for the abstract, geometrical paintings and sculptures he developed during the years around 1950 when he turned away from figurative. Initially he would give his paintings titles like "Creation d'espace" and "Force Noir," but slowly he would also use abstract titles, where the names only intended to hint kinship within a series of paintings (like "Neli," "Nelamk," "Nero," etc). Bærtling opted for an art where nothing; not the colours, not the forms, not even the titles would resemble anything in "nature."

Bærtling was an autodidact artist who provided for himself as a banker, an occupation he would leave in the mid-1950s. He had troubles with becoming accepted among other Swedish abstract artists, but quite early in his career did exhibit extensively abroad. His production from when he started to explore the non-figurative world in the 1950s until his demise in 1981 is best understood as whole. As he wrote in his "Prologue to a manifesto of open form" he insisted that his paintings and sculptures belonged to the same world, being "of kindred spirits."<sup>10</sup> "Open form" was a concept Bærtling would develop during his entire career, which apart from painting and sculpture also included some architectural projects.

<sup>10</sup> "[D]e är båda samma andas barn." Olle Bærtling, "Prolog ur ett manifest till öppen form," *Bærtling, den öppna formens skapare*, Malmö, 1981, p. 40 and p. 49.

## *Groupe Espace*

*Groupe Espace* was formed by artists who already regularly participated in *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles*, founded in 1946. The salon was a yearly exhibition<sup>11</sup> which during its first decade took place at the Musée d'art Moderne Ville Paris.<sup>12</sup> It was constituted by members of the pre-war organisation *Abstraction-Création* (formed in 1931) such as Auguste Herbin, Félix del Marle and Albert Gleizes and was conceived of as a continuation of it. The Salon became successful rather quickly. From 1946 to 1948 the numbers of exhibitors had gone from 89 to 366, and it thus became an important context for showing and arguing for abstract art (hence the manifesto of 1948).<sup>13</sup> Bærtling exhibited there already in 1950, only a year after his first solo exhibition at Galleri Samlaren in Stockholm.

*Groupe Espace* was formed because the initiators didn't feel that the Salon did provide enough space or possibilities for an abstract art that concerned itself with spatiality. Félix del Marle (secretary of the Salon and unsigned author (with Auguste Herbin) of Salon's Manifesto mentioned above) had at this late stage of his career taken interest in the synthesis between art and architecture, and started a section for architecture at the Salon in 1950.<sup>14</sup> At this time, paintings hanging on the wall no longer interested Del Marle. In 1957 Art historian Marcel Brion would describe how del Marle fled the "imprisonment" of two dimensionality,<sup>15</sup> and Daniel Schidlower writes that del Marle left the flatness the painting to grasp what he called "the space."<sup>16</sup> (Same flatness that during the same period was seen as one of the "limiting condition"; the threshold, challenge and demarcation line for the painting of American modernism, promoted

<sup>11</sup> Already in 1939, Sonia and Robert Delaunay and some other artists did a show under this name at the Charpentier gallery in Paris. Sonia Delaunay was also involved in starting the post-war exhibition, which show took place at Palais des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris 1946.

<sup>12</sup> It has since then changed location a few times, but is still running.

<sup>13</sup> See Domitille d'Orgeval, "L'histoire du Salon des réalités nouvelles de 1946 à 1956," p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Felix del Marle passed away in 1952, at the age of 63.

<sup>15</sup> Marcel Brion, *La peinture moderne: De l'impressionnisme à l'art abstrait*, Stuttgart: Editions d'Art Somogy, 1957, p. 83.

<sup>16</sup> "Del Marle va progressivement quitter le plan du tableaux pour ce qu'il appelle 'l'espace'..." Daniel Schidlower, *F. del Marle: la polychromie dans l'espace 1945-1952* (1986) p. 5.

by Clement Greenberg.)<sup>17</sup> As several artists felt inclined to go beyond the scope of the easel painting, del Marle joined André Bloc, founding editor of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* and *Art d'aujourd'hui* (Figure 10.2), to form *Groupe Espace* in 1951. The manifesto would be published in *Art d'aujourd'hui* #3 1951 (Figure 10.1). André Bloc had since long been interested in the synthesis between art and architecture. Before starting *Art d'aujourd'hui* he had a long-time co-operation with le Corbusier (through *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*) and they both also attended the VIe Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in 1947 and 1951, events which both took upon this theme.<sup>18</sup> And in 1949 they formed l'Association pour une synthèse des arts plastiques with Henri Matisse as chair. However, a disagreement between Bloc and le Corbusier in 1950, where Bloc opted for more collective works and solutions, led to that Bloc instead sought out other partners and thus came to form *Groupe Espace* with del Marle.<sup>19</sup> There might also have been other reasons for the fall-out: in a letter from André Bloc to Olle Bærtling, the French artist writes that *Groupe Espace* never consults le Corbusier since the Swiss architect was “anti-abstract.”<sup>20</sup>

It was thus various ideas of spatiality that formed the collective interest for the members of *Groupe Espace*; how this is expressed in various art forms and how these can work together to reach new heights, aesthetic but also social. The idea of a synthesis of the arts, preliminary a sort of joint venture between art, architecture and sculpture, is of course not entirely new. We find it at the advent of modernism, in Weiner Werkstätte, in neo-plasticism and in Bauhaus. *Groupe Espace* must of course be understood in this context and their members were aware of its history. Indeed,

<sup>17</sup> In the essay “After Abstract Expressionism” (1962), Greenberg wrote: “the irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness...”, in *Collected Essays and Criticism IV*, p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> See Domitille d’Orgeval, “Groupe Espace - Groupe Mesure: Une histoire de la synthèse des arts dans la France des années 1950 et 1960,” *Groupe Espace - Groupe Mesure: L’esthétique constructiviste de 1951 à 1970, une aventure du XXème siècle*, Paris: Galeri Drouart (2010), pp. 12–45.

<sup>19</sup> Véronique Wiesinger, “La Synthèse des arts et le Groupe Espace,” *Abstractions en France et en Italie*, pp. 119–121.

<sup>20</sup> “[L]e Corbusier n’ayant jamais été consulté pour le Groupe Espace, en raison de sa position anti-abstraite.” Letter of 31 January 1955.

at the very basis of *Groupe Espace* lay the ideas that Mondrian promoted in his “Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art” namely that Constructivist art should unite with architecture, in order to create a new environment in tune the new society that was to emerge in the modern age.<sup>21</sup> Yet, it seems like the challenge that came with a Europe in ruins, made the ambition of spatial manifestations not only feasible (compare with the spatial ambitions neo-plasticism, which is executed in a few buildings only, where Rietvelds *Schröder Haus* from 1924 stands out) but a reality. The artists, architects and others who belonged to the group also felt it necessary, not to say morally compelled, to engage in the spatiality of the built environment.

Thus, moving towards a synthesis of the arts, gave the artists of *Groupe Espace* a feeling of being more in tune with the times (not to say the future) than their peers, stuck, as they were, by their easels. In contrast to *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles*, *Groupe Espace*, rather than mere organising exhibitions, seems to have moved on to a more theoretical level. This might have come naturally since they already had a journal which gave them visibility: *Art d’aujourd’hui* (and which continued to be published until 1954), the first periodical to be devoted solely to abstract art.

One can only imagine the excitement Bærtling must have felt. In 1950 he had exhibited at the Salon three times, and it was turning out to be a hub of rapid changes and intense discussion about the very *raison d’être* of abstract art. And with the forming of *Groupe Espace*, the arguments extended beyond the scope of aesthetics: In fact, abstraction was understood to be essential for the new world and the artists were encouraged to participate “directly with the human community,” as it is stated in the manifesto.<sup>22</sup> That the move from two to three dimensions also was a move from aesthetics to politics, seems to have been generally agreed. Art being obliged to partake in the reconstruction of Europe, and space as a vehicle to “discipline” a new, democratic, anti-fascist man seem to have been two reasons for this. But one can sense a more phenomenological understanding of the move to three-dimensional space by necessity included the beholder in a kind of social bond. Not unlike the way American artist

<sup>21</sup> Piet Mondrian, “Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art” (1937), in *Art in Theory: 1900–1990*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> “[P]ar d’effectives réalisations (participer) à une action directe avec la communauté humaine.”

Robert Morris would explain how his sculptures functioned, in his seminal essays “notes on sculpture” I–II.<sup>23</sup> Further down in the passage about Fèlix del Marle quoted above, Daniel Schidlower describes how creating *Groupe Espace* was to promote “an art in life, an art for mankind” that opted for a reunion of all the arts, and that was meant for everyone, not just an elite.<sup>24</sup> Gallerist Daniel Cordier reasons in a similar vein when he describes (in a catalogue) the art of Jean Dewasne: by moving towards objects, rather than paintings, Dewasne was understood to experiment with presence and “the forces of modern life.”<sup>25</sup> Marc Ducourant writes apropos of *Groupe Espace* that they made a “radical move” when they tried to “reintroduce art into every-day life.”<sup>26</sup>

The concept of *Groupe Espace* engaged many artists, both of those who had been known before the war (for instance, Fernand Léger and Sonja Delauney) and younger artists such as Jean Dewasne, as well as numerous of foreign artists, such as Olle Bærtling. Marc Ducourant states that by 1954 *Groupe Espace* had over 150 members, from 16 different countries.<sup>27</sup> The concept was also repeated in many other countries. Art historian Domitille d’Orgeval mentions branches in Italy, Belgium, Finland, Switzerland, Great Britain, Tunisia and Germany.<sup>28</sup> Sweden is not mentioned, but an exchange of letters from late 1954 until early 1955 between André Bloc and Olle Bærtling indicates that such a branch did exist. This was however organised without Bærtling’s knowledge, which made him furious and only strengthened him in his belief that the Swedish artists were doing whatever they could to fight him. In one letter, Bærtling explains that he and some colleagues have been preparing a “radical art group” for a long time, whereupon he concludes that the initiators behind the Swedish *Groupe Espace* have declared “a war” against him. But it was a

<sup>23</sup> Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture,” in Gregory Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> “[...] créé le Groupe Espace pour promouvoir l’art dans la vie, l’art pour homme [...],” “[...] non d’une élite, mais de l’homme, de tous les hommes [...],” Schidlower, pp. 6–7.

<sup>25</sup> “Dewasne exprime le sensibilité de la présence de l’objet et des forces de la vie moderne”, Daniel Cordier *Jean Dewasne* (cat) 1963.

<sup>26</sup> “Sa stratégie consiste réintroduire l’art dans la vie quotidienne...”, Marc Ducourante, *L’art d’Edgard Pillet*, Musée de Grenoble, 2001, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Ducourante, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> “L’histoire du Salon des réalités nouvelles de 1946 à 1956,” p. 9.

war waged by only “second rate artists and architects” with whom Bloc should be careful to engage with.<sup>29</sup> Bloc replied that although *Groupe Espace* never interferes in the internal business of branches, they were of course interested in working only with artists who were at the frontline. He encourages Bærtling to remain in the French *Groupe Espace*, but that he also sees the importance of starting a branch in Sweden with the best artists and architects.<sup>30</sup>

There is much research remaining to be done about *Groupe Espace*, about their branches, and what goals they managed to achieve. Some essays do exist. One also finds more or less elaborated passages in monographies, and then there is of course a rich material in the house organ *Art d'aujourd'hui*. As for built environments, it is difficult to discern projects that included various members and projects initiated as a consequence of *Groupe Espace*. One example is André Bloc's villa/studio in Meudon (1952), where not only art, sculpture and architecture collaborate, but so do interior, furniture, the garden, et cetera, to form a totality that Véronique Wiesinger has called the “[Bloc's] substitute for the laboratory of synthesising the arts that never came about together with le Corbusier.”<sup>31</sup> Another quite well-known project is the Renault factory in Flins, close to Paris, which was inaugurated in 1952. It was the work of architect Bernard Zehruss who was appointed vice-president in *Groupe Espace* in 1951 (together with Fernand Léger) in collaboration with Félix del Marle. However, as it was completed in 1952, it could not be the result from a collaboration within *Groupe Espace*. But perhaps such a distinction is unnecessary. The group was formed to provide a forum for ideas that of course already existed, i.e. the *Groupe Espace* is better understood as a *result* of certain ideas about art, society and collaboration than the other way around.

<sup>29</sup> “Après un interview de moi dans un journal ici le Groupe Espace Suédoise [...] a visiblement déclaré la guerre [*sic*] contre moi et comme en contre mes amis dans le groupe radical. [...] Le Groupe Espace Suédoise est constitué [...] par artistes et architectes de deuxième ordre.” Letter of 22 November 1954.

<sup>30</sup> “[J]e pense qu'il faudrait arriver à créer en Suède un Groupe Espace comprenant les meilleurs artistes et les meilleurs architectes,” Letter of 25 November 1954.

<sup>31</sup> “[L]e substitut du laboratoire de synthèse des arts qu'il n'avait pu réaliser avec le Corbusier,” Wiesinger, pp. 54–55.

For the same reasons it is also difficult to say for how long *Groupe Espace* exists, at least in terms of influence. When André Bloc stop publishing *Art d'aujourd'hui* there seems to have been a drop of interest. Not least from Bloc himself, who seem to be more devoted to his own art (mainly sculpture) than to group activities. In 1956 he also left the chair of *Groupe Espace* to Georges Breuil.<sup>32</sup> In the correspondence with Bærtling, which lasted until at least 1961, he is also mostly concerned with exhibitions.

Not only did Bloc de-associate himself with *Groupe Espace*; many of the early members seem to have left the cooperation in the years following the mid-1950s. Many seem to have started to doubt the possibility of a synthesis of the arts. Already in 1954, artist/theorist Michel Seuphor posed the question in an essay called “Le Synthèse des Arts est elle possible?” in *Art d'aujourd'hui*, and two years later an essay with the same name appeared in *Prisme des Arts*, signed by the artist Jean Gorin.<sup>33</sup> Due to some disagreements between painters and architects, the latter left *Groupe Espace* in 1957.<sup>34</sup> It also seems that Gorin thought that the group had abandoned its ideals; that it thus did not exist in spirit anymore.<sup>35</sup> Other artists left for other reasons. Edgart Pillet, for instance, moved to the United States, where he became a professor—first to Louisville, then to Chicago.

### *aspect*

As *Groupe Espace* was dissolving in Paris, a sibling to it was beginning to be formed in Sweden: *aspect: föreningen för konstarnas samverkan* (*aspect: The association for collaborations between the arts*). According to their first annual report, *aspect* was founded on the 11 May 1959 during a public meeting at Moderna Museet, attended by some 100 persons.<sup>36</sup> The formation had a background history from a few years prior when a group consisting primarily of artists and architects had been gathering in meetings in Helsingborg in order to create a manifestation for the progres-

<sup>32</sup> Wiesinger, p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> Michel Seuphor, “Le Synthèse des Arts est-elle possible?,” *Art d'aujourd'hui*, Vol 5, No. 4–5, (1954) pp. 9–11 Jean Gorin, “Le Synthèse des Arts est-elle possible? La Polychromique architectural et le groupe ‘Espace,’” *Prisme des arts*, No. 5 (1956).

<sup>34</sup> Jean Gorin, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (1967).

<sup>35</sup> Brion p. 116.

<sup>36</sup> ”Verksamhetsberättelse för arbetsåret maj 1959 – maj 1960.”

sive arts, something they felt hadn't been done since the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930.<sup>37</sup> The group consisted of Editor Gunnar Hellman, artist Eric H. Olson,<sup>38</sup> artist Nils Nixon, artist Bengt Orup, architect Olaaf Liisberg, architect Hans Matell and later on, also editor Åke Danielsson. They had approached the people in charge of the exhibition area at H55,<sup>39</sup> but the financial situation was still difficult, as it lacked funding. The group then contacted art patron Theodor Ahrenberg, who turned out being less keen on financing the project than taking it to a more national level, forming a group called "Radical Forum for Culture," a name that was never meant to be anything else than a working title, according to the minutes from the first meeting on 18 March 1959, which consequently was changed to "*aspect*" at the constitutional meeting of the 11 of May, suggested by Åke Danielsson.

Thus, this interim society was in existence only for two months, it set the agenda for the larger meeting at the Moderna Museet in May. The minutes from the March meeting reveal some more details about the background story. It seems that editor Gunnar Hellman had been the driving force behind the efforts in Helsingborg, where he was seeking for some kind of manifestation/exhibition of "experimental and radical forms" for every form of art. It also seems like Hellman was the driving force behind this first gathering in March, consisting of 19 persons, mostly artists and architects but one also finds director Per Edström, composer Ingvär Liedholm, curator K.G. Hultén, editor Åke Danielsson, Miss Ingrid Cornéer and Laborator (!) Tryggve Johansson among the participants. Olle Bærtling is among the artists present, and he would later also become member of the Board of *aspect*.

In the debate that followed the opening of the March meeting, two opinions are made clear: the arts would benefit from a mutual exchange

<sup>37</sup> Where the International Style was presented in full scale, something that had immense impact not least on the development of architecture in Sweden; over night, it seems, many of the most influential architects in the country left the neoclassicist ideals behind and became "modern."

<sup>38</sup> According to the letter correspondence referred to above, Eric H Olson seems to have been one of the founders of the Swedish Groupe Espace, which made Bærtling so furious. Olson was also a member of French Groupe Espace.

<sup>39</sup> An architecture and housing exhibition that took place in Helsingborg in 1955, consisting also in some permanent dwelling areas.

not having to live in splendid isolation, as many voices were seen as being the case presently; this was only made possible by forming an association, which also was the result of the meeting. Artist/professor Eric Grate was asked to be the chairman.

The appointment of Grate as chairman is interesting. From one perspective, the choice was logical: Grate was among the older in the group and he held a position as a professor at the Royal Academy of the Arts in Stockholm, both dignifying him with some authority. The connection to younger artists through his position at the academy could be said to place him in the “future” of the arts. But as an artist, Grate is not the obvious choice as someone “experimental and radical” in the year of 1959. Looking at the other artists, one gets an idea of what was meant by this description. Most of them stand in a modernist tradition; only artist Per-Olof Ultved diverts from this, as he already then moved towards a kinetic art. Grate acted chairman only during the interim period, and became vice chairman on the new Board where architect Viking Göransson was elected chairman.

One can draw some conclusions from the first year of forming *aspect*. Many of the claims and actions of *aspect* reveal how small and neglected the cultural sector was in Sweden back then. It also shows how small the country was. When the Swedish government didn't find the means to send composer Karl-Birger Blomberg (who was a member of *aspect*) to participate personally in the opera festival in Edinburgh, where his master piece “Aniara” was set up, *aspect* reacted and collected the money to cover cost of the airplane ticket. The situation became a bit of a newspaper story, where finally Tage Erlander, the prime minister, declared that he found it essential that Blomdahl should go to Edinburgh and that he had been in contact with the Minister of Trade to sort out the matter.<sup>40</sup>

In the light of such stories, one gets the feeling that *aspect* was formed out of a desperate need just to do *something*, in an area neglected by the public authorities. It also reveals a discrepancy between the artistic development and the institutional support. *Aspect* organised a public meeting at Konstakademin on 3 September 1959, where Theodor Ahrenberg held a talk on “The Poverty in Art in the Welfare State” (which would be a theme at several of *aspect*'s public gatherings), where he commented

<sup>40</sup> ”Verksamhetsberättelse för arbetsåret maj 1959–maj 1960,” p. 3.

not only about the step-motherly treatment of the arts from the public authorities, but also about the slumber in which many arts associations were in at the time. Ahrenberg also suggested that investing in art should be tax deductible, in a manner similar to the way things work in the United States, and he also advocated a new public lottery which would contribute to funding for the arts.<sup>41</sup> The Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs Per Edman attended the meeting and suggested that *aspect* should continue to point out a failed appreciation of the situation, and that they should do so in written a presentation. *Aspect* took the suggestion ad nutum, and on 22 October they presented a letter from *aspect* to the King of Sweden, signed by the chairman Viking Göransson and secretary, Åke Danielsson.

The resolution points to many interesting things. The *aspect* association wanted to make the King aware of that, while there had been enormous development in Sweden concerning the social welfare in general, the situation for the artists and sculptors rather has deteriorated during the same years. As a consequence, the letter states, they cannot be expected to contribute to society's development at the same level as other professions: "It [the occupational group] can thus not be expected contribute to the progressive construction and development of contemporary society at full of power."<sup>42</sup> *Aspect* also reacts to the fact that studies in art do not find the same kind of public funding in form of student study loans and student housing, for instance.

In the formation years, *aspect* seem to have been involved in most fields of the arts, ranging from engagement in the Swedish dance scene to various different appeals, not only to the King, but also to the Ecclesiastical Minister Per Edman concerning the situation for students of the fine and performing arts. Their gatherings were set at various locations, including poetry reading and other performing art events such as Carl Fredrik Reutersvärd's "Bankrån i Dublin" (Bank Robbery in Dublin). During the

<sup>41</sup> Konstens armod i Valfärden.

<sup>42</sup> "En från föreningen aspect ställd skrivelse till KONUNGEN 22 oktober 1959," resolution delivered to the King by a committee consisting of Åke Danielsson, Viking Göransson, Gunnar Hellman, and Hans Matell. Quote from the third paragraph, first page. ("Den kan därmed inte förväntas medverka i det samhälleliga uppbyggnads- och utvecklingsarbetet till sin fula kraft.")

first year, several debates concerning the situation for the arts in the country, the status of our museums (Are they archives? Or, Are they living institutions?), and on the co-operation between art and architecture at the Moderna Museet (12 April 1960), with a focus on education on the one hand and commissions on the other.

At this later occasion, Gunnar Hellman, the moderator, seems to have been rather critical about the status of exiting collaborations, where he criticised the artists for being too egotistic. He also questioned the ways The National Public Art Council Sweden (presently, the Public Art Agency) worked. Hellman stressed the need to think about where these projects were going, where the aim must be a totality, a comprehensive environment (*helhetsmiljö*) following “strict artistic principles.”<sup>43</sup>

The “cooperation” between the different art forms (which seems to have excluded craft) that is stated in all the material sent out saying “The Association Aspect for the Collaboration of the Arts” (Föreningen Aspect för Konstarnas Samverkan) seem to have two different meanings. On the one hand, there is this multitude of expressions and the mutual will to meet and form some platform for any kind of experimental art. On the other, the collaboration is often thought of in terms (not unlike the ones we can find in *Groupe Espace*) where the working together is understood as a synthesis of different art forms, usually manifested in architecture.

The question about art and architecture was also addressed in the letter to the King, mentioned above. In the letter, *aspect* comments upon the fact that the “Engbergsk 1 percent rule” that was decided upon in the Riksdag (parliament) before the War (a rule that said that 1 percent of all public building costs should be invested in art) was abandoned due to the extreme circumstances during War, but was at the time not yet reinstalled. And, the authors write “Since private housing construction either has decreased considerably or has been transformed into municipal housing companies,” funded with governmental loans, pressing costs, and other cut-backs has rendered “artistic contributions in societal environments superfluous or something that can be postponed.”<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> ”Verksamhetsberättelse för arbetsåret maj 1959–maj 1960,” p. 6

<sup>44</sup> “[...] konstnärlig medverkan vid samhällsmiljöns utformning är något överflödigt eller något som kan anstå.” From the perspective of 2015, it is interesting to see how *aspect* points to the decrease in private funded buildings as a source for the diminishing presence of arts

The organisation also points to how democratic decision-making can be the source of these problems: As the majority of the people in such assembly have no artistic education, they will often support a conservative line, leaving that some of “our most talented and progressive artists only occasionally under their lifetime are offered official assignments [...]”<sup>45</sup> Instead, *aspect* proposes that special art and cultural boards are created, where knowledge in the field will be essential for all members.

Again, we find that the demarcation line goes between the artists and the others, not between the different art forms. Although many ideas behind the association and the projects clearly belong to modernism, there seems to be no will to promote one art form over the other, or to say that some artists wouldn’t have felt included. Perhaps this is due to the situation for the arts at the time; internal gabble had to stand aside in order to organise against other threats. This would mean that the gathering in *aspect* was not preliminary based on a desire for a mutual program, but on a shared need to put the art agenda on the table. Thus, it followed a strategic, as much as an ideological agenda. Still, at the time, in *aspect* there seems to have been little or no need to make a difference between the upcoming “open” art scene of the coming 1960s and the dying, depleting aesthetics and ideals of modernism. This is probably due to the fact that modernism then still was a radical movement in many ways.

Looking at the housing situation in Stockholm in 1959 also helps to explain why modernism was seen as radical. The reconstruction of the city centre was just finishing, in which *aspect* member David Helldén had been the guiding force behind the five high rises and the shaping of the *Sergels Torg* square at the very core of Stockholm. Helldén was the architect behind the first high rise, where the entrance was designed by him and Olle Bærtling jointly; indeed it was a co-operation between the arts, as promoted by *aspect*—although initiated before. In his article “Estetiskt rum—Immateriell rymd” Bærtling describes the jointly achieved project, where they strived not only for an aesthetic expression, but also tried to

in newly built architecture. Today, as the municipal had been selling out its rental apartments to private households and letting private interests be responsible for the major bulk of new buildings, the complaints goes the other way around.

<sup>45</sup> “Våra mest begåvade och progressiva konstnärer endast undantagsvis under sin livstid erhålla officiella uppdrag [...]”

arrive at a spatiality that could “contribute to a more constructive and progressive way of thinking.”<sup>46</sup> Still, this was to become the only fully realised joint-venture project Bærtling took part in, although there are other suggestions signed by both Bærtling and Helldén and later on by Bærtling and the German architect Gerd Fesel. Other co-operations consisted of Bærtling providing for paintings and sculptures for buildings and/or public spaces (Figure 10.7).

One reoccurring theme in the discussions held by the association was the need to make *aspect* and its members more visible. They reach an agreement on starting a magazine (again close to the workings of *Groupe Espace*), but never find the means to actually do so. Another way of visualisation is of course to make an exhibition and a committee has been working on finding a suitable spot. They negotiated with Liljevalchs konsthall, the kunsthalle of the City of Stockholm, and then agreed on making a “jury free” exhibition for all the arts in 1961 (Figure 10.3–10.4).

This exhibition was to be become the most important task *aspect* managed to accomplish. It is also interesting in that it points to a rupture between two different meanings of cooperation, the totality of “artistic principles” and the infinity of many different projects. The exhibition seems to have balanced in-between the two. The catalogue contains a homage to Otto G. Carlsund, the Swedish artist who belonged to *Art Concret*, and who saw to it that there was a selection of abstract art presented at the Stockholm Exhibition (1930); the exhibition that had been so important for the artists when they were striving to create an association for the radical arts in the years that predated the advent of *aspect*. The exhibition contained a separate part, celebrating the newly constructed Brazilia in Brazil, and there is also an essay in the catalogue by Olle Bærtling called “Rymdålderns konst” (The art of the space age), where the artist in a futuristic vein claims that the modernist aesthetic belongs to a new, even coming age.<sup>47</sup> These entries are arguments for the same kind of modernist synthesis of the arts we found in *Groupe Espace*. But then the exhibition at Liljevalchs spoke another language altogether. *Aspect -61*

<sup>46</sup> Olle Bærtling, “Estetiskt rum – Immateriell rymd,” *Konstperspektiv*, No. 2, 1960, pp. 11–14; “[...] positivt medverka till ett mera konstruktivt, mera framåtskridande tänkande,” p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Olle Bærtling, “Rymdålderns konst,” *Document aspect 61*, Stockholm: Liljevalchs konsthall, 1961, n.p.

counted no less than 202 exhibitors, presenting a multitude of art expression. Judging from this variety, it almost seems like just anything could fit the profile for what *aspect* stood for. Maybe this also explains why Bærtling later on left the association. He felt it was not developing in the right direction, as he states in an unsigned letter, hereby following the reasons Jean Gorin gave for leaving *Groupe Espace* half a decade earlier.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusions

As the influence of modernist aesthetics and ideology began to diminish in the beginning of the 1960s, the art scene shifted, to borrow the concepts from Emmanuel Lévinas, from a “totality” of some visual Esperanto towards an “infinity” of many styles.<sup>49</sup> By then, most of the groups opting for a “synthesis of the arts” had been dissolved. However, the Swedish group *aspect* evolved with the changing art scene and for a short while became a platform for any artistic expression, most notably in the jury-free exhibition *aspect -61*. This transformation of *aspect* is interesting when it comes to the question of what happened to late modernist collectivism. One answer is of course that it became obsolete and disappeared. Another answer would be that the democratic ideals survived, but in a visual multitude. The transformation of *aspect* seems to suggest this; the group could be faithful to the ideals and yet changing expression. A third answer is that it actually survived, where it had its foremost expression in the construction of many suburbs constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. The cooperation in the residential area of Flemingsberg between artist Gert Marcus and architect Hans Matell, both members of *aspect*, is such an example. The fact that the municipality of Huddinge (where Flemingsberg is located) invested money in such high-brow co-operation was widely understood as an effort to make a difference. But when it was completed in 1974, already at its inauguration it was being criticised as being inhuman, as was indeed most suburbs after 1968, the year when journalists and the cultural elite in Sweden started to criticise what it until then had embraced as a quest for democracy. The author Per Wirtén, who grew up in the neighbourhood,

<sup>48</sup> Olle Bærtling, Letter to *aspect*, 1962.

<sup>49</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.

recounts the shift from curious praise to bashing, something he also connects to the fact that when Flemingsberg was completed, the housing shortage that it was meant to solve no longer existed, and it thus it became very difficult to find tenants to occupy the new apartments. In the media, Flemingsberg was described as a “fiasco,” where nobody moved, an area that was plagued with rampant crime, et cetera.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, in 1982 Gert Marcus was allowed four pages to describe the housing project in Flemingsberg in an article in the East German magazine *Farbe und Raum*.<sup>51</sup> The totality of “the syntheses of the arts” had gained the attention of totalitarianism (although the editor wrote that it was questionable if architecture was a suitable carrier of one person’s individualistic artistic expression).

From the perspective of the suburbs of the 1970s, it is easy to think about the endeavours of the artist groups from the 1950s as think tanks for what Michel Foucault called “the society of discipline.” The society of discipline did perhaps get its most well-known description in *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault developed his thoughts on the panopticon, where we all would monitor ourselves, in fear of some kind of big brother.<sup>52</sup> In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre reasons in similar veins when he describes architecture as something that produces an ideological space, often used as a means of monitoring and controlling the citizens. Foucault also seem to have thought along those lines when he argued that “architecture belongs to discipline” in the lecture series at Collège de France in the end of the seventies, posthumously published.<sup>53</sup>

One can argue that artist groups such as *Groupe Espace* or *aspect* (at last initially) moved on the level that Lefebvre called “conceived space,” i.e. more on a level of abstract planning. One can also argue that this is connected to the dispositive “discipline.” Both of these would feel very alien to contemporary art groups who instead operate on small scale in

<sup>50</sup> Per Wirtén, *Där jag kommer ifrån – kriget mot förorten*, Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Gert Marcus, “Farbe in Västra Flemingsberg,” *FARBE und RAUM*, No 9, September 1982, VEB Verlag für Bauwesen, Berlin, DDR, pp. 10-14.

<sup>52</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

<sup>53</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

reaction to the “lived space” of the inhabitants. Still, the “discipline” in the art groups cannot be easily translated to the “discipline” of society. It might be that they are connected in many ways, but this does not mean that they operate with the same goals and/or agendas. The discipline of a (totalitarian) society and the discipline opted for by an art group, striving for a totality of arts, is no more connected than is, the neo-liberal society of “control,” as Foucault called the other dispositive, with the rhizomatically connected alternative art groups of today. The likeness is a likeness of means, which doubtlessly can turn into a problem when the radical alternative finds how easily it can be adopted by the very powers it understands as its enemy.

The discussion of “conceived space” and “society of discipline” must be balanced with questions about what kind of *force* the groups represented. The members of *Groupe Espace* did obviously want to take a step further from easel painting and they did see art as a tool that could and should have social and political implications. Perhaps there are reasons to discuss to what extent the aesthetics of these groups also reflects their possibilities, their virtuality, for returning to Gilles Deleuze. Here it also becomes relevant to look into the downfall of the associations, which begs the more complicated questions: when is it no longer productive to remain in a certain context? Did Bærtling leave *aspect* because he didn’t feel related to the other artistic expressions that in the end were allowed, or did he leave because the association no longer provided the same potentiality in a more profound way?

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# Le Groupe Espace

La dissociation des arts plastiques : peinture, sculpture, architecture, est un fait déplorable, mais tellement admis par les artistes, les critiques et le public, que les essais les plus timides pour replacer les arts dans la vie courante apparaissent, à beaucoup, comme des audaces inutiles.

Cependant, un groupe s'est formé en France pour aborder cette tâche difficile de synthèse, sans laquelle aucune civilisation ne peut affirmer sa présence.

Des conditions favorables vont permettre les premières expériences. Les grandes réalisations de la reconstruction entrent dans une phase décisive. Les architectes, qui ont été chargés des travaux essentiels, ont compris qu'ils pouvaient utilement associer, à leurs études, d'autres plasticiens.

Ensemble, ils viennent de signer un manifeste où ils exposent leur programme. Les artistes, qui ont semblé s'intéresser spécialement aux nouveaux problèmes, ont été invités à se réunir. Les premières signatures, groupées sur le manifeste, ne constituent que le début d'un ralliement.

L'idée est lancée et elle fait son chemin. En France, au Brésil, au Danemark et en Italie, on note les premières réalisations. La Triennale de Milan montre de quelle façon intelligente peuvent collaborer les architectes et les plasticiens.

Le groupe « Espace », désormais constitué en Association, ne sera pas une chapelle. Ses membres ne rechercheront pas une publicité personnelle, mais aborderont, avec l'humilité qui convient aux véritables artistes, les risques qui s'attachent à des expériences fondamentales.

L'Assemblée générale constitutive de cette Association a eu lieu, le 17 octobre 1951, au Grand Palais, sous la présidence d'honneur de M. Eugène Claudius-Petit, Ministre de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme, et la présidence effective de M. André Bloc, Directeur des revues « L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui » et « Art d'aujourd'hui ».

Étaient présents à cette Assemblée :  
Mmes Sonia DELAUNAY, FAHR-EL-NISSA-ZEID, Jeanne COPPEL, Simone SERVANES, Nicolas WARRIHELD.

MM. Luc ARSENE-HENRY, Paul AYNES, André BRUYÈRE, Jean GEORGE, Paul HERBE, Lionel MIRABAUD, Walter MUNZ, Marcel ROUX, Jean SEBAO, Bernard-Henri ZEHRFUSS, Architectes.

MM. Asgard ANDERSEN, Etienne BEOTHY, André BLOC, Félix DEL MARLE, Roger DESSERPRIT, Cicero DIAZ, A. R. FLEISCHMAN, Georges POLMER, Emile GILLOLI, Bernard LAFFAILLE, Pierre LACOMBE, Berto LARDERA, LE CHEVALIER, Fernand LEGER, Claude FAURET, Édgar PILLET, P. E. SARHSON, Ionel SCHEIN, Nicolas SCHOFFER, Plasticiens.

S'étaient excusés :

Madame KANDINSKY

MM. Xavier ARSENE-HENRY, Wladimir BODIANSKY, Silvano BOZZOLINI, Henri CALSAT, G. DEDOYARD, Piero DORAZIO, Pierre FAUCHEUX, Jean FAYETON, G. LAGNEAU, Jean GINSBERG, Jean GORIN, Robert LE RICOLAIS, Marcel LODS, Alberto MAGNELLI, MONNET, NATIVI, Richard NEUTRA, Micaël PATOUT, Serge POLAKOFF, Jean PROUVE, Alfred ROTH, André SIVÉ, YONGERMANN.

Au cours de cette réunion, lecture a été donnée des statuts de l'Association et, notamment de l'article premier qui définit les buts : ceux-ci ont été énoncés par M. André Bloc qui a ouvert la séance et rappelé les diverses tentatives modernes, heureuses ou malheureuses, de synthèse des arts.

Article premier. — L'Association dite « Groupe Espace », fondée au cours de l'Assemblée générale du 17 octobre 1951, a pour but de préparer les conditions d'une collaboration effective des architectes, peintres, sculpteurs, plasticiens et d'organiser, par la plastique, l'harmonieux développement des activités humaines.

Sa durée est fixée à 99 ans.  
Elle a son siège à Boulogne-sur-Seine, 5, rue Bartholdi.

L'Assemblée a, en outre, procédé à l'élection des membres du Bureau et des membres du Comité, qui se trouvent ainsi constitués :

## BUREAU :

Président d'Honneur : M. Eugène CLAUDIUS-PETIT, Ministre de la Reconstruction et de l'Urbanisme.

Président actif : André BLOC.

Vice-Présidents : Paul HERBE, Fernand LEGER, Bernard ZEHRFUSS.

Secrétaire général : Félix DEL MARLE.  
Trésorier : Bernard LAFFAILLE.

Députés à la propagande : Luc ARSENE-HENRY, Édgar PILLET.

## COMITÉ :

MM. Sonia DELAUNAY, Etienne BEOTHY, Silvano BOZZOLINI, Cicero DIAS, Jean FAYETON, Pierre FAUCHEUX, Jean GORIN, Berto LARDERA, Robert LE RICOLAIS, Paul NELSON, Marcel ROUX.

Enfin, elle aborda la mise au point des méthodes de travail : création des diverses Commissions constituées par des Groupes chargés d'études précises, qui s'étendront aux problèmes les plus divers, allant des plans d'urbanisme aux recherches plastiques, dans le domaine des objets les plus usuels.

## COMMISSIONS :

- Urbanisme et Plans Masse.
- Expositions et Fêtes.
- Plastique appliquée aux objets (les industriels seront invités à cette Commission).

En outre, sera constituée une Commission « de la Dimension » chargée d'un des problèmes essentiels pour lequel la collaboration des ingénieurs est très importante.

Dès sa constitution, l'Association est saisie de plusieurs demandes de collaboration, notamment pour la mise en couleur de diverses constructions (extérieur et intérieur), pour les études de volumes, pour des concours de peintures murales et de sculpture en accord avec l'architecture.

# Manifeste

Pour se dégager définitivement de certaines survivances néfastes, qui imprègnent avant la masse du public qu'un grand nombre d'artistes, les Architectes, les Constructeurs et les Plasticiens soussignés créent

## LE GROUPE ESPACE

### ils préconisent

- un Art non-figural procédant des techniques et méthodes actuelles pour des buts rénovés
- un Art qui s'inscrit dans l'époque réelle, réponde aux nécessités fonctionnelles et à tous les besoins de l'homme, des plus simples aux plus élevés
- un Art soucieux des conditions de vie, privée et collective, un Art essentiel même à l'homme le moins artisté par les valeurs esthétiques
- un Art constructif qui, par d'effervescentes réalisations, participe à une action directe avec la communauté humaine
- un Art devenu opéral par le génie inventif et modifié de la lumière dans l'espace, un Art dont la conception et l'exécution s'appuient sur la simultanéité des aspects dans les trois dimensions non suggérées, mais tangibles
- un Art où le Couleur et la Forme soient enfin indissolublement liées par leurs qualités lumineuses et architecturales dans une expression idéale de rapports et de proportions.

### ils constatent

- que d'innombrables tâches de construction sont trop souvent confiées à des personnes qui n'ont ni la qualification pour engager l'avenir d'un groupe d'habitants, d'une ville, voire même d'un pays
- que l'Urbanisme et la Construction des Cités exigent de ceux qui en ont responsabilité, non seulement des qualités techniques, mais aussi des connaissances sociales, psychologiques et une certaine culture artistique
- que ces connaissances et cette culture sont généralement insuffisantes, qu'un artiste trop souvent à la Reconstruction de nos Cités sur des plans imparfaits et avec une plastique convenable
- que la plupart des Architectes n'ont pas été préparés aux tâches nouvelles
- que ceux qui ont la responsabilité de créer le milieu dans lequel vivent les générations futures doivent pouvoir s'enrichir de techniques et d'Artistes plasticiens familiarisés avec les problèmes spatiaux et, de plus, soucieux et aidés par les lois et règlements.

### ils proposent

- la création de liens directs entre tous ceux qui peuvent être appelés à concourir aux grandes tâches contemporaines et en particulier, aux :
- Etudes d'Urbanisme, Etudes de Plans-Masse, Etudes de la Plastique architecturale y compris tous les préjugés dans la vie courante, incidences de la couleur dans l'Architecture.
- Ainsi, pour familiariser le public avec les adresses, innovations plastiques, il est souhaitable que les Artistes du Groupe Espace soient appelés à prêter leur concours, notamment lors des Festivals, Expositions et lors des grandes Fêtes publiques. Des démonstrations plastiques, d'avant-garde, seront admises plus facilement à l'exécution de ces Manifestations en vue de leur rôle aux réalisations permanentes.
- Les Commissions prévues seront créées immédiatement pour l'étude des problèmes particuliers et devront comprendre : Architectes, Peintres, Sculpteurs et Plasticiens :

URBANISME, PLANS-MASSES, COULEUR, EXPOSITIONS, FÊTES, PLASTIQUE APPLIQUÉE AUX OBJETS

### ils réclament

POUR L'HARMONIEUX DÉVELOPPEMENT DE TOUTES LES ACTIVITÉS HUMAINES LA PRÉSENCE FONDAMENTALE DE LA PLASTIQUE

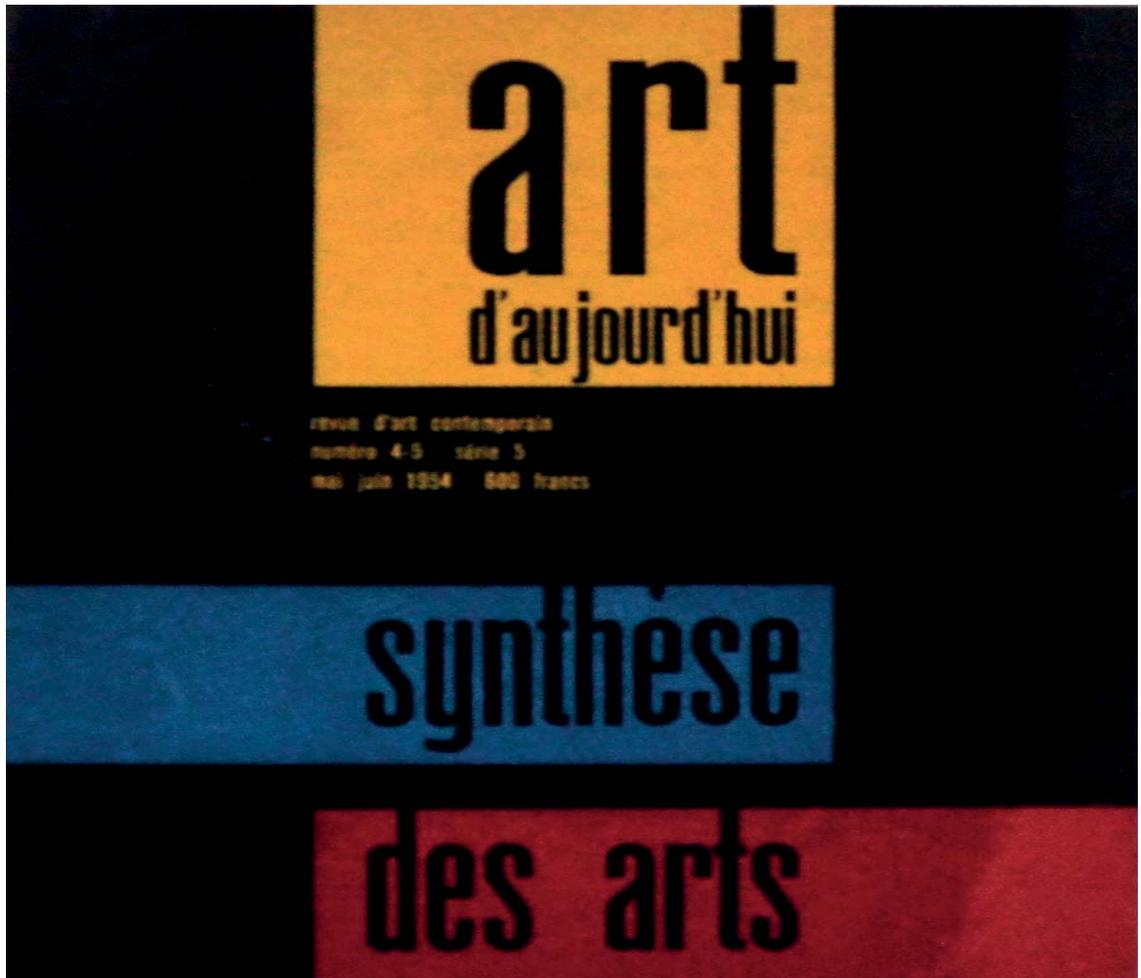


Figure 10.1 (previous page): Manifeste Groupe Espace in *Art d'aujourd'hui*, October 1951, page V.

Figure 10.2: Cover of the journal, *Art d'aujourd'hui*, *revue d'art contemporain*, No. 45 June 1954.

**konstens månad**  
**24 aug - 24 sept**

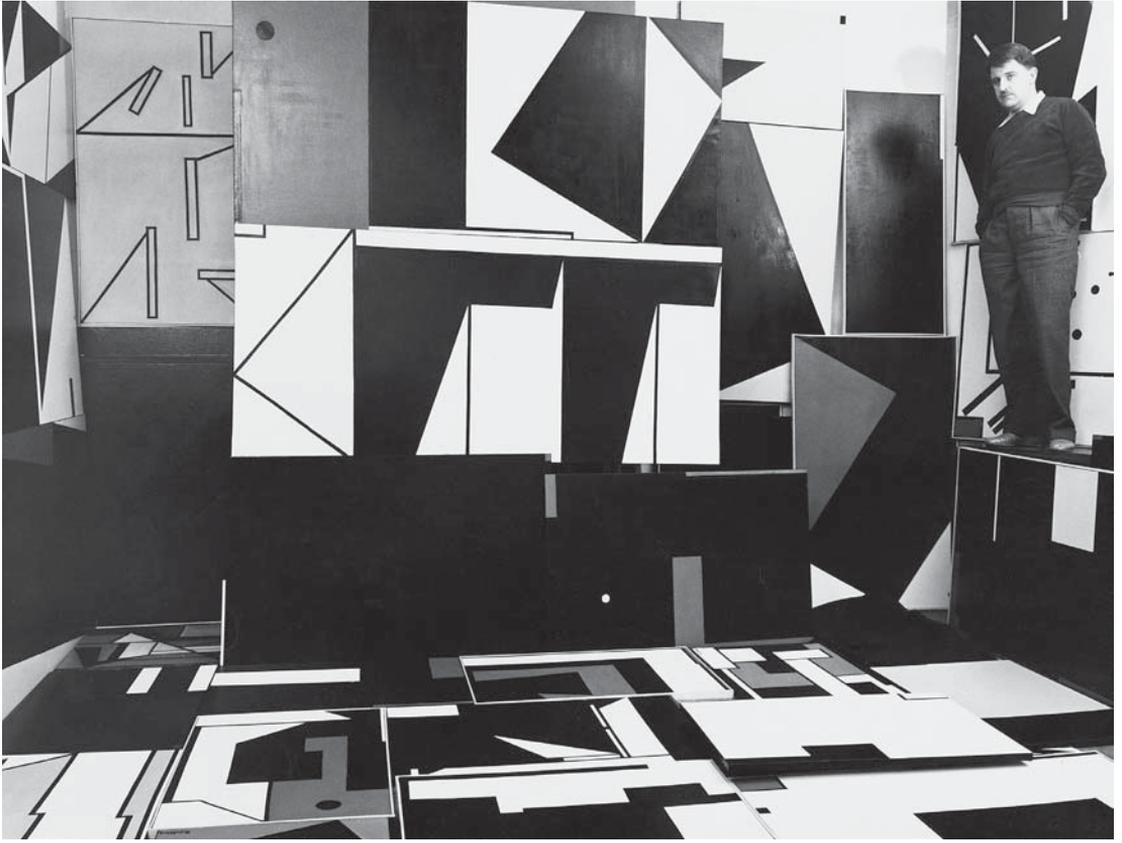
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**Figure 10.3 (previous spread, top left):** Exhibition catalogue, *aspect 61 med brasilian*, kat 254, Liljevalchs konsthall, Stockholm, 1961.

**Figure 10.4 (previous spread, bottom left):** Åke Danielsson (ed.) *document aspect 61*, Stockholm: Liljevalchs konsthall, 1961.

**Figure 10.5 (previous spread, top right):** Olle Bærtling in his studio, undated (probably 1955). Photo: Lennart Olson. © Hallands konstmuseum.

**Figure 10.6 (previous spread, bottom right):** Olle Bærtling in his studio, 1951. Photo: Lennart Olson. © Hallands konstmuseum.

**Figure 10.7:** *The Aesthetic Rom*, entrance to the first high-rise at Hötorget, Stockholm, by Olle Bærtling and David Helldén, 1959. Photo Lennart Olson. By kind courtesy of the Bærtling foundation. © Hallands konstmuseum.



Figure 10.8: Poster of the Groupe Espace Manifest, 1951.

Figure 10.9: Olle Bærtling, *Irgy*, 1958, Oil on canvas. By kind courtesy of the Bærtling foundation. © Olle Bærtling/Bildupphovsrätt 2016.

